

# Guatemala

## DreamCatcher programme

### Objective:

The purpose is to empower marginalized adolescent girls and young women (in indigenous and rural areas) to become social entrepreneurs and innovators.

### Duration:

August 2020 to December 2022

### Donor:

Pandora

### Target audiences:

15 to 19-year-old adolescents from the rural mountainous area of the country

### Current scope:

1,494 adolescent girls directly and 4,482 indirectly; 2,521 teachers, tutors, fathers and mothers directly and 3,481 indirectly.

### Focuses on the following skills:

Secondary education through a flexible and innovative methodology (includes ICT and life skills)

### Collaborators:

Ministry of Education, Non-formal Education Centres (CEEX), Community Development Councils (COCODES)

### Financing:

USD 664,200

### Focal point:

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## Guatemala's reality entails a great challenge for girls and adolescents

In Guatemala, approximately half of the population is under the age of 19, which means that the country has one of the youngest populations in the Americas. However, about 2.1 million youth between the ages of 13 and 24 are not enrolled in the education system. The main reasons mentioned by young people for not attending school include their economic situation (25%), early marriage (7%), and pregnancy (1%). Due to school absenteeism, youths are more prone to participate in illegal activities, migrate to other countries and become involved in violence linked to criminal organizations.



Cultural, social, and gender norms in Guatemala negatively affect the opportunities of girls and adolescents, since their families assign them domestic chores and the responsibility of caring for their siblings and the elderly at home.

Those who continue their studies face other barriers, such as the lack or remoteness of secondary schools in rural areas and the lack of flexible education modalities that they can combine with their assigned responsibilities. All the above, added to gender-based violence, on the way to school and in their immediate surroundings means that more than two thirds of Guatemalan adolescents do not complete secondary education and less than 5% achieve the basic skills they need to prosper in their communities, and to access university and the labour market.



## Our actions to provide solutions

DreamCatcher is an initiative that was set up in 2020, targeted to adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 (girls and boys at school and out of school) who live in the mountainous region of the country (in Huehuetenango, Quiché, Totonicapán), whose families depend on agriculture for their livelihood and where employment opportunities are especially limited.

The programme is targeted to prioritized departments that experience high rates of violence and is the area of the country with the highest number of unaccompanied migrant girls, boys and adolescents, with the lowest rates of permanence in education. COVID-19 and the recent tropical storms ETA and IOTA have exacerbated the problem of thousands of adolescents who interrupted their studies due to the flooding of schools, devastated livelihoods and impassable access roads. UNICEF Guatemala, aware of the challenge of school absenteeism for adolescents in the most vulnerable areas, aims to promote educational continuity through flexible modalities to develop skills using innovative educational methodologies and flexible alternatives according to the needs and individual contexts of adolescents. Included in their regulated educational activities are ICT skills, psychosocial support, recreational and artistic activities, the promotion of healthy habits and lifestyles, leadership training and citizen participation to address community problems and dispute settlement and resilience.

At the same time, UNICEF Guatemala works in coordination with the Ministry of Education to strengthen the flexible modality programme with human and financial resources, support an official certification for the Non-Formal Education Centres (known by the Spanish acronym CEEX) that collaborate with the programme, and develop a strategy for monitoring and identifying adolescents who are outside the educational system in order to bring them into the system again through this flexible modality.

Field Agricultural Techniques for the school feeding program, alliances have been generated with local educational authorities and representatives of the Community Development Councils

(COCODES) to support the young people who attend the program, municipalities and the Ministry of Education has allowed that the program will initiate the establishment of Digital Learning Centers that will provide young people with a unique opportunity to use ICT and learn remotely.

## The voices of girls

**Martha, is a 15-year-old teenager who lives in Paraje Pamixé, a Mayan-speaking town in Guatemala.** Her parents never went to school and although her mother is illiterate, her father learned how to read in church. Marta was unable to finish primary school, she was not successful in her studies as the textbooks and exams were not in her mother tongue. In addition, her father decided that he could not take her to school because she had to help at home with the housework and take care of her little siblings.

