
COPPER COUNTRY GUATEMALA ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT

A Link between Guatemala and the Copper Country



CCGAP Newsletter



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Justice in Guatemala: the Mack Trial

On October 3rd this year, a high military official was convicted of being the "intellectual author" of a murder twelve years ago, in a trial that marked the end to impunity enjoyed by the Guatemalan military.

Twelve years ago, on September 11, 1990, a Guatemalan anthropologist, Myrna Mack Chang, was stabbed 27 times and left to die when she left her office on a city street at night. Myrna Mack was targeted because of her research exposing the devastating impact of counter-insurgency tactics on rural communities in Guatemala. She had provided some of the first evidence challenging the military's claim that these communities were guerilla outposts, a challenge that the military could not let go unanswered.

After the 1993 conviction of the individual soldier who carried out the murder, human rights advocates, led by Myrna's sister Helen Mack Chang, fought for accountability for

those in the positions of authority who ordered the murder, in this case, three officers of the elite military Presidential Security Staff (EMP) in 1990.

The Mack family's struggle for justice took place under extremely difficult circumstances. Over the years, dozens of judges and courts passed the case around like a hot potato, and appeal after appeal was filed by the military defendants to delay it ever getting to trial. On June 7, 2002, a clandestine organization with apparent links to Guatemalan Army's high command faxed a death threat to 11 prominent Guatemalan human rights leaders, including Helen Mack and one of her witnesses, calling them "enemies of the state." The threat said that they would be "the first to experience the taste of the steel of (their) bullets." Additionally, AVANCSO, the organization that Myrna was
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CCGAP Board Considers Changes

Last August, when our most recent accompanier, Tom Bewick, returned from his 6-month stay in Fronterizo, the CCGAP board met to discuss the history and future of accompaniment and how changes might affect our relationship with this returned refugee village.

When we first started sending accompaniers to Fronterizo, the returned refugee communities were at high risk for renewed violence. Accompaniment gave them the measure of security needed to develop their community without fear of reprisal.

CCGAP board members left to right: Terry Kinzel, Floyd Henderson, Sarah Green, Suzanne VanDam, accompanier Tom Bewick, Tom VanDam, Sue Ellen Kingsley and Rich Featherly

However, that situation has changed in the six years since CCGAP formed. Currently the returned refugee and

displaced communities are largely free of the blatant political human rights violations such as threats and kidnappings which G.A.P. accompaniers are trained to observe and report. Ironically, as the risk to returned refugee communities has decreased, violations in the country as a whole have increased notably in recent months. Human rights defenders and civil society groups in Guatemala have seen a marked deterioration since the Guatemala Republican Front (FRG) took office in January 2000, and the human rights climate in Guatemala has worsened further since early 2002. People involved in justice and impunity campaigns experience a high level of threats,

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Tom Bewick Writes: Frustration in Fronterizo

Tom wrote this letter in May of this year after experiencing a very difficult time in Fronterizo. My apologies for having to edit both this letter and the story on page 4 due to space limitations. SEK

Dear all:

I don't know where to begin this letter. I have been through so much in Guatemala that I can barely come up with a reference point to begin my letter. When I wrote my first friends and family letter, Fronterizo was a strange new world. Now it has become my life. The odd has become the ordinary and I have been able to venture beyond my initial adjustment and deeper into an understanding of the complexities of community life. A life that on the surface seems to be incomprehensible to a middle class American, but through time and communication I have come to see Fronterizo as all too human. Of course I will never come close to understanding their truth. But I am trying to get some idea of where they are coming from so that I can know how to deal with the emotions I feel as a temporary member of the community and as a representative of CCGAP and NISGUA.

As I have spent more time in Fronterizo I have more and more reference points. I am aware of the gossip, the heat, the projects, the plans, and the work. Being aware doesn't mean I'm really participating but I can at least empathize to an extent. One or two days a week I go out in the fields with some of the men. They really enjoy the company though I question how effective my help is. The people like teaching me about their crops, the plants, the birds, and their successes and failures.

