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Educating Girls: Achieving Guatemala's Development

Planning and Implementing a National Conference for Policy Makers:

A Development Model

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Preface

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to assist USAID Missions to initiate public and private sector cooperative activities to promote the education of girls.

This is not an academic document--it does not present the rationale for promoting girls' education nor does it present supporting arguments and data on the relationship between girls' education and social and economic development. That information can be found in numerous journal articles and publications, some of which are cited in this report.

This is a "how-to manual" that includes procedures, processes, and lessons learned from USAID/Guatemala's experiment in taking a little-known subject and turning it into a policy dialogue and action issue among development experts and leading policy makers in Guatemala.

Background on the Conference

Early in 1989, Dr. Barry Smith, consultant in health and family planning programs, conducted a presentation for the USAID/Guatemala Mission on worldwide data concerning the relationship between primary education of girls and indicators of social and economic development. The issue had particular significance for Guatemala, because of the high rates of illiteracy and low rates of school attendance and completion among Guatemalan girls and women. As a result of these discussions, the Mission initiated a series of activities to examine the factors affecting the education of girls in Guatemala and to explore the relevance of the issue to Guatemala's social and economic development. The activities (e.g., a review of Guatemalan research, a worldwide literature review on the relationship of girls' education to development, and the development of a concept paper and a set of recommendations for Mission action) conducted throughout 1989 provided sufficient evidence to the Mission of the need to focus resources on improving educational opportunities for girls.

Early in 1990, convinced of the importance of girls' education as a development strategy, the Mission began planning a national conference to bring the issue to the attention of Guatemala's policy makers. The Mission invited a number of agencies to serve as co-sponsors (the United Nations organizations in Guatemala [UNDP]; FUNDESA, a local private-sector development foundation; and the National Office of

Women of the Ministry of Labor). In June of 1990, the Mission contracted a local NGO to handle the logistics for the conference.

The conference planning committee, made up of representatives from USAID, the UNDP group, FUNDESA, Rafael Landivar University (a local private university), and DataPro, S.A. (a local research firm), worked for seven months on building a constituency and on planning the National Conference. The day-long conference was held on January 29, 1991, and attracted approximately 100 of Guatemala's key policy makers, representing leading public- and private-sector institutions.

One of the major activities of the Conference was the presentation of analyses of Guatemalan data, prepared especially for the Conference, showing the relationship of primary education of girls to indicators of development in Guatemala. Based on the strength of the relationships shown for Guatemala, the Conference participants formed a National Commission on Girls' Education with the mandate of developing a national plan of action on girls' education. The National Commission has worked since the Conference on developing a national strategy for mobilizing public- and private-sector institutions to improve educational opportunities for girls.

Contents of this Report

The focus of this report is on the processes of planning and implementing the National Conference. A summary of the Conference program and a description of the strategies used in conducting the Conference are described on pages 21-24 (see section titled, "How was the Conference Conducted?"). A full description of the Conference program is included in Núñez et al., *Final Report of the First National Meeting, Educating Girls: Achieving the Development of Guatemala*, USAID/Guatemala, 1991.

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I. THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS IN GUATEMALA

■ Introduction¹

On January 29, 1991, an historic event took place in Guatemala. For the first time, national public- and private-sector policy makers met to formulate policy recommendations on a previously little known development issue: **the role that four to six years of formal primary education of girls plays in a country's social and economic development.** In this national meeting--*Educating Girls: Achieving the Development of Guatemala*--newly analyzed Guatemalan data on the relationship between girls' education and development in Guatemala were presented to key leaders in business, agriculture, industry, government, and religion, individuals whose previous experience with the country's education system and problems was limited. The convening of these individuals was based on the belief that without commitment from Guatemala's public and private sectors to improving the educational opportunities of girls, the productive potential of much of the country's labor force would remain untapped and vast human and material resources would not be brought to bear on Guatemala's development.

The conference was a resounding success, as evidenced by the commitment made by the conference participants who, during the final plenary session, formed a National Commission on Girls' Education to carry out the policy recommendations made at the conference. The planning and implementation of the national conference represented a significant achievement in Guatemala--cooperation among international and host country governmental agencies and key elements of Guatemala's public and private sectors and universities.

This report provides a summary of the process of planning and implementation of the national conference for U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Missions and other institutions wishing to replicate such an event. It outlines the lessons that we learned in the development of the conference and that we are in the process of learning in maintaining public- and private-sector cooperation and support for girls' education in Guatemala.

¹ This introduction appeared in Núñez et al., Final Report of the First National Meeting, Educating Girls: Achieving the Development of Guatemala, USAID/Guatemala, 1991. See complete report (available in Spanish and English) for full description of the planning and implementation of the national conference.

■ **Background: What is the State of Education in Guatemala?**²

Guatemala is a country whose unusual demographic, political, and economic conditions have helped to perpetuate a low level of human resource development, second only to Haiti among countries in the Western Hemisphere. Guatemala covers an area of 108,889 square kilometers and has a population of approximately 9 million inhabitants. It is the third largest Central American country, first in population size and second in population density. It is also the Central American country with the largest percentage of rural population (63 percent in 1985). The official language is Spanish; however, over half of Guatemala's population speaks one of the 23 distinct Mayan languages. The population is 50 percent indigenous with the largest concentration in rural areas (73 percent of the total rural population). Guatemala is largely an agricultural country with agriculture-related economic activity supplying domestic food consumption, providing employment, and accounting for the majority of export earnings. Principal crops are coffee, bananas, cotton, and sugar. Guatemalans live in some 16,000 small villages that are satellites of 335 municipalities in 22 departments. Because much of the country is mountainous, limited accessibility to rural communities makes development a greater challenge in Guatemala than in other Central American countries.

Of all countries in the Western Hemisphere, Guatemala is second only to Haiti in its rate of illiteracy among women (73 percent of indigenous men are illiterate and 91 percent of indigenous women). Eighty-seven percent of the labor force over the age of 15 has not completed primary school.

Guatemala's public education system has suffered from years of political and economic instability. In addition, the education system is highly inefficient, particularly at the primary school level. Low Government of Guatemala budget allocations to education over the years have contributed to a poor resource base for supporting educational expansion. In addition, other factors contribute to poor school attendance, including seasonal migration from Guatemala's highlands regions to the coast by families and occasionally by entire communities to work the harvest.

Approximately 25 percent of Guatemala's schools are one-room, one-teacher schools. As of 1990, approximately 60 percent of the eligible school population was enrolled in primary school (35 percent of the eligible indigenous population and 82 percent of the eligible ladino population). The total school enrollment was approximately one million children.

