



Report of the Workshop: “Guatemalans in Partnership for Development”

The American Jewish Committee

in collaboration with: The Guatemalan Consulate, Miami, Florida, The Center for International Migration and Integration, The Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University and the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY, MACARTHUR CAMPUS, AD 119
JUPITER, FLORIDA

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BACKGROUND

Migrants may often send only a few hundred dollars to their families “back home” at a time, but aggregate global remittances now surpass \$275 billion dollars a year (World Bank 2006). This is three times what remittances were ten years ago, and seven times what they were twenty years ago. These sums often outstrip the amounts of foreign direct investment or foreign aid that most developing countries receive. In addition to financial capital, migrants bring other resources as well to their communities of origin, in the form of social and human capital, and philanthropic and business endeavors.

Remittances may be spent on food, health, housing, education, business investments or charitable community endeavors. This money is not without its own costs – whether considering the social problems that migration spawns, or the missed opportunities as some recipients become dependent on the remittances and or to take advantage of potential multiplier effects from these funds. Nonetheless migrants are often, or could become, their families’ and communities’ most significant supporters, investors and philanthropists.

One aspect of particular interest to those who work with international aid and development is how migrants are acting not just as individuals sending money to their families, but as communities sending money for community needs in their places of origin. These “collective remittances” may support construction or repair or equipping of schools, health centers, or community centers. They may go towards welfare needs or emergency aid following natural disasters. They may be controversial when they further local conflict or are misspent. But they are significant for the actual and potential ways that they help communities help themselves.

As policy makers and practitioners work to maximize the potential behind these collective actions, they seek to learn from existing models. One successful model of interest is that of the Jewish Diaspora-Israel partnership. In the days before nation-states were in place to address social needs and many Jewish communities throughout the world faced anti-semitism, Jewish tenets of *tsedakah*, charity, were critical to marshalling support for needy Jews within the community. As Jews fled persecution they often sent financial assistance back to their families and communities. With the establishment of the state of Israel many Jewish communities felt compelled to

support the fledgling state. They provided and continue to provide critical support for advocacy; people (immigrants, youth, the disabled, the elderly, minorities such as Arabs, Bedouins, Druze, etc.); the economy (going towards bonds, employment, development, industry, small businesses); the health sector (building and equipping hospitals, training medical staff, strengthening medical emergency capacity); academia (supporting universities and scientific institutions); and the environment (planting trees, advocating for environmentally friendly development policies).

GUATEMALA

Of Guatemala's population of approximately 14 million, more than one million live abroad.¹ The majority is in the United States,² of whom as many as 320,000 are undocumented. In 2006, 18, 315 Guatemalans were deported from the US, and current 2007 estimates of Guatemalan deportees from the US stand at 24,000.³ While three decades of political and military conflict were the main cause of earlier migration flows, the former also led to economic hardship and therefore further emigration.⁴ They now send more than US\$3 billion, in average increments of \$306 per month, to approximately 3.7 million Guatemalans. Migrants and their families back home are contending with a range of socio-economic and political problems, including irregular status in the US; inter-group tensions; economic underdevelopment in Guatemala; broken families; poor education systems; gang violence; trafficking of drugs and children; natural disasters and other issues.

However, migrants in the US and civil society groups in Guatemala are working to address these issues, independently or together with the government and international groups. One step has included learning from others, as the Guatemalan government approached the Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI) in Israel and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in the United States about learning from the model of Israel-Diaspora partnership. Thus AJC, together with CIMI, the Guatemalan Consulate in Miami, the Wilkes Honor College of Florida Atlantic University, and the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach⁵ cooperated to hold a workshop examining this model and Guatemala-based development efforts. The workshop, "Guatemalans in Partnership for Development," was held for Guatemalan community leaders in Jupiter, Florida, 28 – 29 July, 2007. It was held primarily in Spanish (with some English-Spanish translation).

Below are further details regarding workshop goals, participants, content and methodology, and projects which participants are interested in conducting in Guatemala.

¹ The following background information is based on the following source: Smith, James, "Guatemala: Economic Migrants Replace Political Refugees." April 2006. Migration Information Source, Washington DC. Available online at www.migrationinformation.org.

² The majority of Guatemalan migrants in the US live in Los Angeles (36.3 percent), New York (10.6 percent), Miami (8.3 percent) as well as Washington, DC (4.1 percent), Houston (3.8 percent), Boston (3.6 percent) and Chicago (3.2 percent) (MPI 2006).

