



# ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

## I DECIDE PARTICIPATE, TRANSFORM, AND PREVENT

### Paz Joven, Guatemala

**WINNER – Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean**

The initiative I Decide was launched in March 2013 with the objective of working alongside municipal governments to tackle the problems of adolescent pregnancy, sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. The project intends to break away from conservative models and legitimize processes developed by adolescents and young adults through various activities coordinated with local and national entities. To date, the initiative has managed to involve 11,000 direct beneficiaries, and an estimated 5,000 indirect beneficiaries.

#### **The problem**

In Guatemala, adolescents are familiar with contraceptive methods but scarcely use them, leading to high risks of unwanted pregnancy. The most vulnerable young men and women are those who live in rural areas, come from poor households, and have low levels of education. According to the 2008-2009 National Maternal and Child Health Survey, 28% of women between 15 and 19 years old had already had their first sexual encounter; for young men of the same age, the percentage was 38.2%.

#### **Approach of the Initiative**

Paz Joven Guatemala began its work by carrying out gender-sensitive, community-based research to better understand and identify the specific causes directly related with high teenage pregnancy rates (e.g. machismo, partner pressures, lack of use of contraceptive methods, etc.).

In the following phases of the initiative, an innovative campaign was implemented through

the use of information technology, such as the production of short films and the use of SMS to share statistical data. The mobile-based methodology implemented by Paz Joven Guatemala won the World Youth Summit Award in the “Women’s Empowerment” category. To date, the organization has implemented more than 350 peer education and awareness workshops on subjects such as reproductive sexual health, STI-HIV, and pregnancy prevention among adolescents in public institutes and schools, reaching more than 10,000 adolescents and young adults. Paz Joven Guatemala organized several festivals in commemoration of the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Day, securing more than 80 organizations to raise awareness and disseminate findings from local research and peer education workshops.

#### **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

- Promote reflections and create learning materials relevant to Mayan and other minority youth: The initiative applied different strategies of raising awareness among the different

Paz Joven Guatemala is an organization of young people for young people with presence in 25 municipalities of the country. Its objective is to promote and create training and educational opportunities for young people in Culture of Peace values, leadership, volunteer service, political participation and inclusion in the formal decision-making processes at the municipal and national levels.



[www.pazjoven.org](http://www.pazjoven.org)





## Observations of evaluators and collaborating agencies

“This is an interesting approach in behavior change and the implementation of a broad range of interventions. Furthermore, the use of SMS and innovative methods for transmitting key messages is fantastic.”

“The ability of Paz Joven to be articulated in governmental initiatives demonstrates its relevance. Paz Joven has received the recognition of national authorities through its inclusion in the Specific Youth Cabinet in representation of civil society, and spearheading processes such as the National Plan for the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy, or the National Youth Policy initiative.”

“It is a good practice because it represents a space organized by young people, promoting their leading role and establishing a democratic way of incorporating young adults and adolescents to processes that in the past have been reserved for adults and adult men.”

cultural groups, taking into account lifestyle differences and the structure of community organizations. Special attention was given to translate materials into locally spoken languages to better facilitate understanding and learning within these communities.

- **Effective dissemination of information on sexuality, adolescent pregnancy, STIs and HIV through access to contraceptive methods and comprehensive education on sexuality:**

Despite initial resistance, the innovative utilization of information technology such as text messaging and videos has shown to be a useful and effective tool in drawing the attention not only of young people, but of the community in general.

- **Ensuring that local authorities prioritize the issue as a serious problem in their agendas:**

Strategic partnership with the National Youth Board enabled the organization’s participation in the development of the National Plan to Prevent Pregnancies. Participation required continuous work with 17 local governments and municipal youth offices, women’s offices, and citizen protection networks. Requests for financial commitments to teen pregnancy prevention are sought through constant follow-up with local and national authorities.

- **Promote intergenerational relationships between young people and adults:**

The participatory and structured methodology for full participation is fundamental in achieving the initiative’s objectives, and promotes interdisciplinarity of the educational processes. The participation of teachers has also been fundamental in including comprehensive sex education in formal education, with a view to

contributing to awareness and behavioral change in the practice of healthy sexuality.

## Results

To date, mid-term and summative evaluations have been carried out in order to measure the impact and identify project achievements according to the expected outcomes. Some of the most noteworthy actions to date have been: 1) work agreements with more than 10 municipalities and CONJUVE; 2) the development of the Young Volunteers for Comprehensive Health Strategy to strengthen differentiated care in youth-friendly spaces; 3) the consolidation of a network comprising approximately 250 young volunteers working in human development activities; 4) information on the initiative and the problem of adolescent pregnancy transmitted through community communications media, such as radio and opinion columns; 5) community research on adolescent pregnancy; 6) recognition of adolescents and young adults as protagonists and agents of change in their communities; 7) use of new technologies for the promotion and awareness of the problem.



