

The year 2009 saw a landmark victory for activists in Guatemala, as the first-ever sentence for forced disappearance was delivered; NISGUA was actively on the case, providing critical human rights accompaniment. Also this year we stepped up our work for economic and environmental justice, and our Spring Tour elucidated key connections between Guatemala's genocidal war and current schemes to exploit indigenous peoples' land and resources. We invite you to read about each program and share in our successes!

Justice and Accountability Program

Through our Justice and Accountability Program, NISGUA employs **strategic, creative and coordinated grassroots activism and advocacy to pursue justice for human rights abuses**, including those committed during Guatemala's war. We provide information and strategic analysis to our grassroots network and organizational partners to monitor precedent-setting human rights cases and advocate on behalf of Guatemalans working to prosecute those responsible for genocide and other war crimes. This year, we:

- ◆ Organized a **speaking tour for the Historical Memory Initiative**, a grassroots group from the department of Quiché, working to recuperate historical memory in indigenous, rural communities as a tool for future organizing on mega-projects and re-militarization.

- ◆ Collected **over 700 letters** from people in the U.S. demanding respect for community referendums. The Historical Memory Initiative submitted the letters to the Guatemalan Congress and President.

- ◆ With the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission/USA (GHRC), presented over 4,000 letters and postcards calling on President Álvaro Colom to ensure that the Ministry of Defense comply with court orders to **turn over military documents to be used in the genocide cases**. Guatemalan news agency *CERIGUA* covered the joint action in an article on March 11. NISGUA also accompanied public acts held by the Center for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH) and the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR) around the same time. Shortly after these actions, **two of the four military documents were handed in to the judge and a third appeared on the President's desk**.

- ◆ Called on the new U.S. administration to implement a **more just foreign policy** in Latin America and specifically in Guatemala. We invited our base to sign on to a letter asking the Obama administration to close the School of the Americas, support indigenous peoples' rights, develop more humane immigration and security policies, and establish just trade agreements. We also participated in an organizational sign-on letter to the U.S. government with specific asks for U.S. policy in Guatemala.

- ◆ Provided valuable on-the-ground information to U.S.-based partner groups for **urgent actions and organizational sign-on letters**, including a letter to the Minister of the Interior calling for the reinstatement of workers recently laid off from a unit in charge of systematizing information on femicide cases and human rights attacks. Major Guatemalan newspaper *El Periódico* covered the letter on April 30.



NISGUA 2009 tour speaker Domingo Tum Mejía (second from left) drew connections between historical memory and ongoing resistance. Here he is pictured with Mario García Sierra, Cindy Breunig and Tony Castañeda of the Madison Guatemala Network. [Melinda Van Slyke]

Guatemala Accompaniment Project

NISGUA's Guatemala Accompaniment Project (G.A.P.) participates in the global struggle to **ensure the respect of human rights by placing volunteers side-by-side with individuals, communities and organizations working on sensitive issues** ranging from precedent-setting legal cases to indigenous rights and environmental justice. In communities, courtrooms and public activities, G.A.P.'s presence in Guatemala has created the space for Guatemalans to organize in defense of their own rights by enabling activists to advance their work more publically and effectively than they could without accompaniment. In 2009, G.A.P.:

- ◆ Trained and placed **11 accompaniers**.
- ◆ Facilitated workshops at **12 on-the-ground trainings for 54 international accompaniers**, as well as intensive regional trainings for 6 accompaniers.
- ◆ Accompanied the following groups and situations, among others: *Committee in Choatalum, Chimaltenango* - participating in the legal case that resulted in the **first sentence for the forced disappearances** of the war; *Association for the Integral Development of San Miguel Ixtahuacán (ADISMI)* - organizing in indigenous communities **resisting the Marlin**



NISGUA accompanier (far left) travels by boat to communities that would be flooded by the Xalalá dam. She accompanied the anniversary celebration of a regional vote rejecting the dam.

Mine in San Marcos; *Association of Communities for Development and the Defense of Land and Natural Resources (ACODET)* – organizing in communities that would be affected by the **Xalalá dam** in the Ixcán and Alta Verapaz region; *Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR)* - participating in the national and international genocide cases; *Israel Carías trial* - seeking justice for the 2007 murder of a **community land rights activist** and his two sons; *Nueva Linda Pro-Justice Movement* - seeking justice for the 2003 forced **disappearance** of Héctor Reyes and the 2004 **violent eviction** of supporters that had occupied land to pressure the government to move the case forward; *Community Studies and Psychosocial Support Team (ECAP)* - providing **mental health** services in communities carrying out exhumations and inhumations; *Petén Distributors Employees' Union (SITRAPETEN)* – organizing for their reinstatement under **better working conditions**, following their illegal dismissal in 2008; *Regional processes in Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Chimaltenango and the Ixil* - undertaking community referendums, national forums, and local meetings regarding **natural resource issues**.

- ◆ Facilitated **media work** by NISGUA accompaniers, including an article on the military and police archives in *The Nation*, a piece in process on forced disappearance cases for *NACLA*, and articles in *The Dominion* about the Xalalá dam and the precedent-setting case of land rights activist Israel Carías.

- ◆ Organized a **national Gathering** in Denver, CO of Sponsoring Communities, former accompaniers, NISGUA staff and other Guatemala Accompaniment Project supporters.

