
LIFE IN A TIME OF FOOD PRICE VOLATILITY

Guatemala Year 1 Country Report

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Even though changes in food prices are a determining factor in the level of wellbeing among vulnerable populations in developing countries, government measures to provide social protection directly to affected families have been weak or nonexistent, and legal protections to regulate price behavior have been inadequate. As a result, hunger is intensifying daily in rural areas, and the problem is increasingly afflicting urban areas. Today, even though populations' conditions are different, hunger and food insecurity are becoming a constant element that no longer distinguishes between rural and urban settings.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contributes to the Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility study, by examining the impact of food price volatility (FPV) in two communities in Guatemala, one rural and one urban, in the municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, located in the department of Quiché. Data was gathered through focus groups and in-depth interviews in homes and with key informants such as leaders, local social and cultural organizations, and local authorities, among others. Data from the two areas was analyzed comparatively in order to identify contrasts in terms of indicators of wellbeing and strategies for survival and social protection. In addition, youths' perceptions of agricultural work were explored.

In terms of **wellbeing**, it was discovered that both in the rural and urban areas, informants felt that they do not have wellbeing in their families. Families that were interviewed were particularly concerned about the lack of work; this was expressed by several informants, both women and men, particularly in the urban area. They noted that the lack of wellbeing is due to the lack of jobs, even for those with schooling. The informants described a chain reaction that reflects their situation: without work, there is no money; and without money, there is no food, which is the primary factor that determines wellbeing, though they also identified health as an important aspect in wellbeing.

With regards to **resilience**, inhabitants say that they have endured a prolonged period of suffering for different reasons: the armed conflict, poverty, natural disasters (which are increasingly frequent), and exclusion from health care and educational services; it is difficult, then, to conclude that they have “overcome” or developed the capacity to confront their situation. Price increases are another factor that adds to the already precarious situation in which these populations subsist.

Among the **survival strategies** undertaken in the face of price volatility and the decrease in work and in income, impoverished rural families have pared down their diet to corn, sugar, tomato, onions and home-grown goods (gourds, radish, cauliflower) and have replaced meat with eggs. Urban families, though poor, exhibit better conditions than rural families, which allows them at times to acquire rice, pasta, oatmeal, and Incaparina.¹ In times of scarcity, the basic meal is a *tamal* or tortilla with salt, greens, or tomato sauce, accompanied by corn porridge. Other families mention that they curtail their meals, reduce portions, or purchase smaller, lower-quality products.

In terms of **unpaid care work**, the gender-based division of labor that is prevalent across the country means that women handle domestic tasks and care for children and the elderly, while men's role is to provide for the family. Nevertheless, women who were interviewed concurred that now they have also had to take on work outside the home in order to secure supplementary income for their families, especially to feed their children. When women leave the home to wash clothes or sell goods at the market, their young children are cared for by grandmothers or older sisters. Boys also learn to do housework; young women who participated in urban and rural focus groups remarked that the type of work that children and youth perform is based not on their sex but rather on their age. Thus, both sons and daughters learn to clean the house, but as they grow up they are increasingly incorporated into the family's workforce. They do not receive any pay, but they learn a trade and they help augment the productivity of the domestic unit. Later, youth take paid jobs to earn an income that they share with their families.

Talking about **social protection**, informants mentioned the monetary aid that the previous government provided, the support from Catholic and Evangelical churches, and sponsorships from organizations that send money for children to attend school. They mentioned the fertilizer handouts this year, but recognized that solidarity support has diminished because the community

¹ Incaparina is a grain mixture made from corn and cotton flours, whose proteins bear a high biological value compared to those of animal origin. It is produced with local agricultural products and sold at a price accessible to the low-income population. This mixture is fortified with a series of vitamins and minerals, particularly vitamin A, calcium, and riboflavin, which are usually deficient in local diets, but that can substitute those found in milk.

itself opposed a fertilizer donation for a family comprised of single women. They criticized the way in which these programs are implemented and recommended that there be local control to ensure that aid be given to those who are most needy.

Regarding **youths' perceptions of their future**, it was found that they do not consider agriculture to be a viable livelihood, due to land scarcity, low crop yields, climatic risks, low agricultural wages, and particularly because for urban and rural men in the case study sites, agriculture has not been the primary occupation in the past three generations. Nevertheless, youth express interest in vegetable gardening as a way to earn more money. However, they prefer to have a stable job with a fixed salary and to avoid working long hours in the sun.

Families have entered an extreme crisis, in which price increases constitute an additional factor in their destitution. They attest that they cannot overcome these conditions without the support of public policies and permanent programs that provide structural responses to this long-lasting and growing situation. Moreover, they convey the need for aid programs to address the intensification of the crisis due to the lack of food in families living in poverty and extreme poverty.

Experts consulted for this study concur in noting the need to focus on food and nutrition security as a right and not as an act of charity. According to key informants, the complexity of decision-making processes surrounding food and nutrition security, and the financial resources required to implement more in-depth measures that would allow the problem of hunger to be addressed, denote the urgent need to address structural issues foremost, while continuing to grant time-sensitive aid to the most affected communities where people are barely subsisting.

In the political context, there are several high-level initiatives, in both the executive and legislative branches, that could have positive repercussions on food and nutrition security. For the first time, the Congressional Commission on Food and Nutrition Security in Guatemala's national Congress was comprised of 15 congressional representatives, who signed, in their second ordinary session, the Zero Hunger Pact in front of the members of the National Committee on Food and Nutrition Security (CONASAN), while also forming the Parliamentary Front Against Hunger in Guatemala (FPHGT). This newly launched body joins the network of such institutions throughout Latin America and the Caribbean that are supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). At the same time, this commission promoted the creation of the Technical Support Bureau with the participation of diverse international organizations, academic entities, and Guatemala's public and private producer sector², whose objective is to advance laws that support food and nutrition security.

In August 2012, Guatemala hosted the Third Annual Forum of the Parliamentary Front Against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean; parliamentary members and leading figures from 18 countries participated, as well as relevant actors from government, the business sector, and civil society from different countries, especially Guatemala. As a result of interest in this type of activity, the topic appears in the media and contributes to a constant process of social awareness-raising that specialists recommend.

In fulfilling its role of providing oversight for the budgetary expenses for the Zero Hunger Plan components, Guatemala's Congressional Commission on Food Security promoted in its 2013 Budget the approval of articles to ensure the implementation of the Thousand-Day Window (Article 17), Access to Food (Article 20), and the Special Fund for the Zero Hunger Plan (Article 24). The Public Finance Ministry will be obligated to prioritize fund provision to the institutions charged with enacting the Zero Hunger Plan. However, the central challenges facing this Commission are to monitor the effective implementation of the budget; and to exhaustively analyze the implementation of specific items and actions focused on food security and the investments in comprehensive rural development, particularly those that favor rural women. Moreover, follow-up on this budget will serve to identify financial transfers that take away from Food Security and Nutrition – FSN – and from comprehensive rural development items, transfers that would harm investments in the most vulnerable populations.

² AECID, Fundazúcar, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, IICA, INCOPAS, Canadian Embassy, JICA-Japan, Food Security Commission of the Political Parties' Permanent Forum, Consumers' League, PAHO/WHO, Agronomy School of the San Carlos University, CONAFOR, and the Chamber of Agriculture.

In that respect, both the allocation of financial resources to implement preventative and short-term activities, and the social auditing to evaluate their execution, form part of the recommendations made by the key informants consulted.

In the context of the GROW Campaign, a process of monitoring has begun in order to follow up on social programs associated with the Zero Hunger Plan, as has an analysis of the 2012 Budget Implementation by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA). The results generated from these follow-up processes will be published upon the completion of President Otto Pérez's first year in office.

1 INTRODUCTION

The results presented in this report correspond to a longitudinal investigation to be conducted in ten (10) selected countries over a period of four consecutive years, involving two case-study communities, one rural and one urban. The 10 countries included in this investigation are: Bangladesh, Kenya, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Vietnam, Bolivia, Pakistan, Guatemala, Indonesia and Ethiopia.

The overall purpose of this investigation is to document impoverished people's experiences with food price volatility in order to form generalized viewpoints about relevant policies in terms of how price volatility is unfolding in developing countries. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data aims to ensure that the investigation reach relevant politicians as well as the broader public, by incorporating human accounts that illustrate widespread macro-economic impacts. The evidence generated aims to inform short-term and long-term responses in order to protect groups vulnerable to food price volatility (or to enable them to benefit from price increases or decreases, particularly in the case of small-scale farmers).

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) will direct and coordinate the investigative process, while Oxfam will be in charge of overall project management.

The results of this investigation constitute evidence regarding the impacts and responses to food price volatility. The information generated strengthens public debate and dialogue about policies and practices within the country and, with the results of the overall project, worldwide. This will be achieved by generating knowledge about the impacts of price volatility on people's wellbeing and development; on their social protection, both formal and informal; and on their subsistence activities. Key to this study is guaranteeing results with credible evidence that is convincing enough to stimulate public debate and political dialogue that in turn generate protection responses, and to address the problems that are caused by food price volatility and the crises that arise as a result. An additional result of the study is that the local communities that participate in the investigation develop, in a participatory way, the capacity to articulate and express their concerns regarding food insecurity.

The municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango has been chosen as the urban case-study site, and the community Chugüexá Primero as the rural site. These sites were selected by considering poverty indicators, family incomes, and expenditure surveys, using a household economy approach (HEA); in order to facilitate local coordination, an additional criterion involved choosing sites with the presence of Oxfam counterparts.

The primary purpose of this study is to identify the key elements that enable and guarantee food supplies and food and nutrition security in times of food price volatility, by developing community-level assessments in both rural and urban sites of the situation of food price volatility; and by exploring its impacts on local economic activity and livelihoods, individual and community wellbeing and security, households' survival strategies, and official and informal responses for social protection.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Main motivations and objectives

The overall purpose of the investigation is to document relevant experiences of poor people faced with a situation of food price volatility in such a way as to generalize viewpoints about pertinent policies in terms of how food price volatility is being tackled in developing countries.

The reason for integrating qualitative and quantitative data is to ensure that the results of the study reach relevant politicians as well as the broader public, through human narratives that reflect and illustrate the macro-economic impacts of food price volatility.

This investigation aims to generate results that:

- Inform short-term and long-term responses that protect vulnerable groups from food price volatility or determine ways in which small-scale farmers can benefit, for instance, when food prices rise.
- Develop an overall assessment of the food situation at the community level and an analysis of its impacts on local economic activity and livelihoods, individual and community wellbeing and security, households' survival strategies, and official and informal responses for social protection.

This study also gives special consideration to possible impacts on development and to the qualitative methods that are particularly suitable for exploring these types of situations.

To the extent possible, it is important to consider and include investments in human capital and the inter-generational transmission of poverty, as well as impacts to vulnerability related to gender, local social cohesion, and security.

General Objectives

The primary purpose of this study, that serves as its general objective, is:

To identify the key enabling elements that guarantee food supplies and food and nutrition security in times of food price volatility.

The abovementioned objective is further described in the following paragraph:

“To develop a community-level assessment of the situation of food price volatility, in both rural and urban areas, by exploring its impacts on local economic activity and livelihoods, individual and community wellbeing and security, households' survival strategies, and official and informal responses for social protection.”

The reference points for this investigation are two communities, one urban and one rural, posed in conditions of poverty and under-development.

Specific Objectives

In order to guide the investigative process, the following objectives are specifically posed:

- To conduct a complete, multi-dimensional assessment of the impacts of food price volatility on people's wellbeing and their responses to the situation in selected areas of developing countries;
- To develop an analysis centered on political issues specifically related to food security that arise during the given period (for example, youths' aspirations, the right to food, impacts on women's empowerment, the private sector in food markets);

- To explore and analyze activities, actions, and policies that involve politicians, the private sector, professionals, and other institutions in developing social protection and food security policy; and
- To identify the extent of local capacity building to monitor food and nutrition security.

Partnerships and organizations involved

At the global level, this investigation is being promoted by Oxfam and the Institute of Development Studies – IDS – and is led by Richard King on behalf of Oxfam and Naomi Hossain on behalf of IDS.

The Guatemalan case study is being developed by Oxfam's GROW Campaign and the “Vamos al Grano” (“Let's Get to the Point”) teams.

This investigation was developed with the support of the Indigenous Mayoralty and the Municipal Mayoralty of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango. Support was also granted by the Community Development Council in the community of Chuguexá Primero.

In order to incorporate different analytical approaches into this study, the results collected from qualitative assessments at both sites are presented.

3 NATIONAL CONTEXT OF FPV AND POLICY RESPONSES

Summary of national food security context

In Guatemala, half of the country lives in poverty, and the poor use most of their income to purchase food.

According to the 2002 National Population Census, 42% of the economically active population (EAP) is engaged in agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing. The Living Conditions Survey (ENCOVI 2006) presents a complete picture of the drama behind the country's poverty. The published results indicate that 51% of Guatemalans live in poverty, equivalent to 6,625,892 inhabitants out of a total of 12,987,829. ENCOVI 2006 set the extreme poverty line at Q3,206 per capita per year, equivalent to Q264 per month, which solely calculates the cost for minimum food consumption per person. The overall poverty line is set at Q6,574 per person per year, and includes the minimum food cost plus minimum costs for supplementary goods and services, for a monthly amount of Q540 per person.

Ethnically, 38% of the Guatemalan population is indigenous. Six of every ten people living in poverty are indigenous. Of the overall population, 52% reside in the rural area, and 72% of rural inhabitants are poor.

Among small-scale farmers, 92.06% cultivate only 21.86% of the land area, while 1.86% of commercial producers occupy 56.59% of arable land in the country. There are 47 plantations measuring 3,700 hectares or more, while 90% of producers survive on an average of one hectare per family.

Fifty-nine percent of family agriculture is for subsistence. According to FAO data, 51% of corn is grown on farms smaller than 3.5 hectares. The majority of corn growers are small-scale farmers who contribute 67.5% of national corn production.

Climate change presents new challenges and the need for actions to guarantee the population's access to goods. Guatemala is one of the most vulnerable countries in Latin America and the world to climate change.

State institutionality is weak, especially as regards the promotion and support of production. The new government administration's agenda is heavily geared toward security, anti-narcotics, and the fight against hunger. In a short time, military occupation actions maneuvers have arisen, strongly targeting rural areas; and farmworker movements present specific demands, they are designated as violent acts, which has meant in most cases that the army instigates an intimidatory presence in communities. The current government has removed the proposed Comprehensive Rural Development Law from the legislative agenda, opening up a new process of dialogue and hearings that stalls its enactment. The struggle against hunger has been presented as a publicity campaign to promote the government, and its response centers on the same aid strategy as that of the previous administration. They are scattered actions that do not pose solutions to the country's structural problems and in fact aggravate poverty.

Given the problems associated with national rural development and the conditions faced by the most vulnerable populations in the country, the farmworker movement has launched a National March of the Farmworker Movement in which they present 68 demands, focused on: a) addressing land issues, b) canceling agrarian debt, c) ending evictions, persecution, and criminalization, d) canceling mining and oil exploration and exploitation licenses, hydro-electric dam construction, and the promulgation of mono-cropping, e) approving laws to benefit impoverished

peoples and communities. After various sessions of dialogue and agreements, a clear response by the government to implement such measures has not been evidenced.

In spite of this context, Guatemala has great potential as a country: it has diverse productive capacities and great natural wealth and is one of the most dynamic economies in Central America. The opportunity afforded by a change in government, the invigoration of the farm worker movement, the attention granted by the international community, and, above all, the struggle for Guatemalan producers' rights present a dynamic of struggle for both men's and women's rights. The pursuit of opportunities and the right to life and to food are hindered daily by poverty, ethnic and gender-based discrimination, limited access to land and takeovers of land, a reduction in food production due to the expansion of mono-crops, and the increase of petroleum prices which together create a chain reaction that causes food prices to rise.

The food situation in Guatemala

Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) Situation

According to the latest Height and Weight Census (MINEDUC, 2002) Guatemala bears a chronic malnutrition rate of 45.6%; more recent data (ENCOVI, 2011) reveal chronic malnutrition among 49.3% of children under age five, representing approximately a million children. The extent of the problem among indigenous children, 69.5%, is double that among non-indigenous children, 35.7%; the average malnutrition rate in rural areas is 55.5%.