³ This figure was provided directly by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Marta Altolaquirre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala on August 16, 2007.

⁴ They originate primarily from the departments of Guatemala (20.6 percent), San Marcos (9.7 percent), Huehuetenango (9.7 percent), Quetzaltenango (6.3 percent), Jutiapa (5.0 percent), Alta Verapaz (4.9 percent), Chiquimula (4.1 percent) and Escuintla (3.9 percent) (MPI 2006).

⁵ See Appendix A for contact information.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Workshop Goals

The workshop's main goals were as follows:

- ❑ Expose participants to new ideas and models of development and aid work
- ❑ Provide an opportunity to reflect, think and learn
- ❑ Provide networking opportunities
- ❑ Capacity building
- ❑ Develop projects

Participants

Forty-nine people participated in the workshop.⁶ Participants included representatives from the following organizations:⁷

- ❑ **Ajaw Kab'awil**, Inc., based in Indiantown, Florida
- ❑ **Corn Maya**, based in Jupiter, Florida
- ❑ **Organization of Mayan People in Exile**, based in Lake Worth, Florida
- ❑ **Maya Quetzal**, based in West Palm Beach, Florida
- ❑ **Maya Ministry**, Diocese of Palm Beach County, based in Lake Worth, Florida
- ❑ **AGA** (Asociacion Guatemalteca Americana), based in Miami, Florida
- ❑ **ASOMAYA**, part of Justicia Global based in Lake Worth, Florida
- ❑ **MIMA Foundation**, based in Jupiter, Florida
- ❑ **Esperanza Maya**, based in Lake Worth, Florida
- ❑ **Guatemalan Organization of Broadway**, based in West Palm Beach, Florida
- ❑ **El Sol Resource Center**, based in Jupiter, Florida
- ❑ **Jackthebikeman, Inc.**, based in West Palm Beach, Florida

Other participants included individuals who volunteer or work with the Guatemalan community in Florida or in Guatemala.

Method and Content

Speakers (see Appendix B for list of speakers) covered a range of issues, including remittances, development needs in Guatemala, integration challenges to Guatemalan immigrants in Florida, the Jewish Diaspora-Israel partnership model, the role of culture in development, education and development. Cross-cutting issues included implementation challenges; accountability; sustainability; decision-making, etc.

The workshop was action orientated, relating the presentations back to the participants and their work. The intention was for participants to emerge from the workshop with ideas for a new project to undertake in Guatemala. For this reason the workshop

⁶ List of participants available separately.

⁷ See Appendix A.

program, which ran from 6:00 – 9:30 PM Saturday night and 8:30 AM – 6:00 PM on Sunday, included four interspersed sessions in which participants worked as a group or by organization. Time was also allotted for questions and discussion following each speaker’s presentation in order to fully explore and relate to the issues at hand.

In the evening session participants broke up according to organization to prepare a presentation providing an overview of their organization and its activities (goals; geographical focus; sectors; beneficiary populations; partners; primary challenges). They then presented these overviews to the group as a whole.

In the morning workshop session participants discussed in greater depth the work that they are doing or hope to do in Guatemala. Key issues emerged which facilitators and presenters built upon and referred to throughout the rest of the day’s sessions. In the third workshop session participants developed project proposals which they presented to the group and speakers for feedback in the final session.

Key project areas and issues that were raised include:

- Advocacy: immigration issues in US and in Guatemala
- Economic development: coffee cooperative for organic coffee; marketing Guatemalan artisan products; small business development; need to encourage productive use of remittances
- Social issues: education (school, library); youth; gang violence; trafficking; family disintegration;
- Community: community divisions and need for solidarity; importance of culture; importance of civil society and problem of paternalistic state
- Health: alcoholism; disabled, especially related to the conflict
- Implementation issues: accountability; sustainability; irregular status as barrier to travel; information asymmetry; importance of addressing root causes

Further details regarding these project areas are provided in Appendix C.

Media

AJC sent out a press release prior to the workshop. El Sol included information about the workshop on their website. The South Florida Sun-Sentinel published an article about the workshop on July 28, 2007 (included as Appendix D).

Photos of the workshop are also available through the workshop organizers (contact information in Appendix A).

Next steps

Cooperating organizations and participants are discussing next steps, but possibilities include:

1. Generally, follow through on projects that participants discussed in this workshop, as well as sector specific workshops on areas of need raised here possibly including: entrepreneurship and business opportunities; reducing remittance transfer costs; youth; etc.