Luckily, not far from her home, DreamCatcher set up a flexible learning centre and last year Marta was able to enroll in school and come closer to fulfilling her dream: "my parents understood that I could help them if I finished studying and got a job as a teacher in the community. I encourage other youth and adolescents to study because learning has changed my life".



UNICEF Guatemala, thanks to the financial support of the private donor Pandora, has helped especially adolescents to continue or resume their studies through the activities that have been fostered since 2020:

## **1. Developing girls' and adolescents' skills through innovative initiatives:**

- ▶ A flexible studying modality was established, so that adolescents could continue learning at their own pace, meaningful learning, with virtual mentoring and home visits from teachers.
- ▶ Technological tools were provided: social media and digital platforms to create virtual collaborative spaces, allow students to pursue their studies and connect with teachers.
- ▶ Innovative educational methodology: carrying out individual projects with cultural identity based on their interests and skills and a stand-alone and guided education modality.
- ▶ Training in the acquisition and development of soft skills and psycho-emotional support to ensure emotional well-being.
- ▶ C4D actions with adolescents, aimed at increasing their ability to identify and solve their own problems and those of their community so that they can positively make decisions that affect them and thus allow them to continue to be agents of change.
- ▶ Teacher training in flexible methodology and use of technological tools.
- ▶ Recruitment of local teachers with knowledge of the area's culture and language allowing better bonds with the community, generating trust and better dialogue.

## **2. Advocacy activities to do away with stereotypes and provide visibility to the successful experiences of girls and adolescents in this field:**

- ▶ C4D communications campaigns in the communities (using the local dialect) are motivating families to enroll their sons and daughters in the flexible education programme.
- ▶ Actions were carried out to prevent violence overall and gender-based violence, especially for the most vulnerable groups in the communities, including young mothers, single mothers, LGBTI persons, returnees, migrants, and persons with disabilities.

During the implementation of the programme, strategic partnerships were set up to ensure the programme's feasibility and scalability. For instance, the experience of the non-formal education programme led the Ministry of Education to allocate additional resources, whilst partnerships were established to develop skills and entrepreneurship projects with small family businesses and cooperatives to create jobs. Furthermore, an agreement was signed with the Field Agriculture Technical Schools for the school feeding programme, and also partnerships set up with local educational authorities and representatives of the Community Development Councils (COCODES) to support youth who participate in the programme, municipalities and the Ministry of Education has allowed the programme to start establishing Digital Learning Centres that will give youth a unique opportunity to use ICT and learn remotely.

Over the past two years, the DreamCatcher programme has directly impacted 1,494 adolescent girls, and 4,482 indirectly; and 2,521 teachers, tutors, fathers and mothers directly, and 3,481 indirectly.

## Future Opportunities

UNICEF Guatemala intends to continue strengthening and scaling up the outcomes achieved while maintaining quality interventions. The actions planned in the short-medium term include the following:

- ▶ Provide technical assistance and train teachers and educational personnel in innovative and challenging learning methodologies so that they are capable of developing capacities and skills among adolescents, preparing them for their current and future professional life, without forgetting their physical and emotional well-being;
- ▶ Reinforce the systematization of good practices and collect life stories that can become a part of a communications campaign;
- ▶ Continue developing the capacities of public servants to ensure the programme's sustainability;
- ▶ Involve communities and families to ensure the commitment and participation of adolescents;
- ▶ Invest in evidence generation activities that support the programme's feasibility and success;
- ▶ Strengthen partnerships with employment centres and the private sector to provide adolescents and youth with employability opportunities and internships, in addition to providing career guidance and soft skills training;
- ▶ Continue increasing public investment in flexible education programmes and establish partnerships with the health sector, seeking for adolescents to have access to basic services and psychosocial support;
- ▶ Continue advocating with the Ministry of Education so that the programme can provide an official diploma to migrant students in an irregular condition;
- ▶ Furthermore, UNICEF Guatemala will continue to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, to collect evidence of the programme's impact on adolescents and their communities.

