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**The Education of Girls in Guatemala:
From Oversight to Major Policy Initiative**

by

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Introduction

Few issues in the literature of international development banks and agencies have received such concentrated attention in the past five years than has the issue of girls' education and its relationship to improvements in indicators of social and economic development in developing countries. The World Bank has been particularly active in publishing analyses of cross-national studies relating formal primary school education in women with social and economic improvements and in publishing findings and recommendations on specific policy and technical strategies for reaching parity in girls' and boys' rates of primary school attendance in Asian and African countries, where the gender gap is pronounced. In Latin America, only Haiti and Guatemala continue to show persistent discrepancies.¹

These international findings and recommendations, along with findings from studies in Guatemala pointing to a gender gap—despite years of technical support for education interventions—led USAID to take a systematic approach to addressing the barriers to girls' school participation in Guatemala and to serve as a catalyst for creating what is now a national initiative for girls' education that is supported by major public and private-sector agencies.

This paper analyzes the approach followed in Guatemala to address girls' education at the policy and program levels. It also describes the strategies that led girls' education to become a government policy and that created a strong constituency among public- and private-sector leaders and organizations. The paper also describes a multi-donor program begun in 1993 that is testing combinations of interventions in rural communities to address the barriers to girls' school participation.²

Overview of the Guatemalan Context

Guatemala is the third largest Central American country, first in population size (approximately 9.8 million people) and second in population density. The official language is Spanish; however, over half of Guatemala's population speaks one of 22 distinct Mayan languages. Sixty-two percent of the population lives in rural areas, spread throughout 19,140 localities of fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, of which 13,563 (71 percent) are localities of fewer than 200 inhabitants.³

Guatemala reports some of the lowest indicators of social and economic development of any country in the Western Hemisphere. The rate of adult illiteracy in rural areas has changed little during the past several decades; the current estimates are that approximately 45 percent of the Guatemalan population is illiterate (55 percent of the rural population) and that 60 percent of rural women are illiterate. The rate of illiteracy among Mayan⁴ women (72 percent) is nearly three times that of

non-Mayan women (25 percent). Table 1 shows overall rates of illiteracy in Central American countries.

Table 1

Illiteracy Rates in Central American Countries (1990)

Country	Illiteracy Rate	
	Total	Female
Guatemala	45%	53%
Honduras	27%	29%
Nicaragua	--	--
Costa Rica	7%	7%
El Salvador	27%	30%
Latin American Region	16%	18%

Source: 1992 World Bank Development Report

The status of education in Guatemala

Guatemala's education system is highly inefficient and of poor quality. According to 1992 data, the net primary school enrollment rate is 68 percent (35 percent of the eligible indigenous population and 82 percent of the eligible ladino population is enrolled⁵). Approximately 50 percent of first grade students repeat the grade and it takes 11.4 years to produce a sixth grade graduate. Only 51 percent of children who enroll in school complete the sixth grade (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Sixth Grade Completion Rates and Gross Enrollment Ratios
(1990)**

Country	Sixth Grade Completion	Gross Enrollment Ratios in Primary Education	
		1965	1990
	Total		
Guatemala	51%	50%	79%
Honduras	61%	80%	87%
Nicaragua	--	80%	98%
Costa Rica	77%	106%	102%
Panama	93%	--	--
El Salvador	62%	82%	78%
Latin American Region	N.A.	95%	107%

Source: 1992 World Bank Development Report

A key factor in the inefficiency and low quality of Guatemala's system is the low percentage of GDP allocated for education, which is, as noted in Table 3, the lowest of any country in Central America. An average of 95 percent⁶ of the education budget in the past several years has been expended on teachers' salaries, leaving little for investments in quality improvements. The Ministry of Education is highly inefficient in its management of existing resources; and the high repetition and dropout rates exact an additional cost to the system. A 1987 calculation⁷ showed that the costs to the system of repetition equaled 20 percent of the total Ministry of Education budget for that year. Additional factors contributing to the high waste and inefficiency in the primary education system in Guatemala are the low quality of teaching, which results from teacher isolation and poor supervision, deficient teacher placements, lack of parental/community support, sporadic in-service training, lack of achievement standards, and minimal teaching materials and supplies.

Table 3

Comparative Data on Investments in Education

Country	Investment in Education Percent of GDP		
	1960	1989	1992
Guatemala	1.4%	1.8%	1.4%
Honduras	2.2%	4.9%	4.5%
Nicaragua	1.5%	3.9%	5.8%
Costa Rica	4.1%	4.4%	4.3%
El Salvador	2.3%	2.0	2.5%
Latin American Region	2.1%	3.5%	—

Source: 1992 World Bank Development Report

Primary education coverage is also a major problem in Guatemala, with only 68 percent of the eligible population between 7 and 12 years enrolled in 1992. Several factors contribute to the low coverage: the distribution of much of the rural population in highly remote and widely dispersed communities; the seasonal, internal migration of families from the highlands to the coastal areas at various periods throughout the school year; and the pervasive view among rural families that education is of limited value for their children.

USAID's role in studying the problem of girls' education in Guatemala

In 1988, in preparation for designing a new education sector program, USAID conducted a Primary Education Sub-Sector Assessment.⁹ One of the issues highlighted in the assessment were the high dropout and low retention rates for girls in primary school. Also reported were the findings from community interviews in selected Mayan communities concerning the barriers to girls' school attendance, among them the lost opportunity costs to families from girls' labor.

