



GUATEMALA RELIEF PROJECT

PROGRAMS/PROJECTS OF GRP

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY - "ROCKET STOVE" CONSTRUCTION TRAINING

Teaching refugees and Mexican community to build mud and sand stoves
stoves (new version of the "Poyo de Lorena")
Conserves firewood
Slows down the process of deforestation

CHILDREN - GUATEMALAN CHILDREN'S FUND

Children to children aid (sister schools/letter and drawing exchange/
fund raising
Health: inoculations, vitamins, parasite treatment, etc.
Literacy
Funds for orphans (most of whom have been taken in by other families)
Children's book

CRAFTS PROJECT - TEXTILES, HANDICRAFTS

Cultural survival
General income/funds for refugees
Office/retail space in Mexico City for distribution

DOCUMENTATION - STILL PHOTOGRAPHY & JOURNALISM

Teaching new skills
Stop dependency on foreign media
Guatemalan refugees/exiles to do their own documentation of Human Rights
abuses and
Personal testimonies

FOOD - AGRICULTURAL PROJECT

Seeds, fertilizers, tools, land rental, subsistence salary for workers
Provides food for the refugee camp with the project and for other(s)
refugee camp

HEALTH - MEDICAL AID

Medical aid committee in the U.S. (S.F. Bay Area)
Supporting mobile medical clinic(s) in Mexico
Blankets, mosquito nets, medical supplies
Materials, guides, backpack kits for the community (Guatemalan and Mexi-
can), and training for health promotores (barefoot doctors)

WATER - WATER PROJECT

Construction of cisterns and fabrication of clay pots
Treatment with Microdyn = one year potable water
Manufacture and distribution of clay pots with refugees and the Mexican
community

WOMEN

Women's cooperatives, textiles, crafts, etc.
Literacy
Aid for widows, single mothers, elderly
Women's book

Guatemala Relief Project

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The Situation

Guatemala is the northern-most and most heavily populated country in Central America. Over seven million Guatemalan are concentrated in an area the size of Tennessee. The per capita income is US \$790 per year. In 1980, 82% of the children five years of age and younger showed signs of malnutrition. Guatemala has the highest mortality rate in the hemisphere: 16% -- out of every 100 children born, only 37 reach adulthood. While the official language is Spanish, over 60% of the population is of Mayan origin, forming 22 different ethnic groups, each with their own language and cultural identity. The living conditions of the Guatemalan Indians are reported to be the worst in all of Latin America. Not only are the Guatemalan Indians and peasants suffering abject poverty, Guatemala has been racked by government-sponsored violence since 1954, claiming over 100,000 lives (a statistic published by the Guatemalan Justice & Peace Committee). Many prestigious human rights groups and international organizations have denounced the gross violations of human rights of the Guatemalan people by the government-sponsored death squads.

Guatemalans comprise the largest single refugee population in all of Latin America. The last two years have witnessed the complete destruction of a number of villages in the Guatemalan Highlands, the destruction of social and economic structures of the Indian culture, the complete militarization of the population by terror, and the displacement of over one-seventh of the country's population (an estimate from the Catholic Bishops Conference in May 1982). The first Guatemalan refugees to arrive in southern Mexico fled from El Arbolito in 1981 after their agricultural cooperative was looted and burned to the ground by the Guatemalan army. The Mexican government, however, only allowed 40 families to remain in Mexico; the rest were sent back across the border to certain death. Since 1979, more than 200,000 Guatemalan refugees have poured into Mexico and are residing in scattered settlements and the more than 40 refugee camps along the border in Chiapas. Their exodus is a direct result of the Guatemalan army's counterinsurgency campaign. Mexican officials predict the arrival of an additional half-million refugees.

The Response

The Guatemala Relief Project (GRP) was established in 1982 to address the urgent situation of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico and Central America and to broaden national public awareness of the situation in Guatemala and the conditions of the refugee population. Our goals are to aid Guatemalan refugees through both financial contributions and material assistance; to research and publish information on the numbers, location, conditions and needs of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico and Central America; and to educate North Americans about the political, social and economic conditions of Guatemalan refugees.

Guatemala Fact Sheet

Size

42,042 square miles (slightly smaller than Tennessee)

Government

Head of State: General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores
Defense Minister: General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores
Congress: Suspended

Population

1980 total population:
7.2 million
3.6 million men
3.6 million women

Ethnic Composition:

44% Indian
48% Mestizo (mixed Indian and Spanish descent)
8% Caucasian (includes pure Spanish descent)

Percentage of total population in urban and rural areas:

60% rural
40% urban

The urban population has grown twice as fast as the rural population since 1950.

55% of the total population is under the age of 15.

Average family size: 5.2 people.

Economy

Agriculture:

Coffee (chief export crop, Guatemala is largest Central American producer), cotton, cattle, bananas—25% of GDP.

Industry:

Food processing, textiles, beverages, petroleum products—91% of industrial production.

GNP: \$8.5 billion (1981)

Employment:

58% of the workforce is employed in agriculture, 14% in manufacturing, 12% in services. Unemployment is estimated to be over 25%.

Income: Per capita income: \$800 a year.
5% of the population earns over 30% of the gross domestic product—the most skewed distribution of wealth in Central America.

Minimal monthly income necessary for a Guatemalan family of 5 is \$248.
50% of families in Guatemala City earn \$248 or less.

Rural Income:

Rural Indian per capita income: \$100-200 a year.
90% of rural families earn less than \$500 a year.
55% of rural families earn less than \$277 a year.

Land Ownership:

Over half the Guatemalan population survives on subsistence agriculture. 80% of the land is owned by 2% of the farm families. 9 of 10 rural families live on plots too small to support them.

Life Expectancy

56 years urban, 41 years rural.
84.1 of every 1000 live births die before the age of 1 year.
35% of all children die before the age of 5.
60% of all rural children die before the age of 5.

Sanitation

Access to safe water:

40% of total population
14% of rural population

Access to sewage disposal:

25% total population

Health

82% of Guatemalan children under the age of 5 are malnourished, 30% are severely malnourished.

Half of the population receives only 60% of minimal caloric requirements and just 50% of the minimal protein requirement.

(Continued on other side)

Housing

Guatemalan housing deficit: 1.3 million dwellings.

In Guatemala City, the capital, over 1 million people—70% of the population—live in substandard housing.

The February 4, 1976 earthquake destroyed 60,000 dwellings in Guatemala City which had housed 300,000 people. The 1976 earthquake left 1 million people homeless.

Education

Persons over 10 who are illiterate:

Nationally:
48% of men
61% of women

Urban:
22% of men
34% of women

Rural:
62% of men
78% of women

Indians over 7 who are illiterate: 85%

66% of rural children between the ages of 7 and 14 do not attend school.

In predominantly Indian rural areas, 90% of children between the ages of 7 and 14 do not attend school.

In all Guatemala, 88% of youths between 15 and 20 do not attend school.