

TEAMNews

A publication of International Relief Teams

Summer 2009

Food Aid for Families in Guatemala

Much of the native population of Guatemala, descendants of the Mayans, endure harsh living conditions in the rural, mountainous regions where they live. Many families barely survive on large grower plantations (“Fincas”) where they work long hours for meager wages. They live in substandard housing (4 walls, a tin roof, and a dirt floor) with

inadequate sanitation or clean water. Even for those who may own and farm a small plot of land, or who work in trades or specialties other than farming, the income they generate from their activities is not sufficient to adequately feed, house or clothe their families.



The chronic poverty that afflicts the native population has been exacerbated in recent years by seasonal tropical storms that have affected these rural areas of Guatemala. In 2005, with the support of the U.S. government (USAID), International Relief Teams (IRT) initiated an emergency supplemental food program in those rural areas hit hardest by the tropical storms. IRT’s distribution partner in Guatemala is ICADA, a well-respected nonprofit organization dealing with health and agricultural issues in Central America. “When food crops are destroyed by storms, food scarcity reaches life and death proportions for the native population. It

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We Want To Hear From You!

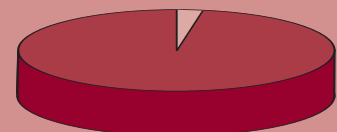
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Excellence

Highest Rating from
Independent Charity Evaluator



Efficiency



FUNDRAISING & ADMINISTRATIVE 1.99%
 PROGRAM SERVICES 98.01%

IRT Updates

APRIL

- **Niger:** IRT shipped more than \$5.3 million in essential medical supplies for humanitarian relief.
- **California:** IRT construction teams traveled to rural areas of San Diego County to assemble lockable metal sheds for 2007 fire victim families.



IRT construction volunteer in Mississippi

MAY

- **Mississippi:** IRT deployed its 21st construction relief team to repair homes of poor and elderly Hurricane Katrina victims.
- **Nicaragua:** IRT shipped more than \$4 million worth of medicines and medical supplies for humanitarian relief.
- **Honduras:** IRT sent two shipments of medicines and medical supplies worth almost \$3 million to alleviate shortages in hospitals.
- **California:** IRT construction volunteers continued to build storage sheds for 2007 fire victims in San Diego County.



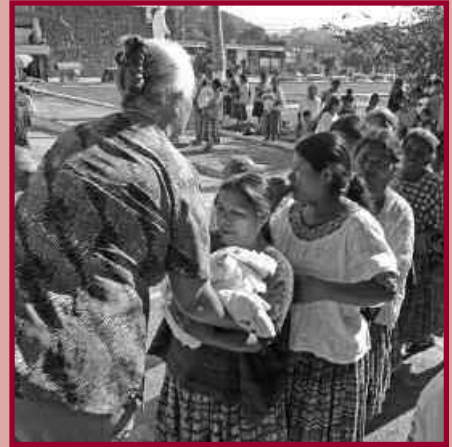
Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) in Pakistan

JUNE

- **Pakistan:** IRT shipped \$1.8 million worth of essential medicines and supplies for humanitarian relief. ■■■

Guatamala...*Continued from page 1*

takes farmers many months to recover – until the next harvest, at the minimum. The supplemental food we provide helps prevent starvation until the food supply can be restored”, stated Guillermo Sanchez, Ph.D., the CEO of ICADA, in explaining the importance of the program.



Distributing food to villagers in Guatemala

During the past three years, IRT and ICADA have distributed 225 metric tons of shelf-stable dehydrated food (12 million meals) in storm-affected regions of Guatemala, using a network of local health, church, civic, and nonprofit organizations to reach families in desperate need of food. Together, they have helped thousands of native Guatemalans survive in the aftermath of these storms.

In his recent visit to various distribution sites in Guatemala, IRT's Executive Director, Barry La Forgia, saw families who had lined up for hours ahead of the scheduled distribution time. As Barry observed, “the importance of the food to these families was so evident. And the gratitude expressed when they received their food was overwhelming”. ■■■

SUPPORT OUR LIFESAVING WORK!

Each year, IRT helps thousands of families and children around the world facing desperate situations. But we can't do it without you!! Your gift today will save lives, and bring hope and healing to suffering people who need help right now. Please send in your donation today, or make it on-line at www.irteams.org.