Insufficient data were available at the time from which to design a project; however, because of the seriousness of the problem, the inefficiency and poor quality of the education system, and the mounting evidence of the relationship between the primary education of girls and improvements in indicators of social and economic development in developing countries, the USAID Mission decided to take a systematic look at the problem and, based on the conclusions, to identify strategies for addressing the issue.

The role of girls' education in socioeconomic development in developing countries

At the same time that USAID was examining the barriers to girls' education in Guatemala, a growing body of evidence was accumulating from studies by the World Bank and other international donors that pointed to a consistently strong relationship between female education (four to six years of primary school education) and such indicators of social and economic development as fertility, family health, and family nutrition; infant and child mortality and morbidity; agricultural, industrial, and domestic productivity; income and employment generation; and educational attainment.⁹ The research and cross-national analyses of data on school attendance, retention, completion, and achievement also indicated the relative cost-effectiveness of programs to promote girls' education, as compared with other types of development investments¹⁰ (e.g., family planning, technical training, health education, etc.).

These findings were presented in a range of publications, most notably those of the World Bank, at a time when the major donor nations were evaluating their past investments and revising their funding policies and levels. In Guatemala, where USAID had invested approximately \$120 million in education projects over a 20 year period, and where education indicators had varied little despite the large investment, national impact and cost-effectiveness became the new watchwords. Investments in girls' education, therefore, appeared to hold promise.

What also added to the interest by USAID and other donors were the disappointing results of adult literacy programs in developing countries, and the high rates of illiteracy in those countries, particularly among women. Girls' education, as a strategy for combatting adult illiteracy, appeared particularly attractive.

Previous investments by the major international donors in Guatemala had focused on increasing school coverage, primarily through construction of schools, printing of textbooks, and training of teachers. However, as was the case in other countries,¹¹ although attendance rates increased, the increases in overall attendance rates did not translate into increased gender parity. In addition, the expectation that improvements in Guatemala's economic status (as measured by improvements in per capita income) would result in improvements in gender parity also did not hold true. Total enrollments increased, but the gender discrepancies persisted. The research findings suggested that while traditional methods for improving the quality and efficiency of education services had a positive effect on increasing overall rates of school retention, the gap between girls' and boys' rates were not reduced. To reduce the gap between boys' and girls' attendance, retention, and completion, therefore, new approaches needed to be devised and tested to address the specific barriers to girls' school retention and completion.

The World Bank analysis of lessons learned from past project experience in developing countries indicates that the barriers to girls' education are frequently multiple and that interventions aimed at confronting these barriers should probably take a "package approach" that includes a minimum combination of actions.¹² Barriers to girls' school attendance in other countries include the distance from home to school, absence of female teachers, parental concern for the physical and moral safety of daughters, requirements for girls' labor in domestic tasks, and religious or cultural norms diminishing the importance of education for girls.¹³

Literature review on girls' education in Guatemala

USAID began its study of the issue of girls' education in Guatemala by conducting a review of worldwide literature on the education of girls and its relationship to development indicators and by developing a concept paper to guide its exploratory efforts.¹⁴ It then conducted a review of Guatemalan literature, research, theses, and data on the relationship of girls' education to indicators of social and economic development in Guatemala.¹⁵ The findings were somewhat disappointing. Only one project had been implemented in Guatemala that was related specifically to the education of girls. And this project, a USAID-funded girls' scholarship pilot program (1986-1991), conducted as one component of a larger family planning project, had not collected baseline data, nor had it conducted formative or summative evaluations. Anecdotal data on the Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program, implemented by the Asociación Guatemalteca de Educación Sexual (AGES), has been reported widely in the international literature on girls' education.

As an additional step, USAID conducted a further analysis of data collected for the Socio-Demographic Household Survey (DHS) of 1989 by the National Institute of Statistics in Guatemala.¹⁶ The DHS was conducted in 28 countries worldwide. This study analyzed specific demographic and education statistics related to girls and women and also looked at the relationship of mothers' schooling to health, fertility, educational attainment, and employment in Guatemala. According to the analyses, fewer than one out of every three Mayan women have received any formal education in Guatemala and 46 percent of women have received no formal education or less than one complete year of primary school education. Over half of the school-aged population of girls between seven and 14 years of age--approximately 500,000--were not enrolled in school (as compared to 300,000 boys not enrolled in school). Although 47.5 percent of rural girls enrolled in school, 66 percent dropped out of school by the third grade. Only 12.5 percent of rural girls who did enroll in school eventually completed the sixth grade.

The further analyses of the Household Survey of 1989 also showed a consistency between the findings in Guatemala and the findings in other developing countries concerning the effects of female education on social and economic development indicators. The analyses showed a significant relationship between mothers' level of education and their use of prenatal care (which is consistently related to reduced maternal mortality rates). The data also showed that infant mortality is twice as high among women with minimum education (80-85/1,000 live births) as compared with women with a secondary education (40/1,000 live births). Women with varying levels of primary education showed 60 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. Of the 28 countries where the DHS was administered, Guatemala showed the second highest infant and child mortality rate; all other developing countries in the survey showed less than half the Guatemalan rate of infant and child deaths. Other measures of family health in Guatemala showed a consistent relationship to mothers' education and reductions in fertility and mortality rates. With every year of education, the age at which a woman marries is delayed. There is a difference of nearly four years between the age of marriage for women with no education and the age of marriage for those with a minimum level of secondary education. By postponing the age at which a woman marries, the age at which she gives birth to her first child is also postponed, and her total number of children tends to be reduced. In addition, women's education is also related to the total number of children she will have in her lifetime. In Guatemala, women with no education have an average of seven children. Women with four to six years of primary education, however, have 3.9 children; and women with seven or more years of education have an average of 2.7 children. The data also confirm the relationship of women's education with employment status. Whereas only 20 percent of women with three or fewer

years of education are economically active (85 percent of men), 50 percent of those who completed primary school are economically active.

