

### **Guatemala: Interrelationship between Conflict, Food Security and Migration**

Guatemala has a rich history, culture, and a variety of natural resources. However, social indicators, especially in terms of human development, are low. Factors such as social inequality, poverty, malnutrition, conflict and violence have contributed to the lack of development. Conflict and Development Foundation partnered with the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Guatemala and the Center on Conflict and Development at Texas A&M University (ConDev) to investigate these factors that are hindering the livelihoods of Guatemalans.

The problems of food insecurity, social conflict and migration are major concerns for policy makers and development practitioners Guatemala. The objective of this project was to explore phenomena related to hunger, types of conflict that promote displacement, and problems associated with reintegration of deported individuals. Based on the findings of the survey, the researchers recommend a greater investment by the state-level government in migration and increased public and private investment in research in social development, human rights, and youth dynamics that are linked to migration.

The research methodology was a mixed methods, exploratory, non-experimental study involving purposeful sampling of participants to establish existing, direct, indirect and potential relationships between food security, migration and conflict. The units of analysis included communities and households across four regions of Guatemala: “Dry Corridor” in the East, the Western and Central areas of the country, the South-Western region. The surveys were conducted in public places of eight municipal headquarters (with a total sample size of 800 participants), in-depth interviews with key actors in society, government institutions and local governments, as well as focus groups in the four regions. To this end, the appropriate research instruments were developed which included a survey questionnaire, a semi-structured interview questionnaire, and a focus group guide. The households surveyed were classified as low income within the

Guatemalan economy, most having incomes below minimum wage. Their main income-generating activities include agriculture, servicing, and trading.

Over half of the households did not experience significant social conflict. Of the households surveyed, 23% to 28% of households experience social conflict due to land, protests, and theft. A smaller percentage of households (10 to 18%) experienced social conflict in the form of extortion, gang violence, and general threats. Drug trafficking and kidnapping only affected a very small percentage of households. Households considered lack of employment, lack of education, poverty, migration, inequality, and food insecurity to be social problems that affected peace and stability in the Guatemalan society. Respondents also mentioned corruption and lack of public services as social problems, but these were not identified as a major cause of social conflict. The analysis of the data implies that deportees have little impact on social conflict, contrary to common perceptions of deportees. Of the municipalities studied, the researchers were not able to establish a close relationship between social conflict and food insecurity. The population also demonstrated a lack of knowledge regarding the programs or projects that address food insecurity at the municipal level. The researchers also found that social conflicts have little effect on the migration of the population. Instead, migration is due to lack of jobs, low wages, and poverty, ultimately rooted in the lack of economic and political opportunities.

With these findings, we conclude that it is important to emphasize the role of the government in the issue of migration. Migration must be a priority in the agenda of the state, particularly at the level of public and financial policies. Furthermore, researchers have strongly suggested that there must be an increase in public and privately funded research in areas that are linked to migration such as gender, sexual violence, youth leadership, citizen security, climate change, status of deportees, and rural versus urban opportunities.