

# GUATEMALA

# THE PERFECT STORM

Impact of Climate Change and the Economic Crisis on Children and Adolescents



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Impact of Climate Change and the  
Economic Crisis on Children and  
Adolescents

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In Guatemala, both the effects of climate change and the global financial and economic crisis have led to a "perfect storm" that has had many consequences for children and adolescents and could limit the achievement of their full potential. In this document you will find facts, figures and testimonials from people who are suffering the brunt of these two phenomena, which originated outside the country but have severely affected on it.

The "perfect storm" resulting from rising prices, the difficult economic and financial situation, climate change and loss of employment opportunities has consequences for the country's population, some of which are reported here. This has increased the number of hungry people, affected their health and exposed them to increased vulnerability and abuse in a context of impunity, among others.

The sum of these crises increase social, environmental and economic vulnerability, as became apparent after the passage through Guatemala of Storm Agatha, which destroyed infrastructure and devastated thousands of hectares of agricultural production in twenty of the twenty-one provinces, or departments. Agatha had a significant psychosocial impact among those who were most affected, resulting in appalling numbers of displaced persons, dozens of deaths and damage to infrastructure and communication networks.

Behind each figure in this document, there are people who are an active and integral part of Guatemalan society, regardless of their gender, social, economic and ethnic status. This document also aims to shed light on the situation of children and adolescents in Guatemala, in order to develop adequate and appropriate responses in all areas of their lives. For this purpose, since September 2008, UNICEF has undertaken several actions to understand the consequences of climate change and economic crisis on children and adolescents using qualitative and quantitative surveys in different regions of the country.

Although there are no magic solutions, people's lives can change to the extent that they make the right decisions to achieve economic growth that is sustainable over time. This is the most efficient and least expensive way to deal with future economic crises and ensure better development for children and adolescents. If timely and appropriate decisions are not taken, things will change, but in a negative way.

Without neglecting analyses and studies, we must work to improve the situation of children and adolescents in Guatemala in view of the difficult situations that have been experienced and are expected in the future, given the circumstances surrounding climatic aspects, the food crisis and economic and financial problems.



Many Guatemalan households are suffering the direct consequences of climate change and economic crisis in their daily lives. This results, above all, in the loss of employment and purchasing power, which limits the possibility of obtaining supplies and food. Issues such as school abandonment, early marriage in households not receiving remittances, changes in diet, commercial sexual exploitation, migration or participation in illegal businesses, are not direct consequences of the economic and climate crisis, but have been exacerbated as a result thereof.

The effects of climate change in Guatemala have worsened in the last decade. Unless appropriate measures are taken to ensure a development that is compatible with the environment but, above all, can meet the needs of society without compromising food security in the future, namely the availability and access to food, the situation may worsen. For example, the heavy rains that fell in 2010 have had an impact on the living conditions of the population, mainly due to the extent of damage and losses suffered by the population living at the subsistence level.

The loss of crops and increased food prices are also framed in a context of economic crisis that is affecting exports and imports, foreign investment, tourism and remittances, among others. All of this has had a negative impact on tax revenues in Guatemala, diminishing public resources for the development of children and adolescents, for whom the situation before these events was far from ideal.

The loss of employment opportunities due to the contraction of the economy and the effects of environmental crises affect Guatemalan society, forcing many people to take hazardous jobs or work outside the law in order to make a living. Everything seems to indicate that job recovery will be slower than global economic recovery.

The first priority must be to improve the quality of life of children and adolescents in Guatemala, not only because they represent 49% of the total population, but also because social and economic development is now at stake. In this sense, if appropriate decisions are not taken, the effects of the economic crisis on children and adolescents in Guatemala will widen social gaps, particularly among the rural indigenous population, especially women.

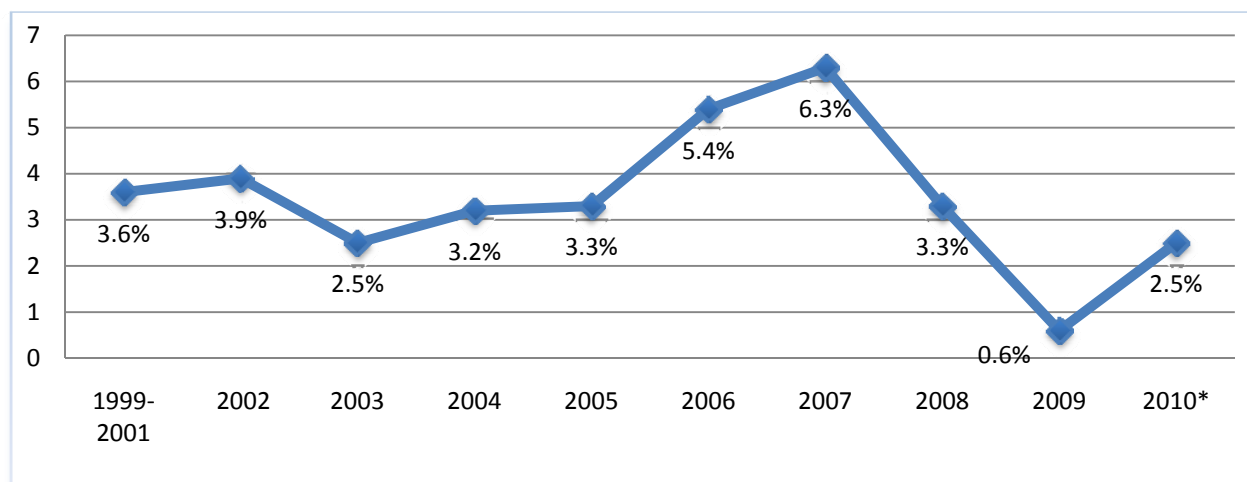
Policies and programs should help minimize the impact of both issues, giving priority to social protection that guarantees the fulfillment of the basic needs of the most disadvantaged. The economic recovery will remain fragile if it does not entail, at least, strengthening with a human face of the social fabric.

# 1. Outlook for Children and Adolescents Prior to the Crisis



After several years of economic growth with values greater than 3% of the gross domestic product (GDP) and relative macroeconomic stability (IMF, 2010), modest progress was made in improving the living conditions of the population. Since 2007, rising food and fuel prices, the global economic and financial crisis, climate change and, more recently, the deterioration of employment, have played a part in increasing the number of poor and hungry people in Guatemala.

**Figure 1**  
**Annual Economic Growth as a Percentage of GDP**



Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2010).

\* Projected growth for 2010 according to the Bank of Guatemala (Banguat, 2010D).

Between 2000 and 2006, a period characterized by economic growth, the overall poverty rate fell by five percentage points, from 56 to 51%. This figure does not consider the magnitude of the wide disparities in the country, where poverty among the indigenous and rural population was 71.9%, according to the *National Survey of Living Conditions (Encovi, 2006)*. As for children and adolescents, 59.2% live in poverty and of this percentage, 19.2% are extremely poor.

Moreover, poverty contributes to increasing hunger in Guatemala, where the main problem is chronic malnutrition (low height for age), affecting 49.8% of the population under five, according to *Nutrition Update 2010* (USAID, 2010), 0.5% more than in 2002. According to the World Bank (2009), chronic malnutrition is "the only indicator that has not improved, and in that regard Guatemala unfortunately has one of the worst indicators in the world".

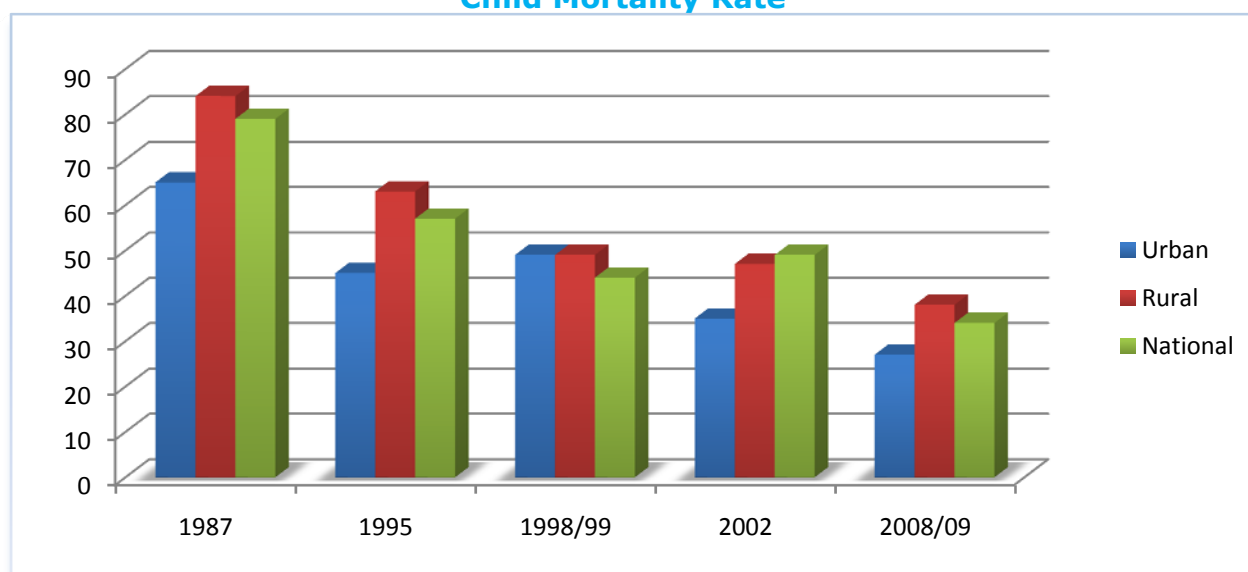
In Guatemala, hunger is related to difficult access to food. According to the World Food Programme (WFP, 2008), "rural families acquire over 80% of their food on the market and 20% comes from their own production," so price increases limit access to food because this population group has few opportunities to increase or diversify their income.

In rural areas, the food and nutrition situation has worsened since late 2007 due to rising food costs and the economic and climate crisis. For many families, limited access to food requires that they eat less or lower quality food or, in some cases, that they space meals, even over several days.

20.5% of the population has no access to public health services, according to the *Encovi* (2006). Child mortality has declined gradually and steadily over the years, but there is still a significant gap between urban and rural areas.

According to *Ensmi* (2008/09), the national child mortality rate is 34 per thousand live births; this figure is lower in urban areas (27) and higher in rural areas (38). For the region of Petén in northern Guatemala, the rate is 43 per thousand live births, close to triple the metropolitan area (16), which demonstrates once again the wide disparities in the country in fields critical for development.

**Figure 2**  
**Child Mortality Rate**



Source: Prepared by the author, based on the *Ensmi* (2008/09).

Both limited access to health services and lack of basic information on reproductive and sexual health contribute to the high fertility rate in Guatemala, which stands at 3.6 children per woman of childbearing age, according to *Ensmi* (2008/09). Another factor explaining this fertility rate is education, since the rate stood at 5.2 children among women with no education, versus 2.3 among women with secondary and higher education (*Ensmi*, 2009).

Significant progress has been made in the education sector, for example in terms of net enrollment in primary education, which has "increased almost 25% since the early nineties, reaching 96.3% in 2007" (ICEFI, 2009). For 2009, according to the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the net enrollment rate in primary school (girls and boys aged between 7 and 12) reached 98.3%.

An analysis of average schooling among different population groups gives us an idea of the great challenges faced by the country: "A non-indigenous Guatemalan in an urban area has an average literacy level comparable to the average in Brazil (97%). The literacy rate of rural indigenous women is 30% lower, comparable to that of Burundi (68%)" (ICEFI, 2009).





Underachievement in education levels in Guatemala is due to structural factors such as extreme poverty, the family income level, parents' education, distance from schools or access to basic services (USAID / AED / ICEFI , 2007). For its part, among the indigenous school population, the main problems encountered for enrolling and staying in school are falling behind in school, over age, absenteeism and dropping out as well as "other cultural, social and economic causes" in which "poverty is, without a doubt, the determining factor that explains the abandonment of the classroom by girls"

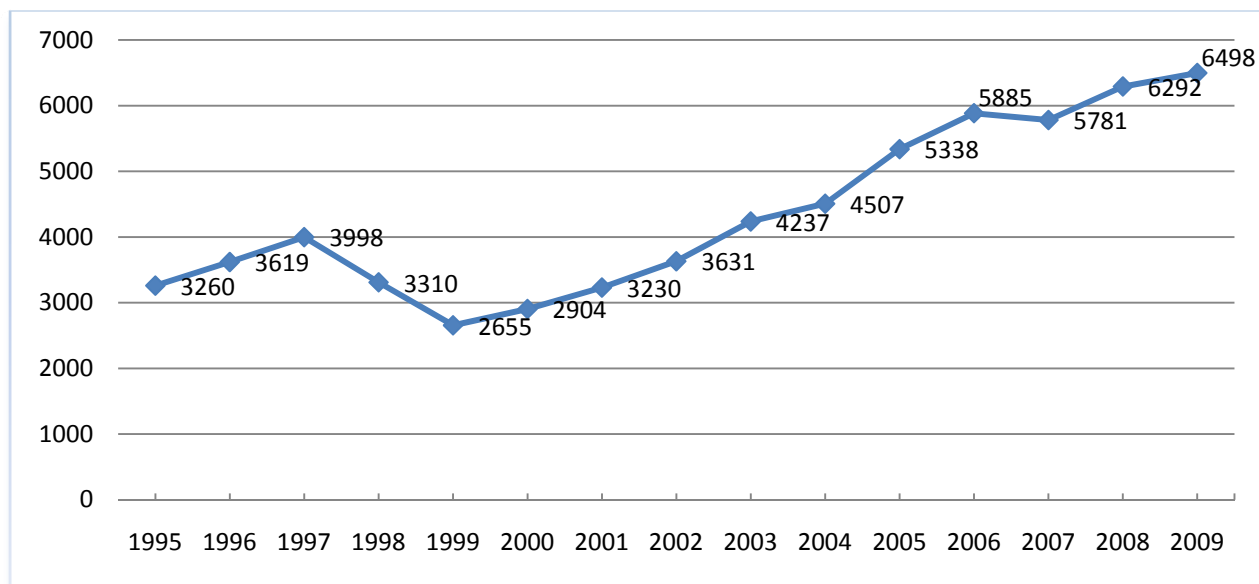
(UNICEF, 2007b). According to the World Bank (2009), "health problems and lack of interest are the main reasons for dropping out among elementary students."

Labor productivity is low compared to neighboring countries, due in part to a low educational level and the consequences of malnutrition. Moreover, child labor is historically high and rising, often due to the need to help support the home, exacerbated at times of economic crisis and the effects of climate change. These situations often lead to temporary or permanent migration to other parts of the country and even abroad.

The Guatemalan population living outside the country has increased steadily in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In 2003, 10.5% of the population lived abroad (1,273,658). This figure rose in 2009 to 11.3% (1,590,832). The inflow of remittances also followed the same positive trend over the years until, in 2009, it went down by 9.3% compared to 2008. This is a result of the economic crisis and job losses, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM / UNICEF, 2009).

Since the signing of the *Peace Accords*, criminal activities have increased throughout the country. In 1996, the year of the signing, the homicide rate per hundred thousand inhabitants was 40, i.e. 3619 homicides. Although this rate declined for three consecutive years, reaching 26 in 1999 (2655 homicides), it has since increased every year. In this regard, in 2008 it was 46 per hundred thousand inhabitants (6292 homicides). 2009 was the most violent year in the history of the Republic, with a homicide rate of 47 (6498 violent deaths, according to the National Civilian Police, NCP). "Of the victims, 720 were women and 510 children" (UNHCHR, 2010).

**Figure 3**  
**Murders in Guatemala (1995-2009)**



Source: prepared by the author based on UNDP (2007), PDH (2009) and UNHCHR (2010) data.

5885 homicides were committed in 2006, according to the police. In that year, the cost of violence in Guatemala represented Q 17,900,400 (USD 2.386 billion), representing 7.3% of the GDP. This means "more than double the amount of damage caused to the country the storm Stan in October 2005, and more than double the resources allocated to the Ministries of Health, Education and Agriculture for 2006," according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2006).

According to the World Bank (2009), "generalized impunity and social exclusion, an ineffective justice system and young people facing the problem of making decisions with negative incentives are some of the factors contributing to increased criminal activity."

During these years important progress has been made in the country's regulatory framework, including the enactment of the Adoption Law, passed in 2007, and the entry into force of the Hague Convention on Child Protection and International Cooperation regarding International Adoption. This put an end to a black period in the history of Guatemala, where 25,198 children were given up for international adoption in a span of ten years between 1997 and 2007 (UNICEF, 2008), with no guarantees to ensure their rights. However, the persistent climate of impunity, in which over 98% of crimes and misdemeanors go unpunished according to the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), limits effective enforcement of those laws.

