

# INSTITUTE FOR OVERCOMING URBAN POVERTY



**Location:** Guatemala City, Guatemala  
**Partner:** International Development Exchange (IDEX)  
**Issue Areas:** Universal Education, Extreme Poverty  
**Points of Interest:** Grassroots Advocacy

## The Organization

ISMU was formed by community groups in the urban shantytowns of Guatemala City who joined together to improve living conditions in their neighborhoods. Many lacked basic necessities such as decent housing, sewage systems and potable water. In light of Guatemala's 36-year civil war that displaced huge numbers of people to the already crowded urban areas, ISMU continues to focus on helping communities negotiate and mobilize collectively to get their needs met and their rights recognized by their government.

Today, ISMU is a network of organizations working in 22 communities, funding income-generating projects; providing training in financial management, organizational development, and leadership skills. It also works to coordinate advocacy campaigns, legalize land tenure, improve housing and infrastructure, and create community services such as schools and childcare centers. In addition, ISMU has a strong disaster response and prevention program, developed from the experience of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and Hurricane Stan in 2005.

## Why the Need?

Over 500,000 people live in the urban shantytowns of Guatemala City. These settlements usually perched on steep hill-sides, often lack basic services such as schools, roads, running water, and sewage systems.

The education system in Guatemala is poor. The average schooling of the adult population in Guatemala is 5.4 years and just 1.4 years for indigenous people. Usually, government spending in Guatemala on education has been very low. Providing educational opportunities in Guatemala is critical in that it provides a way for children and youth living in marginalized communities to improve their livelihoods.

## How Team Efforts Translate to Impact

Institute for Overcoming Urban Poverty (ISMU) will use the funds for ongoing support to teachers and students through access to school supplies, furniture and equipment, scholarships, and cleaning supplies to maximize students' capacity to learn.

## The Partner

International Development Exchange (IDEX), is a San Francisco based non-profit organization that partners with grassroots groups in Africa, Asian, and Latin America, while actively engaging North Americans in the challenges facing communities in these regions. Since 1985, IDEX has channeled over \$3.3 million to fund more than 500 self-help community projects working from social change and economic independence for all humanity, particularly women, children, and indigenous peoples.

## NGC's Approach to Sustainable Global Change

NGC and our Global Partners believe that people in communities all over the world are the real experts and know their community and solutions to their problems. We want to advocate and educate others on behalf of this model of sustainable global change. Additionally, we seek to empower our grassroots Global Projects with the financial resources to create change at the grassroots level. 100% of funds your team raises are sent to Institute for Overcoming Urban Poverty.

By sending your team's funds directly, your project organization has the power to decide the best way to use the money. Since money will be spent in the community, your funds will also support the local economy.

ISMU not only provides scholarships for education so children can receive the education they need to break the cycle of poverty, but they also work to make policy changes in the government to stop the root causes of poverty in Guatemala.

## Additional Resources

Partner Website: <http://www.idex.org/>

CIA World Factbook (Guatemala): <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/GT.html>

Embassy of Guatemala: <http://Guatemala.usembassy.org>

BBC News - Guatemala: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country\\_profiles/1215758.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1215758.stm)

The Latin American Network Information Center - Guatemala: <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/ca/guatemala/>

**See your team binder for more ways to educate your team about your project.**