As a result of the review of international and Guatemalan literature and program experiences, USAID added a girls' education activity under its primary education sector program. The purpose of the activity at that point was to integrate information, concepts, and practices into other activities of the USAID education program to ensure that all actions benefited girls as well as boys.

Based on the strength of the data collected up to that point, and the relevance of the preliminary findings to Guatemala, USAID decided to evaluate the implementation and the effects of the Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program. Anecdotal data from informal observations of the Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program showed it to be successful in increasing girls' school retention; an evaluation could provide important guidance on design and implementation issues for future design efforts.¹⁷

Findings from the Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program

The Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program included three components: small scholarships and visits by promoters to teachers and homes, human development and sex education programs, and vocational training. Between 1987 and 1990, the program provided scholarships to girls in 13 communities.

Of particular interest to USAID was the relatively low dropout rate among scholarship recipients. Although the evaluation did not collect program data on dropout rates of non-scholarship girls attending the same schools, anecdotal data collected by program observers showed lower dropout rates for those girls as well, suggesting that in addition to affecting the economic barriers to girls' school participation, the program may have also had an effect on other barriers (e.g., the perceived value of education to families; motivation of teachers; community participation in education, etc.). Table 4 shows promotion, failure, and dropout rates for 1989, 1990, and 1991. Whereas the overall, rural dropout rate for both boys and girls was 13.7 percent in 1991 (including both indigenous and non-indigenous populations), the dropout rates from the three program years reported here remained at 5 percent and 4 percent.

Table 4

**Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program
Promotion, Failure, and Dropout Rates**

Number of Girls	1989	1990	1991
(1) Awarded Scholarships (Total)	559	624	622
(1) Completed School Year	529	604	596
(1) Promoted	437	495	482
(1) Failed	92 (17%)*	109 (18%)*	114 (19%)*
(1) Dropped Out	30 (5%)**	24 (4%)**	26 (4%)**
(2) Overall rural dropout rate for boys and girls nation-wide ***			13.7%

* of those who completed the school term

** of those who received scholarships

*** data not disaggregated by gender

(1) Source: Isabel Nieves, Rebecka Lundgren, and Beatrice Bezmalinovic. 1992: *Feasibility Study for a Girls' Scholarship Program: Report of Preliminary Results*. Guatemala: IDEAS, Ltd.

(2) Source: *Annual Statistical Yearbook (Anuario Estadístico)*, Ministry of Education, 1991, 1992

Focus group interviews in local communities provided additional information for program design. Community members identified the economic assistance through small program scholarships as being fundamental to the success of the program and they also agreed that the hiring of Mayan women as social promoters was instrumental in maintaining strong program participation.

The Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship program was determined to be successful in achieving community support, in reducing girls' school dropout, and in promoting school retention. The program was not successful, however, in gaining support among Guatemalan private-sector institutions for continued funding, partly due to the fact that the Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program fell under the rubric of a family planning initiative. The sociocultural environment in Guatemala, particularly among policy makers in the public and private sectors, has been unfavorable toward programs related to family planning. Whereas influential individuals might be highly supportive of family planning initiatives, few have been willing to take a public stance in funding such programs. The program was also not successful in developing a strong constituency among policy makers who could publicize the program objectives. Indicative of this was the consistently poor support for the program by the board of directors of AGES, who were unable to develop a unified vision on program objectives. After six years of full funding for all program costs, USAID terminated its support for the Girls' Scholarship Program in 1990. The program has continued to operate with other donor support in a significantly reduced number of communities.

The policy environment for addressing girls' education in Guatemala

Several important lessons were learned from the experience with the Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program in setting policy objectives for developing a girls' education initiative:

- program principles, objectives, and methods must conform to the Guatemalan sociopolitical environment; and
- a strong local constituency must be developed that supports the program efforts to ensure continued funding support once donor funding ends.

In addition to the assessment of the experience with the Guatemalan Girls' Scholarship Program, USAID also looked at international experiences to determine whether conditions in Guatemala were favorable to implementing girls' education actions. USAID conducted a review of the literature concerning effective strategies for increasing girls' school attendance, retention, and completion. A report of experiences in Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia¹⁸ showed that a number of key conditions were present that enabled these countries to attain gender parity in less than a decade. Dominant was a national policy in each country concerning "education for all." Sri Lanka also provided educational programs in the indigenous languages and increased its provision of textbooks and scholarships. In addition, Sri Lanka transferred educational management authority to the local level. Indonesia combined school expansion with free education and non-traditional instructional strategies that were particularly beneficial to girls.

Not all of these conditions existed in Guatemala in 1989 when USAID was initiating its study of girls' education. However, it is important to note that the majority of these conditions now exist in Guatemala. Education for All has become a national policy, fueled by the efforts of international donors. A National Program of Bilingual Education is now institutionalized within the operations of the Ministry of Education; and the 1985 Guatemalan Constitution mandates a bilingual education for all Mayan-language speakers. USAID is currently implementing several non-traditional instructional strategies (e.g., the Colombian, *Nueva Escuela* model; girls' education instructional strategies) in several educational regions of Guatemala, which rely on local community program involvement. And the Ministry of Education recently developed a scholarship program for rural, indigenous girls.

