LOCALIZATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND CHILD PROTECTION IN GUATEMALA

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FOREWORD

"The community, like everything, is dual: it gathers around something in common, which gives strength, while within the community, we also find pain and suffering. Nothing is perfect. May we be able to work together, respecting our differences. May we have the strength to act for the collective good without overriding individualities. May our community energies unite to face those who threaten and destroy us."

Julajuj Kawoq (Energy of the Woman – July 10, 2024).
Source: Asociación Pop No'j, Guatemala.[1]

In humanitarian situations and displacement settings, multiple risks, including heightened exposure to experiencing or witnessing violence, can deprive young children of the stable, responsive, and nurturing care they need to reach their full potential; the accumulation of these adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can have negative long–term effects on their development and well–being.[2] Quality, holistic, and integrated early childhood development (ECD) interventions, policies, and programs for these young children, their caregivers, and communities can counteract these risks and help children survive and thrive.[3] This Collaborative Insights report draws on knowledge and perspectives on how to improve ECD programs, policies, and interventions shared by Guatemalan grassroots practitioners, national social movements, and small non–governmental organizations (collectively referred to as "community–based organizations" or CBOs here); international non–governmental organizations (INGOs); donors; and the Guatemalan government.

This document is designed to assist INGOs and donors involved in child protection and ECD who are eager to learn from CBOs and more effectively align their programs with community interests and needs. It offers practical solutions proposed by Guatemalan CBOs to address three challenges identified by a range of stakeholders—including practitioners, donors, CBOs, policymakers, researchers, and academics—in addressing global child rights issues.[4] These challenges include complex and unequal funding models, inequality in knowledge production, and the compartmentalization of social issues and solutions into silos.

The core findings indicate that holistic, whole–family approaches to early childhood and child protection are crucial for addressing the complex needs of children and families in Guatemala. This approach involves integrating whole–family approaches with initiatives like livelihoods and economic development, ensuring meaningful participation of children and youth, and addressing issues such as gender and sociocultural injustices (Section I). Additionally, there is a wealth of valuable knowledge and innovative solutions at the community level that need to be documented and supported (Section II). Both national and international funding should be increased and structured to support these holistic approaches and the development and documentation of localized, culturally–tailored, and community–based solutions that value Indigenous expertise and prioritize genuine community involvement (Section III). Because of the report's emphasis on lessons learned and recommendations from CBOs, the reflections offered in this report may be especially useful for INGOs and donors interested in localization and integrating programmatic silos, including the intersection of violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC).

This report builds on the Georgetown University Collaborative on Global Children Issues' previous work on innovative responses to migrant, asylum–seeking, and refugee children and families, all of which aims to center young people with lived experience and those who have helped them navigate risks and find

protection. This work includes the Innovating Protection for Children on the Move Across the Americas forum of spring 2022[5], which brought diverse stakeholders to discuss child–focused and solutions–oriented approaches to migration between countries of origin and return, including Guatemala, the U.S.–Mexico border, and within receiving communities across the United States.[6]

Through these collaborative efforts, we hope to encourage further child–focused and community–based communication and partnerships between CBOs, INGOs, the Guatemalan government, and donors in a more equitable and inclusive manner to ensure all young Guatemalan children, including those living in humanitarian and displacement settings, can survive and thrive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In humanitarian situations and displacement settings, multiple risks, including heightened exposure to experiencing or witnessing violence, can deprive young children of the nurturing care they need. These risks threaten their ability to reach their full potential, with possible negative long–term effects on their development and well–being. Quality, holistic, and integrated ECD interventions, policies, and programs for these young children, their caregivers, and communities can counteract these risks and help children survive and thrive. In Guatemala, despite notable progress over the past decades addressing child mortality and malnutrition, young children and their caregivers face severe impacts from structural socioeconomic disparities, gender inequality, and political injustice, with intertwined consequences for child development and protection.

This Collaborative Insights report outlines suggestions proposed by CBOs to address specific challenges affecting young children and their caregivers experiencing displacement in Guatemala. This document results from an extensive desk review and in–depth interviews with community–based organizations, NGOs, and INGOs in Guatemala City, Quetzaltenango, and Huehuetenango, along with online interviews and two virtual convenings. Besides providing an overview of the context regarding ECD and CP in Guatemala, as well as a short description of available ECD programs, it outlines solutions proposed by CBOs to address complex and unequal funding models, inequality in knowledge production, and the compartmentalization of social issues and solutions into silos.

Key findings highlight why holistic, whole–family approaches to early childhood and child protection are crucial for addressing the complex needs of children and families in Guatemala. This involves integrating whole–family approaches with initiatives like livelihoods and economic development, ensuring meaningful participation, and addressing issues like gender and sociocultural injustices (Section I). Additionally, a wealth of valuable knowledge and innovative solutions at the community level need to be documented and supported (Section II). Both national and international funding should be increased and structured to support these holistic approaches and the development and documentation of localized, culturally–tailored, and community–based solutions that value Indigenous expertise and prioritize genuine community involvement (Section III).

ACRONYMS

CBO
Community-based organization

Collaborative
Collaborative on Global Children's Issues at Georgetown University

CP
Child Protection

ECD
Early Childhood Development

GBV
Gender-based violence

GFC
Global Fund for Children

INGOs
International Non-Governmental Organizations

IOM
International Organization for Migration

IRC
International Rescue Committee

LAC
Latin America and Carribean Region

NGOs
Non-governmental organization

UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF
United Nations Children's Fund

USAID
United States Agency for International Development

VAC
Violence Against Children

VAW
Violence Against Women

RESEARCH PROCESS AND CONSULTATIONS

This Collaborative Insights report is informed by knowledge and insights shared by Guatemalan CBOs that participated in interviews and convenings, as well as an extensive desk review of the state of CP and ECD for children experiencing migration and displacement in Guatemala. Between September and December 2023, 31 in–person and 11 online interviews with selected INGOs, donors, CBOs, and government agencies helped us learn what works to support ECD and child protection for displaced Guatemalan families with young children aged 0 to 6.

