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A step forward but still a long way to go: Guatemala

Mireya Obregón

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Introduction

Guatemala is a country whose population has suffered greatly from a failure to respect human rights and its legal system that have been ignored for many years. Due to the failure to comply with legislation a civil conflict arose and took more than 33 years to be resolved. Due to this, Guatemala has been included under the Strategy 5 of UNESCO's for the achievement of Education for All (EFA) for countries whose educational systems have been affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability, in order to conduct educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and that help to prevent violence and conflict.

Guatemalan society is exceedingly complex and its problems are hard to resolve. The statistical indicators show a country that has one of the worst illiteracy rates in Latin America. Additionally, despite the fact that a Mayan woman received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1982 (when the country was in the midst of an armed conflict), Guatemalan women suffer discrimination, especially so if the woman is poor and Mayan.

A mono-linguistic education system is another highly controversial factor, since only a minority of the population speak the official language as their mother tongue, whilst the majority speaks one of the seven Mayan languages¹ most commonly used in the communities in the republic's interior. This makes that only a minority group has the access to information, monopolising it, restriction of citizens' participation in cultural consultations and economic involvement. This right to participation has been narrowed to a minority group, which considers it as a natural right since the Spanish invasion of 1502.

Under these circumstances, the Mayan culture has had to remain underground. This restriction of human, economic and political participation continues over time since the

¹ Even though there are 22 Mayan languages, only seven of these are routinely spoken.

unwillingness of the powerful minority to alter its power structure, failing to respect the “other” alongside with whom it lives. Thus, any small changes that might be achieved through EFA must therefore be seen as major changes in the context of this rigid structure that despise to make room for the majority indigenous sector².

Small but pioneering steps

An important progress towards the EFA goals is the establishment of a bipartite committee with representatives from both the government and indigenous peoples that have started talks to plan a reform of education. In Guatemala it is an achievement that the two different sectors have meet, even more so since they hold talks around the respect for diversity in education and to confer decision-making powers on individuals and community.

The second EFA goal confers the right to education to the entire population of Guatemala. Several progresses have been made at the primary level in the urban areas with statistics showing that the number of enrolments in primary education has increased³. Hopefully this trend will continue and will not undermine the quality of primary education⁴, since the EFA framework also seeks to raise the quality of education as a right to which every human being aspires.

The third EFA goal is concerned in providing all young women and men with opportunities for leading an active life. Partially as a response to this, a variety of short courses of study have therefore been introduced, as ‘diversified cycles’ of upper secondary education (baccalaureates), with different specializations that allow pupils to work at the same time as gaining an education in a variety of technical options. This resolves the highly precarious economic situation that most Guatemalan families suffer. The problem is that only the urban areas have benefited. In the rural regions, national and

² The indigenous population is comprised by the Maya, Xinca and Garifuna ethnic groups, most of who are peasants with no land of their own to cultivate.

³ In the three years from 1995 to 1998, the gross and net enrolment rate rose from 109.5% to 125.9% in the first grade of primary school. Source: Graph 3 p.30 1990-1998 EFA assessment report.

⁴ For example, increasing the number of per teacher, so that the teacher is unable to give them the required attention.

foreign NGOs have held workshops for young people, mostly agricultural workers, as well as adults, to provide them with the education, which has been denied due to a lack of service provision.

However slow, intermediate level education is reaching the hamlets of Rodeo El Espino in the municipality of Concepción Las Minas, as well as Muyurco, Tizamarté and Sierra el Volcán in the municipality of Camotán, in the department of Chiquimula. The ‘Telesecundaria’ or distance secondary education system represents a step forward that promises even greater advances in the future. This includes a classroom catering for 186 pupils in first grade basic secondary education⁵. Let us hope that the system will be able to operate regularly under the right conditions, that the power supply does not fail and that specialised teachers lead the classes properly. Although well intentioned, distance learning technology -and application- is causing a new divide between those who are able to take advantage of this learning and the majority, who cannot.

