

Guatemala: The War on Drug Violence, Youth Taking Back Control

(11'54")

In Guatemala, the drug war rages on as deadly cartels from neighbouring Mexico set their sights on parts of the country. But many of Guatemala's youth are fighting back, not through violence, but by making their voices heard. Can it make a difference?

VIDEO

AUDIO

NARRATION:

HELICOPTER LANDING

It's a country under siege – Guatemala.(2')

POLICE PATROLS

Widespread violence and drug trafficking have paralyzed large parts of the country – threatening the safety of its citizens. (8')

DRUG TRAFFICKERS BEING
ARRESTED
PRESIDENT ALVARO AT TABLE
WITH DOCUMENTS

In the North of the country, in Alta Verapaz the Mexican Drug Cartel Los Zeta has firmly taken control. And on December 19th, 2010 Guatemala's then President Alvaro Colom took the extraordinary measure of calling an emergency state of siege in the region, suspending constitutional rights and purging the region's entire police force (22')

POLICE INSIDE BUS WITH
HANDCUFFED TRAFFICKERS

(SOUND UP: PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT: (In Spanish)

ALVAREZ TO CAMERA IN A PRESS
CONFERENCE

"We will remain a strong presence until we have complete control in the region" (7')

POLICE SEARCHING CARS,

The nation's Army was also deployed to Alta

ARRESTING TRAFFICKERS,
POLICE ARRESTING
TRAFFICKERS

Verapaz for the time since the country's nearly
four decade long civil war ended fifteen years
ago (9')

TRAFFICKERS IN HANDCUFFS
ESCORTED THROUGH STREETS
BY POLICE.

Just what can be done to help regain stability
here and give the people back control over their
own future? (7.5)

JUAN WALKING ON THE
STREETS, CUT TO ON-CAMERA
FACE BLURRED. CUTAWAY TO
HANDS.

JUAN: (In Spanish)

"Look, I can't change the past. But from now
on, I know don't want to do those bad things.
That means something. But it doesn't mean you
can erase the past." (12')

JUAN' WALKING THROUGH THE
STREETS.

NARRATION:

The story of this young man - who asked we
hide his identity for his own protection – is a
story of violence and criminal activity ... an all
too common tale of danger that sheds light on
many of the challenges facing this small Central
American country (17')

MAYDAY WRITING IN JOURNAL
MAYDA ON CAMERA

MAYDA: (In Spanish)

"If a young woman wants to study she doesn't
get the opportunity. This is a source of
violence that we face because we are not being
educated like we should." (13')

MAYDA WRITING IN JOURNAL,
THEN WALKING INTO ANOTHER
ROOM

NARRATION:

This young woman's story will also provide
insight into the cycle of violence and
powerlessness that has shaped Alta Verapaz.
(9')

SPLIT SCREEN: MAYDA AND JUAN
STUDYING

And while the experiences of these two may be different, their stories of struggle, and ultimately of courage and leadership are similar ... and may be vital to their country's future. (12')

JUAN BLURRED FACE TO
CAMERA IN FRONT OF FOUNTAIN

JUAN:(In Spanish)

"I'm sorry that this interview has to be anonymous, but I'm scared they'll kill me." (7')

JUAN WALKING THROUGH THE
STREETS

NARRATION:

Juan - not his real name - is 19 years old, the average age of Guatemala's 14 million people. Like a majority of Guatemalans, Juan grew up in extreme poverty. When he was just 14 years old, his alcoholic father kicked him out of the house. (17')

JUAN IN FRONT OF THE
FOUNTAIN FACE BLURRED

JUAN:(In Spanish)

"The street was my home. In the street I'd smoke with my friends, "Hey...what's up? How you been? That's when I was introduced to [sniffs] substances ...cocaine ...and I smoked way too much marijuana. We hung out and were supposedly friends, but I didn't know they were using me" (20)

JUAN AND FRIEND, SITTING ON
SIDEWALK

NARRATION:

Those "friends" are part of an international drug trade that move an estimated 250-350 tons of cocaine yearly through Central America on the way to North American and European countries. With their enormous resources, the Los Zeta cartel has had little difficulty recruiting

DRUGS STACKED IN BOXES

JUAN AND FRIEND SITTING ON

SIDEWALK

local youth like Juan, desperate to make a living.(24')

