

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, RIGHTS TO TERRITORY AND WATER IN GUATEMALA

« THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN THE GOVERNANCE OF LAND AND WATER »



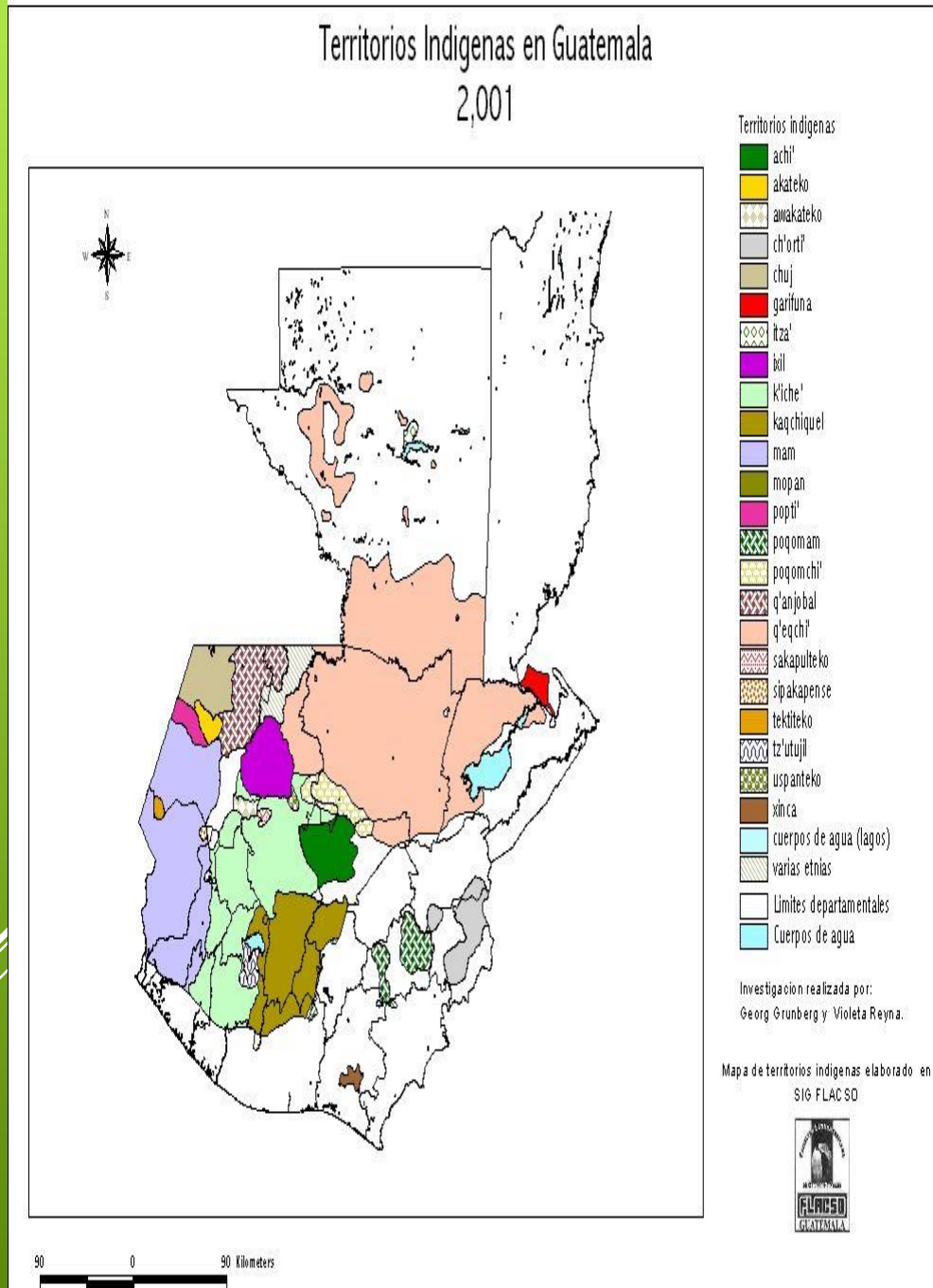
Mapa ge Quauhtemallan



Figura 121: glifo del lugar de Tecpan Quauhtemallan (retocado digitalmente del Lienzo de Tlaxcala).