A legal step that could really pave the way forward is the Congress of the Republic’s ruling approving the National Languages Act. This will benefit communities where the majority of the population speaks one of the 21 Mayan languages where services are going to be provided by professionals that speak the language (act approved on 7 May 2003)⁶. It is expected that this legal regulation will also extend to media space for indigenous languages, since this is a factor in the lack of communication and information for monolingual indigenous communities.

What has led to these small but significant achievements?

The signing of the peace treaty the 29th of December of 1995 gave the Guatemalan people great hopes for legislation changes and a more open social context. It led people and communities to lose their fear of the oppressive forces that had hitherto intimidated the Guatemalan population. A host of new national and foreign NGOs were created which to work with civil society.

⁵ La Semana en Guatemala. Centro de Estudios de Guatemala

⁶ La Semana en Guatemala. Centro de Estudios de Guatemala

As an initial measure, both the government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG, Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca in Spanish) agreed to have a strong dissemination of the agreements established. The idea was to propagate the message held during the Peace Talks around an inclusive Guatemalan society with a peaceful coexistence (which is a goal of the universal quality education prioritised by the EFA Programme). In particular, the Accord on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples was designed to include indigenous peoples in a plan for a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic nation, involving the participation of the entire population within a context of equity⁷. Here, NGOs took the responsibility for informing the population of the pledges in the Agreement, by means of workshops with interpretation into the community languages.

What has sadly not been achieved and why:

Despite this advances, substantial structural changes within the education system have not been achieved. The kind of educational development supported by the EFA Programme is the progressive development of human beings from the day they are born to the day they die. It is based on a commitment to learn, which gives formative meaning to the educational methodology, establishing a creative, responsible and participatory relationship for building and applying knowledge.

At pre-primary level (EFA goal 1), the quality of teachers is very good. This is because this is one of the most creative sectors, which has taken responsibility for keeping teachers in work, since in many cases the pre-primary budget has been seen as something that could be put to better use. The educational authorities would seem to be unconvinced of the importance of this phase of human development (age five and six). There is not enough promotion and publicizing of the importance of pre-primary education, which has an adverse affect on the number of children repeating the first grade of primary school. In spite of the commitments made under the EFA Programme, the budget is still a very small part of the actual Education budget. Only 7.97 % of the total education budget is

⁷ Peace Accords p.77 Rafael Landivar University. (year)

earmarked for pre-primary education⁸. Add to this, the head of the United Nations body to oversee the peace process in Guatemala (MINUGUA) has commented that the army has a “copious budget” while the human rights situation was worse than it had been 15 months previously⁹. Working mothers with small children have problems since there are no day care centres where they can leave them. Neither the government nor private enterprise has remedied this gap in the education provision.

Even though we have described the increase in primary education coverage as an achievement, the quality of education still leaves much to be desired (EFA goal). The few censuses available on the primary school failure rate in urban areas vary widely (see table 1).

Table 1. Average percentage of primary school failure in Guatemala (1992-1997)

Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Average %	17.5	18.1	18.0	18.0	17.2	16.6

Source: UNESCO/CAP, San José, Costa Rica, 1998

The school dropout rate is very high and increasing all the time due to the worsening economic situation. Parents need to send their children to work at an early age, which means that they are forced to drop out of school. An analysis of 1998 censuses showed that twice the number of pupils in rural areas drop out of school, repeat the year, or are older than the normal age for their grade, compared with those living in towns. In the rural sector, parents deny their daughters the benefits of education, because girls are destined for household tasks from an early age, either as a source of labour or because their destiny is to serve their future husbands.

In the sixth grade of urban schools, both girls and boys score 50% of correct answers in reading and 57% in mathematics, whereas pupils in rural schools achieve lower scores in reading and mathematics. The school dropout rate from the third to the sixth grade is higher in rural areas: 25% compared with 4% in urban areas. Pupils of Mayan mother

⁸ Las Políticas y la Situación Educativa en Guatemala de cara al Cumplimiento de los Compromisos de Dakar. October 2002. ActionAid. p.20

⁹ Centro de Estudios de Guatemala. La Semana en Guatemala (5 to 11 May).

tongue have poorer reading skills than pupils speaking only Spanish. Although there is less of a gap in mathematics, it is still significant¹⁰.

