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EDUCATION GUATEMALA

Long-term, sustainable development and improved equity in Guatemala will only be possible if children and youth receive a quality education.

Primary school enrollment rates in Guatemala have progressed significantly over the past 20 years. However, disparities still exist in secondary school between boys and girls, urban and rural, and ladino and indigenous communities.

USAID supports the Government of Guatemala to ensure children and youth stay in school or find an alternative pathway to gain the basic skills necessary to compete for productive employment or start a business in Guatemala. This educational foundation is critical to providing a realistic alternative to irregular migration.

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Guatemala spends 2.8 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in education which is far less than the regional average. This lack of funding paired with poor government effectiveness and corruption impede the internal efficiency of the system and depress the learning outcomes of the students.

The country still faces serious challenges in education quality, coverage, teacher training, and gender and ethnic disparities. The last learning assessment conducted for primary grades found that only 40 percent of sixth graders reached performance standards in reading. Exacerbating the challenge, most Guatemalan youth do not reach high school with 41 percent of all teenagers (13–18 years) out-of-school. This rate rises to 61 percent in the Western Highlands, which is predominantly indigenous.

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF UNDERSERVED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

USAID’s education investments strengthen reading skills for underserved children and youth living in municipalities with the highest rates of irregular migration. Interventions under this objective include the development of reading resources in K’iche’, Mam, and Spanish in collaboration with national and regional education professionals and local community members; support to the Ministry of Education for the development and implementation of the national literacy model for bilingual and intercultural contexts, parent and community engagement to promote reading, and professional development of teachers. USAID also supports decentralization efforts designed to empower municipalities to lead and invest in the education sector.

PROVIDING EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

USAID’s efforts respond to a key driver of irregular migration: lack of employment and educational opportunities. USAID provides out-of-school youth with opportunities to gain skills necessary to contribute to their communities and gain employment. USAID also improves the ability of state and non-state schools to deliver quality education: alternative basic education, workforce development, soft skills, and vocational training. USAID integrates social emotional learning and soft skills into educational programs ranging from primary school up to vocational training to ensure that youth have the foundational skills for life and work. USAID youth programs utilize the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach, emphasizing youth strengths and providing support and opportunities that will help them achieve goals, transition to adulthood in a productive, healthy manner, and participate actively in their communities.