

# Maya Educational Foundation

Providing educational opportunities for the Maya



Report to Contributors

2006

*"...thank you for the support... I have reached my goals and dreams and can now help the indigenous people who have been victims of human rights violations, racism, and discrimination... I was orphaned when my mother was detained and later killed and my father disappeared... the orphans have been a very important group and suffered dramatically as a consequence of the war... having to assume the responsibilities of adults. I was fortunate to receive financial support for my studies... it changed my life..."*

From Julio Cutzal Cumes, a student who graduated this year in law

## Contents

Scholarships for University Students	2
News from Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Guatemala	2
Jacaltenango Scholarship Program	3
Cajolá Scholarships	3
Scholarships for the Chuj in Chiapas	3
The Benjamin & Lois Paul Fund for Tz'utujil Students	4
Belize Scholarship Program	4
Oxlajuj B'atz / Thirteen Threads	5
English Language Program	6
New Collaborations with MEF Amigos de San Cristóbal Yax Te' Books	7
News from Sna Jtz'ibajom	8
In Memoriam-Dr. Marshall Robinson	8
FOMMA	9
CIRMA	9
Chiapas Photography Project	10
Hurricane Stan Relief Update	11
Money Matters	11
How You Can Help and Contact Information	12

Dear Friends:

We are proud to report another successful year of scholarships, educational advancement, and program development for our Maya partners in Guatemala, Mexico, and now in Belize as well. Your generous contributions and continuing support have made possible important growth of our work in several areas and directions.

This year, our scholarship programs have been expanded to include *becas* in memory of Ben and Lois Paul. These scholarships will enable Tz'utujil speaking children in the outlying districts of the region to continue their secondary education. In addition, three newly established scholarship programs now include Mayas in Cajolá, Guatemala; the Chuj speaking area of Chiapas, Mexico; and a high school scholarship program in the Toledo district of Belize.

We are also in the process of working out new and productive relationships with the group Amigos de San Cristóbal in Chiapas, helping to develop funding sources for their educational outreach programs, and with Yax Te' Books, which produces and disseminates books and other materials in Spanish, English, and Mayan languages to promote the educational, cultural, and preservation goals of the Mayan culture. In addition, we are excited about bringing our English language program, so successful in Guatemala, to university students and staff members of MEF programs in Chiapas. We have also opened preliminary discussions with people who want help publishing educational materials in Tawahka, a non-Mayan language spoken by the smallest indigenous group in Honduras.

As always, MEF's work continues with a very impressive set of programs all made possible by your open hearts and hands. The report will give you all the details. This letter is an expression of our gratitude and our thanks to you, our contributors, for your wonderful support of MEF's important, life-changing work. We are encouraged by your commitment and trust, and we count on your continued support.

With immense gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marilyn M. Moors".

Marilyn Moors  
MEF Board President

# Scholarship Programs for University Students

## In Guatemala

The MEF scholarship program for university students in Guatemala coordinated by FEP Maya saw great success, with thirteen graduates in 2005, four more already in 2006, and more anticipated. Law, Electrical Engineering, Medicine, Agronomy, Civil Engineering, Communications, Computer Sciences, Chemistry (with emphasis on alternative energies), and Political Science are just some of the fields these students have pursued. MEF support makes it possible for these students to reach their goals.

Program Coordinator, Lucía Sebaquijay, has accompanied the students through their university years and seen how difficult it was for some of them but how in the end their hard work and graduate degree help transform the students and their families and improve their lives.

The scholarship program currently provides financial assistance to about 60 students. Additional funding for the scholarship program is provided by SOROS, Guatemala.

Several of the students do human rights work now, others help in their home communities.

For more information visit FEP Maya's website at [www.geocities.com/fepmaya](http://www.geocities.com/fepmaya).



*Above: University students after a meeting with Father Ricardo Falla*

*Below: University students at a Mayan literature conference*

## In Mexico

From Chiapas Sna Jtz'ibajom and FOMMA (see pages 8 and 9) monitored the progress made by 26 students with MEF scholarships who are pursuing university careers in a variety of fields and in different regions of Mexico. Five students graduated this year and more are expected to do so in 2007.

We continue to see new qualified candidates waiting between one and two years before we are able to offer them scholarships. As additional funds become available, MEF will be able to increase the number of scholarships for this program. Your contributions will help us address the educational needs of those students who patiently wait for a generous hand to fulfill their aspirations.

