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## The puzzle of debutant INGO participation in Guatemala's National Reading Program Leamos Juntos: A comparative and multi-sited case study

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The puzzle of *debutant* INGO participation in Guatemala's National Reading Program  
*Leamos Juntos: A comparative and multi-sited case study*

A Dissertation Presented

by

JACOB AARON CARTER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2023

College of Education

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by  
JACOB AARON CARTER

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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to Theresa Nowak Carter, without whom this dissertation could not have happened. Thank you for coming to Guatemala, for your ongoing support, love, humor, patience, and encouragement. You have brought our three amazing boys into this world since the time we started this program, and I am forever in awe of your grace and generosity of spirit. Thank you and I love you.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE PUZZLE OF DEBUTANT INGO PARTICIPATION IN GUATEMALA'S NATIONAL READING PROGRAM *LEAMOS JUNTOS*: A COMPARATIVE AND MULTI-SITED CASE STUDY

SEPTEMBER 2023

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The dynamics of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) working in Guatemala can be understood as *processual*, evolving with and being shaped by social and cultural events in Guatemala and around the world. Central to understanding these dynamics is NGOs' historical relationship to the State, which has ranged from collaborative to homicidal. However, as the number and activity of NGOs increase globally and in Guatemala, specifically within the education sector, some scholars characterize them less by their opposition to the State and more by their provision of education and myriad affiliations with the State.

The purpose of this dissertation is to situate and then analyze *debutant* INGO participation in a State-sponsored education program. This dissertation presents and then draws upon the conceptualization of NGOTenango in Guatemala, specifically exploring *debutant* INGO participation in the national reading program, a multi-stakeholder partnership for education (MSPE) called *Leamos Juntos (Let's Read Together)*. Then, this dissertation investigates factors that support and/or hinder *debutant* INGO participation along with strategies for increasing supportive factors and decreasing barriers to INGO participation. I employ a comparative and multi-sited case study

approach with a focus on three *debutant* INGOs and three different public education departments in Guatemala.

This case study suggests that there are specific supportive factors and barriers to *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. The conclusions lay out a series of supportive factors and barriers for *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* along with strategies to reduce barriers and increase supportive factors. The findings highlight and show how different factors—specific to the INGOs, departments, schools, the *Leamos Juntos* program itself, existing challenges in the education system, and the phenomenon of *NGOtenango*—affect how participation takes shape. Furthermore, the ways in which *debutant* INGOs appropriate policy can affect how local schools engage in that policy. The findings also show how public education staff and INGO staff view participation and collaboration differently and, at times, at odds with each other. This case study provides granular detail of how *debutant* INGOs and public education staff navigate decision-making around INGO participation in Guatemala and provides guidance for practice and policy.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

Although the mineral rich soil in Guatemala is known for its exceptional agricultural qualities, the earth also holds the particulates of a genocidal past from which exhumations reveal a terroristic state and the violence endured over generations. Just as the soil produces and supports ecological biodiversity, Guatemala's complex social and political history has intermingled with global education reforms to create a fertile ecosystem in which countless nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have sprouted up as humanitarian actors and social service providers. In this sense, the dynamics of NGOs working in Guatemala can be understood as *processual*, evolving with and being shaped by social and cultural events in Guatemala and around the world.

Central to understanding the dynamics of NGOs working in Guatemala is their historical relationship to the State, which has ranged from collaborative to homicidal. During the 36-year civil war from 1960 – 1996, NGOs were targeted by the State because of their activist work and their engagement with opposition forces (CIA, 1995; Sollis, 1995). Although direct violence against NGOs has decreased since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, persecution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century includes antagonism towards particular types of NGOs that take direct aim at state sanctioned social and economic activities (Amnesty International, 2016; BBC, 2017; Cardelle, 2003; OHCHR, 2021). Although many NGOs continue to openly challenge the State, not all NGOs take an oppositional stance towards power structures and policies that create the misery they seek to ameliorate (Klees, 2002; Mundy & Murphy, 2001; Banks, Hulme & Edwards, 2015).



In fact, as the number and activity of NGOs increase globally, and specifically within the education sector, some scholars characterize them less by their opposition to the State and more by their provision of education and myriad affiliations with the State (Batley & Rose, 2010; Rose, 2011). This juxtaposition demonstrates the complex dynamics of NGO-State relationships, particularly when considering the current terrain of NGOs as both a product of and contestation to neoliberal education reforms.

Neoliberalism has taken shape in different ways around the globe and has uniquely affected Latin America (Molyneaux, 2008). Neoliberal education reforms have been grounded in market-based logics of competition, the privatization of public goods and services and, by extension, deep spending cuts complemented by ambitious goals (Reimers, 1994; DeStefano et al., 2007). One of the many shifts in education policy has been the State's diminished role in educational provision and the corresponding, increased reliance on civil society and non-state actors, especially NGOs, as key partners for service delivery in the education sector (DeStefano et al., 2007; Education International, 2009; MacDonald, 1995; Rose, 2009).

Such neoliberal reforms led to an "NGO Boom" in Latin America in the 1990s through the development of formal partnerships with national and international NGOs, particularly in the health and education sectors (Alvarez, 1999; Alvarado Browning, 1998; Cardelle, 2003; Di Gropello, 2006; Rohloff, Diaz & Dasgupta, 2011). However, as some NGOs increased their alignment with State agendas to address the devastating effects of economic structural adjustments, the NGO sector was the subject of sharp criticism. NGOs were accused of operationalizing neoliberal reforms through the 'NGOization' of the social service sector, replacing States as the primary provider of

these critical services and becoming vehicles of private interests (Alvarez, 1999; Kamat, 2004; MacDonald, 1995).

Yet despite ongoing criticisms, these same scholars have also drawn attention to the nuance and complexity surrounding NGOs. Complicating whether NGOs are a “success or failure”, more recent scholarship has also explored the variety of unexpected and diverse outcomes of NGO work around the globe, suggesting that NGOs can both perpetuate and provide a countervailing force to the dominant neoliberal policy reforms (Alvarez, 2009; Bernal & Grewal, 2014; Klees, 2008; Mitlin, Hickey & Bebbington, 2007). Indeed, Lewis, Schuller, Bernal, Bornstein, and Mannan (2017) highlight that the diversity and unpredictability of NGOs and their work make NGOs a “productively unstable” category for analysis and go on to underscore the importance of treating NGOs as a “multisited phenomena” (p. 634, 639).

Within the context of neoliberalism and the increasing involvement of NGOs in social services, Guatemala has become host to a phenomenon I am calling *NGOtenango*<sup>1</sup> (Chase-Dunn, 2000; Marques and Bannon, 2003; Batley, 2010). The proliferation of NGOs in Guatemala is evident in all service sectors and particularly within health, education, and the environment. Documented estimates place the total number of NGOs in Guatemala upwards of 10,000 and growing (Sridhar, 2007). Within those thousands, this author has identified more than 70 International NGOs (INGO) working in the education sector in the country, reaching more than 350,000 students, or roughly 5% of children in school. However, information about these INGOs has not been widely

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<sup>1</sup> In Guatemala, the suffix “-tenango” means “the place of” and appears in the names of towns to signify a particular attribute of the area. It suggests an abundance of something specific.

dispersed, easily accessible, nor systematized; and many are unknown to the Ministry of Education (Carter, 2015). While the scholarly literature related to health NGOs (Rholoff, Diaz & Dasgupta, 2011; Maupin, 2009), environmental NGOs (Sundberg, 1998) and NGOs engaged in development work (Beck, 2014, 2017) has explored some of the complex intersections of international development agendas, NGOs, and State policies and programs, the same is not true for education.