² The information in this section is taken from the Project Paper, Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) Project, USAID/Guatemala, 1989.

Among the six Central American countries, Guatemala's education system is the least efficient. Approximately 50 percent of first graders repeat the grade. It takes approximately 11.6 years to produce a sixth grade graduate, and only 51 percent of children complete sixth grade (as compared with 93 percent in Panama, 77 percent in Costa Rica, 62 percent in El Salvador, and 61 percent in Honduras).

According to recent analyses of Guatemalan data conducted for the national conference, for every 10 children who are enrolled in sixth grade, eight are boys and only two are girls.³

■ **What is USAID/Guatemala's Role in Education in Guatemala?**

USAID/Guatemala has been an active participant over the past 20 years in educational development in Guatemala. The Mission has funded a total of \$78.2 million in education activities, predominantly in rural educational development.

In 1989, the Education and Human Resources Division of the Office of Development Resources in AID/Washington issued a Basic Education Strategy⁴ for USAID Missions in the Latin American region. The strategy urged Missions to focus Mission resources on basic education activities that would achieve long-term improvements in human resource development in the region.

USAID/Guatemala developed a Mission Education Sector Strategy in 1989, in which the Mission presented its rationale for focusing its efforts on basic education activities (i.e., primary education). At the same time, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Mission initiated development of the Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) Project.⁵ The justification for the focus of the project on improvements in the

³ Guatemalan Office of Planning, Ministry of Education (USIPE), Estadísticas Educativas, 1988. Estadística Final (analyses prepared by Bruce Newman, DataPro, S.A.).

⁴ Dutcher, N., Basic Education Strategy, Education and Human Resources Division, Office of Development Resources, Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (AID/LAC/DR/EHR), 1989.

⁵ Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) Project, USAID/Guatemala, \$30 million grant to the Government of Guatemala, 1989 to 1995.

quality and efficiency of the primary education system was based heavily on education assessments conducted in 1985 and 1988.⁶

■ **Why Did USAID/Guatemala Become Involved in Girls' Education?**

Among the issues considered during the development of the BEST Project was the sizeable discrepancy in girls' and boys' attendance, dropout, and completion rates and their relationship to the high illiteracy rate among Guatemalan women, particularly in rural areas. Within the BEST Project (conceived of as an education sector program), 15 sub-projects were developed to focus on each of the factors contributing to the poor efficiency and quality of the educational system. Due to a lack of sufficient data and experience in Guatemala with respect to the education of girls, a sub-project was not developed at the time to focus on improvements in girls' enrollment, attendance, and completion rates in primary school.

Rather, the project created a position for an advisor on girls' education with the proviso that the issue would be explored in a systematic fashion to determine how to better focus the project's and Mission's resources on improving educational conditions for girls.

■ **How did the Mission Study the Issue?**

Early in 1989, Dr. Barry Smith, medical doctor and public health expert, met with senior USAID/Guatemala officials to discuss Mission programs in health and family planning. In the course of the discussions, he presented a summary of his studies concerning the factors influencing reductions in fertility and infant and child mortality and morbidity. He argued that the variable most consistently correlated with increases in indicators measuring improvements in health and family planning was the primary education of girls, not efforts to promote family planning and health. He encouraged the Mission to focus efforts on the education of girls, not only as a mechanism for improving educational attainment in Guatemala and for reducing adult literacy, but as a strategy for improving family health and nutrition as well as agricultural and industrial production.

Concept paper. As a result of these discussions, the Mission contracted Dr. Smith to develop a concept paper, including a summary of worldwide data on girls' education and development, as well as recommendations for the Mission.⁷ Dr. Smith's paper later

⁶ Guatemala Education Sector Assessment, Academy for Educational Development, 1985; Guatemala Primary Education Efficiency Subsector Assessment, Academy for Educational Development, 1988.

⁷ Smith, Barry. Concept Paper: The Impact of the Education of Girls and Women on Social and Economic Development. USAID/Guatemala, 1989.

served as one of the major documents used to stimulate interest in the subject of girls' education among public and private sector groups, and his recommendations formed the basis for the Mission's strategy to promote girls' education in Guatemala. They included:

- conducting a literature review of research, documents, publications, and theses on the subject of primary education of girls and its role in Guatemala's social and economic development, to provide an information base on which to develop further activities;
- requesting that AID/Washington fund a worldwide review of literature on the role that the primary education of girls plays in a country's social and economic development; and
- conducting analyses of three large Guatemalan data sets (socio-demographic surveys) to identify relationships between girls' primary education and development indicators.

Guatemalan literature review. The USAID Mission contracted a research center at a local university to conduct a literature review of research, theses, pilot projects, and activities that discussed the relationship that primary education of girls has with social and economic development in Guatemala. The literature review indicated that a number of studies, theses, and projects had focused on women's education; however, no research or projects had focused specifically on girls' education and its relationship to any of the indicators of development. This told us that we had a good deal of work to do to understand the relationship of girls' education to development in Guatemala, as well as the conditions, constraints, and barriers that affected girls' attendance, completion, and achievement rates in primary school.

Worldwide literature review. A number of literature reviews had been conducted on the education of girls and its relationship to fertility, health, and infant and child mortality and morbidity. We were aware of individual studies that looked at the relationship of the education of girls to specific indicators such as educational attainment, industrial and agricultural productivity, and employment generation. These studies were not included in one document that drew conclusions and formed recommendations for further action. USAID/Guatemala requested that the Office for Women in Development, in AID/Washington, fund a worldwide literature review, focusing specifically on each of the development indicators. We were pleased that PPC/WID and S&T/ED sponsored this study.⁸

⁸ Floro, M., and J. Wolf, The Economic and Social Impact of Girls' Primary Education in Developing Countries. Creative Associates International, Inc. Washington, D.C. 1991.

Analyses of Guatemalan data. In the course of preparing his concept paper, Barry Smith identified three large data sets (Socio-Demographic Surveys for 1987 and 1989, and the National Institute for Statistics data base) that included data collected on Guatemalan girls and women and had variables for education, health, fertility, and employment. USAID/Guatemala contracted Bruce Newman to conduct analyses of these data, which were later presented as the centerpiece of the conference. These data, although collected for other purposes, showed strong positive relationships between primary education of girls and the indicators of development.

■ **What Did the Mission Learn from the Exploratory Activities?**

Each of these preliminary activities helped us to form a knowledge base for selecting further activities in the Mission to focus on girls' education. Most important, however, in the Mission's decision-making were the results of the analyses of the three Guatemalan data sets, which included the following findings:

The Guatemalan data are consistent with those of other countries.

