CDIE

Impact Evaluation

United States Agency for International Development

IMPROVING GIRLS' EDUCATION IN GUATEMALA

In this Central American nation of 11 million, 800,000 children, mostly girls, attend no school. A USAID project demonstrated that improving educational quality is the best approach to enhancing girls' participation. With Agency support, private sector actors improved scholarship programs and gave visibility to the issue of girls' education. But strategic flaws and incomplete implemenation limited the impact of USAID investments.

SUMMARY

USAID/Guatemala designed the Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) project (1989–97) to improve the quality, efficiency, and equity of primary education services in this Central American country. In 1993 a Girls Education Program (GEP) activity was added to the BEST project. The purpose was restated thus: "to institutionalize measures to improve the classroom environment, to improve efficiency in the allocation and use of resources, and to increase the equity of educational policies and practices in Guatemala." Under the BEST/GEP umbrella several new strategies were tried, most notably mobilizing the private sector to action for girls' education and testing targeted interventions to improve the education of indigenous rural girls.

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BEST faced great challenges. For one, the education system was inequitable. Under it, rural indigenous girls completed only 0.9 years of primary school compared with 4 years for ladino, or nonindigenous, girls, and only 41 percent of rural students who completed sixth grade were girls. Moreover, the number of schools was inadequate, especially in rural indigenous areas. Also inadequate was the investment in the education sector—only 1.6 percent of gross national product. And of the education budget, an estimated one quarter was spent on inefficiencies linked to high repetition and dropout rates.

Collaboration with the host government and other donors was difficult. The government did not meet some key counterpart staffing commitments, and it failed to meet a target of 3 percent of gross national product for education investment. Nor did it institutionalize and scale up successful models demonstrated by BEST and GEP. Meanwhile, the U.S. government announced a phased pullout of the education sector. It also shortened its time frame for major elements of the basic education program and reduced its level of investments as regional priorities shifted away from Central America. Loans by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank that were expected to strengthen and expand reforms and activities were delayed and poorly articulated with BEST and GEP efforts.

Nevertheless, BEST and GEP did score some successes. Two approaches—improving quality and offering scholarships—improved girls' participation. Evaluations of BEST's NEU project confirmed that the use of participatory learning methods in the classroom accompanied by motivational materials increased girls' classroom participation and their persistence in higher primary grades. The improved quality of schooling had greater effects on girls than on boys. Scholarships supported by social promoters to sensitize parents to the importance of education not only increased girls' participation but also improved boys' participation.

Scholarships are an unlikely long-term strategy to achieve universal basic education. In Guatemala they raised per student costs by 90 percent and channeled scarce resources away from investments to benefit *all* students to investments that benefit a few. But scholarships do effectively reach out-of-school girls, are highly visible, and are attractive to governments as political gestures. By contrast, the NEU program is less targeted and potentially sustainable. Although costs per NEU student per year are 58 percent higher than costs per student in standard government schools, the improved quality of NEU schooling, better student performance, and reduced repetition and dropout rates result in a 15 percent drop in total per student costs to complete the primary cycle.

Two other approaches were tested as part of a pilot project called Eduque a la Niña (Educate the Girl). Those approaches—creating parents committees supported by social promoters, and providing gender-sensitive educational materials to teachers—did not in and of themselves improve girls' participation.

USAID's efforts to engage the private sector in support of girls' education led to actions (such as a media campaign and two national seminars) that accomplished three things. They 1) gave national visibility to issues of girls' education, 2) resulted in visible private sector leadership and advocacy for girls' education, and 3) catalyzed Ministry of Education outsourcing of scholarship management. Private sector advocacy and USAID policy dialog in support of girls' education appear to have contributed to an increase in ministry policy statements pledging commitment to education of rural indigenous girls. Although the overall education sector budget failed to increase as promised, the percent dedicated to primary education al-

most doubled, and the percent dedicated to rural education more than doubled.

However, the system effects of BEST and GEP fell short of expectations. During its history, BEST evolved away from a system orientation toward activities that were not tightly integrated and did not build on strong institutional and civil society support. Some of the more ambitious system-level initiatives were not implemented (a project called Franja Curricular, for example—integrated curriculum guidelines). Some effective pilot initiatives, such as Nueva Escuela Unitaria, were not replicated and scaled up to the extent expected. Major stakeholders, such as women's and Mayan groups, were not part of the BEST/GEP implementation. The program failed to integrate and institutionalize systemwide GEP-sponsored gender-sensitive curriculum and teacher training. The private sector contributed new expertise and resources, but it did not—could not—substitute for public sector engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Guatemala, with a gross national product per capita of $1,340, is no longer classified as a low-income country. Yet the distribution of wealth is skewed, poverty is widespread, and 27 percent of Guatemalan children under 5 are malnourished, far worse than most other Latin American countries. Formal schooling coverage is low, with a primary-school gross enrollment rate of 84 percent. The educational system reflects the country's socioeconomic inequalities. Private schools catering to wealthier social classes in urban areas can be of high quality. In contrast, public schools, especially those in rural areas, tend to be ill equipped, with high dropout and repetition rates. Poorly paid and inadequately trained teachers and a high personnel turnover contribute to poor learning environments that tend to be insensitive to the students' ethnicity and gender.

In that context, USAID/Guatemala designed the Basic Education Strengthening project, to improve education for the most disadvantaged group of students, but its overall goal was the national school-age population. The Girls' Education Program was a component of BEST from 1991 to 1997. Its target audience was indigenous girls whose basic education participation and achievements lagged behind the rest of the population.

BACKGROUND

The War and the Peace Accords

Peace is slowly returning to Guatemala after several decades of civil war over social rights and better economic conditions for the majority of the country's 11 million population. During this period, 150,000 to 200,000 civilians, primarily highland Mayans, were killed or disappeared. About a million people have been displaced internally, and 150,000 have been living in refugee camps in Mexico. The consequences of conflict are visible in the large number of destitute populations, including approximately 45,000 widows and an estimated 100,000 to 250,000 orphans. One in six households is headed by a woman, and of those most live in extreme poverty.

A fragile truce in the civil war has followed the December 1996 peace accords. The accords reflect major concessions by the government, the army, and the leftist Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. This negotiated settlement is internationally binding and is being supported by the United Nations. "Unity within diversity," one of the main themes in the accords, calls for a constitutional amendment redefining Guatemala as a multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual nation. Special attention is given to the Mayan people, who speak 21 of the country's 23 indigenous languages and constitute between 50 and 60 percent of the population.

Bilingual education is a central issue, documented in the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous People, which states that the government will "promote the use of all indigenous languages in the educational system so as to enable children to read and write in their own language or in the language more commonly spoken in their community, and will promote in particular bilingual and intercultural education and such models as the Mayan schools and other indigenous educational experiences." The same agreement calls for augmenting scholarship programs and removing cultural and gender stereotypes in school textbooks.

The Problem: Girls' and Women's Low Educational Access And Attainment

Guatemala has one of the least educated populations in Latin America. Conservative estimates indicate that 43 percent of all women over 15 are illiterate, compared with 28 percent of all men. In rural areas, girls constitute 46 percent of first-grade enrollments and 41 percent of sixth-grade enrollments. In urban areas 78 percent of girls enroll in primary school; in rural areas, this percentage falls to 59 percent. Sixty-five percent of the population lives in impoverished rural areas, where domestic work, traditional gender roles, agricultural labor, and poverty are major reasons for weak demand by families for girls' education.

Educational supply lags substantially behind demand, further diminishing enrollments. Although Guatemala has many one-classroom schools, 95 percent of which are in rural areas, an estimated 800,000 children—two thirds of them girls—do not have access to primary schooling. A 1992 study estimated a deficit of 20,000 classrooms. In addition to limited coverage, the country's public education system suffers from high levels of inefficiency. Current rates of repetition and dropout absorb 23 to 25 percent of the Ministry of Education's budget.