## 2. Impact of Climate Change and the Economic and Financial Crisis

Guatemala has been severely impacted by the effects of climate change and the economic and financial crisis. There have been substantial transformations in the lives of its people, especially children and adolescents, who were already in a situation of particular concern prior to these crises.

Due to rising food and fuel prices, many families were unable to ensure regular supplies of many commodities such as corn and beans. This results in deterioration in the nutritional status of these families' children and adolescents and can impair their physical and intellectual development.

High levels of inequality, unplanned urbanization, discrimination due to gender and ethnicity, the lack of actions designed specifically for agriculture and rural development, dropping out of school, hunger and the effects of severe weather are some of the reasons why more than one of every two children and adolescents in Guatemala lived in poverty before the crisis.

The global financial and economic crisis continues to affect the public and private sector in Guatemala, resulting in an increase in the already large social gap.

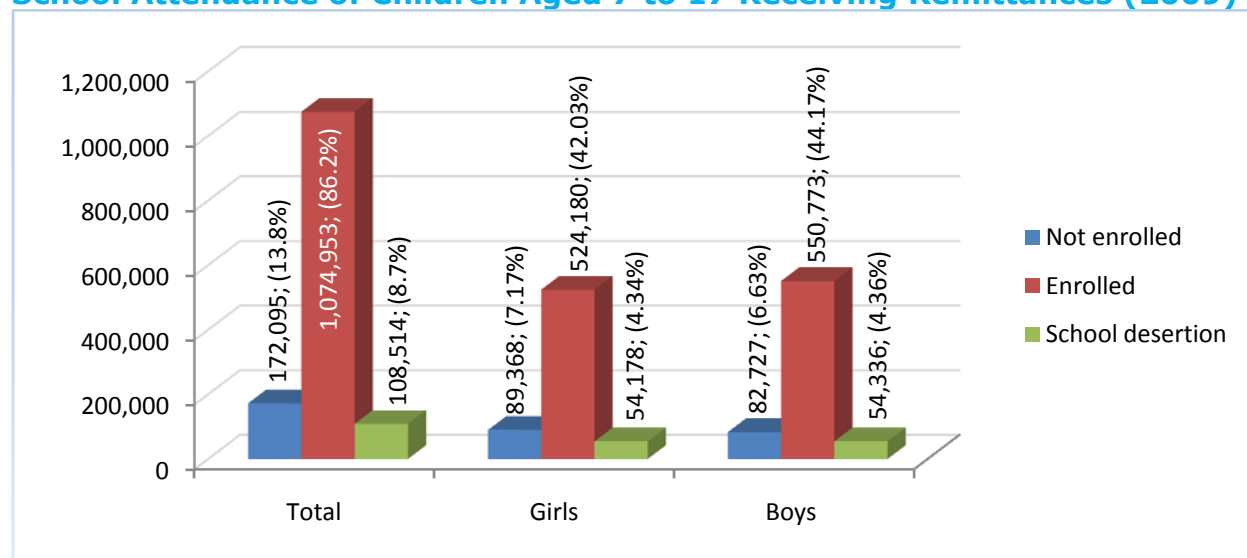
The two crises analyzed in this document paper have increased the number of Guatemalans who are unemployed, both inside and outside the country.

Remittances, one of the engines of the national economy (11.08% of the GDP in 2009, according to Banguat) also fell during that year due to the impact of the economic crisis on Guatemalans living and working abroad, who regularly sent funds to their families in the country. The decline reached -9.3%, so that some households that receive remittances have had to come up with strategies to supplement their income, sometimes forcing their children to take jobs or leave school. According to the survey conducted by IOM / UNICEF in 2009, 8.7% of children aged seven to 17 living in households receiving remittances dropped out of the education system out of 1,247,048.



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**Figure 4**  
**School Attendance of Children Aged 7 to 17 Receiving Remittances (2009)**



Source: IOM / UNICEF (2009).

Moreover, the aforementioned crises affect nutrition, especially among the poorest families. They eat less and food of lower quality. When food is scarce, malnutrition levels increase. Changes in diet affect the intake of red meat, chicken and milk, which were usually absent from the diet, even before the crisis, and now the situation has worsened. Among the population, women, especially those who have several children, are most affected by the lack of food, since they are often the last ones to eat and have less food to eat.

Scarcity of food is also harmful for adolescent women, who are most vulnerable during a crisis. According to the Humanitarian Network, after a period of drought in Guatemala in 2009, 24.8% of the female population between ten and 19 surveyed in the dry corridor of the country suffered from acute malnutrition, revealing the existence of "a direct correlation between age group and the occurrence of acute malnutrition. Thus, the group of younger women has a higher likelihood of suffering from acute malnutrition" (Humanitarian Network, 2009).

This situation has probably deteriorated further after the passage of Agatha and the eruption of Pacaya volcano, "decapitalizing affected households, reducing their ability to respond and adapt to future shocks" (MFEWS / USAID, 2010) and increasing vulnerability to future disasters. In this regard, according to the World Bank (2009), "the living conditions of the poor, their lack of savings and other means to offset an unexpected loss, makes them particularly susceptible or vulnerable."

- 1.
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## 2.1 Climate Change

Variability in rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, floods ... are all evidence that climate change is impacting everyday social, cultural, economic and environmental factors in the country, negatively affecting development opportunities for children and adolescents, especially if plans and actions to prevent them are not developed.

According to the World Bank (2009), people who "live very close to the extreme poverty line can easily fall to the other side with just a little push caused by a natural disaster" and also "it takes them longer to recover from a crisis, so it is best to try to have prevention strategies in place to help mitigate the effects of the crisis from the outset." This is especially worrisome in Guatemala, one of the ten countries most vulnerable to natural disasters, according to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR, 2009).

For Oxfam (2010) "Poverty, more than any other factor, determines the vulnerability to climate change and limits the capacity to adapt. The combination of access to and control over land, money, credit, information, health care, personal mobility and education determines the ability to survive and recover after a disaster."

### *What is Climate Change?*

It is the modification of «climate due directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and is added to climate variability observed during comparable periods», according to the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*.

According to the Government of Guatemala (2010b), between May and September of 2010 the population affected by different natural disasters that struck Guatemala totaled 911,043 people (3.9% of the total population of Guatemala), 75% due to storm Agatha and the eruption of the Pacaya volcano. The damage and losses caused in 2010 by the cumulative amount of weather events represents 1,553.3 billion, equivalent to almost 25% of the amount of the expenditure budget of the Nation.

The effects of climate change have a strong impact on the Guatemalan economy. Agriculture, one of the main legal economic activities in the country, representing 13.5% of the GDP (Banguat, 2010E) and employing 29.2% of the population (*Encovi*, 2006), is severely affected. This sector is very vulnerable to any change in temperature or atmospheric phenomena such as droughts, heat waves and storms.

According to the Mesoamerican Early Warning System for Food Security (MFEWS / USAID, 2010), the passage of Storm Agatha caused losses and damage in the production of vegetables, potatoes, coffee and other crops, which "will affect revenue generation by reducing the volume sold and lowering the demand for unskilled labor, an important source of income in the poorest households."

When a crop is lost, many families are left without food and without jobs. Moreover, when there are fewer yields, food prices increase, so the social sectors that are financially strapped will be unable to buy certain foods such as beans or corn, which could increase the number of hungry people.

For Oxfam (2010), worldwide, "the people who depend on agriculture are particularly vulnerable to climate change because their activities are sensitive to climate and they face economic marginalization." This is also "worse for women due to gender inequalities and the impacts of migration of the male population in response to climatic shocks and crop failure."

According to climate newsletter 1-2010 of the Institute of Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology (*Insivumeh*), the accumulated rainfall decreased by 33% in 2009 compared to 2008 due to the drought that affected mainly the dry corridor. This caused damage to soils and vegetation, leading to serious problems of water retention in periods of rain and mudslides due to torrential rains.

Water quality is affected by both the effect of climate change and irresponsible human actions. The pollution of rivers and lakes (as in the case of Lake Atitlán) and degradation of water catchment areas are worsening because of effluents and scarce protection on the part of both the State and citizens.

Laguna del Tigre, Petén, which contains Central America's largest freshwater reserve, is also threatened by poor conservation.

The deteriorating water quality has a direct and detrimental effect on health, hygiene and environmental sanitation, affecting the nutrition of children, especially younger ones.

The rich historical and cultural heritage of Guatemala also suffers the consequences of climate changes. Not only do conservation costs increase, but the rate of decline is also greater, which has an impact on the number of tourists who visit Guatemala. Foreign exchange earnings from tourism and, above all, the number of formal and informal jobs, are reduced. In 2009, foreign exchange earnings from tourism and travel fell by 9.63% compared to 2008; this is associated with the economic crisis. Far from improving, in the first half of 2010 these foreign exchange earnings fell by 3.99% with respect to the same period of 2009, according to Banguat.



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On the other hand, some regions may benefit from climate change, since the increase in temperature can have a positive impact on certain crops. However, in the long run this could have negative effects such as the emergence of new pests and diseases, or less water, particularly in the area known as the dry corridor, since "high temperatures favor the existence of insects and plant diseases, aggravating the risk of loss of crops. Changes in precipitation directly affect soil moisture and hence food production" (ECLAC, 2010).

Climate change also affects health. There are more cases of heat stress, malaria, dengue, cholera, respiratory diseases and others related to the variability in rainfall, the availability of water and air quality. To cope with deteriorating sanitation and increased demand for services, the State should increase spending on health, which currently represents a very inadequate 1% of the GDP.

Furthermore, human mobility might increase. It will be difficult to survive in certain areas of the country, either because crops cannot be grown, or because the temperature and natural disasters do not make it advisable. This is expected to increase migration from rural to urban areas, caused by the search for new jobs and places to live, increasing the number of urban and peri-urban squatter settlements.

The cases of diarrhea may increase. If so, a historical trend would continue in Guatemala, although it could become worse. Since 1987, *ENSMI* data show that the percentage of children under five years of age who according to their mothers have had diarrhea during the two weeks preceding the survey has increased from 16.7% in that year to 22.5% for the period 2008-2009 (*ENSMI*, 2009).



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According to Action against Hunger, after the storm Agatha, cases of children with acute diarrheal disease (ADD) increased by 300%, which shows "the impact of the widespread contamination of wells due to the transfer of the contents of latrines and flood sediments" (Action against Hunger, 2010). Acute respiratory infections (ARIs) also increased.

This directly affects the nutritional status of the population, especially among children under five. Diarrhea and malnutrition form a vicious cycle that affects children's development. Diarrhea and other infections cause weight loss, harm the intestines and prevent proper growth. Malnutrition, in turn,

results in a significant decrease in the body's defenses, causing increased susceptibility to infection. Lack of access to safe water and basic sanitation exacerbates this vicious cycle, increasing the risk of infectious diseases, especially in places where there is an accumulation of contaminated water.

The effects of changes in weather patterns will be more intense in areas where deforestation is most severe. Traditionally, forests have been regarded as sources of timber and firewood, but also contribute "to regulating the climate, floods, disease and water; provide recreation and education and support soil formation and primary production and recycle nutrients" (IARNA, 2009). Thus, they play a major role in environmental conservation.

In fact, deforestation in rural areas has increased faster than reforestation. Landslides, for example, are more consistent where there are very few trees. In many communities, deforestation is due to the need to collect firewood for homes. Although adults do the logging, children and adolescents work hauling wood to the municipal capital for sale or household use, which prevents them from regularly attending school and stunts their physical development.

A low level of adaptation to climate change increases the risk of crop failure, contributes to the decline in employment and therefore generates considerable difficulties in finding the path to sustainable development. We should bear in mind that if agriculture suffers, the public coffers also suffer. Thus, the State has to face the cost of more droughts, floods, epidemics, heat waves or loss of infrastructure, among others, but has fewer economic resources to do so.

### **¿How Does Climate Change Affect Me?**

- Temperatures will increase. There will be more days of extreme heat in some regions of the country and more days of extreme cold in others.
- Rainfall patterns will change. The rainy season may undergo changes; it will rain harder in some areas.
- Sea level will increase, especially on the south coast of Guatemala. There will be greater likelihood of extreme climate manifestations such as intense rainfall, floods and landslides.
- Rivers and lakes will become polluted.



## 2.2 The Economic and Financial Crisis

Although this crisis began to manifest itself globally at the end of 2007, when Guatemala experienced the effects of the rise in fuel and food prices, it was not until 2009 that its greatest impact was felt by all sectors of the country, especially the most vulnerable ones. Exports, remittances, foreign direct investment and tourism were significantly reduced.

While in 2008 the Guatemalan economy experienced GDP growth of 3.3%, in 2009 it grew by 0.6% (Banguat, 2010), or 193,949 million Quetzals. The inflation rate fell from 9.4% in 2008 to -0.28% in 2009. Along with this, the inflow of remittances fell by 9.3% with respect to 2008. This may have contributed to deterioration of the situation of children and adolescents in the country. These population segments did not enjoy many of the benefits of the economic boom years, but are **suffering the most serious consequences of the crisis**.

**Table 1**  
**Guatemala: Key Economic Indicators**

Indicator	Rate			
	2007	2008	2009	2010 (Forecast)
Inflation	8.75	9.4	-0.28	4.6
Economic Growth	6.3	3.3	0.6	2.5
Remittances (annual change)	14.4	4.5	-9.3	3.5
Fiscal deficit (as a percentage of the GDP)	1.4	1.6	3.2	3.1
Current account deficit	-5.2	-4.5	-0.6	-3.3
Tax revenues (annual change)	15.8	5.8	-4.9	6.49
FOB value of total exports (percentage change)	14.7	12.2	-6.6	5.7
CIF value of total imports (percentage change)	13.9	7.2	-20.8	10.3

Source: developed by the author with Banguat, IMF and Ministry of Public Finance (Ministry of Finance) data.

The effects of the crisis have had major consequences for public finances. A budget of 49,723,100,000 Quetzals was approved for 2009 (ASIES, 2008), based on expected tax revenues that did not materialize. In addition, tax revenues in the country fell by 4.9% compared to 2008 (Ministry of Finance, 2010). However, by 2010, according to the draft budget, the expected change in tax revenue is 6.49% compared with the end of 2009 (30,525 million Quetzals).

Due to the difficulty in meeting financial commitments due to falling tax revenues, the State resorted to borrowing and restraint in spending. As a result, the fiscal deficit increased to 3.2% of GDP, or 9.921 billion, of which 44.2% was paid through gross domestic financing, 41.4% through external financing and the remaining 14.3% with cash resources.

### *What is GDP?*

Gross domestic product is the monetary sum of the goods and services produced in Guatemala and traded in a given year. The GDP amounted to 193,949 million Quetzals in 2009 and grew by 0.6% with respect to 2008.

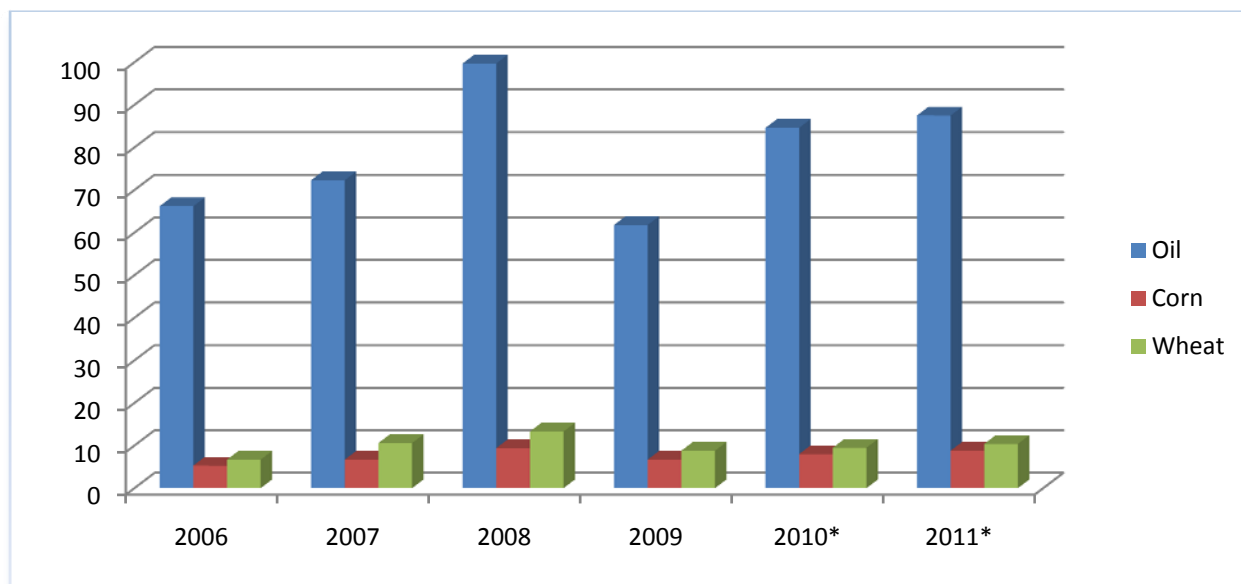
Domestic consumption was also reduced because, on the one hand, there are more unemployed persons who have fewer financial resources. On the other hand, prices remain high, so that not all people have appropriate access to food, particularly basic staples.

