



# Spring 2005 Newsletter

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## Message from "El Presidente" – Newell Hudson

Welcome readers to this our first publication of 2005. We hope that you will find it informs you of the work of Sombrilla Refugee Support Society (Sombrilla) and that you will find it an enjoyable read. Two more newsletters will be published this year. Sombrilla is an Edmonton based non-governmental organization which was incorporated in the province of Alberta in June 1986. Sombrilla is also a registered charity with the Charity Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency. Sombrilla's mission is to work with our Southern partners for sustainable grassroots development. Our goals this year are to expand our membership base; to develop a strong core of volunteers and to find new Southern partners. If the spirit of volunteerism runs in your blood, remember that Sombrilla is the place for you. Sombrilla will take under its umbrella any organization which shares its core values; however, Sombrilla does not subscribe to any political ideology nor does it subscribe to any religious theology. Sombrilla is non-partisan and a non-sectarian organization.

## Whose Development?

By Alvaro Loyola

The 11<sup>th</sup> of January, 2005 brought an end to a month long blockade of a major highway in the junction of Los Encuentros in the Guatemalan department of Solola. A large number of demonstrators, primarily Indigenous campesinos (farmer/peasants) faced off against approximately 1800 members of Guatemala's security forces composed of the National Civil Police (PNC) and Guatemalan military units. Local media reports at least one death and various injuries resulting from violent exchanges between the two groups.

### Glamis Gold Limited

In July 2003 Glamis filed a Notice of Intent under Chapter 11 of NAFTA of a US\$50 million claim against the United States for actions taken by the state of California intended to protect the environment and Indigenous communities from the impacts of open-pit mining. The claim was submitted to arbitration in December 2003. The company argues that it deserves compensation for the laws' impacts on its mining project in California's Imperial Valley.

Source: *MiningWatch Canada*

The intent of the blockade was to keep mining equipment from reaching the Marlin Project site in the county of San Miguel Ixtahuacan in the department of San Marcos. The project is owned by Montana Exploradora de Guatemala, S.A. a 100% subsidiary of the Canadian company Glamis Gold Limited. The Marlin project has an anticipated life of 10 years and is currently in preparation stages with operation to commence in the final quarter of 2005. In accordance with Guatemalan law, a royalty of 1% will be left for local community development activities. The project has recently received a US\$45 million loan/equity from the private lending arm of the World Bank Group.

A number of campesino organizations from the San Miguel and from throughout the country have raised their voice in resistance to the Marlin project. Carlos Arriaza, a representative from the National Coordination of Campesino Organizations (CNO), attributes the death and violence of the 11<sup>th</sup> of January to the National Civil Police (PNC), the Guatemalan government as well as the Montana Exploradora de Guatemala, S.A. In the opinion of CNO, the public was not consulted adequately in regards to the mining project and was deceived by the company during the process of land acquisition, which has resulted in a clear violation of indigenous rights.

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Field Worker Tara Kamp assisting Felician Cruz (Reproductive Health Worker) with materials for health promoters

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, 2005 the Catholic Church of Guatemala by way of the Episcopal Conference (CEG) declared its opposition to the Mining Project, stating that the project failed to meet the necessary consultation requirements before beginning site preparation. Referring specifically to Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization, the Bishop of San Marcos, Alvaro Ramazzini, highlighted that Article 7 clearly recognizes the right of Indigenous peoples "to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development. In addition, they shall participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for national and regional development which may affect them directly."

