

IMF and World Bank dig heels in & resist reforms

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Extra-large edition

# The Upstream Journal

Ten years after the Peace Accords,  
how have things changed?

## GUATEMALA

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Free publication of the  
Social Justice Committee

*Dear readers,*

Preparing this edition reminded me of a talk Rigoberta Menchu, the Guatemalan recipient of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, gave at Concordia University perhaps ten years ago. She was beaming when she came to the podium and said that she wanted to start by acknowledging someone in the audience. Ernie Schibli, she said, was one of the people who accompanied her on her return to Guatemala after years in exile. She called him a "guardian angel" for accompanying her and thus protecting her from a vindictive elite.

As many of our readers know, Ernie has guided the Social Justice Committee's work on Guatemala for years. His focus recently has been mining operations there and the social responsibility of Canadian corporations, but for this special issue of the *Upstream Journal* he takes a look at the changes that have come in the decade since the peace Accords that brought the civil war to an official close.

In many ways there has been progress. People like Rigoberta Menchu are active in politics, and there is a surge in community-based exercises in democratic process.

Even so, it remains a violent and occasionally lawless land. The central problem of unequal land ownership and use remains unchanged, despite the reforms that were promised in the peace agreement. Human rights defenders are facing increasing threats and attacks. Violence against women is unchecked and on the rise.

We have several articles for you about the struggle for human rights in Guatemala, so much so that we've decided to really make this a special issue and go for the full-colour treatment for the cover, plus an extra 8 pages more than our usual 16.

Several people helped put this issue together, and once again some of our volunteers and interns have authored articles. We expect to have the *Upstream Journal* coming to you more frequently this coming year, and have started work on next issues - including one focusing on the trade in small arms.

In the immediate future, though, I hope you'll join us as we kick off our fall/winter program with a big conference on women's empowerment and community-based economic models (see the back cover and page 23). See you there!



Derek MacCuish, Editor

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**Write us!**

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This issue was assembled with the welcome assistance of Ernie Schibli, Marie-Esperance Cerda, Brendan Clarke, and Carol Dolbel.

# Guatemala: Ten Years of Peace?

*In July, 2006, Gloria Papenburg Pereira, Ann Marie DiMichele and I visited a number of rural communities in Guatemala. We began in Huehuetenango where we visited the community of Mam >Asaq (aka Casaca) as the guests of AFOPADI, a Guatemalan NGO. From there we went on to the San Marcos communities of Sipakapa, (affected by the Marlin Gold mine) and the Agricola San Geronimo (a coffee plantation where the workers and their families live in destitution).*

*After a short stay in Guatemala City, we flew to The Peten in the north-east. There we visited Santa Rosa, a former Community of Popular Resistance, Nuevas Horizontes, a co-operative community of former guerilla combatants and their families, and Bonanza, a displaced community now settled on the Usumacinta River.*

*Our intention was to speak with rural indigenous folk to learn their perspectives on the Peace Accords, or at least on those accords which most affected their lives. After all, the war was fought over such questions as the possession of land, education, freedom of association, and other basic human rights.*

*This special issue of the Upstream Journal highlights the progress, or lack thereof, on these fundamental issues, more than a decade after the end of the civil war.*

*By Ernie Schibli*

**O**n December 29, 1996, the government of Guatemala and the Unidad revolucionaria nacional de Guatemala (URNG) guerrilla forces brought a thirty-six year long war to an end by signing the last of the comprehensive Peace Accords. In the 1960s the government, supported by political and economic elites and the military, was pitted against small, mostly ladino

torched and destroyed hundreds of villages, slaughtered approximately 200,000 people and forced up to a million more to flee. Some of these people, in what were called Communities of People in Resistance (CPR), fled further into the Guatemalan wilderness where they survived despite the military's attempts to wipe them out. A larger number became refugees, crossing the border into Mexico or other countries, including Canada.

under its direct control.

The war was marked by indescribable barbarity, especially on the part of the military forces. They conducted a massive terror campaign with the intent of cutting off all support for the guerilla forces. This meant burning down villages, destroying crops and cattle, massacring the inhabitants and burying them in clandestine graves.

The government forces were responsible for some 93% of the



urban and rural guerilla forces. By the early 1980s, rural Mayan communities had become its main victims.

Under President Lucas Garcia (1976 - 82) and then dictator General Rios Montt (1982 - 83), the army

Acting upon the advice of the U.S. government, the Guatemalan military also recruited or forced hundreds of thousands of rural indigenous people to join civil patrols (a type of lightly armed militia) which were placed

human rights violations during this time, according to the 1998 Catholic Church-sponsored the "Recovery of Historical Memory" (REMHI) report. A United Nations report arrived at similar conclusions. Nevertheless, the government forces were unable to prevail and finally, under pressure from foreign governments, includ-

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*Weaving has significance in Maya life, for practical purposes and for social culture and art. Photos by Paul Lemieux.*

ing Canada, the two sides negotiated a peace settlement, and agreed to the Peace Accords of 1996.

## BACKGROUND TO THE WAR

Guatemala's Mayan population has endured strong repression since the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The invaders seized the better land and forced many of the Mayans either to work for them or to relocate to the much less fertile lands of the altiplano (highlands).

Throughout much of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, a series of dictators controlled the country. They paid little attention to the needs of the Mayans, regarding them as low-paid labor for the plantations in the countryside and the factories in Guatemala City. When coffee became a major export crop in the mid-nineteenth century, Mayans were brought to work the large plantations along the Pacific coast.

In 1944, in the first democratic election in the country's history, the reformist José Arevalo won the presidency. He and his successor, Jacobo Arbenz, set about introducing a socially progressive program that included extensive land reform measures. They expropriated large tracts of unused land, ingeniously paying the owners

what the owners themselves had evaluated it for tax purposes, and then sold the land on very easy terms to the country's landless indigenous people.

What turned out to be disastrous was that the U.S.-owned United Fruit Company had extensive land holdings, much of it lying fallow.

United Fruit, which had strong connections

*“They crushed anyone whom they perceived to be a threat—reporters, union people, human rights activists, clergy, etc.—all the while appropriating more of the country's wealth for themselves”*

to the Eisenhower administration, protested the loss of its land. The US government already considered the Arbenz administration to be communist, and so the CIA directed a coup d'état and placed Castillo Armas in power.

Although the coup itself proved relatively bloodless, Armas' subsequent actions were not. He quickly undid the land reform and initiated a reign of terror, putting to death thousands of Mayans who had benefited from the

previous administration. Shortly afterwards, he was assassinated.

Armas was followed by a series of dictators, most of whom were military men. They were determined that what had happened between 1944 and 1954 would not occur again. Accordingly they crushed anyone whom they perceived to be a threat—reporters, union people, human rights activists, clergy, etc.—all the while appropriating more of the country's wealth for themselves. They aligned themselves closely with the United States and its allies, and in return received arms, military training, and a blind eye turned towards their human rights violations, all of which played a large role in the civil war.

## THE PEACE ACCORDS

Between 1994 and the end of 1996, the Guatemalan government and the URNG signed a series of thirteen different agreements which were intended to change the cease-fire into a lasting peace. Many of them were procedural, such as the Agreement on the Definitive Ceasefire and the Agreement on the Basis for the Legal Integration of URNG. Others were more substantial, and intended to address the causes of the war and to bring about substantive change in Guatemalan society. Three of the most important were: the Agreement on Socio-economic Aspects of the Agrarian Situation; the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights.

With the signing of the Peace Accords, the arrival of the United Nations Mission, and the involvement of the World Bank, much of the outside world believed that the last of the Central American wars was over.

There were certainly some good signs. The massacres that epitomized the conflict had ended. Relatively free elections took place and civilians took over the government. People were freer

### Quick Facts: Guatemala

- Population: 12, 728,111
  - Mestizo – 59%
  - Mayan – 40%
- President: Oscar Berger (2004)
- GDP/capita: \$5000 (US)
- Literacy Rate: 69%
- Human Development Index 118 out of 177 countries
- Number of Small Arms: 1.7 million
  - Legal: 200,000
  - Illegal: 1.5 million

to meet, to organize, and even to hold anti-government demonstrations. The international community turned its attention elsewhere.

But there were also ominous signs.

