HEALTH POLICY PROJECT / GUATEMALA

Building capacity for improved health policy, advocacy, governance, and finance.

Overview

Guatemala, the most populated country in Central America, faces serious challenges in its health and education sectors. The government is confronting high rates of maternal and neonatal mortality, as well as increasing numbers of pregnancies among girls ages 10–14 years old. The average child attends school only through fourth grade, and according to the United Nations Development Program's 2009–2010 Human Development Report, approximately 80 percent of indigenous people live in poverty, compared with less than half of non-indigenous people. Where healthcare services are available, the quality is often neither optimal nor culturally sensitive.

The Health and Education Policy Project (HEPP) works to support the Guatemalan government's goal of improved social development and better governance. Since 2011, HEPP has focused on the health, nutrition, and education sectors to

- Increase transparency and accountability in government
- Promote organized civil society interaction with decisionmakers at the national and local levels
- Improve the use of strategic information systems by government and civil society for policy-related decision making and monitoring

Policy

In health and nutrition, HEPP activities strengthen central-level planning and policies. The HEPP team works closely with the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS) and the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) to support policy changes that address inequities in health, nutrition, and education services. HEPP also works to ensure that national and local decisionmakers have access to high-quality information.

HEPP efforts have supported pivotal policies, including

- The Healthy Motherhood Law (2012), affirming a woman's right to high-quality, culturally appropriate care
- Tax exceptions that allow MSPAS to procure contraceptives at more competitive prices
- A regulatory framework for MINEDUC's Education Indicator System

Advocacy

HEPP supports civil society networks and watchdog groups to plan and execute advocacy campaigns to improve health, nutrition, and education in Guatemala.

Photo by: Guatemala Health and Education Policy Project

Guatemalan Minister of Education Cynthia Del Águila and other MINEDUC officials joined Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina, Kevin Kelly, director USAID/Guatemala, and Roxana Baldetti, vice-president of Guatemala, at the 2013 launch of an integrated social information system for education developed with support from HEPP.

Photo by: Health Policy Project

Capacity Development

- HEPP led an organizational capacity assessment with its civil society partners, resulting in customized capacity-building plans for 12 networks. The assessment process served as a learning tool for network members to reflect on their existing capacity in leadership, advocacy, and social monitoring and to establish benchmarks for growth that will be part of an annual capacity-strengthening plan.

- HEPP supports capacity development of sectoral ministries to expand use of the Integrated Social Information System (ISIS) across development sectors.

These efforts have played an important role in

- Developing strategic alliances that contributed to a national campaign to reduce teen pregnancy
- Improving infrastructure, equipment, and the supply of medicines in government-run health services, as well as the provision of family planning methods in rural and urban areas
- The adoption of Administrative Information System software by the Ministry of Public Health for its automated purchasing and contracting information management system

Governance

HEPP aims to improve participatory policy dialogue and increase communication between stakeholders at national and subnational levels. The project works directly with ministries and civil society, focusing on two areas of governance: citizen participation and decentralization. HEPP has contributed to the

- Inclusion of civil society watchdogs on committees that monitor maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity
- Decentralization of MINEDUC's human resource management to the department level
- Development of a national web portal—the Integrated Social Information System—to identify service gaps and support decision making (the system provides a national platform to monitor implementation of the government's commitment to increasing access to education services, especially among the poor)
- Efforts of the Ministry of Social Development to extend this platform across all social sectors, a fundamental part of the government's effort to expand the reach of governmental services as it moves toward a partially decentralized system

How to Work with Us

For over 40 years, Futures Group has managed large and complex international health and development projects for a range of major development players, achieving significant results on the ground in more than 100 countries. Host-country partners with interest in receiving project assistance should contact their USAID Mission. All Missions may participate through field support. For information on how to work with the Health Policy Project please contact:

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