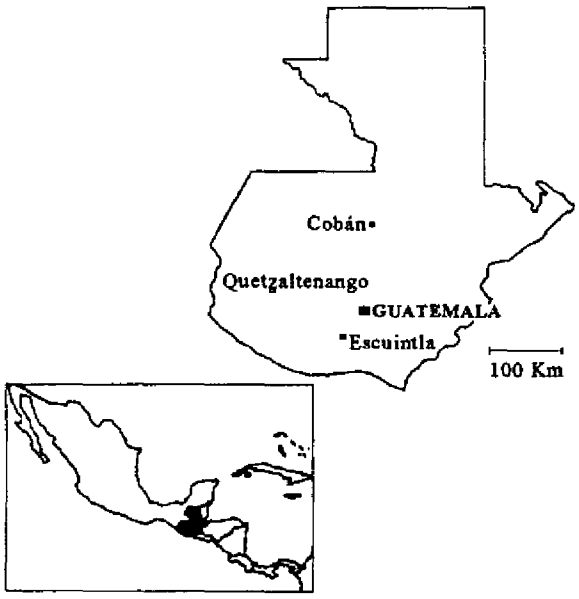
# GUATEMALA




Capital: Guatemala City
Area: 108,889 km²
Population. 9,198,000 (1990) (a)
Population density. 84.4/km²
Urban population: 39%
Per-capita GDP in US$. 910 (1989) (b)
Life expectancy at birth: 63.4 years (c)
Infant mortality rate: 58‰ live births (1991) (d)
Illiteracy: 42% (e)
Population under poverty line: 75% (1990) (f)
Human Development Index 1992: 0.485 (100th) (g)[1]

## The difficult tasks of peace, democracy, development, and the indigenous question

During the 1980s and particularly the early years of that decade, Guatemala was immersed in a profound crisis, which was among the most acute in Latin America. The crisis merely expressed violently the country's grave problems, which had mounted over decades. Among them are, first, authoritarianism, violations of human rights, and the continuing exclusion from political participation of large segments of the poor and indigenous population. Second, the country has had a "concentrating and exclusive" development model based on extreme inequality in land ownership and lack of equity in the distribution of the fruits of economic growth, which thus causes high levels of poverty. Finally, there has been cultural domination of indigenous peoples, which denies the multicultural nature of a country in which two-thirds of the population are Mayan ethnically and culturally.

These problems are rooted in the colonial era and the republic created following independence, but their more immediate origin lies in the military coup of 1954 which ended a brief period of democratic reform led by Presidents Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Arbenz in which agrarian reform began. Since then the country has been governed by military regimes or those dominated by the Armed Forces, has had fraudulent elections, and opposition has generally been eliminated violently. Guatemala has witnessed the most dramatic situation in Central America and perhaps Latin America with respect to human rights

violations since, from 1954 to 1982, there were around 80,000 political murders, most of which were perpetrated by "death squads." The guerrillas who now form the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG),[2] which has remained in armed conflict with the army with varying degrees of intensity for more than 30 years—the oldest still active such conflict in Latin America—were born in this climate in the 1960s and 1970s.

General Romeo Lucas García seized power at the end of the 1970s and began "the violence," the name identifying the period between 1978 and 1985. During those years, perhaps the most tragic in Guatemala's history, there were thousands of "disappearances" and political murders, and a counterinsurgency war broke out to halt the guerrillas' advance and break up their social base which included "scorched earth" tactics and systematic attacks against civilians. In 1982 there was a new coup d'etat, in which General Efraín Ríos Montt assumed power. He abolished constitutional guarantees and launched a military counterinsurgency campaign still more violent than the preceding one. The toll from the violence and terror was 440 communities, villages, and hamlets destroyed, tens of thousands of dead, 50,000 widows, and between 100,000 and 200,000 orphans, 250,000 refugees in Mexico, of whom 46,000 were recognized as such, and around a million persons displaced domestically, some of whom belonged to communities and villages still considered "Resistant Communities" in 1993 which remain hidden in inaccessible areas of the northern part of the country. After the "earth scorching," many communities were rebuilt as "model villages" in which the population under military control was concentrated. Finally, more than 800,000 peasants were recruited into the so-called "Civil Self-Defense Patrols" (PAC), a paramilitary organization linked to the army. All these events led to numerous condemnations from the international community and the consequent isolation of the military regime.

At the same time, the economy experienced a major recession between 1980 and 1985 which increased unemployment and underemployment. The per-capita gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 12% in 1982 and 1983 alone, and between 1984 and 1986 the quetzal lost 46% of its purchasing power because of exchange adjustments. All this worsened the population's living standards so much that the number of poor increased from 71% to 83% of the total population.[3]

