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ABSTRACT

Despite advances in primary school enrollment and completion in recent years, school completion in rural areas of Guatemala is low. The problem is especially severe among indigenous female students, where only about one in eight completes primary school. In 1997, the Guatemalan government launched an ambitious program designed to assist poor indigenous girls to remain in primary school (grades 1-4). In partnership with several nongovernmental organizations, a scholarship delivery system was created that was to reach 36,000 female students over 5 years. This paper examines the partnership arrangement, the relative costs of the program, and its success in increasing girls' school persistence. Promotion rates among children who began school in 1997 in the eight departments targeted by the scholarship program showed that the program had little effect on first-year wastage, an extremely serious problem in rural Guatemala. Over 40 percent of rural first-graders were not promoted, regardless of whether or not their schools were scholarship recipients. Schools with scholarship recipients had higher rates of promotion into fourth and fifth grades than did nonrecipient schools. In recipient schools, 17 percent of students received scholarships, but there was only a 2 percent difference in fourth-grade completion between schools with scholarship holders and those without. The difference in cost per fourth-grade graduate between recipient and nonrecipient schools was about twice the individual scholarship amount for 4 years. (Author/SV)

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Despite advances in primary school coverage in recent years, school completion in rural areas is low. The problem is especially severe among indigenous female students, where only about one in eight completes primary school. In 1997, the Guatemalan government launched an ambitious program designed to assist poor indigenous girls to remain in primary school. In partnership with several non-governmental organizations, a scholarship delivery system was created that was to reach 36,000 female students over five years. This paper examines the partnership arrangement, the relative costs of the program and its success in increasing girls' school persistence. **Descriptors**: primary education; girls' education; scholarships; government/non-government partnerships.

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Girls' education has been identified as a key component in improving economic and social well-being. It is well documented that investment in the education of girls contributes to increased productivity and labor force participation, decreased fertility and infant mortality, and increased child health (Florio and Wolf, 1990; King and Hill, 1993; Schultz, 1998). Private rates of return, measured as the proportionate increase in wages associated with an additional year of schooling, tend to be similar for men and women. However, it has been shown that where there is a systematic difference between estimates of private rates of return, the difference generally favors women (Schultz, 1998). This is especially true in countries where women receive significantly less education than men (Schultz, 1995).

Despite the generally recognized positive social and private outcomes from girls' enrollment and persistence in primary school, rates for girls are lower than that of boys in many developing countries. Although patterns may vary in individual countries, the problems of girls' access to school, the number of years completed by girls, academic performance, and accomplishment upon leaving school are common across many developing nations. Multiple supply and demand factors have been identified as contributing to girls not enrolling in and not completing primary school. Government fiscal and management capability as well as educational systems that reinforce stereotypes about female roles and low academic performance or provide uncomfortable physical and social environments for girls have been identified as supply-side constraints. Poverty and the related factors of direct and opportunity costs to families are seen as depressing demand. The direct costs of schooling in terms of tuition, books, uniforms, and the like have been found to be a deterrent to girls' enrolling in school in many low income countries and in high poverty areas, such as the rural hinterlands, within countries (Filmer 1999). Relatively high opportunity costs resulting from girls' contributions to household labor also influence families' decisions about sending girls to school (Odaga and Heneveld, 1995). Additionally, households may view the schooling of girls as irrelevant, given the perception of their reproductive and household labor roles as adults (Tietjen and Prather, 1991; King and Hill, 1993).

Demand-side financing has been an important strategy used by countries and development agencies to promote female education in recent years. Such financing attempts to decrease private costs for schooling and often includes the promotion of parental choice. Demand side financing can take a number of forms including stipends, community financing, targeted bursaries, vouchers, student loans and community grants. However, one of the more popular mechanisms has been stipends or scholarships given by governments or civil society organizations directly to children and their families to help cover some of the estimated private costs of schooling (Patrinos and Ariasingam, 1996).

