

IMPACT REPORT

Stories and Statistics from the CARE Learning Tour to Guatemala, April 24-28, 2019



PARTICIPANTS

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(R-IN-5)

Rep. Carol D. Miller
(R-WV-3)

Rep. Ann L. Wagner
(R-MO-2)

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Board Chair, CARE USA

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Senior Director,
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OVERVIEW

From April 24-28, Representatives Susan Brooks (R-IN-5), Carol Miller (R-WV-3) and Ann Wagner (R-MO-2) traveled to Guatemala with CARE to see how U.S. investments and partnerships are promoting women's and girls' empowerment and building long-term stability in the region. The delegation also included Congressional staffers from Indiana and Missouri, as well as a representative from the PepsiCo Foundation.



Delegation pictured from left to right: Top row – Matt Miller, Rep. Carol Miller, Rep. Susan Brooks, Rep. Ann Wagner, Erin Thomas, Martha Brooks, Rachael Leman. Bottom row – Rachel Wagley and Erin McMenam

The delegation's journey took place in Guatemala, a country that has made impressive strides in achieving economic stability in the decades following its 36-year civil war. However, significant challenges remain. Guatemala has one of the highest rates of inequality in Latin America, with some of the worst poverty, malnutrition and maternal-child mortality rates in the region, particularly in rural and indigenous areas. Furthermore, the country continues to grapple with staggeringly high rates of crime and violence, particularly violence against women, which result in a tremendous economic burden for the region – costing all three countries in the Northern Triangle region (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) an estimated \$261 billion annually. Guatemala's other development challenges, including poor educational attainment, adolescent pregnancy and gang violence, further compound gender-based violence, poverty and food insecurity – all of which drive instability and migration in the country and throughout the region.

This Learning Tour examined some of the underlying factors driving migration and highlighted the importance of U.S. investments in economic empowerment and prevention of gender-based violence, which have helped families and communities survive and thrive, and overcome the pressures and insecurity that have historically driven many to seek opportunities elsewhere.

→ DAY 1



Rep. Brooks gives remarks at the reception with the U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala, speaking to the importance of sustained leadership and investment by the U.S. to help ensure the safety, security and economic prosperity of Guatemalans in their home communities, particularly for vulnerable women and youth.

Setting the Scene – Why Guatemala?

The delegation began their first full day in-country with an introductory briefing with local technical experts where they heard from representatives from CARE, Catholic Relief Services and the International Labor Organization on the historical, political and development context in Guatemala. During the briefing, the delegation heard about some of the key factors driving migration, including poverty, food insecurity, unemployment and high levels of gender-based violence.

The group closed the day with a reception hosted by CARE. At the event, the delegation heard from the U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala Luis E. Arreaga and spoke with local NGO representatives, private sector partners and representatives from the U.S. Mission on the current development challenges in Guatemala and how the U.S. government, in partnership with the Guatemalan government and other key stakeholders, is working to improve opportunities for women and youth throughout the country.

→ DAY 2

Serving Survivors

On their second day in-country, the delegation explored the role that U.S. investments play in helping to respond to the immediate needs of survivors of gender-based violence and trafficking.

Trafficking in Persons Shelter

LOCATION: Guatemala City, Guatemala

BACKGROUND: The “El Refugio de la Niñez” shelter is supported by USAID’s Protecting Victims, Providing Services and Preventing Human Trafficking in Guatemala Program. The objective of this shelter is to provide children and adolescent girl victims of human trafficking with integrated care, including medical care, psychosocial services, education and legal support. El Refugio de la Niñez also implements prevention activities that improve citizen awareness, knowledge and response to human trafficking and sexual violence. The girls and adolescents who enter the shelter are typically victims of human trafficking and are between the ages of 10 and 17. The girls remain at the shelter on a temporary basis (usually 3- 8 months). The program began in February 2018 and will run through February 2021 with total projected funding of approximately \$2 million.

IMPACT: In 2018, 93 girls and adolescent victims of trafficking received treatment, counseling and case management at the shelter, and nearly 80 percent of these cases were sexual exploitation. In recent years, El Refugio de la Niñez has received more than 600 girls and adolescent victims of human trafficking. To advance criminal proceedings against perpetrators, El Refugio de la Niñez also works to obtain convictions for the crime of trafficking in persons. In 2018, El Refugio de la Niñez helped obtain 50 percent of the all of the criminal sentences for trafficking nationwide. With the support of USAID, prevention activities have been developed in 40 communities in the Guatemalan departments of Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz and Izabal, reaching nearly 8,400 people (children, adolescents, community leaders, public officials, fathers and mothers). In these communities, USAID has worked to build local capacity to ensure the protection of victims and the prevention of human trafficking, organizing and training community leaders in protection networks focused on educating leaders on issues related to child rights, human trafficking, resource management and community planning.

