

Alliances Impacting Social Development in Guatemala

Reducing poverty requires investing in people, especially in their basic education and health. In the early 2000s, private sector organizations began increasing their investments in education and health initiatives across Central America, particularly in Guatemala, where education and health levels were some of the worst in the region. Social development programs, resulting from substantial flows of funds from large private corporations; local private foundations; faith-based organizations; and other charitable givers, were less efficient because of lack of coordination among efforts.

In 2005, RTI International began implementing the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Strategic Alliances for Social Investment (*Alianzas*) program to develop partnerships among public, private, and nongovernmental organizations, to increase access to and improve basic education, nutrition, and health services.

By the time *Alianzas* ended in February 2010, the program had partnered with more than 200 organizations to implement 136 education and health projects in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

Funding What Works

From 2005 to 2010, in Guatemala alone, *Alianzas* raised US\$24 million and formed 103 partnerships. In one such public-private partnership, *Alianzas* participated in a campaign to eradicate measles and rubella, which vaccinated 7.3 million Guatemalans against the diseases. The national campaign utilized seven Guatemalan funding partners, three Guatemalan implementing partners, and one international funding partner to implement a mass media campaign that motivated citizens to receive the vaccination as part of a national effort to eradicate measles and rubella. Such high levels of coverage would have been far less likely with only a single organization driving the campaign.

Based on successes in Guatemala, USAID continued the *Alianzas* program, awarding RTI the second generation Multi-Sector Alliances Program to implement through September 2014. Work is ongoing in Guatemala, and



A girl in Quiché, Guatemala, is measured as part of an alliance that aims to improve food and nutritional safety at the community level, empower mothers, and provide growth monitoring for children under 5. [Photo: Alianzas project staff]

From 2005 to 2010, *Alianzas* formed partnerships to address some of Guatemala's most pressing social needs. Some of the key successes include

- Over 100,000 scholarships awarded
- Over 150,000 textbooks delivered
- 80 computer labs installed
- Nearly 7,500 teachers trained
- More than 350,000 people received reproductive health and family planning messages
- Approximately 26,000 mothers and 22,000 children participated in a maternal/child health program
- More than 5,000 health providers trained
- More than 46,000 people accessed safe water after Tropical Storm Stan

work in Nicaragua started in October 2010. The second generation of *Alianzas* builds on the original program's goals, utilizing alliances to improve education and health.

Investing in Quality Education

Alianzas supports projects that address quality, access, and equity of basic education and that keep children in school, create healthy and safe learning environments, train teachers, promote the use of assessment tools, increase learning opportunities through scholarships, and encourage life skills for at-risk youth.



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In the Millennium Schools project, *Alianzas* is bringing together the United Nations Development Programme and *Fundación Tigo* to improve access to education in 40 schools. This project aims to improve infrastructure in classrooms, bathrooms, kitchens, and recreational areas and implement environmental practices, such as waste disposal and recycling.

Alianzas is also partnering with the U.S. Peace Corps to implement the Healthy School model, which educates school communities in hygiene habits, including hand washing, latrine provision, faucet installation, school cleanliness, and other activities that allow students to learn in healthier and safer spaces.

Health Alliances Maximize Impact

In the health sector, *Alianzas* is forming partnerships to address nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS. In September 2010, *Alianzas* formed an alliance that brought the cast of the Nicaraguan soap opera, *Sexto Sentido*, to youth film festivals in three locations in Guatemala. After airing a special edition of the soap opera, the cast shared information on responsible sexuality, discrimination toward people living with HIV, and inequalities that make youth more vulnerable to HIV. Over 11,200 people—mostly teenagers—participated in the events.

As part of a continued effort to strengthen local organizations, the Reproductive Health Alliance, formed under the first phase of *Alianzas*, serves as a forum in which reproductive health partners share best practices, educational materials, and other technical advice. Through the alliance, the 11 member organizations join efforts to make their individual reproductive health and family planning programs more effective.

Unexpected Needs

In May 2010, Guatemala experienced two devastating natural disasters within 2 days. The eruption of the Pacaya Volcano spread ash and debris and forced more than 2,000 people to evacuate. Tropical Storm Agatha's floods and mudslides damaged 957 public schools and caused approximately US\$14.6 million in damages just in the health sector.



Youth in Guatemala participate in a film festival in which they interacted with the cast of a popular soap opera while learning about sexual health and HIV prevention. [Photo: Alianzas project staff]

Following the disasters, *Alianzas* and USAID gathered government and private sector representatives to coordinate actions and develop a disaster relief strategy focused on long-term preparedness in addition to immediate response. In September 2010, USAID awarded RTI additional funding in Guatemala for *Alianzas* to implement a Post-Disaster Reconstruction program component, which coordinates all disaster relief infrastructure activities.

Under this new component, *Alianzas* supports a basic infrastructure project that plans to rebuild, furnish, and equip primary health-care facilities and schools and restore access to water and sanitation systems. Long-term efforts include establishing emergency shelters, training community groups in disaster response, and leveraging funds to sustain these efforts.

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More Information

Tere Ligorria, Chief of Party
tligorria@alianzasgt.rti.org

Melissa McSwegin, RTI Project Manager
mmswegin@rti.org

Web site: www.alianzasguatemala.org

Also check USAID/*Alianzas* on Facebook for more information.

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