A Canadian government official has defended the mining project, considering it an important component of Canadian economic interests in the mining sector in Guatemala. In an attempt to ensure respect for international environmental and social norms the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala has established a Multi-sector Committee dedicated to defending the Canadian economic interests involved. It has the responsibility of meeting regularly with Canadian companies (including Glamis) in order to create awareness of the political, economic and cultural context of the country as well as insisting upon respect for environmental and social norms. On November 4<sup>th</sup> of 2004, James Lambert, Canadian Ambassador to Guatemala, publicly expressed his support of Canadian mining in Guatemala in an opinion piece published in the national newspaper *Prensa Libre*, positing that mining activities in Canada have had positive economic and social impacts in 1200 Aboriginal communities in Canada; suggesting that similar results are possible in Guatemala. *Continued on Page 3*

## First Impressions

By Diana Coumantarakis

I was asked to write a small article for the Sombrilla newsletter, telling of some of my first impressions of Nebaj. What an overwhelming task. Everything seems so new, to sum it up in an article, is quite the task. So, I will begin at the beginning and hope that you can see some of this journey through my eyes, understanding that everything is still quite new and my first impressions continue to grow by the minute...

As I got off the bus, shaking out my stiff legs and brushing off some of the journey's dust, I looked around. All around me was the beauty of Nebaj. The mountains that rise up all around Nebaj were tipped in clouds. It appeared to be threatening rain, which seemed inconceivable in the dust, but a few days later produced that rain in buckets. The sun was beginning to set as we arrived, so we found a place for me to stay, had some dinner and crashed for the night – it was a long day.

The following morning came early. Roosters crowing, busses in the street – honking their passage, children playing and the general commerce of the day beginning. I headed over to the market to scout out some breakfast. *Piñas*, *mandarinas*, *bananos*, *naranjas* – fruit and veggies everywhere! There is food, clothing, household items, soap, tools... anything one could need, and set out in a maze along the streets.

After a morning of attempting to get my bearings I met up again with Tara, and moved my stuff into my new home. We had lunch with my



Sombrilla's Current Guatemala Field Workers in front of the Office of ADIM – CPR Sierra

Diana Coumantarakis (left)  
Tara Kamp (right)

new roommate, Catty, and then went to see the Sombrilla-ADIM office. I have met many kind and friendly people since my arrival and am trying to sort out who is who. Thankfully everyone is being very forgiving of any errors I am making with names and other little details while I try to make as few as possible.

It has been two weeks since I arrived and Nebaj is starting to feel more like home. I learn something new every day and meet more people at each step. The work of Sombrilla becomes a little clearer and more inspiring each day. Part of what I have been doing since I arrived here is getting acquainted with the history and work of ADIM, Sombrilla, and the CPR's. This has involved a lot of reading, but is also apparent in the interactions between people, and the collage of languages around Nebaj. There is a lot happening here and I am looking forward to learning more and participating in the process. I feel fortunate to be able to be here, working along side people who have committed their lives to creating a peaceful world in their communities.

## La Realidad es por Siempre

Por María Catalina Rivera Zuñiga

Que se puede decir de los proyectos que Sombrilla ha estado financiando en Guatemala y en especial en el Área Ixil? Los proyectos han sido de mucha ayuda para la gente que lo necesita, ya que ha venido fortaleciendo a las comunidades de una u otra forma.

El proyecto de Salud Primaria ha sido uno de los proyectos grandes que se ha ejecutado y se han visto necesidades y también se han visto algunas soluciones, digo algunas; porque se sabe que hablar de Salud y tratar de combatir las enfermedades es muy difícil; pero sin embargo las charlas de prevención que se han dado a la gente y una clínica que quede cerca, es de esta forma el logro de los objetivos del proyecto. Que la gente misma de las comunidades sepa combatir las diferentes clases de enfermedades que asecha, no desde que ya están enfermos, sino cuando no hay señal de ello todavía.

El Proyecto de Derechos Humanos es mas, viene y siguiera fortaleciendo los derechos de las comunidades a solicitar, a decir y hablar de todo lo que le pasa, conociendo cuales son sus obligaciones y sus responsabilidades.

Se ha visto que los proyectos han hecho bastante y se ha visto también, que hay mucho por hacer para que nuestras comunidades salgan de esa opresión en donde están ahora. Así como hay mucha gente que quiere lo bueno para esas comunidades, también se ha visto que hay mucha gente que trata de aprovechar de la situación. Para superar todo esto es necesario apoyar de alguna forma; así como se ha venido haciendo con los proyectos ya descritos.

