

Paraguay's Children of Promise

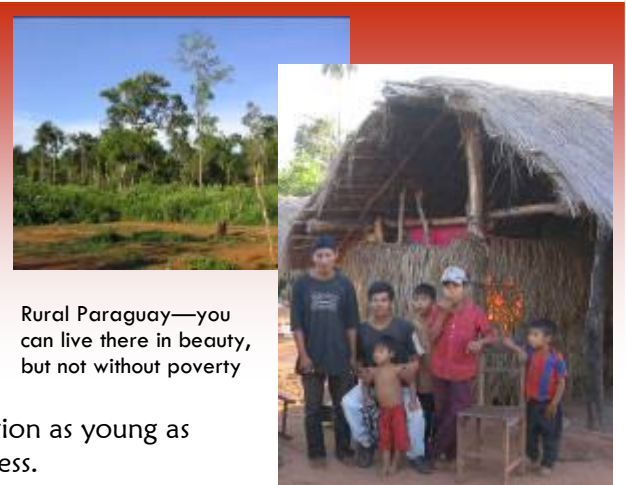
History

Paraguay emerged from a 35-year military dictatorship in 1989, and despite political struggles in recent years, has held relatively free democratic presidential elections since. Its culture has been shaped by Roman Catholic traditions, and longstanding friendships and struggles with neighbouring Argentina and Brazil. This includes a history of money laundering, smuggling, arms and illegal narcotics trafficking, and fundraising for extremist organizations. Paraguay's past poor economy is due to many factors, such as weak anti-money-laundering laws & enforcement, corruption, slow reform, and deficient administrative infrastructure. Economic growth over the past 3 years has been the positive response of a greater confidence in the current Duarte administration.



Reality—Struggling through Uncertainty and Hopelessness

Growing up in Paraguay means needing to find a way to live and to survive the corruption of others. People still caught up in economic & political corruption and the philosophy of power to the strong are constantly at odds with those who desire goodness and justice for Paraguay's people. Common people can feel powerless to improve their life by honest means. A large number of the population are farmers, but often do not produce enough to be independent. This forces people from rural areas into the capital, Asuncion, in the hopes of finding work. Often, they move into the city and if are unable to find work, can turn to crime to earn enough to survive. It is common for children to leave turbulent families to live on the street and become addicted to drugs and alcohol, and for girls to turn to prostitution as young as age 10. It is a heartbreaking cycle of poverty and crime, and hopelessness.



Rural Paraguay—you can live there in beauty, but not without poverty

Recovery—Food and Community Create Promise

Amidst the difficulties, there are projects already active whose founders are reaching out to needy children & families, and we can help!

Compassionate Church Action—Two pastoral couples have been reaching out to feed children and offer them love, hope, and life training. At Tablada Novena, one of these couples have been working with what little they have. The building they use leaks when it rains. They've been feeding poor aboriginal children in slums weekly for 10 years, and this meal is often the best food the children get all week. Most of these children are also in poor health. The couple work in Zebollod, a different region of Asuncion, and through the church are able to offer twice daily meals and daily school classes to poor children. They are bursting at the seams, and have the capacity to expand their building to handle more students, but they need funding.



Hardworking pastoral couples are the heart of compassionate church action to poor children with little support.

These two examples give a small snapshot of a large movement of people reaching out to demonstrate God's love to the needy in Asuncion. GAIN-provided food supplements an expansive 106 feeding programs that reach over 5,000 children through a network of

- 33 churches in 38 locations
- 3 hospitals
- an orphanage that receives food daily

Pastor Osmaldo, one of the pastors who leads one of these feeding programs, attests that without offering to meet people's needs by feeding them, the people would not have accepted them:

"If they were not spending time here, these kids would be on the streets. Here, we give them self esteem, we teach them values and work ethics. Here we prepare them for a better life than a life of crime."

Without having the dried soup mix, dehydrated apples and other food that GAIN has sent, Pastor Osmaldo's church would not have the means to offer food to so many people.

Because of these feeding programs, in 2008, 4 million meals will be distributed. However, we have only just scratched the surface. There are 77 churches on a waiting list to begin feeding programs of their own, to reach out to their own communities, and the hospitals are requesting more food. It's an amazing story of growing trust and seeing transformation take place in Paraguay.



Country Facts

Currency: Exchange rates: guarani per US dollar - 5,672.8 (2006),

Population: 6,506,464 (July 2006 est.)
0-14 years: 37.7% (2006 est.)

Per capita purchasing power equivalent: \$4,700 (2006 est.) (Canada - \$31,500)

Median age: 21.3 years
(Canada - 38.54)

Population below poverty line: 32% 2005 est.

Facts and statistics compiled from various national & international government sources



Response—Our Promise to Paraguay's Children

Our goal is to send **8,000,000 meals in 8 containers over the next 2 years**, which means a shipment every 3 months. Currently, the costs for all 8 containers is **\$78,750** enabling us to provide food for these programs **for less than 1 cent per meal**. GAIN's promise to Paraguay's children is an investment now which will pay dividends long into the country's future. Your partnership in this project is vital in taking advantage of a timely opportunity for promoting positive change where change roots itself most deeply—in the lives and hearts of individuals. Will you join us in helping women and children who want to rise up out of corruption, to break their chains of poverty and live a future of promise & hope?

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