The undernourished population in Guatemala rose from 2.5 million people in the 2000-2002 period to 2.7 million people in the 2005-2007 period, presenting a Global Hunger Index in 2011 of 14.0, the highest in Central America.³ Based on rates of extreme poverty, undernourished population, and countries' capacities to import foodstuffs, the FAO ranks Guatemala's level of food and nutrition vulnerability as one of the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean⁴ (Zero Hunger Plan, 2012).

The above-mentioned means that Guatemala has the highest prevalence of chronic malnutrition among children under age five.⁵ According to the National Maternal and Infant Health Survey (ENSMI) of 2008-2009, the overall percentage of malnutrition among children under five is 49.8%; the situation is worse in rural areas (58.6%) compared to urban areas (34.3%) and is almost twice as high among indigenous children (65.9%) as among non-indigenous children (36.2%). Significant differences were also observed according to the mother's educational level and the household's economic quintile; children's malnutrition rates range from 14.1% in the top quintile of the population to 70.2% in the bottom quintile.⁶

FNS risk factors

Of the four pillars that sustain food security in the country, those that present the highest levels of risk are those related to food access and availability, pillars that are generally reflected in factors such as price increases (both of hydro-carbons and of basic foodstuffs), family food reserves, unemployment, access to land, and access to production inputs, among others. Conditions related to these factors in Guatemala are the following:

Food reserves. As of May 31, 2012, in the communities where FAO projects are implemented, families' reserve supplies of white corn and black beans for their own consumption were low or nonexistent, except in the northern region (with reserve supplies of 3.8 months' worth of corn per family and 0.8 months' worth of black beans per family) where the harvest had recently occurred. Reserves are at low levels in other regions (0.4 and 1.7 months' worth of reserves for corn and black beans, respectively, in the west; and 0.8 and zero months' worth in the south) and are nonexistent in the eastern region. This situation means that the poorest households (in the east

³ International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Global Hunger Index. The Challenge of Hunger: Focus on the Crisis of Child Undernutrition. Washington, 2010.

⁴ FAO. Panorama of Food and Nutrition Security in Latin America and the Caribbean. Rome, 2010.

⁵ UNICEF. The State of the World's Children, 2011.

⁶ Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS). National Maternal and Infant Health Survey (ENSMI). Guatemala 2008-2009.

and west) will depend on the local market to obtain these foods until the next harvest in August/September, except in the highlands when the harvest does not happen until November/December (SIINSAN, 2012). Nevertheless, in August, the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA) reported a drought that will be exacerbated in the country's dry corridor, which will affect crop harvests and as a result will impact not only food reserves but also food availability for over 32,000 affected families.

As of July 18, 2012, the average wholesale price of white corn showed a tendency to rise (Q140.00); and, although the recorded prices are lower than those of the previous year, foods at these prices continue to be inaccessible to families. The price of beans also has tended to rise, and its harvest cycles have diminished (SIINSAN,2012).

Investment in biofuel production and land grabbing have caused populations to lose the ability to grow their own crops or to generate income for family subsistence (Borras et al 2012).

Access to food. A study undertaken by SESAN/FAO/MFEWS (2009) defined a series of livelihood profiles that allow an understanding of the ways in which households in a particular geographic area use their income sources to acquire foods and develop strategies to face and survive threats. Livelihood profiles have been formulated by taking into account agro-ecology and market access to determine geographic areas in which populations share the same systems of production, commerce, and exchange.

According to the Fourth Agriculture and Livestock Census (INE, 2004), the majority of the Guatemalan population is employed in agricultural activities; however, land distribution is unequal (the Gini land tenure index is 0.84; 2% of producers own 56.6% of the land, while 45.2% of producers own only 3%). Meanwhile, "... at least a million more people —of a population of 14 million— are considered to live below the poverty line, as a direct effect of food price increases. The price of basic food necessities (Basic Food Basket) rose 38% in the 2007-2011 period; and from January 2010 and December 2011 alone, it went from Q1,938.3 to Q2,440.2, (US\$251.70 to US\$316.90), a 20% increase. As of April 2012 the cost of the Basic Food Basket was Q2,513.10 (US\$323)" (Price index, cited in Oxfam, 2012).

Poverty, combined with the occurrence of natural disasters and the price increases of recent years, have intensified the situation of hunger and malnutrition in the Guatemalan population. An assessment of food security (SESAN/MFEWS/Action Against Hunger/FAO/Unicef, 2010) carried out after Tropical Storm Agatha indicates that the storm had an almost immediate impact on market supplies of basic grains and therefore on prices. The same source indicates that generally a quarter of basic foodstuffs are produced by the family itself and 70% are procured through purchase, so that food price increases directly impact food security.

In mid-2012 the Ministry of Agriculture announced that the drought conditions endured by communities located in the country's dry corridor (Baja Verapaz, El Progreso, Chiquimula, Zacapa, Jalapa, Jutiapa, and Santa Rosa) are affecting over 32,000 families. In 2012, droughts have extended further, reaching areas such as Sololá, Quiché, and San Marcos.

Vulnerable population. Chronic malnutrition affects indigenous children; for example, overall 45.6% of Guatemala's children have growth retardation (Mineduc/Sesan, 2009), but in predominantly indigenous areas this rate rises to 80%. Malnutrition affects 62.5% of indigenous children, while 34.6% of non-indigenous children face this same situation (Mineduc/Sesan, 2009). The vulnerability index for food and nutrition insecurity (INVISAN) rates as "high" and "very high" in 166 municipalities (50% of the municipalities in the country), with chronic malnutrition rates of 57% to 91%. Among the municipalities with the "very high" INVISAN rate, 64 are located in the western region, where a majority of the population (between 80% and 98%) is indigenous (INE 2002).

Twelve percent of children are born with low birth weight; maternal mortality is 139.6/100.000, and infant mortality is 34/1,000.⁷ The prevalence of acute malnutrition reported by the ENSMI 2008-2009 is 1.4%, a lower rate than that expected in the reference population (2.3%); it is important to note that acute malnutrition increases tenfold the risk of mortality among children under

⁷ MSPAS. ENSMI. Guatemala 2008-2009.

age five. At the same time, as the newspaper *Diario La Hora* (August 22, 2012) declared, “According to the Guatemala Development Foundation (*Fundesa*), over 22% of the country's population is estimated to lack access to improved drinking water sources, and almost 40% of water resources exhibit a degree of pollution. Investment by the State of Guatemala in water provision and sanitation is less than Q75 per inhabitant in 2012.”⁸

The ENSMI 2008-2009 results highlight the fact that the members of the population most vulnerable to food insecurity are children and pregnant and non-pregnant women of child-bearing age; anemia is prevalent in 47.7% of children under five and in 21.4% and 29.1% of non-pregnant and pregnant women, respectively. The National Micro-nutrient Survey in 2009-2010 reported that 34.9% of children under age five suffer from a zinc deficiency, 26.3% from an iron deficiency, and 12.9% from a vitamin B-12 deficiency. Women of child-bearing age are deficient in: iron (18.4%), erythrocyte folate (7%) and vitamin B-12 (18.4%).⁹

Gender relations and local (informal) institutions of social protection or community support

The gender-based division of labor that dominates in the national context means that women handle domestic tasks and care for children and the elderly, while it is men's role to provide for the family. Women interviewed for this investigation concurred that they have now had to take on work outside of the home in order to secure supplementary income for their families, especially to feed their children. When women leave the home to wash clothes or sell goods at the market, their young children are cared for by grandmothers or older sisters. Boys also learn to do housework; young women who participated in urban and rural focus groups remarked that the type of work that children and youth take on is based not on their sex but rather on their age. Thus, both sons and daughters learn to clean the house, but as they grow up they are increasingly incorporated into the family's workforce. They do not receive any pay, but they learn a trade and they help augment domestic productivity. Later, youth take on paid jobs to earn an income that they share with their families.

In terms of social protection, although representatives from different governmental institutions publicize and talk about direct aid programs for populations, the State is the main actor missing from active responses to the pressing situations faced by households trying to feed themselves without the minimum income needed to do so. Those interviewed mention support from Catholic and Evangelical churches and the model used by some organizations of providing aid through child sponsorships. Fertilizer handouts for this year have also been mentioned. The way in which the government's social protection programs are implemented has been criticized, and local control is recommended to ensure that aid reaches the most vulnerable population.

In general, social protection is provided by non-governmental organizations, operating either out of a humanitarian response mode or through steady programs for social protection, that provide health services, education, and food programs. In recent years government programs have been instituted that involve conditional transfers and food handouts; due to their administrative framework, they do not necessarily reach the most needy populations, but they do support families' food security.

Political movements around national food prices in the past year

Specific movements directly focused on the issue of food prices have not developed. Nevertheless, movements aimed at risk factors that affect food security and that influence food prices have emerged in 2011 and to a greater extent in 2012.

⁸ Juárez, E. (Guatemala), *Diario La Hora* (Guatemala, August 22, 2012).

⁹ MSPAS. ENMICRON 2009-01, Guatemala 2011.

In 2011, the historic Comprehensive Rural Development Law entitled Bill 40-84 was approved. This proposal was propelled by a broad movement of mixed-gender and women's civil society organizations whose main demands revolve around the right to land and the right to food.

In 2012, upon the entrance of a new government administration, actions were launched for the Reactivation of the Comprehensive Rural Development Policy through a Plan presented to the Comprehensive Rural Development Commissioner, which somewhat devalued Bill 40-84. In response, the movement of co-ed and women's farmworker organizations continued to demand approval of the Comprehensive Rural Development Law (Bill 40-84). Many civil society organizations paraded outside the National Congress with statements in defense of the Bill. With the year 2012 almost two months away from ending, the Bill's fate in the National Congress is still not clear.

The GROW and *Vamos al Grano* Campaigns¹⁰. In June 2013, Oxfam launched the GROW Campaign in Guatemala, with a forum of presidential candidates in the run-up to elections when the issues of hunger and malnutrition in the country were not yet being discussed. As a campaign, GROW works to achieve political lobbying objectives for actions to reverse the effects of the neglect of structural causes. It uses strategies for alliances and joint work as it engages with 23 organizations: five farmworker and indigenous organizations, six rural women's organizations, two growers' organizations, three research centers, and seven organizations involved in development. Decision-making takes place in a committee that coordinates and reports to the general assembly. At the campaign level, GROW promotes actions with other international NGOs and cooperation agencies while maintaining strategic alliances with the State through specific entities.

Progress has occurred in dialogue processes, normative and regulatory frameworks, commitments undertaken nationally and internationally, windows of opportunity for lobbying, and well-founded proposals that demonstrate viability and appropriateness and that enable changes to be generated in government policies. The topics prioritized for the coming years are: land and rural women, lobbying research, and public campaign actions.

The FAO has created a useful tool to analyze the situation of grain prices on a monthly basis: its monthly report on corn and bean reserves, price, and market among families where projects supported by FAO-Guatemala are implemented. This report has become a valuable tool used for analyzing food prices and reserves in the four regions where FAO actions operate.

Meanwhile, the project to recover national silos administered by the Agricultural Development and Marketing Institute, a department of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA), is much-awaited; this recovery is slated to provide social protection for vulnerable populations and to generate availability in the case of emergency situations which are quite frequent in Guatemala.

Evidence of poverty and food security impacts over the past year

A depiction of the political landscape as relates to the impact of price volatility on the most vulnerable Guatemalan families was formed with qualified opinions by professionals who participate in projects and programs specifically focused on the topic of FNS and by consulting government officials who hold high-level posts in entities focused on FNS in both the executive and legislative branches.

According to informants, the country has had six years' worth of bad harvests for different reasons, including several related to climate change, which significantly affect the recovery ability among families that were already enduring a high degree of vulnerability. This reinforces some

¹⁰ Translator's Note: The expression "vamos al grano" means "let's get to the point." The word "grano" also means "grain" in Spanish; as such, the campaign's name evokes its work with producers of basic grains.

of the research findings, that families' capacity to resist the blows caused by natural disasters has been exhausted by the frequency with which they occur:

“... natural disasters have cornered families and have left them in a very precarious situation of subsistence” “... families are facing a level of drought never before seen in this country” (Interview with Iván Aguilar, Humanitarian Response and Rights in Crisis Coordinator, Oxfam Guatemala).

“Harvests have been lost, and any lost harvest puts the country's food balance at risk, since in Guatemala only in years of good harvest are enough corn (white) and beans produced to meet consumption. Any loss means relying on imports (whose prices are in turn unpredictable due to speculation in international financial markets) or facing grain shortages. On the other hand, local and national market prices rise and greatly affect families' purchasing power. Tools to ameliorate this situation (e.g. grain reserves) have not yet been launched.” (Communication with Susana Gauster, independent consultant and investigator with the Ixim Rural Studies Collective).

Price volatility is added to poverty, exclusionary access to land, the partition and exhaustion of lands, large family size, inequality in access to health care and education, and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. All of these factors combine to aggravate the situation, and families are entering extreme crisis, particularly because disasters occur in the country with increasing frequency, which does not allow people time to assimilate each shock.

“It used to be every four years; the most recent was in 2008, before that in 2001. The crisis is deepening, and if prices rise on top of this, access to food becomes more difficult given this sensitive balance.” “Those of us who work in international organizations and NGOs see this clearly, but it's not easy for decision-makers to see it clearly, to propose attainable goals, and to make timely decisions.” (Interview with Iván Aguilar, Humanitarian Response and Rights in Crisis Coordinator, Oxfam Guatemala).

Poverty, hunger, natural disasters, and malnutrition are not unknown topics in the country, but they get lost due to their everyday nature, a specialist notes:

“This is a deep-seated problem: these situations (of social exclusion) become normal; it would seem odd if there were no poor, hungry people. Its everyday nature makes it hard to raise consciousness around the severity of the situation. It is necessary to maintain constant awareness campaigns to convince the State and society about the urgent need to mobilize measures from all sectors to address this situation.” (Interview with Iván Aguilar, Humanitarian Response and Rights in Crisis Coordinator, Oxfam Guatemala).

In terms of institutionalization, an almost 22-year process has been undertaken to ultimately define a government entity in charge of designing and developing legislative initiatives to support interventions and strategies to be implemented in the short, medium, and long term. This process passed from an initial focus group on food security directed by the General Planning and Programming Secretariat -SEGEPLAN- in 1990; through the creation of the Secretariat on Food and Nutritional Security -SESAN- in 2005; to the formulation in national Congress of a Parliamentary Front Against Hunger that guarantees the right to food, in 2012.

Legislative advances are regarded by specialists consulted in a positive light, but with reservations:

“In principle it is important that the problem be articulated in Congress and that legislators gain sensitivity and hold government entities to account. However, as we know, the

creation of a commission in and of itself does not say anything about the true commitment to make progress on an issue.” (Communication with Susana Gauster, independent consultant and investigator with the Ixim Rural Studies Collective).

