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GUATEMALA

SUCCESS STORY

Local government affirms multicultural identity

USAID supports local initiatives to provide better services to indigenous residents.



The Municipality has issued commendations to several entities, including schools, NGOs and church guilds which have supported initiatives to highlight and support cultural plurality. These include the Academy for Mayan Languages, along with a private and public school, a teaching college and “cofradías,” or Church guilds, all of which are engaged in activities in support of indigenous cultures.

USAID’s technical assistance has helped indigenous people to play an important role in the economic, political and social life of Guatemala.

The Peace Accords of 1996 reaffirmed Guatemala’s status as a multicultural, plurilingual, multiethnic country and the reforms to the law on decentralization made clear that cultural diversity would need to be taken into consideration in the formulation of public policy. USAID has provided continued support to programs that help governments engage in activities that seek to affirm these concepts.

In order to be more accessible to indigenous residents, the Municipality has translated all of the office signs into K’iche. Furthermore, the municipality plans on setting up at the municipal entrance a kiosk with individualized, electronic attention to citizens. Information regarding how to conduct business with the municipality will be available in Spanish and K’iche and municipal staff will be present to answer questions regarding the use of the kiosk.

In addition, Santa Cruz del Quiche’s Municipal Development Council (COMUDE), which has been receiving assistance from USAID, passed a regulation that all written materials emitted by the COMUDE have to be provided in both Spanish and K’iche.

On March 22, 2007 Santa Cruz del Quiche was recognized by the Institute for Municipal Development (INFOM) at its 50th Anniversary as the only municipality in Guatemala who has successfully incorporated multiculturalism into its municipal operations. USAID will be systematizing this experience and developing a guide which can be used by other municipalities in Guatemala.