The Ministry of Education in Guatemala (MINEDUC) still has a lot more to do and they must pool efforts in support of the rural sector. Particularly to overcome the conditions of extreme poverty and under-nourishment in which rural populations -especially of indigenous groups – live. New ways to adapt educational methodology to their specific circumstances are also needed. This includes assessments especially for the rural sector (for example, Popular Education and Popular Science and their dialectical postulates, special post-war Freinet method).

There are two programmes that are endeavouring to resolve the issue of illiteracy in Guatemala (Goal 4 EFA). The first programme is part to the secondary school graduation requirements established by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) that compel students to teach a specific number of people to read and write. The second programme is run by the regional radio stations that operate as a network. This has the advantage of disseminating the indigenous community languages. Under the first programme, MINEDUC is responsible for providing the materials, whilst DIGER is in charge of the second programme. National Literacy Committee (CONALFA) is responsible for coordinating a programme that has the ambitious goal of achieving universal literacy by the year 2015. However, this is uncertain owing to its scant funding and to the country's political situation¹¹. Bear in mind that in November 2003 there will be elections to re-elect the executive and the legislature.

The gender disparity (goal 5 EFA) is a problem that has its foundations in the exclusion, discrimination and under valuation of Guatemalan women. The image of women in official school textbooks; subject differentiation (for example, the course called home economics that is assigned only to women); a minority presence of women in classrooms and research fields; women forbidden from practising sports; professions to which

¹⁰ Informe de Evaluación de Rendimiento Escolar. PRONERE para el año 2000. Reproducido en Informe Ejecutivo p.27. PRODESSA Action Aid Guatemala /02

women are not admitted and public offices to which they are not appointed; prejudice on the ground of gender; and the degrading treatment women receive from the media, which compounds the lack of respect for this section of the population - all these types of discrimination are found within Guatemala's educational system, especially where women are poor and indigenous. As a result, Guatemala is losing the contribution to its development of more than half of the country's population.

The Dakar commitments have a sense of unity that turns them into a comprehensive development process. This provides a framework that allows each nation to position itself within the phase in which it currently finds itself, whilst also holding out the prospect of moving on from that phase. Indeed, the path to the development will gradually lead away from stages where progress is hampered and nations will succeed in moving on to new ones where they are classified as being in further stages of development. In spite of the strategies for achieving the Dakar goals, Guatemala's education authorities have been embarking on isolated and uncoordinated measures that have not been envisaged in terms of everyday practice but instead as changes imposed by decree. We see this with the measures that were adopted to meet the aim of decentralizing education. While most of the communities in the republic's interior are indigenous (Mayas, Xincas, Garifunas), the teachers are Spanish-speaking Ladinos, with very few indigenous teachers, precisely because Guatemala's educational system is so exclusive. In most Community Education Committees (COEDUCAs) education will now be assessed on the basis of the values of the indigenous culture, which differs from the Ladino culture¹². This means that the measures taken to open up the system will in fact lead to a complex relationship that has little chance of working, due to the lack of preparation for applying the measures. These lessons could in fact be made to work, but not by means if the whole EFA goals are considered. It is important to think of the EFA goals as a process, rather as requirements to be fulfilled within the global context of nations.

¹¹ Remarks by MINUGUA/ 2001.

¹² In Guatemala, the term ladino refers to all non-Indians, including Europeans, black Africans and mestizos.

Differences in the criteria between the various state authorities have stopped new measures to be implemented. Let us take a recent example. The executive authorised a small salary raise for teachers, but the legislature, namely MPs from the ruling FRG party, failed to approve the relevant budget item¹³. This was in spite of the fact that, in connection with the social blueprint of the 2000-2004 Social Policy,¹⁴ where the Education Plan states that there will be significant increases in funding for education and efficient use of available resources. Teachers had won this small increase through a prolonged and bitter strike, backed by parts of the peasant and religious sectors, as well as by students from various levels of education (including university students), trade unions, indigenous peoples and parents. The teachers were demanding continuing professionalization, implementation of the Education Reform, funding to improve working conditions and a pay increase to provide them with a decent living. The increase failed to materialize owing to a lack of funding.

The Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) initiated another protest to pressure the government to resolve disputes by promoting a participatory process for defining an education and rural development policy based on the Peace Accords and on the Education Reform, but all to no avail. The Government's lack of political wills to transform its official pledges (the Peace Accords) into legislation is impeding the elimination of discrimination against the rural sector and indigenous people, the development of gender equality and environmental protection. MINUGUA's representative, Tom Koenigs, described the results of implementing the Peace Accords as "disappointing"¹⁵.

The organized sectors of society are aware of the situation in Guatemala, which is why they are demanding structural changes to open up opportunities for improving the quality of life of Guatemala's people. Education could be the key to this development. Documents that were drawn up as part of a socio-economic development process could

¹³ Centro de Estudios de Guatemala. La Semana en Guatemala.

¹⁴ Las Políticas y la Situación Educativa en Guatemala de cara al Cumplimiento de los Compromisos de Dakar p.33 PRODESA Action Aid Guatemala/02

¹⁵ Centro De Estudios de Guatemala: La Semana en Guatemala (5 to 11 May 2003).

make it possible to integrate all the factors for revitalizing society within a certain time frame and circumstances. Hopefully these will change attitudes of discrimination, violence and marginalization against certain sectors of society, which have resulted in policies that limit the development of the peoples making up the Guatemalan nation (Ladinos, Xincas, Garifunas and Mayas). The documents to which we refer are: the Runuk'ik jun K'ak'a Tijonik Education Reform Plan, the Qonojel Project (the term 'qonojel' means 'all' in several Mayan languages), the International Strategy to put the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All into Operation and the Peace Accords. Another way of blocking any planned changes for introducing educational opportunities for the discriminated sector is to accept the proposal at a theoretical (legal) level, whilst failing to actually translate them into activities that would provide genuine prospects for human fulfilment to a sector that is statistically prone to poverty and extreme poverty.

The EFA Programme promotes education that is universal in scope and in quality. Steps are being taken to ensure that they all reach the goal at the same time. Even though it is a teamwork concept, each country works at its own particular pace and time. Dialogue needs to be established within civil society and the government, with the genuine and equitable involvement of all the various stakeholders, to foster an exchange of ideas and views. Allowing these to be expressed and heeded will make it possible to undertake measures within integrated programmes, as part of a process that takes account of the EFA programme goals, whilst also finding ways to tackle human development problems and needs in both the national context and the context of other cooperating nations. The six EFA goals under the Dakar Framework for Action are of utmost importance for the development of the Guatemalan people. The problem is how, without a political commitment from the government, real measures can be taken to overcome poverty by means of genuine, quality education for all.

Above and beyond statistical data and quantitative assessment, there is a lack of hope among the Guatemalan people that anything will ever change and break the inertia of the status quo. It is as though there were not even the smallest breath of air to arouse from its lethargy a people drained of its very lifeblood that has nothing left to give. Let us hope

that a political determination will emerge to foster a change in individual and community life that will finally open up educational alternatives. The philosophical principles of the Education for All are those that give life to the programme: to live side by side with others and to gain knowledge, experience, know-how and life skills. These are the principles that will make it possible to bridge the gap between theory and everyday practice.

