

GUATEMALA / MEXICO

REPATRIATION, REINTEGRATION AND LOCAL SETTLEMENT

AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Guatemala: Complete organised repatriation by 30 June, and provide relief packages to families returning individually; monitor negotiations for the purchase of collective farms in Guatemala; complete quick impact projects (QIPs) for reintegration by March, and support small-scale projects in communities which have received returnees during the past two years; help returnees obtain adequate documentation; strengthen returnee organisations and women's involvement in community life; and continue to create and strengthen linkages with other national and international organisations to increase the stability and long-term sustainability of returnee communities.

Mexico: Facilitate the naturalisation of eligible Guatemalan refugees, and ensure proper legal documentation for all refugees; provide basic support for the infrastructure of communities settled on undisputed land, and incorporate education and health services into the national system; support a community-based credit scheme to help refugees increase their income; facilitate the access of refugees to land ownership; and implement a comprehensive community-based training programme to enhance integration.

Persons of Concern

MAIN REFUGEE ORIGIN/ LOCATION	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHICH: UNHCR-ASSISTED	PER CENT FEMALE	PER CENT < 18
Guatemalan Refugees (Chiapas)*	12,400	11,666	50	60
Guatemalan Refugees (Campeche)	5,670	5,664	49	61
Guatemalan Refugees (Q. Roo)	2,435	2,435	49	70
Returned in 1999** (Guatemala)	2,036	2,036	49	61

Income and Expenditure (USD)

WORKING BUDGET*	INCOME FROM CONTRIBUTIONS	OTHER FUNDS AVAILABLE**	TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	TOTAL EXPENDITURE*
2,457,769	1,320,771	1,105,984	2,426,755	2,380,207

* Includes costs at Headquarters.

** Includes opening balance and adjustments.

* Figure does not include 2,209 refugees living in various locations in Chiapas who did not benefit from UNHCR's assistance.

** Since repatriation began, a total of 43,700 Guatemalans have returned to their home with UNHCR's assistance.



Impact

- Organised repatriation to Guatemala was successfully concluded in July. By the end of the year, UNHCR had assisted a total of 2,036 persons to return to their homes.
- A total of 15 QIPs and 24 small-scale interventions were completed (such as the provision of corn grinding mills and the improvement of water systems and health posts).
- Community-based organisations were strengthened through training and organisational support. Educational promoters were trained and integrated into the national education system. Local women's groups were helped with outreach work in returnee communities.
- UNHCR facilitated contacts between the returnees, the Government and NGOs, and advocated the inclusion of returnee communities in national and regional plans. The Office worked closely with the *Comisión Técnica para la Ejecución del Acuerdo de Reasentamiento* (CTEAR) to formulate recommendations for development-oriented agencies.
- In Mexico, UNHCR facilitated the integration and legal residency or naturalisation of Guatemalan refugees. A total of 1,544 Guatemalan refugees in Campeche and Quintana Roo became Mexican citizens. In addition, 4,877 refugees had their migration documents renewed in Chiapas.
- In Campeche and Quintana Roo, all seven refugee settlements were officially recognised as Mexican villages, and local municipal authorities were established through elections. All 12 communal credit schemes were systematically registered, which gave members full access to other Mexican credit institutions.
- In Chiapas, the authorities assumed responsibility for all basic health and education services in the refugee settlements. Some support was provided for infrastructure in settlements on undisputed land. Some 93 savings groups were created under a micro-credit savings scheme. Refugees were able to purchase plots of land as a result of the Government's decision to allow them to settle permanently where they had been living in Chiapas.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

After three decades of civil war in Guatemala, which forced tens of thousands of refugees to flee to Mexico's southern states of Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo, the signing in 1996 of Peace Accords brought relative stability to the country. Thanks to the cooperation and generosity of the Guatemalan and Mexican governments, refugees who remained in Mexico at the end of 1998 were in the unique position of being able to choose between two equally sound durable solutions: repatriation to their homes in Guatemala or local integration in Mexico.

UNHCR's repatriation and reintegration programme in Guatemala has been conducted within the larger context of the 1996 Peace Accords. The rejection of constitutional reforms in a 1999 referendum signalled a setback for the peace process, but the newly elected President continued to affirm the Government's commitment to peace. Due to an improved incentive package for individual returnees, their number (2,036) significantly exceeded UNHCR's initial forecast of 300 persons. This unexpected increase made it necessary to revise the budget, identify areas where savings could be made, and closely monitor expenditure. Relief materials were donated by the Guatemalan Government to help cope with the larger number of returnees.