While the first half of the 1980s was a period of violence, the second half was characterized by fragile and tentative democratization. In 1985 a new coup d'etat overthrew Ríos Montt, a Constituent Assembly was elected which promulgated a new Constitution, and elections were held which Vinicio Cerezo, the Christian Democratic candidate, won. The new Government undertook an active foreign policy to overcome its international isolation and launched an ambitious program of economic renewal and reform in hopes of surmounting the crisis and solving—though only partially—some of the major problems facing the country. The most important were tax reform, agrarian policy, National Consultation, which included negotiations with the URNG and a cessation of violence, and a policy of domestic development.[4] Around 1989, however, most of the hopes which the return to democracy had awakened were frustrated. Policies aimed at achieving greater equity, such as fiscal reform and agrarian policy, were blocked by the most powerful economic interests.[5] Despite the commitments in the Second Esquipulas Peace Plan and an initial round of talks in Madrid in 1987, negotiations with the URNG were broken off after two attempted coups d'etat, in 1988 and 1989, which showed the fragility of democratization and the great influence that the army continued to wield over the country's life. The armed conflict broke out again, and governmental attempts to bring about the return of refugees were unsuccessful. After a short ebb, human rights violations increased strongly after 1988. In 1989, economic renewal entered a period of stagnation accompanied by inflation, which reduced the buying power of wages and accentuated social polarization and poverty. Finally, the per-capita GDP in 1991 was 18% lower than in 1981 and per-capita private consumption was

24% less.[6] In addition to all these problems, the final years of the decade saw the penetration of drug trafficking into the Government and society.[7]

In 1991 new elections, marked by heavy abstention, brought the conservative Jorge Serrano Elías to power. He decided to restart peace talks with the URNG, as had been agreed at Oslo in 1990 and at the Conference of Parties, the URNG, and the National Reconciliation Commission (CNR) at the Escorial in Spain. An 11-point agenda was drawn up at Mexico City in April 1991 which included matters such as democratization, human rights, a reduction in the size of the army and reforms in its role, the identity and rights of indigenous peoples, constitutional and electoral reforms, socioeconomic matters, the return and reassimilation of displaced persons and refugees, incorporation of the URNG into civil life, and a definitive ceasefire.[8] Nevertheless, the peace process made little progress in 1991 and 1992 and impunity and human rights violations continued. In May 1993, President Serrano Elías suspended constitutional guarantees and dissolved the Congress in a "self-coup" very similar to that carried out by President Fujimori in Peru. Internal opposition and international pressure caused Serrano Elías's attempted coup to fail and, against a backdrop of instability and uncertainty, Ramiro de León Carpio, the Human Rights Prosecutor, became President.[9]

In conclusion, Guatemala confronts a complex national agenda in the 1990s in bringing about peace, achieving true democratization and enforcement of and respect for human rights, overcoming poverty and inequality by attaining higher levels of "human development," and constructively solving the so-called "indigenous question." In this context, the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 to Rigoberta Menchú, the Quiché indigenous leader, signified international recognition of the historical exclusion of the indigenous population, its demands for political participation, and a role in economic and social development. That role must be shaped on the basis of its ethnic and cultural identity by guaranteeing it a leading part and recognizing that it is a population facing the harshest and most difficult living conditions.

## Employment, the crisis in the peasant economy, and the informal urban sector

The economically active population (EAP) comprises 31% of the country's population—around 3 million people. Annual growth in the EAP is 3.4%, which means that 100,000 people join the job market every year. Fifty-six percent of the EAP is agricultural, but only 19% work in the "modern" sector of agriculture.[10] This reflects the markedly "dual" nature of agriculture in which peasant subsistence farming based on small farms coexists with capitalist, export-oriented agriculture dominated by large land holdings.

After the failed agrarian reform of 1952, the land problem became critical because of demographic growth and the fall of export prices, which affected agricultural daily wages, now between USD 1 and 2 a day, and unemployment and underemployment. Guatemala is today the Latin American country with the greatest inequality in land ownership, since 65% of its arable land is concentrated in 2.6% of its farms.[11] It is calculated that the number of parcels in the Northwestern Altiplano is growing at a rate of 5% annually in an area that does not have an "agricultural frontier." In the past 40 years the absolute number of small farms has almost doubled while their average size has fallen by half.[12] This gradual subdivision means that most small farms are so small that they do not permit subsistence, as a result of which peasants have to supplement their income through seasonal work on agroexport estates. Each year more than a half-million people, mostly indigenous persons in the Altiplano, migrate to the southern coast and the *Bocacosta* in search of seasonal work on coffee, cotton, cardamom, and sugar plantations. These facts, together with the existence of 419,620 landless peasants in 1980 (36% of the rural EAP), mean

that the agricultural EAP has high levels of underemployment and inadequate income, and so poverty. In this context, it is significant that Huehuetenango, Totonicapán, Sololá, San Marcos, and Quiché—departments where more than 85% of the population are indigenous peasants—have the lowest capacity to absorb labor and the highest underemployment rates in the country. Underemployment affects 80% of the indigenous population, compared with 53% of the non-indigenous population.[13]

The most visible signs of the crisis in the urban labor market have been the growth of unemployment and the informal sector. Open unemployment affected 2.6% of the EAP in 1980. In 1982 it affected 6%, in 1983, 9.9%, and in 1986, 14.2%—the highest rates in Central America [14] In 1987, coinciding with economic recovery, it fell to 12% and in 1989 to 10.9%. Unemployment later fell appreciably, coinciding with the *maquila* boom.[15]