For their part, officials consulted highlight the importance of efforts towards food and nutrition security in the government’s main current policies:

“The Zero Hunger Pact is integrated as a State policy and comprises one of the three Government priorities, alongside the Security and Justice Pact and the Fiscal Pact by which the tax base is expanded to allow the State more resources at its disposal to attend to its responsibilities.” (Communication with licentiate Edgar Escobar, SESAN Sub-secretary)

National policy developments

Leaders in charge of formulating public policies

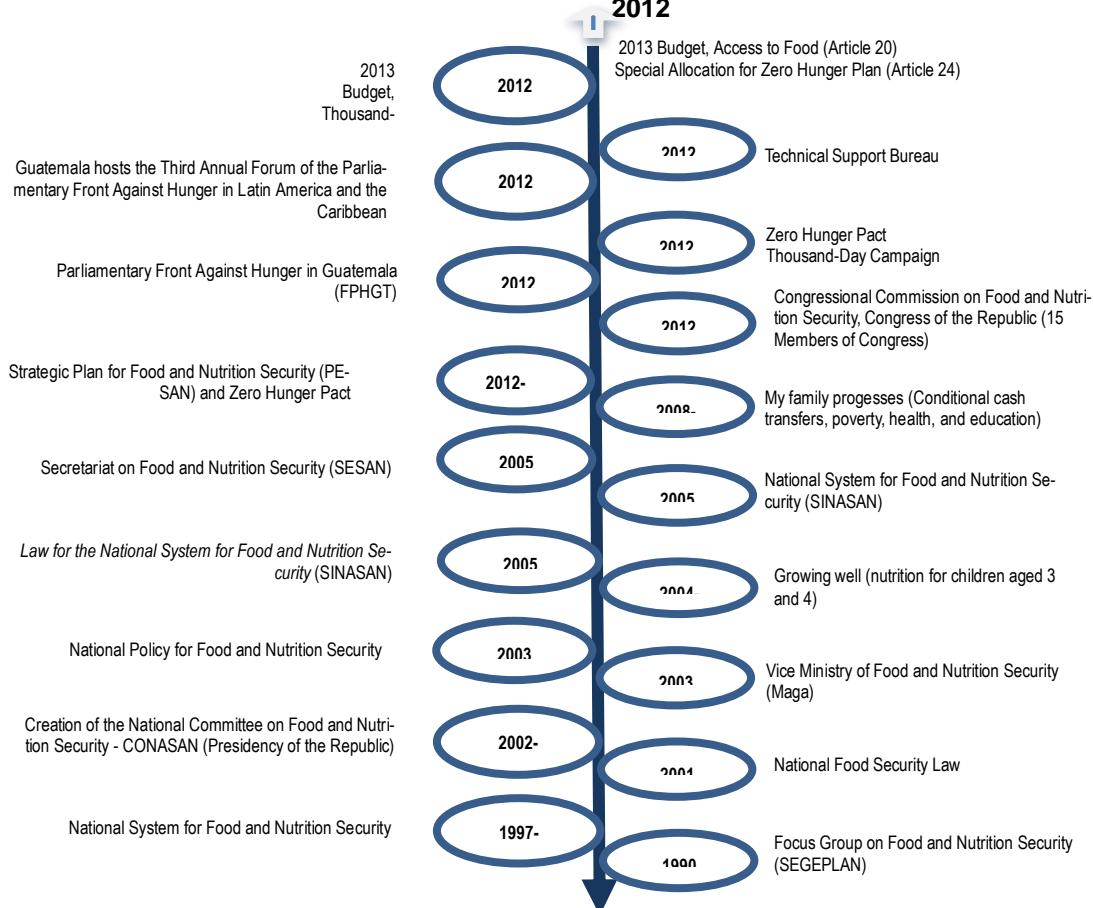
With the aim of incorporating opinions from public policy makers, the licentiates Edgar Escobar, SESAN Sub-secretary, and Hugo Morán, President of the Congressional Commission on Food Security, were contacted. Both of these institutions hold a key technical and political role and the responsibility to address the issue in depth; this year they sit together on the Technical Bureau for Food and Nutrition Security. The technical analysis allows them to foresee achievement indicators that need a long-term period to be met; nevertheless, the short length of government terms, combined with other related factors, mean that decisions are often not adopted as State policies, thus affecting actions' continuity.

According to information provided by the SESAN Sub-secretary, the main policies and strategies currently being promoted (that have enabled the visibility of economic, political, and social inequalities between groups, and especially affecting indigenous groups) are the following:

- **Pesan 2012-2016:** The Strategic Plan for Food and Nutrition Security defines inter-institutional policies, objectives, and strategies for the National Food and Nutrition Security System, Decree Number 32-2005.
- **Zero Hunger Pact:** It comprises a strategy to politically articulate nationwide efforts to reduce chronic and acute malnutrition during this governmental period, in which government, private sector, civil society, and national and international cooperation interact and commit to reduce chronic malnutrition by 10% in four years.
- **Zero Hunger Plan:** It is a joint strategy to address chronic malnutrition, acute malnutrition, and food insecurity. It seeks to create the conditions needed to generate effective and sustainable food and nutrition security (FNS) in the medium and long term, by implementing strategic, integral interventions, plans, projects, and alliances that address malnutrition's multiple causes.
- **The Thousand-Day Window of Opportunity.** The SUN (*Scaling-Up Nutrition*) Initiative proposes carrying out global work by multiple interested parties to boost nutrition, with the goal of reducing hunger and malnutrition and contributing to fulfilling all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Special emphasis is given to the first MDG that calls for halving poverty and hunger by the year 2015.
- **Legislative achievements and progress.** Communication with Hugo Morán, President of the Congressional Commission on Food Security, identified several advances that could have positive repercussions on FNS. For the first time, this Commission was made up of 15 congressional representatives who, at the second ordinary session, signed the Zero Hunger

Pact in front of the members of the National Commission on Food and Nutrition Security (CONASAN) and, moreover, formed the Parliamentary Front Against Hunger in Guatemala (FPHGT). In August 2012, Guatemala hosted the Third Annual Forum of the Parliamentary Front Against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean, in which parliamentary members and leading figures from 18 countries participated, as well as relevant actors from government, the business sector, and civil society from different countries, especially Guatemala. The Commission on Food Security promoted the creation of the Technical Support Bureau with the participation of various international organizations, academic entities, and Guatemala's public and private producer sector¹¹, whose objective is to advance laws to support food and nutrition security. In fulfilling its role of providing oversight for the budgetary expenses for the Zero Hunger Plan components, Guatemala's Congressional Commission on Food Security promoted in its 2013 Budget the approval of articles to ensure the implementation of the **Thousand-Day Window (Article 17), Access to Food (Article 20), and the Special Fund for the Zero Hunger Plan (Article 24)**. The Public Finance Ministry will be obligated to prioritize fund provision to the institutions charged with enacting the Zero Hunger Plan.

Graph 2
Timeline of the process to institutionalize food and nutrition security in Guatemala, 1997-2012



Source: Compilation by authors of present study, using information from Palmieri, M. and Hernán Delgado (2011). *Análisis situacional de la malnutrición en Guatemala: sus causas y abordaje. Cuadernos del Informe de Desarrollo Humano 2010/2011. (Situational Analysis of Malnutrition in Guatemala: Causes and Approach.* Human Development Report 2010/2011.) UNPD, 2012.

¹¹ AECID, Fundazúcar, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, IICA, INCOPAS, Canadian Embassy, JICA-Japan, Food Security Commission of the Political Parties' Permanent Forum, Consumers' League, PAHO/WHO, Agronomy School of the San Carlos University, CONAFOR, and the Chamber of Agriculture.

Experts consulted for this study concur in indicating the need to frame food and nutrition security as a right and not as an act of charity. They equally recommend that it not be seen as a health problem, because it is necessary to pursue and overcome the underlying (structural) causes of food insecurity: unequal distribution of the means of production; lack of respect for labor laws; lack of support for farmworker (subsistence) agriculture; lack of training and education in food and nutrition, etc.

“Furthermore, FNS is a multi-sectorial topic. The Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock, of Economy, and of Labor are linked to the topic through issues of availability and access; the Ministry of Health, through biological consumption and use; and the Ministry of Education, through the integration into the curriculum of knowledge and practices for production and utilization: school gardens, for instance.” (Communication with Susana Gauster, independent consultant and investigator with the Ixim Rural Studies Collective).

The same informant emphasizes that with a multi-sectorial focus, support from the private sector is an important part of national and international efforts towards food and nutrition security in Guatemala. Among the ways in which the private sector can contribute, she notes:

“First, follow the laws: pay taxes, honor labor laws, and enroll workers in social security benefits. Donate funds to public entities or to NGOs dissociated from themselves (to avoid the use of these donations solely to evade taxes) and re-orient their acts from a paternalistic and charity-based attitude to one that attacks the causes of food and nutrition insecurity. In this sense, it would be desirable for them to support sustainable processes and programs focused on human rights and capacity building.”

Perceptions of international cooperation

Experts consulted in international cooperation highlighted another fundamental approach in decision-making on food and nutrition security issues, referring to the option of executing plans to prevent or respond to emergencies. They mentioned, for example, that Unicef (on the topic of childhood malnutrition) describes three levels of causes: basic or structural causes, underlying causes, and immediate causes. Many advocate tackling the basic causes (poverty, inequality, policies, exclusion, etc.) to ensure sustainable solutions that attack the roots, not the consequences, of the problem. Others opt to work more on immediate and underlying causes (preventing infections, improving childcare, improving access to foods, etc.) because interventions at this level of causality achieve short-term results; however, the root problems are not solved.

“Programs to combat malnutrition should simultaneously impact the three levels of causes in order to change the social factors that determine malnutrition, while at the same time rescuing the coming generations. It is important to recall that much is determined about a person's future in the first thousand days of life (pregnancy and first 24 months of a child's life): intelligence (learning ability and future productivity), health (chronic illness risks also arise during this period), and bodily composition (future physical/sports performance). For that reason we can't wait for structural problems to be solved before initiating actions for the coming generation.” (Interview with Maritza de Oliva, nutrition officer with the World Food Program -WFP-).

Following the example of countries that have advanced in reducing or eradicating malnutrition, WFP specialists indicate that national programs like the Zero Hunger Pact should:

- 1) Be a State priority (which means a high-level commitment translated into effective investment).
- 2) Continue through several government terms (in Chile it took over 50 years to eradicate).

- 3) Be implemented on a large scale (no more pilot programs; the problem is too large and requires programs with broad coverage or, ideally, universal coverage).
- 4) Have high-quality implementation (in addition to a high level of coverage).
- 5) Be integrated and concentrated (avoiding scattered action).
- 6) Emphasize the Thousand-Day Window and the 13 actions that the “*Scaling up nutrition*” Global Movement proposes (support for nutrition).
- 7) Have a good system for monitoring and assessing the Pact.
- 8) Incorporate a nutritional dimension in programs that ordinarily would not have it, such as social protection networks and agricultural and educational programs; for example, literacy content topics geared to prevent malnutrition are being developed with the National Literacy Committee -Conalfa- (Conalfa-Unesco and WFP).

According to key informants, the complexity of decision-making processes for food and nutrition security issues, and the financial resources required to implement more in-depth measures that would allow the problem of hunger to be addressed, denote the urgent need to address primarily structural issues, while continuing to grant time-sensitive aid to the most affected communities where people are barely getting by.

“In this sense, at WFP Guatemala, the situation is analyzed and mitigation measures have been proposed that relate to approving projects and funding requests by international cooperation agencies, such as: a) Increasing small-scale farmers' production and WFP purchases (Purchase for Progress/P4P program). Through this program, basic grain availability is increased nationwide, which helps stabilize prices while boosting small-scale farmers' purchasing power; and it allows the WFP a local supply of basic grains to support populations with a food production deficit and that depend on the market to complement their consumption; b) School meals: Support children with one or two meals each day at school; c) Food bags, coupons for food, or cash-food transfers in poor urban areas or among subsistence farming families that do not grow enough for the whole year and generally depend on hiring out their labor or selling at the market during half of the year.” (Interview with Irma Palma, Program Officer, WFP).

4 METHOD AND APPROACH

A common methodology was developed for the Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility study, which was adapted for each country to fit the local context.

Research questions and rationale

The investigation designated five focus areas, as follows:

- Wellbeing
- Resilience
- Coping with change
- Unpaid care
- Social protection

These areas are considered in the context of a situation of abrupt change generated by the high costs and price volatility of foodstuffs.

Taking into account the above-mentioned, the research question posed by this investigation is:

How well do societies and people live when faced with rapid changes in basic living expenses?

- *What happens to everyday life when prices are high or volatile?*
- *How well do formal and informal systems for social protection work when food prices are volatile?*

At the same time, a discussion was launched to determine how to evaluate impacts on daily life and the coping mechanisms used to face problems related to high or volatile prices.

At that point, the following sub-questions for research were generated:

- What are the threats and challenges for access to food?
- In processes of rapid change to the basic costs of living, what changes occur in Health, Access to Information, Access to Food, Community Relationships (social life), Relationships within the Home, Property, and Agricultural Production?
- In regular times, how much is spent on household expenses?

It is important to consider that Oxfam's approaches are clearly defined and are based on the following:

- Recognition of women and their participation in economic development as central to Oxfam's campaign actions.
- Focus on vulnerable populations.
- Political strengthening of grassroots organizations.

Approach to longitudinal qualitative community case studies

Methods and tools

The case study method was applied as an ideal way to address the objectives, using in-depth interviews with people identified as household heads. Different types of households were sought in order to gain a broad view of the topics being researched. In addition, focus groups were conducted with female and male youth and adults in the selected sites.

Two sites (one rural and one urban) were chosen for implementing the research activities. The criteria used for site selection were the following:

- Areas with high concentrations of its population living in situations of poverty and extreme poverty
- Areas at high risk for food and nutrition insecurity
- Areas where Oxfam has counterparts, in order to facilitate logistics
- Places with poverty and extreme poverty below the general poverty line in the country

Sites selected

Region: Western

Department: Santa Cruz del Quiché

Urban Site: Municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango

Rural Site: Community Chuguexá Primero

Techniques and Tools

- Development of tools focused on generating qualitative information (see formats in Appendix A)
- Case studies
- In-depth interviews with community actors
- Observation
- Focus groups with key informants
- Analysis of documents

Considering the level of monolingualism and the low level of formal schooling among women interviewees, figures/photographs of the main food items consumed in the country were used in order to help informants enumerate and measure the quantities of food they buy a week. This allowed an identification of the foods consumed at a greater and lesser extent and the foods considered as essential (see photos 1, 2, and 3). This qualitative research focused on the following indicators¹²:

Table 1 Research indicators and questions		
Indicator	Concept	Research question
Wellbeing	Quality of life, including material and subjective aspects: social relationships, stress, concerns, and other aspects of life.	How well do people live given the rapid changes to basic living expenses?
Resilience	Resources and capacity to change behaviors in order to manage a worsening situation, to prevent it from worsening further.	What happens to daily life when prices are high or volatile?

¹² IDS/Oxfam. *Methodological guidelines for qualitative research for life in a time of food price volatility*. Draft version, May 2012, pages 8-9. (Free translation)

Indicator	Concept	Research question
Survival strategies	Refers to efforts, through outward or internal behavior, to face internal and environmental demands, and the conflicts between the two, that exceed a person's resources. In this case, evaluate how people and communities cope with changes that arise due to increases in food prices.	How do people and communities cope with changes that arise due to increases in food prices?
Unpaid care	Impacts that can be expected not only in activities that generate economic income, but also in the unmeasured work (done above all by women) needed to save on expenses and to carry out unpaid care-taking, that affect people's lives and their rights as members of a community in subjective, psychological, and relational ways.	How well do social protection schemes (formal and informal) work when food prices are volatile?
Social protection	Arrangements to protect people from sudden changes in their wellbeing due to adverse occurrences. Sources can be formal and official (government, non-governmental organizations), informal (help from neighbors or the community) or intermediaries (churches or charity aid groups).	
Special topic: Future farmers		What aspirations do youth have, and what role does agriculture play within these aspirations?

The study was developed in the municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, Quiché department, located in the western part of the country. The communities in which the study was conducted were the municipal capital, Villa de Santo Tomás Chichicastenango (urban area) and Chugüexá Primero Hamlet (rural area). Before initiating the study, it was necessary to get authorization from the Municipal Mayoralty and the Indigenous Mayoralty. Moreover, as required by local authorities, the research project was presented at an assembly, attended by approximately 100 male residents of the community Chugüexá Primero and a small number of women (fewer than 10) who represented their absent husbands and sons. The field assistant in charge of the presentation addressed participants in the K'iché language. Before residents authorized the research project in their community, they made comments that were translated by the interpreter into Spanish for the team, among them: *"An investigation will not change the situation of food prices in Guatemala, especially because you're not doing it in the whole country."* At the same time, they inquired whether or not they would benefit and what they would receive from the study.

Data collection was done through focus groups and interviews with male and female heads of household and key informants. Participants were selected in collaboration with a volunteer in each site and with support from Ixmucané, an Oxfam partner organization that works primarily in the western part of the country.

