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Minister Ablonczy Highlights Canadian Efforts to Combat Hunger in Guatemala

December 5, 2012 - The Honourable Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs), today announced the official launch of a new Canadian project that addresses food insecurity and malnutrition in Guatemala. Minister Ablonczy made the announcement while speaking at a round table on food security in Guatemala City, accompanied by His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada.

"As a strong and reliable partner in the Americas, our government is proud to help improve food security in the region," said Minister Ablonczy. "Canadian expertise will be collaborating to make tangible improvements to food security in Guatemala."

The new three-year project is supported by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and will be run in a partnership between McGill University, Rafael Landívar University's Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment (IARNA) in Guatemala, and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (Canada and Guatemala). These institutions will work together to develop and propose effective agricultural policies and practices in Guatemala in order to improve the effectiveness of local food security.

IDRC, a Canadian Crown Corporation, supports research in developing countries to promote growth and development. The result is innovative, lasting local solutions that aim to bring change to those who need it most.

Minister Ablonczy is in Guatemala City as part of a Canadian delegation, led by the Governor General, which is travelling to Mexico, Peru and Guatemala. The delegation is advancing Canada's ongoing engagement in the Americas—a foreign policy priority since 2007—and its three goals of increasing economic opportunity, strengthening security and institutions and fostering lasting relationships.

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A backgrounder follows.

For further information, media representatives may contact:

Joshua Zanin
Director of Communications
Office of the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas and Consular Affairs)
613-944-2300

Foreign Affairs Media Relations Office
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
613-995-1874
Follow us on Twitter: [@DFAIT_MAECI](#)

Isabelle Bourgeault-Tassé
International Development Research Centre
613-696-2343

Backgrounder - IDRC Project on Food Insecurity and Under-Nutrition in Guatemala

Duration: Three years
IDRC funding: \$450,000
Project partners: Rafael Landívar University, Guatemala; McGill University, Canada; Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (Guatemala)

Overview: Roughly one quarter of Guatemalans do not have enough to eat, and almost half (49 percent) of Guatemalan children under 5 years old are chronically malnourished. This project aims to address some of the underlying issues that threaten local food security.

This three-year project, funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), is led by researchers at Guatemala's Instituto de Agricultura, Recursos Naturales y Ambiente at Rafael Landívar University, in collaboration with scientists at the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at McGill University. Focusing on the neglected role of agriculture in reducing food insecurity and poverty, researchers will measure and compare the effectiveness of various food security and nutrition initiatives in Guatemala to determine which have proven most effective in improving small-scale farming. Partnering with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, they will also ensure that recommendations resulting from the research will influence food security efforts and inform decisions by the Guatemalan government and other national and international development players.