The community–based and small national organizations with which we consulted, located in Guatemala City, its outskirts, Quetzaltenango (Xela), and Huehuetenango, are locally led but operate nationally and maintain transnational connections. They provide integrated services and champion the rights of young children and their families, working at the intersection of displacement, Indigenous peoples' rights, CP, and ECD. Their work includes support for those displaced, at risk of displacement, or facing challenges reintegrating after being returned from the United States or Mexico. Originally, the project was intended to cover all three countries in the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). However, the actual research focused solely on Guatemala, particularly on three specific geographical areas, to ensure that the findings and recommendations were as contextualized as possible. This choice was guided by the principle that the more in–depth knowledge we have of the cultural, social, and historical factors influencing social issues, the more carefully we can consider the development of contextually relevant research, policy, advocacy, and programmatic solutions.[7]

Informed by the needs assessment findings, two online convenings involving CBOs, Guatemalan government representatives, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Global Fund for Children (GFC) were held in May and June 2024. These convenings aimed to foster an environment of open dialogue and learning about efforts to promote ECD and prevent violence against children through integrated ECD policies, programs, and interventions for displaced children and their families. In these convenings, key questions for discussion included: 1) What effective solutions have community organizations already developed to respond to the needs of young Guatemalan displaced children, their caregivers, and communities? 2) How can donors and international cooperation organizations better support community organizations?

We have obtained permission from the interviewed entities and individuals to record the interviews and public convening and to use these quotes in this report. In some cases, the identities and names of organizations have been anonymized due to their location and the potential for easy identification.

Key Definitions

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** include all types of abuse (physical, sexual, and emotional) and neglect by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role (such as a religious leader, a coach, or a teacher) during childhood (0–17 years).[8] These result in harm, potential harm, or threat of harm to a child, and they include exposure to violence in the home or community.

- **Community–based Organizations (CBOs):** In this report, these encompass grassroots, regional, and national civil society organizations, along with non–governmental child and migrant and refugee rights organizations. This term is preferred over "local" because all interviewed community–based organizations are closely linked to local and sub–national needs while also engaging in national, regional, and international funding and advocacy networks.[9]

- **Early Childhood Development (ECD)** is the process through which children develop motor, cognitive, linguistic, and socioemotional skills from conception to age 8 (age 6 for the purposes of this report).[10] In this report, ECD is also considered as an integrated, holistic, interdisciplinary approach to interventions, policies, and programs for the development and well-being of young children and their caregivers, communities, and societies.

- **Gender–based Violence (GBV)**[11] refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, harmful norms, and structural, gender–based power differentials that place women and girls at risk of physical, sexual, psychological, and socioeconomic violence.[12]

- **Localization** refers to the efforts to foster fair, more inclusive, and egalitarian relationships among international donors, INGOs, national organizations, and community–based organizations. In the absence of a universal definition,[13] this report adopts a concept of localization informed by discussions with CBOs and guided by USAID's localization approach.[14] In this report, we define localization as: 1) Adapting policies and programs to support locally–led development, tailored to the unique contexts of each country and, where applicable, each community; 2) Shifting power to community–based actors, including marginalized groups, so they influence and lead priority setting, activity design, implementation, and evaluation; 3) Directing more funding to community–based partners; and 4) Providing long–term, flexible grants to ensure the continuity and sustainability of initiatives.

- **Nurturing Care Framework for ECD** is a roadmap that outlines guiding principles, strategic actions, and ways of monitoring progress toward establishing a caring, stable, and safe environment for young children. To reach their full potential, children need the five components of nurturing care: Health services (for example, maternal, newborn and child health care and hygiene); nutrition services (for example, exclusive breastfeeding, healthy eating); protection interventions (for example, birth registration, protection from violence); responsive caregiving support (for example, coaching caregivers, mental health support); and early learning opportunities (for example, preschool, childcare provision, learning through play).[15]

- **Two–generation or Whole–Family Approaches:** ECD programs that employ two–generation approaches, also known as whole–family approaches, aim to improve children's development by also focusing on the parents' education, economic stability, and health to enhance the well–being of the whole family.[16] They offer coordinated and simultaneous services such as health and nutrition, quality child care, education for parents, and financial support for at least two generations in the same family.[17] These also tailor interventions to specific social contexts and to communities' culture, values, and traditions, engaging parents and communities in program design and delivery.[18]

- **Violence against Children:** This term refers to any deliberate threatened and actual actions against a child that is unwanted (not consented to by the child) and unnecessary (cannot be justified as essential for the child's survival) that result in or are highly likely to cause death, injury, or significant physical and psychological suffering.[19] Among young children, such acts of violence primarily manifest as child maltreatment, which includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as neglect by caregivers and other authority figures.[20]

THE STATE OF ECD AND CP IN GUATEMALA

Guatemala is the largest Central American nation, with 18 million inhabitants, and boasts rich cultural, ethnic, and geographical diversity along with abundant natural and human resources. The country has also developed a robust children's rights legal framework and a protective legal environment for children.[21] Nevertheless, young children and their caregivers face severe impacts from structural socioeconomic, political, and gender inequalities, with negative consequences for child protection and development. Only half of children aged 24 to 59 months are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well–being.[22]

The Impact of Social Inequalities on ECD and CP

Due to its location in the Dry Corridor of Central America, the country faces the impacts of climate change, including food insecurity, particularly in the Western Highlands.[23] Guatemala is also prone to tropical storms, droughts, hurricanes, and earthquakes.[24] Additionally, the country has long grappled with violent land conflict[25] (despite recent progress),[26] worsened by mega infrastructure projects, high levels of social conflict,[27] and a history of foreign interventions.[28] Political, military, and economic elites[29] have long maintained their privileges through structural racism against Guatemala's Mayan, Garífuna, Afro–descendants, and Xinca peoples,[30] as well as by undermining democratic institutions and the rule of law.[31]

In 2018 (the latest census), it was estimated that the population of children aged 0 to 6 was 2.3 million, of whom about 43.48% (one million children) lived in poverty and 34.78% (800,000) in extreme poverty.[32] In 2023, 55.1% of the total population lived in poverty, with 71% of the employed population working in the informal sector.[33] In 2014, the latest official data available, 70% of Indigenous and 42% of non–Indigenous households were living in conditions of multidimensional poverty.[34] Besides this, 40% of Indigenous households lived in extreme poverty (for example, four out of 10 households lacked sufficient income to cover even their

food costs) compared to 13% of non–Indigenous households.[35] As a result, rates of adequate child development outcomes differ by population: whereas 58% of non–Indigenous children show adequate early childhood development, only 45% of Indigenous children do.[36]

Key Figures on Early Childhood Development in Guatemala

- **Survival.** All indicators of neonatal and infant mortality have improved drastically over the past few decades, but Guatemala still has a higher under–5 mortality rate than the average for the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, with 2.21% in Guatemala versus 1.58% in the LAC region.[37]