Instead, one type of NGO dominates the contemporary scholarly literature on education in Guatemala. These are the NGOs associated with PRONADE (National Program for Community-Managed Schools for Educational Development), which maintained a unique, contractual relationship with the State to assist in the implementation of new rural schools from the early 1990s through 2008 (Corrales, 2006; Gershberg, Meade & Andersson, 2009; Meade, 2012; Poppema, 2009). These were primarily Guatemalan NGOs that had the capacity to administer complex, technical administrative grants. Missing from the dialogue, however, is an exploration of small and medium sized international NGOs working in the education sector that are not contracted by the State or bi- and multi-lateral agencies.

This grouping of international NGOs—which I refer to as *debutant* INGOs—is working parallel to both the State and the organizations financed by international development monies and have not been included in scholarly inquiry in the education sector in Guatemala. These *debutant* INGOs are distinct from their predecessors in a variety of ways, notably in that the State has minimal influence over their direction; they are not beholden to the international development project priorities and were not subjected to the intense State antagonism towards NGOs during the civil war. However,

as *debutant* INGO numbers grow and as the Ministry of Education becomes ever more reliant on non-state actors, the literature suggests that their relative distance from the State and international development agendas may be diminishing. As the Guatemalan State appears to continue to seek out new policy avenues for leveraging INGOs in their favor, while simultaneously engaged in diminished service provision, there exists a historical tension and a contemporary challenge that has yet to be explored.

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze *debutant* INGO participation in a State-sponsored educational program. I do so by illuminating *debutant* INGO participation in Guatemala's national reading program *Leamos Juntos*. To that end, this dissertation presents and then draws upon the conceptualization of NGOTenango in Guatemala, specifically exploring *debutant* INGO participation in the national reading program *Leamos Juntos (Let's Read Together)*. Then, this dissertation illuminates the participation of three *debutant* INGOs in *Leamos Juntos* through a comparative and multi-sited case study with a particular focus on three different public education departments in Guatemala. *Debutant* INGO participation is then described by participants by highlighting barriers to *debutant* INGO participation, supportive factors for *debutant* INGO participation, and strategies to reduce barriers and increase supportive factors.

This case study confirms that there are specific supportive factors and barriers to *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. The conclusions lay out a series of supportive factors and barriers to *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* along with strategies to reduce barriers and increase supportive factors. The findings highlight and show how different factors—specific to the INGOs, departments, schools, the *Leamos Juntos* program itself, existing challenges in the education system, and the

phenomenon of NGOtenango—affect how participation takes shape. Furthermore, the case study shows how the ways in which *debutant* INGOs appropriate policy can affect how local schools engage in that policy. It also shows how public education staff and INGO staff view participation and collaboration differently and, at times, at odds with each other.

This case study adds granular detail of how INGOs navigate decision-making around their participation and, in doing so, adds to current research about NGOs especially within the education sector. This research also fills an important gap in the scholarly literature by highlighting factors that influence *debutant* INGO decision-making around participating in State-sponsored educational programming. It offers new insight into the sector with important takeaways for policymakers, educators and INGOs. This research has implications for how to construct policy to maximize the participation of all actors, particularly *debutant* INGOs, in the education sector. Additionally, it has implications for how public education staff at department and local levels can consider and approach partnership opportunities with INGOs. Finally, by providing examples of what actually happens in *Leamos Juntos*, it has implications for the INGO sector in terms of the potential benefits and risks of engaging in State-sponsored education programming as well as considerations for how INGOs may imagine their evolving roles in Guatemala.

The dissertation draws on original research I conducted in Guatemala for 10 months during 2015. The guiding research question was: *how are international NGOs participating in Guatemala's national reading program Leamos Juntos?* That mixed-methods research project included over 100 participants.<sup>2</sup> I employed a survey along with

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<sup>2</sup> See a preliminary analysis of the full data set that I drafted at the end of 2015, before leaving Guatemala. This document was shared with Ministry staff, NGO and INGO representations, and with all study

dozens of interviews with INGOs of all sizes, as well as with policy makers and public education staff. This dissertation uses a comparative and multi-sited case study approach by analyzing six cases from that data set, broken up into two categories of cases: *debutant* INGOs and departments. The *debutant* INGO category includes three different *debutant* INGOs involved in reading programming. The department category includes three different public education departments in Guatemala. Creating these two categories of cases allows for comparison of objectives, barriers, supports, and strategies across all cases as well as within each category.

The first section of this dissertation is the introduction. The second section is the literature review, examining the rise of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in international development and primarily in education. This section explores the trajectory of NGOs in education reforms globally and specifically in Guatemala. It situates NGOtenango and defines *debutant INGOs*. It then presents *Leamos Juntos* and reviews several frameworks to analyze NGO-State relations in education and presents a conceptual framework for this dissertation. The third section describes the research methodology as well as the characteristics of the individual case study sites and participating *debutant* INGOs. It examines the Force Field Analysis approach and goes on to describe my positionality and the limitations of this dissertation. The fourth section presents the findings as organized by the Force Field Analysis. The fifth and final section offers a set of conclusions and recommendations.

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participants who had email addresses.

[https://www.academia.edu/25744255/Analisis\\_Preliminar\\_Participaci%C3%B3n\\_de\\_las\\_ONG\\_internacionales\\_en\\_Leamos\\_Juntos](https://www.academia.edu/25744255/Analisis_Preliminar_Participaci%C3%B3n_de_las_ONG_internacionales_en_Leamos_Juntos)

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This section examines the rise of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in international development and education reforms globally and specifically in Guatemala. It situates *Leamos Juntos* and *debutant* INGOs within a complex terrain of the global, national and local dimensions (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2014). In doing so, it establishes and then situates NGOTenango as a phenomenon that has been actively created by this confluence of global, regional and national factors. It then identifies *debutant* INGOs as particular social actors within that space. This section also presents *Leamos Juntos*, looking at its formation while also posing questions about its application within the context of NGOTenango. Finally, it reviews several frameworks to analyze NGO-State relations, which includes prior research from this author and presents a conceptual framework for this dissertation.

### ***Traversing Neoliberalism and Education Policy: Normalizing NGO Participation***

Neoliberalism has taken shape in different ways around the globe and continues to be a dominant force in the development of educational policy and programming (Klees, 2008; Klees, Samoff & Stromquist, 2012; Brehm & Silova, 2019). Within education reforms globally, one of the many shifts in education policy has been the diminution of the State's role in educational provision and the corresponding, increased reliance on civil society and non-state actors, especially NGOs, as key partners in the education sector (DeStefano et al., 2007; Education International, 2009; MacDonald, 1995; Rose, 2009).

In the 1980s, the World Bank and USAID promoted neoliberal reforms which had implications on education provision: decentralization of resources and decision-making; privatization of once public goods; increased civil society involvement in school governance and administration, and partnerships with non-state actors (IDRC & Rutherford, 1997; Brautigham & Segarra, 2008; Mundy, 2008). The International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies of structural adjustment prompted governments to slash social spending; education expenditures in Latin America and in countries around the world were decimated in an attempt to facilitate loan repayment (Reimers, 1994; Poppema, 2009). In Guatemala, for example, this meant a decrease in public education investment from 16.6% of the national budget in 1980 to 6% in 1990 (Poppema, 2009).<sup>3</sup> Suggested strategies to remedy these dramatic cuts, provided by the very same architects of these austerity measures, encouraged increased participation from the private sector and especially NGOs (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1990 as cited in Contreras & Lapola, 2010). Global agreements on education stimulated education reforms, specifically Education for All, which articulated a new discourse of participation by calling on the participation of nongovernmental actors at every level of involvement.