People living in extreme poverty spend their entire budget on basic food supplies. Any increase in prices has a greater impact on the situation of these people, which increases the poverty gap.

Jesús Alvarado, an indigenous man of the Achí ethnic group, fifty years old, lives in Rabinal (municipality in Baja Verapaz). He says this about the impact of the crisis on his family: "The crops are no longer the same and buying corn or beans is very expensive. In 2008 the price went up to five Quetzals a pound and will not go down. That is why my wife often mixes corn with sorghum, to stretch the dough for tortillas."

The increase in the cost of products is associated with international prices of fuels and the most common foods in Guatemala, such as corn, rice and beans. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), most families rely on the market to purchase their goods and increased prices of basic goods can result in an increase in the number of people living in poverty (WFP, 2008).

**Figure 5**  
**International Oil, Corn and Wheat Prices**



Source: Banguat (2010).

\* Forecast.

As shown by the above graph, although in 2009 there was a decline in international oil, corn and wheat prices, in 2010 the cost of these products rose again, as forecasted by the Bank of Guatemala (Banguat, 2010). According to the Bank, the price of oil in 2010 will stand at \$84.6 per barrel, up 37% over the average price in 2009. In the case of corn, the increase would be 19.4% in 2010, reaching \$8 per quintal (hundredweight). On the other hand, wheat would reach an average price of \$9.5 per quintal, an increase of 8% over 2009. Prices are likely to rise in 2011, according to Banguat.

An analysis of the 2009 *Revenue and Expenditure Budget of the Nation* shows the resources spent on improving the living conditions of children and adolescents in the country. According to a study by the Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies prepared for UNICEF (ICEFI, 2009b), public spending on children and adolescents amounted to 17,753,300,000 Quetzals, "representing 35.7% of total budget expenditures." Of this amount, 49.6% represents spending programs targeting this population.

According to ICEFI, 46.3% of national public spending in children and adolescents is used for education, another 20.7% for housing and community services, "where water supply programs play a significant role." Social protection represents 18.9% of the budget for children and adolescents, and plays "an important role in the conditional transfer program "Mi Familia Progres" and in the school nutrition program."

ICEFI analyzed public investment in children and adolescents per person for this age group based on the budget. Thus, "spending on education is close to Q1,200.00, in contrast with Q239.7 spent on health. Social protection and housing and community services reported expenditures per inhabitant (aged 0 to 17) between Q490.0 and Q540.0, respectively" (sic).

According to figures established with Banguat information, as of April, in 2010 the Guatemalan economy might grow between 1.7 and 2.5%. However, it will take the population much longer to recover from the effects of the economic crisis, especially in areas linked to child and adolescent development, especially if social spending aimed at this age group does not increase. Moreover, "this estimate does not include the possible effects of the eruption of Pacaya Volcano [sic] and Tropical Storm Agatha" (Banguat, 2010b), which caused 7.856 billion Quetzals in damage and losses to the private and public sector (Government of Guatemala, 2010), with a total impact on the GDP of 2.6%. However, for the second half, Banguat has adjusted its forecast to an expected growth between 2.0% and 2.8%.

For 2010, the tax burden remains as low as during the previous year. Therefore, the State has to replace tax revenues with public debt. In this regard, in 2009, the taxes collected represented 10.4% of the GDP, one of the lowest in the region (Ministry of Finance, 2010). This percentage is mainly made up of what is collected through indirect taxes, because the "system of direct income taxation is very weak, representing less than 30% of tax revenues. In addition, exemptions and deductible expenses, together with the establishment of alternative tax schemes, have made income tax a complex and ineffective tax" (ICEFI, 2009).

The estimates predict that, by the end of 2010, the tax burden will suffer a slight decline, hovering around 10.2% of the GDP (Ministry of Finance, 2010b). In regard to public debt, for this year, the issuance of Treasury bonds amounting to 4500 million Quetzals has been contemplated, while external public debt represents a disbursement of approximately 6.7 billion Quetzals. By the end of 2010, public debt could rise from 23.6% in 2009 to 26.5%.

Regarding tax reform, at the time of finalizing this document, Congress was still discussing bills providing for the modernization of customs duties and the indirect tax system, strengthening of the Tax Code, some changes to direct taxation and modernization of the legal customs framework, among others.

### **Some Effects of the Economic and Financial Crisis on Guatemala**

- Increase in the number of hungry people
- Fewer exports
- Fewer remittances
- More violence
- Increased food insecurity
- Greater demand for public services and health education
- A lower public budget
- More pressure on environmental resources
- An increase in illegal businesses

## 2.3 The Employment Crisis

The economic and financial crisis and climate change have created a major labor crisis that results in loss of employment opportunities for Guatemalans, both inside and outside the country. In Guatemala, thousands of people have lost their jobs; thus, an important contribution to household financial resources, or the sole source of income, has been lost. The loss of employment opportunities for those living outside the country has also had an impact, since it reduces the remittances received by families.

The lack of a public social protection system that provides unemployment insurance, the loss of jobs and the decline in the availability of financial resources at home is forcing families to adopt strategies to supplement income or reduce costs. This affects the situation of children and adolescents. Among others, they increase child labor, violence and sexual exploitation. In some cases, they end up accepting high-risk jobs that are often poorly paid.

"I help my dad to find scrap metal and cans in the trash because it gives us money to buy food," says William Santos, aged ten, who lives with his family in the village of Pueblo Nuevo, in the municipality of Olinstepeque (Department of Quetzaltenango). William says that every day he can collect a bag of scrap iron and cans in the dump, which he sells.

His father, Víctor Santos, carefully watches his son work in the dump. "I cannot read and write and because of that I cannot find work. I cannot get work in the fields because people no longer plant corn. One day I decided to go to the dump and I learned how to make money looking for aluminum cans, copper and bronze, which I then sell," said Santos.

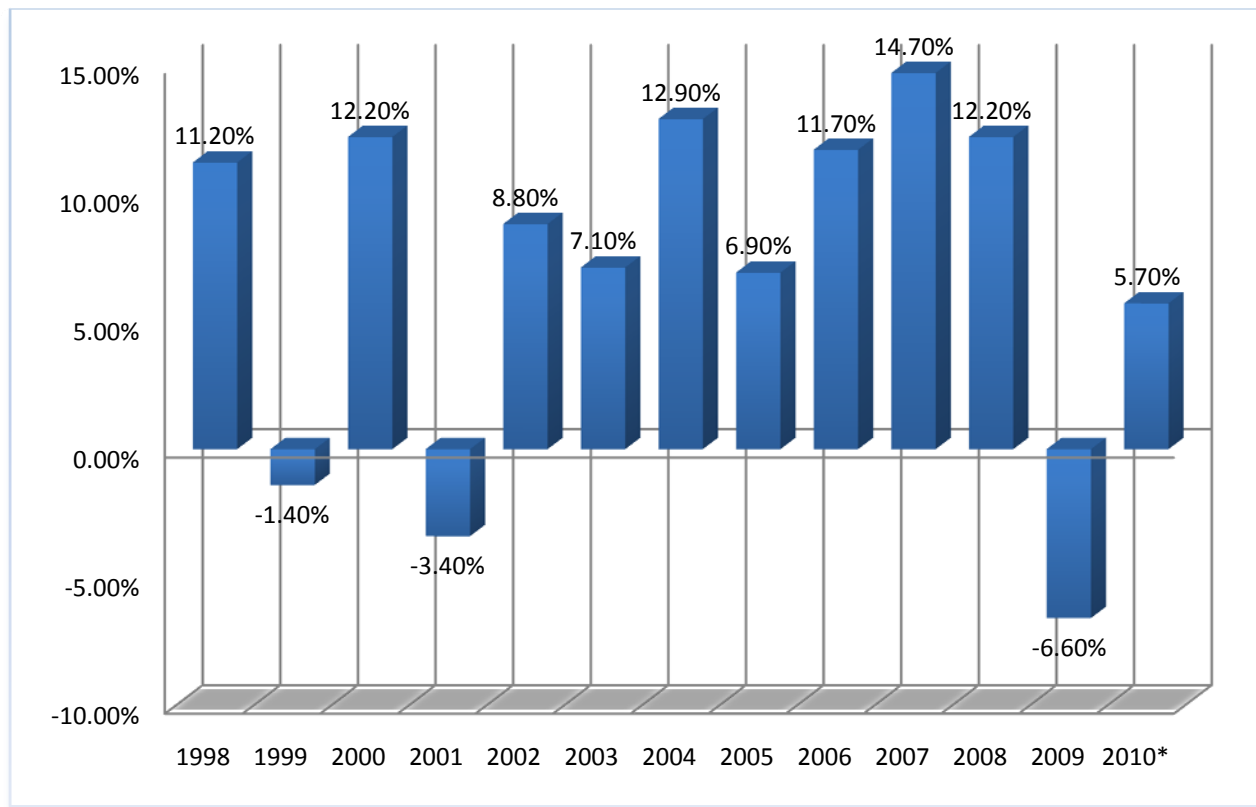
"Every day there are more people at the dump, and since early 2009, the competition has been strong because many people were fired from their jobs and are looking to earn a few cents. Bricklayers come, farmers come ... and now I find it harder to collect cans," adds Víctor Santos.

Global job creation will trail behind the economic recovery, since it will take companies time to re-hire labor. In the case of Guatemala, this is evidenced, for example, in the change in total exports, which fell by 6.6% in 2009 compared to 2008 (Banguat, 2010D). Even if exports return to positive values in 2010 (5.7%, according to Banguat), they will not catch up with previous years' economic growth values. That is why until United States demand recovers (that country accounts for 50% of Guatemalan exports) (ICEFI, 2010), employment in Guatemala will continue to stagnate, according to different analyses.



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**Figure 6**  
**FOB Value of Total Exports (Percentage Change)**



Source: Bank of Guatemala (Banguat, 2010c).

\* Forecast.

Stepping in when jobs are at risk is always less expensive than doing so when they already lost. Some Euro area countries, like Germany, have resorted to part-time employment as a job protection measure (IMF, 2009). From the State and business perspective, it is better to keep workers on the payroll and look forward to better times than to pay severance pay and then hire new people and invest in their training.

On the other hand, the unemployment caused by the effects of natural disasters in the agriculture sector might be used by organized crime to seize land and expel its owners, creating an environment conducive to crime in a context marked by impunity. It is a fact that the damages and losses incurred during the rainy season in agriculture, livestock and fisheries amounted to 862.6 million Quetzals (Government of Guatemala, 2010b). To this, one must add that "crime is an obstacle for business and employment generation" (World Bank, 2009).

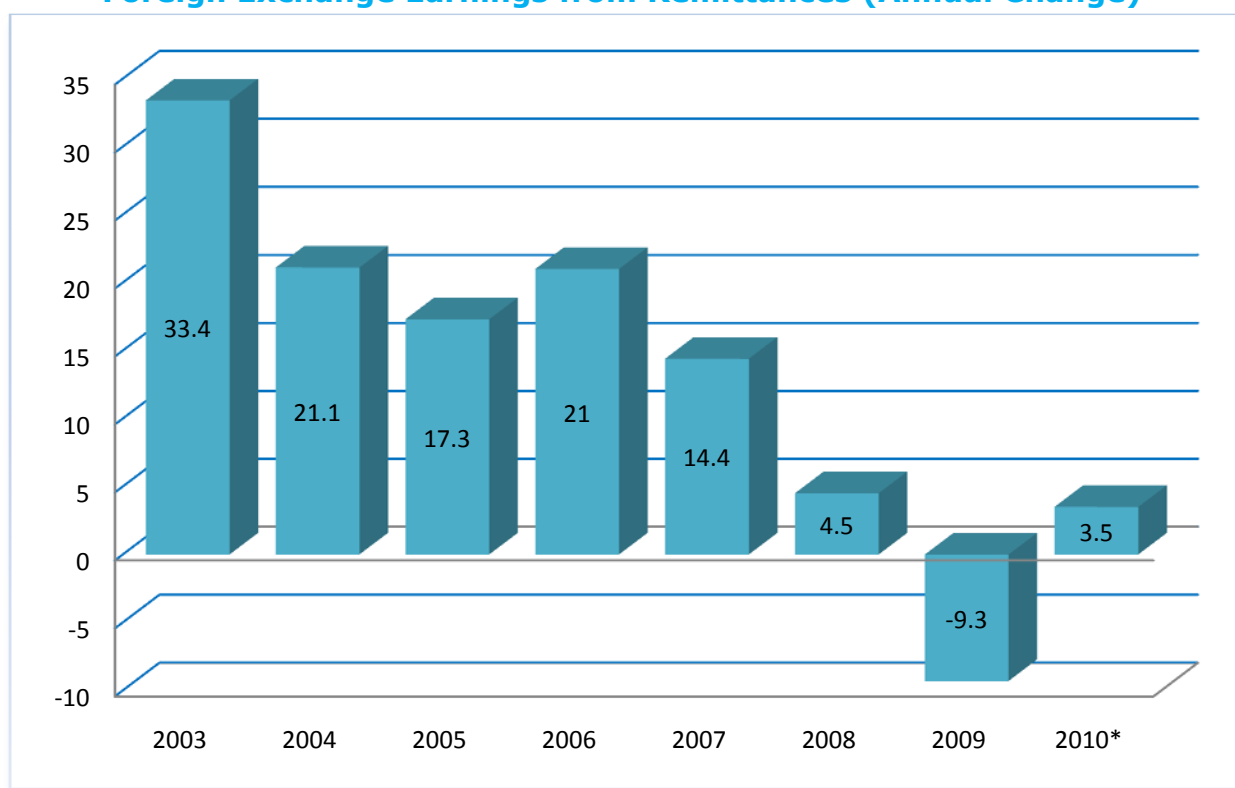
The low skill level of labor limits production and economic growth in Guatemala. This is due both to a low level of education and to the consequences of chronic malnutrition in early life. Overall, this limits access to better paying jobs with good benefits and can induce many people to accept jobs in illegal activities, often linked to criminal or violent behavior, thus affecting sectors that are vital for the country's development, such as health, education, economy, labor and agriculture.

## 2.4 Remittances

When discussing the impact of the economic crisis in Guatemala, one must expand geographic boundaries. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 1,590,832 Guatemalans live abroad and regularly send remittances to their families in Guatemala. Of the 4,386,678 Guatemalans who benefit from remittances, 39% are under eighteen years of age (IOM / UNICEF, 2009).

Remittances accounted for 11.08% of the Guatemalan GDP in 2009, representing a decrease of 9.3% compared to 2008, according to the Bank of Guatemala. However, this negative trend was reversed in the first nine months of 2010, since the inflow of remittances increased by 4.5% from January to September compared with the same period of 2009, which has led Banguat to estimate 3.5% growth for 2010 (Banguat, 2010).

**Figure 7**  
**Foreign Exchange Earnings from Remittances (Annual Change)**



Source: Banguat (2010c).

\* Forecast.

In other periods of economic crisis, remittances have played a crucial role, increasing consumption and reactivating the economy, especially in times of national crisis. In the current financial difficulties, the collapse originated in the United States, where most remittances come from (95.8%, according to IOM / UNICEF 2009). In many cases, the senders are unemployed and therefore have limited ability to continue sending them.