In Mexico, the Government was committed to, and cooperated in, the integration of Guatemalan refugees. The continuing political tension in Chiapas had little effect on the integration programme. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, naturalisation enabled refugees to enjoy equal rights with nationals. With the recognition of seven former refugee settlements as Mexican villages, the refugee population was able to integrate successfully into state programmes and development plans.

Constraints

In Guatemala, the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch, and the presidential campaign (in the run-up to the December elections) caused the Government and the international community to pay less attention to the needs of returnee communities.

In Mexico, refugee communities in some areas experienced problems due to the uncertainty of land tenure, shaky relations with local communities and technical difficulties in the provision of basic services.

Funding

As in the past few years, substantial budget cuts forced UNHCR to carry out a series of drastic reductions in the integration programme in Mexico. These reductions affected the pace and impact of the programme, and left some refugee communities on newly acquired

land devoid of road access, sufficient water or sanitary facilities.

ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

Personal documentation has historically been a critical issue for Guatemalans whether as returnees or refugees. As a result of good co-operation with both the Guatemalan and Mexican authorities, 96 per cent of the returnees in Guatemala are now registered, and 95 per cent of the refugee population in Mexico has been registered and provided with documentation. The transfer of ownership of land in Campeche and Quintana Roo proved to be more complex than expected, as many refugees settled on land whose ownership is constitutionally restricted to nationals. UNHCR therefore concentrated on the naturalisation process and only five per cent of the refugee population (who either left the settlements or chose not to become Mexican citizens) have not benefited from this option.

With the support of local NGOs and UNHCR, Guatemalan refugee women founded a number of women's organisations while in exile in Mexico, starting in 1992. These organisations brought about positive changes for refugee women there by providing them with labour-saving devices (such as corn mills for making tortillas), creating income-generating projects, and providing information on women's rights, reproductive health and literacy training. Once these women returned to Guatemala, a strategy was devised whereby the (male-dominated) refugee organisations and UNHCR signed a document affirming their wish to make men and women equal owners of the lands under negotiation. This document was subsequently made public in a conference at which the authorities were asked to formally respond to the women's request to be included as co-owners. After protracted negotiations between the parties, co-ownership for refugee couples was achieved.

Assistance and Activities

Community Services: Women's organisations in various communities in Guatemala were strengthened through training in the creation of support groups, prevention of domestic violence, human rights and conflict resolution. The Office provided computer equipment and training to organisers, and assisted in setting up income-generating activities and a day-care centre.

In Chiapas, 33 women's committees (550 participants) were trained in leadership skills, women's rights and the prevention of domestic violence, and another 160 women leaders participated in regional workshops. A Community Services Committee identified 150 vulnerable individuals, and 90 people were referred to appropriate institutions. Widows received support to improve or build shelters, and other vulnerable refugees attended gardening courses. UNHCR launched two projects to promote children's rights, one of them involved the production of a radio programme which was translated into indigenous languages. UNHCR supported a feasibility study for the electrification of three returnee communities (to benefit more than 200 families).

Crop Production: In Guatemala, UNHCR organised training in coffee-growing techniques and facilitated closer co-operation between the National Coffee Association and some of the later returnee settlements. Three agricultural projects were supported with equipment, seeds and low-tech machinery, benefiting 900 people (439 of them women). Working together with several community-based women's associations, UNHCR set up three corn grinding mills, which significantly reduced the workload and, in addition, provided a small income. Three QIPs supported the cultivation of cardamom, cocoa and coffee.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: Women's organisations in Guatemala were involved in the distribution of toiletries and cutlery. All individual returnees received a cash grant (USD 50 for adults and USD 25 for children under 14). An additional cash grant (USD 350-500 depending on family size) was given to families returning individually, which facilitated the purchase of small plots of land and enabled the launch of small-scale productive activities. UNHCR ensured that this assistance benefited women and men equally. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, relocated families received nine monthly grants to cover their basic needs until they entered the local labour market, or until the first harvest. The amount depended on family size and ranged from USD 36 to USD 120. Communities moving to Chiapas also received personal hygiene items.