Education For All (EFA) prompted countries to send millions of children to school but the increases in demand for schooling were not matched with sufficient, corresponding public budgets to accommodate the influx of students into the system (DeStefano et al., 2007). To this end, the neoliberal framework of NGO participation became operationalized and advanced through EFA, in that it required a set of circumstances that could not be accomplished by the existing resource flows and

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<sup>3</sup> This had since dropped to roughly 3% of GDP in 2015. ([World Bank, 2017](#))



administrations. This funding gap forced states to consider new methods of education delivery and concurrently leveraged the influence of funding agencies who could provide much needed resources but oftentimes with the agenda of increased participation from non-state actors.

This shift in policy, combined with the *Education for All* initiatives, led to what Mundy and Murphy (2001) called an “explosion of international nongovernmental activity in the field of education” (p. 97). The official inclusion of NGOs in the consultation process, both leading up to and in the years following the conference, elevated their legitimacy as development partners (Mundy & Murphy, 2001). The explicit endorsement of an education system weighted with NGOs impacted the conceptualization of education programming in countries around the world. The discourse of NGO participation in EFA was mimicked in national plans around the world; the EFA country plan, adopted in Guatemala in 1992, mentioned the inclusion of NGOs in nearly every aspect of the plan (UNESCO, 2000).

Different actors used this discursive boost advocating for NGO participation for different ends in Central America. It aligned with both a neoliberal imagining of a decentralized education sector with a limited role for central governments but also with the popular struggles of resistance groups who deeply distrusted their governments. It came at a particular juncture in Central America, intermingling with national and regional processes of pacification and democratization following decades of brutal armed conflict and social uprisings.

## *Peace Accords, NGOs and Education Reforms in Guatemala*

NGO-State relationships in Guatemala have shifted dramatically during the last 70 years. In the mid-century, democratically elected governments fostered the growth of the nongovernment sector, but the CIA-orchestrated coup d'état in 1954 reversed this trend, leading to a reassertion of State control and direct repression during a brutal 36-year Civil War (IHERC, 1988; Alvarado Browning, 1998; Cardelle, 2003). At its height, the antagonism between NGOs and the State led to a special unit in the army created to monitor NGOs operating in Guatemala after the catastrophic 1976 earthquake (IHERC, 1988; Sanford, 2003).

In the early 1980s, the international community condemned the State-perpetrated ongoing human rights violations and, because of this, much of the development aid, particularly from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), was channeled directly through NGOs, deliberately circumventing government agencies except for the provision of food (Cardelle, 2003; Sanford, 2003). This trend of directly funding NGOs, combined with the ongoing military violence, cultivated a culture of distrust between NGOs and the government of Guatemala (Cardelle, 2003; Sollis, 1995; Brautingham & Segarra, 2007). The government became highly suspicious of NGOs operating in the country, and they were seen as a “direct threat to national security” (Sollis, 1995, p. 529). This perception was accentuated as late as 1990 when a government agent gunned down NGO founder and anthropologist Myrna Mack in Guatemala City (Sollis, 1995; CIA, 1995). These events set the stage for the development of the Peace Accords, in which NGOs (national and international) played an important role in all aspects, including the accords related to education.

During the mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century, years, and in some cases decades, of armed conflicts and civil wars in the region had led not only to extreme distrust between States and NGOs but also to highly inequitable education systems<sup>4</sup>. In 1987, the second of two conferences, commonly referred to as *Esquipulas II*, produced a commitment by the five Central American presidents to officially embark on a road towards peace, including education in the *Esquipulas II* Accords as a part of the effort to promote “the rebuilding of harmonious coexistence, development of a peace culture, and national reconciliation” (Marques and Bannon, 2003, p. 12).

In the wake of genocidal terror perpetrated by state forces in Guatemala and the high levels of antagonism between NGOs and States in the region, several countries—El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua—adopted a wave of education-related decentralization reforms, in an effort to increase access and enrollment, particularly focusing on primary schools (DiGropello, 2006). These efforts led to the implementation of Community-managed Schools (CMS) in Central American countries, requiring significant involvement from non-state actors, particularly various types of NGOs, and were directly tied to EFA targets (Schuh Moore, 2007). The distrust between NGOs and States, an inequitable education system, and the tumultuous process of the Peace Accords directly impacted the ways in which the CMS reforms took place in Guatemala.

### **The Peace Accords and education reform**

The Guatemalan Peace Accords were signed in 1996 and contained specific education and public sector objectives, including the right to education for all without

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<sup>4</sup> The net enrollment rate in 1990 for primary education in Guatemala was 64 percent and it held one of the highest illiteracy rates in Latin America at just over 35 percent in 1995 (Marques and Bannon, 2003).

discrimination, the acknowledgement of ethnic and cultural diversity within the curriculum, the inclusion of indigenous languages in public services, and an increase in public spending on education (Marques and Bannon, 2003; World Bank, 2008; IDRC & Rutherford, 2007). These directives to reform the education system were taken on by two committees to oversee reforms in access, budgets, and curriculum: (1) COPARE, a committee concerned with parity between the indigenous and non-indigenous populations, composed of half indigenous representatives and half government appointees, and (2) CCRE, a consultative commission representing broad-based civic engagement of 17 organizations (Cojtí, 2002; Marques & Bannon, 2004).

The extreme distrust between the State and the participating NGOs complicated the process, along with competing visions for the future. The Ministry of Education's existing initiative, PRONADE (National Program for Community-Managed Schools) advanced a combination of neoliberal education reforms by creating NGOs, hiring non-state actors for education servicing, and dramatically reducing spending per pupil while legitimizing the initiative by drawing on the inclusive language of *Education for All* and the emerging Peace Accords.

### **PRONADE: The turbulent rise and fall of NGOs in education servicing**

In 1992, the Ministry of Education approved a pilot experiment with a community-managed school program called *Saq'be'*, a Kaqchikel phrase meaning "Path of Light" (Valerio & Rojas, 2001). Within this pilot program, the goals of decentralization and community participation as laid out in the Peace Accords were in alignment with the goals for EFA. A broad spectrum of civil society groups, the government and international organizations viewed this as an opportunity to advance the