Taking into consideration these findings on the policy conditions conducive to creating a successful girls' education strategy, USAID determined that its funding for girls' education would be incremental, and that specific targets would be established for each increment. Additional increments would be allocated according to the extent to which the girls' education initiative was meeting its policy objectives, in addition to the technical objectives. Principal among these was the extent to which significant policy changes were taking place at the executive and Ministerial level to indicate that girls' education was not just a donor-driven activity—which would cease when external funding was terminated—but a development issue behind which resources were being increasingly allocated by the government and private sector.

Table 5 summarizes the policy and technical criteria that the Mission established for approving each increment of USAID supported activities and the indicators that were used to measure their achievement. It should be noted that they are listed in the order in which they were developed over a two-year period as a result of periodic assessments of USAID's involvement in the girls' education initiative and of the progress of the initiative in general.

Table 5

USAID Mission Criteria for Supporting Girls' Education Actions

Criteria for Support	Indicators of Achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● evidence of relationship between girls' education and economic growth and development in Guatemala 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● analyses of data on relationship of mothers' education to selected indicators measuring health, nutrition, education, productivity, employment, and income
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● evidence of effect on the efficiency, quality, and equity of the primary education system and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● research findings on improvements in school retention, promotion, completion, and academic achievement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● actions can be sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● government policies are created and implemented to support girls' education ● public- and private-sector institutions make resource commitments and assume responsibility for funding and implementing actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● programs can be institutionalized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● public- and private-sector institutions integrate girls' education concepts, strategies, and processes into institutional operations and products
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● actions are cost-effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● research findings demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of combinations of actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● communities participate in program development and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● local NGOs implement girls' education actions ● qualitative evaluation findings show positive community attitudes towards program actions

These criteria were established over time and were based on several key underlying principles.¹⁹ First, the education of girls in Guatemala is a national development problem, and not solely an education problem. Since the factors impeding girls' education are not exclusively related to education but to such factors as infrastructure, family income, cultural norms and values, and opportunity costs, the strategy for addressing these barriers needs to be focused on the benefits that could accrue to the country's economic growth from educating girls. Second, to have a national impact on girls' school retention and completion, it is necessary to gain the support of the country's diverse groups (e.g., political parties, religious groups, ethnic and cultural groups, public and private sector leaders, etc.), who could work in concert to support girls' education actions. Third, because of the polarization that exists on issues related to the discrimination of indigenous populations in Guatemala, girls' education must be framed as a social and economic question, not as an equity issue. Fourth, to ensure sustainability of the efforts, the strategy must focus at the policy, technical, and community

levels simultaneously to create a constituency among policy makers, to create strong technical programs, and to ensure community participation.

Multi-faceted policy and technical approach for funding and technical assistance support

The year-long review of data and experiences provided the framework for developing a strategy appropriate to Guatemala's policy climate. The first step in this strategy was to determine whether a sufficient number of key policy makers would become interested enough in the subject that they would dedicate time to working to develop a strategy for reaching a wider constituency. The approach used was first to identify selected public- and private-sector leaders to acquaint them with the economic and social benefits to girls' education. Once identified, USAID engaged in a low-cost, labor-intensive strategy of contacting and conducting tailor-made presentations for these individuals and organizations throughout late 1989 and early 1990. From these meetings and presentations, a core constituency of representatives was developed from a number of leading public- and private-sector organizations who formed a planning group for the next activity: a national conference for policy makers.²⁰

Throughout much of 1990, while data and literature analyses were continuing to be produced, USAID invited the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Guatemala and the Ministry of Labor's National Office of Women to co-sponsor and plan the national conference to which key public and private-sector policy makers, representing all sectors, were invited to determine their interest in spearheading a program to focus on increasing girls' opportunities for education. At this 1991 conference (*Educating Girls: Achieving Guatemala's Development*²¹), the worldwide and Guatemalan data on the effects of girls' education on improvements in health, nutrition, employment, and productivity were presented to the participants.

The conference succeeded in gaining the support of the participants for girls' education as a socioeconomic development issue. As a result, the conference participants formed the National Commission on Girls' Education (*Comisión Eduquemos a la Niña*), made up of influential public- and private-sector leaders. A commitment made by this group at the national meeting was to conduct a needs assessment and to develop a national plan of action on girls' education.

As a result of the commitment of financial and human resources by these and other private-sector institutions, USAID expanded its initial girls' education efforts and activities and developed a Girls' Education Program (*Programa de la Niña*) to provide technical assistance to the Commission, to the Ministry of Education, and to private-sector groups in initiating girls' education activities (see note number 2). Technical assistance was also provided in institutional strengthening and fundraising. A major activity of the technical assistance was a continual program of presentations and publicity on girls' education to key policy-making groups from all sectors. This strategy proved to be effective in creating a strong and growing constituency in support of girls' education in Guatemala.

As the girls' education initiative began to grow and develop, USAID's support further widened. Its role gradually changed, however, from that of being in the forefront of the initiative to serving in a supporting role. The goal was for Guatemalan individuals and institutions to take ownership of the initiative and to take the lead in designing and implementing actions.

In 1993, USAID again assessed the policy and technical achievements of the initiative and, based on the assessment, expanded the focus of its Girls' Education Program to provide support in the following four areas:

1. National Commission on Girls' Education

- technical assistance and advisory support to the Commission on Girls' Education in fundraising and institutional development
- technical assistance to the Commission to improve its ability to assist private-sector institutions to design new projects
- collaboration with the Commission in developing and conducting presentations on girls' education to local groups
- participation on local planning committees (e.g., UNICEF conference on the rights of children, Education for All-1995 Conference in Beijing, etc.)