Introduction

The water in Guatemala presents a great contradiction: it is a country with abundant water resources, but, 4 million people (25%) lack drinking water in their homes. Within the framework of world water week «water, ecosystem and human development, our presentation tries to explain the perspective of indigenous peoples on the rights to water and their ancestral territories. Emphasizing the role of indigenous women in access to land and water.



Five Axes of Analysis:

- The water situation in Guatemala.
- Indigenous peoples and their rights to water and territory.
- The water and the Ch'orti Maya Village of the Dry Corridor.
- The indigenous Ch'orti' woman and her struggle for rights to land and water.
- Proposals to improve the right to water in indigenous territories.



Territorio Maya Ch'ortí Laguna de Ipala, Ceremonia Maya

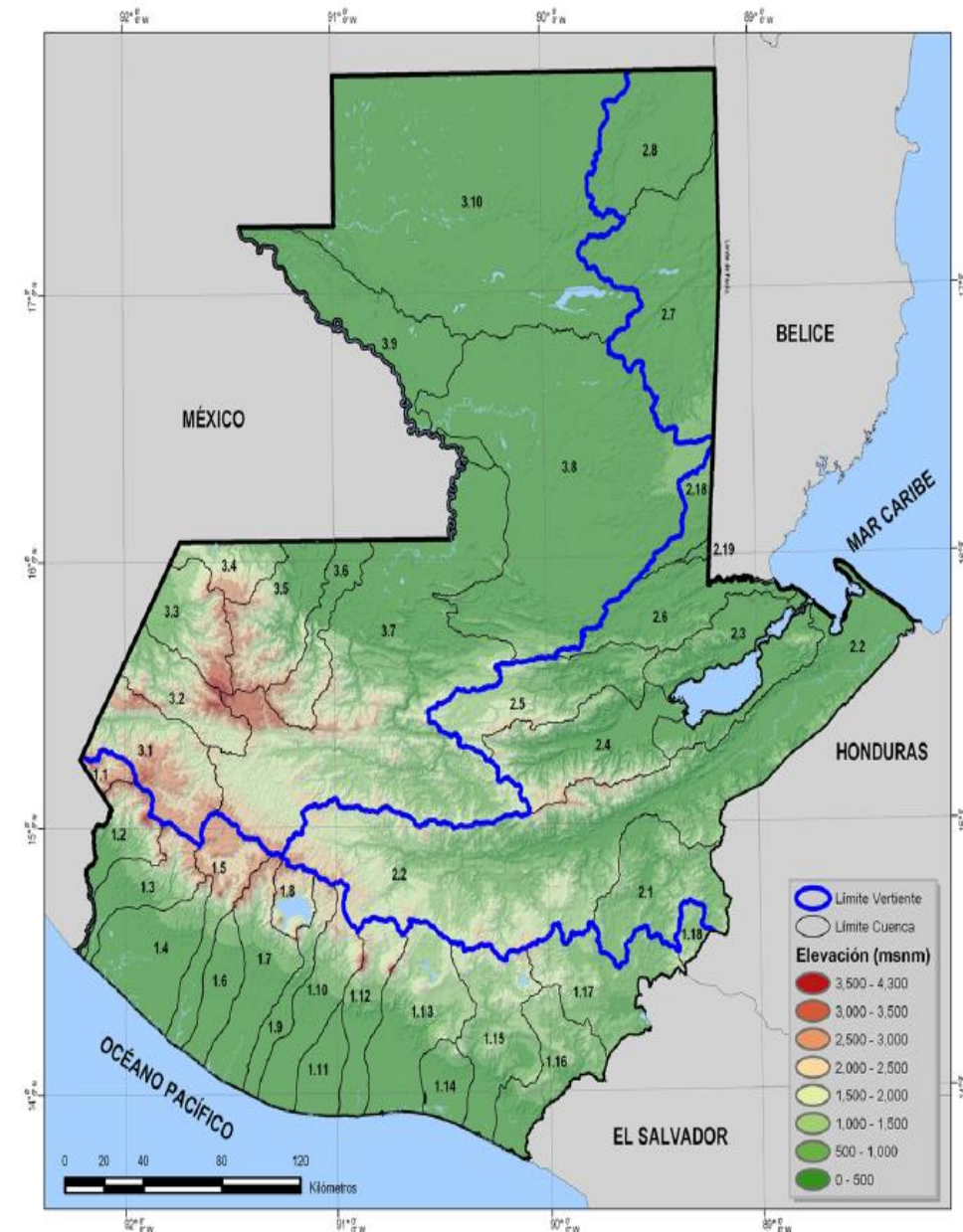
The water situation in Guatemala

Environmental aspects

Due to its geographical position, between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, Guatemala has abundant water resources. It has seven biomes: **Humid Tropical Rainforest, Rainforest Rainforest, Mountain Forest, Mountain Forest, Thorny Chaparral, Subtropical Humid Forest, Humid Tropical Savannah**

The country is divided into three slopes: the Pacific, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico. It presents zones of abundant precipitation, like the tropical zones where it rains around 4000 annual millimeters), and dry corridors where it rains less than 500 annual millimeters.