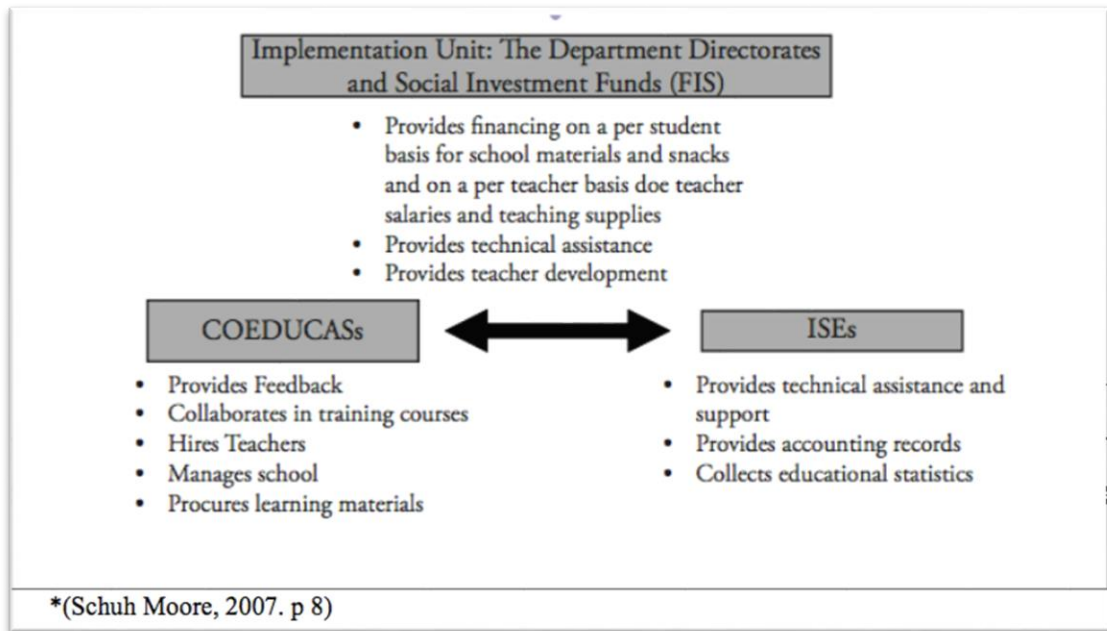
vision for education as laid out in the Peace Accords. Unique to this pilot was the involvement of local NGOs to help administer the schools on the Ministry's behalf.

It was in the context of a struggle to establish the Peace Accords that PRONADE (National Program for Community-Managed Schools), the largest NGO-State collaboration for education in Guatemala, was formed. The World Bank and the Ministry of Education claimed that *Saq'be'* was a successful pilot program and, in 1994, it was turned into Guatemala's CMS implementation mechanism: PRONADE. Financed primarily by the Ministry of Education but with additional funding from the World Bank, the German development bank (KfW), and the Inter-American Development Bank, PRONADE had a specific focus on increasing access to education for historically excluded rural, indigenous communities which, not coincidentally, had been most affected during the war. That the World Bank replaced the name to highlight a technical emphasis on "community management" provides some indication that the program was becoming aligned with the neoliberal discourse of education policy reform, moving away from its conception of education by and for a small community.

PRONADE operated through a nationally dictated Implementation Unit (See Figure 1), overseeing the overall program and the contractual relationships with NGOs and other private entities (both called Education Service Institutes or ISEs). The Ministry contracted ISEs to provide administrative and technical support to community School Committees (COEDUCA) to implement and manage new rural schools (Corrales, 2006; Gershberg, Meade & Andersson, 2009; Meade, 2012; Poppema, 2009; Schuh Moore, 2007). The role of NGOs as contracted agents, directly accountable to the State, and with

specific technical and administrative roles, was a significant departure given the recent history of antagonism.

The unique administrative structure included two types of NGOs. The government provided School Education Committees (COEDUCA), composed of local parents and community leaders, NGO status in order to administer their school and receive direct financing. Education Service Institutes (ISE) were predominantly NGOs responsible for providing technical and administrative support to the COEDUCAs (DiGropello, 2006; Corrales, 2006). The government used COEDUCAs as a legal mechanism to create a school that was a private, nonprofit entity but was financed directly by the government. Figure 1 below depicts the relationships and roles of these units.



**Figure 1: PRONADE Governance Model**

The ISEs, on the other hand, were primarily Guatemalan NGOs administering complicated, technical administrative grants, and providing training and support to the COEDUCAs. Most ISEs were nonprofit, nongovernment organizations such as foundations, religious groups, indigenous organizations, associations, and international organizations; 80% of these ISEs were already working in social and community development before being a part of the PRONADE program (MINEDUC, 1998; Valerio & Rojas, 2001). ISEs compiled administrative reports and data and shared this with the Ministry with a goal of maintaining accountability throughout this administrative system. This complicated technical assignment for NGOs and the involvement of communities through the legal mechanism of the COEDUCA marked a new dynamic for NGOs and the State, one where NGOs (despite their nongovernmental designation) were playing a significant role in the formation of the post-conflict Guatemalan State.

Themes from *Esquipulas II*, *Education for All*, and the *Peace Accords* are all evident in the design and rationale for PRONADE, which emphasized: community participation, decentralization, education for all, and shared responsibility with nongovernmental parties. Advocates for the program trumpeted the success of providing access to hundreds of thousands of students, improved scores, and comparative cost effectiveness with the public system. Yet the actors involved in the social struggle to craft the education reform through the Peace Accords became frustrated by the adoption of PRONADE as the primary mechanism for reform for a variety of reasons.

For example, the teachers' unions and other education activists became highly critical of PRONADE, partly because it usurped the work of COPARE and CCPE but also because of the derogation of the formal education system (Poppema, 2009). Instead of

providing quality, culturally appropriate education delivered by qualified bilingual teachers and designed with input from local educational bodies (as guaranteed by the *Peace Accords*), PRONADE embodied neoliberal education reforms by limiting the formal role of the state as the provider of education, substituting non-state actors for service provision and attempting to dramatically reduce the cost of education delivery within a system that was already deeply underfunded. The criticisms focused on the fact that PRONADE:

1. Hired teachers with as little as a third-grade education and paid their teachers a fraction of the union wage, on at-will contracts and with no social security benefits,
2. Taught a Spanish language curriculum, rather than the mother tongue language of many rural children, and
3. Required community members to provide space for the school, manage the administration, and miss days of work to deliver reports and attend mandatory trainings.

(Camereros, 2006; Cojtí, 2002; Contreras & Lapola, 2010; Poppema 2009)

Furthermore, the program had three times the teacher turnover rate in comparison with public schools, and the extreme impoverishment of many of the participants, particularly teachers and School Committee members, made them vulnerable to corruption and abuse (Camereros, 2006; Poppema, 2009).

The political will to maintain the program was mercurial and, as a result, the Ministry created a separate funding mechanism specifically for PRONADE schools (Abbot & Covey, 1996). This allowed the program to continue despite its controversy. Meanwhile, the Ministry hired Price Waterhouse Cooper to vet participating NGOs and companies for their involvement in PRONADE. The program continued as the largest education reform mechanism linked to the *Peace Accords*. After twelve years of operation and sustained protest, presidential candidate Alvaro Colóm ran on a platform of



dismantling PRONADE. With strong teacher union backing, Colóm was elected in 2008 and immediately terminated the program.

### ***Establishing Debutant INGOs in NGOtenango***

I argue that the global education policy reforms that influenced the creation of PRONADE have, in turn, contributed to the establishment a new space for NGOs in Guatemala. Also, that the success and ultimate demise of PRONADE has shaped the contemporary landscape of NGO-State collaboration in education in Guatemala. PRONADE brought over 450,000 students into the school system through advancing neoliberal education policies and providing legitimacy to alternative formations of educational provision that aligned with national (*Peace Accords*) and international (*EFA*) education goals. By demonstrably reaching its goal of creating ‘access’ to education, much of the literature on the program praises its accomplishments. Yet the substantiated criticisms related to the low quality of education, along with deep opposition especially from teachers’ unions, have likely closed off the likelihood of a similar partnership with NGOs of national scale in the foreseeable future. Importantly, however controversial, it normalized NGOs as central actors in education delivery and further embedded their roles in the education sector.