2. Ministry of Education

- limited technical assistance to assist in the design of the Ministry of Education's Girls' Scholarship Program and limited support for evaluation of the implementation of the program
- periodic training sessions for Ministry of Education personnel on strategies, programs, and instructional techniques for motivating girls' school attendance and retention

3. USAID education project activities

- technical assistance for integrating culture and gender concepts, attitudes, and planning into project-supported innovations (bilingual education services, the one-room school program, etc.)
- development of original educational materials to motivate girls' school participation: teachers' guides, posters, children's literature

4. *Eduque a la Niña* - pilot project

- technical assistance to the private-sector implementing institution in the design, implementation, administration, and evaluation of the project
- diminishing funding support (matching grant arrangement) for girls' scholarships and for salaries of social promoters

The four areas of support are described below.

1. Support to the National Commission on Girls' Education

Since its inception in early 1991, the National Commission on Girls' Education has had a decisive role in coordinating girls' education actions at the policy and program levels. Initially, the membership was made up of 12 senior policy makers from the public and private sectors. Since 1991, the membership has changed, as the Commission has undergone several transitions.

Efforts of the Commission, with support of USAID technical assistance, were successful in promoting the development by the Minister of Education of a Ministry of Education Policy Statement on Girls' Education.²² In addition, a targeted program of publicity and of high-visibility meetings for selected organizations (e.g., boards of political parties, ministers of government, Rotary clubs, foundations, etc.) succeeded in bringing the subject of girls' education to the attention of leaders of all sectors.

A major activity of the National Commission on Girls' Education has been focused on publicizing the girls' education initiative, on stimulating other local institutions to implement girls' education projects, and on coordinating the efforts of the groups. In mid-1993, the Commission, the Fundación Castillo-Córdova, and the Ministry of Education sponsored the Second National Meeting on Girls' Education. Unlike the first meeting, this one was fully funded by private-sector institutions.

2. Technical support to the Ministry of Education

The USAID Girls' Education Program and the Commission were instrumental in achieving the commitment of the Minister of Education to making specific policy and program changes in the Ministry of Education to improve girls' educational opportunities. One of those changes was the creation of a scholarship program for indigenous girls, fully funded with Ministry of Education funds and staffed by Ministry personnel. USAID technical assistance is providing six months of technical assistance in the design of the scholarship program and in the evaluation of the implementation of the program, to assist the Ministry in improving program implementation during the second year.

The USAID Girls' Education Program was established in 1990. Since that time, the Program has provided technical assistance and periodic training to Ministry personnel at all levels. Orientation and training have been conducted for regional and departmental directors, district supervisors, and teachers on effective strategies for increasing girls' school attendance and participation.

3. Integration into Project-supported activities

A major activity of USAID technical assistance has been to integrate concepts and techniques for stimulating girls' school participation into each USAID-funded project intervention in the education sector (e.g., bilingual education curricula and services; one-room school program teacher training and materials; interactive radio services programming and materials; etc.). Technical assistance has also played a major role in ensuring that mechanisms have been established for collecting and reporting gender disaggregated data.

Technical assistance personnel have developed and validated original girls' education materials, including posters, a flip chart story program, and a teacher's manual, which are being distributed to schools in indigenous areas.

4. Design and Implementation of the *Eduque a la Niña* Pilot Project

Throughout 1992, as other institutions were indicating interest in supporting the growing girls' education initiative, USAID coordinated the design of a pilot project based on lessons learned and findings on the "package approach" (i.e., testing of combinations of actions) to addressing the barriers to girls' education.²³ The project, called *Eduque a la Niña* (Educate Girls), had three purposes: to develop a multi-donor model of institutional support in which the Ministry of Education was only one actor (rather than being solely responsible for the success or failure of the implementation); to act as a catalyst for promoting other multi-donor efforts, and to identify the most cost-effective package of actions for promoting girls' education, for replication by other agencies.

The project was designed to be a model of donor cooperation, involving institutions from various sectors. The participating agencies include: USAID; the World Bank (under the Second Education Loan), the Ministry of Education, the Universidad Rafael Landívar (a private, Catholic University), the Fundación Mariano y Rafael Castillo Córdova (the educational foundation of the Central American Brewery, Guatemala's largest business), FUNDAZUCAR (the foundation of sugar producers, one of the most important industries in Guatemala), the Bahá'í Community, a religious organization active in community development, and the National Commission on Girls' Education, in a coordinating role.

The project is being implemented by a private-sector institution--FUNDAZUCAR. The project's beneficiaries are public school girls. All funds are channeled through the private sector implementing organization. USAID is providing three years of decreasing matching funds to the implementing organization. USAID efforts are aimed at strengthening all participating institutions in fundraising and institutional development. Table 6 lists the institutions and their responsibilities in implementing the project.

Table 6

**Institutions and Their Roles in Implementing
the *Eduque a la Niña* Pilot Project**

	Sector	Institution	Role in the <i>Eduque a la Niña</i> Project
1.	Bilateral donor agency	USAID/Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● monitoring, evaluation, auditing ● funding for social promoters, scholarships, technical assistance
2.	Guatemalan Government	Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● departmental offices and personnel ● basic school supplies
3.	Private-sector, key Guatemalan industry	FUNDAZUCAR (foundation of sugar producers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● implementing institution (program design, administration, implementation) ● matching funds
4.	Academic institution	Rafael Landívar University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● girls' education literature
5.	Private-sector, key Guatemalan industry	Castillo Córdova Foundation (foundation of the Central American Brewery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● delivery of program materials to departmental offices
6.	Religious organization	Bahá'í Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● notebooks for scholarship recipients
7.	Coordinating institution	National Commission on Girls' Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● coordination of institutional relationships and fundraising