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Translator's note:

The reference to "Quitándonos las Máscaras. Cosmovisión y Género Oxfam Australia. Recopilación de Testimonios de Mujeres Mayas. 2000. Morna Macleod. Editorial Maya Nojib'sa" may be equivalent to the English reference: "Faces without Masks: Mayan women on identity, gender and ethnicity in Guatemala. Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, Australia. Maria Luisa Cabrera Perez-Arminan and Morna Macleod. 2002"

Additions to the document “A step forward but still a long way to go”:

Author: Mireya Pérez Obregón

Addition one: Role of CONALFA and the Community Education Committees:

The difficult situation in which Guatemala finds itself, especially with respect to the illiteracy problem affecting a large section of the population, led to an emergency decision to adopt a literacy act - legislative decree No. 43-86 – declaring the teaching of basic literacy in Guatemala to be a national emergency. Guatemala has the second highest illiteracy rate in Latin America (1986).

Based on this decree, a network of governmental and private institutions was established which coordinated their activities to propose solutions for resolving the current illiteracy problems. The body responsible for coordinating the various literacy classes was named the National Literacy Committee (CONALFA).

The committee set itself the goal of involving the illiterate adult population in Guatemala’s economic, political and social development by teaching them to read and write, thereby guaranteeing everyone the right to this means of self development.

In support of this goal, Guatemala had already accepted responsibility for literacy as a country, under the UNESCO “Education for All” project, when its education authorities signed an undertaking to increase literacy by 50% by the year 2015.

This led to a comprehensive strategy that defines the problem as one extending far beyond the boundaries of education alone. Instead the strategy considers literacy as a social issue requiring the cooperation of national and foreign entities, NGOs and governmental organizations.

Literacy teaching was divided into two stages. The first is an initiation stage, where the goal is to ensure that adults gain a command of reading, writing and mathematics comparable to that of a pupil in the first grade of primary school. The goal of the second, post-reading, phase is to ensure that adults achieve the same reading and writing proficiency as a person having completed primary education.

Owing to the system of discrimination against rural populations and women in general, which has served to undermine these people's self-esteem, it was acknowledged in advance that major efforts needed to be focused on these sectors of the population. The literacy campaign was conducted by specially trained personnel according to reports from the Ministry of Education [MINEDUC].*

The European Community provided Baja Verapaz (department in northern Guatemala) with funding to initiate a campaign for training children in the 5th and 6th grades of primary school to teach their parents to read and write as part of a programme entitled "Educating Mum and Dad", which was implemented in the home.

The literacy primers were translated into the Chortí language spoken in that region. In accordance with the law stating that the majority language of the region takes precedence in any written or oral acts within a community, the literacy campaigns will now need to be adapted to this new approach, which is certain to benefit the community. However, problems can arise where no trained people are available in the community to implement the programme in the community's indigenous language.

There is a system of Education Councils whose activities have been deadlocked by lack of funding. This is why civil society is asked to call upon the Ministry of Education to comply with the undertaking at the end of its executive report, drawn up by PRODESSA and

Action Aid, on the education situation vis-à-vis the Dakar commitments, analyzed from the standpoint of the EFA Programme goals.

No specific national strategy has been implemented to include both Ladino and indigenous women in a literacy campaign, even though special attention should be paid to them as a majority group suffering discrimination. MINUGUA makes the following comment on the subject: “The National Literacy Programme presents technical and methodological limitations, in particular the lack of a specific strategy for women, in addition to budgetary problems.” *

In every sphere of life, Guatemalan women continue to be at a disadvantage compared with men. This is a matter of utmost urgency, since it means that just over half the population is prevented from contributing to the country’s development. In addition, policies to cut social spending affect women more than men. Working women receive no support from trade unions for asserting their rights on salaries, benefits, training and recruitment, and they are more vulnerable when it comes to budget cuts. In many homes the woman is the head of family, being a single mother, deserted wife or widow. The woman is always held to account for the welfare of children, regardless of the fact that she is not the only parent, but that inevitably there is a male parent who also has responsibility. However, in the eyes of the law, only the woman is punishable for child abuse, neglect and abandonment. In addition, no special attention is paid to women’s health, apart from childbirth, and such services are scarce and of poor quality, especially in rural areas. Women have less access than men to literacy programmes, especially if they are women from rural areas. Their opportunities shrink still further if in addition they are indigenous and poor.

