

Policy Brief



August, 2021

UNEQUAL QUETZALTENANGO

An Intersectional View of Quetzaltenango from a Gender and Social Inclusion Perspective

By: Angélica Menchú, Marleny Ramírez, Jorge Gómez y Alejandra Teleguario.

This Policy Brief was made possible with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of IREX and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

IREX

1275 K Street, NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20005

© 2021 IREX. All rights reserved.

For any commercial use, please obtain authorization from Youth Excel: excelyouth@irex.org

ABSTRACT

Based on the findings of an Intersectional Gender Analysis elaborated by a diverse group of young researchers in the department of Quetzaltenango for the Youth Excel Program*, this report presents a brief look at the reality of women, men, youth, LGBTIQ+ population, indigenous population and people with disabilities in the department of Quetzaltenango in three of its municipalities: Quetzaltenango, La Esperanza and Cantel.

A Research that addressed five areas of analysis: enabling environment; gender roles, responsibility and time use; contribution and agency; capabilities,

assets and resources; and protection; shows that **women, youth, LGBTIQ+ people, indigenous people and persons with disabilities face the greatest challenges in achieving integral development at the personal and community levels, mainly due to social norms and beliefs about gender.** Even though different organizations and key actors have promoted initiatives that contribute to their empowerment and the transformation of their reality, there is a clear lack of recognition of these populations to ensure their full and active integration into society.

INTRODUCTION

Just as in the whole country of Guatemala, in **Quetzaltenango there are significant inequality gaps between different population and identity groups.** Although the local population witnesses these gaps in their daily lives, there is little research that analyzes them in a structured and comprehensive manner. To attack a problem, it is necessary to know about it. Inequalities affect the entire population as a whole in different ways, even when it is not obvious. In order to promote the integral development of all people in Quetzaltenango, it is important to understand the challenges that different groups in the municipalities of the department face due to their identity, age, gender, sex or physical conditions. The following is an intersectional look from gender and social inclusion of the diverse realities that youth, LGBTIQ+ people, indigenous people and people with disabilities face in their lives. It is necessary to understand their reality, to be able to begin building comprehensive and sustainable solutions that benefit these groups, as well as the entire department.



*This brief is based upon an Intersectional Rapid Gender Analysis conducted for the Youth Excel program as part of the process to establish of an Issue Based Collaborative Network (ICON) in Quetzaltenango. The ICON is a place-based collective that will use research to support holistic empowerment of indigenous young women and the prevention of gender based violence.

KEY ASPECTS

Women, youth, LGBTIQ+ people, indigenous people and people with disabilities in La Esperanza, Cantel and Quetzaltenango face large inequality gaps.

- 1 Lack of evidence to inform action:** despite a comprehensive research effort by this research team to uncover the lived realities of women, youth, indigenous peoples, LGBTIQ+ community, and people with disabilities, we were unable to find disaggregated data on these populations in specific topic areas. The minimal amount of existing data is outdated or focused on other regions of the country.
- 2 Violence:** according to the perception of the youth who participated in the research process, it is girls, adolescents and young women who are more exposed to situations of physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence. At the same time, those who identify with the LGBTIQ+ community or have a disability, face higher levels of violence.
- 3 Non-existent policies and programs:** at the national and local levels, there are not enough public policies, projects or specific programs that respond to the needs of women, youth, LGBTIQ+ people and people with disabilities, which limits their full involvement in society.
- 4 Difficulties in accessing employment and economic activities:** Women, particularly young women, face greater difficulties than men in finding a job and/or generating income. On average, women are 50% less likely to find a job than men. More than 50%¹ of women are engaged in unpaid domestic activities. Despite such large gaps, many women seek alternative ways to generate income to support their families, for example, through entrepreneurship.
- 5 Political Participation and Representation:** Although women, youth, the LGBTIQ+ community, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities make up a significant part of the local population, they do not have a representative participation quota in political spaces. Women occupy only 7.36% of the total number of elected positions at the departmental level. On average, the representation of women in local governments is 18%². There is no representation of other identity groups.
- 6 Holistic Development:** In Quetzaltenango, different populations, including women, youth, LGBTIQ+ community, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities, still face gaps in achieving holistic development. Locally, there are populations that live at a greater disadvantage than others, such as women and indigenous peoples. In the department there is a gap in human development between men and women of 11%, while for indigenous peoples it reaches 21%.³
- 7 Digital Gap:** women are at a disadvantage in accessing digital tools and services, such as educational opportunities and professionalization opportunities. Women in the municipalities of Quetzaltenango have less access to electronic devices and the internet compared to men. The impact of this disadvantage is even greater since the beginning of the pandemic caused by COVID-19.