2. CIMI Course on Immigrant Integration and Diaspora-Homeland Partnerships, in Israel, February 2008. Information will be made available soon so that participants may apply (contact Rebecca Bardach).
3. CIMI consultation and Challenge Grants are available up to \$2,500 for groups conducting projects in Guatemala in area of socio-economic needs (contact Rebecca Bardach).
4. GHOP is interested in offering a workshop on team building and leadership training, as well as follow up on business projects (contact John Hardman).
5. GHOP is also willing to consult with groups on projects (contact John Hardman).
6. Steve Dudenhoefer (Asociacion Ak'Tenamit) is also available for follow up consultation on projects.
7. AJC is willing to help coordinate follow up workshops (contact Aileen Josephs)
8. Rosa Maria Cruz is able to help identify partner organizations in Guatemala (contact directly).
9. The Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County willing to share expertise in areas around partnership with Israel and their work locally (contact Luis Fleischman).
10. Recommendation for El Sol to consider starting a micro-business training center to help immigrants think about how to start a business when they return to Guatemala, focusing on elements related to the free trade agreement, utilizing retired business community as a resource in entrepreneurship mentoring (idea from Tim Steigenga).

Further ideas are under discussion.

APPENDIX A

List of Partner Organizations and Participating Organizations

American Jewish Committee

Aileen Josephs
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Asociocon Ak' Tenamit

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The Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI)

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Global Hope and Opportunity Project

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Guatemalan Consulate in Miami

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Inter-American Foundation

Rosa Maria Cruz
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Website: www.iaf.gov
Representative for Guatemala for the Interamerican Foundation is Ms. Jennifer Martinez at jmartinez@iaf.gov

Jewish Federation of Palm Beach

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Wilkes Honor College of Florida Atlantic University

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APPENDIX B

Speakers

Where We Are Today: The Guatemala Community “Here and There”

SPEAKERS:

Mr. Jeronimo Camposeco, Honorary Consul

Ms. Beatriz Illescas, Consul of Guatemala in Miami

The Importance of Working Together

SPEAKER: Aileen Josephs, Advocate and AJC Lay Leader

Film: Saving the World One Tenango at a Time

The Jewish Diaspora - Israel Partnership Model

SPEAKERS:

Luis Fleischman, Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County

Rebecca Bardach, the Center for International Migration and Integration

Culture and Development

SPEAKER: Rosa Maria Cruz, Independent Consultant

Addressing Needs in Guatemala: Education and Development

SPEAKER: Steve Dudenhoefer – Asociacon Ak’ Tenamit.

Addressing Needs in Guatemala: The Impact of Community to Community Development

SPEAKER: John Hardman, Global Hope and Opportunity Project.

APPENDIX C

Projects

Issues around projects, and projects or project ideas in Guatemala work, as compiled during workshop sessions include the following:

Issues:

- Lack of sustainability of projects including lack of the training necessary to sustain the development projects.
- High level of politicization of partners; lack of trust and confidence in government due to corruption and incompetence
- Social problems due to migration such as divorce, family dissolution, gangs
- Spiritual and physical breakdown of communities in Guatemala: “Now there are nice concrete homes but with damaged people inside them”
- Information asymmetry: researchers who work with the immigrants fail to share their results with the communities afterwards so they are unable to take advantage of these academic resources
- Lack of regular status is a barrier for some people who would otherwise travel to Guatemala to coordinate project activities

Project ideas:

- Corn Maya: Coffee cooperative for organic coffee; Health Care Issues; Market for artisan products; Sister City Program: To create development in Jacaltenango to prevent the need for future cycles of immigration.
- Ajaw Kabawil: Youth in both US and Guatemala and importance of education. Migration has reduced the value of education. Coordinating with CONJUVE in 3 cities Soloma, San Juan Xiquoy, Augaquitan.
- Corn Maya (Patricio): Tepeyac Project through the Church - raised \$35,000 from soccer and other donations to work on a playground and other church-related projects in Jacaltenango.
- ASOMAYA Coban Project: interested in helping to market textiles in the US made by women in Guatemala
- Roberto Monjaras: Alcohol and treatment program in Guatemala to be modeled after similar programs in US. This is in response to growing drug use in Guatemala, and other social problems such as divorce, family dissolution
- Maya Quetzal (Carlos Cisneros): Met with politicians in Guatemala and saw a program providing support and therapy for at-risk children (children of parents who are alcoholics or face other problems) must close centers due to insufficient resources, and the government’s inability to help.