Scholarships have been offered to girls in a number of developing countries. Many of the initial scholarship programs for girls were in Asia where upper primary and secondary school are not free or travel costs are prohibitive. Programs in India, Nepal, China and Bangladesh were generally directed at regions or groups in poverty and there is some evidence that such programs increased the persistence of girls already in school (Tietjen and Prather, 1991). Perhaps the best documented program is that for female secondary students in Bangladesh. Started in 1981 with USAID funding, it had expanded from a single NGO offering scholarships to girls in secondary school to 3,366 schools and 187,320 girls supported by World Bank funding, by 1996 (Liang, 1996). The project was found to have an impact on enrollment, attendance and dropout, as well as reproductive behavior of recipients.

Evaluation of a program in Malawi, which included fee waivers and scholarships for girls, found that these strategies contributed to increased primary school enrollments and persistence (CDIE, 1999). There have been a number of recent programs in different geographical regions to use scholarships targeted at poor populations to improve the likelihood of persistence in school among children. Civil society organizations in Morocco have launched a small scholarship program to allow rural girls to attend secondary school (Williams, 2001) and World Bank supported programs in Indonesia, Nicaragua, Panama, and Colombia (World Bank a, b, c, d, 2002) all target poor children of primary school age, although not specifically girls.

Girls' Scholarship Programs in Guatemala

Guatemala has a relatively long experience with the provision of scholarships for girls in primary schools. Beginning in 1987, the Guatemala Association for Sexual Education (*Asociación Guatemalteca de Educación Sexual—AGES*) project funded by USAID provided scholarships of about $4 per month to Indigenous girls attending primary school. The primary objective of the program was to delay reproduction and marriage. The scholarship was allotted to the families of each daughter who did not become pregnant. The project had regular visits by social workers, parent training and community involvement in evaluating results. The program was relatively small, serving between 1500 and 3000 girls, but was highly successful in encouraging girls to stay in school.

The success of the AGES project led to an additional USAID investment in scholarships for Indigenous girls in primary school. This effort, Educate Girls (*Eduque a la Niña*), was a controlled experiment conducted in partnership with the philanthropic foundation of the Association of Sugar Growers. The three-year project (1994-1996) tested different incentive packages in 36 communities in six departments of the country (Alta Verapaz, Chimaltenango, El Quiché, San Marcos, Huehuetenango, and Suchitéquez) where the gap between girls' and boys' primary school enrollment was the greatest. The purpose of the experiment was to determine cost-effective strategies for promoting girls' attendance and completion of primary school. Three incentive packages of 1) a small ($4.00 per month) scholarship combined with community outreach workers (Mayan women) assigned to assist in the organization of parent committees and to provide academic support to the girls; 2) outreach workers who formed parent committees and provided support to girls, but without a scholarship component; and motivational classroom materials for girls in Spanish and Mayan. Twelve schools with similar characteristics to those receiving incentives were also chose to form a comparison group. An evaluation of the experiment program found that only the scholarship program positively affected completion rates, which were at least 10% higher than those of all other groups (Chesterfield and Rubio, 1997). However, when the evaluators projected the costs to produce a sixth grade graduate, total cost was over Q2000 higher than that of the comparison group. The evaluators suggested that the nature of the project as a research and development effort may have produced higher costs than necessary.

The Ministry of Education also initiated a scholarship program for girls in the upper primary grades during the same period. This program, which was administered through the Regional and Departmental Education Directorates, was ruled ineffective because it was too disperse, there were not consistent criteria established for selection of scholarship recipients, and directorate personnel lacked experience in administering funds to communities, leading to charges of corruption (Delpino, 1999).

An outgrowth of both of these efforts and the focus of this study is The Scholarship Program for Rural Indigenous Girls, begun in 1997. This program is an important example of a partnership in the effective use of national resources to promote girls' education. The program involved Congressionally mandated funds administered through the Guatemala Ministry of Education that totaled Q $45,000,000 (about US$7.5 million) over five years. The perceived success of this program also generated civil society support for scholarships for rural indigenous girls that totaled Q $2,525,000 over the same period of 1997-2001.