Mapa 1
Cuencas Hidrográficas
República de Guatemala

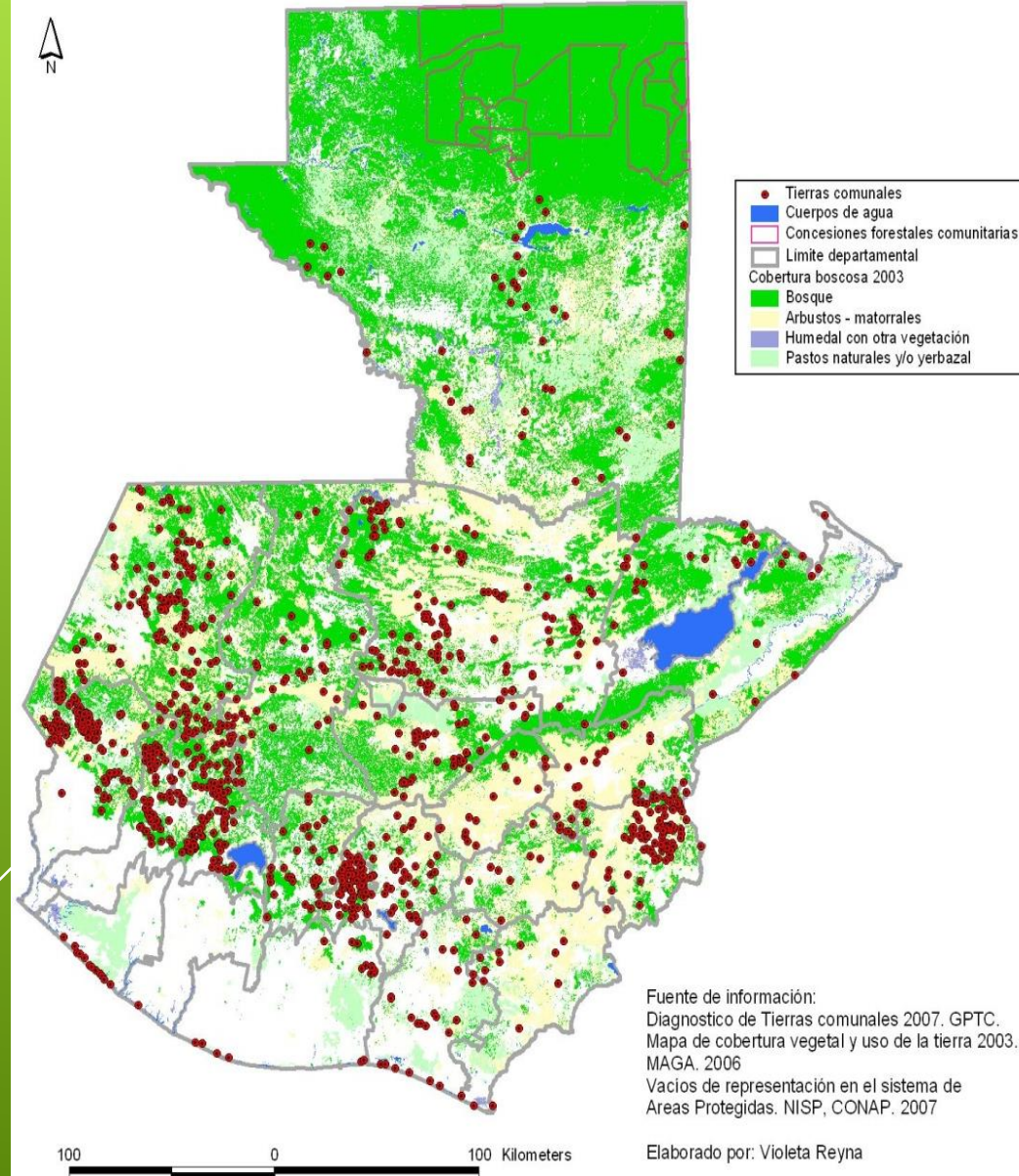


Mapa de las tres vertientes de Guatemala

Agua y Territorios comunales en Guatemala

NÚMERO Y SUPERFICIE DE TIERRAS COMUNALES, GUATEMALA, 2008		
DEPARTAMENTO	# DE CASOS	Has
Alta Verapaz	136	159,521
Baja Verapaz	57	99,603
Chimaltenango	46	7,373
Chiquimula	102	27,237
El Progreso	20	3,781
Escuintla	12	5,619
Guatemala	42	1,642
Huehuetenango	127	65,630
Izabal	48	264,230
Jalapa	18	43,940
Jutiapa	28	65,351
Petén	38	512,276
Quetzaltenango	86	26,329
Quiché	82	205,819
Retalhuleu	14	8,110
Sacatepéquez	57	3,048
San Marcos	134	11,026
Santa Rosa	18	7,575
Sololá	38	4,552
Suchitepéquez	4	1,025
Totonicapán	77	47,084
Zacapa	29	6,358
Total	1213	1,577,129

Tierras comunales en Guatemala y Cobertura Vegetal.



The water situation in Guatemala

Social aspects:

4 million people, who represent 25% of the total population of the country, lack drinking water from their homes.

More than 2 million people living in the dry corridor suffer from water shortages due to long periods of drought, which affects their lives and productive activities.

Polluted water is the cause of 43% of the country's infant mortality. 80% of indigenous and peasant families do not have irrigation water for their agricultural crops.



The water situation in Guatemala

Institutional aspects

The country does not have a water law or a governmental authority that regulates its use and access. The lack of law prevents sanctions such as:

In 2014, the company REPSA, producer of Palma, contaminated with the chemical Malation el Río la Pasión and Río San Román caused the death of millions of fish and other aquatic life.

Large agricultural companies producing sugar cane steal the rivers, diverting them and introducing them in their entirety to the plantations and leaving thousands of families without water.

The lake of Amatitlán, near the capital city, is literally dead by the waste thrown up by the urban area.



Water and indigenous peoples

The "Water from the Worldview of our Indigenous Peoples" has a vital importance that transcends the corporal dimension of its need for consumption. "The relationship we have with our lands, territories and water is the physical, cultural and spiritual foundation of our existence. This relationship with our Mother Earth forces us to conserve our fresh water and seas for the survival of the present and future generations. " Water is seen by our indigenous peoples, as a living, omnipotent, creator and transformer. It constitutes the basis of reciprocity and complementarity, it is seen as a universal and community right, while at the same time constituting an expression of flexibility and adaptability. The best practical expression of this worldview is precisely the rational and respectful use that we make of this and all the resources that Mother Nature offers us