Education: UNHCR provided basic school supplies for over 1,300 children in primary schools in Guatemala. All the kindergarten and primary schoolteachers among the returnees had previously been supported by NGOs: now they were trained and certified, allowing their ser-

vices to become a part of the national education system. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, UNHCR funded scholarships for lower and higher secondary academic studies as well as vocational training. In Chiapas, responsibility for 23 schools was officially transferred to the authorities in September. Following a 1998 study that revealed that 50 per cent of the returnee population was illiterate, an ambitious literacy campaign was launched in 1999. The success rate was substantially lower than expected due to inadequate planning and insufficient local implementing experience. The question of literacy training will be reassessed in 2000.

Food: Food and water was provided for returnees while in transit. WFP also provided food rations for the first nine months after return. Guatemalan refugees integrating in Chiapas received a five-month food ration, which concluded the food assistance programme. Special additional food was provided by UNHCR throughout the year for malnourished children and expectant or nursing mothers.

Fisheries and Forestry: UNHCR funded environmental projects in six returnee communities in Guatemala. In Chiapas, one fishery project and several tree nursery sites were maintained. Because of their positive impact on both the environment and the refugees' income, UNHCR plans to transfer these projects to public environmental agencies.

Health/Nutrition: Returnees had access to medical assistance during repatriation and for one month upon return to Guatemala. Temporary clinics were established and basic equipment and medical supplies were purchased. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, health services were smoothly handed over to the Ministry of Health. In addition, orthopaedic equipment was purchased for the General Hospital in Campeche as a final contribution. In Chiapas, all remaining health services were transferred to the State. UNHCR continued to support reproductive health care and midwifery courses. Nine community health posts were set up; their services are of greatest benefit to refugee women and children.

Income Generation: UNHCR monitored long-standing micro-credit schemes for local and returnee populations run by local NGOs in Guatemala. Most beneficiaries were women. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, 12 credit schemes in the settlements were officially registered, enabling their 651 members (53 per

cent women) to obtain credits from Mexican institutions. A small study showed that participation in the schemes led to an increase in economic resources and opportunities, mainly at the household level, and an increase in self-esteem among women. In Chiapas, the credit and savings programme developed in 1998 did not yield sufficient results so it had to be redesigned.

Legal Assistance: In Guatemala, UNHCR facilitated the documentation of 2,937 returnees who arrived between July 1998 and June 1999. Staff at 70 Civil Registries benefited from legal training seminars and four Civil Registries were computerised. A handbook of regulations governing documentation was published and 1,800 copies were distributed to Civil Registries. Returnee communities were also assisted to obtain the right to cross land belonging to neighbouring landlords. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, a total of 2,184 naturalisation cards have been issued to date (1,544 of them in 1999). In Chiapas, a total of 3,072 resident visas were issued and 1,805 visas were renewed. UNHCR also provided documentation to "dispersed refugees" (non-assisted refugees living outside the settlements). Workshops were conducted on the use of a handbook on integration, highlighting the rights and obligations of Mexican citizens. These were attended by both men and women (including more than 600 women). Local institutions, which helped coordinate the training sessions, will provide follow-up courses.

Livestock: UNHCR funded a women's group to establish a small-scale chicken-breeding project in Guatemala for the benefit of 70 families.

Operational Support (to Agencies): UNHCR covered the administrative costs of five implementing partners. These included: salaries; office rental; utilities; maintenance of premises; communications; office supplies; fuel; maintenance and insurance of vehicles; and travel expenses. All implementing partners provided audit certificates. A series of highly constructive workshops were conducted on lessons learned.

Sanitation: Forty emergency latrines (20 of them designed for women) were constructed in two collective return sites. To avoid the spread of communicable diseases, two garbage pits were also dug.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: Upon arrival in Guatemala, each individually returning family received a package containing raw materials and hand tools as

well as a grant for the purchase of timber. For families returning collectively, UNHCR built temporary shelters and provided 24 meters of rugged plastic sheeting for community structures. For refugee families relocating in Campeche and Quintana Roo, UNHCR provided up to USD 530 to cover dwelling construction/repairs and an additional technical package worth USD 270. The latter grant significantly accelerated the integration process by facilitating the clearance and preparation of farming plots. In Chiapas, UNHCR focused on providing basic infrastructure for what had previously been temporary refugee communities. A total of 121 projects were undertaken for 1,816 families in 42 settlements: 13 water systems; four sanitation projects; five electrical supply systems; seven health posts; 66 classrooms; 19 other community projects and seven rural development studies.