1. Population and Housing Census National Institute of Statistics (INE), 2018.

2. Supreme Electoral Tribunal, 2020.

3. United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 2017. This gap is measured in terms of level of education, health and income.

CONTEXT

Women, youth, people with disabilities, the LGBTIQ+ community and indigenous peoples have not been given a voice, a vote or adequate spaces to make their realities and demands visible or guarantee their full participation in society. According to the experiences gathered through focus groups, the youth consider that this is due to the fact that there are still sexist, patriarchal, discriminatory, racist and exclusionary norms and beliefs. It is important to emphasize that social problems do not arise spontaneously, they have a historical background and derive from the State itself, which reproduces conditions of inequality that create a dominant culture, which is why there is not

enough promotion of programs or projects focused on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable people, resulting in little recognition of their potential and leadership.

In this report we present the different conditions of inequality that these populations face in the municipalities of Quetzaltenango, La Esperanza and Cantel, and the report can be taken into account as a resource to undertake concrete actions to reduce the existing inequality gaps in order to favor a full development of these populations, as well as of the department in general.

APPROACHES AND FINDINGS

The findings presented were obtained mainly from the systematization and analysis of secondary data sources and literature. Constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic, the collection and analysis of information and data was conducted remotely via the Internet. Although much of the information used came from resources and data produced by government institutions and local and international non-governmental organizations, the lack of disaggregated data and data on some identity groups led to primary data collection processes to enrich the available information

Three focus groups were conducted with 14 young people from the localities of interest.

They were selected for their leadership, involvement in the change of their community and participation in projects and advocacy spaces. A survey was also conducted with local youth between the ages of 13-30 years old. This obtained 80 responses from youth in Quetzaltenango, Cantel and La Esperanza.

The reality of Quetzaltenango was analyzed from an intersectional lens around 5 areas of analysis:



1. Enabling environment: gender norms and beliefs Laws, policies, customs and institutional practices, and already existing programming.

In the municipalities of Quetzaltenango there are very strong gender beliefs and social norms that the population has towards women and men. This set of beliefs and norms labels people and imposes a series of expectations on them about how they should behave, as well as a series of activities in which they can perform in their role as men or women and according to what is traditionally considered masculine or feminine.

In Guatemala, two genders are officially recognized: male and female, leaving out some people who identify themselves as part of the LGTBIQ+ diversity, leading to discrimination and social disqualification for them. Their way of interpreting reality is not respected.

According to focus group findings, these gaps are reflected in local policies. Despite the existence of some strategies at the national level, at the municipal level, no regulations or policies were found that were aimed at the development and economic empowerment of indigenous women and youth and other vulnerable groups.

The situation is similar with respect to local institutions. More than 70% of the surveyed youth do not know of any institution that works to improve the living conditions of women, youth, LGTBIQ+ community and/or people with disabilities. Although some institutions exist, their work is not known to the youth, so they do not participate in them or seek their support.

2. Gender roles, responsibility and use of time: tasks assigned by gender and their influence on family and work dynamics.

According to information from the UNDP in 2016, in the municipalities of Quetzaltenango there are large gaps that place women (even more so indigenous women) at a disadvantage in the educational, professional and economic spheres.