Water and indigenous peoples

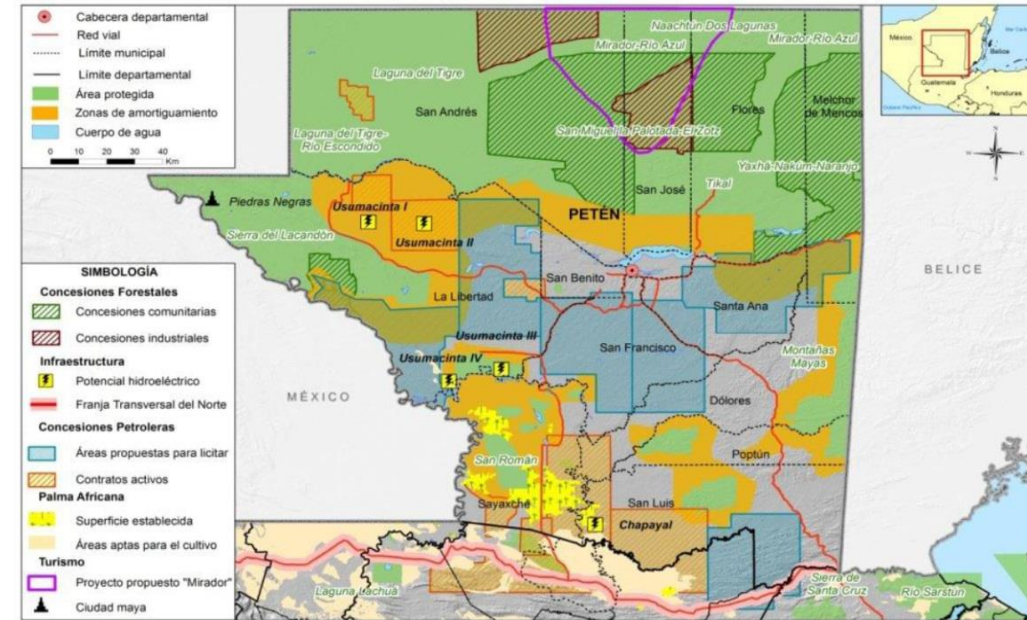
In the last ten years, the State has promoted the installation of large extractive mining projects, dams and monocultures, in indigenous territories.

These projects are based on the use of rivers and natural resources, affecting livelihoods and generating great social conflicts.

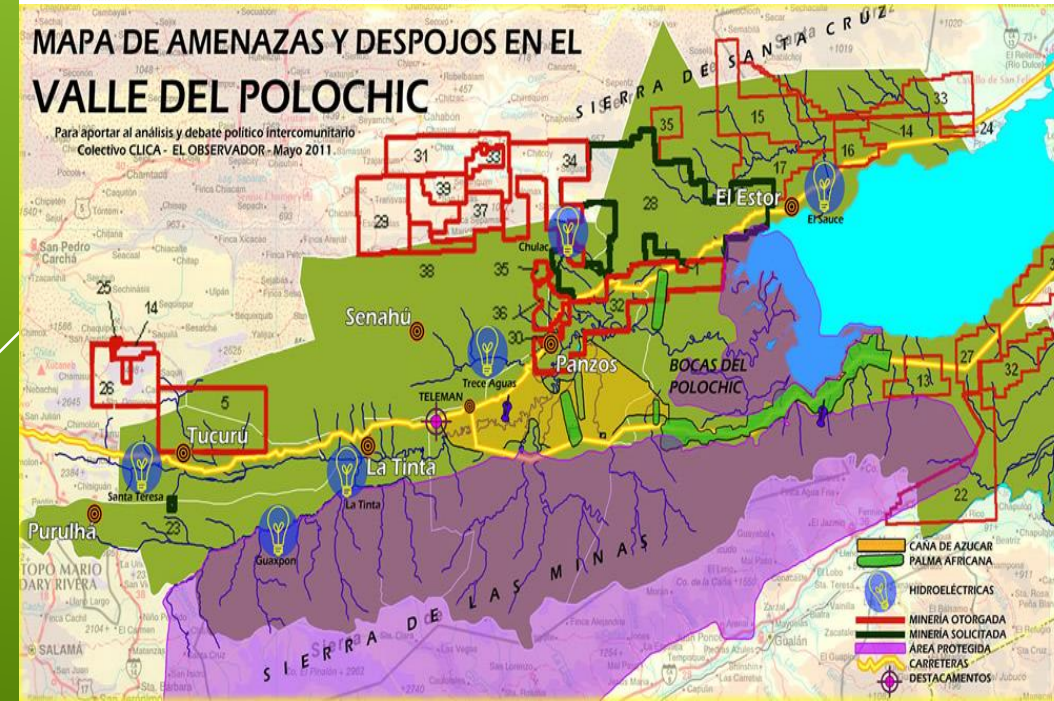
The indigenous peoples who fight against these projects have been repressed and criminalized by the public forces at the service of the large extractive companies.