The project is being implemented initially in six communities in each of six departments (San Marcos, Huehuetenango, Quiché, Alta Verapaz, Chimaltenango, and Suchitepéquez) where the discrepancies between girls' and boys' school attendance are highest. Combinations of educational actions are being tested to identify the minimum package of interventions (i.e., lowest cost and most effective in ensuring girls' school retention and completion) for replication in additional communities. Each donor is contributing one or more of the interventions (e.g., the university is contributing the original children's literature, and the Brewery is contributing transportation and delivery services to the departments). The interventions include:

- small scholarships of Q25 per month (the research indicates that small economic incentives are the most effective strategy for motivating families to send daughters to school)
- social promoters (Mayan women) who are assigned to each community to provide tutoring support to the girls and encouragement to the girls, their families, and the community

- parent committees, who select the beneficiary girls and monitor the activities of the program in the community
- educational materials for students and teachers, including a teachers' manual, two posters, a flipchart program, four reading books, and a collection of children's literature and music focused on the education of girls (written in Spanish and the four major Mayan languages)

Three combinations of actions are being tested in each department. Each combination is being tested in two of the six schools in each department (with control group schools identified in each department). The actions are being tested in the following combinations:

Packages: (Combinations of Actions)	Social Promoter	Educational Materials	Small Scholarships	Parent Committees
1.	X		X	X
2.	X			X
3.		X		

Program planning, hiring and training of personnel, and feasibility studies were conducted during 1993 and program implementation began during the 1994 school year. Qualitative and quantitative data are being collected on all communities to evaluate the effects of the combinations of actions on girls' school retention, completion, and academic achievement when compared with control-group schools. In addition, focus group, interview, and observational data are being collected on each community to describe community histories, attitudes, and conditions (i.e., religious, cultural, demographic, political) that may explain the variations in program effects.

Achievements of the initiative to date

When the girls' education initiative began in 1989, no institution in Guatemala had identified the education of girls as an area on which to focus resources. Four years later, the initiative has advanced considerably and a number of important policy and technical achievements can be identified. The following is a selected listing of those achievements, organized according to the USAID criteria and indicators that were established for funding support. Each of these achievements can be attributed directly to the actions of the Commission on Girls' Education with USAID technical advisory support.

1. Government policies created and implemented to support girls' education

- Girls' education is now an official Presidential and Ministerial policy. The President of Guatemala, Ramiro de León Carpio, when presenting his two-year plan of government in 1993, announced that his focus in the education sector would be in three areas, one of them being the education of girls.

- The Minister of Education issued a *Policy Statement and Strategies on the Education of Girls* for the period 1993-1998.
 - The Minister of Education established a Scholarship Program for Primary School Indigenous Girls in 1993 and a Presidential decree was issued in 1994 ratifying the program. The program is funded completely with Ministry resources. During the first year of the five-year program, 5,440 girls will receive small monthly scholarships.
 - The Minister of Education announced that the focus of his two-year plan in education would be on pre-primary and primary education, with two emphases: one on the rural areas and the other on the education of girls.
 - The National Commission on Girls' Education, which was formed in 1991 following the First National Conference on Girls' Education (which was sponsored by USAID, the UNDP in Guatemala, and the National Office of Women in the Ministry of Labor) is serving in a coordinating and monitoring role for girls' education actions in Guatemala.
 - The Commission published the *Needs Assessment on the Education of Girls* and a *National Plan of Action* in 1992.²⁴ Funding for the research and production of these documents was provided by two private-sector institutions and by USAID.
2. Public- and private-sector institutions make resource commitments and assume responsibility for funding and implementing actions
- The sugar producers' foundation (FUNDAZUCAR) expanded its previous focus from the coastal, sugar-plantation area to the Mayan highlands region because of its recognition of the importance of girls' education to the country's productivity.
 - The Rafael Landívar University, a private Catholic university, contributed matching funds (along with USAID funds) to develop a series of children's books in Spanish and the four major Mayan languages to promote the education of girls.
 - The Bahá'í Community, a religious organization active in community development, is engaged in a training program in five cities to reach local leaders about the issue of girls' education.
 - CEMACO, the largest department store chain in Guatemala, is fully funding the salary of the executive director of the National Commission on Girls' Education. CEMACO also funded the printing of mailing stickers with the girls' education logo to publicize the initiative.
 - FUNDESA, a private foundation whose objective is to promote Guatemalan business in other countries, is providing legal shelter to the Commission while it establishes its independent legal status.
 - Shell Oil Company funded the training of teachers and the printing and distribution of girls' education materials to 500 schools in two rural regions of the country.

