



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**GUATEMALA**

## History - Four Decades of Development Assistance

The 1960s were a period of “high-level development,” when aid was focused on centralized programming, mostly in the form of general-purpose resource transfers between governments for infrastructure and other technical and capital assistance programs. The 1970s were marked by a “basic human needs” approach that included food and nutrition, population planning, and health, education and human resources development. In the 1980s, foreign assistance focused on broad-based economic growth, emphasizing employment and income for the poor. During this decade, activities were increasingly channeled through private voluntary organizations and aid shifted from individual projects to large programs comprised of multiple projects. In the 1990s, “sustainable development” was the priority and USAID concentrated on programs that fostered the capacity of a country to improve the quality of life of its own people (See page 6-7 of *USAID Primer: What We Do and How We Do It*).



USAID has been active in Guatemala for over 40 years, since USAID was created in 1961. Its development programs here have followed the same trajectory as described above. Currently, USAID/Guatemala works with partners to identify and implement policy reforms and programs that will improve the lives of Guatemalan women, men, youth and children. Specifically, USAID assistance in Guatemala promotes democracy, justice, and human rights; foster economic growth, sound environmental practices and improved food security; and increase people’s access to quality health and education services.

### Why is it important that USAID work in Guatemala?

Guatemala is Central America’s largest country in terms of economy and population and plays a pivotal role in regional trade and integration. It is the third most unequal country in the world in terms of income distribution, and thus is a land of contrasts--it has a wealth of natural and cultural resources yet an estimated 58% of its people live in poverty. Most of the poor are rural indigenous people, most often women, of Mayan descent who have suffered a long history of repression and exclusion from fully participating in society and who were most seriously affected by the 36-year armed civil conflict. One observer noted that: *“Eight years ago, after 200,000 deaths, 40,000 “disappearances” and 440 decimated villages, peace formally came to the last redoubt of the Central American war zone, Guatemala. Put it up there with Rwanda, Cambodia, ex-Yugoslavia and, today, the Congo as one of the great killing fields of the ‘postwar’ world.”* (Jonathan Power, Edmonton Journal, January 4, 2005).

As a result of historical inequalities and the lowest health and education spending in the region, Guatemala struggles with some of the lowest social indicators in the hemisphere: the fertility rate is the highest in the hemisphere (3.9 per woman), infant and maternal mortality are unacceptably high (39 per 1,000 live births and 153 per 100,000 live births, respectively), and chronic malnutrition is the worst in the hemisphere (49 percent of all children under age five). More than two million children do not attend school, and most of these are indigenous girls in rural areas. Only three of ten children graduate from sixth grade and only one of 20 enter high school. Less than half of rural residents have access to running water, only 25% have electricity at home, and less than 10% have modern sanitary facilities. The country's complex topography of roughly two-thirds mountains, its 24 languages, and a disenfranchised indigenous population significantly complicate efforts to expand health and education services and improve an extremely low rate of labor productivity. With a population of approximately 12 million and a population growth rate that surpasses its Latin American neighbors at 2.2 percent a year, the country's population is doubling every 19 years.



### **USAID and the Peace Process**

In December 1996, the Peace Accords were signed and brought an end to Guatemala's devastating 36-year civil conflict. The Accords outlined an ambitious "development plan" for transforming Guatemala into a more participatory, pluralistic and equitable society. Despite significant donor assistance, the country has been slow to meet the commitments embodied in the Accords and so these continue to provide a sound "blueprint" for Guatemala's future development.

The United States provided around \$450 million over seven years (1997 to 2003) to support Guatemalan efforts to implement the Peace Accords. USAID's "Peace Program" collaborated closely with several hundred international and Guatemalan organizations from the public, private and non-profit sectors to advance Peace Accords commitments in the areas of Demobilization, Productive Assets, Modernization of the State and Human Capacity building.

Highlights of the results achieved by USAID's Peace Program include:

#### **Peace, Reconciliation, and Modernization of the State**

- More than 3,000 ex-combatants incorporated into productive society
- Over 300 clandestine cemeteries exhumed, remains of more than 2,000 people re-interred by their families, and model for victim's support program adopted by the National Reparations Program
- More than 20,000 victims of torture and conflict received mental health services
- Over 240 houses constructed for widows and orphans
- More than 25,000 land titles issued to farmers in former conflict zones
- Over 300 land conflicts resolved



### **Democracy and Justice**

- 16 justice centers and 15 mediation centers established
- Municipal and community level councils established in 20 municipalities
- Registration of over 500,000 new voters for 2003 elections and increased voter participation to all-time high of 58% of registered voters
- Human rights education and awareness programs reached more than 16,000 people
- Eight civil society coalitions worked with GOG in the areas of ethnic discrimination, public security, congressional strengthening and transparency

### **Education for Rural Populations**

- Net primary school enrollment for girls in the department of Quiché increased from 53% in 1997 to 94% in 2003
- Over 2,200 university scholarships granted to indigenous youth from 19 ethnicities, 1,250 graduated from university degree programs and formed regional alumni associations
- Community integrated literacy model and materials developed in three languages and used by 25 NGOs with women and youth
- More than 700 at-risk indigenous youth trained in leadership and life skills

### **Health for Women and Children**

- Over 3.5 million indigenous poor gained access to basic health services delivered by over 100 NGOs working with the Ministry of Health
- Contraceptive prevalence rate increased from 38% to 43%, especially among Mayan couples
- Health information and services provided in Mayan languages to monolingual Mayan women
- More than 2,100 communities served by integrated maternal child health program
- Maternal mortality decreased from 219 to 153 per 100,000 live births since 1989

### **Rural Productivity and Food Security**

- Employment opportunities open for over 155,000 rural business people

- \$21 million in public/private investment generated in market towns
- Hunger crisis relief to 17 municipalities
- Food rations for up to 220,000 families per year

### **Natural Resource Conservation**

- 20 sustainable community forestry concessions produce certified wood and protect forests
- Ministry of Environment created
- More than 350,000 hectares of forest certified
- Eco-tourism sites certified by Green Deal
- CONAP (National Council for Protected Areas) strengthened

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