With regard to informal employment, available data indicate that between 1979 and 1981, 30% of workers in the Guatemala City metropolitan area, which includes the capital and the municipalities of Mixco and Villanueva, were in the informal sector.[16] Two-thirds were self-employed workers, a high proportion of them craftsmen, and 27% worked in microenterprises. A 1987 study indicated that the causes of informal-sector growth were: (a) countryside-to-city migration resulting from socioeconomic factors, the 1976 earthquake, and violence and conflict; (b) the low capacity of the "modern" or "formal" sector to absorb labor, aggravated by the crisis; (c) institutional inflexibility; (d) the inflationary impact of the recession, which led many families to search for income in addition to that earned by the family head through supplementary jobs and work by women and children; and (e) subjective factors, such as a desire for independence.[17]

In 1986, according to National Sociodemographic Survey data, 40.9% of the active population in the capital were informally employed. The growth of informal employment is greater than that of the population itself and of employment in the formal economy. Self-employed workers, microenterprises and family workshops with long workdays, low incomes (about half of those in the formal sector), and a large amount of unpaid family work predominated. Women were slightly in the majority, especially in trade and among wage earners, and indigenous people living in the capital worked in this sector to a greater extent than did non-indigenous persons [18] All this suggests that the informal sector is above all a survival strategy for the poorest and a "softening cushion" for the crisis more than an entrepreneurially dynamic sector.

The Government headed by Vinicio Cerezo undertook to develop the most important informal activities in the region known as the "Microenterprise Multiplication System" (SIMME) which identified 47,200 microenterprises and granted 17,000 credits totaling USD 1.2 million to informal workers and firms in the Guatemala City metropolitan area.[19]

## The social profile of the crisis: inequality and poverty in Guatemala

The large amount of poverty, and especially of rural poverty, in Guatemala is a structural feature of Guatemalan society which, as we noted, is related to extreme inequality in land ownership and the clear polarization of income distribution. In 1980, before the effects of the crisis became fully apparent, poverty affected 71% of the population, or 5,146,000 people, and extreme poverty affected 39%.

In 1980 the crisis, increase in unemployment, and deterioration in wages—in a context of inflation and price rises—led to the highest levels of poverty in Guatemalan history. In 1985 it affected 83% of Guatemalans. Because of population growth, that meant an increase in the absolute number of poor compared with 1980 of more than 2 million people until it reached 7,330,000.[20] Extreme poverty increased to 65%, affecting more than 5 million people. This means that the extremely poor population almost doubled in the first half of the 1980s. It is significant in this context that, according to

official data, the poorest 20% of the population had 5.5% of the national income in 1980 declining to 2.8% in 1985, while the richest 20% increased their share from 55% to 60% and the 10% with the highest incomes increased their share from 40.8% to 44%.[21] These data show that impoverishment is closely related to increasing concentration of income in the wealthiest sectors of the society. At the beginning of the 1990s, according to recent ECLAC data, 6.9 million people, or 75% of the population, lived in poverty. Fifty-two percent of the population, or a total of 4.8 million people, lived in extreme poverty or indigence.[22]

Because of inflation and devaluations of the quetzal, the urban real minimum wage lost 77% of its purchasing power between 1985 and 1991.[23] In mid-1989 the agricultural wage covered only a quarter of the cost of the basic basket, and the industrial wage a little more than a third of it. In 1991 the minimum wage barely covered 41% of the basic basket,[24] and in 1992 the daily urban minimum wage was GTQ 11.6, which equaled USD 2 and only permitted buying 48% of the basic food basket. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the minimum agricultural wage was GTQ 159 a month, or USD 30.

The large amount of poverty, together with Guatemala's large population in the regional context, means that one in every three poor in the region is a Guatemalan.[25] Poverty in Guatemala is above all rural. Two out of every three poor people in the country live in rural areas, and the immense majority of the rural population (93% in 1985) lives in poverty. Moreover, extreme poverty increased to a much greater extent in rural areas, from 44% in 1980 to 70% in 1985. This rural bias means that the "poverty map" has a markedly indigenous character. The departments in which extreme poverty is higher than the national average are Jalapa, Jutiapa, El Progreso, Huehuetenango, Quiché, Totonicapán, Baja Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, Sololá, and San Marcos. Except for the first three, all are clearly indigenous departments. In Sololá, San Marcos, and Baja Verapaz, the population that is not poor accounted for between 9% and 10% of the total. The poorest departments were Quiché and Totonicapán, with poverty proportions of 95.7% and 96.1%, respectively.[26]

In 1986, with the inauguration of the civilian Government headed by Vinicio Cerezo, the "Economic and Social Restructuring Program" (PRES) and the "National Reorganization Program" (PRN) were begun with social projects to cost almost GTQ 1,000 million which in the short term were aimed at halting economic and social deterioration and in the long term at offsetting the "social debt," estimated at GTQ 5,000 million for 1976-1986 alone, through "inwardly" oriented development. These programs were barely carried out, and in 1989, after the failure of the tax reform which should have provided resources to finance them, they were almost paralyzed because of lack of budget and institutional restrictions.[27] More significant were SIMME, noted above, and decentralization measures such as the transfer of 8% of the budget to municipalities, though those funds were not always assigned to the true needs of social development.