- **Neonatal and Infant Health**. In 2017, 65.5% of women aged 15 to 49 received childbirth care from qualified health care personnel. Among these, 50% of Indigenous women were attended by qualified staff, compared to 82% of non–Indigenous women.[38] In 2021, Guatemala's neonatal mortality rate was 11 per one thousand births, higher than Central America's average of 8, and its maternal mortality rate stood at 108 per 100,000 births, surpassing the regional average of 70.7. These statistics reflect challenges in reproductive, maternal, neonatal, and child health; infectious and non–communicable diseases; and general access to health care services.[39]

- **Nutrition.** Guatemala has the highest rate of chronic malnutrition among children under five in Latin America, and it is ranked sixth globally, with 46.5% of children affected—down from 62.2% in 1987.[40] Most children with chronic malnutrition are Indigenous, have caregivers from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and live in rural areas.[41] The average length of time for exclusive breastfeeding across the country is 2.8 months; among children aged 6 to 23 months who are breastfed, 56% receive four or more food groups, and 71% of non–breastfed children in the same age range receive meals at a minimum frequency.[42]

- **Education.** In 2023, approximately 2.7 million children and adolescents, representing 41% of the population aged 0 to 18, were not enrolled in the educational system. The majority of these are pre–primary–age children. Specifically, of the 2.7 million, 1.8 million children aged 0 to 4 are missing early childhood education programs, and around 115,000 children are not enrolled in pre–primary education for ages 5 and 6.[43] Additionally, only 26% of young children receive responsive care at home, as defined by UNICEF as parents engaging in activities that support their children's motor, cognitive–language, and social–emotional development.[44]

Key Figures on VAC and GBV in Guatemala

- **Experiencing and Witnessing Violence.** The use of corporal punishment and psychological violence are common disciplinary practices. In a survey conducted at the end of 2019 across 52 communities, 88% of adults reported they know people in their community who frequently use belts, whips, sticks, or yelling as disciplinary measures.[45] Of those consulted, 22% of females and 20% of males aged 13 to 24 have experienced violence in their lifetime; 24% of males and 18% of females report having witnessed violence at home or in the community.[46]

- **Homicide.** Although Guatemala's homicide rate has decreased in the past decade, it maintains its status as one of the most violent countries in the Americas.[47] Between 2018 and 2023, 1,902 murders of children aged 0 to 17 were registered, of which 95 were children aged 0–6.[48]

- **Generalized Gender–based Violence (GBV).**[49] Among women aged 15 to 49, 22% have experienced some form of violence, either physical or sexual; 7% of women in this same age group report having experienced physical violence during pregnancy. Among girls aged 15 to 19, 8% have faced physical violence, and 12% have been subject to either sexual or physical violence.

- **Sexual Violence.** Among girls and women aged 13 to 24 who reported experiencing childhood sexual violence, 53% stated that their first incident occurred at the age of 13 or younger, and 55% among them experienced multiple incidents.[50] Notably, only 5% of adolescent girls who have suffered sexual violence have sought help from professional sources (for example, medical personnel, police, court, or social services).[51] This may also be indicative of the lack of comprehensive sexual education (CSE) and resulting social taboos related to sex, reproductive health, and gender equality.[52]

- **Early Unions and Early Marriage.** In 2023, nearly 70,000 children between the ages of 10 and 17 were married or in unions, with 79% (55,309) being girls.[53] In Guatemala, early marriage is correlated with violence against children (some girls and adolescents use early unions as a way to escape violence in their families of origin)[54] and a lack of financial independence (due to limited education, the high burden of domestic work and caregiving, and early maternity care),[55] as well as a lack of bodily autonomy and choices about family planning (stemming from systemic denial of CSE, limited access to contraceptives, and restrictions on safe abortion, even in cases of sexual assault).[56] These circumstances can harm the well–being of these girls and the upbringing of their children, as they may result in economic and social exclusion.

- **Child and Adolescent Pregnancies.** Over 62,000 girls and women aged 10 to 19 registered births in Guatemala in 2023, including 2,289 pregnancies among girls aged 10 to 14 (or six pregnancies per day).[57] Despite the significant underreporting of cases, the government of Guatemala suggests that unwanted pregnancies and early childbearing among girls aged 10 to 14 are correlated with sexual violence.[58] For example, in 2023, 62.7% of reported sexual violence cases involving school girls aged 10 to 14 resulted in pregnancy.[59] These pregnancies are also correlated with social exclusion, given that half of the births happened in five departments (Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Quiché, and San Marcos), most of which have high rates of malnutrition and poverty, and are predominantly Indigenous.[60]

GUATEMALAN CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT

In addition to the aforementioned factors, migration and displacement are driven by structural violence, organized crime,[61] the search for educational and livelihood opportunities, and family reunification, along with cultural attitudes that encourage migration as a pathway to social mobility from a young age. These factors are particularly influential in the western, predominantly Indigenous regions of the country.[62] Rural–urban migration to large Guatemalan cities and migration to the United States from underserved rural, majority Indigenous areas disrupt the family structure and identity of communities.[63] Children experience migration and displacement in different ways:

- An unknown number of children live as internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Guatemala due to violence or natural and man–made disasters.[64]

- In 2019, there were 30,329 children who "stayed behind," that is, who remained in their habitual place of residence while their primary caregiver or the household's main breadwinner—often the father—works abroad and sends remittances back home.[65]

- Children are displaced across borders in transit through Mexico toward the U.S.–Mexico border, whether traveling with their families, as part of caravans, in small groups, or separated from their previous primary caregivers. During their transit, these children may be exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation, smuggling, gender–based violence,[66] and trafficking.[67] They also face limited access to basic services such as water, food, and sanitation, as well as health care and education.[68]

- Between 2013 and 2023, a total of 121,467 Guatemalan children (both unaccompanied and accompanied by their families) were returned from either Mexico or the United States.[69] Over 55% of the children who are returned to their home communities from the United States or Mexico after having migrated are Indigenous, predominantly Mam and K'iche' children from the Western Highlands, and have experienced violence and significant racism during their journey towards the United States.[70] Upon return, children and their families typically face numerous protection and reintegration challenges, including exposure to the same forms of violence they initially fled, financial indebtedness, few livelihood opportunities, and psychosocial impacts and trauma.[71]

- An unknown number of children are trafficked within and across borders.

There is a notable lack of data and evidence on the living conditions of displaced young children both in Guatemala and in the wider Latin American region. Most existing research on displaced Guatemalan children focuses on the reasons behind their flight from their usual places of residence rather than on their experiences during transit, at their destinations, and upon return.[72] Available evidence from the LAC region more broadly indicates that young children on the move are at increased risk of challenges to their survival, and their families have limited access to childcare provision or child protection services adequately tailored to their needs.[73] More research is necessary in Guatemala to understand the effects of migration and displacement on young children's development and enhance service delivery for this population.