Four focus groups were conducted in each site, grouped by gender and age: adult women, adult men, young women, and young men. Youth were selected according to the criteria of being single and aged between 15 and 25 years old. In the community of Chugüexá Primero the focus group with adult men did not transpire because they constantly postponed the meeting date, asserting that they did not have time. Nevertheless, some men accepted visits to their homes and collaborated by providing information in individual interviews, but it was expressed that *"We're tired of being visited and asked questions and then nothing changes"* (head of nuclear household, Chugüexá Primero).

In carrying out the interviews, the analytical units were designated as households with diverse makeups and family situations in order to understand the different strategies undertaken by families in difficult situations. The male and female heads of household were interviewed, and in the case of extended families, the married son and daughter-in-law were interviewed as well. The selection criteria stipulated low-income families with one or more of the following characteristics:

- Nuclear family (consisting of father, mother, and children in an independent economic unit)
- Extended family (consisting of father, mother, single and married children, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, that acts as an integrated economic unit)
- Family of grandparents on their own or taking care of grandchildren (a common situation in the country due to the immigration of both parents; nevertheless, no such cases were found in Chugüexá Primero Hamlet)
- Family with pregnant mother
- Family with sole female head of household (single mother)
- Family whose head of household is an immigrant¹³ (nationally or internationally) or has been deported
- Family with chronically ill members of the household
- Families who receive institutional aid

Interviews with key informants were carried out in both the urban and the rural areas with teachers, health personnel, and local authorities (in Chugüexá Primero Hamlet, the members of the Community Development Council -Cocode- did not accede to an interview). Due to the importance of commerce at the local level, merchants in the urban and rural areas were also interviewed, as were owners of small stores and employees of credit institutions. The interviews and focus groups were undertaken in participants' preferred language; for this reason, and because monolingualism is more common among Maya rural women, the field team included a female bilingual K'iché-Spanish speaker with experience in conducting interviews and focus groups. In order to collect the necessary information, two types of guidebooks for focus groups (adult and youth) were prepared, as well as specific interview guides for each type of family.

Interviews with male and female household heads and focus groups were taped, after notifying participants and obtaining their permission; later, transcriptions were transferred directly into Spanish (for interviews conducted in K'iche') in digital format. To facilitate data about food purchases, female heads of household were provided with images of various foods that they could select and organize by group.

Fieldwork in Rural and Urban Sites

The fieldwork has been implemented in five phases:

Phase 1: Coordination with Ixmucané, a women's non-governmental organization -NGO- that works as a counterpart to Oxfam in the municipality of Chichicastenango. The contact person in Ixmucané was María Riquiac, a representative of the organization.

Activities undertaken on this visit:

- Presentation of key investigative aspects to Ixmucané's representative.
- Selection of the rural case study site: Chugüexá Primero was chosen.
- Initial coordination work for exploratory visit and identification of contacts.

¹³ The communities in this study do not contribute to the temporary internal work force, because in Chugüexá all the men are employed in tailoring, and in the municipal capital of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango they work in the artisan crafts business.

- Planning of exploratory visit: scheduled for July 9 through 12.

Phase 2: *Exploratory visit to the places selected for the study, July 9-12, by the Field Research Team (Margarita Ramírez, Fernando Coc and Floridalma Salanic) and Oxfam's Coordinating Team (Local Research Officer Alma Olivet and Regional Research Coordinator LAC – Oxfam Gabriela Alcaraz).*

Activities undertaken on this visit:

- Review of research tools. Aspects considered: a) assessment indicators, b) key informants, c) focus groups/in-depth interviews, and d) rural and urban sites.
- Validation of the research tools. For this activity the field work team organized two focus groups with adult women and men, members of the Board of the Children's Dance Group of the town of Chichicastenango. The focus group guide with revisions and feedback was used, with assistance from Oxfam officers and the consulting team.
- Visits and permission requests to the Municipal Mayoralty and the Indigenous Mayoralty, with both agencies granting approval for this study.
- Visits and permission requests to authorities in the community of Chuguexá Primero. At a meeting that was underway in the community, this research project was presented and authorization was requested to carry it out. Permission was granted by both the authorities and the assembly. Focus groups lasted about two hours and included 17 women and 8 men. This meeting validated the research tools and other valuable information being processed and analyzed.
- Interviews and price surveys in the Chichicastenango market, community markets, grocery stores, etc.
- Completion of the first focus group with women and men at an urban site, in Chichicastenango.

Meeting with Oxfam officials (*Local Research Officer Alma Olivet and Regional Research Coordinator LAC – Oxfam Gabriela Alcaraz*):

- Delivery of a document containing comments, regarding form and content, generated in the framework of the screening visit.
- Review and discussion of the observations and recommendations.

Phase 3: *Review, adjustment, and fine-tuning of research tools. Meeting for a second validation of the tools, planning and logistics for the final fieldwork.*

Planning and logistics were undertaken for the following activities:

- Four focus groups in Chuguexá Primero (adult women, adult men, young women, young men).
- Two focus group in the urban site in Chichicastenango (young women, young men). The focus groups involving adult women and adult men had already taken place during the first field site visit.
- 10 interviews with households.

According to the plans and based on the experience gained in the first field visit, we proceeded to:

- Review focus group tools and develop tools for individual interviews with heads of households.
- Coordinate and handle logistics for selecting and inviting participants to focus groups in the urban site. Contacts were Ingrid Bocel and Xon Lussi in coordination with Mary Riquiac, Ixmucané NGO representative.
- Identify households for in-depth interviews, according to families' typology.

- Make initial contact visits to gauge household heads' consent to participate in in-depth interviews for the case studies.

Phase 4: Field Research

In Chugüexá Primero, the following focus groups and interviews were conducted:

- Focus group with adult women in K'iche'
- Focus groups with young men and women in Spanish
- Interviews with two leading members of the Health Committee
- Interviews with four nuclear families
- Interview with a family with a disabled girl
- Interview with an extended family
- Interview with a family with a pregnant woman
- Interview with a migrant family
- Interview with the head of a family home
- Interview with two families who receive institutional aid
- Interview with a teacher

Notes: No interviews were performed with a family of elderly people living alone. There is no existing case in the community.

The focus group with men failed to meet. The men postponed the meeting three times, apologizing that they had a lot of work. The consultant team concluded that they had no interest in participating because while the others focus groups were meeting, the men were outside, talking amongst themselves.

In Chichicastenango, the following focus groups and interviews were conducted:

- Focus group with young men
- Focus group with adult men
- Focus group with adult women
- Focus group with young women (15 young women were invited, 6 attended; the focus group was conducted with 6 young women)
- Interview with an extended family
- Interview with a family with a deported family member
- Interview with a family with a pregnant woman
- Interviews with three nuclear families
- Interview with a family of elderly living alone
- Interviews with two families with disabled members
- Interviews with two families who receive aid
- Interview with an indigenous judge
- Interview with a schoolteacher
- Interview with a health center nurse

Adult focus groups lasted approximately two hours, while the youth focus groups lasted an hour and a half. Individual interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half.

Interviews with the following national decision makers and experts in food and nutrition security were conducted:

- Representative of the Ministry of Food and Nutrition Security
- Representative of the Congressional Commission on Food and Nutrition Security
- Specialists in food and nutrition security
- Iván Aguilar, Humanitarian Response and Rights in Crisis Coordinator, Oxfam Guatemala
- Alejandro Zepeda, Researcher, Oxfam Guatemala

Table 2 Focus groups and interviews carried out

Description	Chichicastenango urban center		Chugüexá Primero Hamlet		Total
	K'iche' language	Spanish language	K'iche' language	Spanish language	
Focus Group	0	4	1	2	7
Interviews with householders	9	6	10	10	35
Interviews with key informants	0	10	0	4	14
Total	9	20	11	16	56
Total families interviewed	10		11		

Phase 5: Transcription and translation of interviews

This phase took place between August 6 and 23 and consisted of the following activities:

- 19 interviews translated and 56 interviews transcribed:
 - Translation of 19 interviews from K'iche' to Spanish
 - Transcription of 56 interviews
 - Translation of notes from adult women's focus group (from K'iche' to Spanish)
 - Transcription of six focus groups (FG) conducted in Spanish (2 FG for young men, 2 FG for young women, 1 FG for adult men, 1 FG for adult women).

Phase 6: Data Processing

Analysis Plan

The information was processed in matrices for each of the following indicator categories:

- Wellbeing
- Resilience
- Impacts of food price volatility for different social groups and occupations
- Strategies for adjusting or coping
- Experiences with official and informal support mechanisms
- Other issues as arise during the year

Procedure

- Tabulation of transcripts of interviews and focus groups.
- Relevant results of each indicator organized by area.
- Possible intersections of information obtained with the different units of analysis.

Data management

Interview Transcription

This stage was accomplished between August 6 and 23; prior to the usual fieldwork processing, the interviews were translated and transcribed. It is worth highlighting that of the 56 interviews, 19 were conducted in the K'iché language. The focus group of adult women in Chugüexá Primero was conducted in K'iché, while the other six focus groups were conducted in Spanish (two with male youth, two with female youth, one with adult men and one with adult women).

The adult focus groups lasted approximately two hours, while those with youth lasted an hour and a half. The individual interviews lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. The interviews were taped, and simultaneously notes were taken.

Data was initially taped in different modes such as Audio (electronically in WAV format), and notes taken and later transcribed into Word format. Transcribed and written data were entered into Word as normal text and in formats and grids designed for response collection regarding measured indicators.

Transcription Supervision/Verification

Transcriptions were done selectively and literally on a case-by-case basis; they were entered directly from the audio to Word files in a regular format or in the tables/grids designed for the indicators being evaluated.

A team of interviewers was contracted, of whom two were bilingual; some of the queries were therefore asked in K'iché and later the notes were translated into Spanish. Later, the audio material was transcribed. With these inputs, the notes taken directly in the field were compared with the completed transcriptions.

The team was comprised of primary investigators in addition to the field team. Supervision was provided by the investigating technical team. Later a cross-review was done with the two bilingual interviewers in order to guarantee the quality of the finished transcriptions.

Data Processing

Information was processed in Word charts for each of the following indicators:

- Wellbeing
- Resilience
- Coping with change
- Unpaid care
- Social protection

5 THE RESEARCH SITES

Rationale for selection

The qualitative assessment of food price volatility in the year 2012, Guatemala Case Study, forms part of a worldwide investigation promoted by Oxfam International and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). It is a longitudinal study that will be conducted in ten selected countries over a four-year period and involving two case-study communities, one rural and one urban.

The process for conducting the investigation consisted, first, in defining the scope of the study. The decision was made to carry out the assessment in an urban area and rural area of the municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango. The sites were selected upon taking into account their poverty indicators (household income and expense surveys) and using a HEA (household economy approach); moreover, they are communities covered by Oxfam Guatemala's programs.

General objectives were defined as follows: a) To identify the key elements to enable and “guarantee food supplies and food and nutrition security in a time of food price volatility,” and b) to develop rural and urban community-level assessments of food price volatility by exploring its impacts on local economic activity and livelihoods, individual and community wellbeing and security, households' survival strategies, and official and informal responses for social protection.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to an understanding of the changes taking place in the most vulnerable communities in the country; and to stimulate public debate and political dialogue that generate protection responses and address the problems caused by food price volatility and the ensuing crises that arise.

Main socioeconomic, geographical, and demographic features

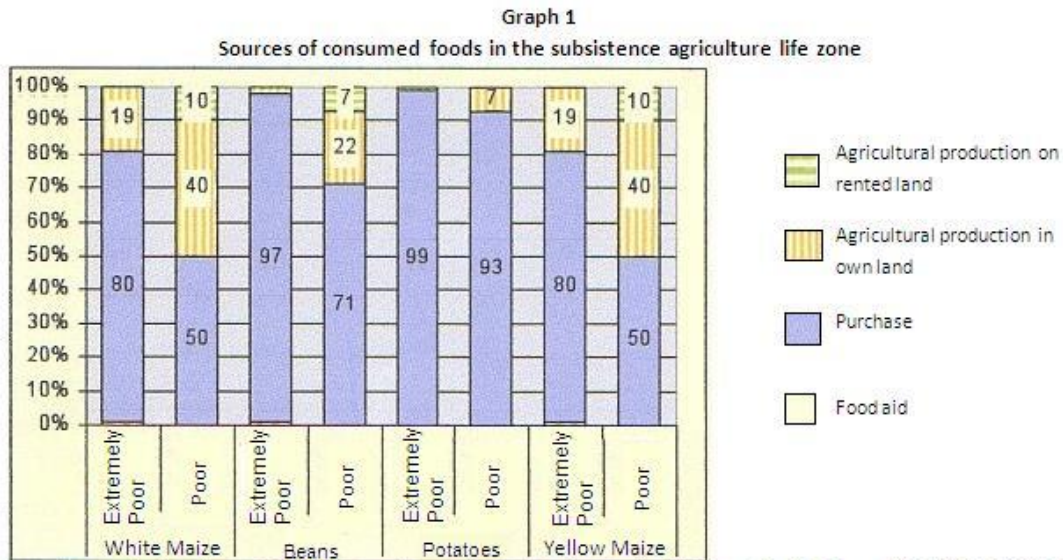
Municipal context

The municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango forms part of the department of Quiché in the western part of the country; it is located 145 km from Guatemala City and 18 km from the departmental capital, Santa Cruz del Quiché. The municipality is situated at an altitude of between 1500 and 2400 MASL; the terrain is mountainous, with varied and steep slopes that oscillate between 12 and 45%, with a predominantly temperate-cold climate (Tala Estrada, 2010).

According to population projections formulated by the National Statistics Institute, in 2012 the municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango has an estimated 148,885 inhabitants, of whom 71,219 are men and 77,666 women (INE, 2011). Of the total population, 98.52% are K'iché Mayas, while 1.48% is not indigenous (Comude Chichicastenango/Segeplan, 2010).

The municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango forms part of the tourist circuit that traverses the Guatemalan highlands, including Lake Atitlán. Chichicastenango, the name by which the municipality is most commonly known, is famous for its market that offers agricultural products, textiles, and crafts, and for its old Catholic church and the Mayan ceremonies that are performed right outside of it. The market operates primarily on Thursdays and Sundays; its vendors hail mainly from the department of Sololá and the communities around Santa Cruz del Quiché. Commerce is possibly the main economic activity performed in the urban center of Chichicastenango, alongside services and businesses related to tourism, primarily foreign tourism. Other income sources are unskilled non-agricultural jobs, especially in manufacture and textiles. The study *Guatemala: perfil de medios de vida (Guatemala: Livelihoods Profile)* (Sesan/FAO/MFEWS, 2009) identifies this area as a subsistence agriculture zone with four socio-economic groups (See Chart 2).

Since this municipality is located in a mountainous area suited to forestry, its agricultural yields are low (Sesan/FAO/MFEWS, 2009: 68). The main crop is corn, but due to small plot size, families are forced to buy grain in an attempt to supplement their annual consumption. Families purchase vegetables, fruit, coffee, basic grains, and food products processed in other regions of the country. Moreover, migration occurs away from this area, to do agricultural work in Chimaltenango and the south coast, domestic labor and construction work in Guatemala's capital, as well as migration to the United States. **Graph 1** demonstrates the negligible impact of subsistence agriculture, as poor and extremely poor families rely on purchased corn, beans, and potatoes for household consumption.



Source: Image taken from the study *Guatemala: perfil de medios de vida (Guatemala: Livelihoods Profile)* (Sesan/FAO/MFEWS, 2009: 76).

Graph 1 demonstrates the negative impact of subsistence agriculture, as poor and extremely poor families rely on purchased corn, beans, and potatoes for household consumption.

Drawing on estimates from the year 2002, the National Human Development Report (2011) concluded that the Human Development Index (HDI) for the Quiché department was 0.610, one of the lowest in the country, while Chichicastenango's municipal-level IDH was 0.485. According to the National Life Conditions Survey (Encovi, 2011), in the Quiché department 71.85% of the population suffers from poverty overall, of which 16.83% corresponds to extreme poverty. The high poverty levels are reflected in the low levels achieved in education and health care. The departments of Quiché and Chichicastenango in particular have a high rate of child labour. This survival mechanism is usually found more in the rural areas, but is also apparent when walking around the market in Chichicastenango.