The Serrano Elías Government established a Social Development Plan (PLADES), based on the creation of productive employment, and a National Peace Fund (FONAPAZ), with an initial USD 75 million budget, for programs to reduce poverty, care for widows, purchase land and minimum housing in areas of conflict, and return refugees and displaced persons. In mid-1992, the Congress discussed the creation of a Social Investment Fund (FIS) similar in concept to those established in other countries in order to offset in the short term the social effects of adjustment measures. The fund, which would be closely coordinated with FONAPAZ, had financial commitments of USD 66 million, half of which would be contributed by international cooperation.[28]

## The ethnic question

Throughout its history, Guatemalan society has been systematically based on the economic domination of Indians, their social segregation,

and cultural denial of whatever is indigenous. Since the arrival of the Europeans, the most important political and socioeconomic changes, such as independence, liberalism, and modernization, have not changed this basic fact, on which the social order of the country has been based.[29] The word "Indian" is today still considered pejorative, and the *ladino* or mestizo world is defined by and takes its identity from negation of what is indigenous rather than from its own characteristic features.

According to the population censuses of 1973 and 1981, the indigenous population comprised between 41% and 43% of the whole. Other, more accurate estimates hold, however, that indigenous people exceed 65% of the population, or more than 6 million people.[30] There are 23 ethnic groups, 22 of them Mayan and one Caribbean Araucanian, the Garifuna who live along the Caribbean coast. The most important Mayan groups are the Quiché, Cakchiquel, Mam, Kekchí, and Kanjobal. Other census data show that 70% are peasants and that 10% of the men and 31% of the women work in crafts manufacturing. There are also an appreciable number of indigenous women who work as small retailers and in domestic service. Since colonial times, the indigenous population has grown 13 times, though the territory occupied by the Mayans has been reduced to half of what they occupied before the conquest due to centuries of expulsion from their lands. This explains the high population density of the Altiplano and underlines the fact, as already noted, that the land question is closely related to the indigenous question and is now one of the major problems facing this segment of the population.

During the 1980s the indigenous population was affected by phenomena such as: (a) acute pauperization and deterioration in living conditions that helped promote migration and "ladinization"; (b) the effects of the armed conflict; and (c) acculturation, which has been tied to the foregoing and is partly linked to the spread of religious fundamentalism and the proliferation of evangelical sects in rural areas.[31]

With regard to the first phenomenon, Guatemala's ethnic map has significant analogies with the "poverty map," as we saw. Departments with more than 85% Indian population, such as Sololá, Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, Quiché, Chimaltenango, and Huehuetenango, also have the most critical child malnutrition situations. In 1990, overall malnutrition affected 28.5% of non-indigenous children and 40.6% of indigenous ones. With the exception of the department of Jalapa, indigenous rural areas are those that have the highest proportion of makeshift housing lacking running water and sanitary facilities. Sixty-three percent of the indigenous population is illiterate, compared with 28% of the non-indigenous population.[32] Illiteracy is more acute among indigenous women, especially those over 30 years old. The Northwestern Altiplano has female illiteracy rates of about 74%. Indigenous women also have higher indices of malnutrition and anemia.[33] Today, indigenous women are one of the priority sectors for action in the health sphere. These facts have stimulated migration to agricultural colonization areas, such as El Petén and Ixcán, and the capital, which is related to the phenomenon of "ladinization," or abandonment of indigenous cultural identity, which has been linked with proletarization. Nevertheless, indigenous people in the capital, who represented 11.5% of Guatemala's population in 1986, maintain their ethnic identity to a large extent and are gradually shaping a new urban working-class identity.[34]

As for the effects of the armed conflict, up to 90% of domestically displaced persons, members of "Resistant Communities," and refugees in Mexico are indigenous persons from the departments of San Marcos, Quiché, Alta Verapaz, and Huehuetenango.[35] Finally, almost all members of the "civil self-defense patrols," an example of the militarization of rural communities, are Mayans. Some ethnic groups, such as the Kanjobals and Ixils, have been particularly affected. Many of their members are refugees or displaced persons and have been reconcentrated in "model villages," and their community ties and economic networks have been unraveled and will be very

difficult to restore. Areas such as the "Ixil triangle," to cite a very visible example, will in consequence require significant efforts in coming years to solve their precarious economic and social situation.

At the end of the 1980s there was a significant boom in indigenous organizations, which are demanding better living standards, access to land, and respect for human rights. A historic leader of the indigenous movement is Rigoberta Menchú, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. Among these organizations are the National Council of Guatemalan Displaced Persons (CONDEG), the National Coordinating Office for Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA), which represents more than 11,000 women widowed as a result of violence, the Runejel Junam Council of Ethnic Communities (CERJ), which has conducted an active campaign against the Civil Self-Defense Patrols, and the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC). The basic goal of other organizations such as Majawil Q'ij, Cholsamaj, and the Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala (ALMG) is recognition and development of indigenous cultures and languages.[36] The problems involved in this effort have become apparent again in the process of Guatemala's adherence to ILO's 1969 convention on Indigenous and Tribal Communities in Independent Countries. This convention recognizes the specific rights of indigenous communities and, in particular, the right to participate in economic and social development. After many delays, adherence was approved in March 1992 in the first reading before the Congress of the Republic, but it aroused strong opposition from landowning interests and the Armed Forces and in the end its final approval was paralyzed.[37]

## Refugees, displaced persons, and repatriation

The problem represented by the refugee, displaced, and repatriated population is one of the most direct consequences of the political and military conflict and one of the chief problems that Guatemala will have to solve in coming years. The broadening of the conflict meant the displacement of a million people, of whom 150,000 entered Mexico as refugees. Many others relocated in other communities or agricultural holdings or swelled the flow of migrants to the capital, where anonymity guaranteed safety and increased the urban informal economy The conflict was also at the root of the so-called "Resistant Communities" (CPR), a non-combatant civilian population which for the past 10 years has been displaced in inaccessible parts of Ixcán or the mountains of Quiché and Alta Verapaz and is estimated at 15,000 people. The CPR have experienced aerial bombardment and military harassment because the army considers them guerrilla collaborators.