DONOR: U.S. Agency for International Development

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: El Refugio de la Niñez; U.S. Agency for International Development

Gender-Based Violence Prevention and One-Stop Center

LOCATION: Guatemala (Nationwide)

BACKGROUND: Through the Youth and Gender Justice Model, USAID has worked with the Specialized Women’s Prosecution Office to implement an integral attention model for victims of gender-based violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation with a “single window” for victims’ first contact, providing specialized attention to victims in a comfortable and private space 24-hour a day, 365 days a year. The integrated model houses a court, a Judgment Tribunal for femicide, an office of the National Institute of Forensic Sciences and is close to the national hospital. Having all these institutions together gives women faster, more convenient access to justice and helps expand services to all clients, including the indigenous population, which is often excluded due to language barriers or an absence of cultural relevance in government services. The Youth and Gender Justice program also provides support to the Association for Women Weaver of Development (AMUTED), an initiative of indigenous women formed to create spaces to promote training, organizing and participation. The Youth and Gender Justice Project was initiated in May 2016 and will run until February 2021 with total projected funding of around \$37 million. **continued on next page ►**

A Story from the Field



Jessica*, age 16, was a victim of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Growing up, Jessica’s parents constantly fought and argued, to the point where Jessica preferred to not be at home and instead stay in the streets, and she eventually dropped out of school in just the fourth grade. At age 14, she met a friend who invited her to drink alcohol and – feeling neglected by her parents – she accepted. This friend worked to earn her trust until one day they took Jessica to a bar where she was sexually exploited and subjected to different forms of humiliation. One day, when Jessica did not come home, her parents realized the severity of the situation and activated a missing child alert and the authorities began to search for her. Eventually, the Jessica was found in the bar where she was being sexually exploited. She was later placed in the protective custody of El Refugio de la Niñez where she stayed for eight months and received specialized attention, including food, clothing, lodging, and health and psychological services for her emotional recovery. She was also enrolled in a specialized education program at the shelter to help her catch up to her grade level and has made significant progress with her studies. While at the shelter, Jessica received training on life skills development and vocational training, eventually graduating the program as a beautician, allowing her to generate income to cover her basic needs on her own. Today, as part of Jessica’s emotional recovery and empowerment, she performs various volunteer services and continues to pursue her studies. For example, she visits assisted living facilities where she provides complimentary nail and hairstyling services to elderly patients.

**Note: This story is shared with the full knowledge and consent of the program participant, although her name, age and personal details may have been modified to protect her identity. We thank her for her bravery.*



As part of traditional Mayan healing practices, healing circles are used to support women and individuals who have experienced violence or traumatic events. AMUTED incorporates traditional Mayan healing practices into the training and support services provided to indigenous women and youth that participate in the program.

IMPACT: The integrated one-stop model has helped to increase the number of prosecutions to support a decrease in violence and impunity, as well as respond to the immediate needs of victims of gender-based violence and exploitation. Through the support of this Youth and Gender Justice project, AMUTED has worked in 20 communities in the Quetzaltenango Totonicapán and San Marcos departments located in the Western Highlands region of Guatemala. Through its vocational training, counseling, emotional support, institutional coordination and referral services, AMUTED has supported 645 beneficiaries, including 122 girls and 523 women – 90 percent of whom are women.

DONOR: U.S. Agency for International Development

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: Association for Women Weaver of Development (AMUTED); Chemonics International; U.S. Agency for International Development



The delegation heard from Floridalma Contreras Vásquez and Fidelia Castellanos Hernández, co-founders of the Guatemalan domestic workers' union SITRADOMSA, who discussed some of the common challenges that domestic workers in Guatemala and Latin America face in obtaining fair wages and working conditions as well as some of the ongoing efforts to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace. The women also discussed past successes and opportunities for the domestic workers' movement in Guatemala and throughout the region.

That evening, the group closed the day with a dinner with leaders from the Guatemalan domestic workers movement who spoke on the drivers, compounding issues and interventions related to violence against women and children in Guatemala.

→ DAY 3

Empowering Community Changemakers

On the third day of the trip, the group learned about the importance of integrated, community-based interventions to addressing issues of violence prevention, community stability and economic empowerment.



The delegation meets with community members and program participants in the USAID-funded Community Roots project. Pictured here are youth participants in the School Commission for Violence Prevention who help their schools and community leaders identify areas and risk factors where violence and delinquency tend to take place.

