Guatemala won its independence from Spain in 1821. Located between the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean, where it borders Mexico, Guatemala has a tropical climate. With 16 million people, it is the most populous country in Central America. Tourists flock to the country’s three active volcanoes, where they can watch the lava flow and even bathe in the steam of volcanic vents. A popular food there is topado, which is a stew of fish, coconut, bananas and cilantro.

Peace returned to the land in 1996, following 36 years of guerilla war that rendered 200,000 casualties and one million refugees. One-third of Guatemalans work in agriculture, where they harvest and export coffee, sugar, bananas and other crops. Guatemala is also the world’s top supplier of jade. Yet poverty is widespread, particularly concentrated among indigenous groups, which results in continued migration to North America. In fact, half of all Guatemalan children under age five lack proper nourishment. Risk of infectious disease also runs high. The country endures significant trafficking of heroin and cocaine.

While 60% of Guatemalans are mestizo (a blend of American Indian and European heritage), the remaining 40% is almost entirely Mayan. Long before the Spanish arrived, the Mayan civilization flourished in the land, where many ancient sites remain. Even today, the Mayan language is spoken by 30% of the population, as well as 23 indigenous languages. In fact, despite the prevalence of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, indigenous Mayan beliefs also remain.

Lutheran Hour Ministries conducts outreach in Guatemala through mass media, technology, and interpersonal channels.

**Ministry Response**

There is tremendous opportunity to share God’s love and reach out with the Gospel in Guatemala. Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM–Guatemala) responds to the spiritual hunger across this Central American country through a variety of strategies:

**RADIO.** Weekly radio spots air on a secular radio station in the capital, Guatemala City, and other cities. Aimed toward individuals of all ages, the spots connect daily life topics to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The radio spots also invite listeners to attend events, subscribe to Bible Correspondence Courses (BCCs), and interact on our digital platform, Vivenciar.net.

**TELEVISION.** Thirty-minute children’s specials air during Easter and Christmas on a television station that reaches almost 90% of the Guatemalan population. The programs share the true meaning of the holidays, the hope of Jesus, and offer free ministry resources for children and their parents.
DIGITAL OUTREACH. Young adults gravitate to the internet seeking help, including millions who are curious—or have doubts—about Christianity. The Vivenciar.net website serves as our hub for digital outreach in Guatemala and throughout Latin America. Through Vivenciar, we establish online relationships with individuals and provide biblically-based answers for their lives. Eventually, as God opens their hearts, we share the Gospel with them and guide them into church.

HOLISTIC OUTREACH. Ministry staff brings food and offers spiritual counseling to families who dwell in extreme poverty. Located in Guatemala’s “dry cord,” where weather conditions have blighted their harvests of corn and beans and impacted their livelihood, these individuals need to hear about Christ’s message of hope.

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES. LHM–Guatemala offers Bible Correspondence Courses (BCCs) to introduce the Gospel to people who don’t know Jesus, and to reinforce a biblical understanding for people who do. When someone responds to an outreach activity, LHM–Guatemala will typically invite the respondent to begin a BCC as the next step in his or her spiritual journey. BCCs are available for both children and adults.

AUTOMATED MESSAGING. Twice each month, we send voice messages encouraging recipients to look to Jesus for solutions to their issues. Messages spread awareness of Vivenciar.net, upcoming events, and other ministry programs to help them through their challenges. We also provide the ministry’s phone number, which recipients can call to receive spiritual counseling and prayer.

YOUTH MINISTRY. As adolescents struggle with conflicting moral and social choices, our Project JOEL program tackles tough topics—from relationships to gangs to drugs—in an honest, relevant manner, rooted in God’s love for them. We work with public and private schools to incorporate Project JOEL events. In fact, Project JOEL is endorsed by the Guatemalan government’s Ministry of Education.

Impact

BABY STEPS: How God Used Lutheran Hour Ministries to Help a Single Mother Overcome Addiction

Esly is a single mother. She is 24 years old and lives in Guatemala.

Lutheran Hour Ministries staff first met Esly three years ago, when she showed up at our ministry center (LHM—Guatemala) selling incense sticks. She had a nine-month-old son at home, and peddling thesesticks provided finances necessary to care for him. As we talked to Esly, we learned she struggled with drugs and alcohol. When she left the ministry center that day, change looked doubtful.

One year later, she visited us again. Her son was a year older. Yet Esly’s substance abuse continued. LHM—Guatemala has a small bookstore, where we offer free resources to help individuals face different issues in life. The bookstore manager told her how much God loved her, and that He could usher change into her life. The manager suggested our booklet called, Overcoming Addictions. Esly took the booklet home.

We didn’t hear from Esly for a long time. Years later, she visited us one day—and brought exciting news! The Lord had brought radical change to her life. He had used our ministry booklet as an important component along the way. With joy and gratitude to God, she shared how much it meant to know the ministry staff had kept her in prayer.

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Esly found a local congregation, where she continues to grow in her faith today. Her testimony is simple yet powerful: “For God, there is nothing impossible,” she says.

We rejoice as the Lord brings Esly to maturity in Him!

LHM.ORG/GLOBAL