Transport/Logistics: UNHCR successfully organised the transportation of 2,000 returnees to Guatemala by hiring 195 buses. Five buses and 12 trucks were rented to provide transport for 86 refugee families who requested to be relocated from Chiapas to Campeche or Quintana Roo. In Chiapas, 17 refugee communities received help from UNHCR with transport to new plots of land.

Water: In Guatemala, two communities benefited from the construction of potable water systems. Three QIPs initiated in 1998 were completed for the benefit of 1,523 returnees.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

Due to budget reductions, several posts in Guatemala were terminated earlier than planned, leaving two international and five national staff for much of the year. The Huehuetenango office was closed at the end of June. In Mexico, the office in Campeche was closed on 31 December. Staff in the two remaining offices in Mexico City and Comitán consisted of eight international staff, two JPOs, three UNVs, three national officers and 16 national staff.

UNHCR's offices in Mexico and Guatemala continued to closely co-ordinate the voluntary repatriation operation, particularly logistics and monitoring. Co-ordination with the office in Belize facilitated the repatriation of 38 Guatemalans in a single convoy. With the completion of organised repatriation in July,

co-ordination was limited to monitoring individual repatriation.

Working with Others

An Inter-agency Group for Uprooted Populations was created in Guatemala by UNDP, the UN Human Rights Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), UNHCR and IOM. Other agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF and WHO participated in theme groups. UNHCR and WFP conducted a joint food security evaluation in July. Families with insufficient food were included in WFP's food-for-work projects. UNICEF and UNHCR supported a study on the impact of documentation and registration of newborn babies in two returnee municipalities. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, a handbook on integration was produced jointly by UNHCR, UNICEF, *Comisión Mexicana para ayuda a los refugiados* (COMAR), and CONMUJER.

In Guatemala, UNHCR worked with two government agencies and 21 NGOs and eight other partners. Most small-scale projects and QIPs contained a capacity-building element to ensure their sustainability. In addition, five initiatives were based on "lessons learned", involving NGOs and other bodies. UNHCR worked with six NGO partners in Chiapas. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, where NGO presence was weak, UNHCR continued to support and train an NGO run by refugees, responsible for the implementation of credit schemes. In view of serious doubts about the ability of NGOs to remain viable without assistance, UNHCR continued to encourage the search for alternative sources of funding.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

To hasten integration, UNHCR encouraged maximum refugee and returnee participation in QIPs in Guatemala and in credit schemes in Mexico. The Office continuously emphasised the importance of women's rights through training and capacity-building. This had a positive impact on equal access to legal documentation for men and women. Women in Mexico were more easily recognised as co-owners of land and could be registered as economically independent individuals, free to participate in credit associations and productive projects.

Budget cuts had a negative effect on UNHCR's work in both countries. In retrospect, UNHCR should have revised its long-term plans earlier and begun creating

linkages with other organisations sooner. The Office could also have improved its effectiveness and efficiency by working with fewer partners, particularly in Mexico. The involvement of the private sector in reintegration activities in Guatemala proved important, and could possibly have reduced UNHCR's input earlier.

Despite efforts by UNHCR and other agencies to promote sustainable reintegration of the returnee population in Guatemala, a number of problems still require the attention of the Government, donors and NGOs. They include: further support and capacity-building for community organisation (particularly for women); legalisation on land tenure in returnee communities to ensure women's access to land; longer-term support for agricultural projects; further improvements to social services in areas of return; access to employment opportunities in areas where agricultural production is limited; and attention to children's and adolescents' needs. A number of returnee communities are still fragile and will continue to suffer the consequences of the gap between reintegration assistance (UNHCR plans to cease its reintegration activities in Guatemala as of mid-2001) and longer-term development initiatives.

In Chiapas, some services have been handed over to returnee communities (such as health, education and literacy programmes) while others are considered to fall within the remit of the State. Barring unforeseen developments, UNHCR's integration programme in Chiapas will conclude at the end of 2001. In Campeche and Quintana Roo, UNHCR's projects are scheduled to cease by the end of 2000. Mexican authorities have already assumed responsibility for public services and seven settlements are officially registered as Mexican villages. Community authorities have been elected and refugees are generating enough income to reach a standard of living similar to that of their Mexican neighbours. The only outstanding issue is the finalisation of the naturalisation process, and the transfer of ownership of 19,000 hectares of land to the refugee community.

