



# Vitafood Meals for the Hungry

— Diocese of Suchitepequez, Guatemala —



Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

JOHN 6:35



## **We are a Catholic ministry**

that mobilizes the global Catholic Church to transform the poor and their communities materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Rather than create new institutions to distribute aid, we support existing ministries and churches already serving the poor. In addition to being the most cost-effective way of helping the poor, empowering these ministries allows us to support the Church's spiritual mission and its important position of leadership in poor communities.

We consider every gift we receive as a precious resource from God. We direct every donation to its intended project, provide honest and accurate reports to our donors, and keep overhead costs to an industry low. We handle funds with utmost integrity and hold our ministry partners in the field to the same high standards by asking them to document costs and the impact of their outreach.

We invite you to join with us as we seek to transform the lives of the poor materially and spiritually — ways that please the Father and glorify him in Heaven and on earth.



## Project Synopsis

### Description

This project will send nutrient-rich Vitafood meals to feed hungry Guatemalan families through the Catholic Diocese of Suchitepequez-Retalhuleu.

### Purpose

To reduce hunger, combat the effects of drought and demonstrate Christ's love for the poor.

### Location

Suchitepequez, a southwestern region of Guatemala, bordering the Pacific Ocean.

### Cost

**\$15,000** will ship, on average, one container holding 272,160 meals to our overseas partners.

**Our goal is to send two containers — about 544,320 meals — to Guatemala at a cost of \$30,000. Every dollar sends 18 meals!**

### Highlights

- Cross Catholic Outreach has been given access to thousands of free nutrient-rich meals — we just need the funding to ship them to Catholic missions feeding the hungry.
- These fortified rice meals, called Vitafood, are loaded with vitamins and minerals and are specifically designed to reverse the effects of malnutrition in children.
- The meals are sealed in airtight packets to maximize shelf life and fit as many as possible in shipping containers.
- These meals, distributed as part of a monthly food outreach, will be provided to families impacted by poverty and drought.
- Families who receive Vitafood will be trained in food preparation and good hygiene to help them achieve better health.
- Please give today to end the hunger pangs of Christ's poor in Guatemala!



*A chef with the Diocese of Suchitepequez teaches local families how to prepare Vitafood.*

**“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”**

**Matthew 25:35**



## The Need



The devastating consequences of Guatemalan poverty rarely get covered in the news. Occasionally, the world learns of some act of crime or violence — a symptom of the desperation in Guatemala — but we seldom hear about the silent killer that has tragically impacted countless families. Malnutrition. It claims lives on a horrific scale without drawing much attention from the world at large, even though most of the victims are babies and young children.

Malnutrition and its terrible impact are particularly troubling in Guatemala's remote, rural regions. There, where families live too far from hospitals or clinics capable of helping, a serious lack of resources and inadequate food production create the perfect conditions for malnutrition to thrive. Poor mothers are forced to choose which of their children to feed on a given day, and they watch in despair as their sons and daughters weaken, grow gaunt and lose the will to live. In these areas, wasting and stunting are common physical problems that can manifest from malnutrition, and the harm they do to a child's body are lasting. Feeling powerless to stop this decline, many poor mothers succumb to despair, knowing they will never be able to provide relief for their suffering little ones without help.

Even in urban areas, parents struggle to feed their children. The slums and dusty outskirts of Guatemala City are filled with the tears of the hungry, who grow up caught in a stranglehold of gangs, violence, corruption and economic devastation. They see no way out.

Thankfully, the Church in Guatemala has a heart for its poorest, most marginalized corners. One of our local partners, the Diocese of Suchitepequez-Retalhuleu, is eager to respond to the ongoing hunger issues affecting vulnerable families — but it needs your help to succeed!

### Guatemala at a Glance

- Guatemala has the **largest** population in Central America.
- Almost **60%** of the population falls below the national poverty line, with 23% living in extreme poverty.
- **1 in 2** Guatemalan children under age 5 suffers chronic malnourishment.
- For every 1,000 live births, **23** children will die before their first birthday — an increase of about 400% over the U.S. rate.
- More than **half** of the population lives in rural areas that may have limited access to hospitals.



## Ministry Description

### The Response: Vitafood

To combat Guatemala's hunger crisis, Cross Catholic Outreach has a simple but effective plan: Vitafood.