ECD SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Most programs visited, whether run by CBOs, national NGOs, or INGOs, offer a wide variety of ECD services through partnerships with local government service providers, other CBOs, or non–governmental organizations through referrals. All but one community–based program in focus employ a two–generation approach, integrating ECD activities—such as home visits and positive parenting lessons—with CP programs, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). They also offer programs for caregivers that focus on livelihoods, economic development, literacy, reproductive health, GBV, migration, and/or poverty alleviation. Despite significant progress and the efforts of NGOs, INGOs, and CBOs, the coverage of ECD services remains low. For example, in 2020, the estimated nationwide net coverage rate for early childhood education was only 1.1%.[74] In 2023, nearly 1.8 million children aged 0 to 4 were excluded from any early childhood education programs.[75]

Common Challenges Facing ECD Programs

- ECD programs are often scattered and sometimes disconnected from one another, with little exchange of resources or lessons learned between them.

- The crucial role of the national government in supporting ECD programs was underscored by several organizations. They stressed the need for continued advocacy to secure budget and personnel for these programs. This support is vital for the successful implementation of ECD programs at the municipal level, especially in the context of Guatemala's centralized governance model.

- Several organizations identified a significant challenge in engaging caregivers in ECD programs. They noted that in many contexts, there is a pressing need to educate caregivers and communities about the importance of early education, stimulation, and learning through play. As one organization explained: "Introducing the project to communities was challenging because they didn't understand its importance (...). Parents believe children will start learning when they start school, and communities asked us 'How are you going to give classes to babies?'"[76]

- Nearly all organizations cited the precarious socioeconomic conditions of the families benefiting from the ECD programs, particularly in rural areas, as a significant obstacle to their participation in activities. Additionally, participants in peer–support groups, home visits, and positive parenting lessons are predominantly mothers.

- Although ECD programs rely on families accessing social services in areas beyond the organizations' thematic or geographic reach, some families are unwilling or unable to do so. Barriers include limited access to resources, such as transportation, and a fear of racism and discrimination due to their Indigenous, impoverished, or illiterate status.

- Early childbearing among girls aged 10 to 14 is correlated with sexual violence. For example, in 2023, 62.7% of reported sexual violence cases involving school girls aged 10 to 14 resulted in pregnancy. These pregnancies are also correlated with social exclusion, given that half of the births happened in five departments (Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Quiché, and San Marcos), most of which have high rates of malnutrition and poverty, and are predominantly Indigenous.

Three Major ECD Program Examples

Fieldwork revealed three integrated ECD programs—Community Centers for Comprehensive Child Development (Cecodii), Changing the Way We Care, and Creciendo Contigo, along with Pastoral de la Primera Infancia—that have significant geographic reach and substantial personnel. Conversely, the 11 CBO–led programs surveyed have a limited scope and reach, serving children and families in one department, a few municipalities, or a select number of communities.[77]

Cecodii,[78] operated by the Ministry of Education (Mineduc) in cooperation with UNICEF, serve several communities in the departments of Totonicapán, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Quiché, Sololá, Alta Verapaz, Chiquimula, and Chimaltenango, benefiting families with children under the age of 4. In 2023, the Cecodii system served nearly 47,000 children, a significant increase from the 18,740 served at its inception in 2019.[79]

Catholic Relief Services' Changing the Way We Care operates in four municipalities across Huehuetenango, San Marcos, and Quetzaltenango.[80] This program collaborates with municipalities as strategic partners, fostering the creation and implementation of "parenting schools" that focus on positive parenting and preventing family separation and institutionalization. It targets families at risk of migration or those returning, providing them with essential ECD skills and knowledge and referring them to governmental or non–governmental services as needed.[81]

ChildFund's Creciendo Contigo spans 15 municipalities in Totonicapán, Sololá, San Marcos, Quiché, Alta Verapaz, and Chiquimula.[82] The program features biweekly meetings led by a volunteer "guiding mother" from the community, who speaks the local language, with caregivers (usually mothers) and their young children. These meetings, held at community–based centers, focus on child protection and responsive care.

The program includes an educational campaign with 30 radio spots promoting learning through play in Spanish, K'iche', and Mam languages.

The ECD Program of Pastoral de la Primera Infancia de la Conferencia Episcopal de Guatemala (PMH CEG) operates in 245 communities across 12 departments. It employs volunteers trained in child development using educational materials originally developed by the Catholic Church in Brazil. In 2021, the program included 15 local ECD trainers and 452 volunteers, and it benefited nearly 7,000 children, 4,375 families, and 1,000 pregnant women.[83] The Church collaborates with CBOs and local government entities to provide additional health, nutrition, food security, and birth registration services.

Examples of Integrated vs. Single Intervention Locally–led ECD Programs[84]

- **Guatemala City:** During fieldwork, we visited Asociación Puerta de Esperanza (part of Proyecto Prevenir), a nine–person organization that provides educational and social support to 400 children and their families in and around the largest municipal market and city dump in Guatemala City. This market is home to approximately 15,000 people, including 5,000 children. Most of these families have migrated from rural areas in search of livelihoods and come from various Indigenous ethnic groups. In addition to early childhood education, Puerta de Esperanza staff frequently engage with the mothers, who are generally heads of their households, through an adult literacy program and food distribution. These women work most of the day and night at the market, either by selling low–priced goods, like tortillas, or by washing other people's clothes by hand. Puerta de Esperanza encourages mothers to send their children to nursery and primary school, rather than bringing them to stay at the market, which poses several child protection risks. The organization has advocated for the neighborhood's government–led nursery to admit children whose mothers work at the market, who initially faced discrimination.

- **Rural Western Highlands of Guatemala:** In only one of the places visited, a small municipal capital in a rural area, the only program available was a parenting school for caregivers, aiming to serve nearly 25 families in each community. However, no livelihood or other early childhood education services programs were available. Only 10 to 15 caregivers, mostly mothers, participate in these activities. The program implementers identified the lack of economic development programs as an obstacle to the caregivers' participation, given the caregivers' main concerns are un– or under–employment and lack of financial resources to provide for their children. Program staff explained that parents often have doubts about how to properly protect their children, especially because they are unable to provide enough time and attention due to economic difficulties. The situation in rural areas is further aggravated by the lack of nurseries where caregivers can leave their children while they work.