As research has shown in other developing countries, the analyses conducted of the three Guatemalan data sets⁹ showed a strong relationship between years of formal primary education for girls and significant improvements in indicators of social and economic development in Guatemala (e.g., rates of fertility and infant mortality, family health, educational attainment of children, employment and income generation).

In addition, the data pointed to the following conclusions:

- increased school attendance by girls produces long-term effects in reduced rates of illiteracy among adults
- increased school attendance by girls can produce medium-term (three to five years) effects by reducing fertility rates¹⁰

⁹ Newman, B., and Bezmalinovic, B., Education of Girls and Development in Guatemala, Guatemala, DataPro, S.A., 1991.

¹⁰ According to the Guatemalan Demographic and Health Survey (1987 and 1989), women with no primary education have an average total of seven children, whereas women who have received four to six years of education have an average of 3.9 children, a reduction of nearly 50 percent. Guatemalan data indicate that the greatest drop in school attendance occurs at around 13 years of age. Because of the high incidence of repetition, most girls who drop out of school at around 13 tend to be enrolled in third grade. If attendance of girls can be increased by even one or two years, the age at which a girl marries can be postponed, the age of birth of the

- increases in the number of years that girls attend school yield cost savings for government and private sector entities in reduced expenditures (e.g., for health programs, family planning interventions, agricultural training programs, efforts to improve industrial productivity)
- increased school attendance by girls can produce long-term effects in improved agricultural and industrial productivity
- increased school attendance by girls produces improved family well-being through improved knowledge of health and nutrition

Improvements in girls' enrollment, attendance, and achievement rates can only occur through intersectoral cooperation.

The BEST Project has as one of its objectives to improve the quality and efficiency of public education programs such that they will have a positive impact on improving girls' rates of attendance and school achievement. However, improvements in the education of girls are not solely the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Major barriers to improvements in girls' education, identified in other developing countries,¹¹ are closely tied with the activities of other ministries (e.g., agriculture, health, roads, etc.) or with activities of the private sector (e.g., salaries and working conditions of large numbers of laborers who work in privately owned factories or who migrate from the highlands to privately owned coastal area farms). Barriers identified in other countries¹² include

- poor roads and the inaccessibility of schools, as well as the distance of school from a girl's home
- direct costs of education often paid by parents, including school fees, books, clothing, etc.

first child can be delayed, and the family size reduced significantly. The effects of these changes can be felt on the economy within a relatively short period of time, an important medium-term benefit.

¹¹ Bellew, R., and E. King. Promoting Girls' and Women's Education: Lessons from the Past. The World Bank, 1991. Note: the BEST Project will explore barriers to girls' school attendance and achievement as part of its Applied Educational Research sub-project.

¹² Raising Girls' Participation in Primary and Secondary School: Benefits, Constraints, and Lessons from Project Experience, unauthored draft, The World Bank, In process, draft dated June 7, 1991.

- inadequate or non-existent child care services, requiring older girls to stay at home to take care of younger siblings
- economic constraints due to lost opportunity costs for girls' labor in domestic tasks
- inadequate public services of energy and water, requiring girls to search for and chop wood for cooking and to fetch water
- perceived irrelevance of the educational curriculum to the needs of girls and their families
- school schedules that conflict with harvest periods or family work schedules

It should be noted that specific studies have not been conducted to date in Guatemala on the barriers to girls' attendance and completion of primary school. However, information gleaned from a number of projects (e.g., USAID-funded girls' scholarship program; the Guatemalan National Bilingual Education Program [PRONEBI], etc.) and anthropological studies conducted on other subjects¹³ indicate that it is highly probable that a number of the constraints identified above also hold true in Guatemala, constraints for which the Ministry of Education is only peripherally responsible. These constraints can be removed only through action taken by such actors in the national economy as other Government Ministries and other sectors, such as the Church, the Military, and the industrial and agricultural sectors (addressing labor laws, the minimum wage, employment conditions, etc.)--action that must begin at the policy level.

A country with limited resources must select investments that will produce greatest results.

In addition to the role that the country's policy makers play in ameliorating the obstacles to girls' school attendance and achievement, the Guatemalan data suggested additional conclusions:

- countries with limited resources must allocate those resources judiciously; they must be used where they will yield the greatest results;
- efficient use of resources means avoiding duplications in efforts; and

¹³ For example, see: Núñez, Gabriela. Patterns of Childrearing (Kaqchikel area). Final Report. Altiplano Higher Education Project, Universidad Rafael Landívar, 1990.

- since the education of girls is correlated with significant improvements in all of the indicators of development, expenditures on girls' education can produce savings for the country.

■ **What Decisions Did the Mission Make Based on the Findings?**

Following its review of the Guatemalan and world-wide data, the Mission considered the options for further actions to improve girls' educational opportunities and academic achievement in Guatemala and determined that the data were of such strength that they must be taken directly to the policy makers of the country.

In consultation with education advisors to the Mission, the Office of Health and Education recommended to Mission management that the following two immediate actions be taken:

1. Conduct a national conference for key public- and private-sector policy makers. Because of the compelling nature of the information cited in the previous section, the Mission agreed to fund the planning and implementation of a national conference to inform key policy makers in all sectors of the role that the primary education of girls plays in the country's development, and the specific role that each sector plays in improving the education of girls.
2. Create a new sub-project (the Girls and Women in Development [GID] activity [a 16th sub-project of the BEST Project¹⁴]). The Mission approved the creation of a new sub-project to identify and implement research, experimental activities, and interventions that would reduce the discrepancies between girls' and boys' enrollment, attendance, and achievement rates, and that would focus on qualitative improvements in the education of girls.

II. **PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

The following section discusses the planning and implementation of the National Conference, including the assumptions on which planning took place, constraints to the planning effort, planning ground rules, and key planning elements. The final section summarizes the activities of the Conference.

¹⁴ The position for a monitor for GID and WID issues in the Project was eliminated and two new long-term positions were created for the GID sub-project: director and deputy director for GID activities.

During the early stages of the planning process, the USAID Mission developed a scope of work for the design, development, and implementation of the Conference¹⁵. One of our initial tasks in the development process was to identify public and private-sector co-sponsors who would lend credibility to the effort and who would provide support for the planning process. However, although we took care in selecting co-sponsors with similar development objectives, each co-sponsor came to the planning effort with distinct perspectives and institutional agendas.