In Quiché, Huehuetenango, and Alta Verapaz, the counterinsurgency violence of the early 1980s led to the destruction of numerous villages and hamlets. They were later rebuilt in order to resettle the displaced population according to a new concentrated habitat model which would facilitate control of the population. These are the "development poles" of Chacaj, Playa Grande, the Ixil Triangle, Chisec, Yanahí, and Senahú, which form a matrix of "model villages" under Armed Forces control.[38] The 100,000 domestically displaced persons recognized by the Government in 1990 are almost entirely in these areas. Various programs operated by NGOs and the United Nations Program for Displaced Persons and Refugees (PRODERE) are acting on behalf of the displaced population Nevertheless, the facts that the Government is focusing attention on displaced persons and repatriates from a counterinsurgency viewpoint dominated by "national security" considerations and that it recognizes only 100,000 people in the Ixil and Alta Verapaz area as displaced are considerable limitations on broadening care of this population.[39]

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officially recognizes 3,000 refugees in Belize and 43,400 in Mexico. Around 23,000 are in 127 camps in the border state of Chiapas under the control of and

receiving assistance from UNHCR and the Mexican Refugee Assistance Commission (COMAR). Another 18,500 were transferred to Campeche and Quintana Roo because of Guatemalan army incursions into Mexico, and it is estimated that 120,000 more are scattered throughout Mexico.[40] There was little repatriation up to 1993 because of the continuing conflict, militarization, and violence in the areas from which the refugees had come. Only 12,000 repatriates returned up to December 1991, and they were largely resettled in the departments of Huehuetenango, Quiché, and El Petén CIREFCA, NGO, UNDP, and Government programs are working to facilitate resettlement.

Large-scale return began in 1993 after long and complicated negotiations among the Government, UNHCR, and the Standing Commissions on Refugees in Mexico (CC.PP.), the body representing the refugees. The "letter of understanding" signed by the Government and UNHCR in November 1992 included the so-called "six conditions" of the CC.PP. for a mass and organized return under conditions of safety and dignity with international monitoring and guarantees of access to land for the more than 46,000 recognized refugees. On January 20, 1993, the first contingent of refugees—2,480 people—returned to Guatemala, despite difficulties created by the Government, and settled in the so-called *Polígono 14* of Ixcán, Quiché. A second contingent, of 1,136 people, could not return because of delays in acquiring land, and a third contingent of around 4,000 people is planned. It will be settled in Nentón, Huehuetenango, after the period of political uncertainty following the "self-coup" of former President Serrano Elías has passed.[41]

## Health, environmental sanitation, nutrition, and food security

Guatemala's health profile is characteristic of a country with deficient health and nutritional conditions and a high proportion of population without access to health services. Around 1989, 40% of deaths were caused by communicable or parasitic diseases or malnutrition.[42] Infant mortality is still very high. The infant mortality rate in 1990 was 54‰ live births,[43] and mortality in children under five years was 94‰ live births, which is considered "high" by UNICEF and is the fourth highest in Latin America after Bolivia, Peru, and Haiti.[44] This high mortality rate is a direct expression of the uncertain nutrition, health, environmental sanitation, and education situation of the population. Infant vaccination coverages are still low, which is related to outbreaks of communicable diseases such as measles. The high prevalence of infectious and acute respiratory diseases is related to the small number of households having potable water and toilets, septic tanks, or latrines, the lowest in the region.[45] Specifically, only 38% of the population has access to potable water, and more than a third of the population continues to lack excreta treatment facilities.[46] Cholera has spread rapidly because of this. By December 1991 there were already 3,530 cases, and in September 1992 the number reached 13,424. The most affected departments were Guatemala, Retalhuleu, Escuintla, and Suchitepéquez, all on the Pacific coast, and the most vulnerable people have been both local residents and migrant farm workers.[47] Other diseases affecting the entire population are tuberculosis, malaria, and dengue. In 1987 there were 57,600 cases of malaria.[48] Two hundred seventy-three cases of AIDS had been recorded by September 1992, of which 112 had ended in death. The incidence of this disease is still relatively low compared with the regional average.[49]

The population at greatest risk of death is in rural communities, among seasonal migrants to farms in the southwestern part of the country, in marginal areas and slums in urban and metropolitan areas, and especially in the indigenous rural population. These are families whose heads are peasants with small farms or who are rural wage earners and urban residents, largely people in the informal sector. Except for Bolivia and Haiti, life expectancy is the lowest in Latin America—63.4 years for the entire population and 65.9 years for women.[50] The maternal mortality rate in 1990 was 2.5‰.[51] The main causes of mater-

nal death are birth complications, puerperal sepsis, and abortion It is noteworthy in relation to these data that only 58% of births in urban areas and 18% in rural ones were attended by professional health workers. Among indigenous women the proportion is still smaller, 10%. The other 90% are attended by traditional midwives.

