

Rights Action

www.rightsaction.org • December 2003

SUPPORTING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

Dear friends,

As of November 20, we have channeled more than US\$800,000 of your money in 2003 to over 50 of our partner development, humanitarian and human rights organizations in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru, as well as organizations in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. A list of the partner groups that we channel your funds to is available at www.rightsaction.org, or from Grahame at info@rightsaction.org, 416-654-2074.

Below, we summarize who we are, what we do and how. At the same time that we are frightened by the nature of national and global obstacles to equality, justice and environmental well-being, we are amazed and empowered by the courage and tenacity of our partner organizations. We are in this work for the long haul.

Please send us your comments and questions. Thank-you for your trust and your tax-charitable donations for this work.

Annie Bird and Grahame Russell, co-directors

MAIN AREAS OF WORK

Rights Action (formerly Guatemala Partners, whose work began in 1982) has become a multi-faceted development and human rights organization working in southern Mexico (mainly Chiapas), Guatemala, Honduras and Peru. With our main office in Guatemala City, we have tax-charitable status in the United States and Canada.

We fund over 50 community-based organizations and projects • We provide technical support and organizational strengthening training • We place volunteers with partner organizations and provide human rights accompaniment to persons at risk of repression • We do education and activist work about global development and human rights, and about how citizens can get involved in these issues.

VISION OF OUR WORK

- ▶ Development (eradication of poverty), environmental and human rights issues are intertwined.
- ▶ A full understanding of poverty, discriminations and repression must include an understanding of global power structures and an historical analysis.
- ▶ Community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) are at the forefront of efforts to construct societies and a global community based on equality and fairness, rule of law and respect for the environment and human rights.
- ▶ All rights (economic, social, cultural, civil and political) must be defended and all actors (governmental, inter-governmental and private) must be held accountable for their actions or omissions that contribute to human rights violations and environmental destruction.



PHOTO: JIM SCHRIDER

Student at Colegio Miguel Angel Asturias in Quezaltenango, a project supported by Rights Action.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS THAT RECEIVE YOUR FUNDS

Our partner organizations can be divided into popular associations or community based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

- ▶ **Self-design and self-implementation:** The NGOs and CBOs we support have the principal role in implementing projects of their own design.
- ▶ **Small is beautiful ... and dynamic:** We pay particular attention to supporting new community-based organizations located in urban shanty-towns and isolated rural areas.
- ▶ **Strengthening organizational capacity:** We support our partner organizations to design and administer their projects; to work and grow democratically in their communities; to share their experiences with local, national and global organizations; and to achieve greater financial diversity.

INCREASED FUNDS SENT TO PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Co-directors Annie Bird & Grahame Russell began work with Rights Action in late 1995. Our growth since that time led to the opening of the regional office in Guatemala in 1997. You may find a complete list of our 2003 partner organizations at www.rightsaction.org or by contacting Grahame at 416-654-2074/info@rightsaction.org.

1995, funds sent to Partner organizations in Guatemala:	\$46,000
1996, Guatemala:	\$67,000
1997, Guatemala, Chiapas:	\$215,000
1998, Guatemala, Chiapas, Honduras:	\$478,000
1999, Guatemala, Chiapas, Honduras, Haiti:	\$615,000
2000, Guatemala, Chiapas, Honduras, Haiti:	\$696,000
2001, Guatemala, Chiapas, Honduras, Peru, El Salvador:	\$818,000
2002, Guatemala, Chiapas, Honduras, Peru, Nigeria, Nicaragua:	\$900,000
2003, Guatemala, Chiapas, Honduras, Peru, Nicaragua, Costa Rica:	\$800,000*

*November 20, 2003

OUR OPERATING COSTS (\$150,000) INCLUDE:

- ▶ The technical support and organization strengthening work we provide to partner organizations.
- ▶ The human rights accompaniment we provide for persons at risk.
- ▶ The education and activism work we do in the region and in North America.
- ▶ Salaries for our full-time staff (including benefits), part-time staff, rent and related work costs (communications, travel, supplies, etc).

RIGHTSACTION STAFF

Grahame Russell directs our Toronto and Washington offices, with part-time support in Washington from **Freddie Schrider** and our long-term financial administrator **Paul Magno**. **Annie Bird** directs our Guatemala office, with full-time support from **Jane Pelly** and **Antonio Catalan** and part-time support from **Ruben Domingo**.

RIGHTSACTION BOARD

We are grateful for the on-going participation of **Iain Guest**, **Michael Willis** and **Julie Stewart** on the board of Rights Action in the United States, and **James MacDonald**, **Wayne Rosen** and **Merran Smith** on the board of Rights Action in Canada.

RightsAction

TAX CHARITABLE contributions:

Make checks payable to "Rights Action" and mail to either our Canadian or US office.

UNITED STATES

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EMAIL LISTS

If you would like to be on our e-mail list and receive regular information about the work and issues that our partner groups are addressing, please let us know.

