

Guatemala

Country Overview



Language: Spanish (69%) & other Mayan languages (30%)

Religion: Roman Catholic, Protestant, & Indigenous Mayan beliefs

Capital: Guatemala City

Currency: Quetzal

Government: Democratic Republic

President: Jimmy Morales Cabrera

Population below poverty line: 59%

Key agricultural exports: sugar, coffee, bananas, and vegetables.

Willow Creek Partner: Saq'be

Location: Quetzaltenango

Environment: Urban and rural

Want to learn more about Guatemala?

www.willowcreek.org/globalinfo

Background

Guatemala has a long history of violence, political instability, and foreign corporations exploiting the country's natural and economic resources. After independence, Guatemala experienced a variety of military and civilian governments, as well as a 36-year guerrilla war. In 1996, the government signed a peace agreement formally ending the internal conflict, which had left more than 200,000 people dead and had created an estimated 1 million refugees. After the war ended, Guatemala re-established a representative democracy, but has continued to face a high crime rate and weak and corrupt law enforcement. The distribution of income remains highly unequal and the indigenous population is disproportionately affected by the social and economic problems. Guatemala is facing economic instability that was made worse by the multiple corruption scandals that led to the resignation of the president, vice president, and numerous high-level economic officials in 2015.

Hunger & Health

- ◆ A predominantly poor country that struggles in several areas of health and development; including infant, child, and maternal mortality, malnutrition, and literacy
- ◆ Nearly one-half of Guatemala's children under age five are chronically malnourished; one of the highest malnutrition rates in the world and highest fertility rate in Latin America
- ◆ The top causes of death are respiratory disease, interpersonal violence and cancer

About Willow's Partner: Saq B'e

Saq B'e is a faith-based, nongovernmental organization founded in 2007 to provide disaster relief efforts in response to the tropical storm Stan that hit in 2005. Over time it expanded to involve community development, health, education, and compassion programs in order to provide sustainable development. The organization partners with churches to alleviate hunger through farming programs.