■ **What Were the Assumptions on Which Planning was Based?**

The differences in agendas made it necessary to clarify the assumptions held by the representatives of each of the co-sponsoring institutions concerning the goals of the conference. Based on an analysis of the institutional agendas, the planning committee established a set of assumptions on which the subsequent planning was based. They included:

As a result of internal and external influences, cultures are dynamic and are in a process of continual change.

In the initial stages of planning, a number of individuals questioned our efforts, asserting that we were tampering with cultural change. They were concerned that by promoting the education of girls, we were going to create changes within indigenous cultures, families, and communities. They feared that customs and traditions might change radically (e.g., education might prompt daughters to move away from home and seek work in the cities). Our response was that, whether or not we intervened, change was inevitable in any community or culture. Cultures and communities are continually responding to internal and external events and pressures.¹⁶

Change is healthy and interventions can be a positive force for change.

We further argued that we were interventionists and that interventions are continually occurring within any culture. Parents, institutions, political parties, and natural events (e.g., earthquakes) are continually intervening to create social change. This change may be perceived of as a positive influence by some groups and as a negative influence by others. We believed that both education and change are "good" interventions and we defended their benefit. We also explained that our strategy was to improve opportunities for girls, not to force girls to follow certain patterns.

¹⁵ The scope of work for the Conference is available in Spanish and English from USAID/Guatemala.

¹⁶ See Orlando Patterson's discussion of the dynamic nature of cultures in Ethnic Chauvinism, Stein and Day, 1977.

System-wide changes can be brought about most effectively by a country's policy makers.

It would have been much easier to have directed the conference to Ministry of Education officials or to members of NGOs working in the education field. However, believing that improvements in the education of girls required system-wide changes involving every sector, we asserted that those changes could only be brought about by the policy makers of those sectors. For that reason, our guest list was strictly controlled and included only those who were determined to be public or private sector leaders. Because of this, we even turned people away (gently) who phoned requesting invitations. Our intention, of course, was not to create ill will among interested and sympathetic people, but to ensure that those who were present at the conference were really those individuals who could influence policy decisions. We planned to hold follow-up seminars after the first one, inviting diverse groups of people (women's associations, mayors, private voluntary organizations, etc.) to attend.

Guatemalans can assume the leadership role and are often hindered by outside influences.

We knew that if girls' education was to take hold in Guatemala, that the movement would have to be led by Guatemalans, not by USAID, the UN, or other international agencies. We knew that institutionalization and sustainability, principles important in AID-funded programs, could only come about if Guatemalans took the issue on as their own. Our strategy was to find highly qualified and motivated Guatemalans who could spearhead the planning and implementation of the conference and follow-up activities.

Development can occur at the top.

Many of us who work in development have been trained in community development strategies that are carried out in village areas. The objective is to teach village communities about techniques and practices that allow them to become responsible for their own development, by using the resources and skills available to them.

We identified our target group as policy makers from all sectors. Our approach, then, was to use the same development strategies with policy makers that we had used with village people. That meant: educating them about the subject by making it relevant to them and then involving them in the decision making.

■ **What Were the Constraints to the Planning Effort?**

From the beginning of the planning effort, we were keenly aware that we were engaged in an experimental activity. We expected to encounter unforeseen challenges in the course of the planning, and we did. Among them were the following:

All development activities require funding.

Our notion was to provide seed money for what would eventually become a Guatemalan enterprise. Our very limited funds for planning and implementing a conference were spread thin and needed to cover everything from hotel and meals for the conference, a publicity campaign, development of conference materials, payment for facilitators, and printing of a glossy final report. None of the members of the planning committee were remunerated for the extra time they committed to the conference planning, and much of the work devolved upon volunteers who enthusiastically contributed time and services to the planning. These normally highly paid Guatemalan professionals offered their time and services free of charge because they were convinced that girls' education was a solution to Guatemala's development problems. Perhaps because we were forced to rely heavily on volunteer labor and to continually search for a wider circle of Guatemalans with varying capabilities, we were at the same time assisting this initiative to become a Guatemalan enterprise and thus helping to create self-sufficiency for the activity.

One of the major efforts following the conference has been raising funds for the succeeding stages: development of the national plan of action, the national consciousness raising campaign, and specific projects and programs that will focus on improving girls' educational opportunities and achievement. The Mission has been a strong supporter of the effort, providing funding support in such a way that it does not dominate the effort but requires that the bulk come from other sources.

Girls' education was an unknown subject -- we needed to build a constituency -- both within and outside of USAID.

Within the Mission. In the past, the role of the education of girls in development had not been a subject of serious dialogue in USAID/Guatemala internal discussions about development objectives. Knowing that any future support for efforts to improve girls' education would require all offices within the Mission to be convinced of the importance of girls' education, we engaged in a program to build a constituency within the Mission. We developed a two-page summary that we passed out to other offices, informing them of the upcoming event. We did several presentations for the Mission Director on the progress of activities and on the data analyses. We also kept the Ambassador informed and requested that he hold a reception for all of the invited participants, to lend credibility to the activity. All of these strategies helped to make the subject of girls' education one of interest in the Mission.

Outside of the Mission. Much to our surprise, outside of the Mission, our listeners became adherents to girls' education after hearing our presentations. We prepared flip chart presentations and handouts of all types as well as duplicated reference articles and statistical reports for our personal visits to policy makers. One by one, we made visits to people whom we were told were leaders in the public and private sector. These visits

were time consuming. But in all cases, they were invaluable. We found that these leaders were looking for an issue to take hold of--something new, something positive, and something neutral. The subject of girls' education didn't have a political party constituency. It wasn't on any organization's agenda. It was something that all, regardless of political affiliation, could take interest in and work with.

A note of warning: To build a constituency requires a serious commitment by a core group of dedicated people. Finding and molding that core group requires an investment of time and energy. We took the time and searched for and nurtured a group of such people in Guatemala; their enthusiasm and knowledge were the strong forces that created the larger constituency.

There was no previous experience in Guatemala working with the issue of girls' education, nor with policy makers.

Since the subject was new and no strategy existed for how to reach policy makers on such an issue, we did quite a bit of experimentation. Through trial and error, we learned how to set up personal appointments with individuals, how to present the data and the vision of what the education of girls could do for the country, and how to enlist support and commitment.

We did find that the USAID name helped a great deal in opening doors. In fact, when influential Guatemalans couldn't get their phone calls returned, the USAID planning team member was asked to make the phone calls, all of which received a response and an appointment. The USAID calling card became a certain way to reach people.