* Educación para Todos en el año 2000. Informe de Evaluación 1990-98 (p.39)

It is a matter of concern that the different literacy programmes rely on international financial cooperation, which is for a finite period, and that the limited Education budget is not being increased. Only one percent of the national budget is spent on education.

The programmes broadcast by the radio network are well received by the community. The problem is that the service does not reach every community, due to Guatemala's electrification problems, especially in rural areas, which are precisely the target for the programmes. The programmes are enjoyable and well suited to the Mayan culture, since they are broadcast orally in words the community finds easy to understand, and some programmes are translated into the community's indigenous language. The church, as an institution, has cooperated in this aspect of learning. The army has helped by providing space for mass campaigns.

The problem is that no strategy has been found to stem the rise in the number of illiterate people since, while some statistics are decreasing, others are increasing, with new illiterates arriving to swell the ranks.

Advantage should be taken of the United Nations Literacy Decade to teach literacy as a means of self-development and to use it to secure a better quality of life for individuals and communities. The national literacy targets for the year 2015 are achievable but are being put at risk by the 2002 budget cuts and by the difficulties in closing the floodgates on illiteracy.

* MINUGUA, 2001. Informe del Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas sobre la Verificación de los Acuerdos de Paz en Guatemala.

Addition two: Government, individuals and communities in decision-making:

In this paragraph I refer specifically to the Education Reform, for which two committees are responsible: one governmental and the other indigenous. The two committees were created following one year of wide-ranging talks instigated by a Consultative Group. It held discussions with various municipal, departmental and national organizations on a number of proposals, some of which met with general agreement whilst others did not. This wide-ranging Dialogue led to the appointment of a Joint Committee on Education Reform. Despite being comprised of different cultures, in its eagerness to include individuals, communities and ethnic groups, the joint committee ultimately succeeded in designing the said Education Reform. Various sectors are currently demanding this reform to ensure that it does not remain merely a law but is actually brought to fruition in Guatemala (in the report I cite the recent teachers' strike and peasant protests, with the National Indigenous and Peasant Coordinating Body of Guatemala (CONIC) calling for the Education Reform to be instituted).

We cite a paragraph from the Minister of Education's address in the MINEDUC document, 'National Dialogue and Consensus for Education Reform', when submitting the conclusions on Education Reform, which aptly summarize the changes resulting from the signing of the Peace Accords. "Today's post-armed-conflict-Guatemala is a Guatemala that must understand that peace is a fundamental factor of survival. We face the challenge of bringing democracy to life. Democracy has to be economic, social and cultural. It must lay the foundations for ensuring that Guatemalan men and women gain access to wealth. The country can no longer continue with high levels of social inequality that lead to violence. This is why it is important to strengthen democracy, and for all of us - the public and

private sectors, indigenous and Ladino peoples, Christians and non-Christians – to play our part in building democracy.”

The climate in which the Education Reform began was founded on the principles of openness, flexibility and tolerance. This made it possible to design a national education plan based on the Peace Accords and on Convention 169, designed to meet the needs of a multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic country. The joint committee worked on its own behalf and on behalf of municipal, state and national organizations, which contributed by means of a broad, nation-wide dialogue. This climate of respectful dialogue between two cultures that each enrich a country is an achievement that would never have been possible prior to the Peace Accords.

However, in spite of this achievement, it is acknowledged that a lot more still needs to be done to eliminate discrimination against indigenous peoples and to stop them from being excluded from citizen participation. In its September 2001 verification report, MINUGUA recommends the abolition of discrimination against indigenous peoples in order to enhance Guatemala’s multicultural character and to implement the Accord on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Only one in every 100 young indigenous people, compared with ten in every 100 young Ladinos, reach university.

Addition three: responsibility for informing the Guatemalan people of the contents of the Peace Accords

The services of the NGOs were called upon to inform the population about the Peace Accords, which had been drawn up outside the country. First the NGOs publicized the accords and, second, they interpreted the accords for the majority of the population to understand, since technical terminology is not a part of everyday language. Also, on a

smaller scale, they translated into the most commonly spoken languages a number of accords of special importance to the Mayan People.

