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Sector Brief

Education

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Situation Analysis

Improvements in the education sector during recent years include near gender parity in primary enrollment and improved first grade completion (77% of girls and 72% of boys passed first grade in 2016 – a significant improvement from 2010). Yet, challenges remain. In 2016, nearly 50 percentage points separated gross and net enrollment rates in first grade (111% versus 62%, respectively), only 89% of girls and 86% of boys enrolled in primary school graduated from 6th grade, and the net enrollment rate for middle school (7th grade to 9th grade) was merely 43% for girls and 45% for boys. Moreover, the gap in school enrollment between rural and urban areas is significant. Education quality is also a pressing issue. According to 2014 Ministry of Education (MOE) data, only 41% of primary students reached national standards in mathematics and only 50% reached national standards in reading. Furthermore, in a 2017 evaluation of around 20,000 public school teachers, just over 50% of reading questions were answered correctly. Even when students are able to complete primary school, many do not acquire the necessary skills for success at higher levels.



Meanwhile, more than 1.6 million youth between 15 and 24 years, including 600,000 youth in the Western Highlands, are out of school and 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

Education interventions are part of USAID's integrated efforts focused on improving economic growth and social development in five departments of the Western Highlands region of the country, where historically underserved and excluded rural populations live. Following a wave of migration to the United States by tens of thousands of unaccompanied children in 2014, USAID/Guatemala is working with development partners to address the main underlying causes of migration from Guatemala -- a lack of social, educational and economic opportunities, as well as insecurity.

USAID seeks to achieve sustainable rural development through a parallel focus on agriculture, economic development, health care, education, nutrition, local governance, and gender equity 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. The education portfolio is focused on 15 municipalities, where USAID collaborates with Guatemalan officials and community leaders to achieve shared goals.



USAID works in partnership with the Government of Guatemala (GOG) to improve primary grade reading skills and provide educational opportunities for out-of-school youth.

- To improve the quality of education, USAID focuses 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 create life plans and receive support accessing the education and training necessary to reach their goals.

Major Results and Accomplishments

- **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. 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.
- **Improved education information systems** – USAID has supported the MOE to build and enhance information systems. Now that the MOE has advanced from a paper-based system with a three-year processing delay to a transparent, web-based, user-oriented dashboard of education indicators, USAID is helping the MOE develop tools to leverage this data for better informed decision-making. USAID assistance is now supporting development of smartphone applications with the goal of real-time access to school-level education indicators of particular interest and utility to departments and municipalities.
- **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 are contributing to strengthened alternative basic education for out-of-school youth and MOE capacity to monitor and assess the quality of these programs.
- **Girls’ education** – USAID has supported the MOE to develop policies that advance gender equality and women’s empowerment and improve gender equality in education. With support from USAID and other collaborators, the MOE has conducted gender studies, provided scholarships for girls, advocated for girls education at the community level, and developed practical gender-sensitive education materials and training for administrators, technical officials, and teachers. As a result, there have been significant improvements in gender equality. At the pre-primary level, the gender gap decreased from 83 to 93 girls for every 100 boys, and in lower secondary, girls’ access expanded from 67% to 86% from 1993 to 2013.



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