Corruption became rampant, particularly in the federal government and the police force. The military, initially reduced in size, began to grow again and it was not long before it once again assumed policing duties. Death threats and assassinations soon increased dramatically, including the murder of Catholic bishop Juan Gerardi just days after he had made public the REMHI report.

In the countryside, land ownership remained as it was prior to the war—among the most unequal in the world. Thanks to a change in the country's mining laws, companies from countries like Canada and the United States received permits to explore and develop mines throughout the country - without the consent of the local inhabitants.

In the cities, foreign-owned maquilas (factories) became numerous, often with low wages and poor working conditions. Youth gangs, frequently controlled by the police and military, caused havoc, killing and robbing at will.

The land reforms required by the Peace Accords were not implemented, and Rios Montt remains a controversial figure. Attempts to have him tried for his role in the genocide have failed. He is running for a Congressional seat in the September 2007 election, which would provide him another level of protection from prosecution. ♦

#### Guatemala's representative in Canada:

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Ottawa ON K1P 5G4  
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# Finca San Geronimo

## Poverty and hunger on the plantations

By Ernie Schibli

**The drive down to the west coast of Guatemala from the city of San Marcos is spectacular.** As the car escapes the clouds surrounding the tops of the mountains, one is greeted by a vast panorama of trees. These are the coffee plantations, where impoverished campesinos from the highlands - men, women and even children - come by the truckload to supplement their meager income by picking and cleaning coffee beans. A few months later, when the crop is in, they take their miserable wages and return to their homes to tend their fields.

Others spend their whole lives on these plantations - *fincas* - where they have constructed their very humble homes. Some families have lived there for three or four generations. Since the

end of the war, members of the SJC have paid a number of visits to communities like these on several fincas in the department of San Marcos. This year, our friends at the Campesinos' Workers Movement (MTC) brought us to visit the community at the Agrícolas San Geronimo.

At this *finca*, fifteen families with a total of seventy-eight children live on a small plot of land in the middle of the plantation. It is hot and humid. Their houses are crudely made and lack electricity and running water. Some of the adults and almost all of the children have lived and worked on the plantation all their lives.

Their most recent set of problems began in 2001 when the owners of the finca told them that they could only work one week on, one week off. Their pay dropped from 25 *quetzales* a day



*People of the San Geronimo community gather to speak with Ernie Schibli and other visitors about conditions at the plantation.*



(about \$3.50 Cdn.) to 15 *quetzales* (about \$2.25). On four occasions they did not receive any pay. In protest they stopped working in November 2002. Nothing happened. They brought their case to court, but still nothing. In other *fincas*, even when the workers won their cases in court, the rulings have not been enforced. At San Geronimo they fear that the owners will sell the *finsa* before they pay the workers what they owe.

In the meantime, some of the San Geronimo workers have found a few days of work a week on nearby *fincas*, but this does not provide enough money on which to survive. Naturally, the lack of decent nutrition and subsequent illness are major problems, especially for the children. There is some outside help, and the MTC brings food, but not enough. The workers worry about their children's lack of education and the difficulty

"As time goes by, it is getting harder to hope," one man told us.

Land has long been a major issue in Guatemala. It still is today. In the *altiplano* (highlands), small communities of Mayans desperately try to eke out a living on plots of land far too small and infertile to support them. In contrast, huge tracts of land, almost always more fertile, are occupied by land barons who, with the help of cheap labor, grow coffee, bananas, sugar, and other export crops. While the Agreement on the Socio-Economic Aspects of the Agrarian Situation was meant to address this situation, little has been accomplished to date. Quite naturally, this has caused growing frustration on the part of rural people.

Some communities have taken matters into their own hands, settling on land that they claim as their own. In response, the land barons have used private security firms, the police, and the military to violently evict these communities, destroying their homes and crops in the process. Other communities have resorted to the courts but have had minimal success.

As always happens when we visit communities like San Geronimo, the people expressed their gratitude that we had come. It gives them some consolation to know that there are others who think about them. They requested that Canadians ask the Guatemalan government to act more justly towards them and the thousands of others under similar circumstances.

# Villagers take a grassroots approach to fighting mega-projects

By: Brendan Clarke

**O**n June 18, 2005, thousands of indigenous locals from Sipacapa, Guatemala, crammed into their town halls to take part in direct democracy. They did not come to vote on a new mayor or governor, but on something more fundamental: the use of their land.

Despite inaccurate government flyers that stated that the vote had been cancelled, several thousand people showed up to vote on gold-mining incursions in their territory by the U.S./Canadian-owned company Glamis Gold Ltd. (now GoldCorp Inc.), setting a precedent for similar community consultations across the region. Their decision was clear: no mining exploration or exploitation was welcome on their land. Of the thirteen municipalities involved, eleven voted against mining exploration and exploitation, one abstained, and one voted "yes" by a margin of three votes.

*"These community consultations, known in Spanish as consultas, are an attempt at participatory self-governance organized from the bottom up."*

These community consultations, known in Spanish as *consultas*, are an attempt at participatory self-governance organized from the bottom up. The procedures of each municipality's *consulta* are unique and based on indigenous traditions and culture. Some groups opt for a show of hands, others a secret ballot, and still others for signing an "X" on a poster. However, they all have one aspect in common - external verification. The validity and transparency of the consultations are monitored by impartial observers, including government officials.

These consultations also fall within the broader framework of international law. In 1989, the International Labor Organization (ILO) passed Convention 169, establishing the right of indigenous people to be consulted by their governments regarding any "legislative or administrative measures which may affect them directly." The indigenous people can then use these consultations to give their

“agreement or consent to the proposed measures.”

Now, just two years after the Sipacapa consultation, the use of consultas has become widespread. They have grown in both frequency and size. On April 20th of this year, nearly twenty-thousand people from the town of Ixcán, voted on hydro-electric mega-projects and petroleum exploration. Again, the consensus was clear. Ninety-four percent of those present voted against the development projects.

Around the same time that the 2007 consultation in Ixcán took place, the Guatemalan Constitutional Court issued a ruling on the legality of the Sipacapa consultation from 2005. The Court ruled that the decision from the consulta was legal, but not binding. In other words, the citizens can vote, but the government has no legal obligation to abide by their decision.

This precedent comes little more than a decade after the end of the Guatemalan civil war. The strengthening of democracy was one of the cornerstones of the 1996 Peace Agreement between the government and the URNG.

Nonetheless, the state of Guatemala, like the governments of many developing countries, is under strong pressure from multinational corporations and the international financial institutions to privatize their economies and open up to foreign investment. For its mining project in Sipacapa, Glamis Gold Ltd. received a US\$45 million loan from the World Bank. The massive planning and potential returns create a powerful incentive to complete a project once the ball is rolling, despite local opposition and attempts to build local democratic processes.



*Participation in consultas has increased substantially in recent years, strengthening local voice and the political impact of community meetings.*

## Breakthrough at factory in Guatemala

**A**n agreement between the independent Guatemalan human rights organization CEADEL and the Legumex agricultural plant is a positive step for worker protection, the National Labor Committee (US) says. The March 2007 agreement calls for the factory to comply with Guatemalan labor laws, and for workers to receive proper wages and health care. Child labour is to end, and children are to receive stipends to return to school. The factory has been criticized for its use of child labour, long hours and poor working conditions.

Some details: Twenty-four 13-year-old children who worked at the Legumex plant will receive a stipend to return to school. The stipend, or severance package, is being worked out now. The child workers will have the option of returning to the factory when they are of legal age.

Every worker will be inscribed in the social security system guaranteeing access to free health care. In addition, the factory will open a clinic with a woman doctor available at least two days a week for consultations with the workers.

Piece rates will be increased and everyone will earn at least the legal minimum wage. More workers will be hired to cut back on overtime hours. CEADEL representatives will have unrestricted access to the Legumex plant.

The National Labor Committee credits Superior Foods of Watsonville, California for its role, saying it “played a positive role by working with factory management to encourage these changes” and helped ensure the plant’s long-term viability by committing to purchase products.

Source: National Labor Committee (US)

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# Access to education is key to peace, local group argues, but Guatemalan government remains unresponsive

by Leah Gardner

**A**t thirty-eight, Marcos Domingo has lived through both war and peace, including the hardest years (1979-1981) of the civil war in Guatemala and the decade since the signing of the Peace Accords that ended the conflict.