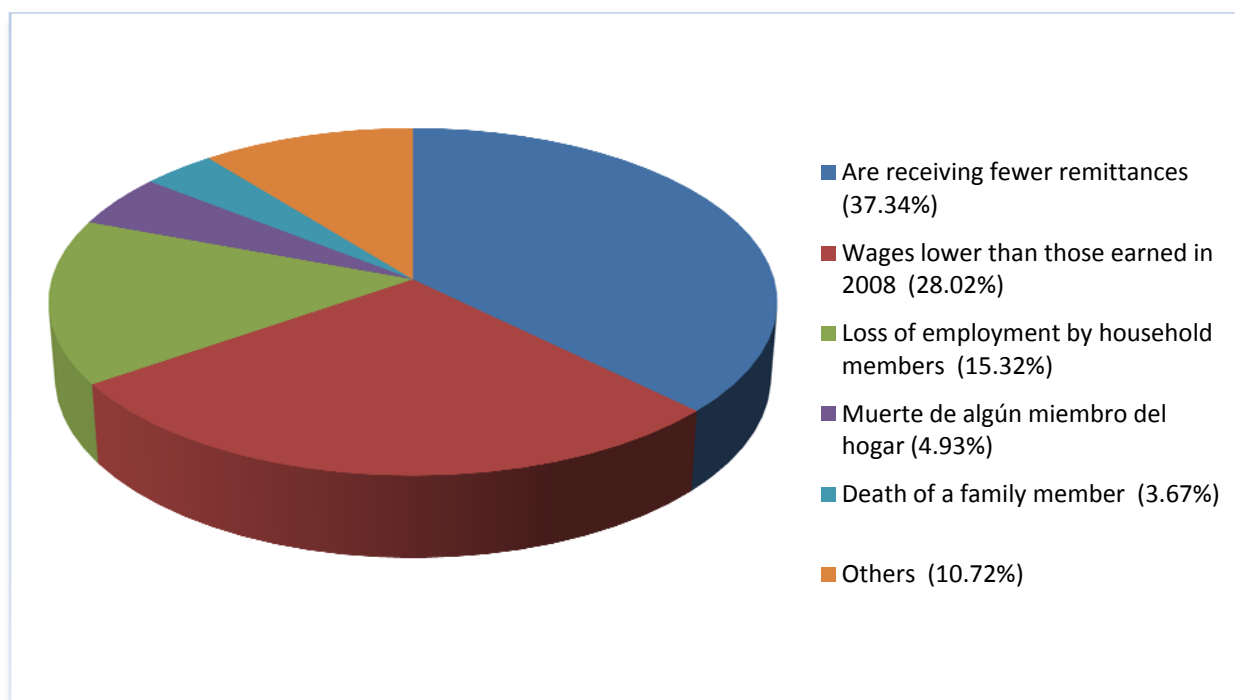
In the United States, unemployment has had an uneven impact across sectors and types of workers. According to the U.S. Labor Department, unemployment among Latinos reached 11.9% among men and 12% among women, according to September 2010 data (rates similar to those recorded in the same month in 2009: 12.6 and 11.6%, respectively).

To measure the impact of economic crisis in households receiving remittances in June 2009, IOM and UNICEF (2009) conducted a survey that yielded information on the situation of children and adolescents in these families. When asked about the economic situation at home, 61.9% of respondents considered it "fair", while 10.5% described it as "bad." 21.4% considered the household's economic situation "good".

65.8% of households surveyed said they are being affected by the economic crisis. Of this percentage, 73.3% report having fewer resources compared with 2008. For 23.8%, the household situation is the same as in 2008 and for 2.5%, the situation had improved.

The causes of this reduction in income are, according to those surveyed, that they were receiving fewer remittances (37.3%); that wages were lower than those earned during 2008 (28%); and/or loss of employment (15.3%). In many homes, there is a combination of different responses, since the problem is not due to a single cause.

**Figure 8**  
**Causes of Loss of Income in Households with Children under 17**



Source: 2009 Survey: *Remittances, Children and Adolescents* (IOM/UNICEF, 2009).



### 3. Consequences for Children and Adolescents

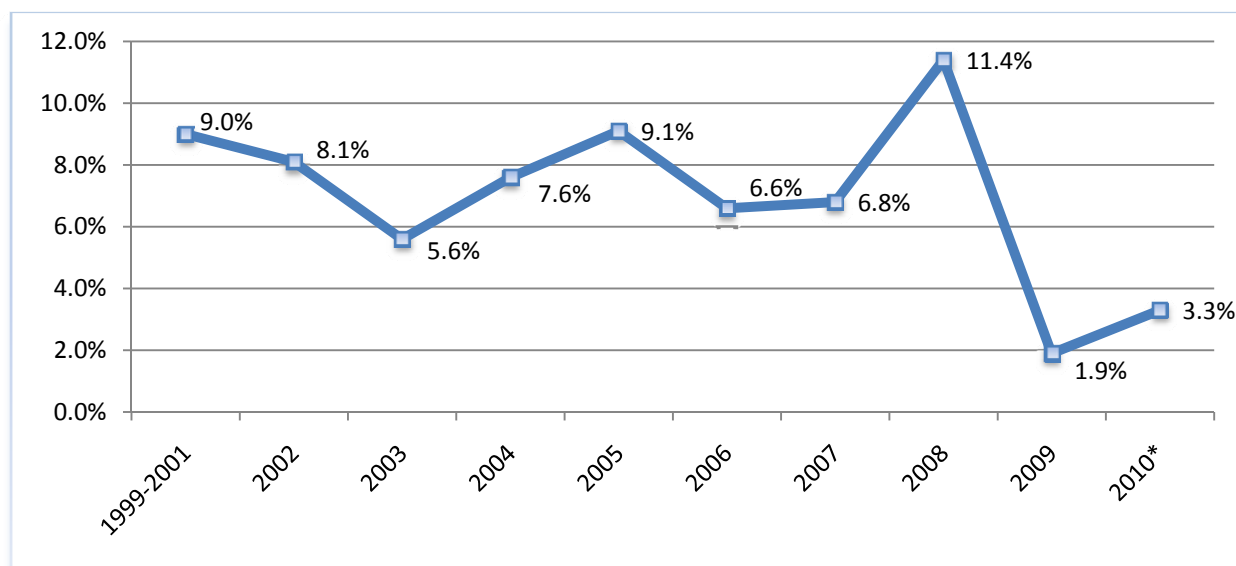


The combined effects of climate change and the economic crisis are taking their toll on the situation of children and adolescents in Guatemala, groups that were already living a *historic and silent crisis* in key areas for development, such as food, education or the lack of protection against abuse and violence.

The historical difficulties that have affected the development and welfare of many generations in the country have deepened due to the ravages of recurrent economic crises. In 2008, an increase of 11.4% in food prices may have increased the number living in poverty in Guatemala, from 51% in 2006 to 56% for 2008; i.e., there was a return to 2000 levels, according to the World Food Programme (WFP, 2008).

Although in 2009 prices increased at a slower rate than the historical average, the difficult economic situation faced by so many families limits access to foods. In 2010, according to IMF projections, food prices will increase by 3.3%. This figure is lower than the one projected by Banguat, which estimates it at about 5%. It should be noted, however, that neither projection takes into account the effects on production of storm Agatha and the Pacaya volcano eruption (May 2010) and other heavy rains and tropical storms. These facts might increase prices due to lower production; in fact, according to the Government of Guatemala (2010), agricultural losses amounting to 595.01 million Quetzals were reported.

**Figure 9**  
**Variation in Food Prices**



Source: IMF (2010).

\* Forecast.

The economic crisis has also contributed to increased pressure on environmental resources, precisely now that the effects of climate change begin to be considered as the great global

challenge. Activities that pollute rivers and lakes, increase deforestation, unsustainable agriculture or indiscriminate construction affect climate sustainability. Based on annual accumulated historical temperature and precipitation data (22.6° C and 1738.7 mm, respectively, ECLAC (2010) used a model to project a likely "increase in average annual temperature of 1.55° C and a decrease in cumulative rainfall of 27.23 mm relative to historical averages."

During 2009, the situation of irregular rainfall patterns, due to the effects of climate change, caused crop losses, which could contribute to increased levels of poverty, especially among the rural population, which affected 75.7% of children and adolescents before the crisis (16.5% above the national average for this age group, according to *Encovi* 2006). As a result, most people working in agriculture were in a situation of high food and nutritional vulnerability.

A rapid assessment in the wake of the storm Agatha by Action against Hunger (2010) in sixty-two communities in seven municipalities of the departments of Escuintla, Suchitepéquez, Retalhuleu and San Marcos determined that among small producers there was an "affected area of 1662 hectares of banana crops. Damage is distributed among 79% of communities and total losses are estimated at 90% of the affected area." In the country, losses and damage caused by Agatha to agriculture, livestock and fisheries amounted to 672.4 million Quetzals, which gives an idea of the severity of this storm (Government of Guatemala, 2010). 190.2 million more Quetzals in losses were caused by other storms and heavy rain.

This reduces employment opportunities for many people who cannot find another source of job earnings, since the labor market has shrunk because of the global crisis. As a result, many families choose to find employment for their sons and daughters or, in extreme cases, encourage them to leave home as a way to reduce expenses. Moreover, early marriages and teenage pregnancy have increased in households that do not receive remittances, in a context marked by high levels of impunity (98%, according to CICIG) for crimes committed against children and adolescents.

For its part, the decrease in the amount of food eaten by many families as a strategy to adapt to the economic crisis is not only unadvisable but also has negative health implications. According to a report by the Humanitarian Network (2009), "On average, 77.5% of the households surveyed [in the dry corridor] have reserves for 8 weeks instead of the 24 weeks held in reserve during normal times", which places them in a situation of vulnerability to other disasters and increases hunger.

To cope with this situation, many families are forced to migrate, either to other parts of the country or abroad, as a way of supplementing incomes that are dwindling due to climate and the economic crisis. For example, according to the qualitative study conducted by UNICEF, in the municipality of Chisec (Alta Verapaz), adolescents aged between thirteen and fourteen migrate to nearby farms to work, earning less than the legal agricultural wages (fifty-six Quetzals a day) and having to spend several days, even weeks, away from home with no contact with their families.

This adaptation to the crisis by the most vulnerable households, which, as we have seen, is particularly detrimental to the development of children and adolescents, has a negative impact because it increases the risk of reducing access to basic rights such as health, education, protection from violence, abuse or commercial sexual exploitation.

Thus, the families most affected by the impact of economic crisis and climate change do not use a single adaptation strategy but a number of them, as several studies clearly show.

### ***An Issue of Rights***

Article 32 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC): "States Parties recognize children's right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work that may be hazardous or interfere with their education, or is harmful to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development".

Article 80 of the *Law on Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents* (PINA Law): "The comprehensive protection of children and adolescents should be ensured at all social, economic and legal levels."

# Victims of the Economic Crisis

The global economic crisis has affected children and adolescents in Guatemala. Its effects are felt by poor and extremely poor homes, making them more vulnerable and preventing their full development.

- 1 The U.S. economy grows and banks grant high-risk mortgage loans between 2003 and 2007.
- 2 Banks transfer high-risk loans to financial and investment agencies.
- 3 The crisis breaks out when the large volume of the debt and bad debts crush financial institutions in 2009.
- 4 Food and fuel prices go up.
- 5 The U.S. Government comes to the rescue of the financial system to give it liquidity.
- 6 The financial crisis affects the economy by restricting credit and contracting the market.
- 7 The collapse results in bankruptcies and the loss of jobs.



## IMPACT ON GUATEMALA

- Cuts in public spending due to the drop in State revenues
- Guatemalan immigrants are deported
- Family remittances from the U.S. drop
- The national economy shrinks
- Guatemalan exports to the U.S. fall
- Risk of adolescent recruitment by organized crime
- Loss of thousands of formal jobs
- Lower tax collection, especially VAT

### EFFECTS ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

- Deterioration of the quality of life in thousands of poor homes.
- Loss of families' purchasing power.
- Thousands of homes go from poverty to extreme poverty.
- The amount and quality of food go down.
- Chronic malnutrition increases.
- Children and adolescents have to leave school in order to work.
- The number of adolescent pregnancies goes up, as well as maternal and child mortality.
- A greater risk of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.
- Adolescents migrate looking for jobs in urban areas of the U.S.

### SUPPORT STRATEGIES

- ✓ Continuous control of children's weight and height to detect growth deficiencies.
- ✓ Improvement and provision of social investment.
- ✓ Increase in coverage of nutrition programs.
- ✓ Fight against organized crime.
- ✓ Real-time information regarding the situation of children and adolescents.
- ✓ Free basic health and education services.
- ✓ Conditional monetary transfer program (health, education and nutrition).
- ✓ Scholarships financed by municipalities.
- ✓ A campaign to promote breastfeeding, environmental sanitation, reproductive health, prevention of premature pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/aids.
- ✓ Protection of children and adolescents who work, against commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons.



### 3.1 Climate Change

Floods, soil erosion, landslides, desertification, reduced access to drinking water and increased disease are just a few of the consequences that climate change can have on children and adolescents in Guatemala, especially in rural areas. According to ECLAC (2010), "a slight increase in temperature has a negative impact on agriculture in Guatemala. Similarly, a 10 mm increase in the annual accumulated rainfall means a decrease in land yields per hectare of about \$2."

In 2009, due to climate change and the "El Niño" phenomenon, Guatemala experienced irregular rainfall, which resulted in the loss of many crops and an increase in chronic malnutrition cases in children under five, especially in the departments of the so-called dry corridor: Baja Verapaz, El Progreso, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Jutiapa and Jalapa.



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"Corn and beans, along with sorghum [sic] and cassava, are the four crops that suffered losses of more than 50% due to the drought that struck the country in 2009," according to a 2009 report by the Humanitarian Network. In this regard, farming families not only saw their incomes drastically reduced, but also their access to food because small and medium growers are for the most part subsistence farmers who sell whatever is left over, said the Humanitarian Network.

Along with this, globally "main subsistence crops are reaching the limits of viability due to temperature ranges. Erratic rainfall patterns and seasons alter the agricultural cycle and for many families the quest for food has become an ongoing struggle" (Oxfam, 2009).

Moreover, in 2010, storm Agatha caused extensive damage in most departments (Government of Guatemala, 2010). The situation was exacerbated by the eruption of Pacaya volcano, which produced thousands of cubic meters of volcanic sand, causing, among others, the closure for five days of the international airport in Guatemala City, with the associated economic losses.

Jaime Martínez is thirteen years old and lives in San Juan Ermita (a municipality in the department of Chiquimula). He earns ten Quetzals a day for agricultural work: "I go in the morning with my machete to clear the corn and bean plants and return in the afternoon. This is hard work but I have to take home something to eat," he says. "My mom gives us tortillas with beans, but sometimes we do not get enough and we have to ignore our stomachs when they growl," says Jaime.

Jaime's is not an isolated case. Families put their children to bed early so they do not ask for supper due to the shortage of food.

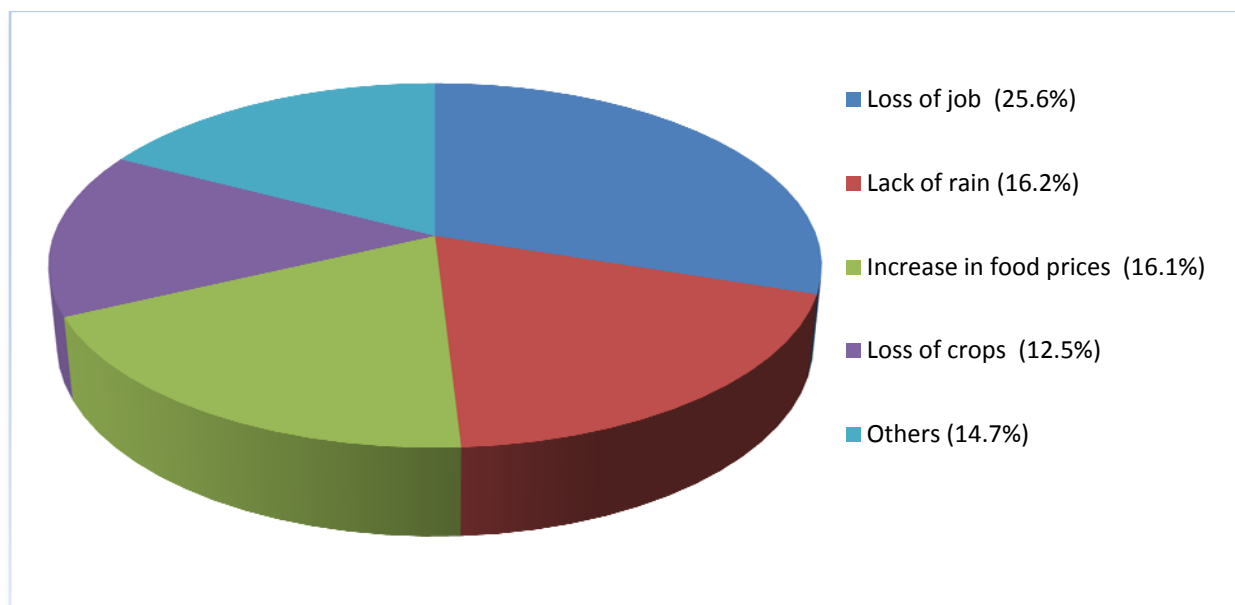
Although it is a historical phenomenon, the practice is spreading to families that had sufficient access to food prior to the crisis. As can be inferred, this practice is detrimental to children's development, since it undermines their health and their school performance declines in a country like Guatemala, where children attend school for an average of 4.8 years (UNICEF, 2008, based on 2002 Census data).

