

Ending hunger

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Of all the countries in Latin America, **Guatemala** has the highest percentage of chronic infant malnutrition, which recent studies put at 48 per cent. When this figure was made public the government invited all sectors of society to unite in a Zero Hunger pact.

Las Gravileas, a training center for women close to the capital, La Antigua, has worked for sixteen years running intensive technical and business training programs for destitute women, mostly from the dry eastern part of the country where the country's poorest communities are located.

Now **Las Gravileas** is contributing its mite to the success of the national Zero Hunger pact. This year it has held a large number of short, two-and-a-half-day courses. On these courses the women learn a productive skill, draw up a business plan and receive a starting kit for setting up their own business immediately. One of the training school's supervisors works with participants during their skills training and on their business plan, and then goes back with them to their local community to help them

through the difficulties of setting up in production.

As the women tend to spend most of their income on feeding and raising their families this type of program has a direct impact in the battle to end hunger.

Las Gravileas (named for a leafy Guatemalan shade tree) opened in 1997 in response to the urgent need for professional training for women in Guatemala. The women who set up the school, and those who run it now, find inspiration in **St Josemaria's** ongoing call to feel responsible for everyone:

“Our neighbours’ problems must be our problems. Christian fraternity should be something very deep in the soul, so that we are indifferent to no one, [so that we] recognize Jesus as he crosses our path and makes himself present to us in the needs of

our fellow men.” Christ is Passing By, 145.

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