The inadequate supply of school facilities contributes to girls' poor participation and attainment in two ways: 1) the insufficient number of schools within walking distance for many rural children creates a situation particularly discouraging to girls, given patriarchal notions about safety and protection, and 2) schools in rural areas offer only a few years of inadequate education, in most cases insufficient to develop literacy skills.

Given the compound effect of gender and ethnicity, Mayan women are much more disadvantaged than ladino, or nonindigenous, women as the former's illiteracy rate (72 percent) is almost three times as great as that of the latter (25 percent). The average number of years of schooling is 1.3 years for indigenous persons and 4.2 for nonindigenous persons. Indigenous women average 0.9 years of schooling compared with 4 years among ladino women. The extreme marginalization of Mayan women has many causes and operates through multiple institutions. The poverty of parents, linked to cultural expectations that girls should engage in domestic work, creates a constant need for the girls' contribution at home. This, in addition to the practice of early marriage, leads parents to enroll Mayan girls at older ages, not enroll them at all, or withdraw the girls early from school—usually before they have developed stable literacy skills. Once enrolled, girls often find themselves in schools that discriminate against them in curriculum content and in the different way teachers treat girls and boys in the classrooms.

The Guatemalan government has expended little effort on social problems and on improvements in the education sector, as reflected in the very low 1.6 percent of gross national product devoted to education and the low level of public resources going to social services. Taxes constitute only about 8 percent of gross domestic product—one of the world's lowest rates.

USAID AND GIRLS' EDUCATION IN GUATEMALA

From 1987 to 1994, USAID dealt with girls' education in Guatemala through a project implemented by a nongovernmental organization (NGO) called the Guatemalan Association for Sexual Education, known by its abbreviation AGES. The project provided scholarships for 600 girls a year in 33 communities as a way to further girls' education, delay childbearing, and reduce fertility. An evaluation of AGES found that girls receiving scholarships completed their elementary education in 6.9 years of schooling—more efficiently than the national average of 7.5 to 11.6 years. School completion was found to be higher among girls who received their first scholarship early—that is, at or near the beginning of primary schooling. The same evaluation found that in addition to the scholarship funds, the role of community promoters was crucial in disseminating the importance of girls' education and in motivating parents to be aware of and support their daughter's education. The experience of AGES was drawn on in choosing directions for the girls' education activities that constituted a part of BEST, the mission's next foray into basic education.

USAID authorized the Basic Education Strengthening (BEST) project in July 1989 to provide $30 million in development assistance grant funds over a period of six years. The Guatemalan government agreed to provide support equivalent to $31 million in counterpart funds for project activities. The overall goal of BEST was "to improve the productivity, quality of life, and democratic participation of the Guatemalan people," and the purpose of the project was "to improve the efficiency, coverage, and administration of basic education services in Guatemala." Its basic strategy called for a mix of activities that sought "balance [of] broad systemic improvements with specific classroom support, and institutionalization of project activities into existing organizational units."

BEST began with four components:

- Consolidating and expanding bilingual education (sociolinguistic mapping, expansion of the Ministry of Education's revision of its materials under bilingual education)
- Providing support services to classroom teachers (in-service teacher training, a teachers' magazine, supervision improvement, school materials, and social marketing)
- Research and development on alternative instructional technologies (achievement testing, a new multigrade school, radio math and Spanish, and a pilot project called Nueva Escuela Unitaria [NEU])
- Administrative strengthening of the Ministry of Education (establishing a management information system, applied research, and personnel management)

The Girls' Education Program was added as a BEST activity in 1991.

The BEST project had ambitious systemwide goals as reflected in the expected end-of-project status indicators: 1) a 25 percent improvement in academic achievement; a 32 percent reduction in repetition, from 318 to 215 per 1,000; a 22 percent increase in sixth-grade completion; a 20 percent decrease in years to produce a sixth-grade graduate; a 21 percent reduction in repetition in bilingual schools; a 30 percent increase in promotion for girls in bilingual schools; a 17 percent reduction in national dropout rate, from 82 to 68 per 1,000.

To achieve its goals, BEST counted on coordinating its activities with the World Bank's Second Education project in 1989. But the government fell into arrears on its payments to the International Monetary Fund, and the Bank

project was delayed three years. Moreover, the original BEST project design was predicated on the expectation of a 10- to 15-year USAID commitment to education in Guatemala, which would support expansion of BEST activities. By 1992, as regional political tensions eased, USAID resource allocations fell sharply for Central America. USAID/Guatemala resources (for all sectors) fell from a high of almost $175 million in 1987 to less than $50 million in 1992. In 1992 USAID/Guatemala decided to withdraw support from the education sector by 1997.

In the context of the mission's plan to withdraw from the education sector, a 1992 midterm evaluation of BEST by Creative Associates led to a substantial reassessment and redesign of BEST that was made official in August 1993. Some key features of this redesign were a 1.5-year extension in the life of the project until the end of 1996, a reduction in the USAID total project allocation from $30 million to $25.7 million, and an immediate reduction from 16 activities to 10, with a further reduction to 7 activities by the beginning of 1995.

The project goal was narrowed to read, "to improve the quality, efficiency, and equity of primary education services to Guatemala." The purpose of the project was also changed: "to institutionalize measures to improve the classroom environment, to improve efficiency in the allocation and use of resources, and to increase the equity of educational policies and practices in Guatemala." The sociolinguistic mapping, in-service distance teacher training, applied research, and personnel management components ended. Rescheduled to end by the close of 1994 were radio mathematics and Spanish, the teachers' magazine, and teacher supervision activities. Development of a high-level policy-planning, research, and analysis unit within the Ministry of Education was the only new activity. The Girls' Education Program, which had just gotten under way, was strengthened and expanded, and GEP was given a role in two of the major continuing BEST activities: bilingual education and Nueva Escuela Unitaria.

Under the revised BEST project, the ministry was required to progressively assume recurrent costs and to hire staff necessary to expand BEST programs. Institutionalization was to be further ensured by linking the redesigned BEST to the third World Bank loan and a large education loan from the Inter-American Development Bank. Both loans were expected by 1995, but neither was signed until 1997. USAID designated 1997 the bridge (and final) year to incorporate BEST in the plans of the World Bank and the ministry. Finally, the restructured BEST project gave a major role in girls' education to the private sector, which was to contribute $1.9 million to BEST activities. Of this, $1.3 million would be assigned to GEP, making the private sector a partner with the government and USAID, which were supposed to contribute $1.6 million and $2.0 million, respectively, to GEP.

Two pivotal activities were Eduque a la Niña (Educate the Girl) and Franja Curricular (new integrated curriculum guidelines). Eduque a la Niña was a three-year pilot project to evaluate the effect of three different packages on the retention and achievement of girls in primary school. Franja Curricular consisted of program and materials development for "integrating concepts, attitudes, and methods for improving girls' attendance and retention" in all primary schools throughout Guatemala. The Franja Curricular activity also called for training of Education Ministry personnel at all levels and in all regions in gender issues.

CDIE STUDY METHODS

This Impact Evaluation, conducted under the auspices of USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation, examines the assumptions, designs, and effects of USAID education programs and policies in Guatemala and develops lessons to improve future perfor-

mance. Based primarily on three weeks of fieldwork, it is part of a wider study that also includes evaluations on girls' education in Guinea, Malawi, Nepal, and Pakistan.

Data-gathering techniques included interviews, analysis of documents, and observations of schools and classrooms. Interviews using a semistructured protocol were conducted with representatives from the Ministry of Education, private institutions, nongovernmental and other organizations interested in bilingual education and in gender issues, research and academic institutions, and international donor agencies—a total of 45 persons.

Team members reviewed many reports, evaluations, and plans concerning education. The team also examined statistical data from project reports and reviewed cost data. Team members observed classrooms and interviewed parents, students, and teachers in seven schools. Data from various sources were checked for reliability and validity and carefully triangulated.