Not only agriculture suffers from the effects of climate change. So does poultry farming, which was reduced by 67% in 2009 in the dry corridor (Humanitarian Network, 2009). The loss of birds by the families "reduces their ability to cope with future adverse events," says the report. The decrease in

the number of animals is important, because they constitute an asset that is sold when the crisis worsens.

According to the Humanitarian Network, for 25.6% of households, the main problem caused by drought was the loss of employment; for 16.2%, it was the lack of rain; 16.1% said the crisis they are going through is due to increased food prices, while for 12.5% the main obstacle was the loss of crops. "These elements are related to the current and future ability to acquire food, which households perceive as a major risk," states the report.

**Figure 10**  
**Major Issues and Risks Arising from the 2009 Drought in the Dry Corridor**



Source: Humanitarian Network (2009).

Climate change also has implications for access to drinking water, especially in rural areas, where, according to the Institute for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of Rafael Landívar University (IARNA, 2009), in 2006 "more than 30%, or 498,191 households, were fetching water from a public or private tap, a well or a river, lake or spring." On the opposite side are urban households, of which 90% "have access to piped water in the house or at least on the property." This still incomplete access to water can be limited both by environmental phenomena such as deforestation and by unplanned urbanization.

The lack of adequate access to water can cause the onset of various diseases. It should be stressed in this connection that 21% of rural households and 10% of those located in urban areas did not have improved sanitation in 2006 (IARNA, 2009). IARNA also notes, "Over 50% of households in urban areas in the departments of Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Sololá, Petén and Totonicapán do not have minimum sanitation facilities."

The damage caused by the storm Agatha to water and sanitation systems and the accumulation of polluted water favored "the increased incidence of diseases such as diarrhea, respiratory and skin diseases, dengue and malaria, to the detriment of health and nutrition of affected populations, especially children under five" (MFEWS / USAID, 2010).

As a result, families adopt different strategies to address the effects of climate change by seeking other sources of income aside from agriculture or aquaculture.

## 3.2 Changes in Diet

One of the estimated consequences of the crisis referred to in this document is that households are forced to make diet changes in order to take advantage of the available financial and/or food resources, eating less food and also lower quality foods.

In Guatemala, these changes in eating patterns are due, among others, to increases in the price of food staples that are part of the country's basic diet such as corn, some of which is being imported. This grain is also the main subsistence crop among small and medium farmers, who were severely impacted by the 2009 weather events that resulted in crop losses or reduced yields.

"Strong winds and heavy rains caused by Agatha caused crop damage and losses due to floods, overflowing rivers and landslides" (MFEWS / USAID, 2010), added to the effects of the eruption of the volcano Pacaya. Both phenomena occurred between 25 and 30 May 2010, a period in which most poor households in Guatemala faced the annual seasonal food shortages and, therefore, were depending on the market for subsistence.

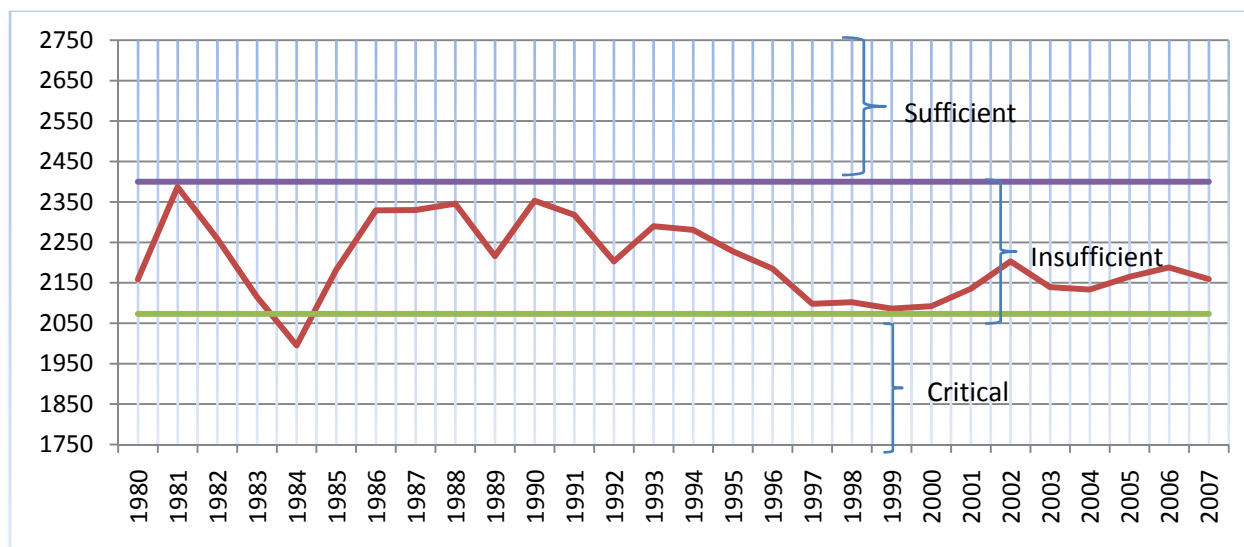
In a normal season, the first harvest is collected in August. This reduces reliance on markets for the poorest families. Today, on the southern coast and in eastern Guatemala, some crops were delayed until October, so that "households will depend on food purchases until then" (MFEWS / USAID, 2010).

On the other hand, in the highlands, according to the Mesoamerican Food Security Early Warning System (MFEWS), because of their characteristics, "replanting is not an option" (MFEWS / USAID, 2010). For this reason, the poorest households rely almost solely on the market for food, since they have no food reserves. Thus, as of October 2010, "food insecurity could worsen for households of the highlands, since "they will not have the option of using their crops at the end of the year for food", according to MFEWS.

The reduced access to food will exacerbate the historical cultural pattern whereby, at mealtimes, the father usually eats first, then the sons, then the daughters and, finally, if any food is left, the mother.

People not only eat less, but eat food of lower quality. The economic crisis has led to changes in food consumption due to price increases. This also coincides with a decline in most consumers' purchasing power. The number of meals has also decreased and the number of days people go without eating has increased. This has significant impact on protein-energy levels, which do not meet the "average energy needs of the population" (UN, 2003), as shown by the following graph.

**Figure 11**  
**Energy Intake Level**



Source: FAOSTAT data.

Indeed, if you look at the energy intake level, the Guatemalan population has inadequate energy levels, especially since 1994, when the trend worsened. This is due to "adverse natural factors that have affected Central America, mainly the hurricane-force wind and rain in 1997 and 1998 and the droughts of the summers of 1999, 2000 and 2001" (UN, 2003), as well as the loss of employment opportunities.

If we project this graph to present times, we would probably find a drop similar to the one experienced between 1994 and 2001 because, for 2009, it would be compounded by the drought caused by climate change and lack of access to food and, for 2010, the effects of the storm Agatha, the eruption of Pacaya volcano and other weather phenomena. Moreover, "buying foodstuffs that provide the minimum caloric requirements of the average Guatemalan (2,173 kilocalories per day per person) has become more expensive" (World Bank, 2009).

Foods of animal origin are limited in most people's diets. Regarding the basic food basket, the qualitative perception study conducted by UNICEF notes that there has been a significant decline in the intake of red meat, poultry, dairy and grain due to their high cost.

In the municipalities of Comitancillo and Ixchiguán, in the department of San Marcos, respondents in the above-mentioned qualitative study indicated that they used to eat red meat (beef) or white meat (chicken) once a week, but now do so once or twice a month. They spaced mealtimes because they buy basic foods in smaller quantities and less frequently.

In these municipalities, as in many others in the country, food purchases are limited to corn, coffee, sugar and salt, plus vegetables and herbs. People occasionally buy meat or similar products. The purchase of commodities such as rice, potatoes, eggs and milk has been reduced in Comitancillo, in order to increase purchases of corn, coffee, salt and tomatoes.

In the highlands, one of the crops most affected by the storm Agatha were potatoes, which registered a 54% price increase the week following the passage of the heavy rains, so that many families were unable to purchase them. Thus, and not only in this region, it is expected



that the effects of heavy rains will promote an increase in basic food basket prices, which until September 2010 represented a yearly 3.55% increase to 2,030.10 Quetzals (INE website). In other words, the average Guatemalan household (5.38 members) needs 67.6 Quetzals a day to buy food, even though the daily minimum wage is 56 Quetzals.

***What is the basic food basket?***

"It is the minimum amount of food needed to meet at least the energy and protein needs of a household", according to the National Statistics Institute (INE). In Guatemala, a family of 5.38 people needed 2030.10 Quetzales in September 2010 to buy basic foods.

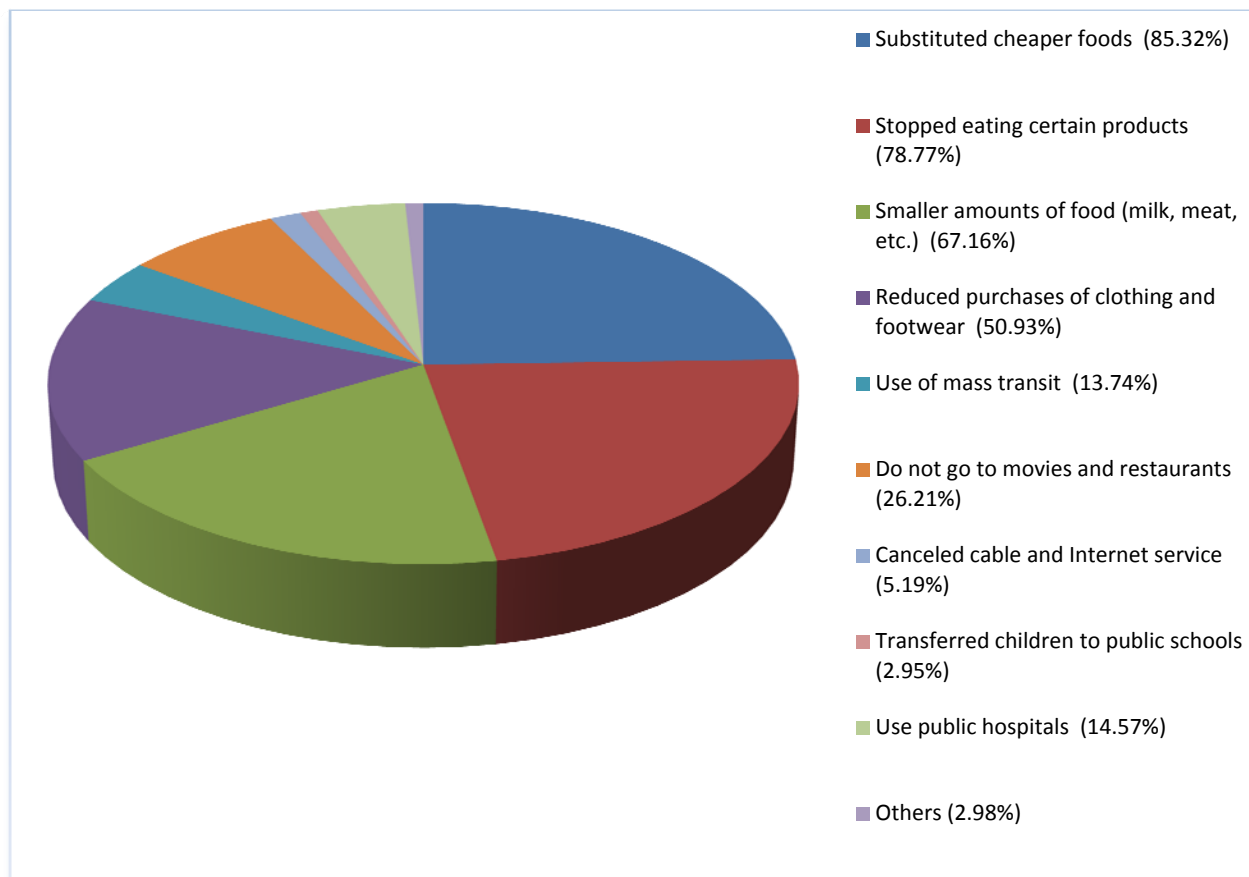
When products are sourced locally, prices are generally lower. For example, in the municipality of Rabinal (department of Baja Verapaz), indigenous and rural population is based on the daily diet of beans, corn tortillas, rice, coffee, sugar, pepita, squash, tomatoes, onions and Pinol, among other products that are produced locally, so the price is lower.

This limited variety in the foods eaten contributes to the already high rates of malnutrition in children under five years of age who do not consume animal protein and micronutrients of adequate quantity and quality. A deficient diet during the first years of life compromises physical and intellectual development, resulting in low educational achievement and later in low labor productivity.

The food restriction situation is mitigated, in part, by the aid that households are receiving, in the form of food or cash transfers. 30% of households (436) surveyed by the Humanitarian Network (2009) in the dry corridor said they had received such transfers, which had allowed them to "temporarily improve food availability in the home".

Of the 1,104,736 households receiving remittances, 49.2% have made changes in their spending to cope with the decline in income, according to a survey conducted by IOM and UNICEF (2009). Among these households, 85.3% of respondents currently purchase cheaper products; 78.8% had stopped using certain products; 67.16% buy less food. Another 50.9% have reduced their purchases of clothing and footwear. Three percent of these households have moved their children to public schools. Many homes have made several of these changes, as shown by the chart below.

**Figure 12**  
**Households that Have Made Changes In their Spending Habits**



Source: IOM / UNICEF (2009).

### 3.3 Health

The economic crisis also affects health care, especially in a country like Guatemala where "57% of total healthcare costs are paid directly by individuals and families" (USAID / Dialogue Project, 2009b), i.e. there is no health insurance, but people go to health centers depending on their financial resources. Moreover, "fewer than half of all childhood diseases in Guatemala are treated outside the home" (World Bank, 2009).

To improve this situation, according to its website, the Social Cohesion Council aims "to improve the health and nutrition of poor families with children aged between 0 and 6 years and/or pregnant women through the conditional cash transfer program called 'Mi Familia Progres<sup>1</sup>', to ensure that children come for free medical checkups to prevent disease and malnutrition.

In the department of Chiquimula, since the first quarter of 2009, medical visits have increased due, among other factors, to the mechanisms for the receipt of conditional cash transfers. In addition, the extension of working hours at the Permanent Care Center to 24 hours a day also encourages more people to use it.

<sup>1</sup> "My Family Progresses"

In San Marcos, after free health services increased, people seek medical advice more often for malnutrition and anemia. The number of patients seeking care for gastrointestinal diseases, diarrhea, pneumonia, dehydration and childbirth has also increased.

According to the World Bank (2009), people living in poverty use public health services as frequently as those who are not poor, but "there are important differences in the type of institution they visit." Although, on average, both groups use public health services 1.6 times per year, poor households go to local services (health centers, health posts and community centers (1.2 times per year) and seldom visit the hospital (0.4 times per year). Households that are not poor "use hospitals more frequently (once a year) than local health services (0.6 times per year)."

For its part, the Guatemalan Humanitarian Network, of which UNICEF is part, says that the most frequent causes of disease in children in the dry corridor are "cough, fever or flu (61% of cases), followed by diarrhea (27%). Malnutrition was recognized as a cause of disease only by 1%", which shows that the problem is not always identified. 81% of sick children receive some treatment at health centers. According to the report, the reasons for not using health centers are "lack of money (according to 33% of respondents), no service nearby (26%) and being treated by others (22%)" (Humanitarian Network, 2009).

That is the case of Liseth Cruz, aged twelve, who lives in San Juan Ermita, Chiquimula. She claims that when she has some pain her parents give her "herbal teas" because they cannot afford to take her to a doctor. "The doctors are far away and you have to walk a lot. When you are in pain the last thing you want to do is walk, so I lie down and my mom gives me something to drink to make the pain go away," she says.

Her father, Feliciano Cruz, thirty-eight, said that his village has a health post, but there isn't enough medicine. "When a doctor arrives he gives us prescriptions for drugs, but we put them away because we have no money to buy them," says this farmer who earns just 35 Quetzals a day, when he finds work as a laborer.

According to the 2008/09 ENSMI, 77.6% of girls and boys between 12 and 23 months are immunized against measles, which is 2.9 percentage points more than in 2002. According to this survey, 71.2% of children in that age bracket have all their shots, 8.7% more than in 2002. Diseases such as measles, pneumonia and diarrhea may increase due, among other reasons, to poor nutrition, because the body does not have adequate defenses to protect itself.

After the Storm Agatha, standing water created by the floods in different parts of the country led to an increase in the number of cases of dengue fever; its symptoms appear between 7 and 14 days after the infectious bite. Dengue causes fever and affects mostly infants; it can be fatal if not diagnosed early. To this, we must add that this tropical storm caused losses and damage to the water and sanitation sector valued at 117.26 million Quetzals, of which 50.87% represents damage to the urban sanitation infrastructure (Government of Guatemala, 2010).