As a result, more than 50 indigenous men and women who fight for the defence of their territories have been killed

Mapa 10
Inversiones y dinámicas territoriales en Petén



Elaborado por PRISMA, basado en Instituto de Estudios Agrarios y Rurales de CONGCOOP y Centro de Monitoreo y Evaluación del Consejo Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (CEMEC-CONAP) (2010); SIGMAGA (2008); Cortavé (2009); Invest in Guatemala (2008); SEGEPLAN (2011); USGS-Eros Data Center (2005) y bases de datos SIG de Mesoamérica / CCAD-BM (2002).



Water and indigenous peoples

The indigenous peoples who fight against these projects have been repressed and criminalized by the public forces at the service of the large extractive companies.

As a result more than 50 indigenous men and women who fight for the defence of their territories have been killed.

They force us to leave our land and leave us on the street, without food, without health services, without homes, without water. With nothing but our misfortune to be banished in our own land.



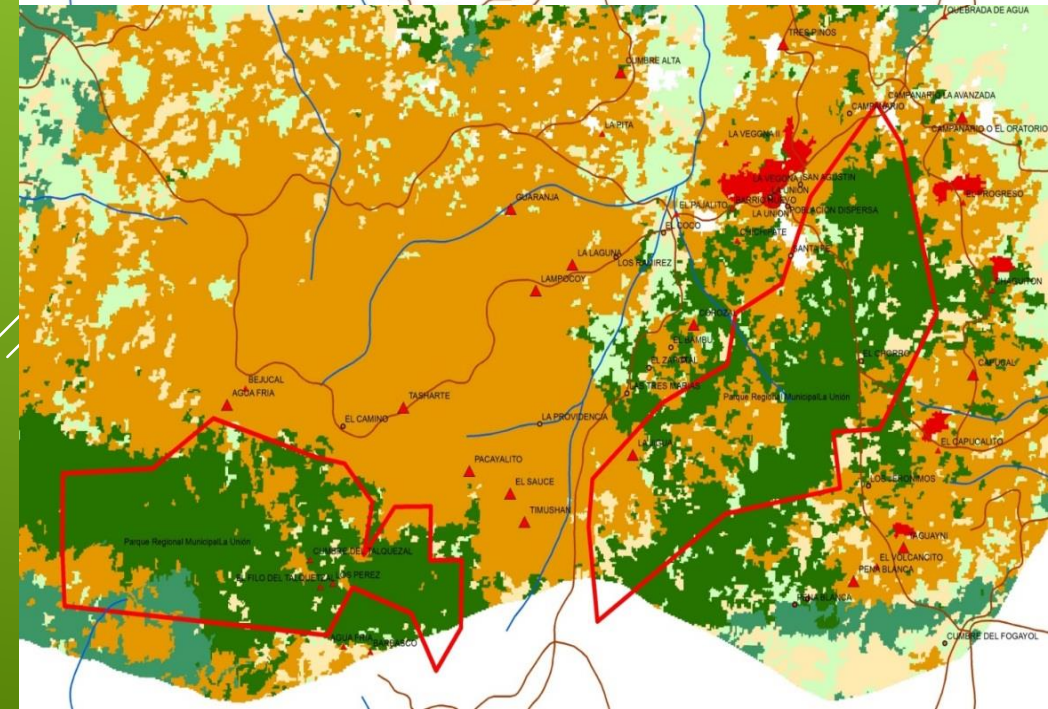
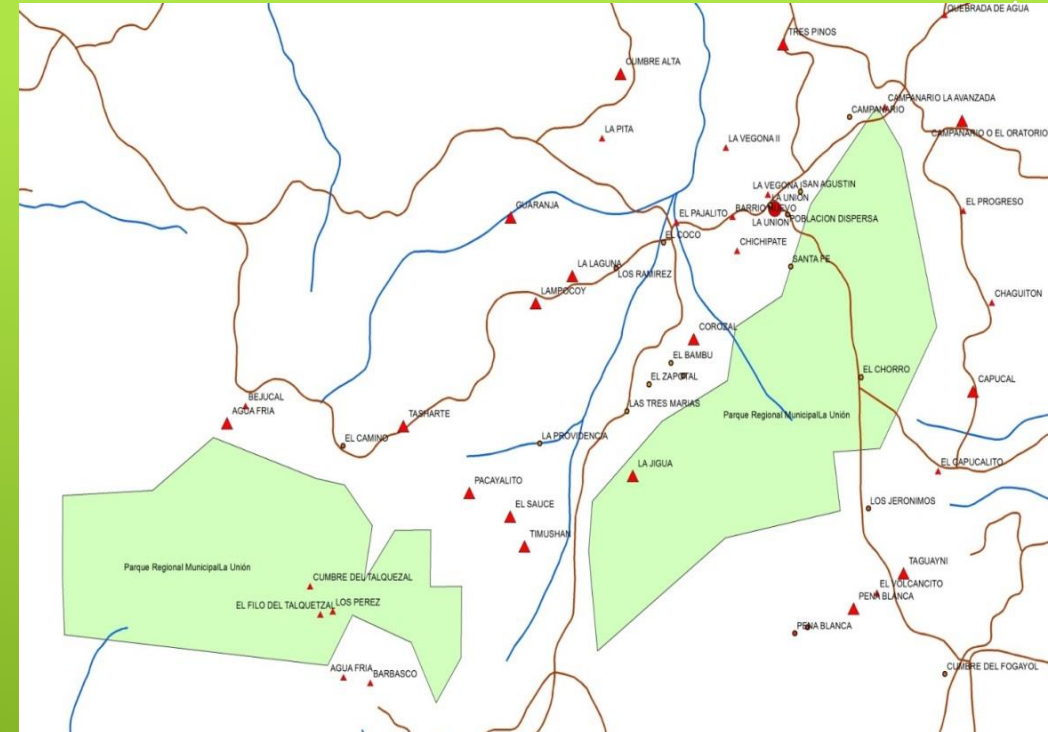
The water and the Mayan village Ch'orti 'in the dry corridor

