YMCA of GUATEMALA

Guatemala

Covering 42,043 square miles, Guatemala is slightly smaller than Tennessee. This mountainous, forested country was where the ancient Mayan Empire flourished for more than a thousand years. Although rich in natural resources and a vibrant culture, Guatemala was ravished by a civil war that lasted more than 20 years. The country has stabilized, but the people still suffer the economic, social and environmental impact of the war. Of the 14.7 million people, nearly half identify themselves as indigenas—or Maya.

The YMCA of Guatemala

The YMCA of Guatemala was founded in 1964, four years after the start of the civil war. Much of its work over the years has been in response to the needs of those affected by the war, and the promotion of peace, reconciliation and democracy. These services are provided through programs and activities targeting the youth of the society, with a special focus on the indigenous populations. The YMCA currently works in 14 communities, including Guatemala City, reaching more than 20,000 young people each year. One of the most effective programs is the Committee for Democracy in Information Technology (CDI) initiative, which provides access to computers and computer training for young people in disadvantaged communities. Guatemala has 3 CDI schools in rural communities, reaching more than 3,200 people. Skills learned in the CDI program allow youth to expand their opportunities for employment and further the development of their villages. Peace building is critical to the future of Guatemala, and the YMCA cultivates a culture of peace by providing an opportunity for young people to meet Nobel Peace Prize winners. Over the years, the Peace Jam Network has enabled more than 5,000 Guatemalan youth to meet with and learn from the prize winners, including local hero, Rigoberta Menchu. The Guatemala YMCA continues to build a peaceful future of opportunity for its country and people. ▼

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