BEST/GEP SUCCESSES AND SHORTCOMINGS

BEST and GEP achieved the following: 1) Gave national visibility to the pressing issue of basic education for girls and the need for girls to attain complete primary education. 2) Promoted a strong interest in the need for girls' education among some leading businesses and other private sector groups. 3) Organized two national seminars looking at girls' education and the role of women in national development. 4) Provided technical assistance on girls' education to personnel working in several other BEST areas. 5) Conducted and evaluated a pilot project that produced substantive evidence of the impact that scholarships for girls have on girls' attendance and retention in school. 6) Created interest within the Ministry of Education in girls' education and encouraged the ministry to offer a scholarship program for girls in basic education. 7) Produced more gender-friendly classroom and teacher materials. 8) Addressed students' self-esteem by highlighting the importance of girls and by using indigenous languages.

Despite these successes, the Girls' Education Program initiatives had several shortcomings marked by 1) an inability to effect substantial systemwide change in the Ministry of Education regarding gender, 2) weak integration and institutionalization of GEP achievements regarding gender-sensitive curriculum and teacher training into the ministry's plans, 3) uneven investment and performance of the private sector in favor of girls' education, 4) insufficient efforts to include important voices of civil society in the effort to promote girls' education, particularly those of women's and Mayan groups.

FINDINGS: BEST/GEP PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Franja Curricular

In the redesign of BEST, the Franja Curricular was to integrate gender issues throughout the ministry's school curriculum and teacher training. The Franja Curricular consisted of "systemwide interventions" intended to be inherently sustainable by design and with "the potential for major impact." However, the Franja Curricular was dropped from BEST. Different actors cited different reasons for this: lack of funds to accomplish the objective; USAID/Guatemala preference for concentrating on the Eduque a la Niña component; and the reluctance of an Education Ministry unit (the System for the Improvement of Human Resources and Curricular Adaption) to work on GEP concerns. Without the Franja Curricular, BEST/GEP lost its major emphasis on institutionalization and sustainability.

Eduque a la Niña

The Eduque a la Niña study was the major component of GEP. It examined three interventions over a period of three years, each set of interventions being implemented in 12 schools. The 36 target schools and 12 matched controls were spread over six departments (provinces) that had large rural Mayan populations. Eduque interventions were 1) provision of scholarships supported by social promoters to sensitize parents to the importance of girls' education, 2) creation of parents' committees supported by promoters, 3) provision of gender-sensitive educational materials to teachers.

As of August 1997 the study found that the experiment had shown no impact.

Scholarships

Evaluations show gains for the approximately 420 girls each year who received scholarships: their rates of attendance, promotion, and completion were better than control groups and than overall national statistics. The greatest impact was on girls in grades 1 and 2. Longitudinal follow-up data, available only for 1996, corroborated these findings: only 2 percent of girls with scholarships did not return to second grade in 1996, compared with 11 percent for girls without scholarships. Evaluation results indicate that the yearly attendance of both girls and boys was higher in schools in which girls received scholarships than in the control schools. This phenomenon suggests that boys are not hurt by efforts to help girls and that, in fact, better school environments may develop for both girls and boys.

The impact of a $4.30-per-month scholarship for girls was significant in rural areas.* When remunerated jobs are available, a typical wage in the field is between $1.70 and $3.40 a day. It is not uncommon for rural parents to spend between $5 and $17 on notebooks and other school materials at the beginning of the school year. Such a modest scholarship was seen as most valuable in this context. Girls and their parents reported that in addition to purchasing school materials, they used scholarship monies to buy clothing, food, and medicines. Principals and teachers in scholarship schools reported more girls attending higher grades. One teacher stated: "We are seeing more girls in fourth grade. A few years ago, I would have seen four in my class; now I have eight. Our school has now two girls in *ciclo básico* [the first three years of secondary schooling]."

Part of the scholarship package consisted of meetings with parents and discussions about their daughters' progress in school. Parents were generally willing to participate in parent committees and pleased to receive training to better understand the need for girls' education. Mayan parents, especially mothers, saw education for their girls as important for giving the girls the possibility of "getting out of bad marriages," the ability to "plan their number of children," and the capacity to "make their own decisions." Economically, parents saw education as helping their girls get "better jobs." When parents were asked if they thought a woman's place was in the home, a common reply was: "Times have changed. Now we need more income to survive."

Influenced by USAID's Guatemalan Association for Sexual Education (AGES) project, the Ministry of Education initiated its own scholarship program with the same size scholarship to promote the education of indigenous rural girls in 1994, at the same time Eduque a la Niña was starting. The goal of the ministry pilot project was to reach 6,000 girls a year, but serious implementation problems, especially irregularities and inefficiencies in the distribution of the funds, led to only 600 girls being reached.

*The scholarships gave 25 quetzales a month for 11 months each year. (All monetary figures in the report are given in U.S. dollars, converted at the exchange rate US$1=Q5.)

Despite the problems, the ministry expanded it to a single group of 36,000 girls for three years (grades 1 to 3), to raise "a generation of educated girls." The ministry contracted with the coffee growers' private foundation, the Foundation for Rural Development (Funrural), to administer and implement the program; by 1998 some 27,000 indigenous girls had received scholarships.

There are more than 600,000 girls in primary school and 500,000 more in this age group who are not enrolled, of whom the vast majority are poor. Coverage of the scholarship program will therefore be modest in comparison with the dimensions of the problem of out-of-school girls. Although the newer program is being carried out in departments where the population is overwhelmingly Mayan, it does not specify (as the original scholarship program did) that Mayan girls—the largest educationally disadvantaged group in the country—will receive priority consideration.

Promoters

The AGES scholarship program evaluation noted that one promoter per community was important to its success. Fundazucar, a foundation established in 1990 by Guatemalan sugar cane growers, appointed one promoter in each of six departments to implement the Eduque a la Niña experimental packages. (The foundation administered the Eduque program.) For Eduque, one promoter was responsible for six schools, and these schools were spread over a whole department. The poor quality of the roads, combined with distance and six-school coverage, made regular contact with the schools difficult. Originally, USAID required that a promoter ride a motorcycle (and be Mayan), but there were not enough qualified women able to ride motorcycles and ultimately this criterion was abandoned. Logistical delays caused inconsistent coverage, and in several cases, the presence of promoters in the assigned schools was sporadic and brief.

Since promoters were also assigned the task of collecting statistics on student attendance and promotion needed to evaluate the pilot project, their role in working with parents and teachers was further constrained. Low pay led to hiring promoters who needed more training in such subjects as leadership, self-esteem, and techniques for working with mothers.

In light of the problems with the promoters, it is not surprising that the second experimental package, which relied on the leadership of promoters to help form parent committees had little effect on outcomes. Nevertheless, some promoters were effective. Project personnel reported the positive effect of a promoter in a western department. She worked diligently with children, was involved with teachers and parents, and regularly visited and planned activities with communities. But the evaluation team met with mothers in one department who complained of a promoter who had on several occasions summoned parents for meetings for which she herself failed to show up. These mothers were also upset because the promoter had told them only fathers could participate in the parents' committees. A number of mothers expressed the desire to create mothers-only committees, saying that the presence of men brings unnecessary conflict.

Educational Materials

The GEP team produced teachers' guides and sample activities to motivate girls' participation in the classroom for Eduque a la Niña instructional materials. These materials were also used as part of the technical support given to NEU and Directorate General of Bilingual Education. A teacher's guide, *In Favor of Girls*, provided a lengthy introduction to social and economic reasons for educating girls along with a set of lessons intended to promote girls' and boys' self-esteem and to communicate the importance of diversity and cooperation. Although the information and suggested activities were useful, the teacher's guide offered no

direction on how to include girls' interests, needs, and life stories in daily lessons; how to correct for gender inequities in textbooks; or how to integrate the self-esteem building and other activities with subject matter. Moreover, no grade-specific materials were produced that introduce gender in any systematic way within the primary school curriculum.