If you are interested in joining our efforts, please contact us at [mayaedfund@aol.com](mailto:mayaedfund@aol.com) or send your contribution to the address indicated on page 12 of this report.

## News from Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Guatemala

Details provided by Felipa Jiménez Jiménez, scholarship Coordinator

Thanks to MEF's donors, Josefina Hermelinda Pablo Jerónimo and Angélica Ramírez are within reach of their professional dreams to be teachers. They are currently practicing their teaching skills near the district capital, Huehuetenango, and in November they will graduate.

Jun Kanek's father is an educated man who cannot afford to send all his children to school on his small income. Jun receives a MEF scholarship to attend middle school and his goal is to continue on for his high school degree.

Margarita Ahilón Velásquez is the ten-year-old daughter of a single mother, a shepherdess from Cantón los Jiménez. Margarita is the only child in her family in school because of the scholarship she receives from MEF. She attends the Escuela



*Margarita Ahilón Velásquez*

Nacional de Autogestión Comunitaria, Tuitnom.

Mauselvo Pablo Ahilón lives in the Chicoy aldea, half an hour from Todos Santos. He will finish elementary school at the Escuela Oficial Rural Mixta this year, and hopes to go on to secondary school next year.



*Mauselvo Pablo Ahilón*

# Jacaltenango Scholarship Program

Jacaltenango is located in the western highlands of Guatemala. Unlike other remote regions with high poverty and illiteracy rates, schooling is available right in town. MEF is able to run a very cost effective program there that provides scholarships for vocational training. Program Coordinator, Mercedes Montejo, reports that seven young Maya women are studying to become elementary school teachers and that three of them will graduate by year's end.

The commitments and sacrifices these students make in order to achieve their educational goals are illustrated by María Candelaria Diego and María Idalia Miguel. The former, after struggling to make the grades and failing one course, has persevered and now managed to pass it. She has three years to go to graduation. The latter walks almost 10 kilometers to school every day from neighboring San Antonio Huista because she cannot afford to rent a room in Jacaltenango. She will graduate next year.

The Program Coordinator hopes donors recognize the value of this program that has helped many young Maya. It can give other students a chance to make a decent living after they graduate.

## Cajolá Scholarships

Nine Mam students in the community of Cajolá, Guatemala are in the final quarter of the first year of a new scholarship program. The association Grupo Cajolá administers the program and MEF has promised to provide multi-year scholarships to five students for the completion of middle and high school curriculums. The other four scholarships are provided by supporters of Grupo Cajolá. MEF's commitment to reach out to rural communities only works with the cooperation of local organizations and individuals like those of Grupo Cajolá in Guatemala and in Morristown, New Jersey who give time, energy, and financial support to advance the education of the children. Grupo Cajolá volunteers also organize meetings on topics such as globalization, Maya cultural values, and education policies for their students.

One student wrote, *"Thank you... for the scholarship each month, it is a good way to help those of us who want to study but wouldn't have been able to because of the [lack of] money. Now I can look for a career that could help my town of Cajolá."*

For further information about the work of Grupo Cajolá, e-mail [GrupoCajola2000@yahoo.com](mailto:GrupoCajola2000@yahoo.com).



*Cajolá students with Eduardo Jiménez, Coordinator*

## Scholarships for the Chuj in Chiapas

Information provided by  
Fernando Limón, Program Coordinator

In January, MEF began a scholarship program in coordination with the Sociedad Cooperativa Productores Alternativos de la Selva (PAS), an autonomous coffee producers co-op based in Tziscaco, Chiapas. PAS offers an educational focus that promotes human rights, conservation, and health issues, and works to honor the ethnic origins of its members and families.

Cristóbal Pérez Tadeo from Rancho Nuevo Porvenir and María Elena (Lenita) Pascual Gómez from Rancho San Lorenzo are the Chuj students who received scholarships at the beginning of the year. Cristóbal finished his middle school studies and expects to start high school next year. Lenita graduated from high school and enrolled to study midwifery in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato. By making this choice, Lenita expects to become deeply involved in the day-to-day lives of Chuj women, families, and babies. PAS hopes that she will choose the community of Tziscaco as the place to do her social service and research when it comes time to do her fieldwork.