In terms of health, the Height Census conducted in 2009 showed that in the Chichicastenango municipality, 72.4% of first-grade school-age students have growth retardation (45.3% at a moderate level and 27.1% at a severe level), placing them in a category of very high nutritional vulnerability (Mineduc/Sesan, 2009: 76).

Administratively, the municipality is divided into a town which is the municipal capital, and 86 hamlets (villages) organized into eight micro-regions; it is administrated by a municipal body headed by the Municipal Mayor who is supported by auxiliary mayors in each of the hamlets. The municipality also has an Indigenous Mayoralty that is charged with solving problems related to the indigenous population by applying common-law precepts; it also preserves traditions, customs, and communal land titles.

Urban context

The municipal capital, Villa de Santo Tomás Chichicastenango, has a population of 5,921 inhabitants, of whom 84% are indigenous (INE, 2003). It has electrical service in homes; public street lighting; household running water; drainage and sewage systems; trash collection services; private and public schools at the preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school levels; a public health center, a hospital, and several private medical clinics; public transportation; and a market. The Catholic church and several Evangelical churches are present. In addition, there are numerous stores, warehouses for different goods, hotels, restaurants, banking entities as well as governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Rural context

Cantón Chugüexá Primero is located at km 122 bordering the Inter-American highway. This village is home to 153 families, equivalent to 1,175 people, all of indigenous background (INE, 2002)¹⁴, K'iché speakers.

It is a rural settlement, comprised of a populated core where the houses are close to one another, which generated inter-personal relationships of trust and solidarity among neighbors. Generally the houses are inhabited by extended families, whose household heads, upon turning 60, bequeath to their children “*a cuerda*¹⁵ of land plus another plot for building a home.”

The social organization identified in the community involves different levels of leadership (primary leaders and community leaders who form the Community Development Council and the Auxiliary Mayoralty). People in the hamlet participate in local activities: men provide labor as part of their obligations to their community; when they turn 60 years old, they are freed of that responsibility and are considered “retired.” In the hamlet, the only social protection program in operation is known by the name Golden Button; however, it was impossible to identify the organization that implements it.

The hamlet has electricity, piped water in homes, a public elementary school, and a middle school; inhabitants receive medical care at the health center located two kilometers away, in Chupol, where there is also a market where families go to sell and buy. The primary access to mass media in the hamlet is by radio; few inhabitants have television sets.

For over 30 years, tailoring has been the primary productive activity done by men in the community¹⁶; besides their household work, women weave, wash other people's laundry, and prepare food and sell it on market days.

¹⁴The latest national census dates to 2002. Updated official data regarding the indigenous population do not exist for any geographic region of the country.

¹⁵ A cuerda is a land measurement equivalent to 40 x 40 varas. One vara is 0.91 meters.

¹⁶ Information obtained during fieldwork in July 2012.

6 LOCAL FINDINGS AND RESPONSES

What is going on that affects how well people have been living in the past year?

Price volatility has combined with poverty, lack of land, unemployment, large family size, and the natural disasters that have affected Guatemala's most vulnerable households.

How does price volatility affect people's wellbeing?

In order to achieve decent living conditions that produce wellbeing, families need to have access to resources, abilities, and social relations that enable them adequate levels of food, health, education, and housing that place them out of risk. Participants in focus groups and interviews, in both urban and rural settings, express concern about their families' wellbeing, especially because the economic situation in general is currently more difficult than that of five years ago when the urban center received a greater number of tourists¹⁷ and the resulting high demand for goods and services allowed for greater circulation of money. Urban and rural inhabitants of Chichicastenango are submerged in a "monetized" economy which makes them rely on money to meet their needs. They earn income through the sale of manufactured goods (textiles and men's jeans) in Chugüexá Primero Hamlet; and, in the urban area, the sale of any object, such as used farming tools; commerce; and salaried work.

Informers in the urban area commented that if there is no work, there is no money to buy anything, which means that those who own businesses can't sell anything, so they have no money either and cannot spend either.

"We all depend on our businesses. A person who sells something goes out to buy a few things; but when others don't sell anything, we don't sell anything, either." (Focus group, adult women, urban area)

As small-scale business owners note, all inhabitants lose money during an economic depression. Some household heads in the urban area assert that business owners take advantage of this situation and of families' needs by paying lower-than-usual prices for textiles and crafts, knowing that the sellers will accept these prices due to their need to earn income for their families.

In the rural area some informants specified that the foodstuffs whose prices rise most (and that never decrease) are processed foods such as soups, powdered milk, and other goods that come from the national capital.

Tourism has declined, and this has caused urban and rural families' incomes to decrease, since when there is trade, the population in both settings has the opportunity to obtain earnings. They feel that not having money is comparable to not having wellbeing. The aspects that they value the most are *a good diet, health, and the opportunity for education*, especially because they relate education with better jobs and, consequently, better salaries and higher family income.

"To have a stable job, to have a set income so that materially nothing necessary is missing in the home, that there be harmony, love, that we be united, education, health, food." (Mother, nuclear family, urban area).

"If I'd had an education, my children would have wellbeing." (Mother, family receiving institutional aid, rural area).

¹⁷ Although figures on the number of tourists who visit Chichicastenango could not be found, foreign exchange earnings from tourism have effectively been declining since 2008 (Bank of Guatemala, 2010).

However, a formal education does not currently guarantee a secure job, as youth who recently finished middle school are experiencing.

"...we can't even get jobs anymore. Youth now have diplomas, they have graduated from school, but they don't get jobs because institutions are laying off many youth. This has also contributed to the fact that business is declining." (Focus group, adult men, urban area).

Faced with this situation, youth take different paths depending on their family's economic level. Those with greater economic means continue their studies at the university and embark on entrepreneurial projects; for example, a youth who participated in the urban focus group is creating new clothing designs as a way to attract attention and increase sales. Although many youth, especially in the urban setting, want to go on to university, due to their families' economic situation, they must work to help their families and cover their personal expenses and school costs, since they must travel 18 kilometers to the city of Santa Cruz del Quiché where university studies are offered. Unfortunately, youth whose families do not have enough income, mainly youth from the rural area, cannot finish high school since to do so they need resources to travel to the municipal center. These youth are obligated to work with their families and learn the tailoring trade without any remuneration. Young women from both the urban and rural areas face greater obstacles, and even those with a high school education are obligated to work as domestic employees in people's homes. These jobs are poorly paid, lack worktime limits, and often do not allow weekends off.

In the Chichicastenango area, subsistence agriculture is a secondary endeavor. Urban families do not have lands, and families in Chugüexá Primero Hamlet have been employed in tailoring for several generations, such that the majority of household heads interviewed do not now know how to farm the land, as this household head informant expresses:

"I've been working only with a machine, only pants, shirts too but not so much. On the other hand, I can't do agricultural work because when I was growing up my father did not teach me how to work." (Family, nuclear family, 59 years old, rural area)

Moreover, rural families have small plots of land, between one and two cuerdas,¹⁸ and they grown only corn. The crop trio of corn, beans, and squash has therefore been lost; it not only provided variety to the diet but also helped conserve soil quality. Household heads of Chugüexá Primero state that they do not plant beans with the corn because when the winds blow, the beans *make the corn plants fall*. In addition, they do not plant squash because when their farmlands are far from their homes, the squash are stolen. The mono-cropping that is being developed exhausts the land; surely for that reason the land *"no longer yields well"* and needs increasing amounts of fertilizer which they cannot afford due to the lack of economic resources. As a result, small plots of land with low yields produce enough corn to last a few months (between three and five months), and families need money to buy supplies for the rest of the year.

"We buy, we've been buying corn for two or three months now. Our harvests are not enough now, since the amount we harvest sometimes goes down. But when the harvest comes out well, we don't worry; it turns out the same. But sometimes we don't have enough, you can see that now we are buying corn and there's still some time before the next harvest comes in. The harvest is about six, no, four months away, but we're already buying corn, that is, we're lacking a lot..." (Father, extended family, rural area).

In the rural area, planting corn, even if just a little bit, signifies security or, in other words, "getting ahead with the work." Despite the risk of losing it to natural disasters, planting corn means having a secure food supply for certain months. Therefore, corn is synonymous with food security; and, in cases of greatest poverty, it is the only food eaten, in different forms. When the corn harvest is gone, inhabitants must purchase this grain, preferring corn from the highlands to that of the coast or from Mexico; the latter costs less but bears a different flavor, and the grains

¹⁸ A cuerda's dimensions are 40 varas by 40 varas. One vara is equivalent to 0.91 metros.

are tougher: *“the tortillas come out stiff”* and *“it doesn’t abound.”* Corn’s low yields in other areas might be due not only to loss in weight, since it is old corn and is harder to process, but also because the highland variety of corn grows over a longer period of time, allowing it to develop a thicker cuticle that shields it from pests and weevils.¹⁹

The cost of growing corn does not translate into any savings compared to purchasing it, but it simply ensures a family food source. Some women who participated in the urban focus group noted that they grow corn in their yards to continue their ancestral tradition or to *“experience the joy”* of eating fresh sweet corn; yet they, as well as the female household heads interviewed, attest that they prefer to buy tortillas or industrial corn flour because it involves less expense.

“I feel like it ends up being more expensive for me to cook my own corn, for instance, because I have to buy the corn, use fuel to cook it, bring it to the corn mill, and then cook it again. On the other hand, if I buy ten quezales’ worth of tortillas, I save myself all of that work. But for mothers, my mother says it’s better to cook it and do all of that because it’s more plentiful that way.” (Focus group, adult women, urban area).

Every year the economic situation is more pressing due to money’s steady loss of purchasing power and *“the same amount of money buys less.”* Since there are no additional sources of employment, both urban and rural inhabitants have had to reduce their food consumption and adopt different strategies to compensate their diets.

“Money is hard to earn, but quick to be spent.” (Focus group, adult women, urban area).

“My expenses (budget) have not changed; on the contrary, they went down a bit because when I was not pregnant last year I worked carrying firewood, and now I only take in laundry, so the amount went down a bit, especially now that I will go into labor in a week and I can’t weave.” (Pregnant mother, rural area).

Even though this situation affects everyone in the family equally, in the rural area fathers and mothers both express particular concern about their children, who eat a small amount of food, and they reflect on the limited variety in their diet.

“It has affected all of us, but my children the most, because sometimes I cook greens and they eat tamales with salt. My children are underweight. I realize that from my older son who works elsewhere: he is fine, but the little ones do not have enough food.” (Pregnant mother, rural area).

Children contribute income to the home, helping their fathers in the tailoring trade and in agricultural endeavors in the rural area; and in the urban area, taking care of other children or selling wares on the street, which forces many of them to leave school. However, in all the families interviewed, children’s education is perceived as a priority and a factor that generates wellbeing.

“Children are affected by food prices, because they don’t perform well in school when they are not well-fed. They can’t remember what they learned in class, or they are tired, they are restless, or they are anxious for snacktime; when they see the snacks they get really restless.” (Teacher, rural area).

Food price fluctuation affects to a greater extent the wellbeing of households living in poverty and extreme poverty, with the most vulnerable being those with many young children (as in the rural area), those with single mothers, and those with elderly living alone. This observation is backed up by an analysis of daily food expenses reported by urban and rural household heads, which can be cataloged into three ranges:

- Under Q5.00: seven out of ten rural households interviewed in the rural area; and in the urban area, the households with elderly living alone and households with infirm members.

¹⁹ Verbal communication, Agronomy Engineer Oscar Rojas, October 2012.

- Between Q5.01 and Q10.00: there are few families in this range: single mothers and extended families in the urban area; and, conversely, in the rural area, families with older children who contribute to the household economy.
- From Q10.00 to Q15.00: found in this range are the majority of urban households whose heads of household finished middle school and have salaried jobs; in contrast, only one rural family falls in this range, thanks to remittances that the household head sends from the United States where he has been working for several years.

By contrasting these figures with the cost of the Basic Food Basket,²⁰ reported by the National Statistics Institute in September 2012 at Q16.25 per day per person, it can be concluded that none of the households participating in this study can afford the Basic Food Basket, with all of the rural households plus four of the ten urban households (40%) being at greatest risk. Unfortunately, the cost of the Basic Food Basket has increased Q19.20 per month over the last month (between August and September 2012) and Q201.60 per year over the last year (September 2011-September 2012). Families' dwindling purchasing power is also evident in the finding that ten years ago the Sixth Housing Census (INE, 2003) recorded that in Chugüexá Primero Hamlet all the housing structures were formal, reflecting its residents' economic wellbeing.

How well are people coping with change in everyday life?

What happens to everyday life when prices are high or volatile?

The term "resilience" is used in the field of social psychology to refer to the ability to confront and overcome adversity. It is applied particularly to populations that have suffered and endured acts of physical aggression, whether due to armed conflict, natural disaster, or long-standing racial discrimination²¹ and exclusion from social and economic opportunities, as in the case of the population in this study. Regardless of the cause, it supposes a situation of suffering and an effort to learn from the suffering and to overcome it so that similar situations do not befall future generations.

From this viewpoint, and in line with informers' contributions, the communities investigated have had an identifiable, long-standing period of suffering, and it is impossible to conclude that they have overcome it. Price volatility is another factor that adds to the situation of exclusion, poverty, and hunger suffered by these populations, which has been aggravated by the impact of natural disasters that because of climate change are ever more frequent.

The National Human Development Report website admonishes that it is important to pay attention to economic resilience²² because overcoming economic losses helps replace, maintain, or continue advancements in human development.

The population of the Quiché department, where the Santo Tomás Chichicastenango municipality is located, has demonstrated resilience over the course of several decades through enduring and overcoming the violence suffered during the internal armed conflict. However, none of the people interviewed in the urban area of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango mentioned the conflict, even though on a market day in 1982, approximately 150 people from different villages were captured and later disappeared (Historical Clarification Commission, Guatemala, 1999).

²⁰ Q2,585.00 per month per family (of 5.3 members), that is, Q86.17 per day, equivalent to Q16.25 per day per person (US\$1.68 at an exchange rate of Q8 to US\$1). For the month of September 2012, the Basket of Goods and Services ("*Canasta Básica Vital*"), which includes the cost of basic services in addition to foods, is valued at Q4,717.34 per month per family (of 5.3 members), that is, Q157.24 per day, equivalent to Q20.96 per day per person (US\$2.62 at an exchange rate of Q8 x \$1).

²¹ Paraphrase of consultation with Ricardo Zepeda.

²² <http://desarrollohumano.org.gt/content/la-resiliencia-y-el-desarrollo-humano>.

Some people in Chugüexá Primero mentioned the violence that they suffered during this period; they spoke of it timidly, since fear still exists and these topics are not discussed with strangers such as the investigators of this study. The Military Detachment located two kilometers away in Chupol Hamlet was in charge of protecting the zone. Apparently, the army arrived in Chugüexá Primero, families had to flee their homes, and their foot-pedal sewing machines were destroyed. A former social leader still lives there; he returned after living in exile for several years.

After the peace accords were signed (December 29, 2012), the families of Chugüexá Primero returned to their community and went back to tailoring and manufacturing pants, advancing economically to the extent of obtaining industrial sewing machines for production. The tailoring business experienced an upswing once again. A group of brothers joined up and began to work as wholesalers, employing other men in the village; however, their endeavor flopped, due to alcoholism. Nowadays each one of those brothers works on his own; and although each family has three or four industrial sewing machines, the low demand for their products does not allow them to permanently employ several workers. *“Used clothing stores have screwed us over,”* is the expression used by these brothers' father, alluding to the fact that people prefer to buy used clothing at a cost of Q5 to Q10 (US\$0.62 to 1.25) per item instead of a new pair of pants that they sell for Q50.00 or Q60.00 (US\$6.25 or 7.50).

Some women said that they belong to the National Widows' Coordination in Guatemala -Conavagua- through which they have received tin roof materials and trainings.

The economic situation caused by a lack of work drives rural and urban families to use almost all of their income to purchase food. The greater the poverty, the greater the portion of diet that is corn. Informants estimate their corn consumption at a pound per day per person. Corn is not only a food with cultural roots but also a food that *“fills”*: that is, it satisfies, it stretches out, it is easy to grow and store, and furthermore, it is economical. The price of white corn fluctuates over the year, from Q1.40 to Q2.50 per pound. Some rural families have trees that they use for collecting wood, while others must buy firewood. Despite their efforts, rural families face a lack of dietary availability and variety, which places them at high risk of food and nutrition insecurity (SESAN, 2009). Faced with this adversity, both urban and rural inhabitants put a high stake on education and exert themselves greatly to send their children to school in order to guarantee them an improved level of wellbeing.