The lack of access to education, and the education system itself, were major factors that contributed to the war,

he argues.

"People realize that they killed each other because of a lack of education," he said. "Brothers killed brothers."

In many ways, unfortunately, the old system remains intact, and access to education is limited.

Tired of the stagnation, local communities have decided to take matters into their own hands. Domingo says that in the 1990s many civilians realized the importance of community organization, especially when negotiating with the government.

During this same time, three brothers who had left Domingo's hometown, Casaca, to study agronomy, health, and education, returned to create a small community organization based on their new skills. The Asociación de Formación para el Desarrollo Integral (AFOPADI) provides help to local residents in areas such as: health, farming, education, and women's rights.

Marcos now works as an educational promoter and coordinator for AFOPADI. He believes that people are more interested in education now that they have more resources and opportunities to send their children to school.

His twenty-two year old co-worker, Katarina Ramirez, is an example of this. Though she does not remember the war, she is conscious of how education transformed her life. She now works to promote women's maternal health, despite social pressure regarding traditional gender roles. Married and a mother of two, she plans to continue her education because "it is good for her and her children."

Even so, there are problems with the education system in Casaca continue. "There is a great difference between urban and rural schools, and between urban and rural student achievement," he said, arguing that the state does not invest in rural schools.

Domingo cited this as only one of many examples of government unresponsiveness to the needs of rural residents, and an all-too-familiar atmosphere of inequality and domination in a



Ramiro Lainez Domingo works as a translator with AFOPADI, where he received a fellowship to study law and legal translation for future service to the community. Here he is at home with his children Maria Isabela and Marvin Alexandre, and speaking with SJC visitors. Photos: SJC/Gloria Pereira



country with a history of state violence.

"The Peace Accords are just pieces of paper," he said, until there is concrete change for the residents of Casaca, especially in education. After all, he says, "education is the basis for development."

*Marcos Domingo was interviewed in Guatemala by Ernie Schibli. Ernie and Gloria Pereira were in Guatemala for the Social Justice Committee in November, 2006, interviewing human rights defenders.*

*To contact AFOPDI, email [afopadi@xela.net.gt](mailto:afopadi@xela.net.gt).*

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Marcos and LKetrina, co-workers at the AFOPADI community group.  
Photo by Gloria Pereira.



# Guatemalan women demand an end to violence

*By Paula Godoy Paiz*

**While most families around the globe celebrated the New Year, the family of Evelyn Karina Isidro Velásquez mourned.** On January 1st 2007, young Evelyn walked to a store one block from her home in Villa Nueva, Guatemala, never to return. The seven-year-old was kidnapped, raped, and cruelly murdered, her decapitated body buried at the bottom of a ravine.

Ten years have passed since the signing of the Peace Accords in Guatemala, yet violence, especially violence committed against women, has not ceased. According to the National Union of Guatemalan Women (UNAMG), femicide took the lives of close to 600 women in the year 2006 alone. It is estimated that during the first three months of 2007, an average of two women were killed daily, their bodies often bearing signs of rape, torture, and mutilation.

I spoke about the escalating violence against women in Guatemala with Emma Chirix, a Maya-Kaqchikel activist and scholar well known for her work for the protection of women's rights, at her home in Guatemala City.

"Before, when a woman experienced domestic assault,

the reality is even harsher for indigenous women, who in addition to gendered violence, experience ethnic and class-based violence."

Today, as was the case during the armed conflict, the Guatemalan government promotes a policy of insecurity rather than one of peace and respect for human dignity.

"Violence in Guatemala is institutionalized," Emma said in our interview. "The state promotes fear, promotes violence."

The administration of the current president, Oscar Berger, for instance, has promoted a policy of social cleansing, or *limpieza social*, as it is referred to locally and reported in the press. Instead of creating employment and providing education and social services as alternatives to crime, the Berger administration has opted to 'eliminate' people it views as the source of the country's problems, namely members of youth gangs and the poor.

*"Violence in Guatemala is institutionalized. The state promotes fear, promotes violence."*

violence did not go beyond beatings. Now, in the context of femicide, we see that violence does not end in beatings, it goes much further," she told me. "There is an attempt to physically erase the woman by

The highly publicized murders of three Salvadoran Parliamentarians this past February by members of the National Civil Police – who were subsequently murdered while in custody – brought to the fore the State's active and central involvement in violence and insecurity in the country. Not only do the institutions fail to seriously address gender-based violence in this country, but in certain cases, members of the National Civil Police have been responsible for the killing of women.

"In Guatemala we see two currents," Emma said. "On the one hand we see groups and organizations that are attempting to construct projects for peace and for life. On the other hand, there are sectors in the country that are constructing and reproducing violence. Unfortunately the State is part of the latter".

Despite the many obstacles in its way, the women's movement in Guatemala has made important strides in the fight against femicide and all forms of violence against women in the country. Chief among them was the creation of the National Coordinator for the Prevention of Violence within the Family and Against Women (CONAPREVI). This national institution is composed of both govern-

ment and civil society representatives, such as staff of women's organizations, for instance the Guatemalan Women's Group and the No Violence Against Women Network that struggled vehemently for CONAPREVI's creation.

One of CONAPREVI's major achievements was the development of the National Plan for the Prevention of Violence within

“Not only do the institutions fail to seriously address gender-based violence in this country, but in certain cases, members of the National Civil Police have been responsible for the killing of women.”

the Family and Against Women (PLANOWI) 2004-2014. This ten-year plan outlines four strategic areas of focus for addressing the problem of gender-based violence:

- 1) research and the compilation of statistics,
- 2) violence prevention,
- 3) raising awareness and education, and
- 4) support for victims and the

strengthening of institutions working in the area of gender-based violence.

After much hard work on the part of Guatemalan women, PLANOWI is now taking off. As a result, support centres for women victims of violence have been opened in Escuintla and Rabinal, and already-existing centres in Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango have strengthened. It is a starting point that has been years in the making, but we have yet to see its full impact.

As our interview concluded, Emma reminded me that when we speak about violence in Guatemala we should also speak about the instances when violence is absent and life and joy are present.

"We must recognize the existence of violence, as its existence cannot be denied," she said, "But we have to hold on to those things that violence has yet to take from us."

*Author Paula Godoy Paiz was born in Guatemala and has lived in Canada since 1987, when her family was forced to leave Guatemala during the armed conflict. Paula is a doctoral candidate in Anthropology at McGill University, and has been in Guatemala since February 2007 undertaking her dissertation research on the effect of violence on women's*



More than 3,000 women have been brutally murdered in Guatemala since 2000. Almost every year the number of femicides has risen. According to police data, the number of women and girls slain rose steadily from 163 in 2002 to 665 in 2005. 603 women were killed in 2006, and more than 189 women were killed in the first half of 2007. - Resource Center of the Americas

Up to 70% of killings of women and girls in Guatemala are not investigated and no arrests are made in 97% of cases. Most attacks take place in populated areas of Guatemala City targeting 14 - 28 year olds. Murders of women are often preceded by violent rape and accompanied by torture." - UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Photo: SJC/Gloria Pereira

## *everyday lives in Guatemala.*

People who want to support work to protect women in Guatemala can do so through these groups:

### Fundacion Sobrevivientes

11 Calle 11-12 Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala  
asobrevivientes@yahoo.es www.sobrevivientes.org

### Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres

2a Calle 8-28, Zona 1, Edificio Cedros 4to nivel, Oficina 4 "A",  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala.  
ggms@intelnet.net.gt Hogar Nuevos Horizontes  
3a Calle 6-51, Zona 2,  
Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.  
www.ahnh.org/help.htm



Emma Chirix (left) with author Paula Godoy Paiz. Photo courtesy of the author.

## **President Rigoberta Menchú Tum?**

The Nobel Peace Prize (1992) winner will run for the Guatemalan presidency. If elected, she would be Guatemala's first female president and Guatemala would join the list of Latin American countries with indigenous presidents, including Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia.

## **Weak Court System**

The UN-sponsored truth commission documented 626 massacres that took place during Guatemala's civil war, the vast majority of which were perpetrated by the military. Two cases led to a conviction. Other court proceedings have been delayed by dilatory defense motions and the inadequacy of both the training and resources available for prosecutors.