One day in particular I remember. Remigio, who visited my sponsoring community in the U.S., and I were out hacking away at the bush with machetes when he told me about the

melocoton tree on his plot. We became tired and thirsty and decided to pursue the elusive fruits. We spent an hour trying to get them down with sticks, stones, and corncobs. Poor Remigio finally tried to climb the tree but found himself covered in tiny cotton spines and we concluded our endeavor more tired and thirsty than before but with a good laugh under

When I leave Fronterizo, the people won't own their land, the children will not have educational opportunities, and they will still live under a corrupt, repressive government.

our belts. We still recall that morning with a chuckle every time a melocoton is present.

Fronterizo is a "community". Their fate has been a shared one and will continue to be. A very different concept than we have as Americans. With this view of a community I have to carry on as an accompanier while experiencing the politics here. Everything is done by consensus, or, as has been the case recently, *not* done by consensus. Old quarrels, suspicions, and jealousies have impeded progress in the community. What is difficult for me to understand is all too obvious to members of the community.

What I've witnessed here regarding community progress is not at all what I imagined. In the last two months the community has temporarily dissolved their land committee, annulled the power of the mayor with accusations of apathy and embezzlement, and cancelled their annual anniversary celebration, an event I was quite looking forward to.

My anger and disappointment has thankfully taken on a more reflective focus. We all want to see the fruits of our labor. In this kind of work, the

end product isn't concrete, or even visible at all for that matter. The people of Fronterizo have struggled so much in the past. They live in extreme poverty in extreme conditions. The organizations I work for, CCGAP and NISGUA, exist to help these people with human rights accompaniment and development. As a long term volunteer, I have given time and resources to be here and work for these organizations that I respect a great deal. What I'm trying to say is that as an accompanier I want so much to witness the people with whom I live for six months put together the essence of their lives--the shared experience of their history, the place they live, the interactive pattern of their daily lives, and their shared hopes for the future--into chronological progress. As I write this letter that is not happening. When I leave Fronterizo they won't own their land, they won't make a comfortable living, the children will not have the educational opportunities they deserve, and they will still live under a corrupt, repressive government.

This has led me to remind myself of my role as an accompanier. I know that the people of Fronterizo appreciate my presence and realize my disappointments, which makes them all the more appreciative of our support. Why do the 300 or so people in Fronterizo have to fight just to find out the who owns the land? Why do they have to break their backs every day in 100 degree heat just to eat? The historical and present economic and political contexts to which the people of Fronterizo belong and those to which myself and my audience belong are so different.

This brings me back to my original point. It's so valuable to have the opportunity to experience a bit of the peoples' lives and incorporate that into a larger context.

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School of Americas Watch

The School of the Americas (SOA), in 2001 renamed the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation," is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers, located at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Initially established in Panama in 1946, it was kicked out of that country in 1984 under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty. Former Panamanian President, Jorge Illueca, stated that the School of the Americas was the "biggest base for destabilization in Latin America." The SOA, frequently dubbed the "School of Assassins," has left a trail of blood and suffering in every country where its graduates have returned.

Over its 56 years, the SOA has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics. These graduates have consistently used their skills to wage a war against their own people. Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared," massacred, and forced into refuge by those trained at the School of Assassins.

The annual protest demonstration in Ft. Benning will take place on November 15-17 this year. Go to www.soaw.org to learn more.

Tom's letter *continued from page 2*

I treasure the moments I have with the people, witnessing the society they have built and how it works. They suffer the same human imperfections as we all do, just in a different context. As an accompanier, I offer a bridge to a different context where we do have the potential to bring a sense of hope. For these reasons I remain firmly committed to bringing respect, confidence, and solidarity to the people of Fronterizo.

That is all.
Tom

Justice in Guatemala

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working for when she was murdered, was broken into, computers were stolen and members were harassed and threatened. In August, shots were fired at the home of one of the lawyers in the case, and after more telephone threats directed at his children, he was forced to send his family abroad for their safety.