This fortified rice product, specifically designed to reverse the effects of child malnutrition, can be packed in large shipping containers and cost-effectively sent to Catholic schools, orphanages and other local partners serving the poorest of the poor. A single container can make a big impact, keeping crucial feeding programs running or providing immediate relief when disasters strike.

Vitafood is an extremely flexible resource. It comes in several different varieties and can be prepared with additional spices or ingredients to suit local tastes. No matter how it is prepared, its nutritional value remains the same, providing the optimal balance of vitamins, minerals, protein, fiber, fat and carbohydrates that a child's hungry body needs. This tried-and-tested formula is suitable for more than just severely malnourished children. These meals are also important to the health and physical well-being of children and adults who are healthy but at risk of becoming malnourished.

What's more, because Vitafood meals are donated to us by respected faith-based organizations, we only need to cover the cost to ship the meals to the hungry. This means that **for every dollar you give, about 18 nutritious meals can be sent to Guatemala!**



### What is Vitafood?

- Vitafood is a fortified rice product loaded with vitamins and minerals and scientifically designed to meet the needs of malnourished children.
- Because the Vitafood meals are donated to us, we only need to cover the cost to ship them to the hungry. *Your generosity will help make that happen!*

### How do the Meals Get into the Hands of People Who Need Them?

Vitafood is packed into 40-foot containers, placed on a cargo ship and sent to international ports. Once the shipment arrives at its destination, our staff relies on a global network of trusted partners to get these products into the hands of priests, nuns, Catholic schools and orphanages that pass them on to needy families in impoverished communities.





*Rather than simply hand out meals, the diocese engages the community through agriculture training, spiritual formation and a work-for-food program.*

## **Our Guatemalan Partner**

With your support, thousands of Vitafood meals will be sent to the Catholic Diocese of Suchi (short for Suchitepequez-Retalhuleu).

The Diocese of Suchi is located in Guatemala's southwest, in a region beset by many challenges, from poverty and malnutrition to droughts and floods. A typical year sees poor local farmers suffering seasonal hunger as their food reserves run short during the March-August period. When drought strikes, as it most recently did in 2018, the shortage is even worse.

The meals you send will reach the hungry through the diocese's Caritas organization. This is an outreach that strives to embody Christ's compassion in a way that empowers the poor and increases their independence. Rather than simply hand out food, Caritas offers agriculture workshops, runs a food-for-work program and asks each participating family to make a symbolic donation toward an emergency care fund.

Poor families also receive hygiene and food preparation tips to improve their overall health, and they participate in spiritual reflections that lift their thoughts from the day-to-day tasks of sheer survival to the eternal blessings of the Catholic faith. By encouraging the poor to play an active role in their advancement, Caritas preserves their dignity and encourages a can-do mindset critical to truly breaking out of poverty.

This new partnership between Cross Catholic Outreach and the Diocese of Suchi began last year, when we helped Caritas grow its staff, acquire a delivery truck and expand its community development projects. Now we're hoping you'll join us in this great new opportunity to bring hope to Guatemalan families who have only ever known poverty. We look forward to seeing the transformation that unfolds in the lives of men, women and children in the Diocese of Suchi as we bring Catholics like you together to feed the hungry!



## Help Now!

Cross Catholic Outreach is eager to satisfy the hunger of Guatemala's poor, and hundreds of thousands of meals are available for distribution. We just need the funds to ship them.

*That's where you come in!*

Your generous gift will send nutrient-rich Vitafood to the Diocese of Suchi so that desperately poor families can get relief from hunger. You will play an important role in lifting poor rural families out of despair and into hope and new opportunities as the Diocese of Suchi advances the Gospel in word and deed, delivering nourishment for bodies and souls and empowering the most disadvantaged and marginalized to achieve abundant lives.

The need for intervention in Guatemala is great, but God's mercy is greater — and the Spirit of Christ compels each one of us to carry that mercy to the vulnerable. Please help us bring relief and hope to this desperately poor country. Every dollar you contribute will send 18 wholesome meals to the hungry.

Please — be an answer to prayer! Provide food for the hungry in Christ's name!



**Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor.**

PROVERBS 22:9

### Our Promise to You!

Donations from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred through June 30, 2021, the close of our ministry's fiscal year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.

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