Community Roots Program

LOCATION: Huehuetenango, Guatemala

BACKGROUND: The objective of the Community Roots project is to create educational, athletic, cultural and employment opportunities for youth and women in targeted communities in the Huehuetenango department of Guatemala. This project works in close coordination with other projects funded by USAID focused on the reduction of violence, crime and migration. The Community Roots Project was initiated December 2016 and will run through December 2021 with total projected funding of around \$40 million.

IMPACT: The project's goals are to support 80 community-based violence prevention projects in 12 municipalities; strengthen and mobilize municipal and national stakeholders and resources to develop and implement municipal-level violence and migration prevention plans; promote the involvement of the private sector (local, national and/or international) in violence migration and prevention activities; and support secondary violence prevention projects in close coordination with municipal and local authorities. The project works in Guatemala's Alta Verapaz, Quetzaltenango and Chiquimula departments.

DONOR: U.S. Agency for International Development

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: World Vision International; RTI

Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center

LOCATION: Santa Cruz del Quiché, Guatemala

BACKGROUND: In 2009, Sister Virginia and fellow Sister of Charity Mary Meyler co-founded the Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center (BFPC). The center works with the local indigenous youth and communities Quiché Department of Guatemala to bring hope and healing through the Center's four central programs focused on integrated health, human rights, opportunities for youth and agricultural production. These programs help promote improved health outcomes, human rights and response to gender-based violence, technical and vocational skills training, economic inclusion and improved food and nutrition security for youth, women and their families. The center also promotes alternative health and medicine programs that incorporate the traditional Mayan healing practices to serve community members using natural remedies.

IMPACT: Through a significant grant from University of California Davis, the center will be providing drip irrigation systems – a type of irrigation that does not erode the soil – for 9,000 farmers and families. Additionally, the Center has been collaborating with Save the Children's USAID Food Security Program, allowing the construction of a model farm on the Center's property to demonstrate common and innovative methods of farming and livestock maintenance.

DONORS: U.S. Agency for International Development; University of California Davis; Sisters of Charity of New York

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: Barbara Ford Peacebuilding Center; Sisters of Charity of New York

A Path Forward for Women and Youth

The next day, the group had a look at the role women's and girls' equality and empowerment play in promoting economic inclusion and improved livelihoods. Below are some of the program highlights from the day:

AgriJoven Project

LOCATION: Guatemala (Nationwide)

BACKGROUND: As part of a USAID Feed the Future program, Mercy Corps works in 115 communities organizing savings and loan groups for youth in the Western Highlands of Guatemala, whose lack of access to formal credit constrains their ability to generate income. Youth in this activity, called AgriJoven, engage in formal discussions on agronomic and social topics and will be encouraged to purchase agricultural technologies that will help them improve on-farm productivity. Mercy Corps also facilitates formal partnerships between the youth groups and other parts of the supply chain, including exporters and off-takers or companies that source from farmers, collecting and aggregating their harvested goods. Due to their small-scale production, uniting as a group provides these young farmers increased market opportunities for them to profit from their combined marketing.

IMPACT: Through AgriJoven, more than 500 young people currently form part of 36 distinct savings and loan groups. The groups usually have 12 to 30 members, and they are trained on new agricultural technologies and innovations—like integrated pest management practices and improved seeds—that increase agricultural production. The members then use a portion of their group savings to purchase agricultural innovations for their farms and share the technology as they all work on their plots. From September to November 2018 alone, the combined savings of the groups totaled more than \$15,500 and nearly \$24,000 in funds available for small loans. In 2018, the AgriJoven project officially closed out; however, the savings activities continue, and Mercy Corps continues to support these groups nationwide with its own core funding. In spring 2019, the AgriJoven savings groups came together to formal government-recognized organization called *Asociación Juvenil Emprende*.

DONOR: Mercy Corps; (Formally U.S. Agency for International Development Feed the Future)

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER: Mercy Corps

A Story from the Field



Domy Rosalinda Ordonez Parabal, age 26, is a member of an AgriJoven savings group from the Sololá department of Guatemala. Through the support of the savings group and the access to credit the group provided to Domy, she was able to support her father's agriculture business, which was at severe risk of going under in a recent harvest due to persistent drought, climate shocks and persistently low crop yields. These challenges, further compounded by issues of delinquency and insecurity in her community, made it difficult for her father to make ends meet for himself and his family – he like many others considered migration. However, the loan Domy was able to secure from the group helped her father purchase better inputs for his crops and increase his production, and thereby his income, and he was able to stay in his community and support his family and Domy's younger siblings.