Facebook: Paz Joven-Guatemala



Twitter: @PazJovenGt

[www.pazjoven.org](http://www.pazjoven.org)

The Regional Contest: “Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean” organized by the World Bank, proposes to discover, document and share innovative, effective and sustainable initiatives that address key gender challenges within the region in the target areas of (i) Teenage Pregnancy, (ii) Gender-based violence and (iii) Women’s participation in decision-making. The following initiative is one of the finalists of its category, among more than 150 initiatives received from 16 countries. This initiative is supported by the World Bank Group’s Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality, a multi-donor facility designed to strengthen awareness, knowledge, and capacity for gender-informed policy making.



# ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

## ASK THE EXPERT

### Think Action Development, Mexico

#### HONOURABLE MENTION – Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean

Launched in March 2013, the Ask the Expert initiative strives to give young people the necessary information and tools for better decision-making regarding their sexuality with a view of preventing adolescent pregnancy. The initiative seeks to reach young people in the media they frequently consult – Google search engine, internet portals and conferences – in order to increase the quality of information pertinent to decisions on sexual health and activity.

#### The Problem

According to data from the National Statistics and Geography Institute (INEGI), there were 2.2 million births in Mexico in 2012, of which 16.4% were to teenage mothers between 15 and 19 years old. The National Survey on Demographic Dynamics (ENADID, 2009) states that 97% of pregnant adolescents acknowledge having some type of knowledge of contraceptive methods; but poor young women, especially from rural populations, indigenous communities, and marginal urban areas in Mexico, have fewer schooling opportunities and lack access to information and services to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

#### Approach of the Initiative

TAD recognizes the need to include both men and women in information provision about sexual and reproductive health, and developed content for both male and female audiences: 1) expert responses in juvenile discussion portals; 2) "Ask the Expert" section in the

institutional website; 3) strategic partnerships with dissemination channels (Notmusa, Google, CEFIM, Sanborns); and 4) conferences and informational materials, including free copies of the Ask the Expert book at secondary schools.

Ask the Expert provides young people access to materials by 20 volunteer specialists from a variety of professional backgrounds - lawyers, physicians and psychologists - who respond to the questions of young people on the subject of sexuality and adolescent pregnancy through different communications media. Through the Google Grants project, TAD has carried out two campaigns on contraceptive methods and the morning-after pill.

#### Challenges and Lessons Learned

- The evidence shows that despite having the information, the majority of young people decide not to use contraceptive methods: This initiative attempts to fill key knowledge

TAD (THINK · ACTION · DEVELOPMENT) is a Mexican think tank that specializes in the analysis and generation of strategic proposals related to public policies for the empowerment of women and strengthening of families.



[www.tad.org.mx](http://www.tad.org.mx)





### Observations of evaluators and collaborating agencies

“The Ask the Expert project is an example of good practices that our company should support. It is comprehensive and offers a creative and innovative way of approaching youth, and succeeds in communicating key issues for their development and personal growth; a distinguishing characteristic that has a national impact in our country.”

“There are many blogs and pages that offer similar support; however, the huge problem is that those that back them do not tend to have the ethical bases of TAD, as well as the care and the quality of the experts providing the responses.”

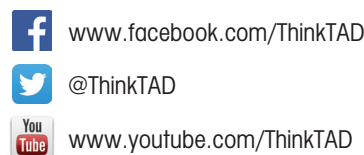
“TAD has promoted an important network of partnerships among experts on the subject, communications media, Internet portal, social networks and groups of adolescents, which has contributed enormously to the success of the initiative.”

gaps and influence critical thinking regarding the risks of unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases. TAD recognizes the benefit of Internet conversations, where anonymity increases youth willingness to pose questions without fear of embarrassment.

- **Availability of information in various Internet portals:** Online youth magazines receive thousands of daily visits from young people; and partnerships have been forged to include relevant sexual and reproductive health-related contents.
- **Lack of economic resources:** Partnerships with private companies, civil society organizations and entrepreneurs committed to the well-being of Mexican youth provided financing to publish the Ask the Expert book.
- **Timely and adequate training through the platform:** Previously forged partnerships were evaluated to avoid replication of resources and efforts. TAD sought experts familiar with the needs of young people to ensure youth-friendly content.