Helen Mack and her compatriots were successful at last, and the trial started on September 3, 2002, in the Guatemalan Supreme Court. It ended one month later with the conviction of one of the officers, who was sentenced to 30 years.

The Mack case is key to challenging the Guatemalan military's long reign of impunity, and this outcome will have an effect on future cases brought forward against human rights crimes committed

during Guatemala's civil war. It is unprecedented that high level commanders have had to answer directly in a Guatemalan court for a murder carried out by state agents.

In our role as accompaniers (see below) Karla and I (SEK) listened also as the retired head of military intelligence in Peru testified to the training that all of the Latin American military officers had received in the School of the Americas in the US, and how the murder of Myrna Mack fit the pattern of suppression advocated in the manual from the SOA. (see box, SOA Watch)

Guatemala's tragic past continues to haunt the present as political crimes—which are seldom successfully investigated and punished—persist against those seeking justice for rights violations. This trial is a step towards a brighter future for Guatemala.

What is Accompaniment?

In his book, Unarmed Bodyguards, Liam Mahoney proposes that accompaniment can be both protective and a source of hope. Personal, protective accompaniment is based on the premise that there will be an international response to any violence that the accompanier may witness, a response that may include diplomatic and economic pressure that the perpetrators of violence may wish to avoid.

Accompaniment of groups or communities can provide a link to the international community: "Victims of human rights abuse are frequently those attempting to organize social change movements that question their society's powerful elites. An international presence can be a source of hope to these activists. It assures them that they are not alone, that their work is important, and that their suffering will not go unnoticed by the outside world. The volunteer's presence not only protects but also encourages." (Mahoney)

The prosecution participants in the Mack trial went to NISGUA (Network in

Solidarity with the People of Guatemala), to ask for international protective accompaniment. NISGUA coordinates both personal and organizational accompaniment for people at risk in Guatemala.

My daughter Karla and I volunteered to serve as accompaniers for a short time during the trial. It involved being present at the side of one of the witnesses every time she changed her location in the city. Doña C. is the director of AVANCSO, the organization mentioned above, and was a personal friend of both Myrna and Helen Mack. It was an honor for us to accompany this woman of amazing courage and great dignity. It was so humbling to realize her personal sacrifice of security in the struggle for human rights, and think of the outrage we as Americans feel at any loss of our national "security".

Go to the NISGUA website, www.nisgua.org to learn more about serving as an accompanier in Guatemala.

A Day in the Life of a Campesino by Tom Bewick

August 2002

Fronterizo 10 de Mayo

It's pure darkness. So dark you have no sense of spatial relativity although you can feel you're laying on wooden planks next to your wife under a mosquito net and you hear the light patter of rain on the roof with the chorus of thousands of insects. Then you hear the faint hum of a motor—it's the molino (corn grinder) up the hill signaling the beginning of the day in Fronterizo. This has been your wife's call to duty for years and she instinctively shifts next to you and rises silently. Shortly afterwards your four children, who all share the wooden plank bed next to yours, begin to rouse as well. The baby wails. Your pregnant wife must calm the infant while she gathers a basin of soaked corn kernels to take up the hill to the molino, where all the women line up to shove wet corn down a funnel to be ground into the masa that will make the tortillas for breakfast and lunch.

The sun is peaking over the hill across the river and light is breaking through the cracks in the walls as you dive into your eggs and tortillas, eating heartily in anticipation of the upcoming workday. Your wife is struggling to feed the baby while making sure the other children have enough to eat and drink. The two older kids pack their notebook and pencil into their hand woven bags and head up to the one-room wooden schoolhouses. Your wife prepares you an empty Coke bottle full of rice milk and some tortillas that will be lunch. If it were harvest or planting season, the family would all accompany you.