“Education for our children is wellbeing for us, because if they don't go to school, they will be the same as us, and I don't know how to sign a piece of paper. That's why education is a service for kids. And that's why I am struggling to send the kids to school.”
(Father, family receiving institutional aid, rural area).

“I'm thinking about my kids and I plan to send them to school until they graduate as professionals because I don't want them to suffer as I am suffering. Maybe we're not dying of hunger, but we do not have enough of what we should have in our home. This is my dream for my children, that we help them get ahead so that they can be prosperous.”
(Mother, family with a deported member, urban area).

Survival strategies for confronting price volatility

Urban and rural families are living in poverty because they are unable to afford the Basic Food Basket valued at Q16.25 per day per person. Unfortunately, most rural families barely have Q5.00 per day per person to cover their food needs. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that rural families have additional resources, thanks to their crops and other resources that they acquire from their lands.

In this fragile survival system, corn has become the primary (and sometimes only) food for families in the rural area. In urban areas, the poorest families buy corn, while those with the resources to do so purchase industrial corn flour or ready-made tortillas. The municipality is known for producing apples, peaches, and plums. In Chugüexá Primero the main crop is corn, and secondarily black beans, fava beans, potatoes, and cauliflower. Rural families procure

foods by going to the Sunday market in the neighboring community of Chupol, while urban families buy their vegetables in the markets of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango. The vegetables that these families purchase come from the Sololá department. None of the urban families have lands devoted to agriculture.

Families in Chugüexá Primero own one or two cuerdas²³ of land, and some of them rent lands for crops (two or three cuerdas) in Zaragoza, Chimaltenango where annual rent costs Q350 (US\$ 43.75) per cuerda. Since precolumbian times, the crops corn + beans + squash were cultivated in association. Currently the practice has turned into monocropping. Due to the small plot size and to land yields, crop harvests are not enough to cover families' food needs for the whole year. In the highlands, crops are harvested only once a year, and in August many families "begin to buy corn." Since they do not own lands, urban families in special situations (families with infirm members, single mothers, or elderly) are vulnerable, possibly more so than rural families.

"Only corn is planted...and when it comes to fruition, it yields 100 pounds per cuerda. It is just for household consumption. Sometimes, when it abounds, it yields ten 100-pound sacks per cuerda. Last year it did not come out well because the wind affected it, and we harvested ten 100-pound sacks over the two cuerdas. Sometimes I sell a bit of it, and sometimes there isn't enough, it depends. If there is no wind, well, we manage to get a bit more. About three years ago we had to buy corn because the wind knocked the plants down; we barely got two bags for each cuerda." (Father, family receiving institutional aid, rural area).

"Piloy²⁴ beans now cost Q8 per pound; that's because they no longer abound, who knows, because when we were kids beans abounded, sometimes they yielded two or three 100-pound sacks per cuerda. That's why it's so expensive now." (Man, nuclear family, rural area).

According to Zepeda and Sandoval (2006:26): "Bean production has tended to decrease since 1990 when it reached a ceiling close to 120,000 tons; due to Hurricane Mitch, it fell to 72,000 tons and has not exceeded 100,000 tons since." "...The foods that are most important to national consumption have been dwindling over the last fifteen years; such is the case of corn, beans, wheat, and rice." This study notes that the decline observed in the production of the principal foodstuffs in the Guatemalan diet "entails a latent threat to the population's food security." The authors of the study affirm: "To the extent that agricultural production is being channelled towards export crops, the traditional foods of the national diet decrease in availability" in a process that they call "Food Dependency."

The practice of growing only corn possibly plays a role in soil exhaustion and decreased yields, which in turn feeds into corn's low availability and increased cost. Low harvest yields may be due, as well, to poor crop management, cultivation in areas suited to forestry, and lack of soil conservation practices, as well as natural disasters.

Corn is harvested once yearly, and in the rural area studied, it is insufficient and food runs out between June and October. During this time, the price of corn goes up, and families, especially in rural areas, resort to purchasing corn from the coast (where it is harvested twice a year) or Mexican corn²⁵ which is less costly but is not to people's taste. This strategy is undertaken until the following corn harvest comes in, if it is not affected by natural disasters: drought, copious rain, hail, or strong winds. Although rain presents a possible danger to corn crops, it also provides other foods, such as greens that emerge among the corn fields, which are freely accessible and free of charge for rural families and are available at low cost to urban families.

²³ One cuerda of land is 0.97122191 acre..

²⁴ Piloy is a common variety of bean, whose primary distinguishing characteristic is that it is larger than the more regularly grown bean.

²⁵ According to those interviewed, Mexican corn was introduced in the area as a response to corn crop losses caused by Tropical Storm Agatha in June 2010.

Rural families utilize their lands to acquire other foods, such as pear squash, radishes, cauliflower, and cilantro grown in family gardens. Having these resources within reach alleviates these families somewhat; in the urban setting, apple and peach production and wholesale trade in the market of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango inject economic resources that move the local economy.

Faced with a difficult economic situation, families have adopted various strategies for food consumption. Rural families “*eat simply*,” that is, they have reduced the variety of foods that they eat to a diet based on four products: corn, tomato, onion, and sugar (one pound per week per family). Corn is prepared in different ways, but mainly as tamales and corn porridge, the latter sweetened with sugar. Tamales are eaten with salt or greens. Tomatoes and onions are important because they are used to make sauce and to give flavor to tamales, tortillas, or other foods that they obtain in their yards, like pear squash or radishes. They have substituted meat with eggs. Two or three families can very occasionally purchase coffee, beans, Incaparina²⁶ or oatmeal. Some families only eat two meals a day, and a constant worry is that as children grow they need more food.

“When we have no work, I have to count each and every little tamal to make sure there's enough for my children and myself because we have no other food.” (Pregnant woman, rural area).

“When I serve the food, I just give out a spoonful.” (Woman, nuclear family, urban area).

“I prepare two eggs with corn dough and I split it into six portions. I tell my children that when they grow up they will earn money and they will eat whatever they want.” (Woman, nuclear family, rural area).

Urban families, though poor, are slightly better off economically than rural families, which allows them to consume corn, beans (one or two pounds per family each week), rice, pasta, oatmeal, and Incaparina; they occasionally eat meat (one or two pounds each month), and some families with small children make the effort to give them a glass of milk in the mornings.

“What we do is eat meals twice a day, or at breakfast we only drink oatmeal porridge with bread and then eat a meal at lunchtime and then supper; I talk with my children and tell them that we do this so that they can get ahead because we don't have money and we can't let them not go to school.” (Woman, nuclear family, urban area)

The foods that both urban and rural families procure are seasonal foods or else lower-quality or smaller portions of foods that in a way involve a lower cost, meaning that both the quality and quantity are diminished. Their income does not let them stock up on food to have reserves; rather, in most cases, they buy and live “day to day.” An interesting fact gleaned from this study is that heads of household, both male and female, are knowledgeable about food prices.

Food security is highly fragile, even among urban families with household heads who have finished high school. Given the lack of savings capacity, contingencies - such as illness, lack of work, or the need to provide care to an elderly member - result in crisis, since expenses increase; at the same time, when an ill person is incapacitated, family income decreases.

People's entire earnings are used to buy food and provide children's education, such that rural families do not have money to buy items like clothing and shoes; urban families buy lower-quality items.

Savings are nonexistent, which means that families are not protected against contingencies, and access to other possessions, like housing or additional lands, is limited. In this respect, those most adversely affected are the rural families that are not formally employed and therefore cannot access the social security system of social services but rather depend completely on public services for treatment in the case of illness. However, many residents prefer not to go

²⁶ A type of flour with a high biological value comparable to vegetable protein, developed in the 1950s by the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (Incap) to combat severe malnutrition and the Kwashiorkor Syndrome.

to public health institutes because they are not given medicine but rather are handed prescriptions for medicines that they cannot obtain due to lack of money.

"My nine-year-old daughter has vision problems, but she does not receive any special care because we do not have money, but she does not complain of pain." (Woman, nuclear family, rural area).

Families have also undertaken diverse strategies to earn more income. Men interviewed in the rural area state that they have no steady jobs, that they work two or three days a week in tailoring, and that they have engaged in learning how to work and cultivate the land. Those who own the tailoring businesses seek distant markets to sell the pants made in the community. Meanwhile, in the urban area, even though men have steady jobs, salaries have not kept up with the increase in food prices, so they try to secure second jobs, working weekends or nights. *"Money doesn't last anymore"* and *"Money is hard to earn, but quick to be spent"* are common statements. Both urban and rural women carry out diverse occupations that grant them some funds to procure foods at the cost-of-living level.

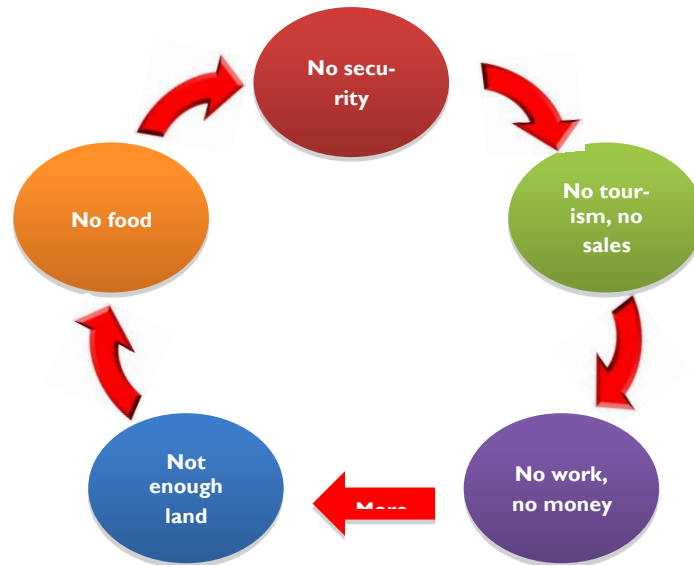
Traditionally, women have engaged in the creation of artisan textiles; but because it takes up to two months to make a *huipil* (indigenous blouse) and families need money immediately, women have been driven to work outside the home. Rural women take in laundry or sell food on Sundays in the neighboring community of Chupol; in addition, they grow small plots of vegetables and raise livestock. These women go out to work while their mothers or mothers-in-law care for their children, a source of support that urban women apparently do not have. Women in the urban area have stopped weaving, and they are informally and occasionally employed in commerce; some of them have market stalls where they sell twice a week. Income from women's work goes directly to cover food expenses. The lack of a stable monetary income does not allow them to plan food schedules ahead of time, since many women buy the foods they can afford on a daily basis according to what they earn working.

"What we earn is a support for what our husband brings in. Weaving prices have gone down now, not like two years ago when we were paid Q350; this year it's only Q250. The value of our work has gone down, but things have gone up in price." (Focus group, adult women, rural area).

"In my case, I did not graduate. I went to school for several years but couldn't continue, since there are five of us sisters and my father is a farmer. I couldn't go on in my studies and I got married. My husband is a teacher, but he was earning very little and what he earned wasn't enough. So what I did is that I cut down on things, for example, sugar. We used to use refined sugar and it was very expensive, and it didn't last, so what I did was to buy unrefined sugar so that it would be enough. It still wasn't enough. He would be paid, and we'd already owe money. It wasn't enough even when I cut back. I looked for ways to stretch the money, but even so, it wasn't enough. So what I did was to open a business, I went to the market because I couldn't do anything else. And not only that, we also have parents. I wanted to give something to them, especially my mother, but I didn't have any extra; what my husband gave me wasn't even enough for us. What I did was, I went to the market and started selling little things there, and I'd get something for my children to eat. First I had to cook everything at home, but later on I started buying little things at the market to give to them. This was several years ago, but there are surely many women just like that now." (Focus group, adult women, urban area).

Graph 3

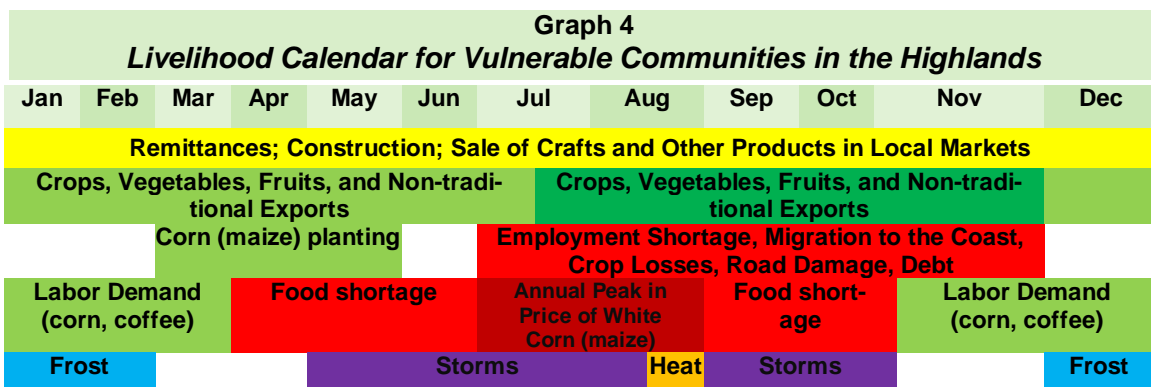
Cycle of hunger in the municipality of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango



The practice of growing only corn probably plays a role in soil exhaustion and decreased yields, which in turn feeds into corn's low availability and increased cost. Another factor affecting families' budgets is the daily wage for agricultural work (Q40) that some families must pay because men have been employed in tailoring for over 30 years and do not know how to perform agricultural tasks, so they hire others.

"I've only been working on the sewing machine; we've been dedicated to just making pants. I can't do farmwork because when I grew up my father did not teach me; I was not taught how to use an ax or a hoe." (Father, 59 years old, nuclear family, rural area).

In the highlands, the region where both case-study sites are located, corn is harvested once a year; because the harvest is not enough to cover food needs, families are obliged to buy corn during part of the year. This time of food crisis coincides with the period when the prices increase for vegetables affected by storms, drought, or frost; sometimes it also coincides with the slow season for tourism that causes a reduction in work and income. In these circumstances, families have been forced to purchase corn from the coast or Mexico that is usually less expensive but of lower quality since *"the tortillas come out stiff."*

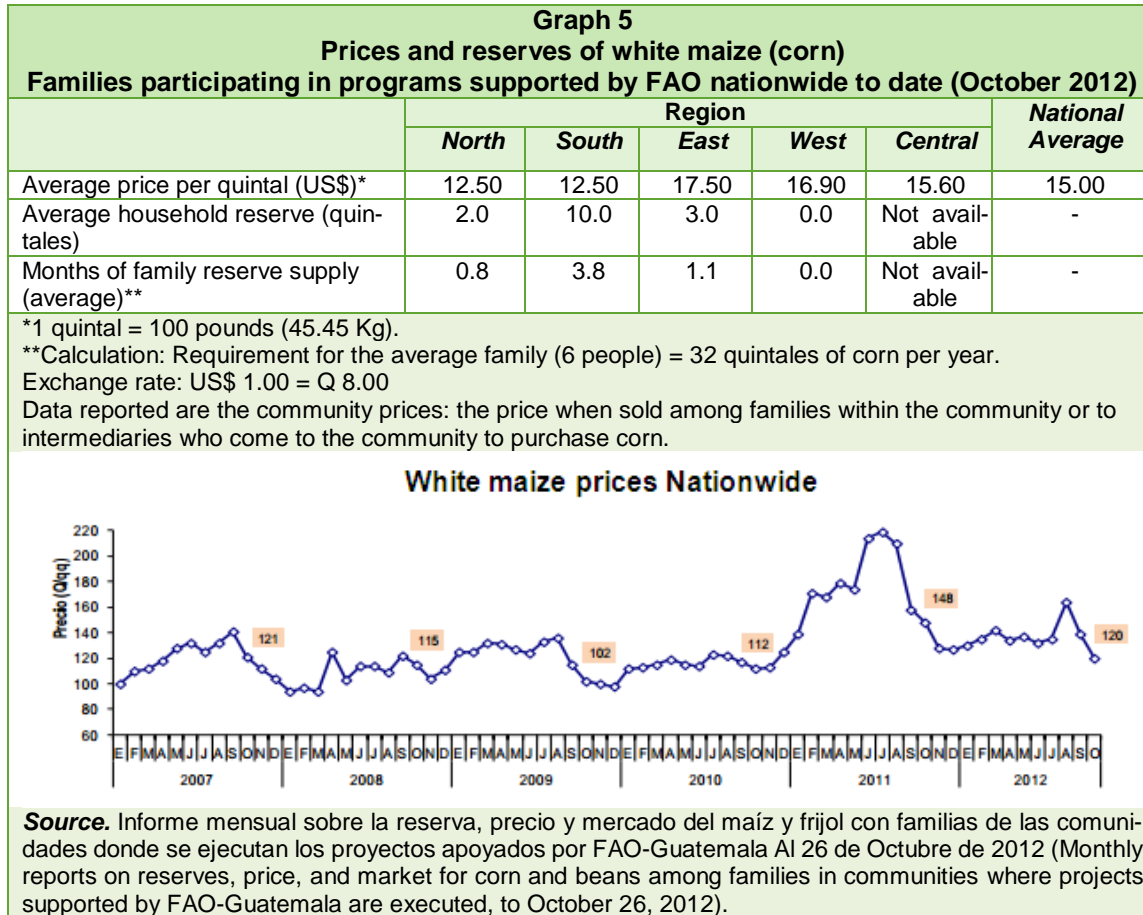


Source: Andrea Markos Lo Primero, Primero. Cambio Climático y Tendencias de los Mercados: Desafíos y Oportunidades para la Agricultura Campesina en el Altiplano Occidental Guatemalteco. Oxfam 2012 (First Comes First. Climate Change and Market Trends: Challenges and Opportunities for Small-Scale Agriculture in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.)

