



COUNTRY PROFILE



Photo: Julio Román, Prensa Libre

“Schools in this project will have classes that are created rather than classes that are just given. For us this is a profound change that will benefit many generations to come. We are very thankful to you.”

~ Ministry of Education Supervisor in Quiché Department ~

OVERVIEW

Guatemala is the most populated Central American country, with over 13 million people and a growth rate that surpasses its Latin American neighbors (2.8 percent a year). Guatemala is a land of sharp contrasts that boasts a wealth of natural resources and diverse cultural heritage where an estimated 51 percent of its people still live in poverty. The nation has the second most skewed income distribution in the hemisphere. Most of Guatemala’s poor are rural indigenous people of Mayan descent with a long history of repression and exclusion from full participation in society. They were also the most seriously affected by the 36-year armed civil conflict that claimed more lives than conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile, and Argentina combined.



Significant progress has been made to turn this tide since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996. The society has strong potential with rich natural resources, management talent, and a large, young labor force, proven capability to produce high-quality products, as well as favorable access to capitalize on U.S. and Central American markets. Guatemala is a highly divided society with many weak and antiquated public sector institutions and deep rural poverty. It is increasingly threatened by migrations, natural disasters, gang violence, escalating crime rates, and the corrosive effects of narco-trafficking.

Working with public sector institutions, civil society, the private sector, and other donors, USAID supports programs that aim to fight corruption; increase public sector transparency, accountability, and management; promote rural development and competitiveness; and improve access and quality of healthcare and primary education. USAID is also collaborating with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to open new markets, create jobs, raise incomes of the poor, and forge public-private partnerships committed to a broad development agenda.

GUATEMALA SNAPSHOT

Date of Independence: 1821
Population: 13.276 million
GDP (PPP): \$68.02 billion
GDP per capita (PPP): \$5,200

Source: CIA, *The World Factbook*

PROGRAMS

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

USAID responds to the most important threats to Guatemalan democracy through its programs in crime prevention, anti-corruption, justice, and local governance. USAID collaborates with the Government of Guatemala (GOG) to promote judicial reform; improve prosecution of homicides and other serious crimes; undertake community-based policing efforts; provide youth training and job placement as alternatives

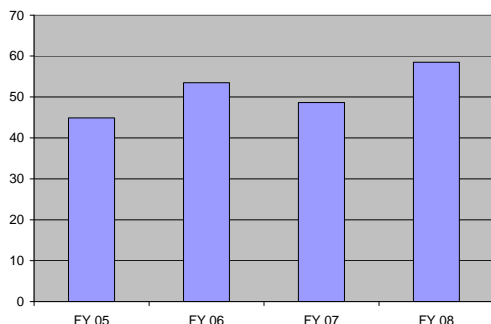


USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GUATEMALA

COUNTRY PROFILE CONTINUED

**USAID Assistance to Guatemala
(Dollars in Millions)**



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to gang membership; and support to local governments so they are more effective in responding to constituents' needs.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

USAID helps enterprises become more competitive in global markets to take advantage of the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement. USAID supports rural development and efforts to build competitiveness of rural-based small and medium-sized business in tourism, forestry, and agro-industry sectors and link them to new markets. USAID implements a loan program using Development Credit Authority funds that increases access to medium-term investment credit.

EDUCATION

USAID programs focus on increasing investment, transparency, and accountability in public expenditure for education and education standards. Assistance is targeted to improve the quality of education, boost primary school completion rates, and build public-private partnerships to help bridge the gap between educational attainment among rural indigenous populations and the rest of the country.

HEALTH

USAID supports the GOG's efforts to expand access to quality healthcare by promoting increased social sector investments, ensuring transparency in public expenditures, and developing partnerships with the corporate sector. USAID programs focus on access to quality maternal-child health care, preventing HIV/AIDS, and improving nutrition practices, reproductive health, and family planning services.

ENVIRONMENT

USAID activities foster environmentally-sound management of natural resources in priority areas of biodiversity. This management simultaneously provides income-generating alternatives such as certified timber production and eco-tourism ventures, as well as "green-friendly" and sustainable agricultural production to people living in and around the protected areas.

FOOD AID

USAID/Guatemala manages one of the largest PL-480 Title II programs in the hemisphere. Resources provide essential support to vulnerable populations through programs that integrate nutrition, animal husbandry, microenterprise, health, education, improved local governance, and sustainable environment practices.

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID has been and continues to be an active player in the disaster relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts following Tropical Storm Stan, which hit Guatemala in October 2005.

REGIONAL HIV/AIDS

USAID/Guatemala manages the regional program for HIV/AIDS as part of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. This program helps contain HIV/AIDS through targeted behavior change programs for the most at-risk populations and improved policies and programs.