The Ch'ortí Maya Town has more than 50 thousand inhabitants who live in the border area between Guatemala and Honduras.

Its territory is composed of cloud forests, dry hillsides and valleys on the banks of rivers.

The dispossession of land caused by liberal governments in the late 19th century reduced the chances of life for the Maya Ch'orti' people.

The long struggle of this people to recover their land begins to have results in the last five years when they achieve the restitution of some land stripped, but still remains to recover most of the ancestral territory.



The water and the Mayan village Ch'orti 'in the dry corridor

Events associated with climate change, such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998, Tropical Storm Stan in 2005 and the prolonged droughts of recent years, have had a disastrous impact on the livelihoods of the Maya Ch'orti' people.

However, the cases of famine suffered by the Ch'orti' people are not only due to climatic phenomena, as the Government assures, but mainly to the dispossession of land, social exclusion and racism that it suffers.



The water and the Mayan village Ch'orti 'in the dry corridor

To aggravate the situation, the State has authorized the installation of hydroelectric and mining projects in the Ch'orti indigenous territory.

This not only affects the livelihoods for the population but also increases the social conflict, causing the murder of 7 leaders and leaders who fight for the defense of their territory.

At the same time, the absence of state public investments to improve living conditions, health, access to water and food security for the Ch'orti people is evident.



The water and the Mayan village Ch'orti 'in the dry corridor

Within our worldview, the relationship of water and land as fundamental elements of life must be venerated, so as a Ch'orti 'people we dedicate three days to the veneration of the earth and the water making offerings to the mountains, hills, rivers and streams.

We love the earth and the water, they are our sources of life.

On the pilgrimage we fill ourselves with energy and offer our crops so that our crops are abundant, and water is not scarce.



The water and the Mayan village Ch'orti 'in the dry corridor.