### Results

To date, the initiative has reached 462,200 young people through the portal, juvenile magazines, campaigns in the Google search engine, and the website. Six conferences have been held with average attendance of 200 students per conference. According to the metrics of Google Adwords, a total of 65,000 young men and women have consulted the Web page. The Morning-after Pill campaign, in particular, was visited by 26,943 teenagers. Each question posted in portals frequented by adolescents is visited, on average, by approximately 5,000 adolescents. The questions posed come from both men and women, reflecting interest of sexes in information pertinent to sexual and reproductive health.



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# ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

## REDUCING THE RISK IN THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF WOMEN

Oriéntame Foundation, Colombia

**FINALIST – Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean**

The “Reducing the risk in sexual and reproductive health of women, especially among young women” initiative, launched in 2010 in partnership with social and community workers, seeks to increase the dissemination of information and resources to poor adolescents in the cities of Bogotá, Pereira, and Soacha in order to ensure that young women have access to safe sexual and reproductive health services (SSR). At the individual level, it encourages the capacity and action of women regarding their reproductive decisions; and at the grassroots level, develops strategic partnerships to increase access to health services and improve reproductive rights.

### The Problem

The National Demography and Health Survey of 2010 highlight the persistence of high numbers of adolescent pregnancies in Colombia. One out of five women aged 15 to 19 has been pregnant; 16% are already mothers and 4% are expecting their first child. A study published by the Guttmacher Institute indicates that, despite the achievements concerning the use of contraceptive methods in Colombia, 67% of all the pregnancies in 2008 were not planned. From 1989 to 2008 the number of induced abortions increased by one third. Despite the decision by the Constitutional Court in 2006 to permit legal abortions in Colombia under certain circumstances, 99.9% of abortions are still performed illegally. These clandestine procedures pose health hazards to women: an estimated one-third of women who interrupt their pregnancies experiment complications that require medical care. Unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions jeopardize the health and development opportunities of women in Colombia and

produce negative gender equality outcomes, especially among young and poor women who face stigmatization and additional barriers to care.

### Approach of the Initiative

The actions of the initiative, based on social and risk analysis, seek to mitigate the health complications that unsafe abortions may cause and to prevent the personal and social consequences of unwanted pregnancies. In this regard, the actions are aimed at increasing the social capital available in the communities through the following strategies:

- Foster relations of solidarity and cooperation to promote self-confidence among women and to develop community partnerships that serve as information channels to women.
- Improve knowledge of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) from various actors through tools to disseminate women’s rights and prevent pregnancies at an early age, unwanted pregnancies, and unsafe abortions.

Private organization that provides sexual and reproductive health services to women, girls, and adolescents who require professional and humane quality care in the prevention and treatment of Unwanted Pregnancy (UP), treatment for voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (VIP) and contraceptive methods.

*Oriéntame*

[www.orientame.org.co](http://www.orientame.org.co)





### Observations of evaluators and collaborating agencies

“This initiative has become an important referent for women and is known as a process with a high level of legitimacy and participation within the country.”

“The quality of the implementation and the professionalism of the staff is clearly reflected in the quantitative and qualitative results of the initiative.”

“There are several sensitization processes on sexual and reproductive rights, however, unlike this initiative, they do not have the objective of developing networks and facilitating access.”

- Facilitate access to reproductive health services, ensuring that poor young women receive contraceptive counseling services, legal abortion services, and comprehensive care in the face of unwanted pregnancies.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

- The lack of knowledge on sexual and reproductive rights by women restricted actions of women leaders to disseminate information in their communities and to approach women. This challenge was overcome through training in values, because beyond the lack of knowledge there are also barriers of a personal type with regard to beliefs on sexuality and reproduction.

- Interest of pharmacy personnel to benefit themselves: Many of the pharmacists contacted do not provide information to women on reproductive health services, because their main interest is to sell their products to women. The awareness strategy on the risks of unsafe abortions and the development of relations based on trust through the Oriéntame foundation helped to mobilize a collective interest to guarantee access to safe health services and to prevent threats to women’s health.

- Initial barriers to the acceptance of the initiative: Since SRH is a subject heavily influenced by social norms, beliefs and myths, there was no guarantee that leaders and pharmacies sensitive to the problem of unwanted pregnancies could be identified

and that they would be willing to become referents in their communities. The strategy to overcome these obstacles was to create relations based on trust and a commitment to the work on behalf of women.