As a result of the expenses and risks associated with corn cultivation, it is equally or more costly to grow corn compared to purchasing it; for that reason, some urban families prefer to buy tortillas instead of making them, and in extreme cases, to buy corn flour.

“I feel like it ends up being more expensive for me to cook my own corn, for instance, because I have to buy the corn, use fuel to cook it, bring it to the corn mill, and then cook it again. On the other hand, if I buy ten quetzales' (US\$ 1.25) worth of tortillas, I save myself all of that work.” (Focus group, adult women, urban area).

In spite of rural families' efforts to ensure their food supply, low yields prevent them from having sufficient reserves to last the year. This is confirmed in a monitoring done by the FAO; as can be observed in graph 5, grain reserves exist during harvest periods. In the Western Region, price volatility bears the same tendency, the difference being that prices are higher than in other regions and exceed the national average (Q 135.00 per 100 pounds as of October 26).



However, corn continues to be grown, even at a small scale on urban households' yards, for different reasons: cultural (to continue ancestral traditions), economic (to consume an inexpensive food that satisfies, that is, it is more filling than other foods), and as a way to ensure food.

What sources of support are working best to help cope with change?

How well do social protection systems (formal and informal) work when food prices are volatile?

Different types of social protection exist: the informal network comprised of family and community; and the formal network comprised of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The special care and attention granted to children in all families are carried out as part of a network of interchange that, in the rural setting, forms part of the cycle of life. In the two areas studied, it was found that parents are interested in their children attending school and having better job opportunities in order to gain a better standard of living, not only for the children but

also for the parents themselves, because in this system of reciprocity, parents provide education and land to their children with the expectation that their children will care for them when they are elderly. This transpires in the rural area, where several cases were found in which elderly members are cared for by all of their children equally; parents and grandparents over 60 years old rotate from house to house, staying with each of their children for 15 days at a time. This strategy in response to the high cost of living serves to spread the additional cost of food among the houses.

In the same way, when an elderly person takes ill, the decisions and the expenses for medicines are distributed among all of his or her children. However, this network for family protection does not exist in the urban setting; when elderly members were living with families, they were always under the care of one of their children. The Indigenous Mayorality also reported that it has received complaints for cases of elderly neglect.

At the community level, be it urban or rural, barter between neighbors no longer exists, nor does the care for widows or solitary women. Community solidarity has deteriorated.

“There's no barter anymore. There used to be: when someone didn't have something, they'd go to their neighbors. Let's say a chicken, I give a little chick, we trade. They need an egg, or fresh corn, it's exchanged. Not it's all done with money.” (Father, nuclear family, rural area).

In Chugüexá Primero, all men starting at age 18 have the obligation to contribute by performing jobs that the community assigns to them, such as path repair, or else to pay the equivalent labor cost. The community therefore has a record of all men, which is also useful in taking someone to task if he abandons his wife or impregnate a young woman. In such cases, local authorities support the petitions that affected women (or their parents) present to the Indigenous Mayorality.

The community does not take care of the wives or children of alcoholic men (a complaint made by wives in the poorest families in the in-depth interviews)²⁷, but it does help families whose member has taken ill, endured an accident, died, or is victim of a natural disaster. In these cases, both in urban and rural settings, families not only receive help from their neighbors but also from the Catholic or Evangelical church. In the words of one person interviewed in the urban area, community solidarity has been lost, and for that reason the common good is no longer pursued; no longer is work done for community development but rather for individual wellbeing.

“No one provides support: no institution, nor the church, nor the government. No one gives any type of aid. Well, when they give aid, they give it to the people who don't need it, and sometimes those who truly need it aren't given any.” (Mother, former beneficiary family of institutional aid, urban area).

As those interviewed explain, some residents of the Santo Tomás Chichicastenango municipality receive aid from government institutions, like the “My Family Progresses” or “Solidarity Bag” programs,²⁸ and from various non-governmental entities, including the Catholic and Evangelical churches, that provide sponsorships or scholarships to children.

Handouts of food or money are welcome in the rural area. In Chugüexá Primero, beneficiaries of the “My Family Progresses” or “Solidarity Bag” programs (no beneficiaries of such programs were found in the urban site) are grateful for the aid received in the form of Incaparina and oatmeal because it helps lighten their budget. The money received through conditional cash transfers was used mainly to purchase shoes for children, which otherwise they could not afford. However, informants in both areas bemoaned the fact that aid distribution becomes politicized and does not reach the neediest people. In the rural area, they cited the example of fertilizer

²⁷ Alcoholism among heads of household was mentioned as the main reason to explain poverty and the need for women to leave the home to seek income to feed her children by doing other people's laundry or selling food in the market.

²⁸ During Álvaro Colom's government administration (2008-2012 term), social protection programs were implemented. The “My Family Progresses” program operated through conditional cash transfers targeted at women in rural areas; and the “Solidarity Bag” program operated through handouts of foods from the Basic Food Basket and was targeted at households in poor neighborhoods of the metropolitan area and in some cases included beneficiaries in rural areas.

donations this year; one of the interviewed women knows a woman who is taking care of her elderly mother on her own and who has a plot of land but was not given fertilizer. They also complain that the fertilizer did not arrive in time this year.

Some informants emphasized that times have changed and that “*people aren't as good as they used to be.*” As an example with regards to the fertilizer handouts, they mentioned the case of a particular family:

"There is a family (mother and daughter) that is so poor, so poor, and [the daughter] never married and the poor woman works. How much does she make in a week? About Q90 if she works all week long, and otherwise, she makes Q75. And her elderly mother is 90 years old, and she has to feed her, care for her, and all of that. And some people said, 'they're going to give out fertilizers to the hamlet,' but some quick people got hold of it, and the family that I mention got nothing. They have a little piece of land, three or four cuerdas. But what can she do on her land without any help? And people within the hamlet itself discriminate. They said that because they don't have children, they don't have a right to the aid. Only those who have children are given aid. Ah, but the clever ones, the village leaders, took advantage of it; their children, grandchildren, sons-in-laws and so on got fertilizer. And this poor family is never given anything. For example, this year one sector got hold of the fertilizer and the poor woman that I'm talking about got nothing. She went to request some and they said, 'Sure, we'll call you when it's delivered.' But it was delivered and the two of them ended up with nothing." (Focus group, adult women, urban area).

Informants in the rural area have not heard about any social programs for this year in their community. However, they know that in previous years there have been such programs. Upon being asked what they think about social programs' coverage and implementation, they replied:

"Sadly, since there is always 'shifty mischief,' there are families that take advantage of this situation, because I know several families that have several children who are already grown up and no longer in school."

In terms of the type of aid that people like the most, they responded:

"I think that aid should reach the most needy people. Sometimes, well, in the past, when the government gave out money, the people who could do so would come. Then, sometimes I thought that someone should come personally to seek out the people and help them, because help is needed."

"It would be good to have greater control. And also we as inhabitants of this country demand development, we demand change, but we also have to be part of this change, and make sure children are being sent to school. And if they're not, then it's a case of corruption because they're not attending school, but there's no one monitoring that. And there are other cases and there are some churches that do help people living in extreme poverty, but I don't know how much aid they give." (Focus group, adult women, urban area).

7 SPECIAL TOPIC: FUTURE FARMERS

What is the future for young people in these communities?

Young people aspire to graduate from high school or university, and they are not interested in agriculture, an endeavor that is made difficult by land scarcity, undeveloped knowledge about farmwork, and the high risks to crops from climatic conditions. Despite their limited interest in agriculture, youth emphasize that their main food is corn, without envisioning who will grow it. Even so, in the current context a formal education does not furnish job opportunity, which is why young women with high school degrees work as domestic laborers to provide income to their families.

Youth are mainly interested in pursuing higher levels of schooling in order to achieve improved working conditions. Youth who study while living in the rural area must travel to the municipal center where high schools operate. This means that they must spend money not only on school materials but also on transportation and, in some cases, food. Nevertheless, data gathered from families reveals that children and youth in rural areas, and especially girls and young women, are attaining higher levels of schooling than that of their parents.²⁹ The basis of these expectations is that rural families with higher levels of wellbeing are those with single adult children whose jobs provide income to the family budget. According to youth – female and male, urban and rural – when they obtain a job, they give half of their earnings to their mothers towards household expenses, and they use the other half to pay for their continued schooling or to cover personal expenses.

"What we have to do is study and graduate to have better opportunities. It is difficult to get a job without a degree. We young people in this community believe that it is hard to work in the fields; that's why it's necessary to study in order to provide for our families." (Focus group, young women, rural area).

"To keep studying. Simply growing corn isn't enough to support a family." (Focus group, young men, rural area).

Many youth, both male and female in urban and rural areas, dream about having a professional career. In the rural site, two families were found whose children attend university; in one of these cases, the desire to provide for his children's education motivated the father to migrate.

"The fact that my husband is far away helped us send my children to school. This is because we spend a lot of money on them. If he hadn't gone, we might not have been able to support them. We have not built a nice house, nor do we eat meat every day as other women do whose husbands are over there, because we want our children to move ahead." (Woman with a migrant husband, rural area).

Currently, the job situation for youth is difficult. Some feel that they have to work harder, and they take advantage of sporadic orders for artisan textiles or pants production; this does not mean, however, that their income is boosted considerably and in fact it is still not enough. Faced with this situation, youth have to "go out and seek work." They no longer go to Guatemala's southern coast to pick sugar cane but rather they move to urban centers like Quetzaltenango or the national capital to seek formal work (although sometimes they are only able to

²⁹ The majority of adult women in the rural area who participated in this study did not go to school at all, while the young women are currently attending middle school; among men, on average, adults have a third-grade education and youth have a ninth-grade education.

procure informal employment) or in informal sales; while young women, as previously mentioned, are employed in domestic work even if they have finished high school. Another option that exists is migration outside of the country, but youth assess the risk, considering that there are not many job opportunities for illegal immigrants in the United States and the payment for the “coyote”³⁰ is high.

“Some leave due to lack of money, but they are forced to change their indigenous clothing and their language. This happens a lot with girls: they go to a house, to a place and they are forced to use Western dress. They take away their traditional clothes because they are Indians, because they are indigenous, because they are Mayas. These are issues that come up that make one say that instead of seeking wellbeing, everything gets distorted.” (Focus group, young men, urban area).

In both the urban and rural areas, one option that is considered is to open a business or to secure a steady job in the government. Youth who were interviewed, both men and women, believe that the latter is better than a liberal, professional job due to the job stability and benefits it provides:

“I think it's good, well-paid, only for university graduates, but in a field where there aren't many professionals. Because here doctors are well-paid, but they are only on a contract basis and have to report their tax receipts every month. For lawyers and notaries, there is not much demand. So teachers are well-paid, I feel, not so well, but more or less because they get paid a salary every month and they're in the budget, but when they're hired on a contract basis, then it's not so good.” (Focus group, young women, urban area).

Both male and female youth are aware of food price increases and the difficulties that their families face.

“It's hard to afford basic goods because we're in the midst of a very intense social crisis. Chichicastenango is a very poor town in economic terms: much is consumed and little is produced.” (Focus group, young men, urban area).

“Sometimes we run out of food when the weekend comes because prices go up, so we eat tortillas with salt.” (Focus group, young men, rural area).

Young women notice that women are the ones who contribute the most to the household, since they work doubly, both as homemakers and as poorly paid workers.

“As for women's contributions to the community, I'd dare to say that 60% of the work is done by women, because you can go on a Saturday or a Sunday, a Wednesday or a Thursday and see women putting up poles in cafeterias. These types of jobs are paid, but at a minimal amount. Women who work making tortillas or working at a cafeteria I'd say earn about Q15 (US\$ 1.875) per day, and it is exploitative work, from six in the morning until six in the evening, on top of the work that they do in their own homes.” (Focus group, young women, urban area).

Despite the difficulties, parents and children alike place their hopes on formal schooling and aspire to an educational degree as a means to obtain work and secure their future.

“What we have to do is study and graduate to have better opportunities. It is difficult to get a job without a degree. We young people in this community believe that it is hard to work in the fields; that's why it's necessary to study in order to provide for our families.” (Focus group, young women, rural area).

How does farming feature in the livelihoods and aspirations of young people?

³⁰ Translator's note: The term “coyote” refers to a guide who helps undocumented immigrants cross the border clandestinely.

Findings from explorations with youth about agriculture

Santo Tomás Chichicastenango is a municipality characterized as quite commercial with concentrations of products, primarily manufactured textiles and diverse selection of crafts; as a result, many of its inhabitants tend towards commerce. At the same time, it is clear from the commercial activity in the municipal markets that the town is a reference point for the sale of agricultural products: corn, beans, vegetables, and seasonal fruits. People who have their own farm-lands combine commercial endeavors with agricultural pursuits. Agricultural production is generally family-based for household consumption.

Members of the upcoming generation do not anticipate performing agricultural work. Parents in both urban and rural areas pay special attention to their children's formal education, considering it is a means to obtain work and therein improve their living conditions.

Agriculture is not considered a viable livelihood because of land scarcity, low crop yields, climatic risks, and low agricultural salaries; especially for men, both urban and rural, agriculture has not been the sole income-generating occupation for several generations. Nevertheless, youth express interest in vegetable gardening as a way to earn more money. Still, they prefer to have a stable job with a fixed salary and thus avoid working long hours in the sun.

"Our youth are trapped, because truly the life that our farmworker parents gave us, maybe we don't want it anymore because of the trap that we're in, the trauma. I don't want to follow my father's footsteps because my father didn't do anything... I am going to seek a different way, because I feel that by studying something else maybe I can move forward. A child's dream is to go on in school, to be a doctor, to be an engineer, but you know, the disadvantage is that he doesn't get a job. When he's a youth, he thinks about migrating to the north... Now that he went to school, he doesn't want to work in the fields and do what his parents did in the past." (Focus group, adult men, urban area).

From the parents' perspective, the lack of land contributes in pushing youth away from agriculture:

"The situation is very unsure, very difficult, because here in our setting now it's hard to get farmers, it is hard to get people who work and cultivate. Also, there's nowhere left to farm. So these are two very strong factors. Now, they are 15, 18 years old; in ten years they'll be parents but with the little plot of land that we still have, and in a few years our children, our grandchildren will be on the way, really, so they will take up little plot. There won't be any land left. It will be harder."