Despite the overnight rains, it looks like the morning will be sunny—which means hot—so an early start is a good start. Today your goal is to clean the weeds out from your cornfield, a task you hope to finish today so you have a day off to make a 5 hour trip to Barillas, the regional municipality, to pick up

some household supplies and medicine for your wife. She has been experiencing stomach pains and the meager selection at the community clinic hasn't helped.

It's a 30-minute hike through the jungle to your parcela (small plot of land). The path this time of year is deep mud and each step sinks into the ground nearly a foot, sometimes

Tom just hanging out with storekeeper in Fronterizo

higher than your rubber boots causing them to fill with mud and water. At one point you feel a sharp sting on your ankle and tear your boot off. A leaf-cutter ant is stuck in there and digging its incisors into your skin in panic. While you rub your wound Miguel trots by on his horse.

"Good day," he calls out cheerfully.

"Good day," you call back without looking up. He is on his way up the hill to his cardamom field. You haven't planted cardamom, and given the fact that it takes three years to produce you don't plan on starting any. Who knows if you'll even be here in three years? It's best just to focus on corn and beans. Corn and beans feed the family. What if the price of cardamom drops like coffee? What good is it then? All that work would be for nothing. Miguel will have to sell his horse to buy your beans. Though it's rarely spoken of, the threat of being displaced again is always in the back of

everyone's mind. You work the land as if it were your own, but when it comes down to making long-term calculations, the worries inevitably creep up. Any long-term investments into your land or community could be nullified with the stroke of a pen in some big city. These fears have intensified of late as rumors have spread regarding plans to damn the Ixcán River for hydroelectric power. This would put your parcela, and Fronterizo, under water. (see article on PPP, cover page).....

You walk up to the first row of corn, pull away a large weed with the clearing tool, and slice with the machete. Then the next one; you pull and slice. Each breath is heavy as you pull in hot, dense air. Whenever you break from your rhythm to catch a breath the mosquitoes land on your neck and arms.

You normally enjoy your lunch in your corn champa (little hut) located just outside the field, but today you eat quickly. Yesterday the dark clouds came chugging in right after lunch and you worked right through the rain. This is still better than the dry season, where temperatures regularly hover around 37C (100F) and can reach 44 (113F). The early afternoon is the worst of the heat and your only thought is to finish. Sure enough, just as you start towards home, the rain starts out with a couple of drops, which are followed by buckets of rain. Well, you're going to be wet anyway so why rush, and after a few minutes it dies down to a light sprinkle. Hey, there's the accompanier. "Hey Tomas," you shout. He is covered in mud and looks bewildered.

"Good afternoon," he says politely. "What did you do today?"

"Well," you begin, "I cleaned my corn."

"Hmmmmmmm, cleaning the

corn. Did you finish?"

"Yep, and tomorrow I'm heading up to Barillas. You should join me, Tomas."

"No, I am very busy tomorrow. Yes, a lot of things to do."

What could he possibly be busy with? You wonder what he does all day. Tomas is a nice guy but he sure is strange. That's just the way gringos are.

As you approach the village you hear the roar of a chainsaw, that chainsaw with the 3-foot blade that Sebastian bought to make boards. Sebastian just returned from six months working in El Norte and has all kinds of money.

You contemplate working up north. You could buy your own chainsaw, paint, and who knows what else. You could support your kids to go to a high school, which doesn't exist in Fronterizo. They could have some dental work done; you could finally buy some things for the house, like a solar panel, which could supply lights and a radio. The possibilities are endless. Maybe next year.....

A bit later your family returns from the river. As your wife hangs out the wet clothes, she explains that the education committee asked her again about the Q10 contribution you owe for the morning snack for the children. She mentions that she heard from Maria that the committee had pocketed several quetzales when they traveled to buy school materials and food. Though you are slightly inclined to believe this, you will come up with the money to avoid getting involved in the conflict. Everybody is hard up this time of year because no crops are being harvested. The money you made from selling beans last April has dried up and you have been scraping by on pennies for weeks. You'll just have to skip lunch on your trip to Barillas tomorrow.