The GEP technical assistance team developed a second manual, *A World in Common*, during the final year of the project. This manual, addressed to the ministry's in-service teacher trainers, seeks to promote equal participation of girls and boys in the classroom. It provides a detailed discussion of attitudes that can be enhanced through classroom exercises and offers several exercises to foster the development of such attitudes. The manual constitutes an improvement over the earlier manual by covering process as well as content. However, the colorful and innovative materials are supplementary and not integral to the curriculum—they are add-ons that teachers can set aside.

The Eduque materials packet also included a flip chart showing how opportunities differ for women with and without education, work sheets for students to review a day in the life of a girl and a woman, four short stories, a map of famous women in the world, and a motivational poster for girls bearing the slogan "We will reach sixth grade." The material packets were distributed during teacher-training workshops and given to all Eduque project schools. An additional 10 storybooks were distributed, but our team did not see any of the books in the GEP project schools we visited. It is worth noting that even for such a small experiment with adequate sector management oversight, materials distribution and availability are a serious problem. The Impact Evaluation reported that Eduque materials were observed in fewer than half the Eduque classrooms in the evaluation during 1994. By 1996 that situation had worsened, as educational materials were missing from most classrooms, and the most common material (the flip chart) could be observed in only 36 percent of the classrooms.

The GEP materials package has not been evaluated against its purpose: more positive attitudes toward diversity and cooperation, and girls' improved self-esteem. The use and effectiveness of these materials should be tested before they are revised and reprinted.

Bilingual Education

The role of USAID in promoting bilingual education in Guatemala is widely recognized. In 1979 the Agency started the pilot program that led to the establishment in 1984 of the National Bilingual Education Program within the Ministry of Education. In 1989, the Agency's ongoing bilingual education activities were incorporated as a BEST activity. In 1995, under the leadership of the first education minister of Mayan origin, the national bilingual program was transformed into the Directorate General of Bilingual Education (DIGEBI). The upgrade from a program to a directorate general was intended to allow greater autonomy and resources, but for various reasons within the ministry, this did not happen.

The directorate general is still far from being institutionalized within the operations of the ministry. Bilingual education coverage is minimal, given the prevailing Mayan composition of the student population. It operates in only 5 percent of existing schools (800 out of 16,000 schools and 1,200 teachers out of 50,000 teachers nationwide are classified as bilingual), and 60 percent of the bilingual schools provide bilingual education only in grades 1 and 2. It is estimated that bilingual education covers only 8 percent of the Mayan children who begin primary school and only 2 percent of those in fourth grade.

Bilingual education is hotly contested. It reflects the strong conflict between indigenous and ladino people for the cultural definition of the

country. Many ladinos think that since Spanish is spoken by 7 million of the country's 10 million inhabitants, the Mayan languages must, at most, be official languages at the regional level. Those within the ministry opposing bilingual education lament USAID's emphasis on it. People in favor of it, mostly of Mayan origin, perceive that the bilingual education program thus far has emphasized language teaching and neglected intercultural approaches. They also criticize the fact that bilingual education has not moved beyond 800 schools, that even in those schools it is far from adequate, and that only 6 of the country's 111 normal schools have begun to train bilingual teachers.

Although girls' education concerns were to be integrated into the provision of bilingual education with the expansion of GEP in 1993, gender-motivational materials and teacher training reached DIGEBI teachers only in 1995. Within the directorate general are conflicts—for example, between older personnel, who generally prefer less attention to gender issues, and younger staff members. DIGEBI has made some of its textbooks and flip charts more gender-sensitive. Yet there is widespread agreement that much more needs to be done.

The peace accords empower the National Council on Mayan Education to monitor and contribute to the forthcoming educational reform to ensure that it is appropriate to the linguistic and sociocultural reality of the country. (The council is an NGO comprising 22 Mayan organizations. It addresses both Mayan and intercultural education.) Educational themes being treated by the council include intercultural sensitivity, interethnic tolerance, education for peace, and education and the environment. When asked about gender issues, a council leader indicated that they would be covered under the interethnic tolerance theme, which is to include the elimination of sexual stereotypes. Gender issues are present but not salient among the Mayan reforms in education.

Nueva Escuela Unitaria

NEU, based upon the Escuela Nueva model that has been successful in Colombia, was initiated as a pilot project through BEST. It uses flexible individual and group study and active participation to improve learning. An emphasis on gender sensitization was not part of the original NEU design, yet as NEU moved teachers away from traditional pedagogical methods and introduced the use of small groups in the classroom, the innovation permitted girls to participate more actively in the classroom and to have their experiences and knowledge recognized. NEUs also benefited from some GEP motivational materials and training related to girls' education.

NEU evaluations confirmed that the use of participatory learning methods in the classroom accompanied by motivational materials in favor of girls' education increased girls' classroom participation and their persistence in higher primary grades. Nevertheless, girls continued to lag behind boys in primary school completion by about 6 percent during the last year of the project, an outcome that argues for the need to give more special attention to girls.

NEU's goal in 1993 was to expand the coverage from 100 schools to 619, sharing the costs of this expansion with the Ministry of Education and serving as a model to institute the strategy in other regions of the country. USAID did expand the NEU program to 200 schools, but basically without the ministry's cost-sharing. UNICEF continues to support 109 experimental bilingual NEUs that it began funding in 1994. (The NEUs were not set up as bilingual schools, making them politically less attractive to the government and the ministry in areas that are bilingual.) It appears now that the NEU innovation will continue in Guatemala through the interest and investment of several groups, rather than on a grand scale with ministry support. Their innovative attributes have influenced private educational institutions. These

include schools run by the Salesian religious order (which is using NEU features in 550 schools), the coffee growers (acting likewise in 400 of their schools), the sugar growers (40 schools), and Plan Internacional, an NGO (21 schools).

Recently, more attention is being paid to the need for bilingual NEUs. DIGEBI initiated NEU–DIGEBI–Niña (NDN) schools in 1995 in an attempt to integrate NEU innovations with bilingual programs and Educate the Girl gender-sensitive materials. USAID implemented NDN on a pilot basis in 36 schools (different from Eduque schools). The ministry tried another adaptation of NEU, Active Bilingual Education (EBA), in 60 schools in one department in 1996. The EBA teaching materials have limited bilingual or Mayan-sensitive content, and are not grade specific. EBA language is sensitive to gender, but the materials do not offer special material to deal with the disadvantages of girls. NDN and EBA schools experienced implementation problems in their first year. EBAs failed to result in discernible student gains when contrasted with comparison schools.

Technical Assistance

The BEST project subcontracted a firm called Juárez & Associates to provide three locally hired experts, supplemented by short-term assistance. This GEP core team offered technical assistance on girls' education to

- Personnel from the Ministry of Education (mostly supervisors and teacher trainers) for strategies to foster girls' attendance and retention and instructional techniques to motivate girls' participation in class
- Two other BEST programs—NEU and bilingual education—for planning and integrating gender concepts
- Fundazucar for designing, implementing, administrating, and evaluating the Eduque a la Niña pilot project
- The Association for Girls' Education for fundraising and institutional development

While the technical assistance was generally seen to be of high caliber, it had limited coverage. The Eduque experiment was best served; 95 percent of the teachers in the 36 schools covered reported having received training in girls' education by 1996. Teachers in Nueva Escuela Unitaria and the Directorate General of Bilingual Education received less attention: 62 percent of the NEU teachers and no DIGEBI teachers reported receiving training in Eduque materials. NEU teachers benefited from the equivalent of eight days' training per year, while bilingual teachers were given only four hours of training per year on gender. Workshop content and effectiveness were not evaluated, but should have been, to aid in planning future workshops. For example, seminars on leadership were based on J. Edward Deming's total quality management approach, which is not specific to the Mayan context or gender emphasis of BEST/GEP.

