

# **REINTEGRATION BASED ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

## **The Republic of Guatemala**

- **Land area: 108.889 sq. Km**
- **Political division: 22 departments and 333 municipalities.**
- **Population: 13 million.**
- **55% of Mayan descent and 45% Mestizo. A minority of European descent**
- **Density: 110 inhabitants per sq. km**
- **Languages: Spanish, 21 Mayan languages. Garifuna and Xinca**

## **Background**

- **Guatemala experienced an internal armed conflict for 36 years.**
- **That ended with the signing of the Peace Accords in 1.996.**
- **There are two types of reintegrated population:**
- **Internal: Those who lived in the mountains.**
- **Returned Population: The refugees who lived at the border on the Mexican side.**
- **Approximately 100,000 people returned to their communities or in new areas.**



# COMMUNITY OF CHEL, CHAJUL IN NORTHERN QUICHE

- The case illustrates how civilian population, who were not a direct part in the conflict was involved in it. They fatally faced the options of collaborating with the guerrillas, taking refuge in the mountains or to patrol for the regular Army.



# PART OF THE STORY OF CHEL

- " ... Some ninety-five people, civilians and defenseless men, women and children, were massacred between eleven o'clock and two o'clock ..." (on April the 3rd 1982)
- The survivors stayed in hiding in the surrounding mountains and in the days that followed the slaughter, they came, with the utmost care, to the community to find their dead and to try to salvage some of their belongings. Also attempted to bury some of the victims ... "

# **“ A FEW DAYS AFTER THE MASSACRE...**

**Elements of the guerrillas gathered at the refugee population in the bushes around Chel. According to the rebels, the survivors had two choices: either live in the mountains under the protection of EGP or leave the area to be delivered to the regular Army” ...**

# DISPLACED

A lush green forest with a waterfall cascading over rocks. The water is white and frothy as it falls, surrounded by dense green foliage and trees. The scene is bright and natural.

**“ The displaced were living in the mountains between, a minimum of 18 months, until ten years ...**

**... On September 21, 1986 the first group of displaced returned to Chel and began to reorganize their community. At the same time, the Army formed the PAC and they did not allow the entry of the guerrillas in the village. In 1992 the PAC were dissolved.**

# STARTING FROM ZERO

*“There was nothing. No roads, no houses and no food..., nothing. We had to start from scratch” Thomas Iboy, a resident of the place tells .*





# BRINGING ELECTRICAL POWER

- In 1999, a group of residents raised an initiative to the population to awake them from the sleep after the war: to bring electricity to Chel in order to bring development.
- With this concern was born Chelense Hydropower Association, with the support of Fundación Solar. They managed to build a hydroelectric plant able to generate electrical power for 500 homes.



# CHEL, AT A STEP OF REACHING THEIR DREAM

***“ Building a Hydro electrical plant is the aspiration of Chel, a village in Quiche, seeking by every possible mean to have electrical power ”***

**Claudia Méndez Villaseñor**

Prensa Libre



# EVERYONE PARTICIPATES

- "When Work began, every body was involved. People carried the cables and the poles from the hammock bridge to Chel (10 kilometers)."
- In 2002, the same peasants who carried on his shoulders the lighting poles, opened the road that currently exists. Such access has enabled products to reach Chel hitherto little consumed, as vegetables, meats, soft drinks and sweets .

# **CHEL: A COMMUNITY THAT WAS DISPLACED**

- They have managed to maintain a harmonious and without crime problems relying solely on community organization and religious renewal.
- The elder of the community are the ones to take the key decisions, in consensus with the entire population.
- In that way they are able to maintain the harmony and control in the community.

# ANOTHER CASE: "THE NEW GENERACION MAYA"

- The New Generacion Maya is a community formed by 400 families of "returned" (who settled in various parts of Mexico during the conflict), located in the northwestern town of Barillas, Huehuetenango.
- On their return they received from the government an estate which, by common consent, was parceled.
- They have a community organization run entirely by their members.
- They have achieved a high degree of excellence.
- They masterfully control the community safety, despite being in a highly vulnerable area, because of its geographical position. They have managed to maintain peace, harmony and respect among all.



# “ RETURNEE COMMUNITIES EDUCATION CENTER OPENS

- GUATEMALA, SEP 13, 2000 (CERIGUA / CIMAC): Members of the community of returnees' The New Generacion Maya opened today an educational center. That will allow 400 children from the town, pre-primary and primary students, to study in decent buildings”
- The opening of this school is the product of the work of national and international organizations.
- They in a joint effort, have supported the people of this community since its return to the country in 1995, allowing to professionalize 22 educational outreach workers, who received the title of Rural Primary Teachers in 1999... 17 teachers received a university degree in intercultural education ...”

# THE PROCESS HAS INVOLVED

- Strengthening of community organization, respecting the cultural processes.
- Inclusion of family in all processes of growth.
- Promoting the role of women.
- Follow up in a renewed religious organization able to respond to the new expectations of the community.

Including these aspects, which are key components of the faith and the heart of these communities, a sustainable development has been reached and organized crime and violence have been successfully fought and controlled.

Accompanying and supporting renewable systems which are organized and managed from the bottom, with participatory approaches, they have been able to meet the daily challenges of strengthening the sustainable growth of their economy and the reconciliation process, in order to consolidate a real and enduring peace.

# GENERAL CONCLUSIONS :

- **Organized crime and delinquency are obstacles to the proper implementation of the reintegration process.**
- **In Guatemala reintegrated communities often lack confidence in organizational systems imposed from outside.**
- **The strengthening of peace and the ability to control any kind of destabilizing forces during the reintegration processes are closely linked to the ability to implement processes for sustainable development and promote cultural identity, with an open and respectful approach.**
- **Often, religious or social organizations that are involved in the processes of reintegration, influenced by perspectives coming from outside, have created groups of "privileged", generating different forms of violence, fighting, corruption and confrontation. These situations block the development, the strengthening of cultural identity and the stability of the reintegration process .**



# **SPECIFIC CONCLUSIONS:**

- **When the internal organization of the Communities has been respected and promoted, these communities have shown the ability to organize and develop security systems capable of maintaining harmony, controlling corruption, overcoming the violence attempts and the organized crime, while respecting human rights.**
- **The strengthening of community processes and organization have promoted further sustainable development, have spurred the integration of communities within the national system, yet maintaining their own autonomy, and are providing stability and strength to the processes of reintegration and peace.**

