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Colorado Company Spearheads Fundraising for Ecuador Earthquake Rebuild
*Campaign will fund new and repaired homes for cacao farmers in Esmeraldes Province,
Farmers are sustainable sourcing partners of Boulder-based Cholaca*

DENVER – May 31, 2016 – Recent aftershocks remind Olkin Olivero that his family’s stable home and way of life in Canalon, Ecuador remain threatened. His wife and four children and neighboring cacao farmers survived the April 9 earthquake that killed 654 people. They feel blessed and thankful to be alive, but anxious for the future. The disaster is the latest in an ongoing struggle to protect their land and way of life.

[Boulder-based Cholaca](#) has launched a fundraiser for Resilience Foundation, a 501c3 nonprofit (EIN 46-2608660) that is financing rebuilding critical to the future of this rural community in northwestern Ecuador. Working with [Terra Genesis International](#), a nongovernmental organization, Cholaca wants to help rebuild and repair 60 homes. In Esmeraldes, the 7.8 magnitude quake destroyed 20 houses, severely damaged 20 more, and left another 20 dwellings needing repair to make habitable again.

How to donate: Cholaca has created a campaign donation page on generosity.com. Individuals can make online donations at <https://igg.me/at/zm-ohzatNis>. Other Colorado businesses and companies are joining Cholaca with donations to kick off the campaign, such as The Philosopher's Stoneground regenerative nut butters. Some major donors and partners also plan to host activities to support awareness of campaign. Organizations wanting to support the rebuilding may contact Cholaca.

Campaign funds directly assist families like the Oliveros who need walls, a roof, running water, sanitation, and other basics to restore their households. They are among the more than 1,500 men, women and children who benefit from a Colorado connection through Cholaca. Cholaca’s cacao suppliers belong to two local farming co-operatives, Eco-Cacao and UOPROCAE, which distribute profits among their members. Over 30 families in the cooperatives now live in camps until they can rebuild their homes. Aftershocks continue to interrupt demolition and other recovery work.

The Resilience Foundation also will address basic sanitation and potable water needs. With \$5,000 to purchase materials such as filters, residents will build 20 composting toilets, and grey and potable water filtration systems. Reconstruction includes rebuilds and existing house repairs such as roofs and foundation restoration. Estimates for new houses run \$9,000 each, depending upon how much local material people can gather.

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“Doing the work themselves reduces costs and strengthens the community’s resilience and self-determination,” said Cholaca CEO Ira Leibtag. “We are investing in their livelihood. If they can stay here and work the land, then they won’t be forced to sell to developers who want to throw up condominiums along this stretch of Pacific coast.”

Before the earthquake, Cholaca had started lining up investors to purchase land for a future cacao processing facility that will create local jobs.

Said Gregory Landua, Terra Genesis International CEO, “The people will do much of the labor to save money, and we are training them to build structures that can withstand the future quakes.” Gregory added that when they finish rebuilding, the homeowners would go train nearby villages to raise homes “that hold up during the next big shake.” Cholaca collaborates with Terra Genesis in supporting the co-ops and other local development.

Even while needing help, locals are delivering produce to towns experiencing food shortages. “They have a determined and generous spirit, caring about others even as they live in tents,” said Gregory. “Resilience funds will also buy gasoline and pay temporarily unemployed drivers to keep deliveries going.”

“We are inspired by the help to rebuild our homes,” said Olkin Olivero on behalf of Canalon. “The engineering and architectural expertise and money to help buy materials that are hard to get, combined with our hands and hard work, will secure our future.”

“Before I’ve talked about preserving the rainforest. It’s really about saving people’s way of life,” said Ira. Cholaca’s indigenous partners produce some of the [finest cacao in the world](#) through regenerative agriculture. Deforestation and unsustainable farming threaten the world’s chocolate supply. Cacao grows beneath the natural canopy alongside bananas and other crops.

Prospective donors can take a visual tour of the community and sustainable development by viewing Cholaca’s video: [“Preventing Deforestation from Chocolate”](#).

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Natural Grocers, Whole Foods Markets, Alfalfa's and Lucky's Markets throughout Colorado [retail Cholaca](#) in [three varieties, unsweetened, original and sweetened](#). All are available in 12- and 32-ounce sizes. Independent coffee shops in three states offer hot and cold espresso drinks. Colorado craft brewers such as Oskar Blues, Shine and Fort Collins Brewing add liquid Cholaca to specialty chocolate infused brews. National brewing writers recently highlighted the Colorado brewers and Cholaca, and the unique advantages of liquid cacao in brewing process. Cholaca's latest product is solid baking disks, a more natural and pure ingredient for commercial and home baking.

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About Cacao and Cholaca: Cacao is one of the planet's most nutrient-rich foods. Rich in antioxidants and flavonoids, Cacao has more iron and magnesium than any other food. Cholaca transforms pure, unadulterated cacao into a decadent and [good for you](#) chocolate beverage. All organic Cholaca contains only three natural ingredients: pure cacao, coconut sugar and water (unsweetened Cholaca has only pure cacao and water). Cholaca provides a jitter-free alternative to caffeinated drinks. Theobromine, a natural stimulant in cacao, gives people a positive, elevated energy and alertness. Vegan, gluten-free and pasteurized, Cholaca contains no preservatives or emulsifiers. Cholaca solid wafers give bakers and confectioners a more natural and pure chocolate ingredient for commercial and home baking.

About the company: [Boulder-based Cholaca](#) was founded in 2012 by Ira Leibtag with a desire to bring healthy, organic cacao, in its purest form, to the masses while curating strong partnerships with the indigenous farmers of Peru and Ecuador. Cholaca and its partners promote regenerative agriculture practices, which protect the rainforests and ensure a long-term supply of chocolate, both of which are under threat. Cholaca is made from one of the planet's most nutrient-rich superfoods. Cholaca has many uses, from drinking as an alternative to caffeinated coffee or tea to baking to mixed warm and cold drinks. Find our more at www.cholaca.com or [@Cholaca](https://twitter.com/Cholaca) on Twitter.

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