- The educational foundation of the Central American Brewery (Fundación Rafael y Mariano Castillo Córdoba), the largest business enterprise in Central America, initiated a national social marketing program to promote girls' education.
 - USAID/Guatemala, the Ministry of Education, and FUNDAZUCAR signed a cooperative agreement to implement the *Eduque a la Niña*—(Educate Girls!) pilot project. The seven institutions participating in the project are receiving fundraising training and technical assistance in institutional strengthening.
 - In 1993, the Second National Conference on Girls' Education—*Educating Girls, Achieving Guatemala's Development*—attracted key public- and private-sector policy makers. The conference was fully funded by the Central American Brewery.
 - In late 1993, two representatives in the Guatemalan Congress contributed several months of their salaries to the Commission to support girls' education initiatives.
 - The seven institutions participating in the *Eduque a la Niña* project collaborated in planning the official inauguration of the project in early 1994. All institutions contributed resources to the event. The senior officer of all seven institutions attended the inauguration, which was held in a remote village of San Marcos.
 - Departmental directors of education traveled across country to attend planning meetings using their own resources.
3. Research findings show that the combinations of actions are cost-effective and increase girls' primary school retention, completion, and academic achievement
- Qualitative and quantitative research is being conducted on the effects of the combination of actions being tested by the *Eduque a la Niña* project. Findings will be available in late 1994.
4. Communities participate in the design and implementation of actions
- The inauguration was designed by the planning committee together with an inauguration committee appointed by the local community in which the inauguration was held. Unlike many such events, the community helped design the ceremony and contributed its own resources. Although extremely poor, community members took time off from work for several days to obtain and prepare the food, decorate the program area, and prepare the dances, music, and program elements.
5. Local NGOs implement girls' education actions
- Local organizations outside of the capital, which have participated in girls' education conferences, attended presentations, and have been party to other publicity efforts, are applying to the Commission to be considered as implementing organizations to administer scholarships for girls. The Commission is receiving contributions for girls' scholarships from U.S. and local individuals.

- As a result of presentations conducted in the U.S. by a former consultant to Guatemala, a U.S. based non-profit organization is funding a girls' scholarship program in two Mayan communities. The program is being implemented by an indigenous NGO.
6. **Qualitative research findings show that community members have positive attitudes toward program actions**
- Reports of qualitative research will be available at the end of 1994. Anecdotal information collected during community observational visits, training sessions, and program events indicates that the educational materials have been favorably received by children and adults in villages in different departments of the country. The materials were developed by both Mayan and non-Mayan linguists and educators and were validated in Mayan communities.

Lessons learned from the Guatemalan strategy

In a national initiative that began in 1989, and whose pace has been established by Guatemalan leaders and not by donor agencies, it is somewhat early to be looking at program impact. The girls' education initiative is not a USAID project with a five-year life and a discrete set of activities to implement. Rather, it is a dynamic interplay of actions by institutions and individuals that can be affected unexpectedly by the volatile political and economic environment in Guatemala (e.g., the 1992 national uproar over a proposed population law; the 1993 auto-coup by President Jorge Serrano Elfas, etc.)

There are, however, a number of lessons that can be learned from the initial four-year period that can be useful for program designers in other countries.

1. **Agreement upon principles.** *To design a strategy that is appropriate for the political, social, and cultural context of the country, and to gain the support of a range of individuals, institutions, and sectors, a set of guiding principles should be developed and agreed to by the program implementers. These principles should be analyzed and modified periodically, to remain current with the political and cultural context in which the program is being implemented.*
 - In the early stages of presenting findings on girls' education to a wide range of policy makers, each audience raised similar issues, and the presenters developed a set of responses that fit the Guatemalan context, but maintained the neutrality of the initiative and its distance from political, religious, or moral causes or affiliations. The responses to the questions evolved into a set of principles and ground rules that have permitted the Commission on Girls' Education to maintain a common vision of goals and actions on girls' education.
2. **Local ownership and involvement in design and implementation.** *Once commitment is gained from policy makers and communities, they should be encouraged to take the lead in designing strategies and approaches for continued program development. They should also provide decisive guidance on the pace of activities based on their knowledge of the country's political reality.*
 - Donor funding cycles generally require targets to be met on schedule, and donors usually pressure local agencies to meet these targets. USAID/Guatemala has been flexible in permit-

ting the local policy makers to set the pace for the implementation of actions and to make critical decisions about program objectives, principles, and policies.

- Although one of USAID/Guatemala's strategic objectives is a family planning objective, the Mission has been willing to support a girls' education initiative that dissociates itself from a number of issues that are politically-charged in Guatemala, among them the issue of family planning.
3. **Targeting of policy makers.** *To ensure institutionalization of program actions, high-level policy makers should be targeted and specific strategies should be developed to gain their commitment.*
- Unlike many USAID projects that begin with implementation of actions at the community level, USAID spent two years supporting the development of a strong constituency among high-level policy makers in the public and private sectors. Now that there is wide support for girls' education initiatives, these leaders are not only supporting the development of girls' education projects, but they are also making changes in the policies and practices that have served as barriers to the education of girls.
4. **Long-term commitment.** *It takes time and labor to develop sufficient commitment on the part of local leaders to change existing policies and practices. Sustained commitment is generally not obtained through funding of programs.*
- The first two years of the initiative involved a low-cost, labor-intensive process of gradually winning over policy makers to the notion that the education of girls has an impact on the country's social and economic development. No promises were made to fund projects and no one was paid to participate in the process. As key leaders became involved, they joined the initiative as volunteers. Neither they nor their institutions received USAID funds.
 - Because this commitment was earned through an educational process based on presenting research findings and international experience, a number of institutions are now implementing girls' education projects and are finding creative mechanisms for obtaining funding for their ventures.
5. **Sustainability through leveraging of resources.** *To ensure sustainability of program actions, USAID funds should be used to leverage, not substitute for, local commitment of resources.*
- program implementation is far more efficient and project outputs can often be more readily achieved in a four or five-year life-of-project period if USAID provides full funding for technical assistance and program interventions. However, if USAID funds are invested first in creating a strong constituency, and then in providing minimal funds to match the contributions of local institutions (diminishing yearly until full local funding is achieved), the likelihood is greater that the program actions will continue once USAID funding terminates.
 - Guatemalan institutions and individuals have taken considerable pride in the fact that the girls' education initiative is not a USAID program, but one in which USAID is playing a supporting role. A number of actions have taken far longer to implement than was intended. But the fact that the problems and solutions were left in the hands of Guatemalans, and not

solved by USAID, has created local ownership and has led credibility to the claim that the initiative is a Guatemalan initiative.