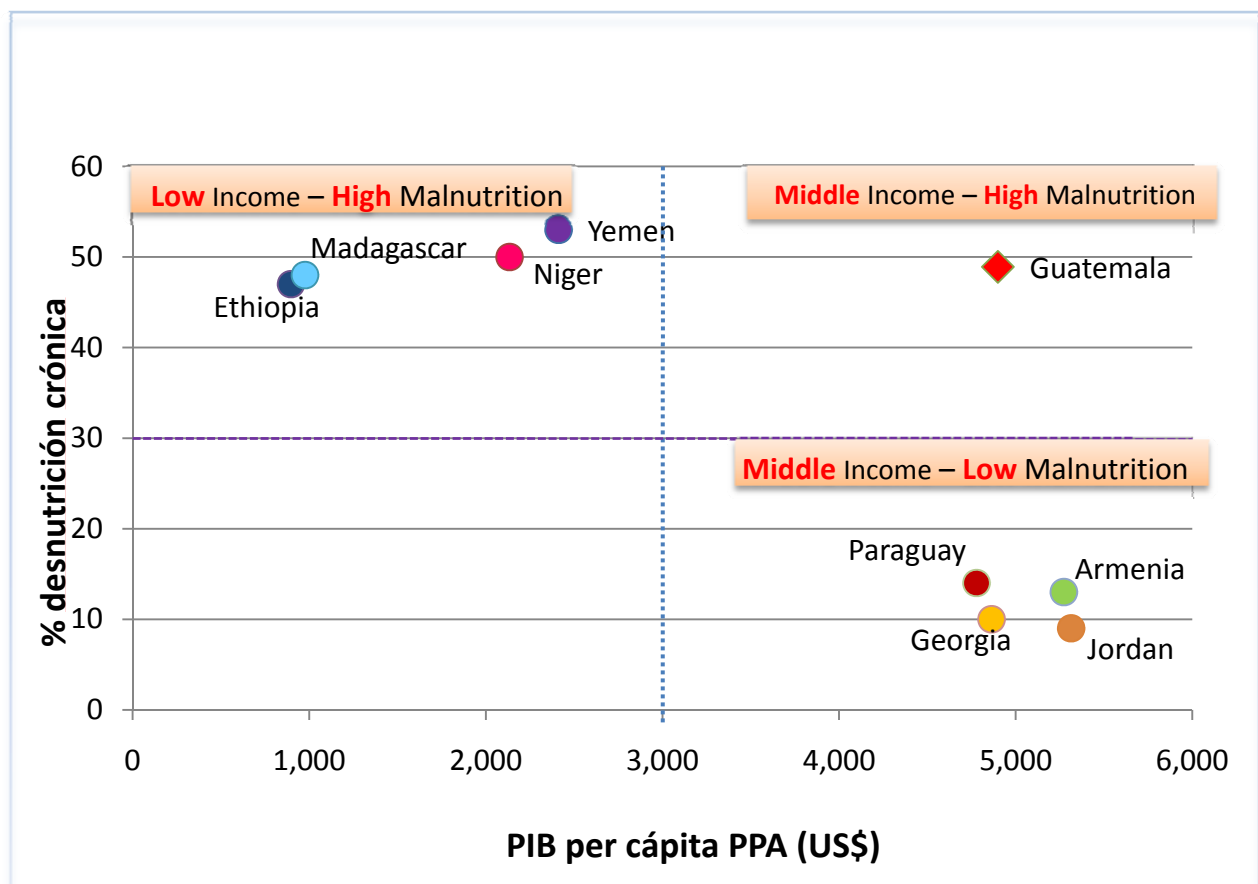
Ligia Lorena Grijalva, three years old, is malnourished. She was close to death, so her parents took her to the Western Regional Hospital (in the department of Quetzaltenango). The girl, who lives in the municipality of Cantel, weighed just 10 pounds and measured 64 inches when she entered the hospital. She looked like "a five-month-old baby because of the malnutrition," said a nurse at the Hospital. Due to lack of space, Ligia Lorena was sent home to complete the recovery process.

### *What is chronic malnutrition?*

It is low height for age, i.e. when a child's height is less than the one that corresponds to its age. In Guatemala, chronic malnutrition affects 49.8% of children under five.

The high rate of chronic malnutrition (49.8%, according to USAID's 2010 *Nutrition Update*) is closely related to hunger, poverty, lack of education and exclusion, gender and ethnicity. It is, in short, a reflection of the high inequality that characterizes Guatemalan society. In fact, if one relates the GDP per capita with chronic malnutrition rates, the contradiction or lack of correspondence is obvious: while Guatemala has a per capita income comparable to that of Paraguay and Jordan (which have low or moderate malnutrition levels), its chronic malnutrition rates are similar to those of much poorer countries such as Madagascar, Ethiopia and Yemen (UNICEF, 2008b).

**Figure 13**  
**The Guatemalan Paradox**



Source: UNICEF (2008b) and USAID (2010)

### 3.4 Formation of New Couples

In an attempt to minimize the effects of the economic crisis, families not only look for ways to supplement their income, but also try to reduce household expenses. One hypothesis that was considered in the IOM / UNICEF survey was that the early formation of new couples increases in times of crisis, increasing the risk of commercial sexual exploitation and pornography and the risk of contracting HIV / AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The results partially invalidated this hypothesis. While early unions are postponed in households receiving remittances, in households where remittances are not received these matches perpetuate the historical cultural pattern and are aggravated by the economic crisis.

Adolescents who live in households that receive remittances are postponing sexual unions and marriage, according to the above-mentioned IOM/UNICEF survey (2009). Remittances contribute to sex education, because people have more resources and information. In addition, family members who live abroad advise and influence those who remain in Guatemala with the lifestyle of the countries of destination.

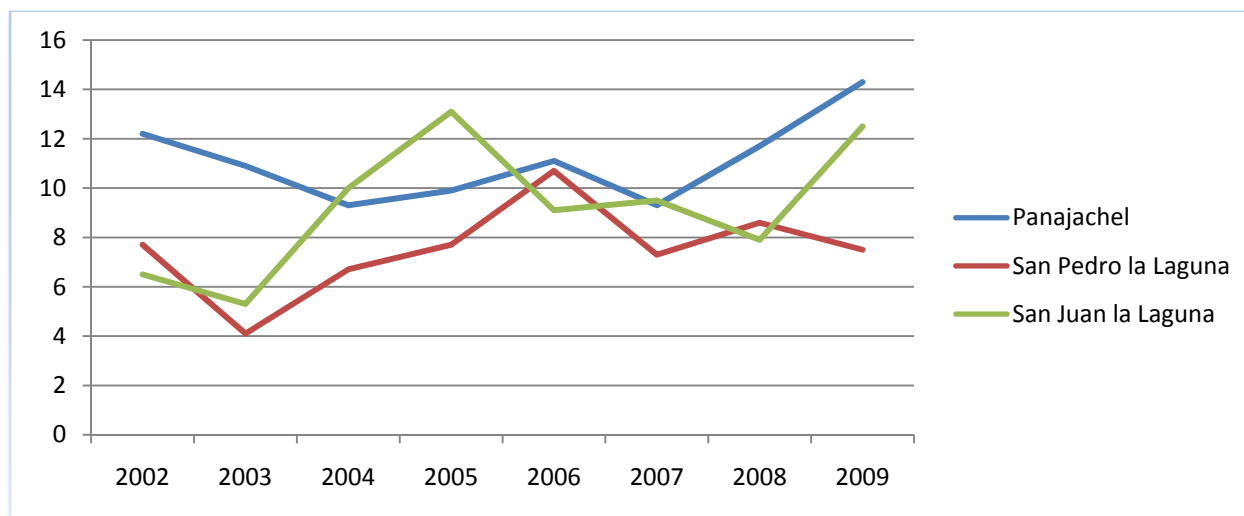
For families that do not receive remittances, the deteriorating economic situation may have more pronounced effects on early marriage at an age that can range from twelve to eighteen. This validates the above hypothesis. In some cases, these choices are made by families or adolescents to try to change a pressing situation associated with the economic crisis.

Although in most cases these unions represent a culturally ingrained behavior, it cannot be dissociated from the precarious living conditions of most families where this behavior is common.

Family disintegration, domestic violence, lack of sexual education and, consequently, unplanned pregnancies are factors that encourage such unions. In the long term, this could result in an increase in maternal mortality rates among teenage girls. This exposes the most vulnerable adolescents to an increased risk of infection by HIV/AIDS, although, according to ENSMI 2008/09, 88.8% of women of reproductive age have knowledge about the disease.

For example, in various municipalities in the department of Sololá (the case of Panajachel), these early marriages have increased since 2007, especially among women, due to the economic crisis, which also has an impact on teenage pregnancy. Indeed, in Panajachel, 14.3% of girls under nineteen had already been mothers in 2009, a figure well above that of nearby towns such as San Pedro la Laguna (7.5%) or San Juan la Laguna (12.5%) (MOH / SIGSA 2010).

**Figure 14**  
**Percentage of Adolescents under 19 Who Have Had Children**



Source: prepared by the author, based on the Health Management System of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare of the Government of Guatemala (MSPAS/SIGSA) and the Dialogue Project.

Obviously, for a teen to get pregnant she has to have sex with a man. For this reason, sexual and reproductive health information and training programs, which are usually designed for women, should also be provided for adolescent males. This becomes even more necessary in those municipalities in which masculinity is intimately connected with control of female sexuality, which prevents women from enforcing their right to have safe sex by using condoms, for example.

Besides the physical problems of early pregnancy, the social and economic problems this entails must be considered as well. Teenage mothers often see their social mobility and independence constrained, as well as their chances of pursuing formal studies. In addition, their entry into the labor market is more complex, both now and in the future, since a single teenage mother with no education has fewer employment opportunities.

### 3.5 School Desertion

Truancy and dropping out of primary school are a historical trend in Guatemala, where "69% of students complete the fifth grade" (USAID / Dialogue Project, 2009). Migration and incorporation of children and adolescents in paid or unpaid labor to contribute to the household income are the main causes of truancy and desertion. Thus, according to the World Bank (2009) "efforts to reduce desertion and repetition in primary education should focus on access to health and quality education, including activities such as sport and the arts" since they represent the main causes of school desertion and non-enrollment.

**Table 2**  
**Reasons Leading to School Desertion and Non-enrollment in Guatemala**  
**(2006)**

	Total	Males	Females	Non-indigenous	Indigenous	Extremely poor	Poor	Not poor
<b>Reasons leading to desertion during the school year in primary school</b>								
Health	27.5%	23.7%	32.6%	11.8%	39.5%	23.0%	26.0%	35.4%
Economic	9.6%	8.2%	11.6%	14.4%	3.1%	8.9%	9.7%	9.5%
Lack of interest	31.4%	33.8%	28.3%	27.3	37.2%	39.2%	31.9%	28.8%
Inadequate conditions	5.7%	6.8%	4.2%	7.6%	3.2%	1.0%	4.8%	10.5%
Other	25.7%	27.5%	23.3%	32.0%	17.0%	27.9%	27.5%	15.9%
<b>Reasons for not enrolling in secondary school</b>								
Health	1.4%	1.5%	1.3%	1.8%	1.1%	1.7%	1.5%	1.3%
Economic	63.4%	65.6%	61.5%	63.5%	63.2%	67.9%	64.4%	60.6%
Lack of interest	27.5%	24.2%	30.2%	25.3%	29.9%	26.2%	28.2%	25.7%
Inadequate conditions	3.6%	5.1%	2.4%	5.2%	1.9%	0.8%	2.0%	6.5%
Other	7.7%	8.6%	7.0%	9.4%	5.8%	4.1%	5.9%	12.3%

Source: World Bank (2009).

Truancy increases on so-called *market days*, that is, the concentration of the population of the municipality in the municipal or departmental capital for market-related activities. During these days, it is customary to use children and adolescents as vendors or "stockers" in the stalls. The coffee and sugarcane harvest seasons are also events that encourage school desertion, since children, if not entire families, are employed.

In several municipalities in the department of Chiquimula, truancy is more pronounced in April and May during the bean and corn harvest, which employs several thousand children. The same happens between November and January during the coffee harvest. Moreover, in this department, adolescents tend to leave the education system after completion of the sixth grade in order to enter the labor market, which influences the early formation of couples as young as twelve or thirteen.

The Social Cohesion Council seeks to encourage and promote school attendance and retention of girls and boys between 6 and 15 through conditional cash transfers. This is driving down the high truancy and desertion rates in the municipalities where the program "Mi Familia Progresiva" is present. In addition, since 2009, the State covers the full cost of public school attendance. Without this central government initiative, the effects of the crisis in education would have been immeasurably greater for children and adolescents.

Julio Tzoy Pu, a Quiché indigenous man from Santa Lucía la Reforma (a municipality in Totonicapán), said: "of my six children, five are in school. Since it is free, it is easier. The Government has helped us with "Mi Familia Progresá" and the money we receive can be used for something."



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A very different case is that of César, fourteen, who lives in the municipality of Rabinal (department of Baja Verapaz), also prioritized by the central government. He states that he has survived by working in the field. He says: "We sell tamales in the square; that is how we subsist." He says he had to leave school to work; "Sometimes I cannot go to school because I have no time, because life in the fields is very hard and you cannot abandon the cornfields just like that."

According to the World Bank (2009), "as solutions to the coverage problem are found", efforts should focus on

"achieving and maintaining the quality of education".

Family disintegration, often associated with the migration of mothers and fathers abroad, further promotes truancy. This is particularly true in the case of older children, who, among other issues, have to take care of the home or need new sources of income, particularly if they do not receive remittances.

In Guatemala, when natural disasters such as storm Agatha cause destruction and damage homes, schools are automatically turned into shelters, bringing as a result "disruption of the teaching-learning process, increased repetition rates, school desertion and increased child labor, among others" (United Nations, 2008).

Using schools as shelters deteriorates classrooms, furniture and equipment, damages toilets and causes the loss of teaching materials. For these reasons, after emergencies, it makes it difficult to resume school activities, although these are considered a necessary condition for children to return to normal.

According to estimates by the Government of Guatemala (2010), damage and losses caused by storm Agatha to education amount to 640.35 million Quetzals. This natural disaster damaged 957 school buildings, which affected 209,004 children.

For its part, in the wake of Hurricane Stan in Guatemala in October 2005, the country's education sector "suffered 52.6 million Quetzals in damage, including damage to churches and sports centers and losses estimated at 9.3 million, for a total of 61.9 million" (ECLAC, 2005). The use of schools as temporary shelters entails a number of direct and indirect consequences, as shown in the following table.



**Table 3**  
**Direct and Indirect Consequences of Using Schools as Temporary Shelters**

Social consequences	Economic consequences	Physical consequences	Health Consequences
Disruption of the educational process Increased repetition, desertion and child labor	Investment in rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools	Damage to the infrastructure, toilets, water supply, kitchens, classrooms, warehouses, electrical installations, etc.	Girls and boys are more prone to diseases due to overcrowding
Children's safety and recreational space are affected	Some people who do not need help make use of resources	Damage to school furniture and equipment: deterioration of desks, chairs, shelves, blackboards, laboratory equipment, mechanical and electrical tools, libraries, educational materials, etc.	The teachers and students need psychosocial support
Disintegration of social support networks	Economic losses for teachers and teachers' aides		Interruption of school health programs
Interruption of feeding programs in schools	Search for alternate learning locations		Poor water and sanitation conditions
Disruption of family routines and family separation			

Source: United Nations (2008).

### 3.6 Child Labor

Although child labor in Guatemala is a historical phenomenon, it is important to stress that the economic crisis and climate change have led to an increase in the incorporation of children into the labor market as a strategy to supplement household incomes.

According to the National Employment and Income Survey (ENEI, 2004), 23% of the population aged 7-17 took part in economic activities or wanted to. "Child labor has a negative impact; in many ways it is a barrier to education, interferes with the necessary play and leisure time, and may jeopardize the physical and mental health of children and adolescents (UNICEF, 2008).

According to the Ministry of Labor and the National Statistics Institute (2008), "while 53.3% of children and economically active adolescents attend school, this tendency decreases with age." Thus, 83.7% of working children aged 5-9, 67.6% of those aged 10-14 and 33.8% of those aged 15-17 go to school.

In rural areas, most household members work in the harvest. In 2009, drought forced families to seek new sources of income, including even the youngest family members, who are forced to do unskilled and low-paying work that keeps them from attending school and makes them more vulnerable.