*Cristóbal Pérez Tadeo*



*María Elena Pascual Gómez*

## The Benjamin & Lois Paul Fund for Tz'utujil Students

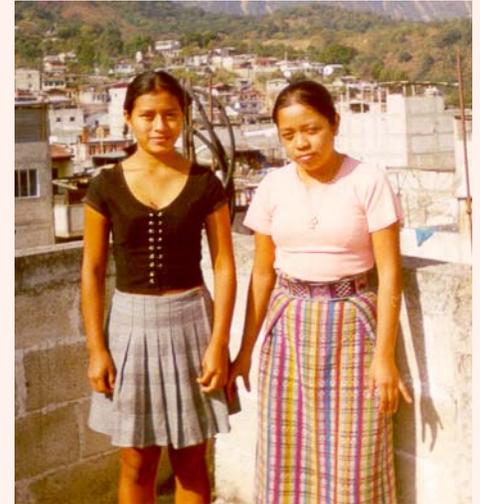
*"It's truly heartening to hear that applicants from the really neglected sectors where negative social factors further complicate initiative for the indigenous population are now being considered... To me, MEF is an enterprising organization that really strives to address the injustices, the inequalities, and the discrimination that oppresses and incapacitates the indigenous populations."*

Quote from John Prybot, a contributor to the Paul Fund and a steady promoter of support to the Tz'utujil people

Less than a year ago, the Benjamin & Lois Paul Fund (Paul Fund) was created for the purpose of providing educational opportunities to the people living in the most neglected communities of the Tz'utujil region of Guatemala. Thanks to the contributions collected during the course of this year, in February María Concepción Lacam and María Cristina Sicay Mendoza, from San Pedro Cutzán and Chicacao received scholarships that pay for their schooling plus room and board in San Pedro La Laguna. Due to the poor quality of the education received while they were growing up, both students have been facing an uphill battle to meet higher academic standards in the school they attend now, but they seem enthusiastic about continuing their studies and feel confident that they will be able to meet the challenge. Both students have adjusted well to the experience of living away from home.

The Paul Fund is still new but, in a modest way, it has already begun to address the educational needs of the Tz'utujil. Our colleague Ajpub' Pablo García Ixmatá, coordinator of the program, has been busy identifying students from remote communities and from the *aldeas* around Santiago Atitlán affected by Hurricane Stan. He's been promoting the message that "We can now offer this opportunity from MEF to the young people here." To date 26 additional Tz'utujil students have been identified for assistance. This clearly shows the need and at the same time highlights MEF's current challenge to address it.

In 2007, thanks to your generous support, the Paul Fund will be able to maintain the two current scholarships and add two new ones. In addition, MEF will strive to develop collaborative efforts with other organizations in Guatemala to see if, together, we may be able to address the schooling needs of more Tz'utujil students.



*María Concepción Lacam y  
María Cristina Sicay Mendoza*

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Contributions to this fund and other programs are helping MEF reach out to areas where help has never been available. We thank you for your participation and we ask for your continued support to help us offer educational opportunities in remote areas.

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## Belize Scholarship Program Begins in September 2006

In fulfilling our goal to expand programs to new areas, MEF is proud to announce a new scholarship program in Belize. The Belize Scholarship Program provides opportunities for education and training assistance at the secondary school level to Maya students with financial need. Crissie Ferrara, an enthusiastic supporter of this program, says: *"Maya children in Belize work very hard at their studies, knowing their opportunities are rare and also a big sacrifice for the family. They are eager to further their education in order to improve their lives and the lives of their families."*

This year MEF began a relationship with the Julian Cho Society (JCS), a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to understanding the history and indigenous cultures of the Toledo District in Belize, and to supporting programs that promote indigenous rights, sustainable development, education, and culture, who agreed to administer the scholarship program.

Beginning in September 2006, seven students received scholarships in the Toledo area. Three students attend Toledo Community College, a high school serving about

# Oxlajuj B'atz / Thirteen Threads

## Third Year of Support to Women Weavers

Notes supplied by Ramona Kirschenman, Program Coordinator

In 2003, Oxlajuj B'atz (OB) or "13 Threads" was formed as a collaborative project of two fair-trade organizations, Mayan Hands, Maya Traditions, and the MEF. OB currently offers workshops to 300 impoverished Mayan women weavers and artisans in 12 Guatemalan highland communities. Its purpose is to empower these women to bring about changes, through their own efforts, that will alleviate the adverse effects of poverty and improve the quality of their lives. At the workshops women learn new skills that will help them succeed in their work, increase their income, improve their physical and mental health, and learn to work cooperatively. The long-term goal of OB is to create a resource center for women weavers and artisans in the Guatemalan highlands.