### Results

- Creation of a solidarity network of referents in SRH. It is comprised of 23 female leaders and 200 committed pharmacists to disseminate the rights and access to SRH services.
- More than 18,000 women have been informed about their sexual and reproductive rights through the social referents: 30% are women under 18, 38% young women between 18-24 years, and 32% adult women (73% achievement of the expected result).
- Prevention of 2,300 unsafe abortions among women who contacted community leaders and pharmacy staff in search of assistance (76% achievement).
- More than 1,900 social referents informed on the resources and services available to access sexual and reproductive health services (98% achievement of the expected result).
- In the community setting, local associations and boards recognize the female leaders; this is evidenced by requests made to these women to accompany medical brigades and educate on the subject.

 [www.facebook.com/pages/Fundaci%C3%B3n-Ori%C3%A9ntame/157080284391723](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Fundaci%C3%B3n-Ori%C3%A9ntame/157080284391723)

 [www.youtube.com/user/FundacionOrientame](https://www.youtube.com/user/FundacionOrientame)

 [vimeo.com/orientame](https://vimeo.com/orientame)

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# ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY EMPOWERMENT OF ADOLESCENT MOTHERS

Juan Felipe Gómez Escobar Foundation, Colombia

**FINALIST – Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean**

The “Empowerment of adolescent mothers living in extreme poverty in Cartagena de Indias” initiative was launched in 2005, and its purpose is to strengthen adolescent mothers and enable them to overcome the long-term challenges that early pregnancy can produce. The initiative provides adolescent mothers the necessary tools to facilitate their entry into the labor market, to gain a stable source of income, and to improve their quality of life and that of their families.

## The Problem

Women in Cartagena are particularly at a disadvantage compared with women from other regions of the country due to the predominantly paternalistic culture and high indices of marginalization and ethnic discrimination, particularly of Afro-Colombian women. In addition to social obstacles, adolescent mothers must also overcome challenges related to poverty. Young mothers struggle to access formal education, and when they do it is in schools of poor educational quality. Access to information pertinent to sexual and reproductive health is scant; and high unemployment rates limit the availability of high-quality jobs.

## Approach of the Initiative

The Foundation created a comprehensive intervention model comprising three phases:

**Phase I: First Pregnancy of Adolescent Mothers Program.** Provides psychosocial support to young women (70% of program), and offers training in a productive trade (30% of program).

**Phase II: Adolescent Mothers Follow-up Program.** Education and training of young mothers is prioritized in this phase, with the aim to provide the necessary tools for their successful insertion into the labor market.

**Phase III: Office of Employment and Entrepreneurship.** Support to young mothers in the process of seeking stable employment. In parallel, mothers and their children receive medical and nutritional support.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

**The Foundation’s target population (adolescent mothers):** The Foundation spends significant time monitoring and encouraging young women in order to avoid program dropouts. These young women, who are in a vulnerable stage of life and precarious home situations, often require extra attention and accompaniment.

**Results of the impact of the intervention:** Often, donors want to see short-term results, despite the fact that work with vulnerable populations require a certain margin of flexibility, time, and

The Juan Felipe Gómez Escobar Foundation works to improve the quality of life of the infant and adolescent population living in poverty in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. The main objectives of the Foundation are the reduction of infant mortality and the empowerment of adolescent mothers living in extreme poverty.



[www.juanfe.org](http://www.juanfe.org)





### Observations of evaluators and collaborating agencies

“Not only has the foundation managed to significantly reduce infant mortality in the city with the highest levels in the country, but it has also empowered these mothers, the majority of them adolescent to change their paradigm of life and thus break the cycle of poverty in which they live.

“It is important that this project continues to be replicated to help not only the poor adolescent mothers of Cartagena, but to extend this comprehensive intervention model to other latitudes.”

perseverance. Furthermore, based on the experience of the Foundation, breaking away from cycles of poverty requires the implementation of a comprehensive intervention, in which all the dimensions of the life of the beneficiaries must be given equal priority.

**Lack of support from the partner and/or the family of the beneficiary:** In order to raise awareness among partners and families, taking into account the culture and the local context, the Foundation designed a series of workshops involving different members of the community to also make them part of the process of the young women, emphasizing that the success of the young woman also implies success for the family and the community.

### Results

Today, after almost 7 years of implementation, the Foundation states that it has a model for measurable, replicable, and scalable interventions.

- To date, more than 2,600 adolescent mothers have benefited.
- The Adolescent Mothers Follow-up Program has trained more than 680 women through workshops, technical, and college careers. At present, 76% of these women study and/or work.

- Since the creation of the Office of Employment and Entrepreneurship in 2012, more than 250 mothers have been employed thanks to the efforts of this office.