SECTION I: SOCIAL JUSTICE IN WHOLE-FAMILY APPROACHES

Given the multiple challenges facing families and children, many interviewees agreed that ECD and CP programs, policies, or interventions targeting Guatemalan children and their caregivers should be holistic. Most programs visited employ a two–generation/whole–family approach and integrate early childhood programs with initiatives focused on livelihoods, economic development, and other forms of poverty alleviation. Guatemalan interviewees stressed that two–generation approaches should be grounded in gender justice and the meaningful participation of children and youth. Gender justice and youth participation approaches can help address harmful social norms, practices, and behaviors related to masculinity and gender roles (for example, machismo and rigid patriarchal systems). This strategy is particularly salient given the critical caregiving roles that youth (especially girls) and women play, as well as the strong correlation between GBV (mainly intimate partner violence) and child abuse,[85] which often co–occur within a household,[86] highlighting the need for an integrated approach to address both issues simultaneously. A staff member from Red Jesuita para Migrantes de Guatemala, which works with women and children who stayed behind,[87] explains:

> "We work with women in self–help groups in their native language (...) to support them with economic empowerment, personal empowerment, grief management, and resource administration. (...) Shortly after their partners have migrated, most women fall into depression because they have to assume new roles that they are not used to (...). They may endure control from people close to them, whether it be in–laws, or their partner who is in the United States. Some (partners) stay in the United States and decide to form a new family. Others disappear during the migration journey. Therefore, the stress on the women increases; malnutrition in children and school–related problems appear."

Many CBO interviewees mentioned the tendency of INGOs and donors to compartmentalize social issues, preferred solutions, and funding as obstacles to providing holistic, integrated services. Support from CBOs is typically integrated, serving children, families, and communities holistically and simultaneously. However, programming and funding often remain siloed by sector, with separate financial channels targeting specific groups such as children, women, migrants, or youth. For example, an organization from the Western Highlands recommended that:

> "Rather than relying heavily on whether international funds are available for our strategic areas, we could promote our own programs [to municipalities and departments] to secure funds. This way, we could (...) focus on the whole family unit, providing comprehensive care and attention to support infants, children, and adolescents, empower women, and offer job training and entrepreneurship for young people, all as part of the same program, creating a more holistic approach."

Many interviewees also concurred that in light of Guatemala's history of systemic racism against its Indigenous populations,[88] programs should engage the entire community and integrate Indigenous and local knowledge, as well as an understanding of the historical root causes of inequality, to facilitate systemic change:

> "It's important for parental education to move beyond the traditional, paternalistic approaches that have been common in this country. (...) We aim to raise legal, political, economic, and social awareness among families (...). We try to explain to the families the historical processes they have endured, which also requires us as technicians to understand all those historical processes and the political and economic aspects at the national level, to convey them to the families" (Asociación Vida Digna).[89]

Indigenous knowledge also includes the community–based interpretations of human rights violations arising from ongoing irregular migration and the events of the Guatemalan Genocide (1960 – 1996)[90], due to the role that inter–generational, cultural, social, and historical traumas may play in the caregivers' ability to care for their children:[91]

> "There are many Indigenous populations who think everything that happened during the conflict was their fault. In some communities we have worked in (...), there are many mental health repercussions and a lot of pain emerging from the armed conflict. (...). So we try to address these mental health issues through 'psycho–political education.' We talk about what happened to better understand the impact that Guatemala's history has had psychologically, emotionally, and socially, and provide tools to channel those emotions, such as through boxing" (Jovenes por el Cambio [JxC]).[92]

Several organizations also emphasized the significance of peer–support groups, awareness–raising, and community organizing, particularly in addressing socioeconomic, and political issues, and human rights violations that impact all community members:

> "Sometimes returned families end up in a lot of debt and emotional distress (...), and they believe they are the only ones going through this. We have peer support groups so that families realize they are not the only ones going through this situation and to help eliminate the stigma associated with being a returned migrant. We invite the whole family: siblings, children, as well as parents or caring for the children." (Pop No'j – Colotenango Office).

SECTION II: KNOWLEDGE CREATION

Nearly all organizations interviewed mentioned the need to democratize knowledge production processes in three ways: prioritizing more equitable and participatory research and evaluation practices; valuing Indigenous knowledge and community–based practices; and creating opportunities to influence national and international policy debates.

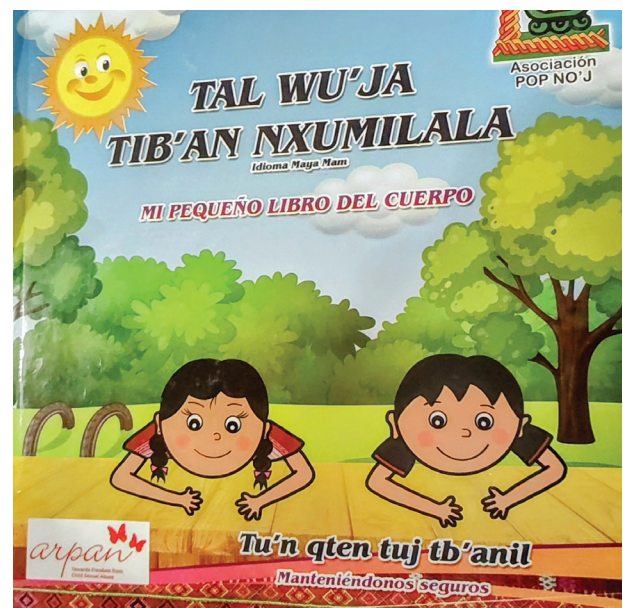## Equitable and Participatory Research and Evaluation Processes

Many organizations seek technical cooperation on various ECD and CP approaches, along with organizational support to ensure long–term, community–based initiatives are sustainable. However, it was noted that international capacity–building and technical cooperation in Guatemala typically operate in a one–directional flow from North to South:

> "The idea that the North is the builder persists when we observe that Latin America has made significant contributions to the world. However, the North does not look to the South as an equal; it often looks down upon it. (...) We are not talking about extractivism because what we have seen and concerns us is that sometimes methodologies we have struggled to develop have been taken, then rebranded, and are no longer recognized as ours. For instance, popular education was invented here in Latin America, but now it comes under a different name, and it turns out that it is no longer ours; it is part of another framework developed by someone else" (COINCIDIR, Guatemala).[93]

Booklet on sexual and reproductive health education for children created by Asociación Pop No'j (Guatemala) and Arpan (India).