Your 3 year-old jumps on top of you in play. It's your first truly pleasurable moment of the day and you're happy. Happy because

the corn has been cleaned, your workday is done, and despite your problems you can feed your family. Your son begins humming a song he learned at pre-school and you hum along.

In the late afternoon you join other men for a game of football (soccer) but the game winds down and comes to a halt when a couple of confused goats run onto the field. It was getting dark anyway and you're hungry. As you approach the house you can see the glow of the fire and you're starving. Fresh tortillas are on the grill and beans are simmering. As the family eats, you and your wife discuss your trip to Barillas tomorrow and what supplies you'll be able to pick up. Though Barillas is your official municipality, it takes over 8 hours to get there, and three of those are hiked. But the real problem is cost.

Round trip will cost nearly 10US\$. You haven't made that much in the last 2 weeks.

It's dark again, the candles are lit, and the insect chorus starts up again. The rest of the town is silent. The long day in the hot sun hits you. It's time to lie down. Tomorrow you have to wake up at 3am, figure out a way to get across the river and hike to Monaco, where, with luck, you'll catch a ride to Barillas. It will be nice to be on the road and have a break from the fields after 7 days straight of hard work. It will be a hungry and tiring day nonetheless.

I wanted to try to give you an idea of life in Fronterizo. It is based on a composite character from my own experiences, observations, and conversations. I hope you found it interesting. I have been fortunate to have the time to notice the details
Take care, Tom



Day Care Continues In Fronterizo

Update: medicine, pots,
CCGAP tax-free!

We were pleased to find that the day care centers in both Fronterizo and Ixtahuacan Chiquito are operating, and were even more pleased when we received word that Rights Action, another NGO that gives grants to small

The women of Fronterizo and Ixtahuacan Chiquito pose for a photo after dividing the supplies and toys donated by CCGAP.

grassroots efforts, is taking over their support for the year of 2003. The grant includes training for the teachers and the mid-morning snack for the children. CCGAP will continue to donate toys and materials for both day care centers, and medicine (thanks to one of our supporters, Ellen Derber, for donations of medicine) for the clinic in Fronterizo.

The health promoters have also requested a special grant to buy a large pot for every family in the community to boil water. CCGAP hasn't quite figured out how we are going to do this, but we are grateful to the first United Methodist Church of Hancock for their donation of \$500 to start this fund. At least another \$500 will be needed.

More news: A list of available scholarships for students in the Ixcan region was compiled by NISGUA/GAP and has already proven beneficial; one of the teachers earned a scholarship to continue her studies for a certificate.

CCGAP has been approved for tax-deductible status— 501(c)3. !!

Experience of a Lifetime *by Shirley Bewick*

After my son, Tom, went to Fronterizo in February to be an accompanier, I started contemplating the idea of going to visit him when the school year was over. I knew that I would probably never have another opportunity to have such an experience. Once I made the commitment to go (buying my airplane ticket) I became anxious about the trip. I was afraid that I would not be able to handle the physical demands and the style of living Tom had described.

Actually getting to the village took us three days. On the second morning of the journey, I told Tom I would not ride in the back of a pickup truck to get to the next town. By the middle of the following day, I was laughing at that statement. It was one of many things I did that I had never done before but did do out of necessity. I had never slept on boards with an injured scorpion underneath the "bed". I had never washed my clothes in a river. I had never walked almost two hours to get fresh spring water to drink, and I had never had the indescribable opportunities to interact with children and adults as welcoming, warm, and gracious as those of Fronterizo.

Having been a teacher for the past 29 years, it was no surprise that the children of the village fasci-

nated me. I was impatient to get into the classrooms to do activities with them and meet the teachers. Tom had to team with me as I hardly know any Spanish. We started out by teaching the kindergarten class a Spanish song. The children were fast learners and so enthusiastic once

caught on, they were running up to show us their answers with smiling faces and flashing bright eyes.