## **Exhumation of victims brings death threats**

The Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation works to discover and exhume clandestine mass graves from the Guatemalan civil war. The forensic evidence that they gather is crucial for the documentation of human rights abuses and prosecution of the perpetrators of the crimes. However, the anthropologists and their families receive repeated death threats for their work and are being forced to risk their own lives in the effort to discover the truth about past massacres. Threats often include description of brutality, rape and dismemberment of family members. Threat victims receive police protection, but claim that it is unreliable.

## **Amnesty International Canada asks for letters about the violence against women, asking the Guatemalan government to:**

- ensure prompt and thorough investigations of cases of missing and murdered women, and ensure that court proceedings are conducted in a timely manner.
- abolish provisions that discriminate against women. This includes criminalizing domestic violence, making marital rape a criminal offence, and abolishing provisions that allow perpetrators to avoid punishment by marrying the victim,
- follow up on a commitment to establish a National Forensic Institute, and ensure that necessary funding is provided for it to do critical work, and
- implement processes for respectful reporting, documenting, and tracking of acts of violence against women and girls to ensure that government, police, and judicial policies and practices are effective in addressing this violence.

Guatemala's representative in Canada is His Excellency Manuel Estuardo Roldan Barillas, Ambassador  
Embassy of Guatemala, 130 Albert Street, Suite 1010, Ottawa ON K1P 5G4. Email [embguate@web ruler.com](mailto:embguate@web ruler.com)

# Assault and intimidation of journalists

By: Marcos Gómez

**On the evening of World Press Freedom Day, May 3, 2007. Mario Rolando López Sánchez, a producer for nationally broadcast Radio Sonora, was shot and killed outside his home in Guatemala City.**

A founding member of Radio Sonora, López Sánchez ran a popular political debate program called “Cosas y casos de la vida nacional,” a show critical of Guatemalan politics. The killing was likely politically motivated. The victim was not robbed and Guatemala’s presidential campaign launched the same day.

In Guatemala, threats against investigators of government and corporate wrongdoing have become commonplace. Since the end of the country’s civil conflict in 1996, abuses of media workers have increased. The same is true for Latin America as a whole. In 2006 the World Association of Newspapers reported the murders of twenty-five media workers in Latin America (not including numerous suspicious disappearances), up from eighteen the previous year.

In Guatemala, it is widely believed that the groups responsible for the attacks are clandestine organizations linked to the country’s political parties, business sector, private security companies, as well as ex- and current military personnel. According to Amnesty International USA, these groups have infiltrated Guatemala’s state structure and are utilizing their connections with political and corporate officials to monopolize the country’s illegal activities and receive immunity from judicial prosecution.

Arrests have been made in the case of López Sánchez, but the apprehen-

sion of suspects in similar cases across the country is not the norm. Since 2001, only two cases involving assaulted or murdered journalists in Guatemala have made it to trial.

In 2006 the Guatemalan government decriminalized press offences which enabled the press to criticize public officials without fear of prosecution. Nonetheless, the harassment and violent intimidation of journalists has actually increased since this decision. This is due in part to a lack of state control over public security, and also to the proliferation of violent gangs linked to the nation’s security forces.

The attacks on employees of Radio

*“They crushed anyone whom they perceived to be a threat—reporters, union people, human rights activists, clergy, etc.—all the while appropriating more of the country’s wealth for themselves”*

10, a Guatemala City-based radio station that openly discusses the country’s economic and political scandals, illustrates this rise in abuses.

In 2005, personnel began reporting acts of aggression against the station. The theft of broadcasting equipment, interference with the station’s transmission signal and judicial harassment are just a few of the obstacles the station dealt with in order to continue censor-free broadcasting. In mid-2006, however, aggressors began to threaten staff members with physical violence.

Last August Oscar Castañeda,

General Director of Radio 10, was reporting on alleged tax evasion by Avicola Villalobos, one of Central America’s largest agricultural conglomerates, when a caller threatened him on-air.

“By talking about tax evasion you are digging your own grave,” the caller said. “We are giving you eight days to leave the country.”

The following day, Vinicio Mancilla, Castañeda’s colleague at Radio 10, was attacked during an early morning jog. Mancilla was stopped by two men on a motorbike. One of the men took out a gun and put it in Mancilla’s mouth.

“This is to shut you up,” the gunman said before pulling the trigger. Miraculously Mancilla survived.

Less than three weeks later, Eduardo Maas Bol, a human rights defender and journalist for various Guatemalan media outlets, was not so lucky. He was shot and killed in his car as he returned home after a night out in Coban. Family and friends say the murder is suspicious. Much like the López Sánchez case, nothing was missing from the body or the car.

Shortly after Maas Bol’s death Oscar Castañeda asked the Guatemalan government for protection, but months later his request has yet to be fulfilled. In early May 2007, the station director filed a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to condemn the failure of Oscar Berger’s government to investigate death threats and attempted murders of Radio 10 employees.

The intimidation puts pressure on a country’s media groups to self-censor, so that media are reluctant to report on sensitive issues such as politics, big business, and other areas that shape Guatemalan society. A lack of freedom

of the press also compromises the nation's democratic structure. A frightened and poorly informed public creates a social environment where citizens find it difficult to organize and make conscientious decisions about the political and economic fate of their nation.

Even so, the deaths of journalists Maas Bol and López Sánchez shows the dedication of the Guatemalan media to creating a society where the country's political and corporate sectors are held accountable for their actions.

## Assaults of human rights workers go unpunished

by Marcos Gómez

**I**n the past few years especially, human rights defenders, social activists and trade unionists have regularly been the victims of assault, harassment, death threats and even murder because of their investigation of abuses committed during and after the civil conflict. In the first forty days of 2007, one break-in and at least twenty acts of intimidation were reported by defenders of human rights.

In 2006, attacks on human rights workers reached 278, 14 of them murders. In 2005 there were 224 attacks with 3 murders. According to Amnesty International USA, few of these attacks have been fully investigated. In the cases that have been investigated at length, evidence points toward the 'clandestine groups', which are criminal networks involving the business sector, private security companies, common criminals, gang members and ex and current members of the armed forces.

The government of Oscar Berger has been stalling the investigation of recent human rights abuses against journalists, rights workers, justice officials, social activists and the like. Since Berger's arrival to power in 2004, hundreds of cases of harassment, assault and murder of human rights defenders continue to be unsolved. The President's inability to pressure the nation's police force to seek justice has resulted in the "little progress" that has been made.

In September 2005 an Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Guatemala was opened to improve the condition of human rights in Guatemala, yet the office's first report, published in February 2006, indicates that "the situation (for human rights defenders) has worsened since there has been little progress in prevention or in the investigation and punishment of those responsible."

"Ríos Montt ruled Guatemala between March 1982 and August 1983, during which the most extensive human rights violations of the 36-year conflict were committed. In that time, the Guatemalan government led a brutal campaign to wipe out large portions of the country's indigenous populations using methods of cruelty described as an outrage to the moral conscience of the civilized world."

- Renata Rendón, Amnesty International USA

## Beyond the reach of law

### Former dictator still immune from arrest

*General Ríos Montt is accused of genocide, torture, and illegal detentions during the civil war, but more than ten years after the end of the war he has been neither tried nor extradited. The former dictator defends himself by citing his right to due process and proper legal proceedings, a right denied thousands of Mayans under his rule.*

**O**n July 7, 2006 the Spanish International Court issued an international arrest warrant for ex-Guatemalan dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt. Spanish Judge Santiago Pedraz, who was denied access to the ex-general for interrogation in June 2006, issued the warrant for crimes against humanity committed during Montt's rule in the early 1980s.

Ríos Montt's military regime of March 1982-August 1983 was the bloodiest period of Guatemala's 36-year civil conflict. Charges of torture, genocide, illegal detention and state-sponsored terrorism against Montt and seven others were presented to the Spanish Court in 1999 by author and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú.

After the warrant was issued, Ríos Montt admitted in a press conference to 'excesses' committed during his regime, but he vehemently denied any responsibility.