50%

On average, women are 50% less likely to find a job than men. In addition, more than 50% of women are engaged in unpaid domestic activities.⁴

Despite such large gaps, many women seek alternative ways to generate income to support their families, for example, through entrepreneurship. More than half of all local businesses are led by women.⁵

The gender roles assigned to people play an important role in creating such inequality gaps. In general, work and activities in other areas are assigned by sex. Another influential factor in Guatemala is ethnicity, since Mayan women are not seen as thinking subjects on a daily and historical basis, but rather as "by nature" doers of "unskilled" manual labor.⁶

Although the information analyzed is recent, it is very likely that conditions have worsened with the emergence of COVID-19. According to the World Labor Organization (ILO), 1 out of every 6 young people in Latin America lost their jobs because of COVID-19, affecting young women more than men.⁷

4 & 5. Own data from survey conducted in 2021.

6. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2021.

7. ILO, 2020.

3. Contribution and agency: forms of access to power, leadership and holistic growth.

The participation of different sectors of society in the political arena is a fundamental part of social development, but it is also a challenge to promote and guarantee their engagement in a meaningful way. Although women, youth, the LGBTIQ+ community, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities make up a significant part of the local population, they do not have a representative participation quota in political spaces. Currently, women occupy only 7.36% of the total number of elected positions at the departmental level.⁸ Within the Municipal Councils of La Esperanza, Cantel and Quetzaltenango, there is little or no representation of women.

On average, the representation of women in local governments is 18%.⁹ There is no representation of other identity groups.

These groups face significant challenges to exercise leadership, access spaces of power and exercise their agency to transform the reality in which they operate, both in public and private spaces. From the focus groups conducted with young people, it was found that although in more than 60% of their households decisions are made by consensus among their parents, young people often do not have a voice in decision-making. Moreover, it is adult men who concentrate resources and power.

Another important aspect that affects the contribution and agency of these populations is their self-esteem. Self-esteem is directly related to the quality of life and holistic development of individuals. By assuming the social roles assigned to them, women internalize that their work is worth less than that of their male counterparts. This lack of appreciation of their capabilities and potential as women contributes to the reaffirmation of social dynamics that do not consider them as an essential part of development.¹⁰ The populations in question have greater difficulties in building their self-esteem because many of them do not feel self-confidence and have the conception that their condition does not allow them to advance in life.

According to a study on the self-concept of indigenous children in Quetzaltenango, more than 75%¹¹ of indigenous children in Quetzaltenango have a low opinion of themselves, which affects their lifelong development.

4. Capacities, assets and resources: means, resources and conditions necessary for development.



Although Quetzaltenango continues to be considered a department of great importance in the economy of western Guatemala, different populations, including women, youth, the LGBTIQ+ community, indigenous peoples and people with disabilities, still face gaps in achieving their holistic development. There are populations that live at a greater disadvantage than others, as is the case of women and indigenous peoples. In the department there is a gap in human development between men and women of 11%, while for indigenous peoples it reaches 21%.¹²

8 & 9. Supreme Electoral Tribunal, 2020

10. Un Women, 2017.

11. Asociación Ixoquib' Miriam, 2017

12. UNDP, 2017. . This gap is measured in terms of level of education, health and income.

Quetzaltenango has been one of the departments with the highest international migration trends for decades. Its migratory dynamics are changing, and currently, the main reasons why people decide to migrate from the departmental territory are reunification and family support, domestic violence, repression of social leaders and insecurity. In the departmental capital, cases of internal displacement due to threats and violence have been identified.¹³

According to the results of previous research, it is notable that people decide to migrate from Guatemala for economic and labor reasons, but also because of threats to their sexual identity, which is an indicator of the risks to which the LGBTIQ+ community is exposed on a daily basis.¹⁴

A key aspect under this dimension of analysis is education. Despite the fact that in Quetzaltenango more than 80% of men and women know how to read and write and that Quetzaltenango concentrates a large part of the educational offer in the western part of the country, access to formal education is not the same for all.¹⁵ In the municipalities analyzed, it is women who have less access to education. On the other hand, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the gaps have increased due to the fact that education is provided by digital means.

