

It is a real honor to be with you this morning and be able to share with you the experiences and lessons learned in Guatemala.

Today I welcome the opportunity to share with you the Reconstruction Program and Process with Emphasis on Transformation that is currently taking place in my country.

On October 5th of 2005, Tropical Storm Stan hit Guatemala and highlighted the environmental, economical, social and political vulnerabilities. The crisis provoked from the Tropical Storm Stan is believed to be the outcome of a number of internal and external environmental factors that include the accelerated deforestation, the lack of preventive plans, an appropriate territorial plan, and the lack of an integral water treatment.

Furthermore, an important external factor that had to be taken into special consideration is global warming which has affected the Gulf of Mexico, and has led to the increase of the quantity and intensity of hurricanes that form and affect the coasts of Mexico, the United States, the Caribbean Islands and Central America.

In the case of Guatemala, it is the first time that an event of this kind affects, not only the coastal areas, but also areas as high as 1,000 meters above sea level (as can be observed in the graph). For this reason, the damages were highly significant, leading to the collapse of bridges, highways, schools, health centers, clean water systems, water treatment plants, houses and productive land. Material losses amounted to as much as \$450 million, and productive and economical losses amounted as much as \$500 million. The death toll equaled 669 people and another 884 people that were never found.

As a result, the Reconstruction Program seeks to strengthen the decentralization that our Government has promoted all through out its administration through the Departmental Development Councils and the establishment of the Reconstruction Commissions along the 15 Departments affected by the Tropical Storm Stan. These commissions seek to promote the participation at all social levels, including local and municipal participation, which permits civil society, along with governmental figures belonging to the Reconstruction Commissions, to develop Departmental Plans that will permit to give priority to the work needed to be done in order to repair the physical and social damages done by the storm, such as the Integration of the Upweaving Society.

The integrated municipal plans, along with governmental action, in the areas of health, education, infrastructure and productivity led to the development of the National Reconstruction Plan (which you can observe in the graph. It is important to note the active participation ranging from the Development Councils and Civil Society, with the goal of strengthening, beyond civil participation, social auditing).

Within the general guidelines of the Reconstruction process, three fundamental pillars have been established: the Integration of the Upweaving Society, Physical Infrastructure repair and the economical reactivation. In addition, a territorial vision was established for the management of the integral water treatment and natural disasters risk management, which include actions for prevention and mitigation of such disasters.

The fundamental element within the Reconstruction efforts has always been to seek the participation and well being of the people. Therefore, our slogan is: “Transformative Reconstruction, from, for and with the people” (as can be observed in the graph).

The Integration of the Upweaving Society has focused its efforts on the family and its role in development, specifically for women. The strengthening of the cultural identity, through the traditional values of the Guatemalan cultures has also been fundamental. Furthermore, supporting the integration and organization of the community through the active participation of community members in the recovery of social networks and local productivity has permitted the development of economical activities that add value to family income and contribute to improve the quality of life of the affected people (as can be noted in the slide).

One of the actions taken by our administration has been to integrate the network of seventeen governmental and non-governmental institutions for the Integration of the Upweaving Society. The work done in the network has focused on strengthening the civil participation to achieve transparency, social auditing and the articulation of local demands along with the Reconstruction Plans. Furthermore, actions have been taken to promote internal and external solidarity, the participation at all levels of society in the productive and social reactivation, communication, search for agreements and coordination between society and Government, and the preservation of the social and cultural identity when taking decisions at the local and municipal levels.

An example that proves the interaction of the different Reconstruction pillars is the challenge of building 87 new “Productive Habitats” which will home 7,500 affected families. To this moment, the construction process is completing 30 of these “Productive Habitats”, that will Benefit 3,500 families. The process is expected to conclude during May, 2007 (as you can appreciate in the map). This new urbanizing concept has been created with the participation of farmers organizations, NGO`s, the International Community and the Guatemalan Government.