Bias against family planning posed a significant threat to achieving support for girls' education.

Of all the variables with which primary education of girls is related, fertility shows the strongest relationship. The data worldwide show that women who have four to six years of primary education have significantly lower rates of fertility than do women with little or no education.

Unfortunately, Guatemala is one of the countries left in the world where a discussion of family planning is generally taboo. Even the mention of fertility rates in discussions can close the door to any future interest.

Our first inclination was to tackle the problem and try to educate our reluctant listeners. We soon learned that the subject of family planning was met with knee-jerk reactions. Otherwise intelligent individuals, concerned with development, became suddenly very closed to any discussion.

We compromised our principles and excluded from our literature and discussions any reference to the relationship of girls' education to reductions in fertility rates. The strategy proved to be a good one and a good lesson to us. We didn't have to agree with all of the participants on all of the issues, only the central issues.

Segments of Guatemalan society suffer from racism with respect to indigenous people.

The majority of Guatemala's population consists of indigenous people who have been marginalized and excluded from active participation in the economy. There is probably a good degree of reticence and uncertainty among much of Guatemala's non-indigenous minority concerning the effects of educating the majority population. The obvious positive benefits are an educated work force. The negative effects could possibly be a backlash by the majority population against centuries of oppression. These and other sentiments formed the backdrop for our discussions about the effects of educating girls. Therefore, we avoided referring specifically to indigenous girls and, rather, talked about girls in general, although the discrepancy between girls' and boys' educational development existed primarily for indigenous children in rural areas.

The public and private sectors have a long-standing distrust of each other.

One of the most challenging areas in implementing a national conference of this sort was convincing our audience of the importance of bringing the public and private sectors together. We knew that the mutual distrust and disrespect that had existed for decades could not be erased at a one-day conference. However, we also believed that cooperation among sectors was essential, since the problems underlying the deficiencies in the education of girls belonged to each and all sectors.

Our strategy was to confront the problem during the workshop sessions by requiring that public and private sector policy makers work together on the specific assignments--forming commitments, declarations, goal statements, and policies. During the conference, we also prohibited any mention of blame for current conditions. Because no one could accuse anyone else of being the cause of the country's problems, the group was forced to discuss the data and the directions the country should take--looking to the future, not to the past.

Each co-sponsoring agency had its own policy agenda to pursue.

Our co-sponsors, the U.N. group in Guatemala, and the National Office of Women of the Ministry of Labor, had their own policy agendas. We spent an inordinate amount of time getting approval of documents from senior people in these institutions, time that could have been better spent. Had we experienced the same difficulty in the USAID Mission, we would have considered this apparent concern with control as something normal. However, our Mission director gave us considerable latitude in

carrying out the conference activities. He wanted to be convinced that we knew what we were doing, and then he let us go. Not so with the other agencies, one an international agency, the other a Government of Guatemala agency.

If we had to do it again, we would still seek the co-sponsorship, however. Not only did it lend credibility to what we were doing, but the agencies provided us with representatives who worked on our planning committee, individuals whose ideas and efforts were invaluable to the effort. We all had to learn patience with bureaucracies that operate differently from our own.

■ **What Were the Ground Rules on Which Planning was Based?**

In doing the initial ground work for planning the conference, we encountered individuals with diverse opinions concerning the focus of the conference. We also discovered that there were wide differences of opinion about a number of important subjects, including family planning, educational development in Guatemala, and women's issues. Since we knew that these differences of opinion could create serious obstacles to later efforts, we learned how to narrow our focus in such a way that areas of conflict no longer appeared. Our message became more and more simple, as we presented the conference objectives to different groups. We also became quite firm on exactly what the conference proposed to do and what it could not do. The following points summarize the ground rules that worked in the conference planning.

USAID should remain in the background.

One of our best decisions was to keep USAID in the background. We wanted to promote the issue of girls' education as a Guatemalan initiative, not a USAID effort. We knew that if we ever wanted the initiative to become a sustained Guatemalan effort, we would have to do the work but not take the credit for it.

In addition, we insisted that the presenters at the conference be Guatemalans, not U.S. experts. The only non-Guatemalan presenter was Bruce Newman, a resident of Guatemala and owner of a research firm who had conducted the analyses of the Guatemalan data.

As the planning progressed, we received numerous requests from USAID staff to attend the conference. We had to politely refuse these requests, explaining that a USAID presence would be counterproductive. In the end, this proved to be a wise decision. At the conference, very few non-Guatemalan faces could be seen participating in the day's activities, an indication to the participants of the support for the initiative among Guatemalans.

The subject is economic development, the vehicle is the education of girls.

We made it abundantly clear in our promotional efforts that the subject of the conference was Guatemala's social and economic development, not education and not women's issues. Talking about the benefits to investments of resources and about mechanisms for development helped to neutralize potentially controversial issues (i.e., race and gender) and to communicate a clear message to industrialists, bankers, and business owners, in terms that they understood well. Whenever our audience began to discuss the deficiencies in the education system, we maneuvered the conversation back to social and economic development, reminding them that the education system was only one of the actors in the problems of development in Guatemala.

Never refer to women, only to girls.

We avoided the use of the word women. We talked about girls and the effects of girls' education on development. The strategy was an obvious one. No one could possibly be threatened by little girls. However, women do pose a potential threat: A professional woman might be a competitor for a job position; an economically self-sufficient woman might be more prone to seeking a divorce than an economically dependent woman. We didn't want to allow our listeners the opportunity to draw these and other possible inferences concerning the effects of education on the lives of girls as they grow into women. Therefore, we limited our discussions always to girls and their school attendance, completion, and achievement.

The focus is narrow and must not include social and personal inequalities or oppression of women.

We found that some people (e.g., those involved with human rights organizations or with the National Office of Women of the Ministry of Labor) were frequently concerned with equity issues and with addressing or redressing women's oppression. We did not allow room for discussions of equity issues, and reminded our listeners that our focus was exclusively on social and economic development. Again, our issue was Guatemala's development, and the role that the education of girls plays in that development.

The focus is on the "cupula" of Guatemala -- the power elite -- not on the education community.

Although we were frequently tempted to seek out the "converted," those who, as a result of their training or experience might be sympathetic (e.g., educators, Ministry of Education officials, PVOs, etc.), we focused our efforts on attracting Guatemala's leadership from all sectors. We turned away many interested people from this initial conference activity. We wanted to attract those individuals who were in a position to

make a policy decision within their institutions, without having to go to a higher authority.