- ◆ Provided ongoing support to former accompaniers who formed a **new group in NISGUA's activist network**, the Central America Solidarity Network/CASN, based in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

- ◆ In collaboration with the International Coordination of Accompaniment of Guatemala, carried out an **evaluation of accompaniment**, and solidarity work more generally, given the current socio-economic and political context in Guatemala.

Trade and Globalization Program

Through our Trade and Globalization Program, NISGUA advocates for **indigenous rights, environmental justice and alternative development policies**. We support communities confronting transnational mega-projects,



Indigenous rights activists present hundreds of NISGUA's letters supporting communities' self-determination to the Guatemalan Congress. [Victorino Tejaxun]

specifically open-pit mines and large-scale hydroelectric dams. Working in close coordination with affected communities and social movements in Guatemala that are unifying against mega-projects, NISGUA is playing a vital solidarity role in advocating for human rights and grassroots democracy in the international arena. In 2009, we:

- ◆ Produced two urgent actions related to Goldcorp, Inc's Marlin Mine, denouncing the **criminalization of the struggle** and threats against leaders.
- ◆ Sponsored two Guatemalan representatives to attend and provide **first-hand testimony during the Goldcorp shareholder meeting** in Vancouver, Canada.
- ◆ Coordinated a two-day **strategy session** with Canadian and U.S. groups in Vancouver after Goldcorp's AGM.
- ◆ Co-wrote and coordinated **sign-on letter to Guatemalan President Colom regarding disturbing trends of repression** (martial law in some cases), manipulation, criminalization of protest, and

threats around mega-projects throughout the country, especially in San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipakapa. The letter, signed by 40 northern human rights organizations, strongly denounced the violation of fundamental human rights implicit in these projects and the social conflict that has been fomented in regions facing mega-development projects.

- ◆ Facilitated **media work on mining issues**: brought Reuters journalist to the region after eight women were issued arrest warrants, leading to the publication of a Reuters story about the conflict; assisted in the translation for BBC's visit to the mine; brought PBS "International Affairs" journalist to film 10-minute video on the Marlin mine's effects on communities.

- ◆ Secured partnership with environmental monitoring company E-tech to embark on process of **ongoing, independent monitoring** of water, environmental, and possibly health indicators around the Marlin mine.

- ◆ Transmitted **communiqués and materials** directly from groups in resistance in San Marcos,

Huehuetenango, and Ixcán.

- ◆ Opened shared internet space to facilitate **coordination amongst international allies** on mining issues and contracted Corp Watch to do additional corporate research.
- ◆ Assisted the University of Washington in St. Louis in **tracking Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funding** for hydroelectric dams in Guatemala, particularly the Xalalá dam in Ixcán, Quiché.
- ◆ Organized **urgent response** to attempt by Guatemala's National Electric Institute to enter communities and use helicopter fly-overs in the area of the proposed Xalalá dam.
- ◆ Facilitated contact and **visit of International Rivers** to the region that would be affected by the Xalalá dam. The week of activities included strategy sessions in communities and with movement actors around international financing; a press conference in Guatemala City that attracted national attention; and a meeting with IDB officials regarding Xalalá.

Grassroots Activism

Acting as a bridge between social movements in Guatemala and the United States, NISGUA takes advantage of opportunities to make **horizontal connections between individuals and groups** in both countries. This year, we:

- ◆ Coordinated delegation of California Bay Area **youth groups** H.O.M.E.Y. and Huaxtec (currently Macehualli) for their third annual exchange with Guatemala City-based group H.I.J.O.S., in celebration of the June 30th Day of Heroes and Martyrs: provided critical pre-departure and on-the-ground support to

participants, organized itinerary and facilitation between the two groups, and participated in post-delegation follow-up and media work, including a report back presentation in San Francisco.

- ◆ Engaged in campaign and accompaniment **outreach with a diverse range of groups** in the U.S., including day laborers in Fruitvale, CA; cultural festivals in the Bay Area; the Rebel Diaz collective in Bronx, NY; the International Indian Treaty Council; Sister Song Reproductive Health; and numerous universities, such as UC Berkeley.

- ◆ Facilitated **representation of Guatemalan social movements at grassroots events**, including Oakland, CA political graffiti art presentation and Day of the Dead celebration honoring assassinated Guatemalan youth.

- ◆ Met with over 12 groups visiting Guatemala to **educate people from the U.S.** on the current situation in Guatemala.

On NISGUA's Radar for 2010

- ◆ **West Coast Spring Tour on Mining and Indigenous Rights** – Contact us to become a host and learn about events near you!
- ◆ **Monitor how 2009 landmark conviction in forced disappearance case will affect future justice efforts** – Support the Guatemala Accompaniment Project.
- ◆ **Support communities that would be affected by the Xalalá dam in the Ixcán** – Sign up to become a campaign leader in demanding respect for local decision-making processes in indigenous communities.

- ◆ Collaborated with local activists in preparation for a future San Francisco **Board of Supervisors municipal resolution** in support of grassroots groups in Guatemala.

- ◆ Endorsed numerous U.S. campaigns, including the **STOP CAFTA/NAFTA** national week of action, the Center of Immokalee Workers **fair food** campaign and actions in response to the **crisis in Honduras**.



Day of the Dead altar in San Francisco honors assassinated Guatemalan youth. [Stephanie Lynn Warga]