A Story from the field



Sandra Xiquin is a 31-year old mother of two boys and a successful farmer in the Santiago Sacatepéquez region of Guatemala who owns or leases 29 plots of land. Sandra is a growing business in producing and exporting an array of fresh vegetables, including green beans, carrots and peas. But before her business took off, Sandra faced many obstacles. Even after inheriting a small plot of land from her father, no bank would give her a loan. One banker told her flat out that “women aren't credit worthy.” Fortunately, through technical support provided by CARE, Sandra's participation in the program equipped her with the tools, training and resources necessary to succeed as a farmer. Today, Sandra is the president of the only women's farming cooperative in Guatemala and her business continues to grow and thrive.

CARE Empowering Small Rural Women Producers project

LOCATION: San Lucas Sacatepéquez, Guatemala

BACKGROUND: CARE and the H&M Foundation have partnered to implement a program called “Strengthening Women – a Catalyst for Positive Change!” The program focuses on strengthening capacities of women entrepreneurs in eleven countries worldwide. The program principally focuses on the economic empowerment of entrepreneurs through training, access to capital and inspiring role models. The program works with women entrepreneurs from marginalized communities, who are active in different sectors of the economy and in different types of activities – from production to manufacturing to trade and distribution. In Guatemala, CARE has co-invested in a packaging plant for the country's first Women Agricultural Cooperative, helping the cooperative members to commercialize their products and access technical skills.

IMPACT: The cooperative has over 500 women farmers and employs an additional 1,500 farm workers. The cooperative also recently established a food packaging plant, which today employs an additional 190 women and ships more than \$6 million in packaged vegetables to the U.S. each year.

DONOR: H&M Foundation

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER: CARE

Taking Action Back Home

Before returning home, the group met with the Guatemalan Congressional Deputy Andrea Villagrán who discussed her vision for the future of Guatemala. They discussed the potential they saw in the Guatemalan youth and connecting them with the tools to maximize their economic potential as well as leverage their skills and eagerness to contribute to their communities.

Throughout the trip, the delegation saw firsthand the role that U.S. investments and partnerships play in empowering women and youth to lift themselves out of poverty and be catalysts for change in their families and communities. The highlight of the trip included field visits to programs in Guatemala and throughout the country's Western Highlands region,

where the delegation sat down with women and girls in their communities to see the impact of investments in addressing women's empowerment to ensure families can survive and thrive, helping Guatemalans overcome the pressures and insecurity that have historically driven many to make the often dangerous decision to migrate.

→ POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INVESTMENTS IN WOMEN AND GIRLS

CARE advocates for the U.S. government to integrate gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment throughout its foreign assistance programs. By placing an emphasis on empowering women and girls to exercise agency and influence through education, health and economic opportunity, we can support communities attain the tools needed to sustainably lift themselves out of poverty. This, in turn, creates more stability and self-sufficiency at a national level and helps build a more prosperous and secure world. Strong policies and robust resources to promote women and girls' education and leadership, prevent child marriage, combat gender-based violence and foster food and nutrition security are at the center of sustainable development.

Achieving these goals means prioritizing smart investments from national governments, but to truly be effective, these investments need to be leveraged by support from the international community, including the United States. The International Affairs Budget is the U.S. government's primary funding source for international programs for emergency response and long-term development. Although the International Affairs Budget is roughly one percent of the overall U.S. budget, it is routinely targeted in budget cuts. Proposals to dramatically cut the International Affairs Budget raise serious concerns about the future of American leadership and how we will achieve the benefits of addressing poverty. CARE

advocates for a FY 2020 International Affairs Budget of at least \$58.5 billion, which is alignment with the House's FY20 levels.

CARE advocates for the timely and effective implementation of the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment (WEEE) Act, which was passed into law in December 2018. This piece of legislation improves USAID programs and activities focused on women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment globally. The WEEE Act recognizes critical barriers to women's economic empowerment, focuses on expanding women's access to and control over resources such as property. The Act supports the financial inclusion of

women necessary to grow their businesses, savings and for prosperity. Passage of this bill signals a step forward in U.S. efforts to make development assistance work effectively to lift women and their families, communities and nations out of the cycle of poverty. Importantly, the WEEE Act also recognizes many of the critical barriers women face in achieving economic empowerment, including gender-based violence, poor access to health, education and underlying norms that perpetuate discrimination.



Interventions that are successful in addressing women's and girls' empowerment in Guatemala have helped families and communities survive and thrive, helping Guatemalans overcome the pressures and insecurity that have historically driven many to seek opportunities elsewhere

Photos: All Images: Ilan Godfrey/CARE

We are deeply grateful to the many people who generously gave of their time to make this visit to Guatemala a success. CARE specifically thanks the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for its generous financial support of the Learning Tours.



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