The key to OB's success is its philosophy of stepping beyond basic needs to long-term sustainability. Through a thorough process of evaluation and follow-up, OB helps Mayan women to live secure and independent lives, rather than create a dependency on outside organizations. OB programs and workshops develop from one year to the next. For example, last year they provided a four-month, first-level sewing course. This year they offered a second-level sewing course with the opportunity to take out a loan to buy sewing machines, with the intention being that the women will learn to sew their own products and earn more income. So far, fifteen women have signed up to buy machines. Last year, 35 women were taught the new skill of pine needle basketry, which yielded enormous success, since through sales in the export market, many women were able

to almost double their monthly income. This year OB provided a follow-up workshop to teach new techniques and offer more women the new skill.

A project that started more than three years ago has finally come to fruition—the ergonomic bench project. Ergonomics expert Karen Piegorsch visited Guatemala on numerous occasions to conduct extensive research on positions and postures of back-strap weavers. Her intention was to design a chair that would help alleviate the pain in the legs and backs of these women who traditionally sat on their knees to weave. In September of 2005, we saw the first version of the ergonomic bench and soon afterwards it was introduced to the communities. The women were thrilled, literally leaping off the floor, since not only did the chair ease some of their pain, but they were weaving in half the time! To date, 145 ergonomic benches have been delivered to the communities.



*Volunteers of the English Language Program observing the use of the ergonomic chair*

*Photograph by Hali Wickner*

900 students, grades 9-12, with a staff of 56. Four students attend the JCS Technical High School, a government co-educational institution, with about 400 students and 30 staff, which emphasizes vocational technical education relevant to the development of the Toledo District and its people.



*Group of dancers, participants of the Oxlajuj B'atz program*

*Photograph by Laurie Levinger*

# English Language Program

## Guatemala Program

By Jane Greenberg, program participant for two years

Last December, 14 volunteers spent two weeks in La Antigua, Guatemala teaching basic conversational English to university students supported through the Maya Educational Foundation. We are looking forward to another two weeks of teaching in La Antigua this year. Our group will again have 14 volunteers, including three new members. In the mornings we teach with only one student per teacher. Students and teachers may then visit informally in the afternoons, when we take “field trips” to interesting sites around Antigua. In addition, afternoon group tutoring sessions are offered for students who want a little more instruction.

For many of us volunteers, the experience with the MEF students has been one of the most rewarding experiences of our lives. The value of the experience has come not just from teaching English, for really, how much can one hope to accomplish in two weeks? What has been truly inspiring is meeting these young, motivated Mayan students who have struggled and worked so hard to become university students. They have set their goals high: to become engineers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, and to help their people and communities. We teachers have been humbled by their strength through times of adversity. And almost all of them improved their English ability at least to the point where they could comfortably converse in a social setting.

We have developed a deep affection for the students we have taught. Many of us remain in touch through e-mails, and some teachers have made extra trips to Guatemala to visit with students or attend their University graduations. Several volunteer teachers have been motivated to learn Spanish by their experiences in the program, and we also have held fundraisers in the US, selling Guatemalan weavings and paintings to help support this program that we all believe to be a positive light in today's world.



*Volunteers and students at the end of a two-week English course in December 2005*

## Chiapas Program

In January 2006, MEF received an e-mail from Steve Homer, who learned about our English Language Program on our website. Steve has volunteered in past years teaching photography to the staff at the Chiapas Photography Project (see article on page 10). This year, with two months available, he asked if he could help MEF by teaching English in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Mexico. After the success of the English Language Program in Guatemala, Steve was the catalyst to launch a similar program in Mexico.

As this report goes to press, Steve has been in San Cristóbal for over a month. He is working with about 27 students, some of whom are scholarship students, and some of whom are staff members who work at MEF projects in Chiapas. The students are grouped according to ability levels and classes are scheduled to accommodate the students' already busy lives. Steve provided text books and MEF provided English dictionaries and computer software to help students improve their skills. In addition, Steve located English speaking “conversation partners” to work one-on-one with students.

Steve is now enthusiastically imploring us to continue the program throughout the year. We hope to be able to provide ongoing instruction to fulfill the needs of the students who have taken on this challenge of learning English.