As a result of the problems encountered in administering its girls' scholarship program, the Ministry of Education contracted with the *Asociación Eduquemos a la Niña*, an NGO formed to build support for girls' education, in collaboration with one of its member organizations, FUNRURAL, to organize and implement the program. FUNRURAL, a foundation of the Association of Coffee Growers, Anacafe, had a national coverage of communities, carried out the actual selection of recipients and provision of scholarships in conjunction with local communities, AEN provided technical support and training. The program was to expand from the 5212 girls in 1155 schools under the previous program to 36,000 girls in the first four grades of approximately 2000 rural schools in eight departments. Scholarships provided to girls were to be continued as they advanced in grade. Communities were selected on the basis of economic need, with individual girls selected in terms of need and their interest in receiving a scholarship, as determined by the local selecting group. Girls received about Q $25, or about $4 per month (Nuñez, 1997).

Several evaluations of the program, carried out with a sample of schools in selected departments, have found that scholarship girls have higher promotion rates than girls in rural areas in general (MYSTIC 2000) and attendance is higher among scholarship recipients and they

participate to a greater degree in classroom activities (Delpino, 1999). These studies have not, however, examined the program in general.

Methodology

The data used to examine the effects of girls' scholarships came from the Ministry of Education's EMIS database and FUNRURAL reports. The EMIS provided data on the number of students enrolled in each primary grade, the number who have been promoted from the previous grade, and the number who were repeating a grade. These data were disaggregated by gender, department, Municipio and school. The FUNRURAL data gave the number of girls who were awarded scholarships by school and the year of the award.

The analytic process consisted of a number of steps to convert the format to SPSS followed by an examination of data integrity and the identification of errors. It was necessary to use only the schools that had complete data during the years of the cohort being examined to ensure internal consistency. Thus, schools that did not report enrollments in one or more years, schools that opened, and schools that closed during the period were removed from the analysis sample. Otherwise, completion rates may change significantly from year to year and not reflect the movement of the same cohort of students from grade to grade.

Once the data were converted and cleaned, the completion rates of children in the 1997, or first scholarship cohort, were calculated. As data were only available through the 2000 school year, promotion to fifth grade was the operational definition for completion. National EMIS data were disaggregated to create a file with enrollment in just the rural schools in the eight departments where the scholarships were awarded in 1997. Next, the data on the schools with scholarship recipients from FUNRURAL were merged with the EMIS data, and variables were created to indicate which schools had scholarship recipients by year from 1997 through 2000. A real cohort analysis was performed to show the progress of girls enrolled in first grade in 1997 through the first four grades of primary school. Comparisons were made of the completion rates of girls in schools with scholarship recipients and in rural schools in the target departments without scholarship recipients. We recognize that using all girls in the school underestimates the effects of the scholarship program. However, it was felt that although data on individual children

were not available that given the magnitude of the program, impact should be clear at the class level.

In order to show the magnitude of the program, data on total enrollments by year in the eight scholarship departments were aggregated. Percentages of girls with scholarships per year were calculated based on the number of scholarship awards reported by FUNRURAL. Percentages of scholarship recipients by department, as well as fourth grade completion rates were also calculated

The cost analysis was done using the EMIS enrollment data, Ministry of Education published figures on the annual cost to educate a rural student and the FUNRURAL figures on the amount of each scholarship award. The total cost of educating a non-scholarship girl through the fourth grade was calculated by taking the total enrollment per year and multiply this by the cost per year; this was done for each of the four years, and the sum of the years gave the total cost for these girls over the four years. The cost to educate a girl that reached the fourth grade was calculated by taking the number of girls who were promoted into fifth without repeating a grade divided into the total cost; the same procedure was used to calculate the cost for the scholarship girls, and the annual cost of the scholarships was added to the cost reported by the Ministry of Education.

Findings

Table 1 shows the percentage of children who began school in the target departments of the scholarship program in 1997 who were promoted to fifth grade four years later. As can be seen, the scholarship program seems to have had little effect on first year wastage, an extremely serious problem rural Guatemala. Promotion rates for schools with scholarship recipients and those without are almost identical in first and second grade. It is promotion from third grade to fourth grade where the impact of the scholarships appears to be felt, as a 4.6% difference in promotion is seen. Higher rates of promotion into fifth grade are also found among girls in schools with scholarship recipients. It is interesting to note that the girls in target schools also have higher promotion rates than the boys in their cohort at each grade level and higher rates than boys in non-scholarship schools. This is also true for girls in non-scholarship schools, with the exception of promotion to fifth grade, when they fall behind boys.