The amended BEST project asked the Ministry of Education to hire technical assistance counterparts in 1993. But only in 1997, the final year of the project, did GEP's technical assistance team have a counterpart in the ministry (in the unit System for the Improvement of Human Resources and Curricular Adaption). Had the ministry unit in charge of curriculum development and in-service teacher training had those counterparts earlier, better technical assistance and dissemination of materials may have resulted.

Cost-Effectiveness

The serious inequities facing girls and women have led to global attention on improving their situation, especially in education. Redressing those inequities is considered to be economically efficient as well as equitable, in that the direct and indirect benefits of expanding and improving the quality of girls' education are

believed to exceed its costs. GEP's goal was to catalyze this process by developing and institutionalizing programs and policies for girls' education. BEST as a whole was an integral part of this process, as potential quality improvements, such as NEUs and bilingual education, improve girls' education as well as boys'. Further, GEP's specific attention to these and other BEST programs was intended to make them even better, especially for girls.

Little attention was given to evaluating the cost-effectiveness of BEST programs. Considerable information is available on dimensions of program effectiveness, but a cost-effectiveness analysis scheduled as part of the final impact evaluations for BEST did not take place. BEST evaluators undertook to develop the cost-effectiveness analysis themselves but completed only a partial analysis of costs.

Five specific pilot projects were costed: girls' scholarships and community promoters; promoters and community organizations; provision of gender-sensitive classroom materials; bilingual education; and the NEU. The main conclusions are as follows:

- For the girls who received scholarships, the scholarship program's costs represent an increase of about 90 percent in average annual expenditures per child in primary school.

- The materials and outreach programs were more expensive than the scholarship programs, by about 20 percent and 40 percent, respectively.

- Education in NEUs raises the expenditures per primary school child by 58 percent, and providing bilingual education raises expenditures per primary school child by only 6 percent.

Examining the design of the Eduque experiment raises many questions, including the payoff expected for the expenditure of a large amount of money on a study of 36 schools. The social science literature does not support fragmentary educational inputs and suggests, for example, that the "treatment" of providing some materials that are gender-sensitive is unlikely to result in the short term in reduced dropout and promotion rates. Materials revision was and is necessary systemwide and should be implemented, not merely studied in an experiment. Parent and community outreach is also a necessary longer-run systemwide intervention. There is little reason to test either outreach or materials against scholarships. Moreover, at the time the experiment began, the Ministry of Education had actually begun its own pilot girls' scholarship program. If institutionalization and sustainable systemwide impact had been prime motivational forces of BEST, technical assistance to the ministry scholarship program could have studied it, helped it work, and expanded it. Materials development, teacher training, and parental and community outreach could all have been worked on systemwide, through the Franja Curricular.

Nueva Escuela Unitaria schools perhaps show the strongest cost-effectiveness results; despite their high costs they decrease dropout and repetition sufficiently to reduce the cost per graduate by 15 percent. Moreover, the schools clearly have helped students, especially girls, to become more active learners, despite high costs per student. Improvements in promotion and dropout rates attributable to NEUs and to the girls' scholarship program would make those innovations look better on the basis of cost per primary school graduate.* However, there are at least two cautions regarding NEUs. One is that because a proper cost study has not been

*NEUs are actually reported to cost less—about 15 percent per graduate—than traditional schools (despite costing 58 percent more per student); the cost per graduate of scholarship programs is still higher than comparison schools by about 35 percent.

done, the costs may have been underestimated. The second is that redesigning to lower costs (which is happening as "pieces" of NEU are used in new ministry programs) may not yield the desired effectiveness.

The estimate of a 6 percent increase in expenditures to provide bilingual education is unrealistically low, in part because some costs were omitted from the analysis. The low costs may also reflect the low level of implementation of the bilingual program. Schools in bilingual areas have very small percentages of teachers who are truly bilingual, and few bilingual materials have been developed. To educate more bilingual teachers, to attract and retain them, and to develop and distribute good materials will require considerable expenditure. Actually, an early study for USAID predicted that the bilingual education program would increase per pupil spending by 56 percent.

The relatively high costs for NEUs and for all the Eduque packages were foreseen in BEST planning documents.* High costs, of course, do not necessarily mean *unreasonable* costs. At present, so little is spent on primary schooling in Guatemala that cost increases of 60 percent or more may be reasonable. Perhaps the most important educational efficiency and equity question for Guatemala is how to increase resources for basic education. USAID recognized this many years ago in the goal of 3 percent of gross domestic product for educational spending included as a BEST project covenant, and some relative improvement in the trend of public investment in education has been recorded.

Thus, from 1992 through 1996, investments increased much more rapidly than in the previous five years. Education as a percent of national budget rose from 11.2 percent to 15.8 percent; primary education as a percent of the education budget almost doubled, from 31.8 percent in 1992 to 61.3 percent in 1997; and rural education as a percent of the education budget more than doubled, from 15.9 percent in 1992 to 33.5 percent in 1996.

Nevertheless, Guatemala continues to underinvest in education, and many productive uses await increased resources. There would be many productive uses for a sharp increase in resources, including major system expansion and quality improvement programs such as those provided by BEST. The educational choices Guatemala makes now will affect its development strategies and potential, and vice versa. Under any set of choices, the country is in sore need of a vastly expanded and improved educational system.

FINDINGS: BEST/GEP POLICY INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES

Policy Dialog And Project Conditionality

Lenders have used conditionality in recent decades to force sectoral policy reforms and to ensure sustainability of project gains. For the BEST project, conditions, covenants, and other agreements between USAID and the government were substantial. They were introduced to support systemwide impact, institutionalize BEST, and sustain its reforms:†

*Planning documents reported that NEUs would be 3.5 times as expensive as traditional schools. The increase due to different girls' program packages was estimated to range from 35 percent to 218 percent.

†The first covenant and counterpart funding agreement listed were part of the original BEST project; all others were a part of the 1993 amendment to redesign the project. Of these other commitments, two were specific conditions necessary to fulfill prior to the disbursement of funds: the formation of an Education Ministry policy analysis unit and the full institutionalization of DIGEBI. All the other ministry hiring requirements were covenants to the 1993 amendment. The ministry's progressive financing of BEST was written into the loan agreement.

- In an original project covenant, the government agreed to almost double its education sector support, to 3 percent of gross domestic product.

- Originally, the government was to provide counterpart funds or equivalent in-kind contributions of $31.9 million; in the 1993 redesign the share was increased to $59.5 million.

- In the 1993 redesign the government agreed to progressively take over the recurrent costs of BEST activities, supporting 40 percent in 1994, 70 percent in 1995, and 100 percent in 1996.

The Ministry of Education also made commitments to provide two girls' education specialists in the ministry, additional staff for initiatives under the Basic Education Strengthening project (including 10 for NEUs, 45 for bilingual education, and 68 for management information systems), and four senior advisers to develop policy analysis capabilities within the ministry.

The ministry and government met none of these conditions or agreements. The two girls' education positions within the ministry were not created, and few other promised positions were realized. The ministry policy analysis unit was not formed as of 1997, and bilingual education was not much more complete or institutionalized than it was in 1993. The government did not come close to fulfilling its recurrent cost obligations; education expenditures rose from 1.4 percent of gross domestic product in 1992 to 1.7 percent in 1996, far from the agreed-on 3 percent. Perhaps most important, educational investment as a percent of gross domestic product has hardly increased.

The midterm evaluation of BEST and its 1993 redesign stressed the need for dialog about conditionality as an integral part of the institutionalization process. Midterm evaluators pointed out that the project had been poorly structured for policy dialog, since it offered a series of uncoordinated activities instead of attention to policy analysis and system reform. In the redesigned BEST, GEP was to have as its major objective the promotion of policy dialog through the work of the Association for Girls' Education and the Franja Curricular process supported by the applied research activity and the new policy analysis unit within the ministry. But the new policy analysis unit was not formed, the applied research activity was discontinued, the association barely functioned, and the Franja Curricular was not pursued.

