



Guatemala

Capacity Overview

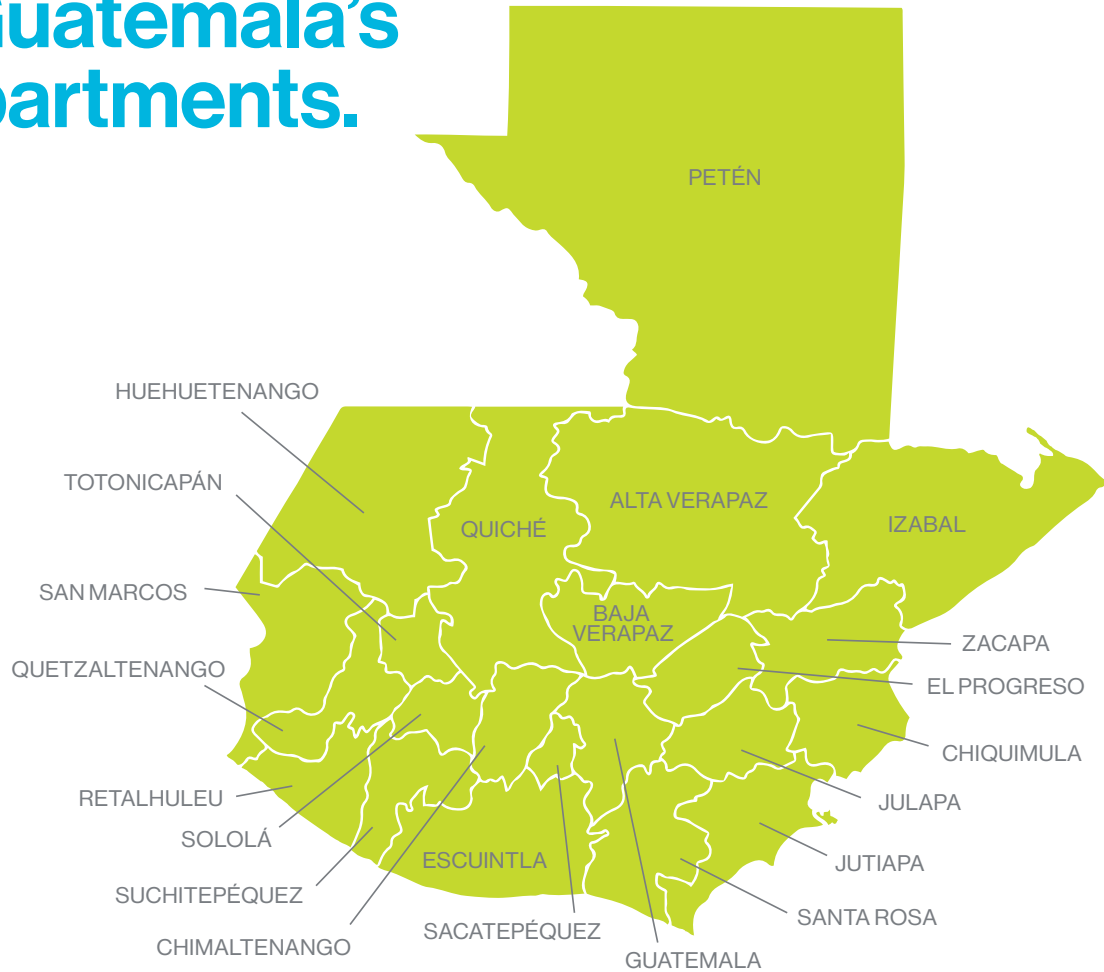
Habitat for Humanity began working in Guatemala in 1979 in response to the acute, long-term housing needs created by the magnitude-7.5 earthquake that struck three years earlier. The earthquake killed more than 20,000 people and left 1 in 6 Guatemalans without a home. Today Habitat remains committed to partnering with communities in Guatemala and with local and international organizations to improve the lives of vulnerable families by removing the barriers that stand between them and a decent, healthy place to call home. Habitat for Humanity's integrated, multisector approach in Guatemala places a special focus on water, sanitation and hygiene, or WASH; healthy housing; disaster risk reduction and response; housing finance; and housing rights and land tenure security.

In 2020, Habitat partnered with more than 36,000 people across 22 departments in Guatemala through housing and WASH interventions. Overall, since 1979, Habitat has supported more than 752,000 people in their journeys to securing safe, decent homes in Guatemala. Habitat's programs bring changes in the living conditions, productivity and health of families and individuals.

As a housing-focused organization, Habitat is able to deliver inclusive interventions in Guatemala that are affordable, sustainable, customized to contextual needs, and integrated into the overall urban and rural settings. Habitat has a national team of experts and leaders with experience in housing, land tenure, house planning, urbanization, housing policies, project management, construction, WASH, disaster risk reduction and response, and housing advocacy.

Research tells us that safe, adequate and affordable housing leads to gains in health, education and economic opportunity, and these in turn promote broader reductions in inequality while building resilience against disasters and economic crises. A driver or catalyst for 13 of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, housing will be particularly important in a post-pandemic world as an essential component of any comprehensive approach to recovery and development in emerging economies, including Guatemala's.

