

# Food Security Pilot in Guatemala

The High Five Club has joined forces with our sister organisation, the \$10 Club in the USA, to pledge support to 'Outreach for World Hope', an NGO whose goal is to improve the quality of life of some of the world's poorest people by providing humanitarian aid and hope. The focus of current OWH projects is drought and famine stricken eastern Guatemala. Their programmes are aimed at rescuing and re-nourishing severely starved children and providing hope for a brighter future through sustainable projects involving education and improvements in agricultural output.

## The Need



The indigenous Mayan communities of eastern Guatemala continue to suffer drought-induced famine, which has resulted in chronic malnutrition and high mortality rates, especially among children. 50% of children less than five years are chronically malnourished. Chronic malnutrition is far higher among indigenous children, 70% of whom are chronically malnourished. Lack of food security and the prevalence of parasitic disease such as worm and amoeba infestation caused by a lack of adequate sanitation, make survival extremely difficult.

Conditions in 2008 have been increasingly dismal due to out of control inflation caused by rising fuel prices. The cost of fertilizer in the Chiquimula region has risen by 150% making it cost prohibitive for most farmers. Due to poor soil and steep, rocky conditions, crops do not grow without fertilizer, so many farmers are planting only the small portion of their land for which they can afford fertilizer. Starvation is resulting and malnutrition related deaths in children are on the rise.

Although drought conditions exist from November through to June in eastern Guatemala, there is a rainy season. The 2008 rainy season has, however, proven to be disastrous. Excessive

torrential rains have caused severe flooding and landslides that have buried entire villages. This has caused the loss of staple crops.

Health care in the region is inaccessible to most due to distance and inability to pay. Many die on a daily basis of curable illnesses such as diarrhea and pneumonia. Women and children are at highest risk due to the lack of prenatal and obstetric care. Women often die during childbirth leaving children to care for children. The infant mortality rate in Guatemala is 38 deaths per 1,000 live births. This is the highest rate of any country in Central America.

Lack of access to education perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Educational facilities are inadequate and those children that do attend school often drop out by age ten to work for \$1.50 per day to help support their families. Inability to purchase shoes, uniforms and school supplies is the difference between a life of extreme poverty and the hope of a brighter future for many.

**Outreach for World Hope's Life Boat and Virtual Village programs save lives at imminent risk and offer viable opportunities for future success. For further details view their website at [www.outreachforworldhope.org](http://www.outreachforworldhope.org)**

### **Agricultural Research and Improvements**

The pilot programme that High Five Club members are supporting is part of OWH's 'Sustainable Pathways out of Poverty' initiative. Like the High Five Club, OWH believes that although it is necessary to save lives imminently at risk of death, it is equally valuable to solve the underlying causes of starvation and poverty. Therefore, OWH programmes include sustainable pathways out of poverty for the population they serve. Through agricultural research conducted by leading



agronomy experts working in partnership with local growers, OWH has identified several drought tolerant food sources that will increase food security in the region.

With High Five Club and \$10 Club financial support OWH is beginning a new and exciting project that has proven successful in other drought plagued parts of the world. In

partnership with Chapin Living Waters, OWH will begin a pilot project by which 50 families will grow vegetable gardens using "Bucket Kits", otherwise known as drip irrigation. The basic equipment consists of two poles and a crossbar which holds a 5 gallon bucket one meter off the ground. The bucket, which must be filled once each day, drips water into the ground by way of a hose connected to a 100 foot buried irrigation tape with small holes along it, allowing water to seep into the ground. One "bucket kit" is able to provide enough moisture to grow a vegetable garden capable feeding a family of four as long as water is available with which to fill the buckets. This will be an extremely important breakthrough in eastern Guatemala, if successful, because the rainfall from the rainy season is not sufficient to last through the summer. The drip irrigation is expected to bridge the gap and could mean the difference between life and death for many children as the drought conditions continue. OWH's agriculture team is in the process of securing seeds for high calorie, vitamin rich vegetables such as squash and potatoes for growth in the bucket kit gardens. High protein black beans will also be grown by this method.

**In summary, the support of High Five Club members has facilitated this exciting opportunity by which families can hopefully avoid starvation in the future and achieve independence and self respect through the ability to provide for their own needs and well being. The High Five Club will contribute £335 (\$500) towards the cost of bucket kit irrigation systems, fertilizer and technical support for 50 families in this important pilot.**