CBOs emphasized the need for direct, unrestricted, and flexible funding to promote greater equality in knowledge production. This funding would enable them to systematize and publish their proven methodologies, thereby enhancing programs and supporting fundraising and communications efforts. Additionally, they require financial resources to develop and test curricula and didactic materials focused on ECD for young caregivers and others that educate young children about their human rights from an early age, including in Indigenous languages. For example, the organization Asociación Pop No'j has developed, printed, and used educational brochures in Spanish, Mam, and Popti' languages in its programs on child protection, girls' and women's rights, and migration in Indigenous communities. These brochures cover topics such as Mayan cosmovision, women's rights, migrants' rights, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, sexual and reproductive health education for children and young people, healthy masculinities, and more.[94]

Although funding for research and evaluations is important, it is not sufficient. INGOs and other donors must also recognize and legitimize the authority of these organizations to create knowledge, as well as properly credit them for their contributions. As the director of a community–based organization in the Western Highlands explains:

> "There are many good lessons and institutional practices that we could turn into a model to advise other organizations, (...), but the donor takes all the credit. We have many materials

we developed institutionally here, but the donor liked them and said: 'You know what? We're going to put some money into publishing it in a better way.' Then it comes out as a donor's material. In the best case, it says 'with the support of x organization.' And we say: 'It's not a donor's material, it's our material, with the support of the donor.' But the roles are reversed."

Valuing Local Knowledge and Community-based Practices

Most interviewees agreed that preexisting local knowledge and methods, including Indigenous worldviews such as the concept of "el Buen Vivir,"[95] should inform project design, implementation, and evaluation, rather than prescriptive international agendas applied uniformly across different sociocultural contexts. Organizations emphasized, in particular, that evaluations and needs assessments should be locally driven so that solutions genuinely meet the needs of young children and their families within their specific contexts.

> "The approach from the communities, including Indigenous communities, and the approach from an ancestral perspective, from the Mayan worldview, has been very important for us. It has also enabled us to get involved in the communities (...) Creating community gardens has been very important from the Mayan worldview—the knowledge of taking care of the earth, the animals, the plants, and life" (JxC [Jovenes por el Cambio]).

Several interviewees agreed that CBOs possess a deeper understanding of local realities and are well–connected to the cultural and linguistic populations with which they work, so their knowledge and solutions should inform international aid agencies' decision–making processes.

> "Forced migration due to the lack of food and livelihoods prevents people from being able to educate their children or recognize their cultural strength. [In Huehuetenango], there is also a lot of richness in community life. (...) Almost everyone who comes from abroad focuses on what is lacking. People are seen as inferior, poor, and lacking, instead of validating the essence, richness, and knowledge of the people. There is much to learn from them" (Asociación Vida Digna).

This principle also applies to the monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) practices used by INGOS. Direct funding or technical support is needed for organizations to draw from their experiences to produce intervention methodologies, such as how-to guides of their own monitoring and impact evaluation methods to measure a particular ECD and/or CP intervention's success. As one organization director puts it:

> "We don't want a [monitoring and evaluation] model that just feeds what the donors ask for, but rather (...) one that allows us to determine if our organization is impacting people's lives in our strategic areas. For example, we know that early pregnancies have decreased in the populations we work with compared to the national rate; the grade repetition rate for the first school grade of the 6–year–old children who previously participated in our ECD program is also lower than the national rate (...). But we need to create a formal document with the evidence to confidently say we're living up to our goals."

For its part, PAMI (Programa de Atención, Movilización e Incidencia por la Niñez y Adolescencia) explains that:

> "We are interested in (…) practical knowledge that helps us develop our actions on the ground, beyond early childhood development theory. What interests us is transferring what we learn more effectively to the people with whom we are in contact. These are often illiterate people, people who speak Spanish partially, or people who have not fully developed their intellectual capabilities due to various obstacles they have faced. For our needs assessments, we have developed a very practical methodology with simple variables, indicators, categories, and reporting. That is the type of knowledge that is useful to us."

Opportunities for National and International Advocacy

CBOs leading advocacy for systemic change need strategic technical cooperation and political support to participate in regional and international advocacy mechanisms, such as the UN Universal Periodic Review and the CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child) periodic reporting mechanism, as a way to influence Guatemalan and regional decision–makers.

> "Many of our cooperation needs are not technical but political. As part of civil society networks, we constantly produce shadow or alternative reports submitted to various human rights mechanisms (…). So, for us, establishing relationships with large or small organizations and universities from other countries is very helpful. (…) We are under high levels of repression, and we are overwhelmed by it. (…) Cooperation might not be monetary but could involve establishing a work alliance, an exchange of strategies" (PAMI).

Some organizations highlighted the importance of supporting existing local and national advocacy and peer support networks that involve CBOs, instead of establishing new ones tied to specific funding cycles or projects:

> "Every INGO wants to create its own network, (…) people sometimes participate in these networks, but they aren't really convinced. (…) It would be interesting to map how many networks promoted by donors persist after the funding is withdrawn. We do believe that cooperation can support the formation of networks, (…) but not just impose them because their work plan demands it as a result" (Community–based organization working nationally).

SECTION III: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND FUNDING

The Need for Increased Funding and Disaggregated Data

Guatemala urgently needs to strengthen evidence and data collection systems to accurately assess ECD needs across diverse regions where significant shortcomings exist. Reporting systems should also be established to track the allocation of international donor funds to support young children accurately.[96] This gap mirrors a global trend, as there currently is no established methodology for tracking and reporting on donor commitments and funding directed at early childhood interventions in humanitarian action.[97] Additionally, the overlapping emergencies and humanitarian situations affecting Guatemalans have garnered less international attention compared to Guatemalans arriving at the U.S.–Mexico border. Guatemala was listed among CARE's "10 Most Under–Reported Humanitarian Crises of 2021"[98] and has also been a recipient of the Underfunded Emergency Allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), a pooled fund designed to mitigate the impact of underfunding in contexts affected by humanitarian crises.[99] Despite an increase in the absolute funding and coverage of Guatemala's Humanitarian Response Plans—which outline prioritized needs, activities, and funding requirements—between 2023 and 2024, humanitarian action remains chronically and severely underfunded in Guatemala. These funding limitations apply to efforts in the protection and nutrition sectors, where from 2005 to 2024, funding has consistently fallen short of requirements, with the percentage of funding relative to requirements varying between approximately 20% and 50% each year.[100] At the same time, humanitarian needs are escalating: In 2024, an estimated 5.3 million people need humanitarian aid in Guatemala, an increase of

300,000 people from 2023. These numbers include 2.9 million individuals in need of child protection and responses to GBV, although only 810,000 are currently receiving these services.[101]

Development and Humanitarian Funding for ECD Worldwide

The international community must increase development and humanitarian funding for displaced young children worldwide. In 2020, the Moving Minds Alliance reported these trends in funding for ECD in emergencies in crisis–affected countries worldwide:[102]

- Only 3.3% of total development assistance and 2% of humanitarian funding were allocated to quality services for pregnant women, newborns, and young children.