During a morning break, I taught the kids "Duck, Duck, Goose". I was often picked as the goose because I think they loved watching me run and fall down chasing them.

They would actually roll over with laughter at my antics. Being kind of wild and crazy was not one of the characteristics I noticed of the mothers in Fronterizo. Life has to be more serious as their survival depends on it.

More than the differences, the similarities of these children and those of the US jumped out at me. Their love for laughter, praise, challenges, and their sense of pride were very evident. I feel very lucky to have had the privilege to spend time in

Fronterizo.

My experience had a great impact on me and will certainly influence my teaching next fall. I plan to stay connected on some level with the wonderful work of CCGAP. Tears came to my eyes when I left because I felt so fortunate to have learned a little about the lives of these people, seen the natural beauty of Guatemala, and most of all, spent this very special time with my son. I gained huge respect for what he and CCGAP are doing in Guatemala. The world is a better place because of it.

Shirley Bewick demonstrates some math.



they got over their shyness. We continued to go into all the classrooms. Some of the children knew the song before we even got to their class as word seems to spread quickly in Fronterizo. At 6:00 each morning we then heard them singing as they waited for school to start. It was a pleasant wakeup alarm.

By the second day, the children were clapping when Tom and I arrived. That never happens here! We did a math lesson with the older students which at first was difficult for them to understand. Once they

Thank you

These people gave to CCGAP since the last newsletter. Thank you, people!

Barbara Bell
Candy & Rolf Peterson
Chuck Harris
Ciro & Sandra Sandoval
Craig Kurtz

Dana Richter & Sharon Levine
Ellen Derber
Joan Chadde
Karl Kingsley
Ken & Susie Kraft
Kerry Harris
Leonard & Velma Kingsley
Linda Rulison
Mary Hindelang & Mark Silver
Mel Driller
Merle Kindred
Mitch & Ann Kingsley
Nancy Bean

Nancy Bowen
Rebecca Sandretto
Robert & Nancy Korth
Robert & Viola Brown
Terry Vozel
William & Sally Anderson
Zvi Flanders
Deb Barth
Paul & Audrey Frair
Jo Foley
Janice Klemp
Paula & Terry Monson
Kevin & Jean Walsh

Robert & Joan Kaeiser
Donald Pawlowski
Anonymous
Liala Leskela
Ginger Alberti
Lake Superior Society
of Friends
First United Methodists
of Hancock
Members of Linda Rulison's
social studies class



The Copper Country Guatemala Accompaniment Project (CCGAP) is a group of organizations and individuals who form a sponsoring community for the Guatemalan village of Fronterizo 10 de Mayo, a community established on the 10th of May 1995 by a group of refugees who returned to Guatemala after 12-15 years in refugee camps in Mexico. CCGAP is committed to maintaining a long-term relationship with Fronterizo by recruiting and financially supporting accompaniers to live in the community as human rights observers in accordance with the agreements signed by the Guatemalan government in 1992. CCGAP endeavors to strengthen the ties between our communities and express our solidarity with Fronterizo by developing individual relationships and by giving financial support to small projects planned by the Guatemala community. We offer educational talks on Guatemala to groups here in the Copper Country along with the opportunity to become involved in this community-to-community relationship with the Mayan indigenous people of Guatemala.

The Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP) is sponsored by the national organization, NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala). All donations to CCGAP are used to support accompaniers in Fronterizo and small community projects as requested by the members of Fronterizo. Some of our funds are used for newsletter printing and postage.

A GIFT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA

____ YES I want to contribute towards human rights accompaniment in Guatemala

__ \$10 __ \$25 __ \$50 __ \$100 __ \$ ____ other

Name: _____

Address: _____

Make tax-deductible donations to CCGAP

Send to CCGAP treasurer

Floyd Henderson, 58877 Lakeshore Dr, Calumet MI 49913

New Accompanier!