8 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Public policy options for food security

In 1996, the National Commission on Food and Nutrition Security (CONASAN) developed the proposal for a National Policy for Food and Nutrition Security and the Food and Nutrition Action Plan 1996-2000, in addition to the institutional framework for their implementation. The Policy proposal was approved by the government in 1997, as was the National System for Food Security (SINASAN); in 2000, the National Policy for Food and Nutrition Security was formulated under the direction of the Presidential Social Cabinet and in 2001 it was approved in a second reading.

Actions began in 2001 under the umbrella of the Public Policy for Food Security with the direction of the Secretariat on Food and Nutrition Security –SESAN– and the General Planning and Programming Secretariat –SEGEPLAN–, with the latter in charge of formulating and monitoring public policies implemented by the State. This policy is based on the pillars of food availability, the population's access to food, food consumption, biological utilization of food, and the prevention and treatment of malnutrition.

Thus, in various government programs since 2002 actions have been implemented geared at protecting vulnerable populations from the main factors that generate food insecurity, such as price increases (in both hydro-carbons and basic goods), family food reserves, unemployment, access to land, and access to inputs for production, among others.

Social protection programs that have been implemented in the past two decades have focused on responding to perceived emergencies and have not addressed structural problems that generate poverty. These programs, implemented by different government administrations, have basically stayed the same, changing in name only.

The current administration has presented, in the framework of what it calls the “Pact Against Hunger,” an integrated plan entitled the “Zero Hunger Plan.” In this plan, the government incorporates the implementation of strategies, programs, and actions aimed at providing social protection to the 166 most vulnerable municipalities in the country (50% of all municipalities).

Government discourse regarding these programs is to leave behind impromptu actions that follow a model of charity and patronage, and instead to design public policies and comprehensive programs with a human rights focus, based on evidence and transparent criteria for selecting users and for using tax revenues (as the Ministry of Development stipulates). Yet organizations present in the communities attest that the members of the population who benefit from this programs are those listed as sympathizers of the ruling political party.

The Dignity Triangle. The current government has announced a purchasing program that it calls the “Dignity Triangle” that will be executed through the National Land Fund –FON-TIERRAS– and will be under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA) which will be in charge of providing technical assistance and marketing. The amount assigned to MAGA for this program is Q 225 million, and it is projected to benefit 67,515. The objective of this project is to support farmworkers who have a manzana³¹ of land, whether owned or rented, so that they may buy seeds and produce basic grains. To do so they will be granted an interest-free, unsubsidized loan of Q 3,000.00 (US\$ 428.57), which must be paid back after the second harvest in the productive cycle (approximately late February of the year following the disbursement). In Guatemala, at least 92% of producing families are estimated to have half a manzana of land and are not eligible for this project. According to MAGA personnel, one requirement for beneficiaries of this project is that they must generate a minimum harvest of 60 hundred-pound sacks. With the current government in office for nine months now, substantive actions for this program have not yet materialized.

³¹ A manzana is a land measurement equivalent to 0.7 hectares.

My secure harvest. This program entails the distribution of fertilizers to small-scale farmers. This year, as has happened in previous years, the fertilizer was given to farmers late. The program has been strongly criticized in terms of how fertilizer is distributed and which members of the population benefit; social organizations that monitor these events have indicated that lists are used and preference is given to people affiliated with the ruling party. This prompted the Ministry of Agriculture to issue a summons, requiring the plenary of the Congress of the Republic to respond to the situation.

My secure bonus. This is the Conditional Cash Transfers Program coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development. It is based on a system of joint responsibilities in which families enrolled in the Program receive economic assistance intended for purchasing food, clothing, and school materials, and must reciprocally fulfill obligations in health, nutrition, and education, and when invited, must attend training sessions organized by the Ministry of Social Development, in coordination primarily with the Ministries of Education and Health.³²

Secure cafeterias. This is a program that aims to provide (from Monday to Friday) balanced, low-cost meals for low-income individuals. Currently nine such cafeterias operate in the country (in the urban areas of the departments of Guatemala, Quiché, Escuintla, Chiquimula and Quetzaltenango) and serve two meals a day. Breakfast costs consumers Q 1.00 (US\$ 0.13), and lunch costs Q 3.00 (US\$ 0.38). However, there are no clear criteria by which those serving the meals in these cafeterias can determine consumers' level of poverty.

My secure bag. This is one of the programs within the Urban Social Protection Strategy to support womens' economic endeavors and serve the most vulnerable people, such as single mothers, elderly adults, and families with young children. Initially, My Secure Bag is targeted to families and individuals located in the urban areas of the 17 municipalities in the department of Guatemala who live in vulnerable settlements or neighborhoods affected by poverty; children must attend school and mothers must receive talks about family values at classes for parents. The approximate cost of My Secure Bag is Q 175.21 (US\$ 9.40), and it includes 10 pounds of beans, 10 pounds of rice, one bottle of cooking oil, five pounds of corn flour, 2.2 pounds of oat meal, and 24 packs of prepared Incaparina.

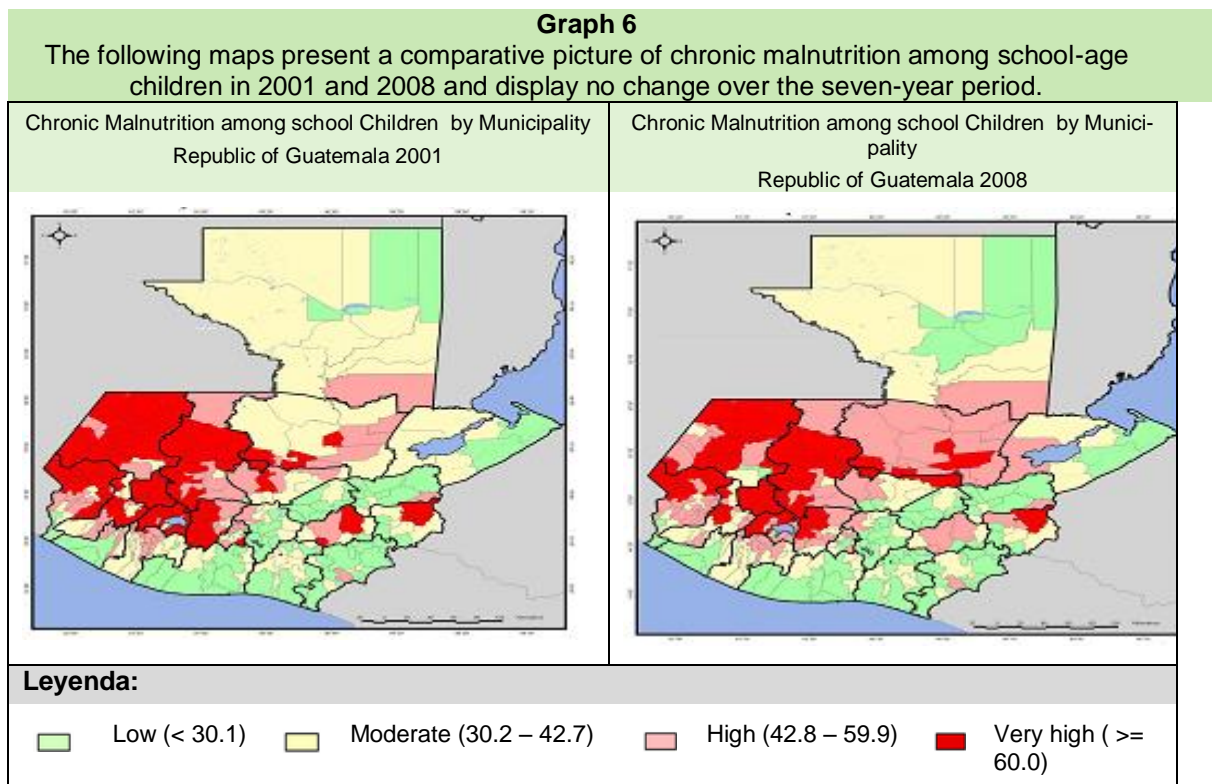
The Thousand-Day Window. This is a health program with a budget of Q 104.738 million (US\$ 13.092 million), integrated within the Ministry of Health's 2012 Budget and focused on combating acute malnutrition. This program incorporates preventative measures and health and nutritional improvement in the thousand-day period comprised by pregnancy (207 days) and the first two years of a child's life (730 days). The strategy institutes support for breastfeeding, supplementary feeding, improved hygienic practices, deworming in children, and the distribution of iron and folic acid to pregnant women.

Recovery of the National System of Food Reserves. The Institute of Agricultural Marketing – INDECA – is the government entity created in 1970 to stabilize national market prices and supplies of agricultural products for basic consumption (Decree 101-70). Through partial privatization in the 1990s, 19 silos were given to private companies. The rest were abandoned (Pons, G. 2011). Since 1997, INDECA has been in charge of managing foods donated to Guatemala through the World Food Program –WFP– (Decree 191-97) and of managing foods in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food –MAGA– programs; the institution was left with the sole job of cleaning and drying grains. As a result of the price crisis of 2008, the decision was made to recover the remaining INDECA silos to have a storage space in the case of emergencies and for social protection programs. Currently, MAGA, through INDECA, continues to carry out actions aimed at recovering silos that are still in decent condition.

The fact that social protection programs do not address structural solutions creates a social dynamic that reveals that the commitments that the government has publicized in different media have not been met. The social movement has been carrying out its task of monitoring the executive branch's promises and plans, promises that are backed by a Plan that attempts to address

³² Source: *Website of the Ministry of Social Development, Guatemala*, <http://www.mides.gob.gt/programas-sociales/mibonoseguro>, taken on October 15, 2012.

one of the four pacts that the current government has pledged but that have not been launched in the comprehensive and far-reaching way that had been proposed.



What we need to keep monitoring

This longitudinal investigation (2012–2015) is incorporated in a timely way for Guatemala, since it coincides exactly with the start of the current government term (2012–2015); this will enable monitoring of the implementation of public policy on food and nutrition security –PSAN (FNSP)– and the social programs proposed as part of the new Social Protection Plan that addresses the pressing needs of vulnerable groups whose food and nutrition security is impaired. However, this Social Protection Plan, called the Zero Hunger Plan, is no more than the continuation of social programs implemented by the previous government and has been widely criticized for the way in which it is administered and the way in which its financial resources are managed.

As with the previous government, these programs add up to a high percentage of the general budget and are spread among various entities and Executive trusts.

For that reason, one of the key elements to be monitored is the budgetary allocation for entities and specific categories related to Public Expenditure on Food and Nutrition Security –GPSAN–. Also, in parallel fashion, an adequate and orderly monitoring of the effectiveness of social protection programs will serve to determine if benefits are reaching the most vulnerable groups in the population (foremost, those living in extreme poverty).

In the framework of the *Vamos al Grano* Campaign and the GROW Campaign promoted by Oxfam, processes have been initiated in 2012 to monitor these two elements.

What needs immediate action, where, and by whom

Among the structural measures proposed by specialists interviewed, the following stand out:

- Continue to call attention to the problem in order to raise awareness; and continue with investigations that provide the State updated data to inform their interventions.
- Promote actions that raise awareness among society in general, and the business sector in particular, about what kind of State they desire. It is urgent that the State reaches areas that it is currently not reaching, and this will only be possible through tax revenue. To do so, it is imperative put in place an effective fiscal policy with the aim to increase the tax rate and cancel tax privileges for the private sector.
- It is very important that control mechanisms exist to ensure proper use of funds.
- Multi-sectorial coordination is recommended in order to guarantee the right to education, health care, and work, as stipulated in the SINASAN and its related law.
- Improve access to health care, as children are born already at low weight. Mothers' levels of schooling are tied to families' health and nutrition, and the illiteracy rate is still high among women in rural areas, especially among indigenous women.
- Strengthen families' capacities by providing improved qualifications for farmers to do other types of work, and other types of financing for those who continue in agriculture.
- Implement a system of recovering and reactivating the Food Reserves with the aim of providing social protection and attending to emergencies caused both by intensified food insecurity in the country and by weather events generated by climate change.

In terms of short-term and medium-term policies, informants identified two main areas of work: a) Rural development and b) Responses to the current situation. Regarding rural development, specialists interviewed concurred in noting the following lines of action:

- **Crop diversification as a means to improve diets.** Although corn is the staple food for vulnerable families, it should not be the only thing that they eat. It is valued primarily because of its following qualities: it grows on inferior, even rocky, lands; it is the least costly item available; it is adaptable to weather variations, growing in times of heavy rain and in times of drought; it is a forgiving plant that “*at least produces something*” on any type of land. For these reasons it is the staple of the diet, whereas beans are more sensitive to the weather. Furthermore, corn is deeply ingrained in the indigenous peoples' worldview, and “*one has the right to eat what seems appropriate.*”

“The core problem is poverty, and corn is being used to make ethanol, which impels price volatility.” (Interview with Ricardo Zepeda, Oxfam investigator).

- **Production linkages.** Some families rely on basic grain production for their own consumption, and subsistence growers have been impacted by poor harvests. The food security situation has deteriorated and can be rescued only through rural development. One of the main actions entails mobilizing the Secretariat on Food and Nutrition Security – SESAN– with the support of organizations such as the WFP to address crop loss among subsistence grains.
- **Increases in food availability and consumption.** This means enhancing the production of basic foods. This can be accomplished through land distribution, technical assistance, credit assistance, inputs (particularly seeds), etc. Later on, education and information are key. Families often do not know that junk food and sweetened carbonated drinks are harmful, but rather, due to advertising, they believe that such foods grant some benefit to

their children. In the same way, they are not aware of the need for a varied diet of foods (especially vegetables, fruits, and eggs) that can be acquired relatively easily on their yards (through family gardens, backyard animals) or on diversified farms: these are projects that should be supported to a greater degree.

- **Agro-forestry systems.** These are particularly well suited to counteract the effects of climate change (extreme weather events such as droughts or floods), because they fortify soils and grant greater resilience against such phenomena.
- **Social protection programs.** Families' capacity to resist is wearing out. It can be said that they have not managed to achieve resilience; they are stretched to the limit. Though the ultimate prescription is to work on rural development, interventions must happen now to ensure that people do not decline any further. Given their current diet, it is impossible to assail the chronic malnutrition which undermines future generations' potential and the country's production capacity.

Social investment plays an important role in helping families mitigate hunger. In 2009, it was clear that people overcame drought thanks to money received in conditional transfers.

What we need to understand better or on a larger scale

Experts consulted for this study concur in indicating the need to frame food and nutrition security as a right and not as an act of charity. They emphasize the urgency of addressing structural issues related to rural development, improving taxation, and monitoring spending to ensure transparency, while continuing to give time-sensitive aid to the most affected communities, because people are subsisting with great difficulty: *"It is necessary to create initiatives with the private sector so that businesspeople understand that, in social security terms, it is important to be aware of the conflict that would be unleashed if hunger escalates."* (Interview with Ricardo Zepeda, Oxfam investigator).

Agriculture should be more highly valued in society. Over the last 20 years, small-scale agriculture has been treated as a practice out of step with "modernity," mired in the past, with little dynamism and little future. Nevertheless, it is farmers who continue to feed the country and, globally, the world. Valuing farm work, by respecting and recognizing its key contributions to society and by supporting it (through training, credit, and subsidies), would help make it more attractive to the youth.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all the team of experts and technicians who conducted qualitative research. Special thanks to Eva Sazo and Guisela Mayén who took part in the field work. To the Oxfam staff who contributed so much to this report, including Gabriela Alcaraz and Mónica Bau. Thanks also go to the management and technical team of Ixmucané; organization that supported establishing the contacts with municipal and community level and the authorities of Chichicastenango and Chugüexá Primero.

With funding from DFID, Oxfam and IDS have embarked on a four-year research project to better understand the impact that food price volatility is having in different communities around the world. The project aims to fill the gap in evidence and understanding of the impact that volatile food prices are having on the lives of poor people living in rural and urban areas, including personal income and finance, health, social, family and security. This national research report is a contribution to that project.

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The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by the Institute of Development Studies under ISBN 978-1-78118-279-6 in November 2012.

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