Women are at a disadvantage in accessing digital tools and services, such as educational opportunities and professionalization opportunities. According to the last National Census, women in these places have less access to electronic devices and internet compared to men.

+50%

On average, more than 50% of the population of the department lacks access to electronic devices and the internet for activities such as education or employment.¹⁶

5. Protection: different forms of violence that affect the lives of different sectors of society and the resources available to deal with them.

Insecurity, violence and discrimination limit the possibilities of promoting sustainable development processes. The different population groups analyzed in this report suffer from high levels of violence.

In Quetzaltenango there has been an increase in violence against women in recent years. According to the survey conducted, around 30% of the youth surveyed either are aware of violence and/or have experienced violence themselves in their municipalities. At the same time, young people consider women to be the population group most vulnerable to violence. Within this group, women with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ and elderly women are seen as even more vulnerable.

Expressions of the violence to which these groups are subjected are the high number of teenage pregnancies or the levels of impunity in cases of violence against the LGBTIQ+ community. From January to May 5, 2021, Quetzaltenango has a record of 2,028 pregnancies in girls and adolescents between the ages of 13 and 19.¹⁷

At present, there are few effective mechanisms to prevent violence against these groups, as well as to guarantee respect for their rights. In general, there is little data and evidence to promote solutions. Although an arduous and comprehensive documentary research process was carried out in order to make visible the reality of women, youth, indigenous peoples, LGBTIQ+ community and people with disabilities in Quetzaltenango, there is no disaggregated data on these populations in specific topics; or the minimum amount of existing data is outdated or focused on other regions of the country.

13 & 14. ILO, 2017.

15 & 16. Population and Housing Census National Institute of Statistics (INE), 2018

17. Observatory of Sexual and Reproductive Health (OSAR), 2017

CONCLUSIONS

Quetzaltenango has been considered the key department for the development of the western region of Guatemala. However, populations such as women, youth, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples, still find gaps to achieve their integral development. There are limitations in access to services and resources such as education and technology, in addition to having difficulties in finding job opportunities, economic income or participating in decision-making processes. This is due to the existence of social and gender stereotypes, situations of violence and exclusion that limit the possibility of exercising their leadership and capabilities.

At the national and local level, disaggregated data on women, youth, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples are inaccessible, outdated, focused on other regions of the country or do not exist, which limits the understanding of their realities. In addition, in Guatemala and mainly in the department of Quetzaltenango, there are very few public policies, projects or programs of governmental entities focused on comprehensive economic development, which do not consider the needs of the prioritized groups. There are initiatives that have been promoted by non-governmental organizations; however, these are not well known in the communities, which means that these populations are not informed about the opportunities that can improve their own, family and community economy.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the main findings of the study, the following recommendations are presented for decision makers, policy makers, local civil society organizations and other stakeholders in Quetzaltenango:

- 1** Invest in research processes that allow to have updated and disaggregated data on issues relevant to women, youth, indigenous population, LGBTIQ+ community and people with disabilities, which can be used as a source of information for the development of projects that respond to these evidenced needs.
- 2** Promote municipal projects, policies and initiatives that are sustainable and cross-cutting, where the populations prioritized in this report can access opportunities for skill-building and capacity building, basic knowledge on finance and the approach to gender equality to promote their full involvement at the community level and ensure the self-sustainability of their initiatives.
- 3** Regarding local institutions, more than 70% of the surveyed youth do not know of any institution that works to improve the living conditions of women, youth, LGTBIQ+ community and/or people with disabilities. Although there are some institutions, their work is not known by the youth, for this purpose it is necessary to provide information on projects and programs promoted by organizations and key actors that improve the quality of life of the prioritized populations, disseminating it through strategies adapted to their context that allow them to learn about these initiatives and get involved in them.
- 4** Promote the transformation of socio-cultural patterns that generate conditions of inequality for the most vulnerable populations, such as limited access to education for rural youth, gender violence, the labor gap between men and women, among others, through strategies that guarantee the awareness and involvement of women, men, youth and other sectors, strengthening their technical, organizational and active participation capacities and skills.
- 5** To provide comprehensive assistance, including legal, social, technical, psychological and/or economic support to the most vulnerable populations to improve their quality of life and protection conditions. from both governmental and non-governmental entities in the municipalities addressed in the research.
- 6** Assess and target municipal resources to better link development programs to the local needs, and to ensure these programs are carried out by specialists on the field and subject in question.



