

Hear their story: <https://vimeo.com/770927854>

### **Guatemala Facts and Figures:**

#### **Economy:**

- Guatemala is 42,000 sq mi, roughly the size of Tennessee with an average 6 people per house.
- It has the most inequitable and concentrated distribution of landownership in Central America.
- The rich land is primarily used for agricultural pastureland and forestry. However, land disputes and ineffective resolution puts production at risk for hillside erosion. Guatemala has the third highest level of malnutrition in the world.
- Three-quarters of all rural people live in poverty, which correlates with their geographic isolation and ethnic exclusion. Rural average income is \$603 per month. The dollar amount for indigenous people is lower by far. 59.3% live below the poverty level, and 23% live below the extreme poverty level.
- Six percent of cropland is irrigated and used for cash and export crops, mainly vegetables and sugar cane. Primary agricultural products are sugar, fruits and vegetables, and cereals.
- Population facts: 18.6 million people. 41% are Ladino, or Mestizo—mixed. 39% full Amerindian—the highest percentage in the western hemisphere.
- 93% speak some Spanish, the language of commerce. There are 21 Mayan languages as well as 2 non-Mayan Amerindian languages.
- Minimum wage right now is less than \$12 a day for agricultural and non-agricultural work, and less than \$11 a day for export sector factories.

#### **Child Health:**

- Children grow up with limited access to electricity, running water and sanitation.
- One of the poorest health ratings in Latin America, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest infant mortality, only better than Haiti. One child is abandoned every 4 days.
- The country has very high childhood mortality. A child is five times more likely to die before their fifth birthday in Guatemala than in the United States.
- Malnutrition is a very common problem, and many families do not have access to high quality foods. Almost 50% of all Guatemalan children are stunted because they don't have access to a balanced diet.

#### **Literacy/Education:**

- Literacy rates vary between men and women, and between Ladino and indigenous populations. Across the country, at least 25% of youth will not be able to read and write when they grow up. Only Haiti is lower.

- Only 16% of people in Guatemala have access to the internet which means children can't connect to resources on the world wide web.
- Only 35% of teenagers attend middle school, and even fewer attend high school.
- Public education is not free in Guatemala and many families cannot afford to send more than one child to school. As a result, in indigenous Guatemalan communities only 1 in 10 children ever reach high school. They must pay for transportation to and from school, uniforms, lunch, school supplies. High school costs average between \$600-1200 per year, depending on what courses are studied. It is prohibitively expensive.

#### **Family Life:**

- Across Guatemala, 30% of children are married before the age of 18. That means rather than going to college Guatemalan youth are more likely to be getting a job or taking care of a house or even starting a family!
- Since children are getting married early, they are also starting families much younger than we do in the United States. In Guatemala, more than 20% of youth give birth to their first child before the age of 18.
- Best estimates suggest that as many as 1.5 million Guatemalan children are consistently out of school. Instead of being in a safe classroom they are scraping by on the streets, often helping earn a living for their families.

#### **Government:**

- The Guatemalan governments spend only 3% of its GDP on education, so even those students who try to go to school often fail out. Sadly, more than 30% of females drop out of school before the third level. Their 3<sup>rd</sup> level is not equivalent to our 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- Corruption is huge in Guatemala. Organized crime groups operate with relative impunity.
- Women-headed households, particularly those headed by indigenous women, are more susceptible to poverty. Think about the fact that for 36 years, the fathers, husbands, and sons of these women were fighting a war. Many were "disappeared". These women had no way of supporting themselves, and many became homeless.
- Most Americans don't know much about a 36-year civil war that lasted from 1960 through 1996. We should. It's one of the most brutal in Latin American history. According to a truth commission report, more than 200,000 people were killed — most of them indigenous, more than half a million were driven from their homes, and many more were raped and tortured. And the US played a big part in the background.

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