The Foundation performs, on the one hand, a quantitative accountability on the basis of indicators of the expected goals and, on the other, a qualitative accountability through testimonies and surveys performed with the beneficiary young women to verify that the programs meet the quality targets. Moreover, a baseline is under development to carry out an impact assessment in 2015 thanks to financing received from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). This evaluation will be an essential tool to replicate the intervention model in other Colombian cities and other countries of the region.

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# ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY EMPOWERED YOUTH Alas Association, Guatemala

**FINALIST – Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean**

The Empowered Youth initiative of ALAS Guatemala began in 2013 with the objective of carrying out educational and training activities on reproductive and sexual health, aimed mainly at adolescents, families, teachers, and community leaders. ALAS also funds health staff and mobile medical clinics to communities to support the distribution of family planning methods and to treat health problems, such as sexually transmitted diseases.

## The Problem

In Guatemala, adolescents often lack adequate information on sexual and reproductive health and about the services available to exercise their rights in this area. As a result, adolescent girls and, in particular, indigenous women, suffer above average indices of high-risk pregnancies, maternal mortality, inequality, and gender violence, which limit their access to socioeconomic opportunities. Globally, Guatemala has the 29th highest adolescent fertility rate. According to official sources, in the first five months of 2014, the country recorded more than 79,000 pregnancies of girls and adolescents.

## Approach of the Initiative

ALAS, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Education, identified areas in the country with high indices of adolescent pregnancy and maternal mortality, and contacted schools and teachers to carry out a series of seminars for teens on the subjects of gender violence, reproductive rights,

and romantic relationships. Furthermore, teachers and parents also received a series of training sessions to understand the importance of talking with youth on these subjects. ALAS pays special attention to indigenous women, providing support to increase their self-esteem and decision-making power, encouraging them to defend their rights as women at the community level.

In 2015, ALAS plans to extend its services to adolescents who do not attend school through a network of peer leaders in order to ensure that this vulnerable population can access information and safe spaces to discuss issues affecting them.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **Social barriers in the communities:** Individuals from rural areas, mainly women, face patriarchal social norms that limit their participating in social activities and control over their sexual and reproductive rights. ALAS relied on key community leaders and the consent of the male heads of households for

The Asociación Alas of Guatemala, ALAS, provides Guatemalan families, mainly in rural and indigenous areas, an opportunity to improve the quality of their lives by providing adequate information on sexual and reproductive health and complete access to family planning services.



[www.wingsguate.org](http://www.wingsguate.org)





## Observations of evaluators and collaborating agencies

“The training processes developed by ALAS are both dynamic and trustworthy, and the instructors have clear learning objectives that ensure attendees participate actively as protagonists and not as spectators.”

“ALAS has grown throughout the country by its own institutional effort and its work is high quality and very relevant.”

“I have visited some rural communities where ALAS works and have been very impressed listening to very moving stories from women telling how ALAS has changed their lives after having acquired control over their fertility and the tools to negotiate with their partners about reproductive decisions.”

their children’s participation in educational seminars. Local staff was hired with in-depth knowledge of the culture and the language spoken in the communities to ensure full confidentiality and privacy of participants when they seek information and health services.

- **School-teacher coordination:** Logistical and sustainability problems associated with school involvement was solved through the creation of partnerships with the local offices of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry helped identify schools in project intervention areas, and assisted in the implementation of the program of activities.

- **Reluctance to participate:** In Alta Verapaz, it was observed that a large number of adolescents seemed reluctant to participate actively in the educational seminars compared to adolescents from other areas. ALAS adapted the curriculum to incorporate leadership competencies, self-esteem, and empowerment in order to tackle the shyness and the fear induced by social stigmas. Undoubtedly, the emphasis on leadership raised the interest and commitment of the teenagers and established the bases of a young leaders’ network.

## Results

To date, ALAS has provided sex and reproductive health education through more than 600 seminars in schools to more than 7,800 youths between 10 and 19 years old. These seminars have demonstrated that, on average, 39% of the attendees have increased their knowledge on these subjects and, in general, 93% were satisfied with the contents. The number of teenagers who received information represented 84% of the target established for a two-year period, which is expected to reach 100% by the end of 2014. During this time, more than 2,600 users, 11% of which were adolescents between 15 and 19 years old, have had access to a wide range of contraceptive methods facilitated by ALAS.

ALAS has created a monitoring and evaluation strategy and established a series of annual indicators for each activity of the program, which will be compared with a baseline collected in 2013. ALAS will measure the direct impact of the different programs on fertility rates, reported gender violence, and the participation of women in decision-making. Between 2013 and 2014, ALAS has prevented approximately 10,444 unwanted pregnancies and 2,268 unsafe abortions, with savings of approximately \$333,217 to families and health service providers.

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