Policy Reform

Policy reform specific to girls' education has been minimal. At one level, it has depended on the varying priorities and convictions of the people occupying leading positions within the ministry and USAID's rapport with important ministry units such as the Directorate General of Bilingual Education and the System for the Improvement of Human Resources and Curricular Adaption.

In 1993, the minister most supportive of the girls' education initiative (a woman) enacted a series of policy principles in favor of girls' education. The principles call for promoting the enrollment, retention, and achievement of girls; strengthening the national curriculum with content that promotes girls' education; sensitizing the school community, especially parents, about the need to promote girls' education; and linking with various social sectors to develop activities to promote girls' education. A set of actions are described to promote the education of girls.

But the principles appear with no identified time lines, resources, or delegation of responsibility within the ministry to enact them. Although those associated with GEP identify the

brochure as describing a government policy, it is unclear to what extent those principles are known within the ministry and have influenced work at various levels. As a result, the ministry in 1997 did revise systemwide policies for girls' education and rewrote textbooks free of gender and ethnic stereotypes.

In its education section, Guatemala's Five-Year National Plan states as a "government proposal" that government will increase the coverage of preprimary and primary schooling, emphasizing bilingual and intercultural education and girls' education in both rural and marginal urban areas to attain universal primary education (six grades) by the year 2000. Girls' education, however, does not appear among the many specific objectives of the plan. Activities the government will undertake to expand coverage of schooling include decentralization, school construction, school food programs, fostering new services, adoption of schools by the private sector, expansion and strengthening of the National Program for Self-Advancement of Education, and providing "innovative and alternative modalities to expand coverage."

However, none of the specific activities consider either girls or, in particular, indigenous girls. Nor is the provision of scholarships to facilitate girls' education mentioned. Activities for the specific objective of improving the quality of education do include the "elimination of any type of discrimination in teaching materials and methods," but that text does not directly reference gender or ethnic issues.

In November 1996 the ministry attempted a policy reform specifically to increase parental involvement in administering their schools and to augment bilingual educational programs. According to ministry officials, the teachers unions rejected that reform. They feared more work for the same pay and changes in hiring and firing procedures. As a result, the ministry dropped that initiative.

Private Sector Participation

A major—and widely publicized—component of the Girls' Education Program under the revised Basic Educational Strengthening project was involving the private sector in girls' education. This strategy is based on a belief in the comparative advantages of leading business firms to raise funds, to mobilize resources, to assist with strategic planning, to influence decision-makers in government, and to offer efficiency and transparency in management. The program's experience, however, with the Association for Girls' Education and with three private sector foundations demonstrates that these benefits are difficult to realize.

One of the most successful outcomes of the early Girls and Women activity was a well-attended national seminar on girls' education in 1991. The seminar resulted in the formation of a commission on girls' education and, with the strong input of USAID/Guatemala an action plan for girls' education in 1992. The plan consisted of a set of 37 separate projects seeking potential adopters. Several of the projects were assumed by business firms, the most important being an initiative of three experimental interventions (later called Eduque a la Niña) and a social marketing campaign in favor of girls' education.

Association for Girls' Education

The Association for Girls' Education, incorporated as a nonprofit institution in 1994, was an outcome of the national seminar. Made up of 25 representatives from the private sector, the Ministry of Education, and the Girls' Education Program, it had as its main purpose to coordinate efforts in the private sector and to engage in fund-raising to help girls' education.

The association was organized as a collection of individual members rather than institutions; however, some of those individuals joined because of its first board chairman, the wife of

Guatemala City's mayor. When she left the association, several others followed. According to the association's executive director, of the current 25 members of the association, only 10 are presently active, and only four pay their fees of $85 a month.

During its four-year existence, the Association for Girls' Education has had two presidents and three executive directors. Substantial internal disagreements have arisen over objectives, administrative procedures, bilingual education, literacy action, and the provision of technical assistance. The association has never had a regular budget for its own staff; as a consequence, many of the executive director's efforts concentrated on survival.

Fundazucar

Fundazucar, the sugar growers' foundation and a member of the Association for Girls' Education, implemented and administered the experimental projects of Eduque a la Niña. The foundation was given a one-year contract renewable if it was able to raise $100,000 in private funds. That target was not met, but each year the contract was renewed. Fundazucar also received contributions from other donors (about $840,000 in total from the Spanish and Japanese aid agencies and UNESCO) to add to USAID's support of the project (estimated at $1.5 million). By Fundazucar's own accounting, it has contributed $1.4 million. There has been no independent audit, and many are skeptical of that figure, given the small number of schools covered and the limited nature of the three interventions.*

*Notably, Fundazucar's accounting of how much it contributed to the Eduque project felicitously coincides exactly with what the 1993 USAID budget plans said Fundazucar would spend on the project.

At present there is limited interest within Fundazucar to continue its educational efforts in girls' education. Fundazucar argues that it has given the ministry "scientifically validated findings about what works and what does not," and that it is now up to the government to extend coverage to many more girls. According to Fundazucar, it served 5,000 girls, and now the government must intervene to serve the 500,000 girls estimated to be out of school. But the foundation perceives the government as not interested—and finds this regrettable.

Fundación Castillo Córdova

This group is a foundation of the beer and food producers. It undertook two projects. The largest was the nationwide social marketing campaign in favor of girls' education mentioned earlier. Billboards were put up in various parts of the country. Radio stations and television channels collaborated by providing free air time for the campaign. Castillo Córdova reportedly contributed $1.4 million to the campaign.

In addition, the foundation initially engaged in a small but successful mobilization campaign in eight communities in 1993 that sought to increase the enrollment of girls in primary schools. The campaign brought together community leaders, university students, and Ministry of Culture staff for several days of community meetings, talks, play, and contests. They succeeded in increasing families' interest in girls' education—only to discover that the schools were not able to satisfy the resulting demand. This intensive mobilization was not repeated as part of the nationwide social marketing campaign. Costs may have been a partial factor, although foundation staff said both projects did not take a substantial amount of their resources because many of those involved contributed time and other resources.

Fundación Castillo Córdova is currently involved in a program entitled *La Cocina en Mi Escuela* ("the kitchen in my school"). This pro-

gram provides girls with cooking classes and recipes using products sold by the firms supporting the foundation. Staff at Fundazucar, the Association for Girls' Education, and others observe that the emphasis on cooking for girls conveys a stereotypical message of girls as domestic workers. The foundation justifies this emphasis by saying that its programs cover more than cooking: it also offers knowledge of nutrition and health and that its nutritious products are sold at a much reduced rate.

Fundación Para el Desarrollo Rural

The Ministry of Education hired Funrural (the Foundation for Rural Development), the coffee growers' foundation, in 1996 to administer its ailing girls' scholarship program. Thus far, the foundation has shown better administrative ability than the government in getting funds to local schools: distribution of funds to parents' committees through bank transfers now appears prompt and transparent. Because the foundation represents coffee growers, whose operations are located in the highlands, it has been able to use its network of member firms in implementing its redesigned system.

Funrural receives a 7 percent commission from the ministry for administering the scholarships, but by its financial accounting, that does not cover the foundation's costs. Another 3 percent of ministry scholarship money is supposed to go to the Association for Girls' Education to do the type of community work conducted under the Guatemalan Association for Sexual Education (AGES) and Eduque a la Niña; but given the broad coverage and minimal resources, very little community work can be done, as evidenced by the lessons of AGES and GEP.

Other Private Sector Involvement

Other private sector involvement in girls' education has been modest. Shell Oil funded the training of teachers and the printing and distribution of a thousand girls' educational flip charts among rural schools. A few Americans, several Guatemalan, and one American NGO contributed to girls' scholarships. The Baha'i community donated notebooks for some scholarship recipients. Rafael Landivar University was involved in the production of the short stories for the girls' educational materials, but this was contractual, not a donation.