The new “Productive Habitats” seek to improve the quality of life of the affected population. The process starts with the search of appropriate land (risk free of any disasters including floods), by the people, local authorities and Government jointly. Once the land is acquired, through a process of participation, the urbanization is designed, taking into consideration the geographic characteristics of the area and the cultural identity of the population. Furthermore, the basic housing units are technically designed to give families the opportunity to grow reasonably.

The program for the new “Productive Habitats” revolves around economic activities and productive existing abilities in the community, and the generation of new capacities for the benefited population. Also, the new job opportunities, along with the opportunities to implement productive, alternative projects (both agricultural and non-agricultural) are considered as the first phase in the rehabilitation and reactivation of the collective and family economy.

In the case of Santiago, Atitlan, located in the Department of Solola, in the West side of the country, this new vision takes place jointly among the civil population and the municipality. Despite the great tragedy experienced by the people of the area, the civil organization and coordination has yielded very positive results. Tropical Storm Stan affected various communities in the area, causing mud and water floods that carried rocks and stones with them, all the way from the top of the Atitlan and Toliman volcanoes, damaging the city of Panabaj, leading to the death of 82 habitants and the disappearance of 600 others. All people lost their houses and form of income.

Government, along with the local population and the international community, assisted and managed the emergency providing the affected population with humanitarian help and locating them in temporary housing **(as is shown in the photograph)**. To facilitate the definite housing construction process, a number of meetings took place to assist the 289 affected families. The final agreement defined that a new urbanization is to be constructed in a land in the northern area.

Initial evaluations of possible risks in the area have proved necessary to engage in further research. Therefore, Government, through its National Coordinator for Risk Reduction (CONRED) have completed a study **(as is shown in the slide)** that reports that the area is not safe for the definitive construction of housing due to the fact that the work required is complex and would not guarantee the prevention of a new environmental impact.

Due to the risks present, and considering the well being and security of the Panabaj community as a priority, construction in the area had to be paralyzed and a series of emergency meetings took place with community and family members of the area, NGO’s (both national and international) and Government institutions with the purpose to agree on new and safe areas for constructing new houses. **(You can see in the slide the different organizations that formed part of this decision. They were: The Community Development Asociation of Canton Panabaj, The Reconstruction Committee of the North Area, The Community Developmental Council of Panabaj, the Municipality of Canton Panabaj, The San Carlos University, The Rafael Landivar University, The Mayor and Municipal Corporation of Santiago Atitlan, The Departmental Governor, Orden de Malta, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, The Human Rights Procurement, the Presidential Commission for Human Rights, CONRED, INSIVUMEH, The Governor of Solola, the Vicpresidency and the Reconstruction Management Team).**

This process has permitted to resolve conflicts that existed among communities, some NGO's and municipal authorities, as well as the successful integration of the Reconstruction Committee in Santiago Atitlan **(as you can observe in the photograph)**. The Reconstruction Committee focuses its efforts in identifying appropriate land for effective construction of new "Productive Habitats", and researches on the available housing designs to develop a participative integral plan in the area for the long-term, as it also focuses on risk management. **(In the following slide we can appreciate the design of the productive habitat in Chokomuc, Santiago Atitlan, Solola, which is designed for 60 families and will include productive areas, museums, a health center, a school and an artisan market).**

The Reconstruction process, with emphasis in transformation, is possible due to the integration and joint efforts that are Government has done along with the population, NGO's and the International Community. The United Nations role has been fundamental in terms of recruiting donors, administrating funds, developing direct actions with the affected communities, and also in terms of manifesting its solidarity with Guatemala **(in the graph we can appreciate the support obtained from the United Nations Development Program)**.

Once again, our Government, with the joint support of the United Nations, on June 23rd, 2006, has solicited funds from the friend countries to finance the development of programs, including the Productive Habitat and the Disaster Risk Reduction program, which demand immediate and medium term actions.

For the Guatemalan Government, to be able to fulfill the Reconstruction Program has become an opportunity to build a new Guatemala without risks, a higher degree of development and decentralization, giving priority to the strengthening of civil society to become empowered and participative.