'JUAN' TO CAMERA IN FRONT OF FOUNTAIN

JUAN :(In Spanish)

"They knew I was really violent ... and other young people were scared of me.(pause) So if I was with them nobody would try anything because I was there." (14)

JUAN WALKING THROUGH STREETS

NARRATION:

Juan became a foot soldier in the army of drug smugglers that roamed openly throughout the region (7')

EDWIN TO CAMERA

EDWIN DANIEL MONTERROSA MIJANGOS

:(In Spanish)

"Abductions were taking place. Extortions were happening on a daily basis and drug trafficking activity was really strong." (10')

EDWIN ON CAMERA

NARRATION:

Edwin Daniel Monterrosa is a Colonel in the Guatemalan Army in Alta Verapaz.(6')

EDWIN TO CAMERA

EDWIN DANIEL MONTERROSA MIJANGOS

:(In Spanish)

"People didn't felt safe because armed men were on the move" (5')

AERIAL OF GUATEMALA CITY.
JUAN WALKING THROUGH THE STREETS. CUT TO MAYDA IN CORN FIELD.

NARRATION:

Many here in Alta Verapaz fell victim to the crimes, others like Juan were lured into illegal activity, while the majority of people here – with little education, little knowledge of their rights,

and next to no say in their government - felt powerless (16')

MAYA IN FIELD. CUT TO MAYDA ON CAMERA.

MAYDA:(In Spanish)

"In my family, nobody has ever earned a high school degree. They're farmers and really don't think much beyond their farm." (10').

KIDS IN SCHOOL CLASSROOM. MAYDA IN FIELD WITH HER FATHER

NARRATION:

Few in Guatemala pass primary school, and young women like 20 year old Myda Aracely Cahuec face particularly difficult challenges getting ahead. Jorge Cahuec, Mayda's father expects her to work at home....(16')

MAYDA'S FATHER TO CAMERA CUT TO MAYDA IN THE FIELD

JORGE:(In Spanish)

"She's my right hand. That is, she's always helping me out. When she does, there's no need to pay someone else."(5')

MAYDA MAKING BREAD

NARRATION:

But Mayda is longing to do much more than work on the farm. She wants to change her community for the better (6')

MAYDA TO CAMERA

MAYDA:(In Spanish)

"My problem is that I like to help others. That's why I want to continue studying. I feel that change within myself and it can impact my country which is in such a bad place." (10')

STILLS OF ALVAREZ AND SEIZED WEAPONS, GRENADES,

NARRATION:

The government has managed to gain back some control over the region where she lives,

CARTRIDGES.

Alta Verapaz, one month after calling the state of siege during which it seized military grade arms, explosives, vehicles, airplanes and drugs. (18')

But many believe that the current calm won't last ...(3')

STILLS OF BULLET PROOF
JACKETS
SET UP OF MARIANO

And those who would be most affected by the violence are often the most vulnerable fears Mariano Gonzalez, a researcher at the Archbishop's Office on Human Rights in Guatemala City (12')

MARIANO TO CAMERA

MARIANO GONZALEZ: (In Spanish)

"Most of those killed are youth. And a majority of the aggressors are also youth. So what we have are youth at the root of the problem of violence, both as victims and perpetrators. And this is causing a tragic phenomena" (18')

PULL FOCUS FROM FORENSIC
OFFICER TO GUN BUTT TO DEAD
BODY ON THE STREET. ARCHIVE
CIVIL WAR FOOTAGE.

NARRATION:

Fifteen to twenty homicides are committed daily in Guatemala – a statistic that rivals the daily death counts during the civil war that killed more than 200,000 people. Of the current homicides – an alarming percentage of the victims are under 25 years old. (19')

ALBERTO TO CAMERA

ALBERTO BRUNORI:(In Spanish)

"In the absence of any real public policy for youth, what we're seeing is something very serious. If you don't include youth, you're condemning your country to failure." (11')

ALBERTO AT HIS DESK WRITING

NARRATION:

Alberto Brunori is the representative in Guatemala for the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (7')

ALBERTO TO CAMERA

ALBERTO BRUNORI:(In Spanish)

"Youth aren't seen...just not seen. They practically don't exist. No one takes them into consideration except maybe during political campaigns to win votes, but nobody's creating public policies that involves or inspires them. (15')

YOUTH GROUP WALKING INTO ROOM WITH BANNERS

(Sound up ADP Youth Dramatization: "Present Mr. President" "You can't overthrow me!")