*Steve Homer teaching English in Chiapas  
Photograph by Emiliano Guzman of AFI/Lok'tamayach*

# New Collaborations with MEF

## Amigos de San Cristóbal

Information provided by David Orr, President

Amigos de San Cristóbal, A.C. is an umbrella NGO headquartered in the highland city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. With an integrated membership of Mexican and foreign nationals, its mission is to develop new funding sources for proven organizations providing direct service and assistance to the most needy, primarily in the areas of education, health, and economic improvement.

In June, MEF began working with Amigos to support certain projects which fit MEF's mission. For example, Amigos supports Melel Xojobal (Truthful Light), a Tsotsil charity in San Cristóbal de Las Casas with a strong track record working with indigenous children in

adverse urban environments. The funding helps provide basic education programs to children of street vendors, who otherwise would not be in school. David Orr says:

*"Amigos has obtained most of its funding from individuals who have visited Chiapas and have seen first hand the unlimited needs that exist. We are currently considering six new organizations for grant distributions in the coming year, and we are delighted with our new relationship with the Maya Educational Foundation."*

To learn more about Amigos de San Cristóbal visit their website at [www.amigosdesc.org](http://www.amigosdesc.org).

## Yax Te' Books

Information provided by Laura Martin, Director and Nadine Grimm, Program Manager

Yax Te' Books is a publishing enterprise whose mission is to produce and disseminate books and other materials that serve educational, cultural, and preservation goals related to the Maya culture, in order to promote literacy, cultural awareness, and global citizenship. Because MEF and Yax Te' share the mission of education and dissemination of information about the Mayan culture, MEF adopted Yax Te' as a sponsored project. Tax deductible contributions to support some of Yax Te''s activities and productions can now be made through MEF.

Yax Te' publishes ethnographies, oral and written literature, and titles on traditional arts in Spanish, English, and Mayan languages. The organization focuses on works by contemporary Maya writers and on materials that enhance the understanding of those works. It also distributes materials about Mayan languages and linguistics, and the works of Maya artists, writers, photographers, and cultural activists. In addition, as a service to the North American audience, Yax Te' carries a number of books issued by Maya publishers.

Yax Te' promotes the use of Mayan literary and cultural products for classrooms in the United States, in Maya communities, and around the world. Services and training in the use of these products are provided. Proceeds support the production of new materials and the free distribution of materials to appropriate audiences.

### Recent activities

In summer 2006, Nadine Grimm did a presentation at the Mi Pueblo Latin American Culture Camp sponsored by Concern for Children, a non-profit organization supporting adoptive parents and their international adoptive kids. The presentation included hands-on activities related to corn and Mayan domestic life. Several Yax Te' titles, including the bilingual coloring book *Artes y artesanías de Guatemala*, were distributed.

Also in summer 2006, Yax Te' donated mini-libraries of its titles to over thirty international organizations, and community libraries. Tulane University received a set of such titles to replace materials lost in Hurricane Katrina.

On 8 August 2006, the town of Sumpango, Sacatepéquez in Guatemala held a community-wide book reception for the new title *The Clothing of Indigenous Women of Sumpango, Guatemala*. Laura Martin spoke at the reception, and copies of the book were given to representatives of the national congress and local government officials, to city and regional schools and libraries, and to Sumpango weavers and embroiderers whose work is featured in the book.

For more information visit Yax Te''s website at [www.yaxtebooks.com](http://www.yaxtebooks.com) and [www.csuohio.edu/yaxte](http://www.csuohio.edu/yaxte).

# News from Sna Jtz'ibajom (House of the Writer), Cultura de los Indios Mayas

Information provided by Juan de la Torre López, President

MEF continues to help Sna Jtz'ibajom fulfill its mission of preservation, diffusion, and reclamation of our Maya culture, with the goal of reducing and eradicating the cultural, economic, and educational gaps that marginalize the Maya people in Mexico.

This year Mayan language classes in six Tsotsil and Tzeltal communities are being offered by specially trained instructors who know the culture and know how to teach the native language to interested children and adults.



*Training for Mayan language instructors*



*Literacy class in a Tsotsil community*

Every month we have staged an average of two to three theater performances of our most requested pieces in remote communities. In some places we show video recordings of our plays to the public, projected on small or large screens or walls of buildings, schools, and churches. We also exhibit old photos of daily life, so people can compare the past and the present and come to appreciate the culture of their ancestors. More and more people get to know our message delivered in our works, which highlight the special diversity of our culture, our social and environmental problems, and alternative ideas to improve the quality of our lives and the sustainable development of our towns and communities. Currently, in collaboration with the organization, Foro Chiapas para el Desarrollo Sustentable, we are finishing a new play called *Voces de la naturaleza*, which deals with the problem of environmental exploitation by various organizations, indigenous and non-indigenous. It makes the audience ponder the commercial activities harming the environment and affecting Chiapas such as deforestation, forest fires, fire wood sales, water shortage, and more.