Within the context of the evolving global agreements on education, neoliberal education policy reform, and this unique national history, Guatemala is the host to a phenomenon that I am calling NGOtenango. NGOtenango is a country-specific phenomenon and the result of a confluence of global, national and regional factors. This includes neoliberal education policy reforms in Latin America over the last decades resulting in chronically underfunded education systems. These cuts were simultaneously

accompanied by ambitious goals and an increased reliance on non-state actors as providers of education. Within this specifically Guatemalan context, the history of intense antagonism between the State and NGOs during the civil war, followed by a dramatic shift in the participation of non-state actors in education through PRONADE, normalized NGOs as actors in education delivery and support. This set the stage for the rapid proliferation of international and national NGOs, yet their inclusion was very different than the highly prescribed and controlled participation emblematic of PRONADE.

The NGO sector as a whole has grown at a fast pace and with minimal regulatory oversight from the state, resulting in a “patchwork of small local and foreign NGOs” (Chase-Dunn, 2000; Marques and Bannon, 2003; Rohloff, Diaz & Dasgupta, 2011, p. 428; Sridhar, 2007). Although the termination of PRONADE in 2008 ended the national level NGO-State partnership, it provided fertile ground for the unchecked growth of NGOs in the country. Within this, the scholarly literature has not included a grouping of smaller international NGOs working parallel to both the State and the programming financed by international development monies—which I refer to as *debutant INGOs*—in scholarly inquiry in the education sector in Guatemala.

These *debutant INGOs* are distinct from their predecessors in PRONADE in a variety of ways, notably in that, a) they are not beholden to the international development project objectives, b) the State has minimal influence over their direction, c) they were not subjected to the intense State antagonism towards NGOs during the civil war, and d) their relationship to the education sector is voluntary and non-contractual in nature. Indeed, as Batley and Rose (2010) and Rose (2011) highlight, specifically within the

education sector, NGOs are becoming characterized less by their opposition to the State and more by their provision of education and myriad affiliations with the State. *Debutant* INGOs are working in a voluntary and non-contractual relationship with the education sector especially at the local levels, providing them with a certain kind of autonomy.

The term *debutant*—derived from the French word *debutant*, which means “leading off” in English—has been used to describe someone who is new to a career or a ‘fashionable society’ or making their debut (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Within this definition, *debutant* INGOs are relatively new actors in Guatemala, mostly emerging after the *Peace Accords* and within the contemporary context of NGOtenango. In this dissertation, as opposed to focusing on an NGO’s relative size as *small* or *medium*, “*debutant* INGO” serves as a heuristic focused on the emergent nature and nascent integration of these INGOs within the education sector, yet steeped and steered by national and international histories that have taken shape in Guatemala.

Furthermore, *debutant* INGOs are distinct from their predecessors in PRONADE in a variety of ways, including their: formation, programming, financing, legal characteristics, origin, capabilities, the scope and strategy of their programming, and the particular type of educational focus (See Table 1). Whereas the NGOs contracted by PRONADE were heavily regulated, the State exerts minimal influence over *debutant* INGOs to the extreme extent that in the education sector, the Ministry of Education may be unaware of their very presence.

My research until this point suggests that many *debutant* INGOs have not participated in national education programs, although they are involved in the public education sector at the local levels. They do not appear to be reliant upon the

international donor monies or agendas that adhere to specific project cycles and they may be intentionally or unintentionally in alignment with larger, global goals in the education sector. They are working in different locations around the country, and their interactions are at the same time highly contextualized and a part of the broader phenomenon of international interventions in Guatemala. Table 1 lays out some of these important differences between the NGO-State relational characteristics of PRONADE NGOs versus *debutant* INGOs.

**Table 1: Situating *Debutant* INGOs in relation to PRONADE NGOs**

<i>NGO-State Units of Analysis</i>	<i>PRONADE (1994 – 2007)</i>	<i>Debutant INGOs (1990s – 2022)</i>
<b>Formation</b>	State initiated a contractual partnership	Individual/NGO initiates an intervention
<b>Programming Decisions</b>	NGOs met their contractual obligation for programming	NGOs decide on the programming interventions
<b>Financing</b>	Financing from World Bank, Kfw, IADB, and the State	Diverse funding streams including grants, foundation money, sponsorship, much of it international
<b>Legal Characteristics of Partners</b>	NGOs, private companies, foundations, and/or religious	Nonprofits incorporated in different countries, some not registered at all in Guatemala, non-proselytizing
<b>Origin of Partners</b>	Primarily national actors	International actors with a significant percentage of international board, staff and/or volunteers

<b>Capability Characteristics of Partners</b>	Vetted advanced technical and administrative capabilities	Variation in technical and administrative capabilities
<b>Scope and Strategy of Programming</b>	National scale and strategically located	Regional/local scale and typically centered in areas that attract tourists
<b>Type of Education</b>	Formal, primary education	Nonformal and formal education for preschool, primary, secondary, adults

*Debutant* INGOs are absent from the scholarly literature in comparative and international education and yet they are working with a significant number of children, teachers and communities around the country. As their numbers grow and as the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) becomes ever more reliant on non-state actors to support public education efforts, *debutant* INGOs' relative distance from the State may be diminishing.<sup>5</sup> The design of *Leamos Juntos* suggests that the Guatemalan State may continue to seek out new policy avenues for leveraging INGOs in their favor. Furthermore, in the midst of neoliberal education reforms advanced by both the MINEDUC and international donors, the emergent nature of *debutant* INGOs suggests that they have yet to form a particular trajectory or allegiance.

Thus, *debutant* INGOs must be understood within the context of NGOtenango as both a resulting and an emergent phenomenon in the Guatemalan education sector and one that has yet to be explored in scholarly literature. This dissertation establishes NGOtenango and provides examples of what happens within the *Leamos Juntos* program

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<sup>5</sup> In fact, the Guatemalan government passed a new NGO law in 2021 curtailing the rights of all NGOs and increasing the executive power to intervene and even dissolve NGOs at their discretion (OHCHR, 2021).

as it relates to *debutant* INGO participation. This dissertation addresses a gap in the literature in that little is known about the experience of *debutant* INGOs in the sector, the factors that influence their decisions to engage in Ministry programs like *Leamos Juntos*, how they are seen by the public education staff working in different departments, and how *debutant* INGOs navigate their participation—or not—in such a program.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Guatemala’s National Reading Program***

Guatemala’s adoption of a national reading program in 2004 was connected to a larger, hemispheric initiative to advance reading in the Americas called “Plan Iberoamericana de Lectura.” Ministers of Education in Guatemala utilized the program at different times, including an iteration in 2006 called “Todos a Leer” (Everyone Let’s Read) and in 2010 called “A Leer se ha Dicho” (They Have Said to Read). *Leamos Juntos* (Let’s Read Together) was the most recent iteration of Guatemala’s national reading program from 2012 – 2015.<sup>7</sup> The design and implementation began in its first year and the plan was passed into law at the beginning of 2013.<sup>8</sup>

Designed as a multi-stakeholder partnership for education, it intended to involve everyone in Guatemala to support reading (MINEDUC, 2012). The program’s rationale drew on previous experiences in the national reading program as well as on good practices and evidence drawn from a variety of national and international stakeholders who have worked in reading programming in Guatemala. Additionally, it drew on

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for additional details and a brief overview of the NGO landscape in Guatemala during my study in 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Although the national reading program has been continued under the same name for subsequent administrations, this paper focuses specifically on the implementation between 2012 – 2015.

