Guatemala

Adolescent Girls in Guatemala

In places where poverty and inequality are prevalent, indigenous females are by far the most disadvantaged and vulnerable group. The rights of adolescent girls are not protected and thus many girls and women do not attend school and are forced into child labor. More than 2 million children in Guatemala do not attend school, most of whom are in rural areas. The prevalence of child labor is higher in Guatemala than anywhere else in Latin America. Girls can be forced to spend many hours working, leaving little time for school or to just be a girl.

What is Girl Up doing in Guatemala?

Girl Up supports adolescent girls in Guatemala by funding a Joint United Nations program that delivers an integrated and holistic package of services in partnership with national partners and implementing organizations. These programs address the complex challenges that limit indigenous girls’ opportunities for success. Through the UN joint program, Girl Up empowers girls through:

- **Four strategic goals**
  - An increase in social investments for adolescent girls
  - Increasing the legal act of marriage to 18 years
  - Reduce teenage pregnancy, sexual violence and trafficking
  - Support civil efforts that demand comprehensive sex education

- **Strengthening government support and capacity**
  The Girl Up-funded joint UN program works with the national government of Guatemala – the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the National Institute of Statistics – to support adolescent girls from around the country, with a specific focus on indigenous girls in rural areas.

- **Building partnerships**
  Through partnerships with local organizations, the program has implemented activities that have strengthened the social skills of hundreds of adolescent girls from rural communities. Additionally, boys, family members and caregivers, community leaders and health technicians have also participated in training processes to become allies in the prevention of violence and teenage pregnancy.

Facts

- By 17 years old, only 26% of indigenous girls are still enrolled in school.
- By the age of 18, almost 40% of indigenous Mayan girls are married.
- Almost half of Guatemalan girls have a child before the age of 20, giving it one of the highest adolescent birth rates in the region.
- In Guatemala, women hold only 13% of seats in the national parliament.

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About Guatemala

Guatemala is located in Central America, between Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and Belize. The ancient Mayan civilization flourished in and around today’s Guatemala, creating a powerful empire. Today, the population is of mixed heritage with nearly 40% of inhabitants claiming indigenous Mayan heritage, and just fewer than 60% classified as “ladino” [mixed native and European blood]. In addition to Spanish, the government recognizes 23 indigenous languages.

Guatemala ranks as one of the poorest places in the Western Hemisphere.* It has the youngest and fastest growing population in Latin America and among the lowest literacy rates in the region. Guatemala is still experiencing the impact of a 36-year civil conflict, during which more than 200,000 lives were lost and close to one million people were displaced.


Because adolescent girls in Guatemala deserve to be educated, healthy, safe, counted and positioned to be the next generation of leaders.

You see a girl. We see the future.