Table 1: Percentage of Children in Scholarship Schools and Non-Scholarship Schools in Target Departments Reaching Fourth Grade in Four Years

Grade	Year	Girls		Boys	
		Scholarship	No Scholarship	Scholarship	No Scholarship
1	1997	57.5%	58.0%	55.4%	55.7%
2	1998	39.3%	39.6%	36.5%	38.4%
3	1999	38.8%	34.2%	34.4%	32.4%
4	2000	31.4%	29.2%	29.9%	30.4%

Source: MINEDUC Unidad de Informática; FUNRURAL 1998

When first grade wastage in subsequent years of the program was examined, percentages remain similar to 1997. Neither girls in the scholarship cohort nor girls in the non-scholarship cohort reached a first grade promotion rate of 60% over the four years of the program. This was true for boys as well as girls.

Table 2 provides the percentage of girls who received scholarships among the population of first through fourth grade girls in the target departments. As can be seen, the percentage of scholarship recipients is fairly consistent over the four years for which data were available. It ranges between 15% and 19% of the population. Project documentation states that there was a focus on first grade during the first year of the project, and girls who were promoted in the first two grades would continue to receive scholarships. Thus the completion rates of the 1997 cohort are lower than might be expected, suggesting that scholarships alone may not be sufficient to encourage girls to stay in school, at least in the early grades.

Table 2: Percentage of the Enrolled Population in Target Departments Receiving Scholarships

Year	enrollments	Scholarships	% Scholarships
1997	152,419	27,073	17.8%
1998	188,683	36,039	19.1%
1999	223,351	36,689	16.4%
2000	238,722	36,689	15.4%

Source: MINEDUC Unidad de Informática; FUNRURAL 1998

Table 3 shows the cost of producing a fourth grade graduate for scholarship and non-scholarship recipients. The costs are somewhat underestimated as they include only the cost of the scholarship and not the operational costs of the program, which were not available. As can be seen, the cost per graduate is about Q1500 higher than that for fourth grade graduates without scholarships. This is close to double the Q875 invested in a single scholarship recipient that makes normal progress to fifth grade.

Table 3: Cost (in Quetzales)of Producing a Fourth Grade Graduate in Scholarship and Non-Scholarship Schools in Target Departments

Grade	Year	Scholarship Status	No. of Girls Enrolled	MOE Annual cost /Student	Annual Scholarship Cost/Student	Total Annual Cost/Student	Total Annual Cost
		no scholarship	53,131	481.01		481.01	25,556,542.31
1	1997	Scholarship	7,764	481.01	140.58	621.59	4,826,025.52
		no scholarship	35,459	390.31		390.31	13,840,002.29
2	1998	Scholarship	5,264	390.31	234.83	625.14	3,290,742.31
		no scholarship	26,868	358.89		358.89	9,642,656.52
3	1999	Scholarship	4,145	358.89	250	608.89	2,523,849.05
		no scholarship	20,595	358.89		358.89	7,391,339.55
4	2000	Scholarship	3,255	358.89	250	608.89	1,981,936.95

Scholarship Status	Total Cost to Reach 4th Grade	No. Girls 4th Grade	Cost/4th Grade Girl
No Scholarship	56,430,540.67	16,579	3,403.74
Scholarship	12,622,553.83	2,582	4,888.67

Source: MINEDUC Unidad de Informática; FUNRURAL 1998

In order to examine regional differences within the country, each of the original target departments were examined separately. As can be seen from Table 4, higher percentages of scholarship recipients do not seem to be related to greater completion, at least with the initial cohort. In Alta Verapaz, which has the highest percentages of recipients, completion rates are only a percentage point higher in schools with scholarship holders than in schools without. El Quiché has the lowest percentage of scholarship recipients and the greatest difference in completion favoring schools with scholarship holders.

