

PfR Guatemala country factsheet

Country: Guatemala

Project Area: Zacapa

Organization(s): Cordaid

Key data about the project area (area of the beneficiaries):

Population: 218,510

Geography: Guatemala is located in an area of high volcanic and seismic activity. The combination of these various hazards causes landslides. The situation is influenced by climate change resulting in food insecurity, desertification, drought, forest fires and health problems. Over the last 20 years the most frequent disaster have been floods (23) and storms (13) (e.g. Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and Tropical storm Stan in 2005). The increase in the number of events to 32 in 2009, compared to a normal yearly average of 2-3. The quality of seasonal forecasts for Guatemala is decent, with good forecast lead times for August-December.¹

Main livelihood sectors: agrivulture: cultivation staple crops

Beneficiaries #:

Beneficiary groups: Indigenous groups. The Maya languages K'iché, Tz'utujil and Cakch'iquel are spoken. Focus on women, youth and elderly (the latter possess rich indigenous knowledge).

What types of hazards occur in project site?

multi-hazard prone area (hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions) and is part of the so called Pacific Rim's "ring of fire".

How are these hazards exacerbated?

By human activity? (ecosystems degradation)

There is a tendency towards development of economic activities with significant environmental and social impacts (e.g. mining, palm oil, sugar cane, melon, oil) related to the signing of the DR-CAFTA (2004).

Solutions to the above problems are complicated by high levels of illiteracy among indigenous groups, low of access to health services, imbalance in gender relations

(?) Politics?

Solutions to the above problems are complicated by a dysfunctional legal system that is unable to protect the cultural, economical and social rights of indigenous groups.

Drug-related violence has increased and is more visible. The clear examples are the declaration of state in Coban and Peten (first part of 2011) after violent actions related to drug trafficking. Some working areas are affected by the infiltration of drug trafficking (Izabal, Zacapa and Chiquimula).

Governance at national, local and community levels is deficient and there are no programmes for DRR and conservation of biodiversity in agro-forestry systems, forests and wetlands. Government policies encourage the production of commercial crops, and do not favour the production of staples. The government institutions responsible for livelihood development, disaster risk reduction and ecosystem management do not have the technical, financial and human capacity to implement government policies. Coordination between these institutions is quasi-absent.

Zacapa: The elections for mayors and deputies in the departments of Zacapa and Chiquimula (Cordaid/Caritas), was turned into a civic celebration due to which the elections happened in a peaceful environment.

Because of national elections and the transition of the new government in the last quarter of 2011, we expect substantial changes in the key positions of both the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) and the National Commission on Protected Areas (CONAP).

Zacapa & Chiquimula: During the second semester the case for the Granadillas Mountain was received by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), in the hearings that resulted in 143 session. The case was filed on behalf of communities affected by the Lutheran pastor Jose Pilar Alvarez, Gerardo Paiz Mother's Collective Forest Ecologist and Mynor Perez Mutual Support Group. The case is to apply for recognition of the legitimate struggle for the defense of water, forests and biodiversity in Las Granadillas and the CIDH was asked to order the Guatemalan State to declare the area as protective springs reserve, as a human right of access to water for the inhabitants of Zacapa and Chiquimula.

(?) Economics?

mining activities

The globalized economy favours the expansion of monocultures for agro export, and prevents indigenous cultural autonomy in planning agricultural production and the control over water sources and other basic resources. The traditional products of peasants and indigenous people are not marketed nationally or internationally. Domestic trade is a "paperless" and without formal contracts. The majority of the population has very few opportunities for generating an economic surplus to be reinvested in their own human and social development.

Climate change?

The northern part of Guatemala has a tropical climate with maximum rainfall from May to September. The west and south of the country is very mountainous with moderate rainfall and a distinct dry season from November to April. Rainfall is heavier along the Pacific coast.ⁱⁱ In El Niño years dry conditions in parts of Guatemala during July-Decemberⁱⁱⁱ, and cool and wet conditions from July-August in La Niña years.^{iv} Climate models project a median average temperature increase of 3.2°C in Central America by 2080-2099.^v The median decrease in annual rainfall is projected at 9%, ranging from a 48% decrease to 9% increase.^{vi} The sea level rise is projected to rise 0.18 metre to 0.59 metre by 2100. Some sources project a sea level rise of one metre by 2100.^{vii} Intensity of tropical cyclones is expected to increase.^{viii}

By 2020 large areas of different Central American ecosystems will be affected by climate change. About 25% of broadleaf forests and mangroves, 20% of coniferous forests, 15% of savannas and wetlands, and 10% of mixed forests in Central America will show elevated climate change severity indices, and even 25-30% of agricultural lands will be affected. The Mesoamerican Reef is experiencing the looming threat of bleaching and mass mortality of corals. Once sea temperatures pass the threshold for thermal tolerance, corals will be gone, the ecosystem will collapse, and this will have impacts on local fisheries and tourism, and an increased vulnerability.

How are people's livelihoods affected?

Human

Diarrhoeal diseases and vector-borne diseases

Social

Physical

financial

Natural

What are the solutions offered by the alliance?

Preparedness

Early warning

Mitigation

development