<sup>8</sup> In 2013, the Ministry also launched the National Mathematics Program called *Contemos Juntos*. Although it was occurring simultaneously with *Leamos Juntos* and each national program called on broad participation from non-state actors, *Contemos Juntos* was not a part of this study.

reading metrics from primary schools around the country; in 2009, the Directorate General of Evaluation and Educational Research reported that 47.93% of students in first grade reached the required level of reading achievement 51.8% in the third grade, and 30.09% in the sixth grade, underscoring the gravity of this issue in Guatemala.

*Leamos Juntos* was grounded in national policies that prioritize *quality, bilingual and intercultural education*, and *equity*. Using two strategic objectives—the promotion of reading, and reading development and acquisition—*Leamos Juntos* organized programmatic interventions for each objective. Notably, the first strategic objective included a law that mandated (at least) 30 minutes of reading a day in every school around the country. The two objectives were operationalized through four key actions:

1. The formation of human resources
2. The provision of reading materials and resources
3. The establishment of partnerships and community participation
4. Accompaniment, monitoring and evaluation

Within the first action, the law placed an emphasis on providing in-service teacher training on good practices and methods for stimulating reading.<sup>9</sup> The second involved a mass procurement of books to create culturally and language appropriate mini-school libraries for all primary and secondary public schools in the country, which also required a massive logistics operation to ensure that the books were purchased, divided appropriately and then distributed to schools. For the third action, creating alliances and community participation, *Leamos Juntos* invited participation from government and non-government organizations and the private sector. They worked with nationally syndicated newspapers to distribute reading supplements and created radio programming in several

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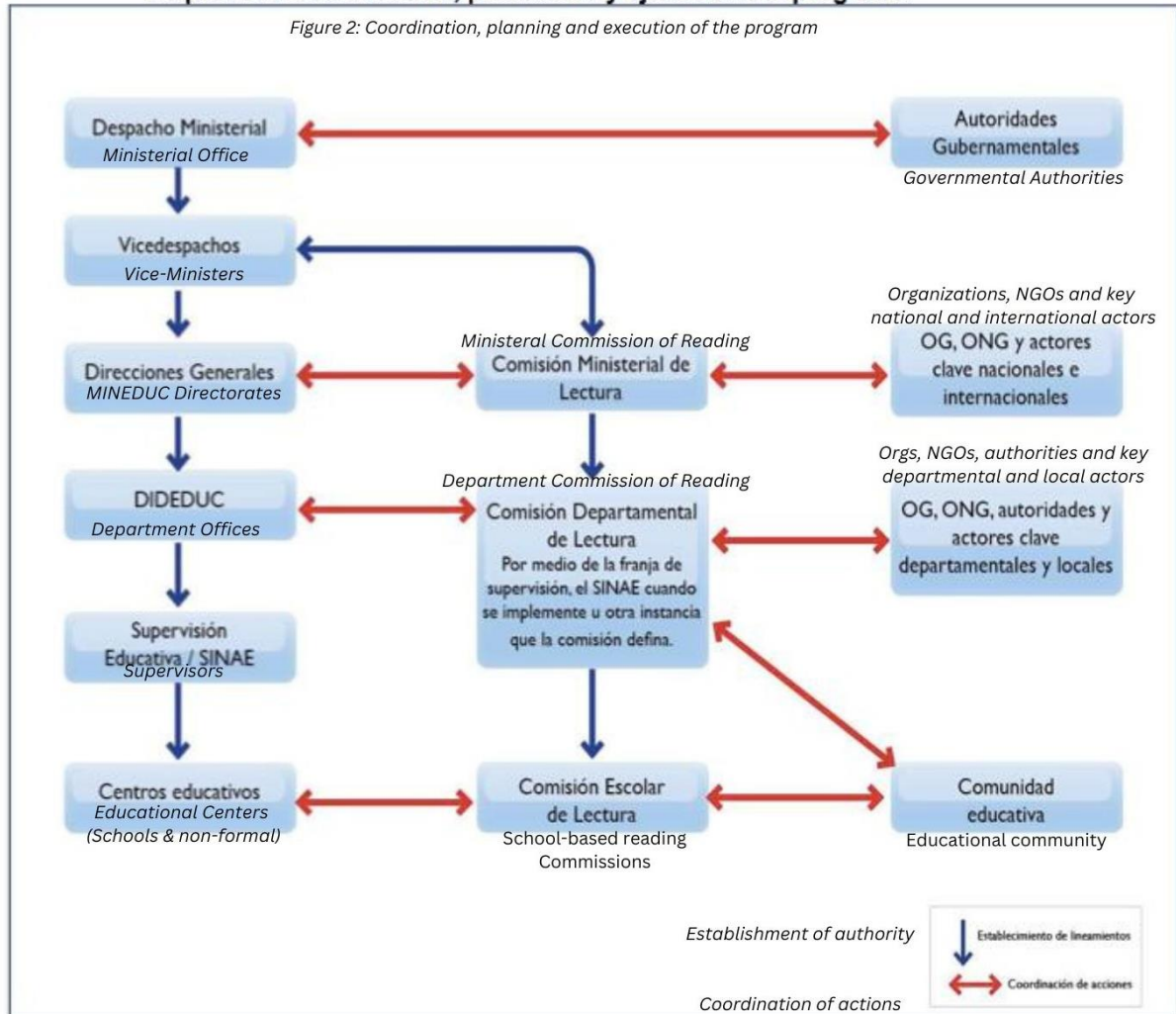
<sup>9</sup> I was told by *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team members that 150 teachers in each Department received training related to *Leamos Juntos* with a focus on the reading process (*el proceso lector*).

of the national languages related to the distributed texts. Additionally, this included sponsoring community events focused on reading and encouraging reading within the household. The last key action required the development of significant technical and administrative processes and tools to design, implement and monitor the progress of the program nationally and within each of the geographic departments of Guatemala. To make this possible, they created a network of “*enlaces*” (in English, *links*, and hereafter referred to as *LJ Links*) in each of the departments to orchestrate planning, implementation and monitoring.

This study specifically draws upon the third key action, the establishment of partnerships and community participation, including both national and international NGOs as desired partners and allies (MINEDUC, 2012). *Leamos Juntos* includes a framework for coordination at the national and departmental levels. The framework for inclusion is entitled **Coordination, Planning and Execution of the Program** (Esquema 2: Coordinación, planeación y ejecución del programa) (See Figure 2 with English subtitles under each part of the framework). This framework for coordination makes clear that the Ministerial and Departmental Reading Commissions (Comisión Ministerial de Lectura and the Comisiones Departamentales de Lectura) are responsible for engaging international actors, non-government organizations, and other key actors. Additionally, the description of this key action uses inclusive language and indicates that any and all NGOs are invited to be a part of the program.



**Esquema 2. Coordinación, planeación y ejecución del programa**



**Figure 2: Coordination, Planning and Execution of the Program<sup>10</sup>**

A specific section within the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD) on

**Alliances and Community Participation** (5.3.3 Alianzas y Participación Comunitaria)

outlines who the Ministry would like to involve and in what ways:

*We hope to establish alliances with both national and International entities, be they public or private, so that they may help with technical or financial assistance for the implementation of the national reading program...<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> MINEDUC Guatemala, 2012, *Programa Nacional de Lectura Leamos Juntos*. (Translated text in italics)

<sup>11</sup> Author's Translation

Beyond its national focus, international education policy discourse and funding structures that supported reading influenced the program. The Ministry called national and international NGOs alike to action to align under the banner of *Leamos Juntos* in a specifically non-contractual and voluntary fashion. The effort contrasted with previous national-level engagement with NGOs in the education sector, which were heavily scripted and grounded in contractual agreements for service provision. Furthermore, it stood in stark contrast to the recent decades of intense antagonism between NGOs and the State. Yet in some ways, one might also consider it an inevitable development for NGOs, given a global turn towards increased NGO participation in the education sector.

