



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GUATEMALA

SUCCESS STORY

Policy Reform through Research

Replacing opinions with data and analysis in education reform

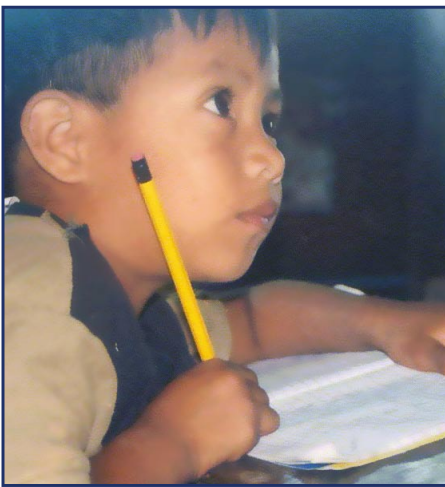


Photo: Antje Begeermann

A determining factor in first grade failure in rural areas is the lack of preschool reading and writing skills.

“Research has proven to be an essential base for us to generate understanding and informed policy dialogue,” said one education official.

Telling Our Story
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Education reform requires creative practical ideas, good intentions, and a profound understanding of the issues to identify effective strategies. It sounds easy on paper. However, in countries like Guatemala where decision-making is centralized, decisions are often based on assumptions rather than data, scant resources are wasted on trial and error, and reform is an uphill and constant challenge.

In Guatemala, USAID is a crucial source of information for education reform. USAID collects data and distributes evidence-based policy analysis to an array of leaders and government bodies. The information is then used to influence policy reform for changing an education system that ranks among the lowest in Latin America.

USAID prepares profiles of education that help the Ministry of Education establish priorities, performance indicators, and targets. The program also conducts pioneering research that identifies essential data such as the determining factors for first grade success and the effectiveness of the ministry’s decentralization effort. These data are essential to transforming the existing culture of dialogue from one based on opinion to one based on research and data. Evidence-based analysis brings understanding, encourages informed policy dialogue, and ultimately improves public and private investment in education.

USAID’s programs have developed dynamic tools to disseminate and discuss data and research findings with a wide audience, including government officials, policymakers, opinion leaders, and education communities. These tools have significantly improved the policy formulation process and introduced a new culture of evidence-based decision-making and planning.

The relevance of these USAID initiatives is so important that the ministry recently launched several campaigns using USAID program research as evidence to justify reforms in key areas of education, such as bilingual education, teacher training, standards and evaluation, girls’ education, and community participation.

The quality and equity of education in Guatemala has improved thanks to the cultural transformation that objective research and evidence-based analysis has brought to policy dialogue and reform.