REFERENCES

- Annona, J (2020) Men don't cry or wash dishes. Plaza Pública Guatemala. <https://bit.ly/3yTJMgu>
- ASIES (2020). Migration and family remittances in the context of COVID-19.
- Cumes, A (2012).) Indigenous women, patriarchy and colonialism: A challenge to the comprehensive segregation of forms of domination.
- Duart et al., (2020) Violence against the LGBTIQ+ population: Experiences and dynamics that sustain it. <https://bit.ly/3A7oKMs>
- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2020-2021 Guatemala Report. Universidad Francisco Marroquín. <https://gem.ufm.edu/>
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE) (2019) Population and Housing Census 2018. <https://bit.ly/3AFNxr8>
- Mazariegos, I (2017) Asociación Ixoqib' Miriam - Study on self-concept in indigenous boys and girls of Quetzaltenango. <https://bit.ly/3iHbLLp>
- OIM (2016) Survey on international migration of Guatemalans and remittances. <https://bit.ly/2VR878G>
- OIT (2020) More than one in six young people are out of work because of COVID-19. <https://bit.ly/3iIKk3O>
- ONU Mujeres (2017) Redistributing unpaid work. <https://bit.ly/2UeChSS>
- OSAR (2021). Pregnancies and birth registration for teenage mothers. <https://bit.ly/3yM8MHc>
- Paz Joven Guatemala (2016) Perceptions of public servants, adolescents and young people in the approach and guarantee of sexual and reproductive rights. <https://bit.ly/3z5osop>
- PNUD Guatemala (2017). Quetzaltenango: Women and indigenous peoples face major barriers to human development. <https://bit.ly/3jQt8Zr>
- PNUD Guatemala (2016) The economic cost of violence in Guatemala. <https://bit.ly/3jVWF5s>
- PNUD Guatemala (2017) Quetzaltenango: Mujeres y pueblos indígenas enfrentan mayores barreras para alcanzar el desarrollo humano. <https://bit.ly/3jR5Qns>
- Tribunal Supremo Electoral (2020). Memoria de Elecciones 2019. <https://bit.ly/37Gu4Kw>

IREX

1275 K Street NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20005, USA

+1 (202) 628-8188

<https://bit.ly/USAIDYouthExcel> | excelyouth@irex.org



We want to know what you think about this brief.
Click or scan this code to tell us more about your
experience.

Methodology

Data collection for this report was based primarily on secondary sources. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this process was carried out from home through the Internet. Different resources and data were found that have been produced by government institutions and non-governmental organizations, in addition to having information from the Population and Housing Census conducted in 2018.

Despite having these resources, certain data were not found, so the team considered conducting primary information gathering through focus groups, surveys and an interview with a key informant.

Three focus groups were conducted, one for each municipality of analysis, through the Zoom platform, planned for 2 hours of conversation. During this process, 14 young people participated (10 women and 4 men) of whom 5 were from Quetzaltenango, 5 from La Esperanza and 4 from Cantel, identified by their leadership, involvement in the change of their community and participation in projects and advocacy spaces. The interest of the participants in sharing their experiences, contributing to the analysis of the dynamics of their communities and providing ideas for the development of initiatives was evident.

The survey tool was implemented digitally and disseminated through the research team's social networks. We obtained 50 (62.5%) responses from Quetzaltenango, 16 (20.0%) responses from Cantel and 14 (17.5%) responses from La Esperanza, answered by young people between the ages of 13 and 30.