YOUTH IN LECTURE ROOM

NARRATION

And that's why this group, The Association of Friends of Development and Peace, ADP, – was created. It's an innovative education program that trains and certifies young leaders in development and democracy studies. It's an initiative made possible by the United Nations Democracy Fund, UNDEF, which finances and oversees the project (21)

VARIOUS IN LECTURE ROOM

ROBERTO SPEAKING TO YOUTH IN CLASSROOM

(SOUND UP: ROBERTO ALVARADO (IN SPANISH)

"What do we understand by "democracy? Participation ... we are a society, made, directed and, educated to obey, not think")(10')

MORE CLASSROOM SHOTS OF

NARRATION:

Roberto Alvarado is ADP's Director. He

YOUTH

believes that empowering the youth to have a voice in their own future is a crucial weapon in the war against violence.(10”)

ROBERTO TO CAMERA

ROBERTO:(In Spanish)

“We train future political leaders. We can not allow the youth to just vote without analyzing the reason why they cast that vote. (pause) They’re not just preparing for exams but for real life” (17’)

MORE CLASSROOM SHOTS.
DIFFERENT YOUTH SPEAKING
INTO MICROPHONE.

NARRATION:

With UNDEF’s support, the ADP program trains more than 500 young people to be local community leaders by offering them year-long scholarships to learn development and life skills. Once they graduate, they're ready to head back into their communities to help educate others on their rights, the nation’s laws, and participating in the democratic process (23)

MAYDA IN CLASSROOM

NARRATION:

And leading the way was one girl who longed to make a difference ... Mayda,(5’)

MAYDA TO CAMERA

MAYDA :(In Spanish)

“I told my mother I was coming here, but not my father.” (5’)

MAYDA IN CLASSROOM WRITING

NARRATION:

Mayda decided not to tell her father that she had won and accepted an ADP scholarship to participate in the training. But when local press

NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPH

STILL OF GROUP PARTICIPATING
IN TRAINING.

covered the inauguration of her program, it
didn't take long for him to find out.(14')

MAYDA TO CAMERA

MAYDA:(In Spanish)

“That day my father came home around 3:00 in
the afternoon and was so furious that I wasn't
there, he took it out on my brothers and beat all
of them.” (10')

MAYDA STUDYING

NARRATION:

In spite of her father's disapproval, Mayda was
determined and continued in the programme
and, alongside her was someone many had
already written off - Juan, (11')

JUAN IN CLASSROOM

After four years on the street Juan' siblings
intervened and convinced him to go back to
school and apply to ADP (8')

NATALI:(In Spanish)

“The first time we spoke, I felt intimidated. But
over time my perception about him changed.”
(7')

NATALI IN CLASSROOM

NARRATION

Juan says it was trainers like Nataly Pacay who
helped him gain a voice. (4')

JUAN IN FRONT OF FOUNTAIN TO
CAMERA.

JUAN :(In Spanish)

“During the first week we studied about self
esteem and how to live with other people in a
calm, democratic way.” (9')

NATALI PACAY:(In Spanish)

NATALI TO CAMERA. CUT TO
JUAN LECTURING TO STUDENTS.

He loves to participate. He's very mature, expresses his points of view and likes to communicate. He can get the group going, which shows leadership (12')

ROBERTO TO CAMERA

ROBERTO:(In Spanish)

"We don't introduce in any way some sort of political or ideological beliefs. What we are trying to do is engage youth to make their own analysis and come up with their own decisions." (11').

MAYDA IN CLASSROOM WITH
OTHER STUDENTS

NARRATION

Mayda graduated and was certified as an ADP leader, and was even awarded a second scholarship - earning a high school degree in development and democracy studies. (11')

And Juan quickly learned that his value was much more than that of a soldier in a drug cartel, but that he could affect change in ways he never imagined (10')

JUAN LECTURING STUDENTS

JUAN:(In Spanish)

"We're beginning to apply what we know about democracy and peace, and we are making a change."(6')

STUDENTS CLAPPING, DANCING
ETC.

NARRATION:

While achieving true security in their country, and having a real say in their future may take years, Juan and Mayda, and so many other young people in leadership roles are working hard laying the foundation now for that change

to happen.(17')