- Education and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) services for children under five years received merely 1% and 2% of all humanitarian funding, respectively. Data on funding for child protection and responsive caregiving interventions remained unreported.

- Coordination of funds across humanitarian clusters to address the needs of children under five years was limited; only 19% of ECD funds were reported as "multi–sector," involving at least one ECD–related sector such as health, nutrition, or education.

- Funding sources came predominantly from a few bilateral and multilateral donors. In 2018, three bilateral donors—Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom—and the EU accounted for 75% of all humanitarian ECD funding. UNICEF contributed 5% of the total. In terms of development funding, the World Bank was a leading contributor, providing 11% of all development funding for ECD in 2017.

Localization of Funding

To better support community–based and locally–led ECD and CP programs, it is crucial to advocate for further localization of international bilateral and multilateral donors' funding. The U.S. government, primarily through USAID, stands as one of the country's foremost funders of development aid.[103] Thus, acknowledging both the past achievements and the ongoing challenges of USAID's localization strategy is essential.[104]

In this report, localizing funding models is defined as increasing the proportion of funds directly allocated to community–based organizations, local nonprofits, small national civil society organizations, and grassroots entities directly engaged in ECD and CP. This approach aims to bypass intermediary agencies or companies, thereby enhancing the contextual relevance, continuity, and sustainability of community–based programs.[105]

Guatemala is the fourth–largest recipient of USAID funds in the LAC region, with $1.44 billion in aid disbursed from 2013 to 2023.[106] The primary recipients of these funds have been INGOs such as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children Federation, Project Concern International, and Mercy Corps; private companies, including Chemonics, Futures Group (Palladium), Creative Associates International, and RTI International; and UN agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).[107] Throughout the same period (2013 to 2023), the sectors of "Maternal and Child Health, Family

Planning," "Basic Health," and "Basic Education" consistently ranked among the top 10 sectors.[108] In fiscal year (FY) 2022, only three INGOs—Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children, and World Vision—received about 24% of the total funding disbursed by USAID in Guatemala, amounting to approximately $47.5 million.[109] Priority populations for USAID in Guatemala are Indigenous peoples, women, and youth.[110] USAID prioritizes Indigenous peoples and youth because they are more prone to migrating: Most returned individuals from the United States identify as Indigenous and come from the Western Highlands, and efforts to socially integrate youth aim to prevent them from migrating internationally.[111]

Significant progress in U.S.–Northern Triangle cooperation for development has been made since July 2021, with the Biden–Harris administration's U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America[112] aiming to address migration's underlying issues[113] by focusing on job creation,[114] economic investment, rule of law, and human rights.[115] In fiscal year (FY) 2022, USAID reported that its interventions aimed at combating malnutrition and improving child survival in Honduras and Guatemala benefited approximately 175,000 children under the age of 5. Additionally, through USAID programs, more than 30,000 survivors of gender–based violence received essential services.[116]

In November 2021, USAID Administrator Samantha Power announced the Centroamérica Local initiative at Georgetown University.[117] This $300 million, five–year initiative aims to support local organizations,[118] especially those led by Indigenous groups and women.[119] In her address, Administrator Power urged the amplification of local voices often left out of the conversation: "Local voices need to be at the center of everything we do… We've got to tap into the knowledge of local communities, and their lived–experiences. Otherwise, we risk reinforcing the systemic inequities already in place."[120] From 2021 to 2023, USAID allocated over $140 million to nearly 30 local entities in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Additionally, in September 2023, USAID Guatemala launched a localization Annual Program Statement (APS) in Spanish to fund local organizations previously outside its usual funding scope.[121] As Nikki Enersen, Foreign Service Officer at USAID, explains:

> "By 2023, we are proud to say that the majority of USAID programs in Central America have been co–created with local partners and communities. By working together to incorporate local knowledge and perspectives into the design, planning, and implementation of activities, USAID programs are more inclusive and better aligned with local priorities, with less risk of duplicating efforts."

Despite these achievements, overall progress in localizing funding in Guatemala has been modest. Direct local funding has remained steady from 2021 to 2023, with percentages at 18.3% in FY2021, 23.9% in FY2022, and 19.4% in FY2023.[122] Meanwhile, direct regional funding for Guatemala—allocated directly to USAID's country partners working in one or more countries in the Global South—has remained at very low levels, with 0.0% in FY2021, 1.1% in FY2022, and 0.4% in FY2023.[123] Additionally, USAID's broad definition of "local" and the methodology used to measure progress towards localization has been criticized because it excludes funds directed to multilateral and global programs and UN agencies from the denominator, resulting in inflated localization figures.[124]

In Guatemala, all community–based and small national organizations interviewed reported feeling chronically overwhelmed, understaffed, and/or underfunded. Interviews suggested that to support
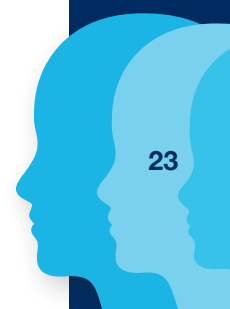
systemic and sustainable changes, donors should increase unrestricted funding for non–project expenses (also known as indirect or overhead costs), including compensation and transportation. Additionally, offering flexible, multiyear grants is critical. Flexible funding, in particular, is vital for organizations to address their community's priorities and implement long–term solutions based on their own approaches. As Corey Oser, vice president for programs at Global Fund for Children, explains,

> "Flexible funding, particularly multiyear investment, is really key since it offers the opportunity for a more holistic investment over the longer term. Also additional support to help organizations strengthen their work in their own terms and space to connect with other organizations to share learning around methodologies and approaches that can also enable more collective strategies."

Organizations also stated that application and reporting requirements should be based on a trusting relationship between the donor and partner organizations, and these requirements should not impose a burden on these organizations by being time–consuming and labor–intensive.