On January 17, 2007 81-year-old Ríos Montt announced his bid for a seat in congress in the September 2007 elections, which, if won, would make him immune from any charges brought against him. Amnesty International and other Guatemalan human rights groups have been urging the Guatemalan Constitutional Court to act on the country's commitment to international and domestic law and hand over the ex-General to Spain or try him directly in Guatemala.



# Elvira & Gary - their stories

## ELVIRA

*At the height of the war, thousands of people fled into the mountains where they formed Communities of Popular Resistance (CPR). Elvira lived in one such CPR. At the end of the war, her community of approximately 60 families was resettled in El Peten where she now lives.*

"In 1980 we had to flee to the mountains. We had to leave everything behind: family members, land,



houses, and animals. Wherever we went, the army followed. They would come in helicopters, which meant we had to flee once more. We could not stay in any place very long. We did not want to go over the border to Mexico

because we had the hope that one day we would be free. We had to confront the problem.

There has been very little improvement since the peace accords were signed. We receive very little support from the government. For instance, we have health promoters, but often no medicine. We also have problems with the education of our children. What support we receive comes from international organizations in Sweden and Canada."

## GARY

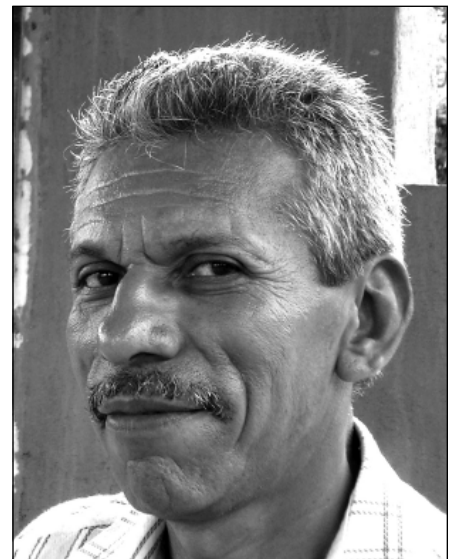
*Prior to the war, Gary was a catechist. He says that the Church removed the blindfold from his eyes and he realized that he had to fight and so he joined the guerrilla forces. He was involved in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Peace Accords. He says that he has the same objectives that he had during the war, but now he uses political tools to fight on behalf of the poor.*

"This year there have been eight occasions of people being thrown off their land. Many others have been threatened with the same thing. The Peten used to be a place where people had a plot of land, worked it, and owned it. Now other people own the land. We are working to give the *campesinos* legal papers to the land so that it won't be taken from them.

The Puebla Panama Plan and free-

trade agreements are also of great concern to us. It is easy to say >no' but we must say what we will do instead. We visit local communities to talk about these projects and to develop alternatives.

We are also struggling against hydro-electric dams and oil companies which force many people off their land. This is where our radio station comes into play. We use it for education and expressing the views of the community. It serves as an alternative to the mainstream press.



An important benefit of the Peace Accords is freedom of expression. Before, if I'd said what I am saying now, I would have been called a communist. I'd be dead."

- Interviewed by Ernie Schibli Nov 2006

## Internship opportunity

The Upstream journal welcomes applicants who wish to intern with the magazine in September - December 2007 or January - April 2008. Internships can include work in writing, editing,, art, marketing or production. Please contact the editor, Derek MacCuish, by email [editor@upstreamjournal.org](mailto:editor@upstreamjournal.org)

# « Operación Trueno » - les compagnies de sécurité privée ont carte blanche au Honduras

Par Nadia Tjoti

**L'**avocat et défenseur des droits de la personne **Dionisio Diaz** a été abattu en pleine rue à Tegucigalpa alors qu'il s'apprêtait à porter plainte contre l'organisation de sécurité privée SETECH. Diaz, mandaté par l'association AJS (Association pour une société plus juste) et connu dans son pays comme ardent défenseur des droits de la personne avait été menacé à plusieurs reprises avant son exécution. Diaz laisse derrière lui une femme et une fille de 7 ans. Il s'apprêtait à traduire en justice SETECH au nom d'anciens employés. Il travaillait en étroite collaboration avec des inspecteurs du Ministère du travail pour exposer les méthodes employées par cette compagnie.

SETECH est accusé d'avoir forcé ses employés à opérer des gardes pouvant aller jusqu'à 24 heures successives, d'avoir refusé de cotiser à la caisse de sécurité sociale pourtant obligatoire dans le pays, et d'avoir pratiqué des

licenciements arbitraires. Le gouvernement Hondurien à ce jour n'a entamé aucune poursuite à l'encontre de SETECH ni de son propriétaire Richard Swasey, un citoyen américain.

D'autres avocats membres d'AJS ont aujourd'hui repris l'affaire et sont eux aussi victimes de menaces. Les conditions de sécurités se dégradent au Honduras, et devant la montée de la violence, des compagnies de sécurités privées comme SETECH sont aujourd'hui habilitées par le gouvernement à utiliser « les mesures nécessaires » pour éradiquer le problème de la violence.

Le Honduras fait face depuis les vingt dernières années à une montée croissante de la violence et du crime organisé. Un des pays les plus pauvres d'Amérique Centrale (deuxième après le Nicaragua) où la classe moyenne est quasi inexistante, les disparités entre riche et pauvre grandissante et la corruption florissante.

Devant cette réalité la jeunesse pauvre et les enfants de la rue sont souvent amenés à rejoindre des groupes armés criminels, les Maras. Pour lutter contre ce phénomène alarmant une nouvelle réforme nommée « Operación Trueno » a été instituée par le nouveau gouvernement conservateur de Manuel Zelaya et vise à éradiquer le problème de la



Dionisio Diaz. Photo: Association pour une société plus juste.

manière forte « mano dura ». Cette réforme autorise les compagnies de sécurités privées à seconder la police et l'armée, ils sont légalement habilités à maintenir l'ordre de la manière qu'ils jugent nécessaire.

Les compagnies de sécurités privées deviennent la troisième force armée dans le pays. Ainsi, plus de 20 000 (officiellement) hommes armés et 60 000 (officieusement) sont habilités à gérer le problème avec pour seule législation l'article 11 Reglamento para el Registro, Control, Supervisión y Vigilancia de las Empresas de Seguridad Privada, Investigación, Capacitación y Grupos Internos de Seguridad, qui stipule simplement que « les compagnies de sécurités privées ont l'obligation de mettre en place un plan de formation pour leur personnel qui devra être approuvé chaque année par le Ministère de la sécurité ».

Pour les organisations de protection de droit de la personne et notamment



Burger King, Tegucigalpa. Photo par Craig T. Edwards



Security guards in training

Bertha Oliva coordinatrice pour Comité de Familiares Detenidos y Desaparecidos, CODAFEH (Le Comité pour les familles des détenus et des disparus) cette situation est « scandaleuse » et « viole directement la constitution de la république. » D'autre part, Oliva soutient que « Les méthodes employées par ces groupes armés sont en marge de la loi. »

En effet, d'après Manuel Bermudez journaliste d'Inter Press Service News dans un article paru le 6 septembre 2006, il se pratique actuellement un nombre impressionnant d'exécutions extrajudiciaire de jeunes délinquants. Des corps d'adolescents ont été retrouvés pieds et mains liés sur les bords de l'autoroute principale du pays. Bien qu'il y ait des preuves associant la police et les compagnies de sécurités pri-

vement aux escadrons de la mort, les autorités justifient ces méthodes par la « limpieza social » (nettoyage social) qui font partie de la politique de « tolérance zéro » du nouveau gouvernement.

Mais que faire pour lutter contre le crime organisé dans un pays extrêmement pauvre qui dépend lourdement d'investisseurs étrangers et qui souhaite en attirer plus. D'après Oliva « ce n'est pas la violence qui va sauver le pays, c'est elle qui va le perdre ».

Le pays a déjà traversé dans les années 80 une phase de violence et de répression militaire, la présence des forces armées aujourd'hui réveille des vieilles blessures pour les défenseurs des droits de la personne. COFADEH et ASJ deux organisations de défense des droits de la personne prônent en faveur de réforme démocratique, « une réforme visant à former et à éduquer la jeunesse du pays pour leur donner accès à des emplois et à des opportunités » suggère Abram coordinateur d'ASJ. Oliva et Abram soutiennent aussi une réforme visant à mettre « un terme à l'impunité et à la

corruption qui règne dans le pays ».