We have also published three new bi-lingual books, *Relatos y vivencias de Chamula*, *La verdadera humanidad y sus naguales (Xinacantán)*, and *Fabulosas expresiones de la palabra*, all dealing with the oral tradition of contemporary history and the literary creativity of the Tsotsil and Tzeltal people.

With the help of the Public Education Ministry, we expect to receive support for the creation of the Instituto de Ciencias y Artes Mayas y Zoque de Chiapas, an organization which would conduct research in native science, the arts, and language. Its mission is to interweave modern and traditional knowledge and to train individuals to return that knowledge to their own communities. This will be of great importance to this generations and those to come.

For more information visit Sna Jtz'ibajom's website at <http://pages.prodigy.net/gbonline/casaescr.html>.



*Book presentation in Chiapas*

## In Memoriam – Dr. Marshall Robinson

We mourn the loss of Dr. Marshall Robinson this past January

In addition to his many professional accomplishments, Dr. Marshall Robinson was a great friend and supporter of MEF and the poor people of the Maya regions. From 1992 until last year, he was the vice president of the Daniele Agostino Foundation of New York, which supports women and children's programs in indigenous communities, primarily in Guatemala and Mexico.

The scholarships programs in Jacaltenango and Todos Santos plus the literacy programs of Sna Jtz'ibajom and FOMMA have regularly benefitted from the Agostino Foundation's support. Together with his wife, Flavia DeRossi, Marshall was able to make a difference, with an emphasis on alleviating poverty by improving health and education. His involvement and selfless efforts contributed to making the world a better place.

# FOMMA (Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya The Strength of Mayan Women)

Report supplied by Miriam Laughlin, honorary MEF board member

Having established a solid reputation for excellence, FOMMA continues to champion the rights of Mayan women in Chiapas, Mexico, instilling in them an appreciation for their own culture and self confidence to realize the life skills necessary to overcome domestic abuse and poverty.

Five members of FOMMA traveled to the United States this year, performing two of their original plays at universities and other organizations in the Boston area. The tour was hosted by Cultural Survival and supported by the Mexican Consulate of Boston. The women agreed that this trip was very meaningful, particularly because the workshops they presented opened discussions offering more insight into US culture than they had experienced before.

In addition to the tour, Isabel

Juárez Espinoza was invited to New York representing a board of native peoples for Cultural Survival, where she participated in meetings at the UN and with Amnesty International. Isabel said that she has never spoken to such warm and attentive audiences. She remains deeply moved by the experience and motivated to continue struggling at the international and national levels for the rights of the indigenous people of Chiapas.

Back in Chiapas, despite the ongoing construction turmoil of the new theater and cultural center, FOMMA continues to offer workshops for women and children. Enrichment classes are conducted by MEF scholarship students on Saturdays. FOMMA holds its tailoring workshop on weekday afternoons and evenings. FOMMA also provides literacy classes to the recipients of aid from the Best

Foundation, an organization assisting poor families in buying groceries. In addition, FOMMA provides a class in reading skills, sponsored by the government program INEA, for indigenous children in secondary schools who have fallen behind because of Spanish language deficiencies.

For more information, e-mail [petrona10@hotmail.com](mailto:petrona10@hotmail.com) or [isabel3414@hotmail.com](mailto:isabel3414@hotmail.com).



*Literacy class at FOMMA*

## CIRMA (Center for Research of the Mesoamerican Region)

For over 20 years, CIRMA has served as an academic research center in La Antigua, Guatemala, focused on preserving the intellectual and cultural heritage of Central America. CIRMA's academic legacy rests in its library and in its historical and photo archives. Since 2004 MEF has taken on the responsibility to help CIRMA with its collections, to ensure that they are maintained, kept up-to-date, and remain open for research purposes.

Over the years, scholars from around the world have had access to its holdings. To cite some statistics, from January to June of this year the Library, the Historical Archives, and the Photo Archives provided service to a total of 3,211 users, an increase over

previous semesters. Over the past ten years, CIRMA's collections have steadily and dramatically increased. For instance, since 1996, the number of volumes in the library has tripled, and the Historical Archives have grown to hold approximately 7 million documents. The Photo Archives acquired 900,000 new images.

