



**USAID**  
DEL PUEBLO DE LOS ESTADOS  
UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA



# GOVERNANCE IN GUATEMALA

## CENTRAL AMERICA STRATEGY

Central America’s security and prosperity is directly linked to the security and prosperity of the United States. Through the U.S. Strategy for Central America, USAID’s assistance addresses the security, governance, and economic drivers of illegal migration to the United States. By reducing crime and violence, addressing corruption and impunity, and providing greater economic opportunity, USAID creates the foundation for Guatemalans to be self-reliant and make their country a prosperous place to thrive, reducing the desire to illegally immigrate.

### OVERVIEW & CHALLENGES

As Guatemala builds towards a brighter future after the 1996 end to its 36-year internal armed conflict, it is hindered by unresolved issues that impede its progress. To date, transparency and accountability in democratic governance are insufficient at all levels of government. Civil society lacks adequate support in organizing its constituents and engaging with government officials. Pathways for participating in local and national government institutions are virtually non-existent, especially for women, youth, and indigenous populations.

A majority of Guatemalans believe there is widespread corruption among public officials, and 1 in 5 citizens have been victims of corruption—a significant factor influencing emigration. Unresolved social conflict impedes economic and social development in communities that need it most. Compounding these issues is the centralization of funds and resources in the capital, to the detriment of over 300 municipalities throughout Guatemala. Tax revenues rank among the lowest in the world, preventing the government from delivering services to its citizens. Further, municipal governments are charged with delivering state services but lack the funding, capacity, and controls to perform.

PHOTO: BENJAMIN ILKA / USAID

## USAID'S RESPONSE

Working closely with government institutions, USAID and its partners implement a wide-range of projects to address governance and democracy issues hindering Guatemala's progress. To reduce illegal immigration, improve governance of key public institutions, and increase civic participation in government functions and oversight, USAID's projects focus on: 1) Providing technical support to municipal and national institutions, and 2) Engaging civil society to promote rule of law, free and fair elections, and transparent and accountable governance and financial management.

### IMPROVED GOVERNANCE

USAID's Consortium for Election & Political Process Strengthening program (CEPPS) works with government and civil society to implement democratic reforms, advance positive political change through inclusion, and conduct observation to ensure free and fair elections. By building the capacity of Guatemalan political and civic leaders, CEPPS facilitates the introduction of civil society's proposals into legislation, increasing the likelihood that laws will be responsive to citizens' needs. The Law on Elections and Political Parties and the Organic Law on Congress are two such examples of joint legislation drafted by the government and civil society. CEPPS has enhanced the ability of the government to develop effective and informed public policies, while creating the opportunity for civil society to influence decision-making and political processes.

### INCREASED CIVIC PARTICIPATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Communities Leading Development project (CLD), empowers communities to create development plans to define and implement their own priorities. By identifying their needs, and a means to address them, communities strengthen social cohesion in an inclusive environment, and build alliances with the public and private sectors for community development. This is creating high impact, entrepreneurial projects in agriculture, business, and value chains in 200 CLD communities in the Western Highlands—Guatemala's most impoverished region with the highest emigration rates.

### SUPPORT TO COMMUNITIES & GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Nexos Locales (*meaning Local Networks in English*) strengthens the capacity of municipalities to deliver responsive, inclusive, and effective socioeconomic development by encouraging active civic engagement in the decision-making processes in local government. USAID supports Nexos Locales to bolster the ability of municipal governments and civil society to respond to individual citizen needs in the areas of natural resource management, food security, health, and public financial management. The implementation of this project in municipalities in the Western Highlands has increased the degree of civic participation and transparency in governance.

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To learn more about USAID's work in Guatemala, please visit our website at [www.usaid.gov/guatemala](http://www.usaid.gov/guatemala)

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