DONATE ONLINE (IN THE USA) Go to our website at www.rightsaction.org

PROGRAM AREAS THAT YOU SUPPORT

Your donations and grants are channeled directly to our partner NGOs and CBOs. The work of many partner groups would fit into 2 or 3 Program Areas.

- ▶ **Community services, infrastructure & social rights:** With economic and political systems undermining social rights of the poorest across the world, we see devastating statistics in literacy, nutrition, life expectancy, infant mortality, etc. In response, Rights Action works with partner groups to support the following: scholarships for community leaders; primary and middle schools; scholarships for high school and university students; education and training for teachers; women's health programs; health outreach in rural communities and urban settlements; dental clinics; and training for health and dental promoters.
- ▶ **Political & civil rights, impunity, justice & political prisoners:** The failure of legal systems across the world to guarantee human rights enables those in power to act with impunity. Rights Action our partner groups addresses impunity at all levels and supports democracy from the community level up by working in the following areas: legal aid for victims of human rights abuses, support for political prisoner, support for women's rights, challenging the impunity of global actors, community museums and historical recovery programs.
- ▶ **Land, territory, resources & cultural rights:** Land and resources in the global south have long been exploited by absentee individuals, institutions and corporations. Those whose lives and culture depend on such resources are rarely involved in decisions about their use or the subsequent benefits reaped. In response, Rights Action our partner groups support work in the following areas: opposition to mining and petroleum exploitation; community control over land and resources; forest re-growth and management; potable water projects and sustainable agriculture; construction of wood-saving stoves and environmentally sound latrines.
- ▶ **Community economic development, economic rights & justice:** Current economic development policies generate tremendous profit for minority sectors in developing nations, as well as transnational corporations and countries in the global north. This worsens the already unequal distribution of wealth, promotes unsustainable use of resources and undercuts community based producers. Rights action and our partner groups support: women's community micro-businesses and micro-loan funds; traditional economies; fair trade of artisanry and coffee; emergency "natural" disaster relief; and labor rights.

COMING AND GOING

After years of great work with Rights Action in Guatemala, **Marie Manrique** is moving to Peru to strengthen her involvement with human rights work there. We applaud this courageous move and will continue to support Marie's on-going work. After more than one year with Rights Action, **Jessica Pupovac** has returned to Chicago. We thank Jessica for her commitment to activism that took her across Guatemala, into Honduras and up to Cancun Mexico, working with community development and human rights groups. We were also privileged to work with a number of committed volunteer interns and human rights accompaniers, who come up with their own funds to work with Rights Action. We give our respect and sincere thanks to **Sandra Cuffe, Beth Brockland, Ashley Kaper, Andy Astritis.**

Educational Tours and Delegations

To receive up-to-date information about our on-going delegations and tours, we urge you to get on our e-list at info@rightsaction.org. Coming up in February 2003 is an Activist Seminar-Delegation to Guatemala. Contact Grahame Rusell at 416-654-2074 or info@rightsaction.org for more information.

HIGHLIGHTS

Rights Action is honored to have nominated COPINH (Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) for the 2002 Body Shop Human Rights Award.

Rights Action is honored to have nominated Guatemala journalist Luis Barillas (below) for the 2003 International Press Freedom Award, given by the Canadian Journalists for Freedom of Expression.



Education and Activism

Poverty, discriminations, environmental destruction and repression are not national problems; they are local-to-national-to-global problems and need to be remedied local-to-national-to-globally. Related to our Program Areas, we carry out education and activism work.

“GLOBALIZATION” SPEAKING TOURS: RA organizes 2–4 educational tours a year, in the USA and Canada. These tours highlight: who our community development partners are; the issues of impoverishment, racism and repression they confront; how policies and actions of northern countries and institutions contribute to impoverishment and repression; how North American people and organizations can get involved in addressing these issues.

PUBLIC SPEAKING: Our staff – north and south – are regularly invited to speak to audiences in the USA, Canada, Central America and Mexico on these global issues.

PUBLICATIONS:

- ▶ four newsletters per year, to a mailing list of 4000 people.
- ▶ regular news updates, analysis and urgent actions to an e-list of 2500.

- ▶ special reports on pressing development and human rights issues.

DELEGATIONS: Rights Action hosts or co-hosts educational delegations, bringing donors and North Americans to the countries we work in to learn first hand of the development, humanitarian and human rights issues they confront.

ACTIVIST HUMAN RIGHTS DELEGATION-SEMINAR: Rights Action hosts 2 activist Seminars, bringing northern activists south to learn first-hand of the negative impact of the policies and actions of global actors (companies, banks, IMF, WB & IDB, US and Canadian government military policies, etc.), and to learn about what they can do, in their home country, to address and remedy the responsibility of the northern, global actors.

Our work has grown considerably over the past eight years. This is thanks to you – our donors and supporters. We have in place professional and institutional procedures so that our partner organizations receive consistent support for their work, so that we are supporting alliance building work needed at the local-to-national-to global levels, and so that our funders – individual and foundations – are properly apprised of how their money is being well spent.

RightsAction

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