The accords were disseminated at various levels. Teaching organizations in the departments and capital city required workshops and aids to enable them to disseminate the accords in their communities and schools. The San Carlos National University of Guatemala was interested in disseminating them among the students of various faculties.

These requirements were met by the following organizations: CEDMUC - Municipal Development - CEIBAS - Public Communication - “Fundación Guillermo Toriello”, especially work with returnees and demobilized personnel, and OXFAM Australia, by disseminating the UN Conventions on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Other organizations helped by providing workshops and distributing graphic, written and recorded material. MINUGUA attempted to form a network of NGOs to pool efforts and funding, but various interests prevented this.

The Peace Accords stipulate that the accords shall be publicized, in particular the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace, by means of official education programmes.*

Addition four: Additions to the footnotes and bibliography:

Where ‘La Semana en Guatemala’ is mentioned as a source. ‘Noticias de Guatemala’ is a news bulletin received via the Internet.

The Peace Accords refer to the third (1998) edition, published by the Economic and Social Research Institute of Rafael Landivar University, Politics series, and sponsored by the Peace Secretariat of Guatemala’s Ministry of Education, and the Swedish Government’s ASDI.

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The Qonojel Project has not been published. It is a citizens' initiative by a diverse group of people, proposing a plan for dialogue on issues of common interest to the Guatemalan people. Guatemala de la Asunción, February 2002.

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Addition five: Budget and donations:

One of the government's commitments under the Education for All Programme is to accord special importance to the national education budget. This commitment has not been fulfilled and it is a matter of concern for the different projects, which are at risk of being suspended for lack of funding. The final section of the executive report on prospects for meeting the Dakar commitments makes recommendations for full compliance. PRODESSA and Action Aid drew up the report.

Among other things, the government is called upon to abide by its commitment to increase public spending on education in a sustained and sustainable manner, as a national priority. It is also called upon to strengthen education policies, as well as action and resource-distribution plans, based on the criteria of equity and transparency, without overburdening the poorest sectors of the population with indirect costs.

* Acuerdos de Paz. Universidad Rafael Landívar Tercera Edición 1998 p. 244

International cooperation bodies are requested to recommend an increase in public spending on education as a government commitment.

International financial institutions are advised to review their policies and plans to guarantee that these do not transfer costs to the poorest sectors of the population. They should also facilitate loan terms for education projects and, lastly, implement assessment mechanisms to guarantee the transparent implementation of such projects.

Civil Society is recommended to call for an increase in public spending on education and to implement strategic impact planning to take into account the Dakar commitments and the Peace Accords. It should also demand funding for the operation of the Education Councils.

Forty percent of the funding for the various educational projects comes from loans totalling 48,360 million dollars, whilst the remaining 60% comes from donations totalling 71,258,345 million dollars. The agencies providing most of this funding are USAID, the EU and UNESCO. Loans are made via the World Bank and the International Development Bank.

Guatemala's education budget has always been one of the lowest in the region. According to the national economic research centre, CIEN, public spending on education in Guatemala in 1997 was 1.7% of GDP, followed by the Dominican Republic with 2.3% and the other Central American countries, with higher percentages.

In 2001 education spending was 2.7% of GDP, before a 10% cut reduced it to 2.4%. The education plan as part of the social blueprint for the 2000-2004 social policy states that, as from 2001, MINEDUC, the Ministry of Finance, the Congress of the Republic and civil society should jointly secure a gradual increase in MINEDUC's budget until it reaches 3% of GDP by the end of the period, including investment in physical infrastructure. However, the Congress of the Republic, namely MPs from the ruling FRG party, failed to approve a

budget item to cover the teachers' pay increase authorized by the Executive (case already documented in the report to which these additions are made).

One of the most tangible threats is the lack of funding earmarked for the Dakar goals, since there is no follow-up to these activities, even though they are included in the Education Reform. Without financial support, it is impossible to secure the gradual and continuous development of Guatemala's educational process.