Maintain a narrow focus on broad policy, not on projects.

Of all the concepts we tried to communicate, the most difficult was the global vision of the initiative. Repeatedly, our listeners would look for single causes or single solutions. We used multiple strategies to get our intended audience to look at the multitude of factors that have an influence on girls' attendance, completion, and school achievement. A common response was to blame the Ministry of Education for the problems affecting girls' education, rather than to look at the larger social and economic context and the role that each of the sectors plays in the country's development.

Typically, our listeners identified one factor influencing girls' high dropout rates (e.g., cultural factors). They would then propose that a project be implemented to address these factors (e.g., a project for street children, a teacher training program, etc.). We had to devise strategies for explaining that this girls' education initiative was an inter-sectoral activity, which would identify the complex set of factors affecting girls' educational opportunities. Based on the identification of barriers within each sector, projects and programs would be developed by each sector. These were yet to be defined, but must be based on a careful diagnosis of conditions in Guatemala.

Go high profile.

Because our objective was to attract the leaders of Guatemala's public and private sectors, our decision was to impress them with the high level of organization, commitment, and quality of our efforts. Along with this, we decided to prepare the highest quality materials and program, including an elegant luncheon and dinner. In addition, we prepared the following:

- a conference logo, included on all conference materials
- conference reference materials
- a personally delivered letter of invitation, signed by the Director of the USAID Mission, the United Nations Representative, and the Director of the National Office of Women
- formal follow-up invitations
- publicity documents
- photo exhibition
- media interviews
- press announcements
- a formal reception at the Ambassador's residence

■ **What were the Essential Elements in the Planning Process?**

A number of the items that follow have been referred to previously. They are, however, repeated here because they were considered essential to the success of the effort.

Seek co-sponsors.

Although it is generally not easy to create "donor cooperation," USAID knew that co-sponsorship of the event was important for lending credibility to the effort as well as for providing an example of the effectiveness of public, private, and international cooperation¹⁷. We were unable, unfortunately, to find a private sector institution, possessing a neutral public reputation, that was interested in sharing the sponsorship of the event. We therefore sought out the United Nations organizations, because of their experience in the social sectors in Guatemala. We also sought out the National Office of Women, because of its link to activities and organizations dealing with women's issues. Although both organizations put up enormous bureaucratic road blocks throughout the planning, the staff they proposed to work with USAID were exceptionally competent and committed.

Form a planning committee.

The planning committee was made up of representatives of the co-sponsoring organizations as well as representatives of other institutions, such as a private university (Universidad Rafael Landivar), the Guatemalan Sexual Education Association (AGES), a private development foundation (FUNDESA), and a private research company (DataPro, S.A.). Ministry of Education representatives were also invited to participate in the planning. The planning committee learned that the following important strategies were essential:

- *Knock on many doors.* That meant that we identified representatives of key institutions and made individual appointments with them. This one-on-one effort was highly labor-intensive, but essential in obtaining commitments from leaders in each sector.
- *Provide strong leadership to the planning effort.* The planning committee was kept quite small. In the beginning, we attempted to be democratic in decisions concerning philosophy and vision. We soon learned that USAID needed not only to control the resources but also the decisions concerning

¹⁷ USAID provided the full funding for the event. Co-sponsorship was defined as shared planning responsibilities and organizational contribution of staff time.

each action taken. The group didn't mind that USAID was in the driver's seat. The other members frequently reminded the group that USAID understood the larger picture.

- *Find enthusiastic leadership.* Without a core group of competent and enthusiastic planners, the effort could not have succeeded. Much of our ability to convince policy makers of the importance of the issue was due to our enthusiasm and preparation in the subject area. We arrived at the personal interviews with flip charts, journal articles, and data presentations.

Develop a timeline.

Early on, we developed a timeline for each and every task that needed to be performed to carry out the event. The timeline kept us all on track and helped us to gauge time required to conduct a publicity campaign, write and print conference materials, and pilot test the conference program methodology.

Develop and coordinate a program of publicity (T.V., radio, newspaper) including a specially commissioned photo exhibition.

Our publicity program included a range of activities intended to inform the public of this new initiative and to attract policy makers.

- *Photo exhibition of Guatemalan girls commissioned for display at the conference.* Since our discussions had been tightly focused on girls' education as a development mechanism, we had intentionally dehumanized the issue. However, we wanted the conference participants to be reminded, throughout the day's events and workshop sessions, that the development mechanism concerned the lives of human beings. We wanted the faces of Guatemala's girls to form a backdrop for the discussions.
- *Series of articles for the press,* which we submitted to each of the newspapers.
- *Logo to identify the initiative.* Of all of our activities, the logo created the greatest disagreement. We had special concerns: the logo needed to represent both Ladino and Mayan girls, as well as the development focus of the development initiative. We tried to be democratic in seeking approval of the logo options from among our co-sponsors. However, USAID's experience in such efforts made us more qualified to make the final decision about which logo should be used.

Identify four facilitators, representing the public and private sectors, men and women, and the ethnic groups of the country.

One of the most time-consuming tasks was identifying facilitators for the event, individuals who clearly understood the focus of the activity and who understood that improvements in the education of girls required interventions by all of Guatemala's key actors and sectors, not exclusively the Ministry of Education. We also wanted to find facilitators who didn't have axes to grind. Without question, if any facilitator had a particular bias, that bias would be detected by the conference participants. We also wanted to include an indigenous person as a facilitator, as well as representatives of the public and private sectors. This required individuals who would not be intimidated by sharing facilitator roles with high-powered private sector representatives. That representation and division served us well. Our four facilitators were not professional facilitators. One was a leader among indigenous movements in Guatemala, another was a leading researcher in a major international organization, and the other two were well-known owners of two important businesses in Guatemala City.

Bring in experts to serve as resources during small group sessions.

We brought in four experts to serve as resource people during the workshop sessions. We wanted to provide flexibility to the conference program and to allow the participants to seek out information when they needed it. Rather than have these experts present position papers to the participants, they set up centers in the room to which the participants could go if they needed information on specific issues while the workshop sessions were taking place.

Develop the program methodology.

Our objective in holding the conference was to create a commitment on the part of the participants to the role that girls' education plays in development and to motivate them to propose and implement national policies to improve educational opportunities for girls. However, to create a sense of commitment in a one-day conference session, we needed a conference program methodology that used highly interactive strategies. That meant that we needed to have a minimum number of lectures and a maximum number of sessions where the participants were working with data, consulting information sources, asking and responding to questions, and forming conclusions. The program methodology was the key to taking the participants from the point of being novices on the subject to being educated decision makers. The methodology we selected did the following:

- it forced the participants to study the data, form conclusions, and propose policies based on their conclusions;

- it forced representatives from the different sectors to talk to each other and to discover that they had common interests in the country's development.