Habitat works in all of Guatemala's 22 departments.



Country context

Of the approximately 17 million people in Guatemala, two-thirds live under the poverty line and over half suffer from inadequate housing conditions. Poverty and poor infrastructure are present in rural areas of the country, where 77% of the population lives in poverty and 58% lives in extreme poverty. With earnings of less than US\$2 a day, families in extreme poverty face subsistence conditions, unable to meet their basic needs or build toward their future. Many families cannot afford basic household services. Consequently, they cook over an open flame, often with unsafe wood stoves that cause respiratory illness and glaucoma while posing a burn risk. Excessive use of firewood is both a strain on family budgets and the local environment because so many trees are cut down to make the fuel. Many families consume contaminated water, which causes gastrointestinal disease and diarrhea while harming child development.



Water, sanitation and hygiene

Habitat is able to deliver inclusive WASH interventions in Guatemala that are customized, affordable, sustainable, and integrated into the overall housing and urban ecosystems. Our WASH programs flow from community-driven processes. They include information and knowledge management opportunities, employ contextually appropriate technologies, and engage in responsible natural resource management and governance. Habitat Guatemala has built partnerships with donors such as the Australian Embassy in Mexico, International Community Fund, the Tillotson Foundation and EFICO Foundation to implement WASH programs around the country.

Habitat Guatemala increases access to sustainable and safe water supplies in vulnerable communities by constructing water and sanitation facilities, improving hygiene practices, and enhancing the governance of water and sanitation systems by building the capacity of communities across the country. This includes partnering with community leaders to construct sanitary latrine facilities, improving sanitation and hygiene awareness, and implementing purifying water filters. Construction projects have included the installation of biodigestors, elevated water tanks, rainwater catchment systems, basins and sumps (for treatment of gray wastewater), along with the reconstruction of a communal water distribution system.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Habitat Guatemala has supported more than 5,100 individuals at risk of contracting the virus, providing them with sanitation materials and face masks and running awareness-raising campaigns across 19 communities.





Healthy housing

Without sufficient resources to invest in basic services, many Guatemalan families who live in conditions of extreme poverty (earning less than US\$1.90 per day) are forced to cook over open flame, lack access to drinking water, and use unsanitary latrines or practice open defecation. Consequently, rural areas of Guatemala register alarmingly high rates of respiratory and gastrointestinal illness. In response to these needs, Habitat Guatemala created the Healthy Home Kit program, which provides families in extreme poverty with access to smokeless stoves, sanitary latrines and purifying water filters.

Habitat Guatemala's first Healthy Home Kit solution was a smokeless stove installed in Jocotán, Chiquimula, in 2010. Since then, more than 46,000 stoves have been installed, and Habitat Guatemala has implemented water filters and sanitary latrines while innovating the stove design and technology. In 2014, the three products officially became part of the Healthy Home Kit.

In recent years, Habitat Guatemala has added other solutions to the Healthy Home Kit, including grey-water sumps, which help reduce bacterial infections, and concrete floors that also promote better home health. The World Bank found that replacing dirt floors with concrete in neighboring Mexico led to a 78% reduction in parasitic infestations, a 49% reduction in diarrhea, an 81% reduction in anemia, and a more than 36% improvement in cognitive development.

In Guatemala's Sacatepéquez province, the kits also have included smokeless stoves for more than 12,000 people. Built from adobe blocks and featuring a pipe that takes harmful smoke out of the home, the stoves reduce eye irritation, help improve health and cut firewood use by up to 50%.

Since 2010, more than 300,000 individuals have improved their living conditions thanks to products in the Healthy Home Kits.

Housing finance

Housing microfinance

Through Habitat for Humanity's Terwilliger Center for Innovation in Shelter, we have invested \$5 million from the MicroBuild Fund into Genesis, a leader in the Guatemalan microfinance sector, with a more than 35% market share. The MicroBuild Fund partnership with Genesis began in 2016 with a US\$2 million loan. Given the strong performance of that initial loan, the fund later invested an additional US\$3 million in Genesis.

Most of the microloans are used for home upgrades, but some fund the construction of entire homes. The loans had served 2,055 families as of March 2021, or more than 10,000 people. About 64% percent of the loans have gone to women, and 85% serve families in rural areas. Habitat's Terwilliger Center has assisted Genesis in building the capacity of its sales force, including through innovative tools and processes that promote training in microloans related to housing.

Mortgage revolving fund

Habitat Guatemala has partnered with families to construct houses through a mortgage program supported by a revolving fund.

Habitat for Humanity Guatemala has created 15 housing designs adapted to the variety of climates and terrains that can be found throughout the country. On average, homes are 50 square meters and feature two bedrooms, a living room, a dining room/kitchen, and a bathroom. The houses are built with locally sourced concrete blocks, which are reinforced with rebar to resist seismic activity. They feature corrugated metal sheet roofing, metal doors and windows. Repayment occurs over eight to 12 years with a low interest rate to account for inflation. In addition, Habitat Guatemala has created three productive housing designs that allow for families to use a portion of their home for business activities, such as a tortilla shop or a small corner store.



