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GUATEMALA

SNAPSHOT

Mothers Build Bridges to Educate Communities

USAID helps mothers find jobs and empower communities



Gladys Soto during a growth monitoring activity in early 2011. Photo: Ruben Espinoza, FUNDAZUCAR

“I see myself in other mothers’ eyes, know exactly what they go through, and that is the reason why I am sure we are that bridge towards a better future for our children.”

“We are bridges; we build bridges for a better future,” says Gladys Marisol Soto. She is 29, a mother of two: 3-year-old Selvin David and 11-month-old Joshua. As a housewife from a rural community in Pedro Jocopilas, on the South Coast of Guatemala, Gladys received a visit at her home from a USAID-sponsored community facilitator. He invited her to join a training program for mothers.

“That was one of the best decisions of my life,” she said. Since Gladys has always lived in a rural community, she said, she never imagined anything more than staying at home and taking care of her family.

After a year in the training program, Gladys began to look for a job that would allow her to effectively use the newly gained knowledge while giving back to her community.

In 2010, she was recruited as a field facilitator by Fundazúcar, USAID’s partner and implementer on the training program. She is now responsible for six communities along the southern coast. She delivers her training – the best practices in nutrition, women’s empowerment, growth monitoring – to approximately 215 women and 293 small children. Her efforts contribute greatly in a country where approximately half of the children under five are chronically malnourished.

USAID, in Guatemala, is working to strengthen public-private partnerships focused on health and education; it has worked with Fundazúcar – the corporate responsibility arm of the sugar industry – to deliver in these areas since June 200. In under three years, the program has been able to reach over 16,000 mothers and 16,000 children under five.

“As I see myself in other mothers’ eyes, [I] know exactly what they go through and that is the reason why I am sure we are that bridge towards a better future for our children,” says Gladys. “Sometimes I start thinking that if I were not here, maybe there wouldn’t be someone else who could detect those malnutrition cases and treat children on time; there wouldn’t be someone to tell the mother what to do to prevent her child from getting sick!”

Telling Our Story

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