In the area of nutrition, it was calculated in 1991 that 67% of children had some degree of malnutrition. Thirteen percent of newborns have low birth weights.[52] Thirty-four percent of four-year-old children are severely or moderately underweight for their age, and 68% of children aged 24 to 59 months have moderate or severe height deficiencies.[53] This means that 37 of the 42 children who may reach adulthood will have problems in the growth and development of their physical and mental capacities. As we noted, indigenous departments such as Sololá, Totonicapán, Baja Verapaz, Huehuetenango, Quiché, and Chimaltenango have still higher levels Severe vitamin A deficiencies, a high prevalence of goiter, and iron deficiencies in pregnant women, a high-risk group accounting for between 52% and 76% of women of reproductive age, have been detected.[54] Thirty percent of pregnant women present symptoms of anemia. Finally, reports from the nutritional surveillance systems of the Ministry of Health warn that the index of acute malnutrition doubled between 1988 and 1990, coinciding with the economic adjustment measures initiated during that period. This means that 40% of children under five years old have symptoms of acute malnutrition, i.e., hunger.[55]

This situation is related to the worsening of food insecurity in recent years, which has been caused by the decline in food production in the country. Guatemala has the greatest deficit in consumption of cereals and milk in Central America, so much so that it has increased dependence on food aid. It was estimated in 1987 that 62% of the population received aid in the form of wheat, 5% in the form of corn, 20% in rice, and 32% in milk. Nevertheless, although food aid increases national availability of foodstuffs, the increase is not seen at the household level.[56]

The Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance is the agency responsible for health services for the entire population. The Guatemalan Social Security Institute (IGSS) covers member workers and their families, though its already very low coverage declined even more during the 1980s. In 1980 it covered 14.2% of the entire population and in 1988, 13%.[57] In 1988 there were 216 health posts, 216 health centers, and 35 district, area, regional, and national hospitals with 10,673 beds, 8,341 belonging to the Ministry and 2,332 to the IGSS. The private sector had 59 hospitals and around 2,500 beds. The Military Health Service covers a small proportion of the population, and the private sector cares for about 2%. Nationally, it is estimated that only 34% of the population has access to health services, which are of poor quality, very centralized, and oriented toward curative medicine. In this regard, it is estimated that eight in every 10 consultations the health system provides are suited to the primary care level, which is almost nonexistent. The major budget cuts that the system experienced in the final years of the 1980s have led to the virtual collapse of the national hospital network. In September 1989, the Ministry of Health revealed that 98% of the network was inoperative.

There is a great disparity in the distribution of expenditure between the Ministry of Health, which receives 56% of the expenditure and should cover 75% of the population, and the IGSS, which receives 33% of public expenditure on health to care for 13% of the population.[58] It has been pointed out that social security thus has a regressive effect on the redistribution of income in favor of the poorest. The metropolitan area has most of the human resources and infrastructure, and so its infant mortality rates are appreciably lower. The Government established a National Health Plan for 1991-1995 which aims at improving planning and redefining the national health system by giving priority to local services, primary health care (PHC) strategies, and community participation.

## Housing and basic services

Access to housing is one of the most acute problems Guatemala faces and will have to face in coming years The housing deficit increased during the 1980s since only 17% of the dwellings needed in the two halves of the decade were built. The housing deficit amounted to 840,000 dwellings in 1991. Projections to the year 2000 show that only 14% of the demand will be met and that the cumulative deficit will be 1,230,000 units. The problem is aggravated if we take into account the great overcrowding and lack of basic services in rural and marginal urban areas. In 1989, 61% of the population lived in houses with two or fewer rooms.[59]

Pauperization and violence have resulted in a large migratory flow from the countryside to cities and also to certain departments, such as Retalhuleu, Izabal, and El Petén, where land colonization has occurred, and Sacatepéquez and Escuintla, adjoining the capital. The result has been the growth of makeshift settlements with acute environmental sanitation, substandard housing, and health problems. According to governmental estimates, 900,000 people, or 10% of the country's population, live in marginal areas; 600,000 of them live in urban areas and 300,000 in periurban rural areas in the Greater Guatemala City metropolitan area.

## Education

The educational situation confronting the country in the 1990s is characterized by inadequate coverage and a significant maladjustment to the cultural needs of a multiethnic country. Because of this situation, the educational challenge in Guatemala is more complex than in other countries. In 1988, 21% of children were not receiving primary education Most are monolingual indigenous children. Most of the 85% who do not enter secondary education are rural and marginal urban youths. The problems of overage, repetition, and irrelevant curricula are also noteworthy. In 1989, 47.6% of women and 33% of men were illiterate.[60] Illiteracy is concentrated in rural areas and especially among women.

