

GUATEMALA - Civil Strife/Displaced Persons

Date: October 25, 1983 (first declaration)
December 9, 1983 (second declaration)

Location: The northwest area of Chimaltenango and the western highlands of Huehuetenango and El Quiche

No. Dead: Not reported

No. Affected: Hundreds of displaced families in Chimaltenango; estimates as high as 250,000 displaced persons in Huehuetenango and El Quiche, and 210,000 in Quetzaltenango

The Disaster

In the department of Chimaltenango in late 1982 confrontations between army troops and guerrilla forces destroyed hundreds of homes and damaged roads. Many who survived the violence returned to their communities to find their homes burned and their possessions gone. Further military operations near the Mexican border in the departments of Huehuetenango, El Quiche, and Alta Verapaz displaced still more people in mid-1983, a situation which exacerbated the already severe health and economic problems of the area and contributed to a lack of adequate shelter and food.

Action Taken by the Government of Guatemala (GOG)

The National Reconstruction Committee (NRC), which is the Guatemalan organization in charge of coordinating relief efforts in times of emergency, lacked adequate resources to deal with the increasing numbers of displaced persons. In October and again in December, the GOG requested U.S. assistance in obtaining food, medicines, clothing, and other emergency support materials.

Local Guatemalan voluntary organizations, such as PAVA (Programa de Ayuda a los Vecinos del Altiplano), Caritas of El Quiche diocese, and the Behrhorst Clinic in Chimaltenango, distributed relief supplies and conducted surveys and needs assessments of the displaced.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

The U.S. Ambassador made a disaster determination on October 25, 1983, in response to the situation in the Department of Chimaltenango resulting from civil strife. On November 7, he used his disaster assistance authority to donate \$25,000 to the Behrhorst Foundation for immediate assistance to the displaced in the Chimaltenango area. The Behrhorst Foundation, assisted by PAVA, provided food, housing materials, medicines, basic tools, and seeds to the displaced. In January 1984, \$20,000 was added to the Ambassador's authority.....\$45,000

In response to a request by the U.S. Mission in Guatemala, OFDA sent a disaster specialist to conduct a needs assessment in El Quiche. Because the work was performed as part of a long-term contract with OFDA, an exact itemization cannot be provided.

Another disaster declaration was made on December 9, 1983, in response to the increasing number of displaced persons in the Guatemalan highlands near the Mexican border. The Ambassador's authority was granted to CRS for relief efforts in El Quiche.....\$25,000

An increase in the Ambassador's authority was used for the local purchase of medicines.....\$10,000

In February 1984, OFDA approved a mission allotment of \$35,000 to be used for needs assessment in Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Playa Grande, and the western Peten.....\$35,000

A month later, additional allotments of \$63,215 for PAVA and \$15,000 for Project Hope were approved to conduct surveys in the departments of San Marcos and Quetzaltenango.....\$78,215

A mission allotment of \$3,000 was approved in April for local administrative costs.....\$3,000

Total OFDA assistance.....\$196,215

As a result of the PAVA and Project Hope assessments and the increasing numbers of displaced persons in the highlands, a Displaced Persons Assistance Project was authorized in July 1984, and \$500,000 of Development Assistance funds were granted to the Salvation Army. This sum was combined with the PAVA grant, and PAVA and Project Hope participated as subgrantees.

The funds granted to the Salvation Army were to provide short-term (seven months) assistance to approximately 5,000 families displaced by violence in the departments of Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, and El Quiche. Assistance included medical teams and medicines, seeds and tools, and materials to make clothing, household items, and shelter. The project also included the procurement and transport of WFP food commodities and NRC roofing materials.....\$500,000

TOTAL \$696,215

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

The Salvation Army, Project Hope, and CRS received grants from the USG (see above).

Assistance Provided by the International Community

None reported.