This amazing growth demands that the organization devote more manpower and resources to process the materials and provide access to the public. To address this need, CIRMA has been able to secure partial funding to upgrade its cataloging system; improve maintenance of and access to the collections; and train staff to use the new systems and better manage the collection. But additional support for this purpose is still needed.

If you would like to help with this endeavor, please contact us at [mayaedfund@aol.com](mailto:mayaedfund@aol.com).

For additional information about the services CIRMA provides and the variety of activities and projects it undertakes, visit CIRMA's website at [www.cirma.org.gt](http://www.cirma.org.gt).



*Material being processed and catalogued at  
CIRMA*

# Chiapas Photography Project

Information provided by Carlota Duarte, CPP Coordinator

Indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico lack sufficient opportunities to represent their own culture and speak for themselves. To address this need, in 1992, the Chiapas Photography Project (CPP) was conceived to provide indigenous people in Chiapas with a means to represent their own culture by writing their history through photography.

The last twelve months have seen the publication of two new photography books: *Pox: Posh, a Traditional Liquor from Chiapas*, by Tsotsil photographer Genaro Santiz Gómez, and *Carnaval in Tenejapa, a Tzeltal Community in Chiapas*, by Petul Hernández Guzmán who is from Tenejapa. With these new titles, a series of books planned several years ago has been completed, resulting in works by six individual authors (three men and three women) and one collective work.

CPP's core activity of education involves workshops and training to hone the skills of indigenous photographers, which are carried out at the Archivo Fotográfico Indígena / Indigenous Photography Archive (AFI) housed at the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology (CIESAS-Sureste). This year, monthly workshops were offered to 15 men and women photographers from several Tsotsil, Tzeltal, and Tojolab'al villages, emphasizing the use

of the manual reflex camera and black and white darkroom work. The workshops were taught by four members of Lok'tamayach, an independent NGO, consisting of 31 indigenous photographers, that encourages its members to further develop their photographic work for themselves and for their communities. By the end of this year each of the four participant members of Lok'tamayach will have a small portfolio of new work.

Currently, the collection at AFI/CIESAS consists of over 75,000 images by indigenous photographers, and continues to grow. A highlight this year was an analysis of the collection's themes, carried out by a volunteer from Norway who spent a month reviewing the collection and working with the staff. CPP future plans include improving the maintenance and storage conditions of the collection and preparing for a digitized database to manage the collection.

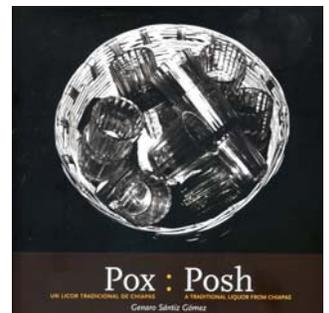
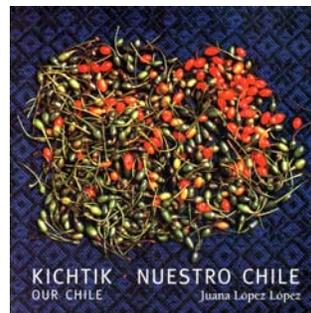
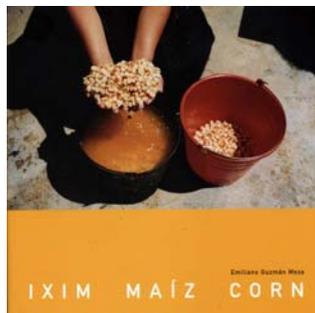
At the end of 2004 MEF began implementation of an endowment fund campaign, in order to support the activities of the CPP and guarantee its long-term stability. Several fund raising activities for the CPP Fund are underway, and more are planned.

For more information visit CPP's website at [www.chiapasphoto.org](http://www.chiapasphoto.org).



*Xunka' López Díaz (sitting down) and Juana López López taking pictures*

*Photograph by Carlota Duarte*



*Front covers of some of the books published by the CPP to date  
Photographs courtesy of Chiapas Photography Project*

# Hurricane Stan Relief Update

Deborah Chandler, Director of Mayan Hands, a fair trade organization of women weavers in the Guatemala highland area

Over the past year, much of the hurricane relief money received at Mayan Hands has been used as a kind of revolving fund, supplying internal “loans” to support various projects of women in need.

