

HEP+ Guatemala: Stronger Capacity to Sustain Health

The Health and Education Policy Plus (HEP+) project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, seeks to strengthen the capacity and performance of Guatemala's health systems and its local partners so that organizations and individuals are equipped with the proper knowledge and tools to contribute to a healthier population. Capacity strengthening is not an end result, but leads to design and implementation of contextualized policy, finance, and governance solutions; institutionalizes strategies and capacities for future adaptation and sustainability; and drives equitable and effective action. HEP+ technical, organizational, and relational approaches have included in-person and online workshops, training of trainers, technical courses, community dialogue, co-creation events, and on-the-job mentorship.

Support to the Ministry of Health and Government Agencies

The Guatemalan Ministry of Public Health (MSPAS) and other governmental actors at the national, departmental, and municipal levels hold the policy and regulatory reins to improve health outcomes. HEP+ partners with these stakeholders on health program financing and sustainability, legal and policy frameworks, decentralization and management,

and the analysis and use of data. Our partnerships promote improved skills at governmental agencies to make transparent, well-informed policy decisions and efficiently implement new health initiatives. Some successes include:

- Trained 62 staff from MSPAS, the Ombudsman for Indigenous Women, and the attorney general's office on legal and institutional commitments for reproductive health rights.
- Supported civil society advocacy that led the MSPAS Reproductive Health Program to adopt a manual for the promotion of responsible fatherhood, which HEP+ then used to train the country's 29 health area directorates.
- Supported civil society advocacy, which led the Guatemalan Congress to approve a civil code outlawing underage marriage.
- Conducted five trainings for government ministries on business skills, results-based management, cybersecurity, technology, and HEP+ tools for efficient governance.
- Activated 11 HEP+ digital policy tools for government institutions.
- Trained 46 municipal representatives on an HEP+ guide to develop municipal investment plans in nutrition and food security, which led to three new nutrition and food security policies.

Capacity Development of Healthcare Institutions and Stakeholders

Decentralization of the health sector in Guatemala means that health area directorates and local healthcare institutions must be empowered and skilled to take on new responsibilities. HEP+ supports training on financial management, data collection and analysis, governance and joint accountability, leadership, and management of multisectoral initiatives. As part of this work, HEP+:

- Conducted workshops on COVID-19 spread, infection prevention and control, vaccination, diagnosis, treatment, and the use of personal protective equipment and mechanical ventilators for 4,250 healthcare professionals.
- Trained 88 El Quiché district healthcare providers on reproductive health and the national infrastructure for providing family planning services.
- Trained 51 University of San Carlos school of medicine professors on monitoring public health using indicators on demographics, policy, nutrition, and reproductive health.

Civil Society Support

HEP+ partners with civil society organizations to strengthen capacity, resulting in vibrant voices for community dialogue and policy advocacy. Now, Guatemalan civil society monitors health service quality and delivery, human rights, and culturally appropriate and age-relevant health services. They also engage stakeholders to achieve improved health policy and governance. HEP+ civil society partners include the National Alliance of Indigenous Women's Organizations for Reproductive Health (ALIANMISAR); Young Artists for Social Justice; the Men's Network for Health, Education, and Nutrition;

the Network of Indigenous Women for Human Rights; and the Sexual and Reproductive Health Watchdog (OSAR) and its youth network (OSAR Youth). HEP+ recognized 88 members of civil society for leadership in dialogue for social change and policy strengthening in reproductive health, nutrition, education, and migration. Other key results include:

- A 34 percent increase in knowledge among civil society network members on how to engage government, present proposals, and advocate for policy compliance.
- Eight civil society networks applied to register as formal nongovernmental organizations after training on financial and program management.
- Three digital platforms designed for civil society to support policy advocacy, informed decision making, and virtual capacity building. Two of these, the [1,000 Day Window](#) and the [Right to Education](#) monitoring systems, were adopted by the Human Rights Ombudsman. Civil society used the Right to Education tool to monitor 440 schools between 2016-2020.
- \$3 million allocated for the improvement of 77 healthcare facilities, advocated for by civil society.
- 18 leaders from the Men's Network and ALIANMISAR elected to the Organization for Social Inquiry and Citizen Participation and 11 named to the Nutritional Security Commission—both of which measure progress on social and nutrition indicators.
- 1,000 educators trained on a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum after successful OSAR Youth advocacy with MSPAS and the Ministry of Education.
- 70 percent of health staff in ALIANMISAR-represented departments spoke local languages after ALIANMISAR advocated for more culturally relevant services.

Health Policy Plus

1331 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20004

www.healthpolicyplus.com

policyinfo@thepalladiumgroup.com

Health Policy Plus (HP+) operates as Health and Education Policy Plus (HEP+) in Guatemala. HP+ is a seven-year cooperative agreement funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development under Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-15-00051, beginning August 28, 2015. HP+ is implemented by Palladium, in collaboration with Avenir Health, Futures Group Global Outreach, Plan International USA, Population Reference Bureau, RTI International, ThinkWell, and the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood.

This publication was produced for review by the U.S. Agency for International Development. It was prepared by HP+. The information provided in this document is not official U.S. Government information and does not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

Photo credit: Telma Suchi, HEP+.