For Juan José Tale, life is not easy in Tecún Umán, a town in the department of San Marcos located on the border with Mexico. He had to leave school in 2007 to support his mother and eight siblings after his father died tragically. "I take whatever work I can find because I cannot have a formal job," he says. Sometimes he works as a blacksmith, a mason's assistant, a parcel carrier at Customs, a bus driver assistant or a "rickshaw" operator in the most populous area of this town, which is a transit point toward immigration offices of both countries.

Juan José lives with his family in the Tres de Mayo neighborhood of Tecún Umán, where most people live in poverty and children beg on the streets from passersby. In a month of strenuous work, Juan José manages to earn 400 Quetzals and sometimes only half that amount, when the situation becomes more critical. He uses that money to buy food for his family, consisting of ten members. "What I earn does not go very far and sometimes people do not want to pay much even if you work really hard", he says, adding that he works from sunrise to sunset.

The economic crisis has prompted more parents to take their sons and daughters to work with them or make them take different jobs to supplement the household income. While the boys and adolescent males often take low-paying jobs (mason's assistants, bootblacks or street vendors), girls and adolescent females are usually forced to work in their own homes or in private homes where perform household chores or care for children younger than themselves.



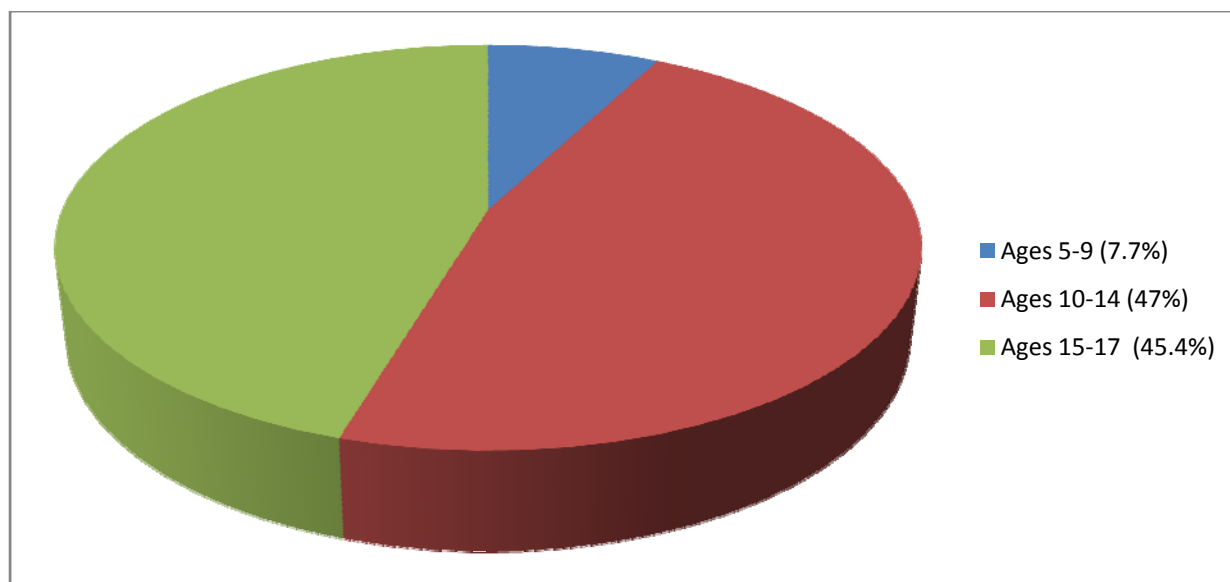
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Children and adolescents are also employed as seasonal workers during the sugarcane and coffee harvest periods. In some municipalities, children also work during the fruit-picking season. For example, in the municipality of Cubulco (department of Baja Verapaz), rural children as young as nine work on farms, where they pick coffee, cardamom and other products.

In several communities in the municipality of La Libertad (Huehuetenango), extreme poverty and the fact that many parents are unemployed forces children to work in agriculture, as domestic servants or in subsistence commerce. This historical fact has been exacerbated by the economic and financial crisis that leads more adolescents to look for jobs that contribute to the economy, but are invisible and under-registered, which means that they join the labor market under unfavorable conditions.

Based on the 2006 *Encovi*, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and the National Statistics Institute (2008) have determined that 966,361 persons under eighteen work in Guatemala. About three quarters (66.8%) of working children and adolescents live in rural areas, while only 33.2% of working children and teenagers live in urban areas. Nationally, "there is a tendency for people who begin to work to continue working and gradually drop out of school. However, there has been a slight drop in the number of workers aged 10-14."

**Figure 15**  
**Distribution of Working Children and Adolescents by Age Group.**  
**Guatemala (2006)**



Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and National Statistics Institute (2008).

While they felt the effects of the current economic situation, children living in households that receive remittances are less likely to work. According to the survey conducted by IOM and UNICEF (2009), 7.44% of the children in these households claimed that they work. Of these, 57% indicated they worked to increase household income. 30.26% of these workers are not skilled; 27.34% work in agriculture, another 18.39% are operators and mechanics and 17.86% are service providers and vendors.

An analysis of the activities carried out by workers under 18 who live in households receiving remittances provides the following data: 43.84% work in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fisheries; 21.91% work in wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels; 16.65% work in manufacturing, textile and food industries. 7.72% are construction workers. Of these, 46.4% work in a company or family business without pay, 40.2% work for private companies and receive pay. Another 3.3% work at home.

### 3.7 Migration

One of the strategies used to supplement family income is migration, either to cities or other areas of the country (such as migration from rural to urban areas) and abroad, mainly to the U.S.

Migration is due to various circumstances, including the search for better living conditions, to escape violence or the effects of adverse weather. In the latter case, people migrate because the land yields smaller crops and that often makes people more vulnerable (Oxfam, 2009).

According to the 2009 IOM/UNICEF survey, the main causes of migration among children and adolescents living outside Guatemala are the search for better living conditions (40%), finding a job (38.9%) and family reunification (10.7%).

Although it brings unquestionable benefits, especially economic ones, migration also contributes to vulnerability and family disintegration. Children and adolescents spend hours, even days, without parental supervision in the home. This weakens family bonds between those left behind (mostly children and adolescents) and those who leave (mothers and/or fathers). Family disintegration has consequences for social and emotional development and even affects school performance.

"Family disintegration, problems in raising children, risk behaviors among children and adolescents who are left without parental guidance and increased vulnerability to violence, abuse and exploitation are some of the results" of Guatemalan migration to other countries (UNICEF, 2007c).

Migration also has negative economic effects for the country, such as the brain drain of professionals and entrepreneurs trained in Guatemala. Those who migrate are usually better educated than the national average and able to find work outside the country.

Moreover, when fathers or mothers have to leave home to find work, care and attention of the house and the siblings often fall on the shoulders of teenagers, especially girls. These girls are forced to leave the educational system to perform household chores. In many cases, they are defenseless against sexual and gender abuse or violence from siblings, relatives or neighbors who are aware of their vulnerability.

According to the qualitative study conducted by UNICEF in 2008 and 2009, the trend is for children and adolescents to participate in the upkeep of the home. The perception study identified that the migration of boys and girls aged twelve to fourteen from the countryside to the city, especially in the case of children, is intensified by the crisis. Most of these migrants head for municipal and departmental capitals.

In the departments of Chiquimula, Huehuetenango, Retalhuleu, Sololá, Quetzaltenango, San Marcos, Totonicapán, Escuintla, Quiché, Santa Rosa and Baja Verapaz, temporary internal migration (from one place to another in the country) affects entire families who go to work in

farms. This involves the temporary abandonment of school, which brings about learning problems or possible permanent abandonment of school to focus on work.

Migrants also go to other countries, mainly the United States, home to 97% of the Guatemalan population living abroad (IOM/UNICEF, 2009). Among those who have emigrated, 43.14% left Guatemala in search of work; another 40.51% have done so to improve their living conditions, among others. Most work in the hospitality business and commerce (26.48%), followed by agriculture (20.79%), textile and/or food industries (16.78%) and social services (9.58%), according to the 2009 IOM/UNICEF survey.

Once in the country of destination, Guatemalans who live there must take the available jobs. Thus, at the time of the survey (June 2009), 26.48% worked in wholesale and retail commerce, hotels or restaurants, 20.79% in agriculture, hunting, forestry and/or fishing, 16.78% in manufacturing, textiles and food, 9.58% in community, social and personal services; 7.39% in education and 5.17% in construction.

### 3.8 Unlawful Businesses

Due to the economic crisis and other factors, illicit businesses in Guatemala have increased, in many cases as a survival strategy linked to informal but above all, illegal activities. In this way, economic activities outside the law are becoming the main employer at the national level as well as providing social safety nets.

These illegal activities are undermining the capacity of the State, since they operate outside the established legal and tax framework and are characterized by "the versatility of their organization", which also makes this issue "extremely difficult to estimate because those who engage in underground activities avoid detection and there are no public records "(UNDP, 2009b).

For people who have been unemployed, illegal business activities and payments for services typically offer very high compensation for short periods. They are also seen as a quick way to make money. Due to their desperate situation, people who take part in these activities are not always aware of the risks, which can lead to imprisonment or death.

These illegal businesses fall in different categories, ranging from drug trafficking to car theft. According to data generated by the Public Information Unit of the Ministry of Interior, of the 15,578 criminal acts against property committed in 2009, 42.53% were car thefts, 20.27% motorcycle thefts, 12.58% theft of firearms and 6.18% residential burglaries, among others. In addition, there were 401 rapes and 1510 crimes against personal freedom.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2009), in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, "strong drug-fueled violence poses a serious challenge for governance", since "part of the cocaine headed north passes through Central America, including El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Belize."

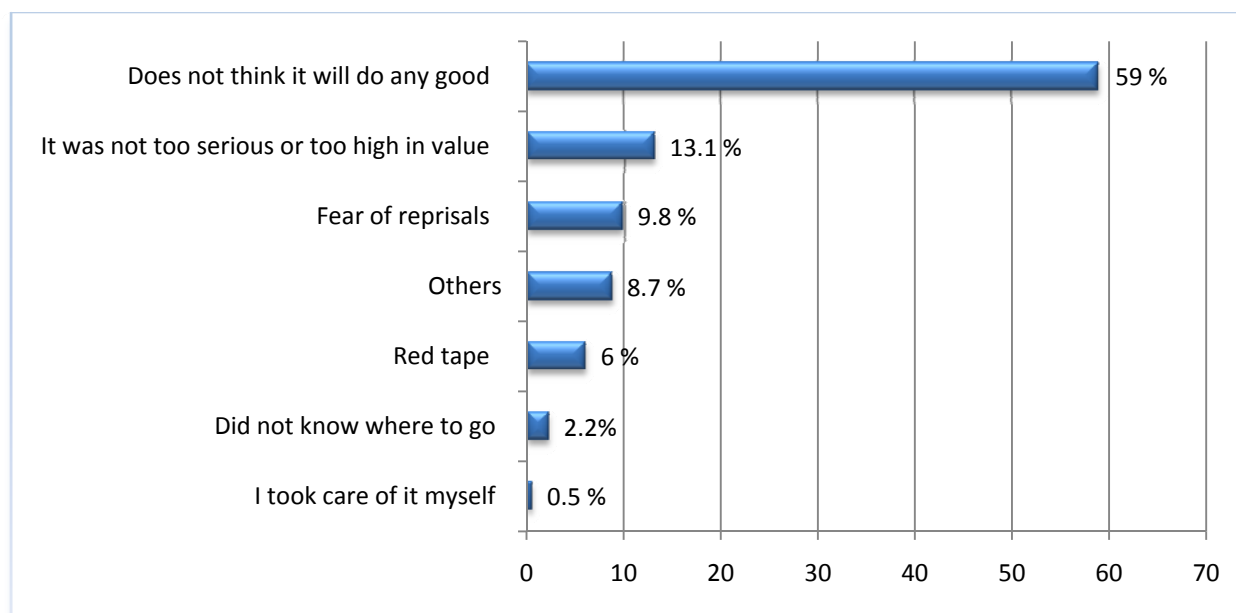
The report entitled *Money Laundering and Financial Crime* (Department of State, United States, 2010b), p. 180) states that "laundering of the proceeds of other illicit activities such as trafficking, smuggling, kidnapping, tax evasion and vehicle theft, is substantial."

According to the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH), "the activity of common and organized crime included the abduction of children, sometimes for ransom or extortion, sometimes for personal vendetta" (PDH, 2009). 48 child and adolescent kidnappings were reported during the first ten months of 2009, but many others were unreported.

According to UNDP (2007) 'illegal acts in the municipality of Guatemala are being committed by young men against the economically active population. "In the capital city, during the first half of 2007, most crimes committed were classified as "theft or robbery" (81.1%).

The UNDP study shows that 75% of crimes are not reported. In this regard, three out of four "illegal acts committed in Guatemala City [sic] are completely invisible to official statistics" (UNDP, 2007). This is because much of the population (59%) "does not believe it is worth the trouble reporting them" or believes that the theft or assault "was not serious or had a lot of value" (13.1%).

**Figure 16**  
**Reasons Why Illegal Acts Are Not Reported**



Source: UNDP (2007).

The lack of education and employment, as well as leisure and recreation opportunities for adolescents, coupled with the economic crisis, social exclusion and impunity, create a favorable environment for the rise in illegal activities in Guatemala. According to the World Bank (2009), a scenario of "low education, lack of opportunity and high impunity increases the risk that young people will participate in illegal activities."

Finally, the economic crisis undermines resilience and capacity for action due to the lack of resources of different actors and public institutions, which are circumstances exploited by organized crime. According to the World Bank (2009), "the high level of impunity and social exclusion are two of the main causes of the serious and increasing problems of crime and violence."

### 3.9 Exploitation and Violence

The economic and climate crises threaten the progress made in protecting the rights of children and adolescents, as has been shown in this paper. The increase in violence against young people, especially women, is alarming.

According to the INE Domestic Violence Statistics Unit, there were 23,721 cases of domestic violence in 2008; 10.4% of the victims were under nineteen. Of these, 92.18% were committed against women in that age range. We must not forget that "the effects of violence can be devastating and have implications in many areas of life" (UNICEF, 2008), since many children are exposed to and are victims of violence at the hands of household members.

As for child and adolescent labor associated with commercial sexual exploitation, the qualitative study conducted by UNICEF found evidence of this in the city of Tecún Umán, near the border with Mexico. In addition, in urban areas of most departments of the country one can see teenage girls who are being sexually exploited in nightclubs and bars, such as in Chisec (Alta Verapaz).

In the department of San Marcos (near the border with Mexico), there are reports of what is known as "card users", who are mothers and fathers who sexually exploit their daughters in exchange for cell phone prepaid cards.

In Guatemala City, adolescents who used to watch and wash cars or shine shoes earned a little more than twenty-five Quetzals for a day's work, but since they can no longer watch cars and there are fewer shoeshine customers, they have fallen prey to pedophile rings and are sexually exploited by means of cell phones and the Internet.

While commercial sexual exploitation activities involve children and adolescents from other Central American countries, mainly from Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador, most are Guatemalans. The criminal networks seeking more victims to feed this activity find fertile ground in populations with high rates of extreme poverty, since many teenagers can be tricked with promises of legal work, but are in reality victims of commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of violence.

The Municipality of Camotán in Chiquimula, near the border with Honduras, is part of a corridor of Central American migrants, drug trafficking and human trafficking. The population speaks about the commercial sexual exploitation of adolescents and expresses fear of reprisals for filing complaints, leading to behavior that worsens impunity.

According to the Central Intelligence Agency, "Guatemala is a source, transit and destination country for Central Americans trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor purposes; trafficking in persons is a significant and growing problem in the country" (CIA, 2010).

With the entry into force of the *Law against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons* in 2009, Guatemala is no longer the only country in Central America that had not aligned its legislation in this area that is essential for the protection and development of children and adolescents. The *Global Report on Violence against Children* (UN, 2006) suggests that "child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation should be treated as victims and receive support, rather than being treated as criminals and arrested".

### 3.10 Collateral Victims of Violence

The high rate of impunity prevailing in the country has resulted in many crimes against women. In 2009, 720 women died in Guatemala, according to the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH). 43% of them were between thirteen and twenty-seven years old. The authorities took no steps to prevent their deaths, nor to capture and convict the perpetrators. In addition to being a factor in family disruption, the death of the mother has negative consequences for children and adolescents, since they are virtually left with no guidance at home and suffer irreparable emotional loss.

Guatemala has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in Latin America and the Caribbean; around 589 women die annually from causes related to childbirth, "but more women die violent deaths, which gives an idea of the magnitude of the problem. 2174 cases of domestic violence were reported during 2009, according to the Public Information Unit of the Ministry of Interior based on data generated by the NCP.