- Maya Quetzal (Carlos Cisneros): Working on issue of immigration. Illegal immigrants in Guatemala who face issues not unlike those the Guatemala immigrants face in US. Immigrants should be legalized there as well.
- Asociacion Guatemalteca Americana (Blanca Mendoza): Promoting culture, art and literature of Guatemala
- Asociacion Guatemalteca Americana (Abelina Mendoza): international adoption program for children orphaned by the war. Concerned with bigger issue of international trafficking of children (Guatemala second leading country in illegal trafficking of children) and gang violence, the latter which exploit children abandoned by migrants.
- Corn Maya (Israel Ramirez): Improving the local school in a town of origin with brother who lives there.
- Esperanza Maya Quiche: Founded in 1997 to provide assistance to children whose parents had been victims of the massacre. Brought police presence to area; build a soccer field for the children; want to build a library as parents can not afford books
- OPME: OPME has a weekly radio program airing every Sunday that transmits from West Palm Beach and reaches some areas of Guatemala in Spanish as well as in various Mayan languages. They assisted following Hurricane Stan by sending food and clothes to Guatemala.

APPENDIX D

Media

This article about the workshop appeared in the South Florida Sun-Sentinel July 28, 2007

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Headline: Guatemalans to learn how remittances help homeland

Workshop aimed at local immigrants

Date: Saturday, July 28, 2007

Section: Local

Edition: Broward Metro

Page: 6B

At 18, Juan Silvestre became a lifeline for his mother in Guatemala.

Since he left rural Huehuetenango four years ago, he has sent \$1,000 home every month to pay phone and electric bills. Gone is the small, mud-brick home his mother lived in, replaced by a larger, concrete-block house.

Community leaders and development experts gathering at Florida Atlantic University today think immigrants like Silvestre can do more to build Guatemala's economy and stem the flow of those fleeing a bleak future for better prospects in the United States.

The American Jewish Committee, together with the Israel-based Center for International Migration and Integration, the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County and Florida Atlantic University will host a workshop for Palm Beach County's Guatemalan community to discuss how remittances can fund community projects in their homeland. They will share strategies used by American Jews who for decades have raised billions of dollars to fund projects in Israel.

Local Guatemalan activists and leaders, many of whom lead nonprofit organizations, will attend seminars on how to build alliances with community groups in their Guatemalan hometowns and raise money from immigrants here. The money would fund schools, housing projects, clinics, agricultural cooperatives and other ventures.

In 2005, the remittances of Guatemalans living abroad totaled \$3 billion, according to the World Bank.

"We want to tell people, 'You're in a position of power. You can start making changes so in the future people won't have to leave their homeland,' " said West Palm Beach immigration attorney and activist Aileen Josephs, who helped organize the event.

The conference begins tonight and runs through Sunday at Florida Atlantic University's Jupiter campus. It follows efforts by the Inter-American Foundation, the International Organization for Migration and other agencies to help countries such as Mexico and El Salvador tap remittance money for development projects.

But the concept won't be an easy sell for Guatemalans who fled their country's civil war, which ended a decade ago, or its high crime rates. Many have a deep mistrust of government and fear their money would end up in political hands even if the projects are run by hometown associations and nongovernmental groups.

"The government needs to give us guarantees that these projects won't end up in limbo or politicized," said Roberto Monjaras, 38, owner of a tree-trimming business in West Palm Beach. Monjaras, who will attend the workshop, said the money he has sent home since 1987 helped his parents replace their adobe home in Huehuetenango with a concrete one.

In the two decades since Guatemalans started arriving in Palm Beach County, immigrants like Monjaras and Silvestre have watched their remittance money transform desolate hometowns. Darkened homes suddenly buzzed with electricity and television sets, mud huts became concrete homes and women started to take charge in villages emptied of men who left for the Mexican border.

"Everyone is running around with cell phones. They take taxis to go to the store. People suddenly have money they don't know what to do with," said Silvestre, a travel agent and manager of a money-transfer service in Jupiter. He supports the idea of remittance-funded projects but agrees that immigrants will be mistrustful of any government involvement.

Small projects have already sprung up in several Guatemalan towns. In Pachalum, immigrants pooled their money together to fund a high school and a Montessori kindergarten, according to Rosa Maria Cruz, a development consultant in Guatemala who will speak at the workshop.

"Guatemalans once came here with nothing and accepted any job they could get," said Jeronimo Camposeco, of the group Corn Maya.

"But now enough of us are business owners and we can invest in our country. We can help create jobs. We can give young people a future so they don't have to leave their families and come here."

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