



## SUCCESS STORY

# Star Cuppers Smell Success

### Challenging professional program graduates 30 coffee specialists



Photo: Krystell Guzman, Chemonics

Two Star Cuppers check the fragrance of the coffee grounds.

***“It was a tough program but we did it, and now are professionals in the coffee world. This will be good for our families and our country.”***

***— Star Cupper Maria Acuña***

To the applause and hearty cheers of family members and coffee industry employers, 30 coffee cuppers from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, received Star Cupper diplomas endorsed by the Specialty Coffee Association of America. The graduate cuppers — specialists in systematically evaluating the aroma and taste of coffee beans — included three women who beamed at having “made it” in a largely male profession.

USAID’s intensive regional coffee program began in November 2003 with testing applicants on cupping, sensory analysis and coffee marketing, and the top 10 from each country were selected to participate in the program. These 30 cuppers attended nine training modules over a year’s time at the facilities of national coffee associations. After training, each cupper had his or her knowledge tested through formal written and practical examinations.

National and international coffee processors, roasters, exporters and local coffee associations showed keen interest and provided financial support to the program, knowing the new cuppers would help them raise the bar on coffee quality throughout the region.

The cuppers had obvious pride in the public recognition of their accomplishment in completing a challenging and significant professional program. Maria Acuña, one of the three female Star Cupper graduates, said, “It was a tough program but we did it, and now are professionals in the coffee world. This will be good for our families and our country.”