Donor Coordination: World Bank Loan and JICA

World Bank support for BEST and GEP was delayed significantly and caused problems in program continuity and effectiveness. Successful BEST programs were expected to be taken to scale by the government through loans from the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The 1993 redesign signaled the added importance of this approach since USAID's own work in education was being phased out. However, the loan from the World Bank was not approved until mid-1997, and the IDB loan not until late 1997.

The World Bank loan project description emphasizes decentralization and incorporates little from BEST programs. Bilingual education and girls' education are each allotted only 2 percent of project funds. Funds for girls' education will be spent for a public awareness campaign at the beginning of each academic year and for printing and distributing training and curriculum materials. The small level of support for bilingual education is also surprising given the widespread need and its prominent place in the peace accords. NEUs are merely mentioned.

The loan provides significant funding for the production of a new set of textbooks for all primary school grades. A large team of textbook writers was formed even before the loan started, but it has no Mayan representation. The textbooks are primarily intended for ladino

areas, which is surprising, since the peace accords require multicultural and bilingual education throughout the country. Textbook writers are supposed to use guidelines for gender-sensitive guidelines, but that appears unlikely. Work on textbook production was intensive as the prototypes were expected to be ready by the end of 1997 so that books could be published by 1998.*

The common agenda defines collaborative relationships between USAID and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). In Guatemala, the two agencies decided to target their common agenda on girls' education. The mission assigned the counterpart role for this effort to USAID/Washington's Proyecto Global, an arrangement that JICA has questioned because it views the USAID Global Bureau as its counterpart in organizational structure. JICA has elaborated department-level project profiles that emphasize the development of girls' motivational materials and training activities for parents and teachers, and has also organized a third national seminar on girls' education in mid-1997.

USAID's principal effort to sustain a focus in girls' education in Guatemala is Proyecto Global, funded under the Girls' and Women's Education initiative from USAID's Office of Women and Development. A major challenge for Proyecto Global will be to develop a collaborative relationship with JICA on the common agenda, since the stated goal is to "increase girls' primary school completion rates by 20 percent over the next five years."

To that end, Proyecto Global has initiated several studies to summarize, review, and analyze Guatemala's experiences in girls' education. The project will also analyze local fundraising potential and attempt to strengthen local ownership of girls' education on an annual budget of $380,000 a year over a five-year period. It will initially target capacity development across sectors, including the Ministry of Education, the private sector (mostly firms in commerce and industry), nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, and the religious sector.

At the time of the evaluation team's visit to Proyecto Global, its coordinator was initiating an examination of the role and potential of the Association for Girls' Education. Proyecto Global has the opportunity to build on USAID lessons from BEST and GEP and, hopefully, the vision to chart a new course. While the results and indicators are set globally for all countries participating in Girls' and Women's Education, Proyecto Global primarily defines its role locally to support the education of girls and women in the country.

Whether BEST and GEP outcomes will be sustained may depend in part on whether USAID/Guatemala new $10 million project continues and develops the work of BEST and whether its modus operandi is a potpourri of activities or an integrated sustained long-term effort. USAID's new strategy is to expand access and bilingual intercultural education. Proyecto Global is caught in a variety of Washington, USAID/Guatemala and Guatemalan currents that make it difficult to negotiate a straightforward path.

Sustainability

The sustainability of BEST programs and reforms was predicated on cooperation with the Ministry of Education, private sector commitments, donor coordination, and demonstrated effects of interventions. However, conditions, covenants, and agreements that might have improved sustainability were not enforced. Despite overarching goals, the project remained a loose collection of activities, reflecting a lack of emphasis on the whole. A systemwide emphasis was exchanged for small-scale pilot projects. Resources were put into the Eduque

*The gender specialist position was filled after the research for this evaluation was completed.

experiment instead of the Franja Curricular. Nueva Escuela Unitaria schools were not initially bilingual and not widely replicated in the government system. The policy analysis unit in the ministry was abandoned, and policy dialog with the government was limited, apparently owing to resistance by both parties.

BEST made a significant but incomplete contribution by promoting widespread awareness for girls' education and inducing other donors to work in the area. Unfortunately, the GEP strategy concentrated on convincing private-sector high-level decision-makers and opinion-makers of the value of girls' education but left out other social actors. Democracy in Guatemala, especially after such a long and bitter war, requires attention to participation in the affairs of policy and the allocation of public resources. No major activity or outcome of the girls' education component of BEST is clearly sustainable. Scholarships have been institutionalized but may not be sustainable. The most sustainable component appears to be bilingual education, the future of which is contingent on national and international politics. Sustainability is as much about politics as it is about developing a program that looks technically cost-effective. GEP was the only program in BEST that explicitly recognized the political dimension of convincing a nation it was short-changing girls and needed to do something about it.

Of the $26 million that BEST received, about $16 million went to the Academy for Educational Development, Juárez & Associates, and Ideas, Ltd., to run the development, research, ministry support, and technical assistance activities. The rest was divided more or less in half between the mission and the ministry for operating expenses and equipment.* According to the BEST redesign, the entire Girls' Education Program was to have spent about $2 million of BEST money. How much of this went to the Eduque experiment is difficult to calculate. Fundazucar's final financial accounting reported USAID spent $1.5 million on Eduque, a quarter of GEP resources (this does not include the very substantial evaluation costs). Moreover, Fundazucar reported that it spent $1.4 million of its own money on Eduque and received $800,000 in additional contributions from Spain and Japan. This comes to $3.7 million, which if divided by the 36 experimental schools amounts to nearly $103,000 per school.

Missing Actors

Women's groups and teachers' unions are important in the civil society of Latin America and in the education of girls, roles widely recognized in the social science literature and in international forums since 1985. Because of polarization in Guatemalan society, GEP worked almost exclusively with the government and the private commercial and foundation sector. Even though a few women's groups and NGOs were invited to the 1991 First National Conference on Girls, there was no significant subsequent involvement. The Association for Girls' Education only included individuals associated with government or large business. At least in part, reluctance of USAID to include a broad group of stakeholders in promoting girls' education was due to the polarization as the civil war was ending. This seems to have contributed to the dissociation of girls' and women's education in the BEST project. The GEP was originally called Girls and Women in Development, but operationally the program was defined to mean only girls and was subsequently renamed.

GEP's avoidance of conflict in general, and, in particular, of equity issues and women's rights in the efforts to promote girls' education, was based on the goal of building consensus and a constituency for girls' education.† Unfortu-

*The ministry received 400 motorcycles, 38 Cherokee vans, and a number of computers.

†This avoidance of equity and conflict issues permeated even the educational content of GEP's work. For example, stereotypical images might be changed, but gender discrimination would not be discussed or analyzed.

nately, a broad consensus could not be forged, given the narrow scope of civil society involvement. A number of women's groups as well as relevant NGOs and the teacher unions were in existence at the time GEP was initiated. The National Women's Office, in existence since the late 1980s, had created a joint commission with the Ministry of Education to work to eliminate sexual stereotypes in school textbooks in 1992. At the time of our evaluation visit in August 1997, many of the women's groups did not know about the ministry's initiatives in girls' education. The peace accords and reaffirmation of women's roles as citizens may be another opportunity to accelerate, expand, and sustain efforts to improve girls' education.

Boys

Evidence suggests that boys have benefited from GEP initiatives. Boys' attendance improved in schools where girls had scholarships.* Furthermore, boys benefit directly in other ways—for example, from improvements in the quality of classrooms. Increased resources in schools, communities, and homes also benefit boys. The GEP scholarship program money is purposefully directed to girls, but as one mother said, "Of course, the program benefited boys—I used the scholarship to feed my children."

The question whether it is "better" in some overall sense to put resources into quality improvement programs such as Nueva Escuela Unitaria versus programs that target girls reflects an implicit zero-sum model of programming that is not reality based. NEUs improve schooling for boys and girls; one element of improved NEU schooling is gender-appropriate instruction. The improved quality of schooling is useless without students. Since girls are the majority of eligible but absent students, it is both efficient and equitable to encourage girls' access to NEUs.