*Leamos Juntos* embodied the neoliberal spirit of a multi-sector partnership for education, creating ambitious goals that the Ministry alone could not accomplish or finance and instead required significant contributions from a variety of nongovernmental actors along with international loans (IADB, 2017).<sup>12</sup> In *Leamos Juntos*, the Ministry sought out NGO participation with an invitation to engage in a voluntary and non-contractual relationship. Yet, *debutant* INGOs are relatively new actors in Guatemala and little is known about how they would respond to this courtship proposal, let alone the factors that might influence their decision-making process or what would actually happen.

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<sup>12</sup> It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to analyze the strategy of debt-funded national education programs but, nonetheless, this remains an important element of understanding the full context of *Leamos Juntos*.

## ***Factors that drive NGO participation in government education programs***

There is limited scholarly literature on factors that specifically drive participation for smaller NGOs or INGOs in government education programs, including reading programs, or on what happens when they do participate. However, there are frameworks set forth to analyze and describe NGO and government interactions as well as multi-stakeholder partnerships for education. Furthermore, national reading program documents from Latin America also describe processes and considerations for such national programs.

For example, national reading programs in Latin America list NGOs regularly as important alliances as seen in documents analyzing the programs (CERLALC, 2017; Mejia & Lozano, 2007; Zapata, 2014). The limited literature on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Education (MSPE) examines the dynamics of such partnerships and provides guidance on factors that contribute to success and to roadblocks specifically within education programming (Draxler, 2008).<sup>13</sup> Najam (2000) suggests using a strategic interest framework to analyze NGO-Government relationships. My own master's capstone project (Carter, 2012) draws on original research with policymakers and NGOs in Guatemala using Najam (2000) and Lewis (2006) to present a framework that aims to help explain ideas about NGO-Government partnerships in the formal education sector in

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<sup>13</sup> As a Fulbright-Clinton fellow assigned to the Ministry of Education in 2015, I proposed a research study on INGOs and *Leamos Juntos* drawing upon Draxler's (2008) definition of MSPEs in order to describe the particular type of collaborative endeavor that brings "together a wide range of public, private and civil society stakeholders" and in order to highlight the formal, defined role of INGOs as partners in the *Leamos Juntos* program (p. 23). The proposed research study was endorsed by Ministry officials and I was granted permission to conduct the study.

Guatemala. More recently in my comprehensive exams, I set forth yet another framework by identifying the constructs of both *debutant* INGOs and NGOtenango to analyze what happens when a *debutant* INGO participates in *Leamos Juntos*, based on the experience of one *debutant* INGO and one public education department (Carter, 2017).

Each of these has limitations and usefulness for this study and each sets touchpoints for analyzing NGO and INGO participation in government education programs. Together, and as a progression of my own research on INGO participation in education programming in Guatemala, they create the conceptual framework for this study.

### **National reading programs**

The literature from UNESCO's Latin American office on reading (CERLALC) mentions NGOs as important alliances in national reading programs. Mejia and Lozano (2007) present recommendations for designing a national reading program. In a section on "modalities of participation", NGOs are included as "linking" organizations that can provide information for the plan and/or support with operations (p. 48). Zapata (2014) compares national reading programs in Latin America, providing details from 17 different countries in Latin America. Several times, Zapata lists NGOs as partners or as identified organizations working on reading. Neither of these reports provided any information about strategies around NGO participation, nor did they provide any examples of what happens when NGOs do participate. These reports cite a diversification of alliances as positive, but the reports provide no further information or analysis specific to NGOs or INGOs.

## **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for Education**

In the last two decades, the scholarly literature contains debates regarding partnerships in public education, using the terminology of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and Multi-stakeholder Partnerships for Education (MSPE) to identify the growing variety of actors and relationships involved in executing educational programming. While the literature on PPPs is voluminous, there is limited literature on MSPEs. In the report *New Partnerships for EFA: Building on Experience*, Draxler (2008) reviews the literature on public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder partnerships “that have bearing on education” (p. 8). She reviews definitions of partnerships, rationales for partnerships as well as providing short case studies of partnerships.

Draxler (2008) reviews the “partnership” terminology as it relates to the *Education For All* (EFA) initiative and distinguishes between PPPs and MSPEs by stating that, while PPPs tend to indicate the joint partnership of the government and a private, for-profit entity, MSPEs are meant to include a variety of “public, private and civil society stakeholders” (p. 23). However, a report from Education International (EI) (2009) posed an alternative interpretation of the same terminology: that PPPs occur when a for-profit, private entity contracts with the state to build, operate or service the public sector, and that MSPEs are non-contractual and specifically related to corporate social responsibility initiatives and, especially internationally, the work of NGOs (Education International, 2009).

*Leamos Juntos* most clearly fits within some combined version of the above definitions of MSPEs; it includes public, private and civil society stakeholders as well as both non-profit and for-profit partners. In addition, within the context of this study, it

incorporates non-contractual partnerships with NGOs. Draxler ultimately proposes the following definition of partnerships, specific to Education For All:

*Multi-stakeholder partnerships for advancing EFA (Education For All) goals can be defined as the pooling and managing of resources, as well as the mobilization of competencies and commitments by public, business and civil society partners to contribute to expansion and quality of education. They are founded on the principles of international rights, ethical principles and organizational agreements underlying education sector development and management; on consultation with other stakeholders; and on shared decision-making, risk, benefit and accountability. (Draxler, 2008, p. 16)*

Draxler (2008) determines that six themes contribute to success within the context of

MSPEs:

1. The definition of **needs** and the process of defining those needs,
2. The notion of **ownership**, particularly concerning those groups that participate in the design and those groups that receive the design,
3. The focus or lack thereof on **impact** given that the "evidence about the effects of partnerships in general is relatively slim" (p. 28),
4. **Regulation** and **accountability** for partnerships in particular concerning the responsibility of the partners and the transparency surrounding decision-making,
5. The **sustainability** of a given intervention and the potential for the intervention to have a long-term impact on the education system as well the notion of the continuity of collaboration beyond initiative, and
6. The effective use of **monitoring and evaluation** to provide information and continuous feedback that is used to inform the roll-out that is ultimately useful for all stakeholders (pages 28 – 30, bold from original text).

There are some limitations to Draxler's report. For example, the terms "civil society," "NGO," and "INGO" are, at times, used in different ways. At times, Draxler uses the term "civil society" to encompass all non-business and non-government groups. At other times, Draxler uses the terms "NGO" and "INGO" in describing different partners or partnerships. Furthermore, Draxler's discussion on successful partnerships is limited in its discussion of INGOs and even more limited with regards to the factors that would contribute to the specific success of INGOs in such a partnership. The examples

Draxler provides are of large-scale “operational partnerships” with governments, large corporations like Microsoft, Cisco, and Wal-Mart, and large INGOs; the report contains no descriptive examples of smaller INGOs. Although smaller NGOs and INGOs are among the intended partners in an MSPE, Draxler does not explore such voluntary and non-contractual partnerships. All of this being said, Draxler’s report, even with its limitations, appears to be the most developed text containing factors that contribute to the success of MSPEs and includes some limited discussion on NGOs. Draxler’s report contains the only accounts that specifically describe factors that affect the success of MSPEs and therefore was the reference point for my Fulbright proposal and subsequent proposal to the Ministry of Education to carry out this research.