Offices

GUATEMALA

Guatemala City
Huehuetenango (closed 30 June 1999)

MEXICO

Mexico City
Comitán
Campeche (closed 31 December 1999)

Partners

GUATEMALA

Government Agencies

National Commission for the Attention of Repatriates, Refugees and Displaced (CEAR)
Technical Commission for the Verification of the Resettlement Peace Accord (CTEAR)

NGOs

Asociación de Apoyo Integral
Asociación de Mujeres MADRE TIERRA
Asociación guatemalteca pro agua y saneamiento
Asociación IDEAS
Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas IXMUCANE
Asociación para la promoción y el desarrollo de la comunidad
Asociación y unidad para el desarrollo autosostenible
Capacitación y Desarrollo Comunitario
Centre Canadien d'Etudes et de Coopération Internationale
Conferencia de Religiosos de Guatemala
Cooperación Mesoamericana para el Desarrollo y la Paz
Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres
Médecins du Monde (Spain and France)
Médecins Sans Frontières (France, Switzerland and Spain)
Niños Refugiados del Mundo
Organización de Mujeres Guatemaltecas MAMA MAQUIN
Pastoral Social
Paz y Tercer Mundo

Other

Asesoría y consultoría en ingeniería, agronomía y arquitectura
Asociación Nacional del Café
Consultores agrícolas
Diseño y construcciones integrales
Empresa de Desarrollo y Servicios
GSD Consultores Asociados
Instituto Nacional de Cooperativas
Servicios y Telecomunicaciones, S.A.

MEXICO

Government Agencies

Commission for Assistance to Refugees
Administración RH SA

NGOs

Capacitación y Asesoría en Medio Ambiente y Defensa del Derecho a la Salud
Capacitación y Desarrollo Comunitario
Desarrollo Sustentable para la Mujer y la Niñez
Investigación y Desarrollo Femenino
Promoción de Servicios Comunitarios
Red de Mujeres Pro Derechos de Educación y Salud Sin Fronteras

Voluntary Contributions (USD)

Donor	Income	Contribution
Canada	544,218	544,218
France	81,786	81,786
Japan	180,000	180,000
Norway	337,136	337,136
Sweden	168,840	168,840
<i>España con ACNUR (SPA)</i>	8,791	0
TOTAL	1,320,771	1,311,980



Financial Report (USD)

Programme Overview	Current Year's Projects		Prior Years' Projects	
		notes		notes
Opening Balance	789,801	(1)		
Income from Contributions	1,320,771	(1)		
Other Funds Available	316,183			
Total Funds Available	2,426,755	(5)		
Expenditure	2,380,207	(1) (5)		
Closing Balance	46,548	(1) (5)		
Expenditure Breakdown				
Protection, Monitoring and Coordination*	728,082		7,407	
Community Services	48,505		2,500	
Crop Production	117,342		99,293	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	192,413		19,894	
Education	27,000		5,767	
Food	36,932		24,940	
Forestry	5,628		(40)	
Fisheries	0		0	
Health / Nutrition	25,746		6,532	
Income Generation	5,839		8,171	
Legal Assistance	67,176		45,820	
Livestock	0		1,207	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	223,242		117,169	
Sanitation	3,491		10,769	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	70,191		79,226	
Transport / Logistics	295,548		75,838	
Water	30,527		34,394	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	19,522		(449,557)	
Sub - total Operational	1,897,184		89,330	
Administrative Support*	220,752		0	
Sub - total Disbursements/Deliveries	2,117,936	(5)	89,330	(6)
Unliquidated Obligations	262,271	(5)	0	(6)
TOTAL	2,380,207	(1) (5)	89,330	
Instalments with Implementing Partners				
Payments Made	1,243,693		105,754	
Reporting Received	1,224,171		555,311	
Balance	19,522		(449,557)	
Outstanding 1 January	0		610,612	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		203,133	
Currency Adjustment	(4,637)		(5,473)	
Outstanding 31 December	14,885		(47,551)	
Unliquidated Obligations				
Outstanding 1 January	0		220,692	(6)
New Obligations	2,380,207	(1) (5)	0	
Disbursements	2,117,936	(5)	89,330	(6)
Cancellations	0		131,362	(6)
Outstanding 31 December	262,271	(5)	0	(6)

* Includes costs at Headquarters.

Figures which cross reference to accounts

(1) Annex 1 to Statement 1

(5) Schedule 5

(6) Schedule 6