The death of the mother due to male violence occurs in an environment of total impunity for the perpetrators. Children and adolescents growing up in an atmosphere of fear, violence and violation of their rights will be scarred for life and will probably repeat what they have seen in their family when they have their own partners.



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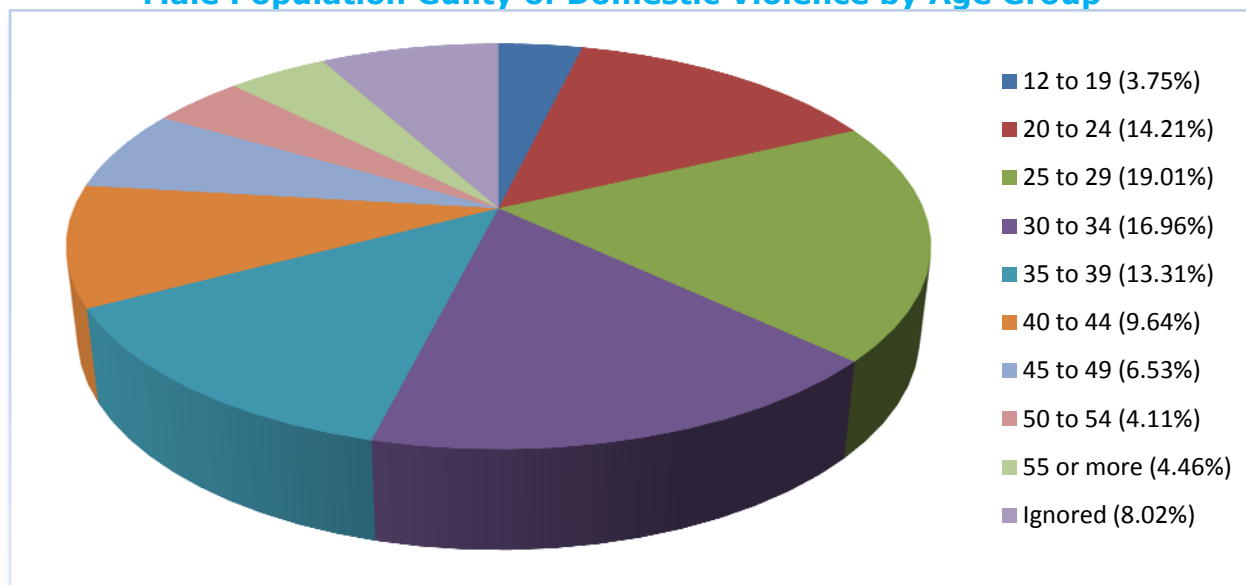
Carmen López, leader of Alliance for Action, was quoted by AFP as saying that from the entry into force of the Law against Femicide and Violence against Women until April 22, 2010, 17,687 court cases were admitted by the Judiciary. Of these complaints, 75 resulted in judgments, of which 18 were acquittals and 57 convictions." In other words, the rate of impunity for such crimes reaches 99.57%.

According to INE Domestic Violence Statistics, in 2008 there were 23,271 cases of domestic violence, of which 90.34% the victims were women, and of these, 27.77% were Mayan women. The

spouse or cohabitant committed 75.96% of these attacks. In many cases, the victims are economically dependent; 71.39% of women victims of violence were not gainfully employed. For its part, the INE traces the profile of the perpetrator as a male worker (86.93%), of which 63.5% are aged between twenty and thirty-nine. For 2010, the INE foresees around 33,600 cases of domestic violence, i.e. 92 events per day, although under-registration will remain high.



**Figure 17**  
**Male Population Guilty of Domestic Violence by Age Group**



Source: INE Statistical Unit on Domestic Violence (website).

Article 1 of the *Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Domestic Violence* (Decree 97-1996) states that "domestic violence is a violation of human rights and for the purposes of this Law it is defined as any action or omission which directly or indirectly causes physical, sexual, psychological or property damage or suffering, in the public and private sphere, to a family member at the hands of a relative, partner or former partner, spouse or former spouse or individual who has fathered the victim's children."

In Rabinal (municipality in the department of Baja Verapaz), domestic violence is a constant problem. To combat it, the city created the Municipal Office for Women, Children and Adolescents, which receives complaints of male violence against women, who subsequently receive support.

Domestic violence and child abuse are part of daily life in most of the municipalities of San Marcos. In the municipality of Ixchiguán, these behaviors are associated with machismo and alcoholism. Several people questioned in the town of Tejutla reported cases of domestic violence associated with stress at home due to lack of financial resources.

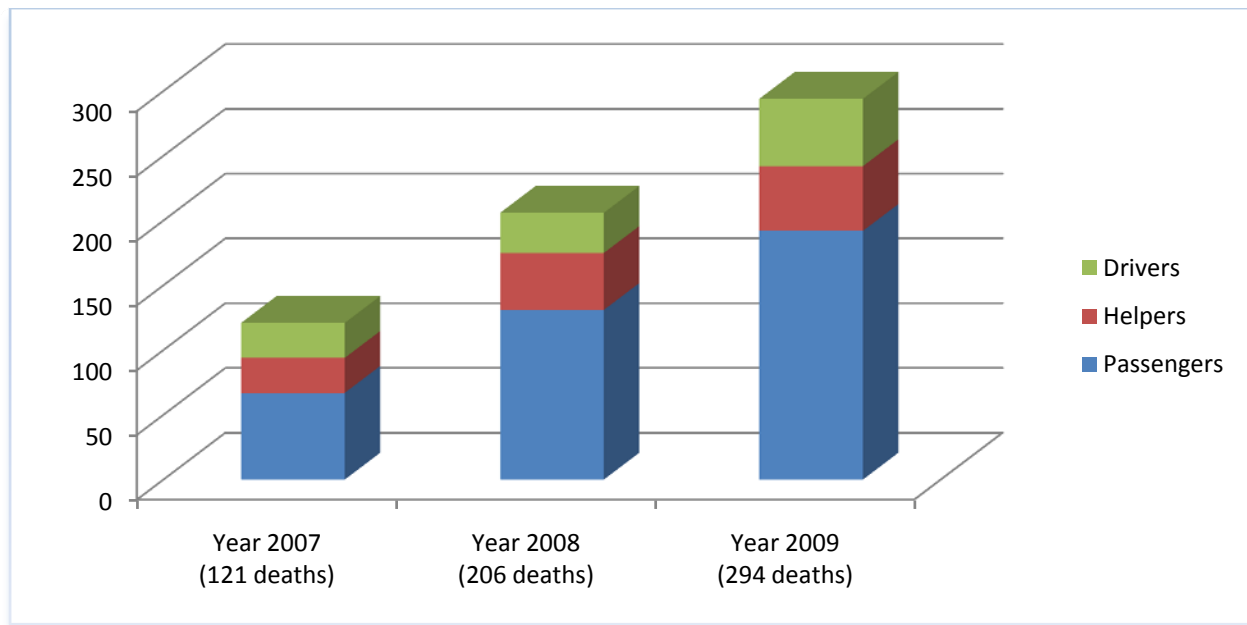
For many indigenous adolescent victims of domestic violence, not being able to receive assistance or care in their native language is a barrier for lodging complaints. Additionally, the lack of funds to pay for transportation from home to the courthouse also prevents them from reporting abuse and demanding justice.

Psychological violence has a special impact on women, children and adolescents because, although there is no physical or sexual violence, the effects on victims are high and in many cases, irreparable. Psychological violence not only harms the sufferers, most of whom are mothers, but also disrupts the coexistence and development of children and adolescents.

Moreover, according to the PDH, "the murders of people using mass transit reflect a new pattern in the increase and high levels of violence experienced in the country" (PDH, 2009).

Crimes committed in buses left 192 drivers, 50 conductors and 52 passengers dead in 2009 (PDH, 2009). Their families have been shattered and in many cases have no other sources of income. Most children in these households have to miss school or drop out entirely, as a family subsistence strategy, and even have to take hazardous jobs. Thus, children and adolescent orphans are more vulnerable to being recruited by gangs, by organized crime or for commercial sexual exploitation.

**Figure 18**  
**Bus killings between 2007 and 2009**



Source: Author, based on PDH data (PDH, 2009).

## 4. From Concern to Action



In Guatemala, the effects of climate change and the economic crisis have restricted new job opportunities, causing a *perfect storm* that has implications on society, especially among the younger population, as shown in this document. The challenges brought about by these crises are opportunities for change and test the ability of society and institutions to reinvent themselves and continue to grow, creating more equitable wealth and well-being and strengthening social protection systems.

The Republic of Guatemala will undoubtedly emerge from the economic and financial crisis over time. However, there is no guarantee that society will soon be back on the path to economic prosperity, especially if timely and necessary decisions are not taken to mitigate the historical social, nutritional and economic inequality that has delayed and impeded the full development of its people, especially children and adolescents. Therefore, it is now time to move from concern to action and decision.

Since late 2007, after the strong impact caused by the combination of these crises, the situation of children and adolescents has worsened, especially in terms of poverty levels and social inequality. The principal effect might be an increase in the number of hungry and malnourished people.

The situation of children and adolescents in Guatemala should be addressed by the State. When children, adolescents and women have poor health, low nutrition and education levels, they are less productive and the likelihood that they will remain poor and leave future generations a legacy of poverty is greater.

All actions must take into account the country's **multiculturalism**, and that one-size-fits-all solutions cannot be applied; these must be adapted to the different geographical, ethnic, linguistic and cultural areas of Guatemala and their respective demands. It is also necessary to incorporate the gender perspective in budgeting. Investing in women produces the greatest return in terms of social welfare, resulting in improved living conditions for children and adolescents.

Both the effects of climate change and the economic crisis are reducing the State's capacity to meet the population's demands for better public services, so the efficiency of social investment and public productivity must be improved. In other words, it must meet increased demands with fewer resources, adapting the supply of public services to the needs of the population, i.e., doing more with less.

For example, the use of information and telecommunications technologies to improve connectivity between people and decision makers, at the national and municipal level, can help improve the delivery of public services, like in other countries. The application of technologies in the health sector could avoid unnecessary travel by health center staff to communities and vice versa, if a procedure or query only takes a phone call, text message or e-mail.

The State must play a **countercyclical** role. It must therefore ensure, if not increase, public investment in favor of children and adolescents, **strengthening social protection**.

In times of economic crisis, the **coverage of health and nutrition** programs must be maintained and, if possible, expanded. This includes clean water, basic education, protection and the fight against impunity, protecting the rights of children and adolescents.

The cost of violence is high and rising. To reduce violence, impunity must be combated and more young people protected from falling prey to crime networks. The national, departmental and municipal authorities are called upon to play a decisive role in the fight against impunity and organized crime. In addition, society must have **zero tolerance** for individuals who commit any crime. Domestic violence, abuse and crimes against children and adolescents are reduced by combating impunity.

In the area of **malnutrition**, the State must strengthen and enhance measures for prevention of malnutrition through growth monitoring and promotion, with emphasis on children under two. To do so, it must increase the budget and make greater efforts at all levels for that purpose. Measures such as promoting exclusive breastfeeding for children until the age of six months and complementary breastfeeding until age two promotes children's physical growth and mental development in addition to providing them with more defenses and benefits for growth.

**Specific national and local actions** must be implemented to overcome the effects of the global economic crisis. Municipal resources are also reduced by the economic crisis, which requires an adjustment of their plans and strategies, focusing their actions on the most disadvantaged groups, especially children and adolescents.

In the implementation of the **recovery and reconstruction plan and reform** of the Government of Guatemala, it should favor the recruitment of people affected by natural disasters.

Although Guatemala contributes little to global climate change, it suffers many of its effects. Therefore, the most efficient and least costly policy is to adapt to climate change preventively, taking into account natural, economic, social, technological, environmental and energy processes. This adaptation must not be understood solely as preparation and response to natural disasters, but rather as a set of strategies designed to avoid their impact on the most disadvantaged groups.

Acting and adapting quickly to the changes wrought by the crisis has advantages. If the country does not prevent the effects of the crisis, **public funds** may be brusquely affected by the impact of a natural disaster or economic crisis.

Adapting to the effects of climate change is not only a task for the State, but also for the citizenry and the business sector. **Joint efforts** can and should be made to minimize the impact on the present and future population. Preventing pollution of drinking water sources such as rivers and lakes, preventing inappropriate development and unsustainable agricultural practices is more economically advantageous than recovering what has been destroyed.

Policies and programs are required at the national, regional and municipal level, to provide for sustainable environmental development. To do this, the necessary legislation must be enacted to **preserve the environment** and punish environmental crimes. This development should encourage the use of clean energy, regeneration and cleaning of rivers and lakes, protection of sources of safe water for human consumption and reforestation of forests.

Knowledge, skills, access to public services and income should be enhanced to **increase the resilience** of families and communities to natural disasters.

## What can we do to adapt?

### To prevent **DISASTERS**

- Manage and regulate human settlements and land. The municipal level is best able to carry out these activities.
- Contemplate risk management for projects of public and private investment.

### To improve **FOOD SECURITY**

- Pay more attention to weather forecasts as part of early warning systems.
- Diversify crops and use new genetic varieties.
- Strengthen community-based organizations that serve as support systems for farmers.
- Improve access to financing sources for the production and marketing chains.

### To ensure **WATER supply**

- Improve regulation and management of water resources: enact a general water law; generate and improve the dissemination of information on resources and their users.
- Increase water storage systems. Reservoirs have multiple purposes: hydroelectric power, irrigation and household use.
- Territorial regulation: not settling water recharge areas, treating wastewater and controlling the discharge of sanitary sewers.

To ensure effective, timely and reliable responses, preparations for dealing with emergencies should be made and updated. Special emphasis should be placed on the care of children, adolescents, women and communities, as well as basic service providers, who must be prepared to address the health, nutrition, education and security needs that arise when there is a disaster.

The change in climate conditions will affect **water supply**, so management of water resources available in Guatemala must be improved. Faced with a likely scenario of changes in rainfall, it is vital to store water in reservoirs, which can be multipurpose: as hydroelectric power generators, for irrigation, household water supply and to meet environmental water demand.

In order to improve basic **sanitation** at the community level, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare (MOH), as the governing body on the subject, should be strengthened; sectoral and program planning should be improved. It is therefore necessary to establish national coordination mechanisms for regulation of public and private interventions, increasing the allocation of public budgets for priority actions in rural areas.

**Reforestation** prevents soil erosion, mitigates desertification and protects coastal areas, among other effects. Planting trees is a good way to protect the environment and improve conditions for development. Therefore, it is an essential activity in Guatemala.

In the energy sector, the State could encourage the adoption of **clean energy** sources, giving tax cuts to companies that take that step. The availability of clean energy sources such as solar energy will improve the living conditions of households and keep girls and boys in school, since they no longer need to fetch firewood and other biofuels such as oil for cooking and heating the home.

If the necessary adaptation measures are not taken, **climate change will be more devastating than the economic, financial and labor crises** and will last much longer. Although the country can return to the path of economic growth, it will take more than half the population much longer to recover unless an adjustment and recovery plan that takes into consideration children and adolescents as well as other vulnerable groups is put in place.

## The Main Sources:

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- *Monitoring and Addressing the Situation of Children and Adolescents in Guatemala, in the Context of the Rising Food Price Crisis.* December 2008. Qualitative study.
- *Monitoring and Addressing the Situation of Children and Adolescents in Guatemala, in the Context of the Global Economic Crisis.* July 2009. Qualitative study.
- *2009 Survey on Remittances, Children and Adolescents.* Prepared by IOM with UNICEF support. October 2009.
- *Results of the Assessment of Food and Nutrition Insecurity in the Dry Corridor of Eastern Guatemala Provinces of Quiché and Izabal.* Produced by the Humanitarian Network of Guatemala, of which UNICEF is part. November 2009.
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## List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ARIs	Acute respiratory infections
Banguat	Bank of Guatemala
CDN CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CECC	Coordinator of Education and Culture in Central America
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CICIG	International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala
EAP	Economically active population
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America
ADDs	Acute diarrheal diseases
Encovi	National Survey of Living Conditions
Ensmi	National Survey on Maternal and Child Health
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross domestic product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IARNA	Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of Rafael Landívar University
Icefi	Central American Institute for Tax Studies
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INE	National Statistics Institute
Insivumeh	Institute of Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFEWS	Mesoamerican Food Security Early Warning System
Mineduc	Ministry of Education
Minfin	Ministry of Public Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
NCP	National Civilian Police
PPP	Purchasing power parity

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Segeplan	Planning and Programming Secretariat of the Presidency
Sesan	Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAT	Value Added Tax
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

<http://www.unicef.org/guatemala>

unite for  
children