THANK YOU for your *compassion and support!*

Returning to Vietnam... a Different Role... a New Purpose



Christmas Day, 1970. Barry's airplane painted as Santa for delivery of presents to U.S. soldiers in South Vietnam.

Last July, I returned to Vietnam for the first time in 38 years. I had served as a U.S. Air Force tactical transport pilot from 1970-1971 during the Vietnam War. Although I had come through my year-long assignment relatively "unscathed", I had lost some close friends in the war. So I was uncertain as to what my reactions would be, or what emotions would arise within me once I set foot in Vietnam again.



Barry with medical practitioners at Da Nang Hospital

As our commercial airliner taxied in after landing in Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City), I was surprised to see the concrete reinforced fighter airplane hangars from the Vietnam War still standing. Just beyond those hangars, my crew and I had frequently loaded up our tactical transport plane (C-7A Caribou) with food, passengers, ammunition, mail, etc., for delivery to various small outposts in the Delta and Central Highlands of South Vietnam.

I also had some apprehension, especially in anticipation of my scheduled meetings with health delegations in the North (Hanoi and Haiphong), about how I would be received. Would my participation as a pilot in the war become an obstacle to bringing IRT's "Project Healthy Baby" – a program that Vietnamese practitioners desperately wanted and needed – to the country? Although my responsibilities with IRT encompass medical training programs, should someone else have gone?

My fears were quickly dispelled. What I found out was that the Vietnam War was "ancient history" to them. The Vietnamese people had already experienced two subsequent conflicts (Cambodia and China).

Furthermore, most doctors, nurses and governmental leaders that I needed to meet with were too young to remember or have any firsthand experiences concerning the "American war".

I returned again to Vietnam this past March. On this trip, I had an opportunity to observe firsthand the tremendous progress we are making through our Project "Healthy Baby" program. IRT is training dedicated groups of

Vietnamese doctors and nurses, so that they can instruct others in the proper emergency procedures to use when babies are experiencing breathing difficulties at birth. I was so pleased to see the tremendous

enthusiasm and motivation of both the Vietnamese instructors and their students for this vital program. The training was highly interactive, and punctuated by good questions, spirited discussions, and high quality practical instruction with the training mannequins. The tears displayed at the graduation ceremonies held at the end of each course attested to the importance of this program, as seen through the eyes of the Vietnamese practitioner.

Whether in the cities or in the rural areas, I have found the Vietnamese to be very kind, helpful, and courteous people. It is indeed a great privilege for our organization to help them save their newborns. And it has presented me with an opportunity to assist them in a way I never dreamed possible 38 years ago. ■

Winner of Hawaii Vacation Drawing 2009

We are pleased to announce that **Doreen Somers of Edwards, Colorado** was the winner of IRT's drawing for a "Hawaiian Vacation for Two". Doreen and her guest will soon be spending a fun-filled week at the beautiful **Sheraton Kauai Resort** on the island of **Kauai**.

Thanks to all of our supporters who participated in the drawing and to the **Sheraton Kauai Resort** for sponsoring the accommodations for this trip.
ALOHA, Doreen!





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International Relief Teams

alleviates human suffering by providing health services and humanitarian assistance to victims of disaster, neglect and profound poverty worldwide.

IRT is classified as a charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. All contributions and bequests are deductible to the extent allowed by the law, and can be made by mail or on-line on our secure website at www.irteams.org

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7-DAY DREAM VACATION

IRT is excited to announce a very special summer drawing for a 7-day vacation at a top-rated timeshare resort of your choice ... **plus \$1,000 towards your travel expenses!**

The proceeds will support our outreach to impoverished children throughout the world. Entry tickets have already been mailed to you. If you desire additional tickets, call our office at (619) 284-7979.

**Remember to return your tickets for the September 15th drawing!*

2009 VOLUNTEER TEAM OPPORTUNITIES

*Our volunteers change lives...
ordinary men and women doing extraordinary things!
The only qualification you need is a willing heart.*

- **SKILLED CONSTRUCTION TEAMS** - **MISSISSIPPI**

Disaster Relief

Skilled construction volunteers (carpenters, roofers, dry wallers, framers) are needed to help rebuild/repair homes for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

*Call Tamra at our office 619-284-7979
to volunteer or for more information.*