Sadly, a year after Hurricane Stan, families still live in refugee shelters, which consist of rows of rooms made with cloth sides. The permanent housing project that was due to be finished in June was abandoned in May, as it was determined that the project was too close to the earlier damage,

and so was likely to be in the path of future mud slides. It is still hoped that the bulk of the relief fund will be put to use helping to



*Refugee shelter in Panajachel*

rebuild homes in safe areas.

Happily, the women are back to work weaving thousands of products for a huge order for SERRV International. Deborah gratefully mentions other gifts received in response to the disaster, such as the clothing, kitchen utensils, children’s books and toys brought by volunteers from MEF’s English Language Program last December (see article on page 6). The relief funds received from MEF donors are being used to support MEF

programs in the affected areas and to provide vocational and educational assistance to the Tz’utujil and Mam communities. See the article on scholarships on pages 3 and 4.



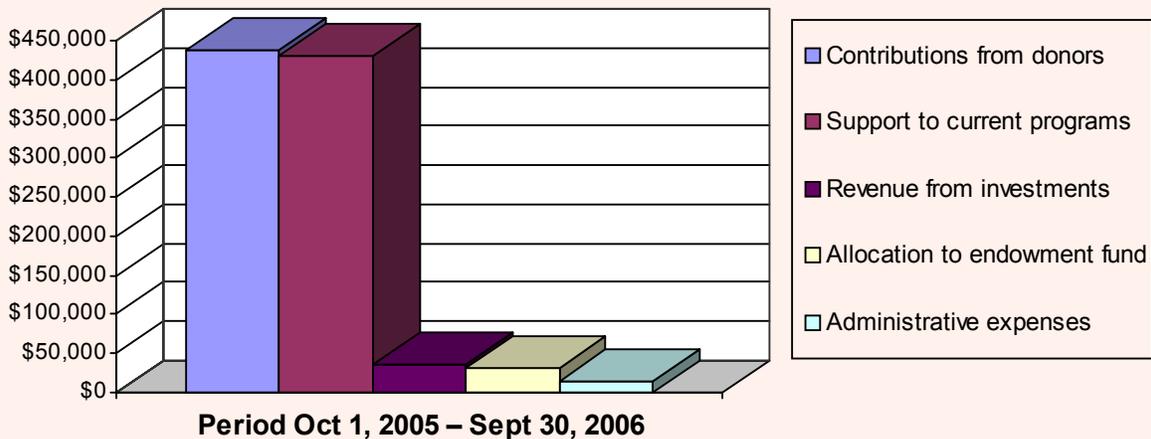
*Women weaver’s group in Santiago Atitlán*

*Photograph by Laurie Levinger*

## Money Matters

This section presents in simple terms information about MEF’s finances for the period of October 1, 2005–September 30, 2006, in order to give an idea of the way your contributions are being used.

Contributions from all donors	\$ 438,965
Revenue from the investment of MEF’s portfolio	\$ 36,265
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$ 475,230</b>
Support to current programs and projects	\$ 430,530
Allocation to endowment fund	\$ 31,200
Administrative expenses	\$ 13,500
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 475,230</b>



# How You Can Help

There are different ways you can help MEF:

by sponsoring an event in your community to bring awareness to our mission

by volunteering your time and expertise to enhance an ongoing program

by considering a bequest to MEF

by donating Frequent Flyer Miles to offer travel opportunities for Maya students, scholars and volunteers

by making a financial contribution

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As one volunteer from Grupo Cajolá expresses, *“Education is the most powerful way to begin the road out of poverty, and your financial contribution is really an investment in the future of Cajolá and all of Guatemala.”*

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<b>How</b>	\$ 150 support the education of a university student for one month.
<b>your</b>	\$ 70 support a student in high school for one month.
<b>donations help</b>	\$ 35 support a student in middle school for one month.
	\$ 20 help parents send a child to elementary school for one month.
	\$ 40 cover the cost of teaching a Maya how to read and write his or her native language in six months.

If you are interested in additional information about any particular program, please contact

## Maya Educational Foundation

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MEF is a 501(c)(3) public charity. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

MEF needs your help to do more for the Maya people.

**We hope you will send your donation today.**

**Thank you very much!**

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Yes! I want to support the Maya Educational Foundation projects

Enclosed is my check payable to Maya Educational Foundation in the amount of US\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge my \_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_\_\_ VISA in the amount of US\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Account No. \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_