6. **Fundraising to promote sustainability.** *To increase the level of local commitment of resources, a fundraising program should be designed and training in fundraising provided to local institutions.*
 - One of the current areas of weakness in the girls' education initiative is the reluctance on the part of the boards of directors of participating institutions to become actively involved in fundraising for the initiative.
 - Like any skill, fundraising needs to be taught and actions need to be monitored and improved. If fundraising is a critical element in achieving program sustainability, the project should provide for a long-term, high-quality, fundraising-training program.

7. **Evaluation of the process and the interventions.** *To evaluate the development process and to assess the impact as well as the cost-effectiveness of the interventions, evaluation mechanisms need to be put in place up front (e.g., baseline data, control groups, documentation of processes, etc.).*
 - The process for creating a girls' education initiative in Guatemala has been documented in a number of publications to permit program developers in other countries to adapt or replicate the process.
 - Although the "package approach" to implementing girls' education interventions is widely recommended in the literature, there is a dearth of evaluation data on the effectiveness of varying interventions in different contexts. To ensure the effective use of limited local and donor resources, USAID is conducting quantitative and qualitative research on the actions of the Girls' Education Program.

NOTES

1. King, Elizabeth. 1990. *Education of Girls and Women: Investing in Development*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.
2. USAID support for the girls' education initiative in Guatemala is being provided under the Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) Project (1989-1997). The institutional contractor for the project is the Academy for Educational Development (AED). The Girls' Education Program, one of the activities under the BEST Project, is being implemented by Juárez and Associates, sub-contractor to AED.
3. The source of these data is an unpublished 1994 report of the Guatemalan Planning Secretariat (SEGEPLAN).
4. The terms "Mayan" and "indigenous" are used interchangeably in this paper.
5. Data reported in this section were selected from the *Anuario Estadístico, 1992* (1992 Statistical Yearbook). May, 1993. Guatemala City: Ministry of Education.
6. Data are from the *Unidad Sectorial de Investigación y Planificación Educativa (USIPE)*, Guatemalan Ministry of Education, 1985 through 1992.
7. *Project Paper, Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) Project*. 1989. USAID/Guatemala.
8. *Guatemala Primary Education Sub-Sector Assessment*. 1988. Washington, D.C.: Academy for Educational Development. USAID/Guatemala.
9. King, Elizabeth. 1990. See note 1.
10. Summers, Lawrence H. 1992. *Investing in All the People*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.
11. Bellew, Rosemary; Laura Raney; and K. Subbarao. March, 1992. "Educating Girls." *Finance & Development*. Volume 29, No. 1.
12. Herz, Barbara; K. Subbarao; M. Habib; and Laura Raney. 1992. *Letting Girls Learn: Promising Approaches in Primary and Secondary Education*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.
13. King, Elizabeth M., and Anne M. Hill. 1993. *Women's Education in Developing Countries*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
14. Smith, Barry. 1989. *The Impact of the Education of Girls and Women on Social and Economic Development*. USAID/Guatemala.

15. Sazo de Mendéz, Eva; and María Luisa Escobar de Gómez. 1990. *El Impacto de la Educación de las Niñas en el Desarrollo Socio-Económico de Guatemala*. Guatemala: Universidad Rafael Landívar/Centro de Información y Documentación de Educación de Guatemala.
16. Newman, Bruce C., and Beatrice Bezmalinovic. 1991. *Relationship of Primary Education of Girls to Development Indicators in Guatemala: Further Analysis of Data*. USAID/Guatemala.
17. Nieves, Isabel, Rebecka Lundgren, and Beatrice Bezmalinovic. March 6, 1992. *Feasibility Study for a Girls' Scholarship Program: Report of Preliminary Results*. Guatemala: IDEAS, Ltd.
18. Tietjen, Karen. 1991. *Educating Girls: Strategies to Increase Access, Persistence, and Achievement*, Washington, D.C.: USAID.
19. A full set of principles and ground rules have been developed by the National Commission on Girls' Education (*Principios de la Iniciativa de la Educación de la Niña*) and Ground Rules (*Reglas del Juego de la Comisión Eduquemos a la Niña*) which help the girls' education initiative maintain a unified focus. The Principles and the Ground Rules (in Spanish and English) and other publications can be obtained by writing to the author: USAID/OH&E, Unit 3323, APO AA, 34024.
20. The full cost of the planning and implementation of the conference (including one year of planning, personnel, and hotel fees) was \$18,000. The planning took place over a one-year period and involved a large number of volunteers from six local institutions. One USAID staff member and one project technical advisor (a Guatemalan) participated in the planning and implementation.
21. Núñez, Gabriela, et al. 1991. *First National Conference, Educating Girls: Achieving Guatemala's Development*. USAID/Guatemala.
22. *Referencias, Políticas, y Estrategias para la Educación de las Niñas: 1993-1998* (Framework, Policies, and Strategies on the Education of Girls: 1993-1998). Guatemala: Ministry of Education.
23. See Note 12, Herz, Barbara, et al., p. 52.
24. Nieves, Isabel, Beatriz Bezmalinovic, and Bruce Newman. 1992. *Diagnóstico de la Educación de la Niña, and Plan de Acción de la Educación de la Niña: Comisión Eduquemos a la Niña* (Needs Assessment on Girls' Education, and Plan of Action on Girls' Education). Guatemala: National Commission on Girls' Education.