Digo esto porque soy una persona que trabaja y ha trabajado en los proyectos y se ve el resultado y avance, talvez no resultados tangibles, sino, con el hecho que la gente defienda lo que es suyo y el índice de mortalidad no es igual, cuando se inicio el proyecto.

*María Catalina Rivera Zuñiga is the financial administrator for Sombrilla's Guatemalan Partner ADIM-CPR Sierra*

## Update from the Field

By Tara Kamp

I have been reflecting on the many accomplishments and successes of our projects, both Health and Human Rights, of Sombrilla and ADIM in 2004. Some of the highlights of last year's projects included the legalization of women's committees, a Mayan Priest conference, the construction of a new clinic in the community of Estrella Polar, a course for community midwives, recognized Ministry of Health and a staff trip to Tikal.

Women's committees were formed in all 11 communities attended to by the project, and 7 committees were legalized, thus recognized by the municipal government and in a position to manage projects and have a women's voice represent their respective communities. This was celebrated in a women's conference held in October, 2004, where representatives from the 11 women's committees gathered in our Nebaj office in order to share the experiences of CPR women. Some women walked over 10 hours to attend the conference. It was a major success.

The Mayan Priests of the CPR communities also participated in a 15-day course (3 days each month for 5 months) in the ADIM office in Nebaj. This course covered topics such as environmentalism, medicinal plant gardens, making remedial balms, alcoholism, and Mayan spiritualism. At the end of the course, the Mayan Priests spent a day in the hospital in Nebaj, exchanging experiences with Medical Doctors.

In 2004, ADIM and Sombrilla expanded the reach of their project to include the community of Estrella Polar as participants in both the Health and Human Rights project. A clinic was built by the project, which included courses for Health Promoters in the area.

The Midwives of the 11 communities participated in a yearlong course which resulted in their roles as healthcare providers was finally being recognized by the Ministry of Health. Each Midwife received a certificate signed by the Ministry of Health, along with a number of materials to support them in their work. Midwives attend to more than 90% of births in the communities.

The year ended with a staff trip to the Mayan Temples of TIKAL! Thanks to Sombrilla, workers in both the Health and Human Rights project were able to go on an educational and cultural trip to Tikal to see and hear the legends of their "antepasados" (ancestors). It was the perfect way the end the year.

*Continued on Page 3*

## The Affects of the World Bank and IMF in Argentina

By Rodrigo Loyola

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the two most powerful institutions in global trade and finance. Since 1980, the United States government, which dominates both these bodies has used them to economically subjugate the under-developed world, one of the countries most drastically affected has been Argentina. So how did this "poster child" for neo-liberal economic globalization fall into chaos? For the past two decades the World Bank and the IMF have been creating the conditions that benefit Western corporations and governments through what are known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The SAPs are a four-step reform program.

The first step is capital market liberalization. In the Argentine process this meant pegging the Argentine peso in a one-to-one relationship with the U.S. dollar. This was done to keep inflation low and to make deficit spending difficult, in the hope of attracting and comforting foreign investors. However, capital market liberalization allows capital to flow in and out across borders and when Argentina's economy began to wobble, money simply poured out.

Secondly, the IMF/World Bank implement a regime of privatization. Argentina throughout the nineties sold off what Argentines refer to as "las joyas de mi abuela", grandmother's jewels: the state's oil, gas, water and electric companies as well as the state banks. In 1994 Argentina even partially privatized its social security system, diverting much of it into private accounts. The US-based Center for Economic and Policy Research calculated the revenue loss from this decision alone to be almost equal to the nation's budget deficit during the same period.

