



## **Informe #1: Guatemala at a Glance** *By Kris Schrader, ASC and Dani Brought, ASC* August 2008



*Pictures: left - Sr. Kris Schrader with Guatemalen woman,  
right – Sr. Dani Brought with Guatemalen woman*

We have been working on our Life Plan and Mission Statement, and one of our commitments is to “deepen our knowledge of Guatemala’s reality, mindful that our choice to be here demands from us an openness to the ‘cry of the Blood’ which begs our response as women who embrace the Spirituality of the Blood of Christ.”

How to make that real? One choice we make is to read, reflect and share information on Guatemala’s reality once a week in our community prayer time and once a month to send out a brief news update to those who in one way or another are a part of our presence here.

In life there are always BIG pictures and LITTLE pictures to share. In this “Informe” we wish to do that:

- These have been months of horrendous rains and mudslides which have washed out bridges and roads leaving parts of the country totally cut-off. Far worse than this is the number of deaths, folks buried alive in the capital city’s garbage dumps, the eastern area of Zacapa and areas around Lake Atitlan. The rains probably won’t stop until mid-October.
- The effects of the immigration round ups in the States, especially Postville, Iowa, have an impact here. Money sent back to families here is the #1 source of income for the country. In fact, the amount is greater than the sum of all exports. As this situation becomes more precarious, other consequences worsen and poverty and crime escalate. With the door to the U.S. closing, so too closes that window of hope for thousands who find themselves without formal education and the possibility of sustaining their families here. Organized crime has entrenched itself ever more, and seeming indiscriminate violence has escalated prompting the Cardinal Archbishop of Guatemala to speak of the “culture of death which prevails.”

An example would be the story of MOYA. He was a former Institute student trying to break from his gang connections and establish a business as an ironworker. Kris went to look for him for a job and, not finding him, stopped to ask some students. Their simple reply was unsettling. “MOYA? Ya no existe.” Moya no longer exists, no longer is with us, no longer lives -- a phrase spoken as if it is a common occurrence, a casual remark, a reference to an object and not as it really is...the life of another person, another human being who, as so many others here, was killed in the street. It is this reality that questions us as to how we can be a conduit of God’s voice, a sign of hope, the face and presence of Adorers.

The SMALL pictures speak to the seeding of hope.

- This month we had a week long visit from an Episcopalian church group from Dayton and Columbus, OH. They worked hard and were a joy to host.

- Mary Mathile (former owner of IAM's pet foods) whose family foundation has been a huge support, made a quick visit to the Health Care Project, complete with 3 cars of Israeli bodyguards. The village thought the president had come to visit.
- The Education Project received a large grant from the De Mattias fund of the ASC Foundation to develop a regional library and resource center.
- Margo is here for a 3 week visit. Yea! [*Note: Margo is Sister Margo, a Precious Blood Sister from Dayton, Ohio, who is also a physician. She is in the midst of a one-year sabbatical from her work in Guatemala.*]
- The new compost area is working great and Dani's replanted banana tree has yielded 3 new "hijos." (children). She checks it everyday.

Interesting facts: 1) US Airways and United no longer fly to Guatemala as of September 2<sup>nd</sup>; 2) The 30<sup>th</sup> Pizza Hut will open next week 3) Most U.S. companies do not pay taxes in Guatemala

So that's a bit of the feel for Guatemala at this moment. We'll be back to you at the end of September as we continue to question what does it mean for us with our spirituality to be here in Guatemala. Hasta pronto.