CCGAP has just gotten the news that we've been assigned a new accompanier! His name is Hale Sargent, he's been living in Washington DC and has served in the Peace Corps in Armenia. He also spent time in Mexico and speaks Spanish, but is going to study the language for several weeks in November before heading out to the jungle.

Hale writes, "I'd like the Guatemalan people to know they're not alone in their struggle for justice....I'd like them to feel more connected to the international community and to have a positive opinion of American people. I'd like to leave the community (Fronterizo) a more empowered place than when I arrived."

Hale probably won't have a chance to visit us in the Copper Country before he leaves but we'll look forward to meeting him on his return in 2003.

CCGAP Changes *continued from page 1*

intimidation attacks, and assassination. In Latin America, Guatemala is second only to Colombia in the rate of human rights abuses.

Since the main purpose of CCGAP is to sponsor accompaniment, we discussed whether we might better sponsor it in another setting, that is, with one of the many organizations that have requested a protective presence in recent months. (See the Mack Trial story, page 1)

A proposal from NISGUA/GAP seemed to offer a way for us to continue somewhat less intensive accompaniment in Fronterizo and at the same time free up other accompaniers to fill the needs in urban settings. The suggestion was for regional accompaniment, where one or two accompaniers would maintain a presence in a larger region that contains several returned refugee communities, a concept that wasn't new for us as we have sponsored regional accompaniment once before.

I had the opportunity to present this idea to the members of Fronterizo when Karla and I were there to visit in September. The reaction there was mostly in favor of having their own accompanier, reasoning that they are so isolated that they worry that no one would know if there were any human rights infractions, and that they feel very insecure on the land that is not theirs, afraid that they may be evicted at any time. We pointed out that since they had dissolved their land committee they weren't actively working on the land ownership issue themselves. They agreed that they needed to take more responsibility for working on this, but of course we all realize that it's not easy.

In any case, CCGAP has just been assigned another accompanier. (see story this page) Hale will be based in Fronterizo and will be looking in on the neighboring communities of Los Angeles and Ixtahuacan Chiquito. He will also be available temporarily if any urgent needs for accompaniment elsewhere arise during his tenure.

It costs over \$3000 to support an accompanier for six months, including health insurance, travel expenses, and office/staff support in Guatemala City. We are so grateful for the generous people who support CCGAP with gifts of all kinds. CCGAP lost one of our most loyal supporters this year when Bob Brown passed away. Many will remember having had \$5.00 wheedled out of their pockets by Bob at the last CCGAP fund-raiser. Thanks, Bob. We miss you.



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PLAN PUEBLA PANAMA



Despite its name, Plan Puebla Panama is actually a combination of several plans developed to connect southern Mexico and all seven Central American countries into one regional, integrated “megaproject”. Although most of the specifics and details are closely guarded or yet undetermined, it is clear that PPP will include one enormous north-to-south industrial and transportation “development corridor” covering the entire region of 102 million square kilometers and 63 million citizens. It will also include five east-to-west, coast-to-coast “dry canal” corridors, the final placement of which is undisclosed. Yet the region contains vast cultural and biological diversity, from the lush rainforests in the north to the rare ecosystems of the delicate isthmus of Costa Rica and Panama.

Governments, corporations, oil refineries and international institutions have joined forces to launch this plan to connect all major development zones from Puebla in southern Mexico to Panama. Funding is coming from the World Bank, InterAmerican Development Bank and Central American Development Bank. The funds would be invested in new highways, ports, airport expansion, hydroelectric power plants, multiple dams, telecommunications, gas and oil pipelines and massive industrial development and factories (maquilas). One report is that over 3 billion dollars have already been pledged to begin the work.

However, a wide variety of concerned public interest organizations, NGOs, citizen groups and others have joined together to learn more about the plan and to protect the interests of the communities, citizens and environment. The plan could irrevocably damage the entire region—rich in culture, biodiversity and natural resources—through rampant ecological devastation, exploitation of natural resources, vast displacement of native communities and increased militarization throughout the region.

To find out more go to www.acerca.org or call ACERCA 802-863-0571