The third activity of the neo-liberal economic push is market-based pricing. The main target of this effort is labour. In a report titled "Country Assistance Strategies" by the World Bank and IMF it states that in Argentina labour costs (i.e. wages) had fallen due to labor market flexibility induced by the de facto liberalization of the market via increased informality." This basically translates to: workers who lost unionized jobs were forced into ad hoc arrangements, with far less protection. The World Bank/IMF response to this was to suggest to the Argentine government that they decentralize collective bargaining. As a result of the implementation the jobless figure in Buenos Aires increased from 17 percent to 22 percent in the year after the World Bank issued their report.

Step four of the World Bank/IMF program is free trade. In Argentina's situation the powers that be required that the government accept "an open trade policy." As the recession set, Argentina's exporters, whose products were effectively priced, via the peg in US dollars, were forced into a unequal competition against Brazilian goods priced in the devalued currency of Brazil.

So why is Sombrilla in Argentina? Due to Structural Adjustment Programs in Argentina, the lives of the majority of the people of Argentina have

been gradually sinking deeper and deeper into insecurity, poverty, hunger and unemployment as the country entered into a crisis of historical proportions. The middle class is gradually disappearing from the social fabric of the society and the working class has been impoverished. One of the regions hardest hit by this crisis is the province of Entre Rios, where Sombrilla is currently working. In this province, the industrial and the agricultural sectors have experienced severe financial difficulties that have led to many closures and worker lay-offs. Small farming operations have been severely crippled. Unemployment rates have risen to dramatic levels, averaging between 35% - 40% in this area.

Entre Rios was chosen as the site for the current project because of the many years of economic devastation it has experienced. School-aged children have been quitting school to help their families to get food on their tables. Some of these children have been collecting garbage just to gather food scraps and food waste from the city garbage in a desperate move to quell their hunger. The paradox is that schools have been forced to discontinue their lunch programs; programs that would have kept these children in school. The social consequences of forcing children out of school to fend for themselves are severe; a future generation of uneducated and unhealthy adults as a result of economic crisis.

The local socio-political context is similar to the majority of rural Latin American communities. A small elite group of well educated and financially stable local citizens control the circle of political influence and decision-making apparatus, such as the municipal government and the representatives to the National Congress. The majority of the residents have little access to political power or influence over decision-making.

In response to the socio-economic crisis, Argentineans are organizing at the local and community levels to work for a more hopeful future. Sombrilla is currently working with Caritas-Parana in order to implement a two-year community gardening project. This project is providing agricultural training for individuals of more than 10 communities, as well as improving food security for children and families alike. Moreover, the project ensures that children stay in school. Currently Sombrilla is 10 months into the project and the Parana has established 29 family, community and school plots out of the 77 planned in the project. They are also in the process of training 19 participants to tend the agricultural plots.

This Project is a shining example of how communities can empower themselves, obtaining access to the resources they need to help themselves. They don't need a loan with strings attached. What they do need is help accessing resources. The struggle to implement alternative economic, political, and cultural systems is to improve life. Our partners stopped believing in the World Bank and the IMF along time ago, when are we (the Global North) going to do the same?

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## Whose Development? *Continued from page 1*

The events of January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005 are manifestations of the frustrations felt by campesinos that have no choice but to participate in the process of globalization, which continues to transform the relationship between state and market in profound ways. The Marlin Project represents a classic Latin American example of private interests superseding those of local campesino populations with the support of the traditional aristocracy, which fails to leave even the slightest trail of democratic accountability. Although Convention 169 legally entitles local indigenous organizations to participate in the development of their region, the government of Guatemala has not succeeded in even consulting adequately with them. The absurdity of the 1% royalty almost matches its offensiveness when considering the potential environmental and social costs to be incurred by the local residents of San Miguel Ixtahuacan. In order for development to be sustainable it must have the full support of the local population with clear benefits identified for the local population that is assuming the costs. If not, whose development is it? The decision by local campesino organizations to continue peaceful protests is reassuring, while the support given to the project by the Government of Canada remains unsettling.

