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# Guatemala: Report On Social & Economic Conditions

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## **Guatemala: Report On Social & Economic Conditions**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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On Feb. 28, in Guatemala City, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) issued a joint report on social and economic conditions in Guatemala. The report said that there has been a "grave deterioration" of social conditions in the country, particularly in the areas of health, education and housing. According to the report, 86% of Guatemalans live below the poverty line, over 6 million of the nation's 9.2 million inhabitants lack access to health services, and 3.6 million do not have access to drinking water. The report added that the prevailing development model in Guatemala has led to extreme concentrations of land and wealth. The country's largest landholders, who represent 2.2% of the population, hold 65% of arable farmland, while the wealthiest 10% of the population monopolizes 44% of all income. The report said that poverty has had particularly harsh effects upon children. There are an estimated 5,000 street children, over one million children who work as street vendors, and 250,000 orphans. Next, the report noted that, as a result of the armed conflict, an estimated 46,000 Guatemalan refugees live in camps in southern Mexico under the auspices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), while over 90,000 reside in Mexico as undocumented refugees. (Basic data from Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 02/28/92)

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