Deux compagnies de sécurité privée ont été contactées et ont refusés de commenter sur la situation, d'après eux il n'y a pas de relation entre le problème des Maras et leur travail.

### Les Maras

Les Maras sont un mouvement de gang créé par d'anciens immigrants illégaux qui résidaient à Los Angeles et qui furent déportés en Amérique centrale. À leur retour ces gangs ont recruté parmi les populations les plus défavorisées notamment des jeunes des quartiers pauvres. Aujourd'hui le phénomène Maras s'est rependu au travers de toute l'Amérique centrale, aux États-Unis, au Canada et en Europe.

Les Maras ont généralement entre 12 et 25 ans. Ultraviolents, ils ont construit un monde parallèle avec ses règles, ses rites initiatiques, son économie, sa moralité. Un quotidien ponctué de trafic de drogues, de vols, de rackets, de viols et d'assassinats. C'est aujourd'hui, selon les spécialistes, le réseau criminel le plus étendu d'Amérique et l'un des plus prolifiques au monde. Pour ces jeunes, les Maras sont devenues une famille et la violence, un mode de vie. On estime à ce jour 36 000 adhérents rien qu'au Honduras.

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# eye on the World Bank and IMF

By Amy Steele

**D**uring the past few months, World Bank employees have come increasingly under fire for their roles in various scandals, and cover-ups. Exposed by government watchdog and whistleblower protection agency Government Accountability Project (GAP), these events have shown that the Bank's governance structure is far more influenced by U.S. domestic and foreign policy than about addressing the needs of the world's poor. However, they have also shown that the Bank's sometimes-questionable policies and practices in developing countries are no longer out of the gaze of the media, and are being met with harsh and effective criticism on a global scale.

## Paul Wolfowitz

The first scandal involved Bank President and well-known architect of the war in Iraq, Paul Wolfowitz. Upon his appointment as head of the Bank, Wolfowitz became champion of the fight against corruption and the push for transparency in governance. He frequently suspended development aid to countries such as India, Chad and Kenya, citing corruption and lack of transparency in their governments and their private sectors.

His personal integrity came into question when a World Bank employee revealed that Shaha Riza, a former employee of the World Bank with whom Wolfowitz is romantically involved,

received raises and a compensation package upon leaving the bank far in excess of what is permissible under World Bank regulations. Wolfowitz engineered the package. Riza currently makes a tax-free salary of \$193,590, which is greater than that of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Under extreme pressure from governments and civil society groups Wolfowitz

*“Daboub instructed his staff to eliminate references to family planning and reproductive rights from the World Bank's new Health, Nutrition and Population strategy”*

stepped down as president at the end of June. He is the first World Bank president ever to be forced out.

Wolfowitz claims he was ganged up on because of his role in the Iraq war. However, employees at the Bank considered his corruption policies as hypocritical in light of recent allegations, and say his lapse of ethics merited his removal from the institution.

## Women's health care

Two lesser-known issues involve one of Wolfowitz's hand-picked depu-

ties, the Bank's Managing Director Juan Jose Daboub. Daboub is the former finance minister of El Salvador. He has alleged links to Opus Dei and is a member of El Salvador's right wing ARENA party, which opposes contraception and equal rights for women. Daboub is a supporter of the Bush administration's anti-family planning and abstinence policies.

In May, it was leaked that Daboub sought to remove all references to family planning from the Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) of Madagascar, despite a strong request by the Madagascar government to include these services as a core component of World Bank support for its health sector. Country Assistance Strategies are long term plans that lay out World Bank lending priorities for a country.

Daboub also instructed his staff to eliminate references to family planning and reproductive rights from the World Bank's new Health, Nutrition and Population strategy (HNP). CAS's are developed using this global strategy. The previous HNP, drafted in 1997, identified lack of access to family planning services as a primary health challenge and identified this area as a priority for World Bank Country Assistance Strategies.

“Removal of these references would have had a dramatic impact on funding programs that address sexual and reproductive health,” said Serra Sippel of the Centre for Health and Gender Equity. The move was said to be re-

garded by World Bank staff as a potential setback to its policy of supporting contraception as part of its efforts to fight AIDS.

According to the World Bank website, there are approximately 75 million unplanned pregnancies every year, one-third of which result in unsafe abortions.

"This effort to deprive impoverished women and men in poor countries of the freedom to control their family size, while condemning women to unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions, is unthinkable in a public health program prepared by a development institution," said Bea Edwards, international program director for the Government Accountability Project, a Washington NGO.

In a letter to his staff, Daboub claimed that "none of the editorial changes that were made at my direction changed, or intended to change, the Bank Group's program in the area of family planning. There has been no change to the Bank's policy on family planning."

However, the omissions and changes to the strategy were then strengthened by U.S. Executive Director to the Bank's board, E. Whitney Debevoise, who also sought to insert the phrase "age appropriate access to sexual and reproductive health care". This addition would have denied young women in developing countries access to these services, the population who needs them most. Debevoise also sought to change "reproductive health services" to "reproductive care", and "reproductive rights" to "reproductive health." The change from "services" to care would have had a dramatic impact on funding programs that address sexual and reproductive health, and the elim-

ination of the word "rights" denies that proper reproductive care is something women deserve and to which they are entitled.

"This (U.S.) administration has used sexual and reproductive health issues on a global level to throw a bone to the right wing in the US. To them, women's lives in developing countries are totally expendable," Serra Sippel said.

Outcry from civil society groups such as GAP, CHANGE, International Planned Parenthood Federation, and even the World Bank's European

*“This administration has used sexual and reproductive health issues on a global level to throw a bone to the right wing in the US.”*

Executive Directors, all came together to put the proper language back in the HNP and reaffirm previous Bank commitments. According to Serra Sippel: "This is definitely a victory. It is a really great example of how advocacy *can* work."

### **"Clean energy" not "climate change"**

In a separate incident, in February 2006, Daboub tried to water down references to climate change in an environmental strategy paper. World Bank officials were asked to "refocus" a policy paper "shifting from a climate lens mainly to a clean energy lens" to emphasize the clean energy investment

framework. All references to climate change were taken out of the strategy paper and replaced with "climate risk" or "climate variability."

According to GAP's Bea Edwards this was "yet another example of Mr. Wolfowitz' attempt to align Bank policy with the ideological positions of the Bush administration." Although there is a global scientific consensus on the reality of climate change, the US administration denies that climate change is an urgent problem that requires cuts in emissions.

On the World Bank's website, however, it states that "developing countries and particularly the world's poorest people would be the ones most harmed by changes of climate and extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves, and rising sea levels."

There are concerns that there may be numerous other 'altered' documents that have not been brought to public attention. If World Bank senior management continue to promote right-wing American ideology instead of the interests of the world's poor, it is possible that this sort of thing will only become more common.

"There are people towing the US line on all these different areas, which is very concerning," Serra Sippel said. "As long this administration is in office and continues to put their people in there, the fight is never over."

Following the resignation of Wolfowitz, the US nominated Robert Zoellick to be World bank president. He assumed the office unopposed.

*Amy Steele played the part of the World Bank in the SJC's theatre production in the winter, 2007.*

### **Do you have a comment on this situation?**

**Juan Deboub** is a Managing Director at the World Bank, responsible to the President for several programs, including Africa, Sustainable Development, and Human Development. His email address is [jdeboub@worldbank.org](mailto:jdeboub@worldbank.org). Canada's representative at the World Bank is **Samy Watson**. His email address is [swatson1@worldbank.org](mailto:swatson1@worldbank.org).



# New challenges for the IMF

## as it faces charges of a “business as usual” approach and of forcing cuts to social spending

*From the European Network on Debt and Development with contribution by Asma Ishak*

**T**he future looks murky for the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Set up after WWII, the IMF's main role was to regulate exchange rates and provide short-term financial support for countries. For decades the IMF, and its counterpart the World Bank, enjoyed a virtual monopoly over lending to poor and emerging countries, but things have changed. Brazil, India and China, once large debtors, have now diversified their palate with new private sources of funding effectively removing the previous monopoly of the Fund and the Bank.

Adding to the problems facing the IMF, criticism of its policies continues. Three recent studies - two from NGOs, the other from the IMF's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) - highlight problems with IMF engagement in poor countries and its reluctance to

evolve even as there is consideration of a new role for the institution in development efforts.