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## Update from the Field *Continued from page 2*

In the New Year, 2005 we are planning to continue the activities from the 2004 Health Project. For the next few months we will be doing monitoring activities of the health project, including the clinics, medicinal plant gardens, preventative health workshops and participating in the County Health Authority meetings for the County of Chajul. More exhumations will take place this year in Santa Clara and Mirador. This will involve the participation of the communities, national institutions, international institutions, local anthropologists, archaeologists, and both national and international press. Sombrilla has also been invited to participate in the exhumation activities and will support these events as much as possible.

Sombrilla has the pleasure of working with a worthy, admirable and hard-working organization here in the Ixil region. ADIM and Sombrilla's work is recognized by the Canadian Embassy here, in Guatemala, and their continued support is always appreciated.



## The Joshua Thompson Story

By Enneke Lorberg

This is a story about my visit as a community and school global coordinator for Sombrilla Refugee Support Society to Archbishop McNeil School, where the Vice-Principal had invited me to do a series of presentations and demonstrations about water for the School Earth Day. This school visit became a very special event that I will never forget! It became one of the most inspiring highlights of the year.

For Earth Day we chose to focus on water. Clean water is a major global issue for all citizens of this planet called Earth, including citizens of all ages, especially elementary and junior high school youngsters! I did some thorough planning and tried to get the undivided attention of students from grade one up to grade eight. The plan the Vice-Principal and I agreed upon was to have me deliver a series of sessions about the water issues to at the classes at this school.

I decided to bring some typical examples of really dirty water to the various classes that were waiting for me. I took extremely attractive, almost elegant glass cups and saucers from my home and in the early morning before taking off I made dirty water with some soil from my own backyard while reflecting about the real problems that people in the Global South are facing everyday, not having access to safe drinking water. At the beginning of the various classroom presentations held in the library and the gymnasium (where all the students gathered for the series of sessions throughout the day), I poured the dirty water out right in front of the students. They had great interest in my dramatized stories about water. However, when I urged them to taste a cup of 'global water,' they all refused with some nice smiles. Then I pretended that I could purify that same water by letting it run through a tea sieve and even a very clean coffee filter made of sterilized paper. But of course the kids kept refusing and laughing!

Then we discussed the whole issue of why so many kids in the world have no access to safe water and how this is causing so many diseases and deaths for many millions all over the world. This group exercise made everyone start to think. How on earth is it possible that kids in different parts of the world cannot even go to school until they have carried each day's water over a long distance for their families? Furthermore, this cumbersome task is a daily job only for women and girls.

I also showed them how the Maya are living with far less water and are respecting water as their most crucial source of life. I showed pictures of Maya people and houses collecting water in rain barrels to save every drop of rain for the long hot summer days of total dryness.

Three weeks later I was phoned by the school and heard some great and exciting news the blew me away! A boy in a class I spoke to had started collecting many pennies all over the place to help the Maya in their need for safe water! A seven year old grade two student managed to fundraise \$450 in just a few weeks! **His name is Joshua Thompson!**

I was called back to the school and had a wonderfully inspiring interview with him during which he told me a great detail about how much he believes in the power of pennies and doing good for the world. He impressed me greatly with his enthusiasm and sincerity. He was an eager beaver global citizen for sure! He had managed to put his whole family and school to work collecting and counting huge piles of pennies and could mathematically explain how small pennies add up to big numbers. He gave me more inspiration to go on bringing the message of a global shortage of water to many more schools.

This story must be told over and over again to inspire other people, both young and old. It is simply a most beautiful happening that can result when you go hit a chord with just one young person who can immediately grasp a global problem and start doing something about it before the day is over. Enneke Lorberg is still in awe of Joshua!

Much thanks to our long time partners:

 Canadian International Development Agency

 Wild Rose FOUNDATION



Ixil Children from the Community of Mirador in the County of Chajul, Guatemala

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