> "Being a partner is not the same as being a donor, (…) when you become a partner, they trust you, they trust your work, they trust that you will act transparently. What I see is that donors sometimes have such complicated forms that only people specialized in project development can understand them. (…) It's like an elite way to manage projects, when we all know that projects ultimately always involve the most basic planning questions: What do you want to do? Why do you want to do it? What is it for? How will you measure it?" (COINCIDIR)

Community–based and grassroots organizations emphasized the need for increased direct funding through long–term, flexible grants to ensure the continuity and sustainability of their programs. In this context, pooled funds and collaborative donor efforts can be seen as effective strategies for establishing such funding frameworks. For example, the GFC's RECARGA Program is a funder collaborative effort that supports a cohort of 12 civil society organizations in Guatemala and Honduras to achieve a collective impact for post–pandemic educational recovery.[125] As Marta Xicay, a GFC program coordinator, explains:

> "It is important that we use flexible funding models because, at the end of the day, it reflects our trust in local leadership. (…) This approach is rooted in trust–based philanthropy practices. We do not fully understand the context and complexity of the community challenges, but local leaders know their communities better. If funders want to strengthen local leadership and communities, they should ask what is needed and support their agenda instead of just fulfilling the funders' agenda."
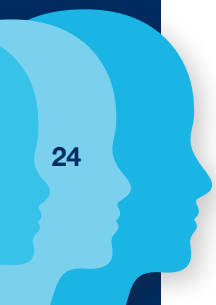
For this, GFC and partner donors provide them with flexible annual funding, including for institutional strengthening, and offer emergency grants as needed.

Considering the legal difficulties and political challenges associated with registering civil society organizations in Guatemala, it is also vital for donors to support informal groups and grassroots organizations. These groups often struggle to obtain traditional international cooperation funding. As one grassroots organization noted:

> "Working with various flexible donors has been key, (…) but not having legal incorporation greatly limits our ability to acquire other funds and to be present in other spaces. Here in Guatemala, it has been very challenging for us to incorporate JxC and obtain this legal status due to political changes (…). Also, being located about seven hours from the capital greatly limits our ability to complete these legal procedures. Sometimes, this is what some funders fail to understand" (JXC [Jóvenes por el Cambio]).

Many of the ECD and CP–focused CBOs interviewed for this research echoed recommendations previously made by organizations globally consulted by USAID. When consulted, local organizations worldwide have recommended that USAID simplify its complex application, administrative, and reporting processes, accept reporting in local languages, reduce strict compliance demands, and reduce competition with international agencies, which often restrict opportunities for local organizations to compete for funding.[126] Several CBOs interviewed in Guatemala were pleased that USAID had recently opened calls for bids targeting local organizations, as these funds would normally support larger national NGOs. They also preferred smaller, more flexible funds over larger, inflexible funds that are difficult to apply for and report on. As one Guatemalan CBO explains: "Flexible funding sources may not be as large, but they're appealing to us because we can achieve much more in our strategic areas. In contrast, funds from, for instance, a European Commission–funded project come with too many limitations on how we can use them."
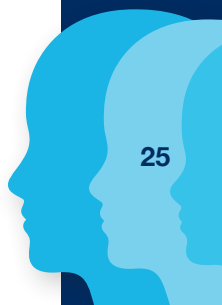
NEXT STEPS

This report calls for a transformation in funding and operational strategies to ensure that community–based organizations and their expertise lead sustainable change within their communities. It suggests a model where funding and project design are more responsive to the nuanced needs of communities, fostering contextually–relevant and sustainable solutions to ECD and CP issues affecting displaced children and their families. To accomplish this, we hope this Collaborative Insights report inspires universities, INGOs, and donors to conduct similar analyses in other countries and to foster an environment of open dialogue and continuous learning within their structures and with their community–based and national partners.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- See further resources on the website https://globalchildren.georgetown.edu/essays/resources-for-localization-for-early-childhood-development-and-child-protection-in-guatemala. These resources are meant to help readers learn more about approaches to early childhood development, protection, and localization in the context of forced migration, including in Guatemala.

- Georgetown University Collaborative on Global Children's Issues. "Localization for Early Childhood Development and Child Protection in Guatemala Webinar." Last modified June 13, 2024. https://globalchildren.georgetown.edu/events/localization-for-early-childhood-development-and-child-protection-in-guatemala.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mara Tissera Luna is an international consultant focusing on forced displacement and protection in Latin America and the Caribbean and the program manager of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Promoting Early Childhood Development for Young Children on the Move in Northern Central America.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Promoting Early Childhood Development for Young Children on the Move in Northern Central America is an effort to learn from innovative community–based responses to address the early childhood development and protection needs of children aged 0 to 6 experiencing displacement and migration in Guatemala. This program is part of the Collaborative on Global Children's Issues' focus on children on the move.

The Breakthrough Series Collaborative is funded by the Bainum Family Foundation's Global Education Fund (GEF), which seeks to increase equity in access to quality early care and education for young children worldwide by supporting and learning from local community–led projects serving children and families. The goal is to share knowledge and innovation through co–creation.

ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE

The Collaborative on Global Children's Issues fosters cross–disciplinary research and dialogue on critical and emerging global children's issues, with a particular focus on children in adversity and pathways to resilience. It brings together practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders to reflect on and find solutions to pressing questions related to global children's issues, including child protection and early childhood development for children on the move in the Americas. The collaborative is:

- Committed to creating opportunities that are child–centered;

- Grounded in the lived experiences of children, their families, and communities;

- Responsive to current and emerging needs and useful to actors working in a variety of contexts and capacities to meet them;

- Evidence–informed and solutions–oriented; and

- Committed to building effective bridges between stakeholders involved in practice, policy, and research.

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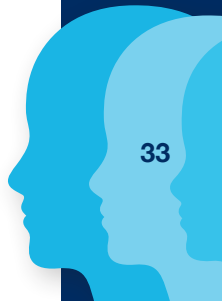
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95. As an example, Asociación Pop No'j's objective is to support processes of organization, training, empowerment, and participation of the Mayan peoples for the construction of *"Buen Vivir"* in Guatemala. *"Buen Vivir"* is a collective effort to achieve dignified and fair living conditions for everyone and to sustain the natural environment. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. "Descolonizando la Cultura y Experimentando la Plenitud de la Vida." Last modified December 17, 2021. Accessed July 24, 2024. https://www.culturalsurvival.org/es/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/descolonizando-la-cultura-y-experimentando-la-plenitud-de.

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122. All figures are based on fiscal year (FY) data. Source: USAID. "Committed to Change: USAID Localization Progress Report FY 2023." 2024. Accessed July 2024. P. 45. https://www.usaid.gov/localization/progressreport/full-report-fy2023#:~:text=Both%20the%20number%20of%20new,local%20partners%20in%20FY%202023.

123. See the complete definitions of these two indicators (Direct Local Funding and Direct Regional Funding) in: USAID. "Key Performance Indicators: Direct Acquisition & Assistance Funding for Localization." April 2023. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/Key-Performance-Indicators-Direct-AA-Funding-Localization.pdf.

124. See also: Adomako, Margaret, and Marc Cohen. 2023. *Funding the Localization Agenda*. Oxfam, November 30. https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/research-publications/funding-the-localization-agenda/. This report suggests adopting an alternative definition and methodology to more accurately measure progress (pages 17-23).

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