Table 4: Percentage with Scholarships and Percentage Entering Fifth Grade after Four Years by Department

Department	% with Scholarships	Reach 4th Grade			
		Girls		Boys	
		no scholarship	scholarship	no scholarship	scholarship
Chimaltenango	17.8%	33.1%	36.2%	34.7%	35.1%
Sololá	23.9%	35.9%	40.5%	37.3%	37.0%
Totonicapán	16.2%	36.5%	36.4%	33.7%	19.6%
San Marcos	15.8%	29.7%	34.6%	31.7%	29.8%
Huehuetenango	15.9%	29.2%	29.1%	32.6%	29.5%
El Quiché	15.1%	22.8%	28.9%	23.3%	28.1%
Baja Verapaz	16.3%	data not available			
Alta Verapaz	27.8%	23.0%	24.2%	23.5%	21.4%
National	17.8%	29.2%	31.4%	30.4%	29.9%

Source: MINEDUC Unidad de Informática; FUNRURAL 1998

Discussion

While the findings must be regarded as tentative, as they do not deal directly with scholarship recipients but rather with the populations of schools containing scholarship recipients, they do suggest that scholarship programs can have an effect on the completion rates of girls in rural settings. Further, this effect seems to be similar across different contexts, as found in the various Guatemalan departments targeted by the Scholarship Program for Rural Indigenous Girls, when the relative investment is similar. However, at least in Guatemala, there will not be a one to one relationship in the percentage of girls receiving scholarships and the percentage of girls making normal progress through primary school. In the case of the first cohort of scholarship recipients, more than 17% of the first to fourth grade population received scholarships. However, only a 2% difference in fourth grade completion between schools with scholarship holders and those without was found.

Providing a financial incentive to families to keep girls in school does not appear to resolve the crucial wastage problem found in first grade of Guatemalan rural schools. More than 40% of first graders are not promoted whether or not they are in schools with a scholarship program. Thus, other factors, at least in Guatemala influence school completion. Although evaluations of the program under study did not look at quality of instruction in ways that were quantifiable, the evaluation of the pilot study did. This study showed that girls' participation in the classroom

changed very little (Chesterfield and Rubio 1997), suggesting at least one factor that may influence completion. Severe economic downturn and adverse climatic conditions in Guatemala, during the period that the scholarships were implemented, may also contribute to wastage.

There is very little to suggest that going to scale, even using a program implementer that already has an infrastructure for scholarship delivery, will reduce the costs of a scholarship program. Because of low completion rates, costs per graduate remained higher than the cost of four years of scholarship plus the normal per student cost, even when program operating costs where not included. Thus, the pilot program evaluators optimism that R&D costs may be higher than when a project was taken to scale were not borne out.

It is important to note that low completion is not only a problem for girls in Guatemalan rural primary schools. Boys have completion rates similar to girls and only about one in three children make normal progress to fifth grade.

Implications

The importance of monitoring scholarship recipients at the individual student level is highlighted by this study. The lack of data on individual scholarship holders forced us to make school level estimates of the program impact. Building in tracking of individual recipients would allow a real cohort analysis to be conducted which would provide greater precision as to the impact of large scale investment in demand-side financing than was possible here.

In Guatemala, where scholarships were provided to girls enrolled in school, the intent is largely one of school completion. However, scholarships alone seem to be insufficient as a strategy to improve school efficiency in that country. Several evaluations of scholarship programs in Guatemala have suggested that school quality for girls is low. Thus, the provision of scholarships may need to be combined with strategies that promote greater participation of girls in the classroom to be effective. An alternative hypothesis is that the small scholarships could not overcome the adverse economic conditions in the country, and girls were removed from schools to contribute to family economic well-being. However, the two evaluations of the project, which

conducted extensive interviews with parents, found no reference to the amounts of the scholarships being insufficient.

Finally, the high wastage in first grade suggests that Guatemala needs a concentrated strategy to help first entrants of either gender be successful in school. As most of the children in the scholarship areas are indigenous, this may mean bilingual early childhood education programs that prepare children for primary schools.

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