## The situation of women

Compared with men, Guatemalan women have lower literacy and educational rates and. occupationally, participate increasingly in agriculture and the informal sector. Unemployment is greater among women, especially among the youngest. There is significant wage discrimination, especially in the private sector. At the same time, their health and nutrition problems are more severe than among men. An additional handicap is subordination to men, which is culturally and legally countenanced Households headed by women account for 20% of the total in urban and 11% of the total in rural areas. Almost half of these women are widows as a result of political violence, among other factors This proportion was 56% in rural areas.[61]

## The situation of marginalized children

One of the severest problems concerning children is the large number of orphans resulting from the conflict. It is thought that there are at least 60,000, many of whom have lost both parents, but the figures may be higher.[62] In March 1984 the Children's Coordinating Magistracy of the Supreme Court of Justice conducted a survey in all of the country's municipalities. The results showed between 100.000 and 200,000 orphaned children, 20% of whom had lost both parents.[63] In relation to this problem, there are indications that international networks trafficking in children are operating in Guatemala which may be related to traffic in organs for transplantation In addition, the large number of abandoned and "street" children living in the capital's streets by begging, scavenging, and committing minor crimes and prostitution has also been noted. According to estimates by NGOs working with these children such as Casa

Alianza and SODIFAG, there are 5,000 between five and 18 years old.[64]

## International Humanitarian Law and the human rights situation

Guatemala is perhaps the most dramatic example of human rights violations in Central America. According to the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission, there have been around 150,000 cases of extralegal execution since 1963. Two thousand more cases were added in 1989,[65] and yet another 550 between January and November 1991. More recent data, provided by the Archdiocese of Guatemala City, indicate that between January and November 1991 there were 1,067 reports of human rights violations.[66] Finally, 408 extrajudicial executions, 57 disappearances, 49 bombings or machine-gunnings of civilians in which there were victims, and 322 cases of arbitrary detention and torture were recorded between January and September 1992.[67] "Street children" have also been victims of murder and torture. Since 1989 a good number of cases have been recorded, and the best known was the murder of Nahamán Carmona, 13 years old, which caused the arrest of several policemen.[68]

In this regard, the report by an expert submitted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for 1993 noted that human rights violations—especially attempted murders and beatings—were continuing to occur and were attributed to members of the Armed Forces and the so-called Civil Self-Defense Committees, who continued to go unpunished.[69] Only a few of these cases. such as that of the anthropologist Myrna Mack, have lead to trials

The Government of Guatemala ratified Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions in October 1987, though it is important to point out that several events unlawful according to the Protocols occurred before and after then such as threats to and attacks against civilians, including those suffered by the Resistant Communities.[70] From 1981 to 1984, coinciding with the renewal of the civil war, there were more than 370 massacres that left 14,800 victims, a factor stimulating the phenomenon of displaced persons and refugees. Since 1987 there have been instances such as the Aguacate massacre and the more recent killings at Santiago Atitlán.

Another phenomenon contravening International Humanitarian Law and human rights is the forced relocation of indigenous peasants into "model villages" under military control. Equally unlawful by the standards of the Conventions and Protocols is the forced recruitment of civilians into paramilitary groups, specifically the so-called "Voluntary Civil Self-Defense Committees," known as "Civil Self-Defense Patrols," which has involved more than 800,000 Guatemalan citizens.

## The environment and vulnerability to disasters

Part of the crisis of recent years has been the rapid deterioration of the natural environment and non-renewable resources. This process has resulted from demographic pressure, irrational productive practices, and abuse of resources. Deforestation, one of the most important environmental problems, is advancing at an annual rate of 2%, which means the yearly clearing of about 90,000 hectares. It is believed that Guatemala has already lost 65% of its original forest cover. The cleared area increased by 26% from 1979 to 1989 because of expansion of livestock raising, export pressures, and the poor rural population's need for firewood [71] This results in serious erosion problems, loss of soils and biodiversity, and a decrease in the permanent stock of springs and surface waters and is making lowland flooding more frequent and intense, as demonstrated by the frequent overflows of the Achiguate and Pantaleón Rivers on the slopes of the Pacific.

The areas most affected by deforestation are the Northwestern Altiplano, the Verapaz departments, the eastern area, and El Petén In the Altiplano, deforestation is due to pressure on the land by small-farming peasants resulting from the

extreme inequality in this productive resource's distribution, which leads to cropping on slope lands without using soil conservation techniques It is estimated that 65% of the country's energy needs are fulfilled by firewood. Because of this, future social tensions and even violence caused by the use of firewood in the Altiplano are predicted [72] The eastern part of the country and Alta and Baja Verapaz are threatened by a Celulosas de Guatemala (CELGUSA) plant, a sawmill, and a paper factory with a production capacity of 100,000 metric tons a year, which is still not fully operational. This plant will consume between 600,000 and 700,000 $m^3$ of wood a year, which equals the clearing of 6,500 hectares annually. This worsens the deforestation of surrounding departments and helps impoverish soils because of the planting of rapid-growth species. It may also have negative consequences for the Chixoy hydroelectric plant, the most important electricity-generating plant, because accelerated sedimentation of its hydrographic basin will cut its useful life to only 35 years.[73] The Motagua River basin has already lost 50% of its carrying capacity because of sedimentation.[74] Finally, El Petén is one of the last major reserves of humid tropical forest in Central America The mass arrival of migrants and colonists, who use "slash and burn" methods, the uncontrolled cutting of lumber companies, including smuggling of precious woods to Mexico, and the expansion of livestock raising are seriously depreciating what is considered the greatest reserve of biodiversity in the Central American isthmus.[75]

