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Sector Brief

Education

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Situation Analysis

Today, primary school enrollment rates in Guatemala are almost 100% and there is nearly equal enrollment of boys and girls. Failure rates in first grade have dropped dramatically (by 18.6%) in the last five years as a result of the implementation of several quality education policies and programs. Still, 80% of female and 76% of male students passed first grade in 2016. In addition, only about three-fourths of those enrolled in primary school graduate from 6th grade (80% of boys and 73% of girls), and the net enrollment rate for middle school (7th grade to 9th grade) in 2015 was merely 47% for boys and 45% for girls.

Education quality is also a pressing issue. According to 2014 Ministry of Education (MOE) data, only 41% of primary students reach national standards in mathematics and only 50% reach national standards in reading. Therefore, even when students are able to complete primary school, many do not acquire the necessary skills to advance. Furthermore, the gap in school enrollment between rural and urban areas is significant.

In Guatemala, more than 1.6 million out-of-school youth between 15 and 24 years old, including 600,000 youth in the Western Highlands, do not have basic life or vocational skills to enter the workforce. Youth face increasingly difficult conditions, including high levels of unemployment, social and economic marginalization, rapid urbanization, increasing incidence of crime, and lack of basic services.

USAID Response

USAID's education efforts are part of the Western Highlands Integrated Program, which focuses on reducing chronic malnutrition and improving food security through the implementation of three presidential initiatives – Feed the Future, the Global Health Initiative, and the Global Climate Change Initiative. Following a wave of migration to the United States by tens of thousands of unaccompanied children in 2014, USAID/Guatemala, through these programs, is addressing the lack of security, social, educational and economic opportunities-- the main underlying causes of migration from Guatemala.

The Western Highlands Integrated Program seeks to achieve sustainable rural development through parallel focus on agriculture, economic development, health care, education, nutrition, adaptation to the impacts of climate change, local governance, and gender equity. The program works in 30 municipalities and more than 2,500 communities in Guatemala's Western Highlands that suffer from the highest rates of poverty and chronic malnutrition, yet have the potential for economic growth. USAID collaborates with Guatemalan officials and leaders at the community, municipal, departmental, and regional levels to achieve shared goals.

In the education sector, USAID works in partnership with the Government of Guatemala to improve primary grade reading skills and provide educational opportunities for out-of-school youth.

- To improve the quality of education, USAID is focusing on improving reading skills by promoting early grade reading as the backbone of lifelong learning.

- USAID supports activities that are implemented by the MOE at the central and local levels, such as the development, printing and distribution of materials in Mayan languages and Spanish. Additionally, USAID supports teacher training at the local level and the strengthening of management and technical skills of MOE personnel.
- USAID partners with parents and communities to promote demand for quality education services and raise awareness of the important role that families play in their children's education.
- USAID works alongside local governments to establish basic requirements for schools in order to foster a classroom environment conducive to improving reading skills.
- USAID provides technical assistance to the MOE to improve information systems and to promote the use of data generated by these systems to inform policy decisions.
- USAID activities provide opportunities for out-of-school rural indigenous youth in the Western Highlands to receive education and build skills to increase their access to sustainable livelihoods. Out-of-school youth receive workforce readiness and vocational training as well as alternative options to complete primary and secondary school.

Major Results and Accomplishments

- **Support for bilingual education for indigenous students** –USAID has supported the MOE's design and implementation of the literacy model -a pedagogical strategy for bilingual contexts to promote the development of reading skills of early grade students in their mother tongue (Mayan language) and in Spanish as a second language- for bilingual and intercultural environments. This approach includes development of methodologies and educational materials, teacher training, parental and community involvement, and professional development programs for technical staff of the departmental education offices and educational coaching specialists.
- A photograph showing three young indigenous children sitting at a desk in a classroom. They are looking towards the camera with neutral to slightly smiling expressions. The child on the left is a boy with short dark hair, wearing a maroon jacket. The child in the middle is a boy with short dark hair, wearing a dark shirt. The child on the right is a girl with long dark hair, wearing a red cardigan. They are sitting at a green desk with papers and a pencil. In the background, there are shelves with books and other classroom items. A small copyright notice '© H. Gonzalez, ACME 2006' is visible in the top left corner of the image.
- **Improved education systems**- USAID is moving beyond supporting the MOE to improve the information systems to develop tools that provide anytime anywhere access to data for decision making. In 2016 USAID developed a mobile application called EscuelApp that provides data at the school level including enrollment, drop-out and promotion rates, teacher/student ratio, financial resources and principal's contact information . EscuelApp was designed to improve information access by civil society and education stakeholders to support their social audit efforts.
 - **Support for alternative basic education quality programs** – USAID has developed learning standards for technical and vocational training programs and standards of implementation for institutions that implement these programs. These standards will contribute to strengthen alternative basic education for out-of-school youth, as well as the MOE capabilities to monitor and assess the quality of these programs.

Current Projects

Project Name	Implementing Partner	Duration
Lifelong Learning	Juárez and Associates, Inc.	March 27, 2014 – March 26, 2019
Health and Education Policy Project Plus(HEP+)	Palladium (formerly known as Futures Group)	October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2020
Puentes	World Vision International	April 10, 2017 – April 9, 2022