Conduct a field test.

To insure the relevance of the program methodology, the facilitators tested the methodology on a number of individuals representing each of the sectors invited to the event. They developed a questionnaire and submitted the questionnaire and tentative conference program to a sample of participants. They then analyzed the questionnaire data for refining the program methodology.

Create materials for the conference workshop sessions.

We translated (from English to Spanish) and duplicated reference materials and journal articles on girls' education for the conference participants and included them in a conference packet. These materials provided strong support to the arguments presented at the conference and helped communicate to the participants that the issue of girls' education and development had been studied worldwide by major international institutions and research centers.

Conduct a full rehearsal of the event.

We had the greatest difficulty convincing the facilitators, presenters, and planners that it was important to conduct a full rehearsal of the conference program prior to the event. Whether it was stage fright or arrogance, no one wanted to conduct a rehearsal. However, this simulation proved to be essential. Problems were worked out in the presentations, and parts of the conference methodology were eliminated while others were added. After the rehearsal, we had created a group of believers in the importance of conducting a simulation of such an event.

■ **How was the Conference Conducted?**

The Conference took place on January 29, 1991, beginning at 8 A.M. and ending at 9:00 P.M. The program included a key-note address by the Minister of Education, a closing address by the First Lady of Guatemala, a formal luncheon in which the U.S. Ambassador addressed the audience, and a formal dinner. The Conference strategies aimed at taking a diverse set of participants representing a range of sectors, political allegiances, and professional preparation, and creating a unified consciousness concerning the importance of the education of girls to the country's development. The following is a summary of the conference program.

Location

The conference was held in a large banquet room of an exclusive hotel in Guatemala City. The entrance was decorated with a photo exhibition of indigenous and Ladino girls, commissioned specially for the occasion. The room was set up with chairs in a semi-circle facing a stage area. On both sides of the room, for the small group sessions, round tables were placed with flip charts for each table. On a 25-foot banner at the head of the room were the conference logo and the words, "Educando a la Niña: Lograremos el Desarrollo de Guatemala" (Educating Girls: Achieving the Development of Guatemala).

Conference packet

The conference participants were presented with a packet as they entered. The packet included a set of journal articles on girls' education, the conference program, and a report of the Guatemalan data analyses, including graphs and tables.

Highlights of the conference

The schedule was a tight one and efforts were made to allow no slack in the day's events. Since the purpose of the conference was to provide the participants with the opportunity to study the worldwide and Guatemalan data and to draw their own conclusions about a course of action for Guatemala, a limited number of presentations occurred, allowing a maximum amount of time for work group and plenary sessions.

- *Speeches.* Only two talks were given, but these were both presented by influential actors in Guatemala's development and both were short. The Minister of Education, Maria Luisa Beltranena de Padilla, presented the keynote address, discussing the critical economic conditions in Guatemala and the need for promoting the education of girls as a development strategy. The other talk was offered by the First Lady (substituting at the last minute for the President, who was unable to be present), who gave the closing address.
- *Presentation of data.* The heart of the conference was the presentation by Bruce Newman of analyses of Guatemalan data showing, for the first time, the relationship of primary education of girls to indicators of educational attainment, health, fertility, and income and employment generation. This presentation of new data was a powerful introduction to the day's events and helped to draw the participants into a discussion of the role that girls' education plays in Guatemala's development. In addition to Newman's presentation, the participants received the complete set of graphics in their

conference packets, which they would use later in the small group sessions as reference documents.

It should be noted that although Mr. Newman presented the data to the participants, the strategy he used was an active one, prompting the participants to answer questions about the data and to study the data for themselves.

- *Workshop sessions.* The group sessions used a highly structured format in which the participants were divided randomly (through selecting a number when they first entered the room) to ensure that they would not sit with friends or with those from the same sector.

In the morning workgroup, following the presentation of data, the participants were provided with guidelines and worksheets on which they were to write "declarations" of their beliefs and convictions, based on their study of the Guatemalan data on girls' education and development indicators. Requiring each participant to review the data and declare his or her beliefs and convictions forced them to engage in a process of analysis concerning their personal role in their country's development. To facilitate this process, we offered the participants the support of experts to whom they could refer for information. While the small groups were working, four experts (in educational models, demographics, qualitative and quantitative research, and educational economics) were available to consult with the groups, when they needed assistance with the interpretation of data or with information on lessons learned in other countries. In addition, the director of the National Institute of Statistics brought his senior staff, with computers and software, to perform immediate analyses of Guatemalan demographic data for the conference participants.

In the afternoon session, the participants were asked to meet again in small groups and to take the declarations of beliefs and convictions that they had developed in the morning session and to convert these into goal statements and policy recommendations for actions that individuals, institutions, and the Government of Guatemala could take to improve the education of girls.

The program methodology took individuals with varying backgrounds and perspectives and moved them through a succession of stages:

- presentation of current data on girls' education and its relationship to development,

- guided analysis of the data and the creation of statements of convictions and beliefs with respect to the relationship of the data to current conditions, and
 - development of statements of goals and policy recommendations for actions based on current development needs in Guatemala.
- *Final plenary session.* In the final plenary session, the participants reached consensus on their policy recommendations and voted to support activities that would carry these recommendations forward. It was at that time that the plenary session formed a National Commission on Girls' Education to develop a national consciousness-raising campaign and a national plan of action.
 - *Luncheon and dinner.* Participants were served lunch, presided over by the U.S. Ambassador, as well as dinner. The purpose of both was to ensure that the participants remained for the entire day's event.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

■ What are the Lessons We Learned and are Still Learning?

Over the months of experimentation with various strategies, we learned a number of lessons which we state here emphatically.

A public relations program is essential.

Personal visits are essential for maintaining and expanding interest in the subject of girls' education. We conducted and are still conducting personal visits to key interest groups and individuals. We developed a basic flip-chart program and set of materials that we provided to each group. However, most presentations need to be tailor-made and require careful preparation.

Friction between the public and private sector needs continual attention.

Never relax on the issue of public and private sector cooperation. The problem doesn't seem to want to resolve itself. One strategy is to ensure that sub-commissions of the National Commission (e.g., finances, technical issues, human resources, etc.) include representatives from both sectors. Develop agendas ahead of time for these meetings so that public sector individuals (who seem to respect appointment schedules less and to talk more than private sector representatives) do not lose their patience.