The extensive use of agricultural chemicals and pollution by toxic residues are also among the country's most important environmental problems. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) estimated in 1989 that 181,000 metric tons of such products were imported annually, some of which, such as paraquat, methyl parathion, and EDB, were prohibited in their producing countries. The recent expansion of export crops has made their use much more extensive. The use of defoliants such as glyphosate or Agent Orange in the operations of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the Armed Forces has also been reported. Because of such practices, foodstuffs and even maternal milk have high concentrations of organochlorine insecticides. Hydrographic basins and lakes are badly polluted. Lake Amatitlán receives a large volume of urban and industrial wastes and shows signs of eutrophication [76] The Motagua River is perhaps the most contaminated since it receives urban wastes from the capital and pesticides from banana-growing areas. In addition, CELGUSA may increase the presence of organochlorines in its waters. Lake Izabal received large amounts of nickel residues from the Exmibal mining company, and Lake Atitlán receives untreated wastewaters from the municipalities surrounding it. Finally, Guatemala City has 70% of the country's industry and 60% of its vehicles, as a result of which its air pollution often exceeds the levels established by the World Health Organization (WHO).[77]

Guatemala has conditions putting it at high risk of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions as well as weather-related disasters such as floods and hurricanes. In 1976 there was a major earthquake which caused 25,000 deaths, affected more than a million people, and was called the "earthquake of the poor" since it revealed the extreme vulnerability of the largely indigenous rural population in the most affected departments. Many became victims because of the collapse of the walls and roofs of traditional peasant dwellings built of adobe and straw. Although only minor earthquakes occurred during the 1980s, most of the Northwestern Altiplano and the eastern part of the country are in an area of high seismic risk. Despite the limitations of this kind of estimate, OAS studies have noted that an earthquake with an intensity higher than VIII on the Mercalli scale has a 79% probability of occurring in the southeastern part of the country before the year 2000. This index is 50% for central Guatemala, including the capital.[78] In September 1991 an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.3 on the Richter scale jolted the municipality of San Miguel Pochuta, in Chimaltenango. Mud and rock slides caused by the earthquake also affected other places in Chimal-

tenango, Escuintla, Sololá, and Suchitepéquez, leaving 51 dead, 115 injured, and more than USD 50 million in losses.

Stretching across the Altiplano from north to south are also 24 volcanoes, of which seven may be considered "active" because they have erupted within the past 150 years. They are Tajumulco, Cerro Quemado, Atitlán, Acatenango, which last erupted in 1972, Fuego, in 1977, Pacaya, in 1989, and Santa María, in 1990.[79]

The growth of marginalized areas, characterized by unhealthy conditions and overcrowding, in ravines very susceptible to landslides and flooding, which are very visible in Guatemala City, has been a well-known fact that has increased the population's vulnerability to earthquakes. Between 1982 and 1984, migrants and displaced persons frequently took possession of parcels in the city and built new, makeshift settlements on them. It is calculated that a million people live in these settlements in poverty and high vulnerability. About 400,000 live in the capital's "ravines."[80]

## The impact of cooperation and development policies and institutions

The return to civilian Governments begun in 1985, which overcame Guatemala's international isolation, led to the country receiving major donations and concessionary credits as official development aid (ODA) since 1986. Between 1982 and 1984 the average was USD 68 million a year; in 1985 the amount increased to USD 83 million. In 1986 it was USD 241 million. The highest amount was in 1989, when it was USD 261 million. In 1990 it fell to USD 191 million, which was related to the Government's lower credibility and a series of elections.[81] The most important donor has been the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), whose aid amounted to about 50% of all cooperation Guatemala received and which provided about USD 825 million from 1986 to 1990. Forty-three percent has been in "Economic Support Funds" (ESF) to stabilize the balance of payments and currency exchange; 20% has been in food aid, and 29% in project assistance. A considerable part of the counterpart funds in local currency has served to strengthen the state's budget and has been directed toward development projects in pacification areas under military control, the "development poles" and "model villages." Funds have also been provided to local NGOs through the National Reconstruction Committee (CRN). USAID has also promoted efforts to privatize state companies, supported export chambers of commerce, and promoted non-traditional exports.[82]

Another major donor has been Italy, which among other projects has financed PRODERE. Germany has financed development programs in El Petén and the Guatemalan-German Food for Work Cooperation Program (COGAAT) The Netherlands supported programs promoting small businesses and agricultural technology Japan financed digital telephony programs and Spain, through its Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, has financed programs for Comprehensive Rural Development (DRI), support of women widowed and children orphaned by the violence in the Altiplano, and for reforestation in the El Progreso area. Mexico has also been a significant donor in the area of hydrocarbons. Finally, the European Community has provided food aid and finances the "Trifinio" trinational comprehensive rural development project in the border area shared by Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.[83]

It is estimated that 719 national and international NGOs are at work in Guatemala, the highest number in relative terms in Latin America. The first of them appeared in the 1960s; the 1976 earthquake and reconstruction efforts gave rise to numerous NGOs, but most were established starting in 1988 with the opening up of opportunities for participation following the return of civilians to power According to a 1989 study, most are in the capital (35%) and the indigenous Altiplano. Forty-seven percent conduct training activities, 37% train social agents, 27% train health workers, and only 7%

focus on productive projects.[84] There are two significant organizations that coordinate NGOs, ASINDES and COINDE, the latter more tied to the indigenous and poor sectors of the population