Disaster risk reduction and response



Responsible for less than 0.1% of total global green house gas emissions, Guatemala is extremely vulnerable to climate change. In fact, Guatemala has been ranked as one of the 10 countries most affected by climate change and most at risk because of climate change in the long term, including from disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions.

On June 3, 2018, the Fuego Volcano, located 30 miles from Guatemala City, erupted, spewing ash, rocks and gas into the air. This eruption is considered to be one of the strongest from the Fuego Volcano in more than a century, killing more than 200 people and forcing more than 12,000 people to evacuate their homes. With the support of several national and international entities, Habitat Guatemala

responded by delivering emergency kits, water filters, portable stoves and vouchers for purchasing emergency supplies. Habitat Guatemala also purchased land and helped displaced families construct homes.

Between June and November 2020, four tropical systems, including powerful Category 4 hurricanes Eta and Iota, hit Central America, bringing catastrophic winds and life-threatening storm surges. The disasters killed more than 50 people and affected more than 1.3 million others, including 203,000 people who had to evacuate their homes. With the support of several national and international entities, Habitat Guatemala delivered cash vouchers, hygiene kits and water filters. As of early 2021, Habitat was coordinating with families to help them rebuild or improve damaged homes.

Housing rights and land tenure security

For years, the rights of indigenous and low-income people in Guatemala have been denied. Guatemala has inherited a fragmented government system that does not consider the needs of the most underprivileged citizens. Despite a national law on housing and human settlements designed to guarantee the right of citizens to adequate housing, the housing crisis in Guatemala is worsening. According to the Ministry of Communications and Infrastructure of Guatemala, the housing deficit reached 2.2 million homes in 2021, a 39% increase in the past six years. This means that around half of the Guatemalan population does not have access to adequate housing.

To change policies, systems and attitudes in the name of adequate housing for all, Habitat has been engaging different sectors of society to address issues related to land tenure and access to housing, along with access to water and sanitation in Guatemala. During the past eight years, national and local governments, private entities, civil society organizations, community leaders, multilateral and bilateral organizations, ambassadors, and other

stakeholders have come together at Habitat-organized housing forums at both the national and regional levels.

Habitat Guatemala has been able to raise awareness about the importance of housing as a basic human right, call for the removal of barriers to accessing adequate housing, and enhance collaborations and partnerships to improve the lives of vulnerable families.

Habitat Guatemala's grassroots-based advocacy model relies on empowering local communities and a national network of social leaders and volunteers to influence local governments to approve municipal housing policies in a participatory way. In this process, it is important to enhance local capacities, identify barriers, and develop plans that promote policy positions and mobilize advocates. In 2018, during Habitat for Humanity's first Solid Ground global advocacy campaign, Habitat developed land tenure research, increased the capacities of the Habitat staff, and reached out to local governments. Habitat Guatemala continues to enhance these collaborations.

The Habitat network

Habitat's work in Guatemala is supported by Habitat for Humanity International, an acclaimed global development organization that partners with a full range of stakeholders in more than 70 countries, implementing appropriate solutions for more than 5 million people per year in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Habitat advocates for policies that bring adequate housing within reach for the estimated 1.6 billion people worldwide who currently lack decent shelter, and helps make housing market systems more responsive to their needs.

Habitat for Humanity International maintains its Latin America and Caribbean area office in Costa Rica, thus multiplying its impact through regionally centralized programmatic support, which can help countries such as Guatemala with resources and expertise.

Accountability

Habitat has a strong commitment to being accountable to the families and communities we work with in Guatemala, and to donors and other partners. We have developed systems for demonstrating our impact and ensuring we live up to our values, including financial responsibility; diversity and inclusion; and safeguarding our employees, partners and the people we work with every day.

Habitat employs a robust monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, or MEAL, system in Guatemala that has been set up to continually track and – if needed – modify and refine approaches.

Habitat Guatemala has strong governance through structures that ensure high standards of implementation and performance, and we operate with the highest level of financial accountability and integrity. We adhere to strict financial policies and regularly conduct internal audits. Our ethics policies protect the people and communities we serve from exploitation and abuse.

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Delorean Randich

Habitat for Humanity Guatemala
Avenida Las Americas, 9-50, zona 3,
Edificio Supercom Delco, 3er. Nivel, Oficina 3
Quetzaltenango, Quetzaltenango
Email: randich@habitatguate.org
Phone: (+502) 4740-6639

GLOBAL POINT OF CONTACT

Roberto Valladares Ortega

Latin America/Caribbean Manager, Global Foundations,
Organizations and Institutions Partners
Habitat for Humanity International
285 Peachtree Center Ave. NE, Suite 2700
Atlanta, GA 30303-1220 USA
Phone: +44 (478) 504-1039
Email: rvalladares@habitat.org



285 Peachtree Center Ave. NE, Suite 2700, Atlanta, GA 30303-1220 USA
322 W. Lamar St., Americus, GA 31709-3543 USA
(800) 422-4828 fax (229) 928-8811 publicinfo@habitat.org habitat.org