In our claim of rights and with the energy of our ancestors, as a Ch'orti 'people we are advancing in the recovery of our rights:

- Right to ethnic identity
- Right to territory and natural resources
- Right to organization and own authority

Sentences issued by the supreme courts of justice that strengthen the governance of the land and environmental governance have been reached.

We work to recover our own ways of life and make the land produce to face the poverty and hunger in which they have subjected us during decades of slavery.

MIÉRCOLES 24 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2010 - NUESTRO DIARIO **ORIENTE**

Reciben títulos

Chortís las ocupaban desde hace 200 años

ZACAPA
CARRERA
ZACAPA
Población: 21.000 hab.
EXTENSIÓN: 1.000 km²
MUNICIPIOS: 11

Voluntario Maelit
Colaborador

La Unión. En respuesta a su falta de muchos años, familias de ascendencia Chortí de sus comunidades reclaman por fin los derechos que les corresponden como propietarios de las tierras que usaron desde el día.

Este acto beneficia a más de mil familias de los municipios Taguarete, Compañero Amador, Compañero Antonio, Compañero Progreso, Copacil y Caserio Esposquilán.

Walter Hernández, uno de los líderes comunitarios, explicó que el proceso de legitimación comenzó en 2006, por medio de la Coordinadora de Asociaciones y Comandantes para el Desarrollo Integral de la Región Chortí Comunitaria.

ASÍ OPINAN

"Es un momento histórico por el derecho que se genera para nosotros".
WALTER HERNÁNDEZ
LÍDER COMUNITARIO

"No se trata de la reivindicación de los derechos de los campesinos".
WALTER HERNÁNDEZ
LÍDER COMUNITARIO

Los títulos de propiedad se dan cortesa jurídica a 5 mil familias de seis comunidades.

ASÍ OPINAN

"Es un momento histórico por el derecho que se genera para nosotros".
WALTER HERNÁNDEZ
LÍDER COMUNITARIO

Actuaciones locales presidieron el acto de entrega.

Los campesinos celebraron con una ceremonia.

Los representantes visitan su nueva tierra desde W.L.

PARA COMENTAR

ZACAPA
Centro de mediación
Zacapa. La Corte Superior de Justicia facilitó un Centro de Mediación en el edificio del Juzgado de Paz de esta ciudad. El objetivo es solucionar casos de conflictos entre pobladores, vecinos o familiares de toda Zacapa.
Aster Cordero Aguilar Colaboradora

MIAPA
Salud recibe equipo
Méjapa. Autoridades de Salud entregaron la entrega de equipo de cómputo a un nuevo centro de salud del departamento. El objetivo es modernizar el sistema de transmisión de datos dentro de la institución.
Rosa Ortil Colaboradora

ZACAPA
Fagan a campesinos
Cobaltón. Campesinos de La Unión, Huit, San Diego y Cobaltón recibieron más de Q1 millón, 400 mil por parte del Programa de Incentivos para Pagos Posibles de Tierras (Pagos) que les paga por el cultivo de los bonos.
Walter Maelit Colaborador

The indigenous Ch'orti' woman and her struggle for rights to land and water

We as indigenous women have taken the path of the struggle for the claim of our rights.

We fight for the right to land and for environmental justice, we lead processes before the supreme courts of justice.

As indigenous women historically relegated to the home and marginalized by society, we are taking an active and propitious role, we are breaking paradigms. An example can be found in this speaker who brings the voice of hundreds of Ch'orti' indigenous women who suffer from racism, discrimination and oppression.



Proposals to improve the right to water in indigenous territories:

The State will guarantee the use and responsible access to water for the diverse purposes that sustain the livelihoods for the communities.

The State must recognize and protect the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral territories and their natural resources, including water.

The State must recognize and strengthen the mechanisms of water governance and the territories that exist in indigenous peoples.

The State must stop promoting extractive projects that affect indigenous territories, especially those that violate the rights of use and access to water.

In this forum, to which I had the privilege of being, I want, humbly, to ask you for solidarity with my people, your support to achieve justice for our murdered peasants, for our fellow political prisoners, for the hunger suffered by hundreds of girls and children.

We want justice, land and freedom. We want to live in peace.