Keep USAID in the background, but keep a firm hold on the focus.

Recognize that development, sustainability, and institutionalization take years to accomplish. To do this, it is essential to keep USAID in the background and to promote host country citizens as the major actors in the program. However, strong leadership by USAID is required to keep the objectives from being diverted and diluted.

Keep the Mission informed.

Mission support is essential. To get this support, keep the Mission informed by using differing strategies. We held a half-day event for all Mission staff to bring them up to date on data and findings on population and girls' education. We also planned periodic briefings for selected offices and field trips to visit schools so that the discrepancies in girls' and boys' attendance could be observed.

Don't leave the planning and organization to the National Commission.

Several months after the event, we made the mistake of drastically reducing our support to the National Commission: in an effort not to interfere, we backed off from our leadership role. It wasn't until the National Commission requested that the conference planning committee members become more active that we renewed our involvement. We then resumed our active role, calling ourselves "observers," not members. This active support role has been essential in maintaining the momentum of activities. We realized that because we had worked on the planning for two years and had become educated on the subject and on effective promotional strategies, we had an important role to play in "training" the Commission members in their new positions as advocates for girls' education.

The Commission members must represent themselves, not their institutions.

One of the keys to the continuing success of the effort has been that the Commission members do not represent their institutions, they represent themselves. On a number of occasions, the Commission has almost come to blows on issues, when members felt it necessary to defend certain positions or philosophies of their institutions. The other members have been quick to remind those asserting this role that they had been appointed to the National Commission because of their individual influence and not because of their institutional affiliation.

Hold periodic meetings to keep the National Commission unified and focused on its ultimate objective.

Don't assume that the Commission members have the same understanding and commitment to the issues that the planning committee members have. The Commission

members need to be educated about their roles. This takes time. Succeeding stages in the implementation of a national plan of action and publicity program sometimes create tunnel vision. To prevent the members from focusing too closely on the trees rather than the forest, plan periodic meetings (in addition to the regular monthly meetings and weekly subcommission meetings) for bringing in experts, speakers, and educational programs to keep motivation high and to share new information and research findings.

■ **Where are We Now in the National Initiative?**

Although we had high expectations when we initiated this effort, we had little idea how intense the work would be or how slow the process of "policy dialogue" would be. We were naive in thinking that the conference would provide us with a large constituency that could immediately launch a national initiative. We didn't realize that to reach policy makers in each of the sectors, and to influence their decisions concerning policy and budget decisions, would require a carefully worked out strategy involving a continual series of personal visits and presentations to boards of directors of institution after institution, both public and private sector. On the other hand, we also didn't realize the degree to which these institutions would commit themselves to joining forces to improve the education of girls in Guatemala. What we have seen to date far exceeds our expectations. At this point in the effort, we are witnessing a commitment, both personal and institutional, on the part of a wide range of individuals representing the highest level institutions of the country.

The following briefly describes the Commission's current activities. Because interests and activities are changing daily and moving so quickly, interested readers should place a phone call to USAID/Guatemala for an update.

The National Commission is actively engaged in responding to the Conference mandates.

Immediately following the conference, the National Commission began to develop plans for accomplishing the conference mandates. During monthly meetings, the Commission takes executive decisions on planning efforts. The Commission appointed sub-commissions which have been charged with such activities as raising funds, creating a human resource bank, developing terms of reference for preparing the national plan of action and identifying experts for preparing the plan, and developing a national consciousness-raising campaign. Each of the sub-commissions meets during the month and presents the results of its planning efforts at the monthly meetings. A weekly meeting takes place that includes representatives from each of the sub-commissions.

The National Commission created a position paper.

One of the Commission's first activities was to develop a position statement on girls' education which included graphics displaying the relationship of girls' education to

development in Guatemala. This white paper was presented in formal meetings with the President of Guatemala and with the Minister of Education, both of whom placed their support behind the effort. The Commission's position paper has also been used as a promotional document and has been printed and distributed widely to other individuals and institutions.

The National Commission is seeking funding.

Once the Commission developed a set of budgets for all of its planned activities (e.g., development of the national emergency plan of action, implementation of a national publicity program, etc.), it engaged in a systematic fund-raising campaign. This campaign included identifying key institutions in the public and private sector that could benefit from improvements in the human resource capacity of Guatemala and that could play a leading role in improving girls' education. The Commission has spent the past several months conducting formal presentations to these groups; its message on the importance of girls' education to Guatemala's development is finding an enthusiastic response in the public and private sector.

In November of 1991, a core group of the six leading institutions in Guatemala's private sector made a joint commitment to share the responsibility for funding the development of the national plan of action and the national publicity program. In a joint session, they acknowledged the historic nature of their commitment, formally declaring themselves as pioneers in a development effort that has the potential to be a major force in Guatemala's social and economic growth.

The National Commission established a technical commission to prepare the national plan of action.

The Commission identified and conducted formal interviews with a large number of experts (e.g., leading economists, planners, anthropologists, etc.) to form the technical commission which is to develop the national plan of action on girls' education.¹⁸ This plan will establish guidelines for each sector in Guatemala, based on an analysis of the role that each sector plays in improving opportunities for girls.

In December of 1991, the technical commission of experts initiated work on the national plan of action. The national plan will include

- an assessment of the barriers and obstacles to girls' education, and

¹⁸ The scope of work is available in Spanish from USAID/Guatemala.

- profiles of projects and programs that each sector of the government and the private sector must implement to address the problems facing primary school girls in Guatemala.

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1992 promises to be a year of accelerating activity by the National Commission¹⁹. During the early months of 1992, the National Commission will present the national plan of action to the President of Guatemala for his formal approval. This event will be followed by a "national auction" in which the plans for projects and programs addressing needed interventions will be auctioned to public and private-sector institutions. Expectations are high that as a direct result of the strategies used for building a solid constituency at all levels of the government and private sector, individuals, groups, and agencies will respond to the challenge to remove the barriers and to promote the education of girls as a major development initiative.

Unlike almost every other endeavor we can think of currently underway in Guatemala, the education of girls is bringing people together who have never worked together before. Indigenous and ladino, men and women, public and private sectors: the education of girls is becoming a movement in which diverse groups can find a place and make a contribution.

¹⁹ To keep interested individuals and organizations informed about the progress of activities supported by the Girls and Women in Development (GID) Program of the Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) Project, the GID Program will be publishing a periodic bulletin that will be available from USAID/Guatemala upon request.