In June, the Center for Global Development (CGD) contributed its report “Does the IMF Constrain Health Spending in Poor Countries? Evidence and an Agenda for Action.” The report from the CGD, a Washington nonprofit think tank focused on global poverty, found that the IMF purposely cut health spending in developing countries, even when economic conditions were favourable. The IMF responded to the report by agreeing with some of the critiques but blasted it for its lack of nuance regarding certain issues. Jo-Marie Griesgraber, who played a role in producing the report, contends that it was in fact “so carefully nuanced that it caused dissension among the group.”

The study explored criticisms of the IMF's macroeconomic policies and the impact they actually have on health spending in low-income countries, supported by in-depth case studies from Mozambique, Rwanda, and Zambia. The report found that “the evidence suggests that IMF-supported fiscal programs have often been too conservative or risk-averse. In particular, the IMF has not done enough to explore more expansionary, but still feasible, options for higher public spending.”

A report from ActionAid found that a major factor behind the chronic and severe shortage of teachers is that IMF policies have required many poor countries to freeze or curtail teacher recruitment. The April 2007 report, “Confronting the Contradictions: The IMF, wage bill caps and the case for teachers,” builds on previous research

with new in-depth country case studies from Malawi, Mozambique and Sierra Leone.

An emerging question is whether the IMF should have a close-to-developmental role in low-income countries. Most NGOs, bearing in mind the Fund's track record in Low Income Countries, tend to think that the IMF should rather “get out of the South.”

In March 2007, the IMF's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) published a report entitled “The IMF and Aid to Sub-Saharan Africa,” which found that significant percentages of foreign aid to these countries during these years were not programmed to be spent because of IMF policies on currency reserve levels and inflation rates.

As part of the larger context for the IMF's tight monetary policies, one of the major overarching findings of the IEO report was that the IMF Executive Board and senior management were never really enthusiastic about the emphasis placed by donors on “poverty reduction” or the new efforts to scale-up aid and spending for the MDGs. Despite claims of policy change and improvements in its programs, the IEO report concluded that things “gravitated back to business as usual.”

Some leading NGO spokespersons argue that the things have not significantly changed at the Fund because its very structure is the problem: its mandate, hierarchy, rigidity and so forth. Leading NGOs point out that because the IMF's priority is reducing inflation, all other considerations like health care fall to the wayside - a concern echoed by the IEO which identified a preference for fiscal governance over poverty and social impact.



Robert Zelick, the new president of the World Bank. He was selected by the Bush administration; the IMF is seeking a new Director, who will be selected by the European Union, reaffirming a decades-old power-sharing arrangement. Photo© Simone D. McCourtie/World Bank



## Friends like these?

had heard some criticism of the Canadian government's decision to make their office in Guatemala City a true embassy. It was feared that this would be interpreted as approval of the Rios Montt regime, thus giving it a certain legitimacy. However, those of us who visited Guatemala during the war quickly came to see that the Canadian embassy did play a helpful and important role on behalf of the poor and persecuted. This certainly contributed to the good reputation we Canadians enjoyed during the war years among all but those who supported the military.

On the recent trip, though, we heard criticism of Canada. The activities of Canadian mining companies, and the Canadian embassy's aggressive support for them, is well-known by readers of the *Upstream Journal*. Even as the people of Sipacapa and San Miguel Ixtahuacan were demonstrating their opposition to the gold mine being developed nearby, Canadian ambassador James Lambert and his staff launched a strong pro-mining propaganda campaign. (In Honduras, we learned that officials from the embassy had done the same there.)

Here in Canada some of us rather naively believed that the embassy had been pushing its own agenda, not Ottawa's. When Kenneth Cook was named the new ambassador, we hoped that the embassy would moderate its position. How sadly mistaken we were. In the last several months, events surrounding the forceful expulsion of people from settlements on land claimed by a Canadian-owned nickel mine in El Estor demonstrate that Cook isn't much different from Lambert, at least when it comes to supporting the mining industry. This is a "made in Ottawa" policy. The wishes of the local people are of no account. No wonder that our reputation as friends of the Guatemalan people has taken a major hit.

The picture I have painted would be rather bleak if it weren't for the resiliency of so many people we met. Despite the setbacks and even some discouragement, many are continuing to work for better times. They continue to meet, organize and make their voices heard, even when the opposition seems insurmountable. They are determined to keep the peace accords alive for, as one interviewee said "Too much blood has been spilt to let them die." And, despite the failings of our government and mining corporations, they still look at Canadians as friends who will continue to work with them. Will we?

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Ernie Schibli is one of the SJC's most sought-after speakers.  
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**R**ecently at the office I happened to glance at several large binders containing back issues of the *Upstream Journal*. Out of curiosity I decided to take a look at an issue (known then as *News Notes*) from the summer of 1982, twenty-five years ago. To my surprise, the lead article was a report that Barbara Zerter and I had written about a trip to Chiapas, Mexico, and the Guatemalan refugees who had fled their homeland.

A little earlier that year, General Rios Montt had staged a coup in Guatemala. According to our article, the international community was quite accepting of the coup and was already praising the new government for its improving respect for human rights and its fight against corruption. At the SJC we were skeptical; we had been receiving messages of widespread atrocities in the highlands, people slaughtered as their villages were attacked and burned.

As it turned out, we were among the first international visitors to verify that the reports of massacres were indeed true. We now know that 1982 proved to be one of the most horrible years of Guatemala's long war against its own people.

Last summer, ten years after the signing of the peace accords which brought an end to war, three of us were back in Guatemala, asking survivors of the repression about their lives since the war's end.

Life for them is somewhat better, with more freedom to organize and speak out. The economic situation has also improved, but people were quick to add that this is largely because many have relatives who fled to 'the north' and now send money back to their families.

Sadly, people also said that there really isn't any peace in Guatemala. Grinding poverty, unjust distribution of land and wealth, growing numbers of human rights violations, and widespread corruption don't permit it. After all, these were the reasons people took up arms in the first place. Clearly, the country's economic and political elites have no intention of respecting the peace accords. As one person said, "each year it becomes harder to hope."

In the 1982 article, we explicitly mentioned that we

# SJC launches expanded public education program

As the Coordinator of Public Education for the SJC, I can tell you that this is an exciting time for us. We're looking forward to the months ahead as a time for the SJC to increase its visibility in the community, reach out to new members and partners and embrace the enthusiasm that is growing both within the organization, and in the public at large.

In the last year, interest in our work has increased dramatically. Thousands of visitors to our new website, dozens of new interns and volunteers, and increased demand for our group presentations are all the result of the SJC's efforts to expand our reach and promote our social justice work through public education that is innovative and inspiring.

This year, several new initiatives will be added to our successful public education program.

To launch the year, the SJC will host "*¡Arriba las Mujeres! Women Building Strong Communities*," an international conference on women's empowerment and social economy in Latin America and Canada. Women from community organizations in Guatemala, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Canada will explore the role of alternative economic models (such as co-ops, collectives, loan circles and micro-finance initiatives) in women's lives and in their communities. By reaching out to other groups who are active in these areas, the SJC has forged valuable new partnerships with other non-profit organizations, community organizations, and universities, which will allow us to expand our network and the scope of the SJC's work in the coming years.

A formalized **internship program** will train students in popular education techniques, teach them to animate the SJC's small group presentations, and match them up with groups interested in seeing presentations. We will be working in partnership with area universities to promote the internship program and the work of the SJC on campuses throughout Montreal. With more presenters available, we will be able to extend the reach of our public education work and meet the demand for our popular presentations. A similar internship program for the SJC's popular mining presentation is also under consideration.

The SJC's interactive dinner theatre presentation, "**The Dictatorship of Debt**," will also undergo a transformation

this year when the theatre troupe will work more closely with the office volunteers and benefit from the addition of a part-time staff person to manage the stage production. With funding from AQOCI, the SJC will be able to expand the theatre program by altering the dinner-theatre format and transforming the show into a travelling theatre piece that will be performed at schools throughout the Montreal region.

