

**COVA**

2026-2028

# Strategic Plan





## **Mission**

Building a healthier Central America through community-centered safe water solutions.

## **Vision**

A world where all communities have access to safe water.

## **We Believe In Strong Bonds**

We are a nonprofit social enterprise bridging the gap between available and safe water in rural communities. We provide ongoing, data-informed support to ensure reliable services.

Much like hydrogen and oxygen need one another to form a covalent bond to create water, Cova relies on successful partnerships to provide comprehensive safe drinking water solutions to rural communities in Central America. We partner with communities to provide educational opportunities and build capacity for self-sustaining, easy to maintain, and financially viable water treatment solutions that lead to healthy lives.

# Our Values

## → Collaborative

We achieve transformative change when we work together.

## → Committed

We bring energy, resolve, and purpose to solving the global water crisis.

## → Entrepreneurial

We innovate and adapt to create meaningful impact.

## → Results-Driven

We learn from experience and use data to drive our work.

## → Sustainable

We create community-centered solutions that support lasting change.

## → Accountable

We act with integrity and transparency to earn trust.





## Strategic Plan

# Introduction

Over the next three years, Cova will strengthen our partnerships with rural communities in Central America to expand reliable access to safe drinking water. Through our unique Circuit Rider Model, we train and support local leaders and technicians to operate and maintain simple, affordable water treatment systems, ensuring communities can sustainably manage their own water service. By combining blended finance, results-based funding, and strong local government partnerships, Cova aims to rapidly scale up impact, reaching last mile communities at less than \$1 per person per year.



# The Challenge

Safe, accessible drinking water is a basic human right. Yet, unsafe water is one of the greatest threats to human health, responsible for approximately a million deaths worldwide each year, many of them children.<sup>1</sup>

Only 53% of rural communities in Latin America and the Caribbean have access to safely managed drinking water.<sup>2</sup> While most rural communities have basic access to untreated water with household connections, professionalized safe water services are limited. In these last-mile communities, locally-elected water boards are responsible for overseeing and operating their water systems. These WASH management entities, made up of community volunteers, often lack the technical capacity and resources to treat water, monitor water quality, and manage system operations and maintenance.

Cova's safe drinking water program specifically targets rural communities in Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador. The majority of these residents are subsistence farmers earning \$3–6 per day and lack access to safe drinking water. Approximately 8.6 million people live in rural communities across these three countries and are tasked with managing their own drinking water systems. Over 85% of these water systems are contaminated with harmful pathogens, as systems lack disinfection treatment.



1) World Health Organization, 2019

2) WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), 2024



## The Solution

Cova's strong local partnerships, proven Circuit Rider Model, and expertise in water quality analysis advance the professionalization and financial sustainability of locally managed systems. These systems serve millions in low-income, geographically isolated areas. Through our in-line water chlorination system and commitment to building local capacity, we provide ongoing technical assistance, water quality testing, data collection and analysis, and training for community water committees, helping ensure the sustainability of water systems and services.

Cova's market-based approach requires an initial investment to install a water treatment system, build the capacity of the community, and offer necessary technical support. Our safe water solutions are locally operated and require co-financing from our rural community clients. Leveraging initial philanthropic funding for community water board support, we fuel a financially sustainable model that generates revenue, ensures underserved communities have continued access to safe drinking water, and accelerates our goal of reaching more Central Americans even faster.

Safe drinking water not only improves the health of rural communities in Central America, but provides a basic need that lays the foundation for building a stronger, more prosperous and productive life.



## Strategy 1

# Ensure Safe Water Service Delivery Through Circuit Rider Model

Strengthen the capacity of rural community water boards to deliver sustainable, high-quality water services by providing continuous technical assistance and direct support.

### Tactics:

- Equip community water boards with skills, knowledge, and resources for safe water management including: source protection, water treatment, system operation and maintenance, water quality monitoring, water tariff setting, and water board administration.
- Provide ongoing technical support and monitoring, including monthly testing, chlorine delivery, system inspections, and on-demand assistance.
- Conduct water system mapping and baseline assessments to track sustainability metrics.
- Provide training for community health volunteers to perform monthly water quality assessments.
- Establish water quality laboratories to provide access to comprehensive and affordable water quality testing services to rural communities in accordance with national water quality norms.
- Establish mechanisms for reporting results to both communities and government entities, enhancing transparency, promoting accountability, and driving impact.



## Strategy 2

# Strengthen Water Sector Systems Through Partnerships with Government and Stakeholders

Support the integration of professional water services into public systems by directly strengthening institutions and water boards.

### Tactics:

- Strengthen partnerships with Ministries of Health and local governments to train field staff and align water service monitoring systems.
- Equip communities and local governments with reagents, tools, and a shared reporting platform for reporting.
- Lead cross-sector collaborations to promote best practices and establish professionalized services as the standard.
- Ensure access to the chlorine tablet distribution supply chain.
- Secure local government contracts to support water services in rural communities.
- Establish contracts with all community partners describing roles and responsibilities of Cova and the community encouraging transparency and enhanced governance.



### Strategy 3

# Scale Up Circuit Rider Model To New Geographies

Reach 4 million people with safe water by 2028 by scaling up into new districts using a readiness and sustainability framework.

#### Tactics:

- Apply sustainability criteria before entering new districts, scaling only when predefined thresholds are met.
- Prioritize new areas based on district level mapping, stakeholder analysis, and Ministry of Health prioritization.
- Phase entry into new districts while continuing support for existing ones.
- Replicate Circuit Rider model in a fourth country.
- Invest in Cova's people, systems, and operations to sustain quality during growth.



## Strategy 4

# Advance Sector Learning Through Our Evidence Base

Lead the sector on professional water services and in-line chlorination through evidence-based guidance and technical assistance to promote best practices.

### Tactics:

- Lead and participate in Communities of Practice to enable collaboration among experts.
- Execute formative and applied research, internally and in collaboration with third-party evaluators to generate evidence and insight into service delivery performance and Cova program outcomes and impact.
- Continue to seek and learn best practices from others.
- Investigate the true costs and benefits of our model as well as true costs of service delivery that meets appropriate standards to inform government.
- Disseminate research findings through peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, webinars, and regional knowledge-sharing platforms.
- Share real-time and historical water quality data with external stakeholders.
- Develop and share recommended approaches, manuals, and guides for the Circuit Rider Model.



## Strategy 5

# Leverage Catalytic Financing To Sustain Growth And Expand Impact

Drive diverse revenue streams from products and services, impact investments, government contracts, and philanthropic capital to sustain growth and expand impact.

### Tactics:

- Achieve a financial model that eliminates dependency on philanthropic capital.
- Increase results-based funding for safe water service support, including government contracts.
- Expand in-country product and service sales, including chlorine sales, water quality testing, and technical services.
- Establish water stewardship and carbon-based revenue programs.
- Secure impact investments for working capital when needed.