CONCLUSIONS

Synergies Unrealized

The Girls' Education Program could have accomplished more than it did. Despite the program's many good efforts, overall its achievements were modest. What prevented GEP from being more successful? It did not generate the synergy that could have resulted had it pursued systemic reform with the government and opened BEST participation to a broader spectrum of Guatemalan civil society, especially after peace came to the country.

First, GEP did not pursue systemic change. From the outset, it encountered resistance within BEST and within the ministry; gender issues were perceived as extra work, rather than as integrated improvements. Franja Curricular, the systemwide curriculum reform and teacher training strategy, was dropped. The Eduque experiment held little possibility of catalyzing or contributing to systemic change. The result of abandoning the systemwide Franja Curricular project left GEP to serve a limited audience within the BEST project, through Eduque a la Niña, NEUs, and the bilingual program.

Inability to involve major stakeholders in the girls' education initiatives was the program's other strategic flaw. As GEP began, there was recognition of the need to involve other groups and even some attempt to do so in the first national conference. But other than this, there was no serious participation of broader civil society in GEP. The civil war, still ongoing when GEP began, was a reason for political caution. It has been argued that because of the polarization on issues related to the discrimination of indigenous populations in Guatemala, girls' educational issues must be framed as a social

*All the economic, family, and social benefits that result from not discriminating against girls' education also accrue in large part to boys and men.

and economic question, not as an equity issue. Girls' education cannot be apolitical: by its nature it is about unequal access, disparate opportunities, and systemwide imbalance—that is, discrimination, sexism, oppression. Controversial participation by groups that advocate gender equity is inherent to broader civil society's participation in initiatives in girls' education.

Aid agencies must often avoid controversy, in times of civil conflict. In Guatemala, GEP's outreach to big business foundations in the private sector was innovative but relatively safe, politically. Big business proved its willingness and capacity to contribute to educating girls. But big business has a vested interest in keeping down taxation and the realignment of budget to make revenues available for education. Thus, big business was an unlikely partner for USAID if its priority was to work with the ministry toward institutionalization and fulfillment of financial agreements under BEST.

These are complex issues. Unless the government and donor are of one mind about systemic sectoral reforms, little is likely to be achieved without controversy and broad civic participation. Aid projects that opt for isolation and control end up with well-run pilot projects that yield little, if any, lasting impact. For girls' education, it would have been possible, and still is, to bring the synergies of all these groups to the same table, as has occurred in other countries. Such discussions would include but go far beyond discussions of changes in textbooks and teacher training. They would call for extensive discussion about the nature of and remedies for sexism, racism, poverty, and other issues. Stakeholders the team spoke with expressed a commitment to improving practice, and they could have found many possibilities to work together. The peace accords processes are currently bringing many diverse constituencies together. Much more can be done, and USAID has been an important catalyst in this process.

USAID's Comparative Advantage

USAID was one of the first donors to pay attention to girls' education in Guatemala and has continued to do so. The Girls' Education Program had a good base: it (and BEST overall) had a highly competent professional staff. The main weakness was at the policy level: choosing directions, opening the decision-making process to a broad array of stakeholders, and addressing institutionalization and sustainability. Despite this shortcoming, USAID/Guatemala still has a comparative advantage working in girls' education.

To use comparative advantages of reputation, resources, access, experience, and others well requires strategic policy directions. When development assistance is generous for political considerations, as was the case when BEST began, policy dialog is difficult because the parties to the dialog, the two governments, have very different goals and stakes in the negotiation. Dialog is further complicated when multiple donors with several goals each engages in uncoordinated policy dialog with the government. In the case of USAID, openness to greater diversity of stakeholders, and more transparency with stakeholders about the potential for abrupt changes in strategies and resource flows might have minimized perceptions of bad faith that apparently clouded policy dialog in Guatemala.

USAID is often criticized for its short-term project structure and consequent low sustainable returns. The decision in Guatemala to broaden the investment base in girls' education was strategic in this regard, if not wholly effective. It was a valuable lesson in the potential, utility, and limitations of the private sector investment and advocacy for achieving universal education. The Guatemala experience demonstrates also some not-infrequent outcomes of pilot project approaches that are not rooted in community participation and local

demand: limited field effects, minimal replication, and scaling up in the public system. And finally, policy coordination among donors was incomplete during BEST; in the absence of fully shared visions and goals, not surprisingly, the handoff of responsibility from one to the other (e.g., from BEST to the third World Bank loan) did not work smoothly.

LESSONS LEARNED

The two principal lessons of GEP regarding the need for broader and deeper participation and for concentrating on systemwide sustainable impacts have been discussed above. The lessons below underscore and supplement these points.

1. Target girls. USAID/Guatemala identified and worked with the most disadvantaged social group in Guatemala—indigenous girls. Wherever BEST resources were applied to girl's issues—in curriculum reform, scholarship incentives, social marketing, parental involvement—they helped change people's attitudes, awareness, and behavior. An emphasis on girls, in particular Mayan girls, is especially important to USAID/G's achieving its strategic objective of reducing poverty. We are not suggesting that the Agency initiate programs that need permanent funding but that it

- Work with the government to institutionalize effective programs
- Plan to fund such programs until they are reasonably established within the educational system or the need for them is eliminated

2. Provide scholarship support. The AGES program demonstrated that providing scholarships to Mayan girls increased rates of attendance, promotion, and completion. Positive results also were seen in the Eduque pilot project scholarship package, and international literature supports this strategy. The direct and opportunity costs of schooling continue to be a major barrier to the schooling of girls and boys in Guatemala and elsewhere. Although there are political and financial obstacles to instituting large-scale scholarship programs, a nationwide program, even if short term, directed toward the most disadvantaged girls could make a substantial contribution to closing the gender gap in primary education.

3. Bring successful projects to large scale. Too many efforts take the form of pilot projects, absorbing substantial resources that could be used more effectively by expanding well-demonstrated actions and policies to nationwide scale. Beginning a system innovation on a small scale is usually necessary, but donor-run pilot projects, especially experimental ones such as Eduque, are usually costly and so isolated and insulated that they are seldom scaled up. Pilot projects generally should be run by governments with expansion plans built into the pilot, with support from donors where appropriate. In Guatemala, support for NEU and the Ministry of Education scholarship program—despite its problems—would have made more sense than Eduque.

4. Realign expectations for contributions by the private commercial sector. The private sector can contribute to education, including girls' education, but it is unlikely to be a major sustainable source of resources or field activities. Businesses contribute to tasks integral to their activities, such as management, strategic planning, efficient administration, and school-to-work programs. For broad social issues such as girls' education, however, civil society constituencies whose immediate interests are more vested in progressive social change (e.g., women's groups) may be more enthusiastic and effective partners for influencing government investment in education.

5. Support connection of girls' and women's education. Girls' education and women's issues are integrally connected, and their separation has not been productive. It is not possible to isolate girls' education from the substance and the politics of women's concerns; with democracy, women are an increasingly strong political force and, potentially, a voice for girls' needs and interests. There are many ways of linking education for girls and women in meaningful ways, including, for example, encouraging mothers to participate more actively in their daughters' education and assisting NGOs working with women to address formal and nonformal education issues. All work done in girls' education should build in an active role for groups concerned with women's education and development.

6. Balance policy dialog and conditionalities. Monitoring and enforcing conditions and agreements by USAID might have had a positive effect on GEP and BEST. However, national and international politics, the vagaries of funding, and institutional weaknesses made policy dialog and enforcement of conditionalities fraught with difficulties. In general, questions of sovereignty and practicality make conditionality a complex issue. For example, conditions designed to support IMF-style economic reform are quite different from those that could be designed to further peace accord social reform. Conditions should be chosen that would have popular support among those who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of aid. In addition, the determination of these conditions must be developed in a process of dialog and must realistically anticipate the extent to which the contributing parties, especially the government, can and will provide the agreed resources and reforms agreed.

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