With funding from CIDA, the SJC has hired Elvira Truglia to continue work on "**A Different World**", an educational tool-kit for secondary school students. Its 250 pages include two teaching modules designed to help students develop the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to become responsible citizens in an interdependent world. In the upcoming year, the SJC will focus on promoting the tool-kit as an important resource for teachers who want to provide their students with a dynamic curriculum that encourages active citizenship and respect for human rights.

The **Urgent Action Network** will continue to improve and will benefit from our move to an automated mail system that allows for on-line subscription and a more polished look. Individuals can register to get our e-bulletins, with alerts, events notices and SJC updates, at the web site ([www.s-j-c.net](http://www.s-j-c.net)).

Within community organizations and NGO's, the summer months are usually a time to slow down and take a break from the hectic program year. Apparently the Social Justice Committee team didn't get that message! The last several months have been an exceptionally busy time. With six summer interns, a dozen volunteers and an additional staff person hired to help coordinate the "*¡Arriba las Mujeres*," conference, the SJC office has been a busy place. Watch for the results of all this energy and enthusiasm in the coming year.



Margo Foster

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Keep up to date with the SJC e-bulletin Visit [www.s-j-c.net](http://www.s-j-c.net) & click the yellow box  
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Visitez le [www.s-j-c.net](http://www.s-j-c.net) & cliquez sur <e-bulletin>



The Social Justice Committee  
Le Comité pour la justice sociale

**The Social Justice Committee of Montreal** has been working to raise awareness of the root causes of hunger, poverty and repression in the world through our education programs since 1975. We work in solidarity with organizations in a number of Third World countries in the search for a more just and sustainable global socio-economic system.

The Social Justice Committee depends on financial support from its members and the general public. It is a registered charitable organization; donations are tax deductible.

**We invite you to donate today, and become a member by supporting the mission of the Social Justice Committee to:**

- Analyze the underlying structural and global causes of poverty, human rights violations and other social injustices.
- Contribute to informed popular participation in eliminating these injustices.
- *Work in solidarity to transform our world into a just society.*

*The Social Justice Committee believes that social and economic change is essential for the creation of a sustainable world, and that each person has the right and the responsibility to participate in the process.*

The **Upstream Journal** is published by the **Social Justice Committee, Montreal**. The Upstream Journal focuses on economic, social and cultural rights, reflecting the SJC perspective of Third World poverty as a human rights issue.

Subscription to the Upstream Journal is by donation, which goes to support a range of SJC educational projects. The journal is published five times a year, at irregular intervals between September and June.

Views expressed in the Upstream Journal are the writers' own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Social Justice Committee. We welcome the submission of illustrations and articles on aspects of international development and human rights.

Le Comité pour la justice sociale remercie le **ministère des Relations internationales** de son appui à sa mission d'éducation à la solidarité internationale.

The Social Justice Committee thanks the **Québec Ministry of International Relations** for its support of our mission of education on behalf of international solidarity.

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- ☐ Yes, I support the mission of the Social Justice Committee and would like to become a member.
- ☐ My contribution is enclosed. For credit card donations, call toll-free 1-866-RIGHTS-2
- ☐ I am unable to make a contribution at this time, but I would like to receive the Upstream Journal.

# Conference: ¡Arriba las Mujeres!

## Women Building Strong Communities

The **¡Arriba las Mujeres!** conference evolved from the Social Justice Committee's ongoing involvement in public education work around human rights abuses in Central America and policy research and education on international financial institutions. It will serve as a gathering point for sharing experiences and research related to women's empowerment through alternative economic models, especially participation in economic collectives, co-operatives, barter networks, and micro-finance initiatives. We hope you can join us!

The SJC is proud to host these inspiring women from Guatemala, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Honduras:

**ROSA GARCIA CORADO- GUATEMALA** Rosa Garcia Corado is a member of the Alianza por la Vida y la Paz, a coalition of social and popular organizations, indigenous and ladino women and men from the Petén, Guatemala. The Alianza strives for respect for life and peace, and fights against economic, social, cultural, political exploitation and exclusion. Rosa will speak on the panel "**Latin American Context for Women and the Social Economy**," and will present a **workshop exploring the social economy as a response to globalization**.

**VICTORIA ALVERCA- ECUADOR** At the age of 16, Victoria Alverca was a founding member of Fapecafes, a fair trade coffee cooperative in Ecuador. From a family of coffee farmers, Victoria recently finished her university studies in community development while still working full time with Fapecafes. Victoria will speak on the panel "**Latin American Context for Women and the Social Economy**" and will animate a **workshop about youth involvement in Latin American cooperatives**.

**GLORIA DEL SOCORRO SIESAR GONZÁLEZ- NICARAGUA** Gloria del Socorro is the Secretary of the Administration Council of the Masaya Women's Cooperative. One of the main objectives of the cooperative is to seek economic, cultural, and technical improvements for its members, through joint action and appropriate services. The cooperative helps women develop their skills in crafts production and marketing, and provides sessions on gender analysis, women's self-esteem, and prevention of family violence. Gloria will speak on the panel "**Latin American Context for Women and the Social Economy**."

**TERESA LOPEZ- HONDURAS** Teresa Lopez works with the Simiente Foundation based in Honduras. Simiente formed in 2001 and focuses on sustainable agriculture and small livestock production, gender equity, micro-enterprise initiatives for women, and citizen participation. Teresa will speak on the panel "**Latin American Context for Women and the Social Economy**."

**EMILIA TORRES - NICARAGUA** Emilia Torres is president of the Administrative Council of the Association of Cultural Promoters of Nicaragua. The APC is a partner with Oxfam-Québec on the Water, Culture and Agriculture Project in Nicaragua. Ms. Torres is actively involved in work on the status of women and women's empowerment in Nicaragua. She is former director of the Nicaraguan Institute of Women and the Nicaraguan Institute of Culture. Emilia will speak on the panel "**Women's Empowerment in Latin America and Canada**."

*(Simultaneous Spanish/English/French translation for panels.)*

They will be joined by an exceptional group of **speakers from Canada**:

Nanci Lee (formerly of the Coady International Institute, St. Francis Xavier University), Dr. Margie Mendell (School of Community and Public Affairs, Concordia University), Professor Carmen Rico de Sotelo (Département de Communication Sociale et Publique, UQAM), Barbara Legault (Fédération des femmes du Québec), Sarah Rosenhek (Association for Women's Rights In Development), Lis Suarez (FEM International), Makai Harif (Afghan Women's Association of Montreal), Kerlande Mibel and Maria Cristina Gonzalez (Companie-F), Ilona Dougherty (Apathy is Boring), Clara Whyte (Gaia Vision), Michelle Switzer (Horizons of Friendship), Monika Firl (Cooperative Coffees Canada), Karen Craggs-Milne (Gender Equality Incorporated).

**Workshops** include:

Resource Mobilization for Building Women's Networks: Challenges and Potential Strategies (Association for Women's Rights In Development) Building Bridges Around the Globe: The FEM International Approach (FEM International) La economía social: Respuesta a la globalización (Alianza por la Vida y la Paz) Participación de los jóvenes en las cooperativas en Latinoamérica (Fapecafe) Women Working Together: Overcoming Obstacles to Women's Participation (Afghan Women's Collective) La Femme et le pouvoir : Atelier sur les moyens d'existence durable (Compagnie-F) The Youth Friendly Workshop (Apathy is Boring) Le rôle moteur des femmes dans la création de nouvelles solidarités locales et globales en Amérique Latine (Gaia Vision) Building Support for Southern Cooperatives (Horizons of Friendship) Fair Trade as a Socio-Economic Alternative (Cooperatives Coffees).



# *¡Arriba las Mujeres!*

Women Building Strong Communities  
Les femmes bâtissent des communautés dynamiques



## Conférence Internationale

Join speakers from Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Canada at this international conference on social economy and women's empowerment.

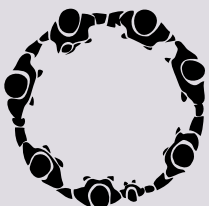
Venez joindre des orateurs du Guatemala, Honduras, Équateur, Bolivie, Nicaragua et Canada pour une conférence internationale sur l'économie sociale et la promotion du pouvoir des femmes.

**Sept. 14 - 15, 2007**  
**Le Nouvel Hôtel**  
**(Metro Guy-Concordia)**  
[www.arribalasmujeres.net](http://www.arribalasmujeres.net)

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