To consider each of the six themes within the context of this study, there is a mutual alignment between the participating *debutant* INGOs and the MINEDUC because they have both identified the “need” for literacy interventions. Certainly, the process of defining those needs has been different and yet the common defined need is likely contributing supportive factor for INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. The concept of “ownership” for *debutant* INGOs will likely be different in that they did not play any role in the formulation of this initiative. Draxler’s review suggests that organizations that do not participate in the design and are only on the receiving end will likely not participate. The “regulations” within the *Leamos Juntos* program document set forth a general framework for successful participation and by the fact that such a framework exists, this may be a contributing influence on *debutant* INGO participation. However, Draxler’s notion of “accountability” appears to fall within a different realm given that it is not describing voluntary participation. The sustainability of the initiative could have an

impact of whether or not *debutant* INGOs decide to participate. However, given the particular focus of reading within the *debutant* INGOs reviewed in this dataset, sustainability may prove less consequential given these INGOs' stated focus on reading. Lastly, as organizations voluntarily participating in *Leamos Juntos*, it is unclear whether the "monitoring and evaluation" of the program will affect their participation or not.

Due to the variety of factors influencing INGO and government relations outside of the confines of MSPEs, and because I found no literature on voluntary partnerships, I used these gaps as one rationale for investigating INGOs and more specifically *debutant* INGO involvement in *Leamos Juntos*.

### **Strategic Interest Lens**

Najam (2000) describes a framework for analyzing the relationships between the third sector and the government, using what he calls the Four-C's: cooperation, complementarity, confrontation and co-optation. According to Najam, these interactions occur within a framework of strategic institutional interests, meaning that they are not limited to single issues but instead a totality of all of the issues occurring between the government and NGOs. Each constituent, NGOs and the government, has ends (goals) and strategies (means) for reaching those ends. He proposes four interactions (See Figure 3):

- seeking similar ends with similar means, (cooperation)
- seeking dissimilar ends with dissimilar means, (confrontation)
- seeking similar ends but preferring dissimilar means, (complementarity) or
- preferring similar means but for dissimilar ends (co-optation) (Najam, 2000, p. 383).



Najam also suggests a fifth possibility, which is nonengagement: this occurs when the two, either by chance or on purpose, do not interact with each other.

		<i>Goals (Ends)</i>	
		Similar	Dissimilar
<i>Preferred Strategies (Means)</i>	Similar	Cooperation	Co-optation
	Dissimilar	Complementarity	Confrontation

**Figure 3: The 4 Cs of NGO-Government Relations (Najam, 2000, p. 383)**

*Cooperative relationships* are likely, posits Najam, when the government and NGOs have goals and strategies that are aligned in a situation where both groups work together to promote or provide a specific service or stance. Characteristics of cooperation include shared decision-making and/or cost sharing and contracting. The confluence of preferred ends and means can happen on both a national and international scale through individual NGOs and governments as well as through coalitions of NGOs and governments. National boundaries do not restrain the ideas of an NGO, so an NGO can have a cooperative relationship with other governments while concurrently not having one with its own. This interaction demonstrates the possibility of partnership between a government and an NGO in a complicated inter-sector relationship.

There is a high probability of *confrontational relationships* when government agencies and NGOs have disparate views on both the goals and strategies by which to achieve those goals. In addition to the fact that some NGOs are conceived as a reaction to a disagreement on government policy, the simple fact that each group is in near total

opposition to the stance of the other contributes to the likelihood of confrontational behavior. Najam points out that the gradients of hostility vary from discursive disagreements and defiance of policy to violent confrontations. He also notes that certain agencies within the government may have a confrontational relationship with the same NGO that has a collaborative relationship with another agency. By demonstrating multiple, simultaneous relationships between the two groups, Najam underscores the complicated nature of government and NGO relations.

Najam characterizes *complementary relationships* as having similar end goals but different strategies for implementation. Najam articulates the difference between his usage of this term and that of Young (1999), who characterizes this interaction as a contractual, financial agreement of fee for service where the NGO would be compensated directly by the government. Najam distinguishes his definition by stating that, where governments and NGOs have comparable goals but differentiating medium of realization, there exists the opportunity for complementarity. Najam states that NGOs and governments can work towards the same goals without the pretext of a government contract or direct funding. This frame further addresses the blurred line between government and NGO interactions by indicating that a variety of interests are at play when governments and NGOs maintain a complementary relationship.

*Co-optive* interactions occur when NGOs and governments employ the same strategies to achieve different results. Najam (2000) describes this relationship through “power asymmetry”, where one party has more power and uses that to pressure a given outcome (p. 388). Similar to the complementary frame, co-optive relationships tend to be transitional stages with the potential to shift into the complementary or confrontational

quadrants, depending on how the power dynamic unfolds. Najam refers to the inherent instability of this stage given that each has different objectives and suggests that this dynamic is more likely to steer towards a confrontational relationship.

Najam's (2000) last category, mentioned briefly when setting up his framework, is *nonengagement*, a scenario whereby, either as a strategic objective or by happenstance, an NGO and a government do not engage with each other whatsoever. He states that this area lies beyond the Four C's model given that no relationship exists.

To consider each of the five outcomes within the context of this study, Najam's framework can help to categorize the kinds of relationships or interactions between INGOs and the public education staff and/or the MINEDUC. Given the overlap with interest in reading and literacy programming, it would seem plausible for the participation to occur with both and/or complementarity and cooperative relationships. Given historically tense relationships between NGOs and the Guatemalan state, both and/or co-optation and confrontation could also occur. Lastly, and particularly within the realm of *debutant* INGOs, non-engagement is a real possibility.

Umbrella terms such as cooperation, coordination, complementarity, co-optation and nonengagement may provide some use but fall short of providing a sufficient lens with which to holistically analyze the multi-sited case study in this dissertation. The first issue is that this framework is not specific to the education sector nor to international NGOs specifically. Secondly, its focus on high-level "decision-making", although useful to a certain extent, falls short in analyzing *debutant* INGOs day-to-day interactions on the ground by INGOs working in the education sector in Guatemala. Thirdly, "government" is used with a broad brush stroke and, although Najam acknowledges differences that

exist within and between governments, the framework itself does not delineate the differences. Lastly, although this framework helps to describe why particular decisions are made, it is not intended to illuminate the dynamics of what actually happens when INGOs are invited to participate in a national education program.

### **Different Views of Educational Partnerships in Guatemala**

My master's thesis drew on original research in Guatemala and analyzed 10 interviews from individuals working in the education sector in Guatemala. Six of the participating individuals were directors or in leadership positions at different small education-focused NGOs. The four other interviews were with individuals working at the policy level affiliated with the Ministry, bi-lateral aid agencies and/or consultancy work.

The driving research questions were:

- How are NGOs in Guatemala interacting with the Ministry of Education and/or the formal education sector?
- How do NGOs perceive their role/s within the formal education sector in Guatemala?
- How do stakeholders envision the roles of NGOs in the education sector in the future?

To analyze the data, I drew upon Najam's strategic interest framework as well as on Lewis' (2006) conceptualization of the roles of NGOs in developing countries. Lewis (2006) posits three primary roles that NGOs play in developing countries: *Implementers*, *catalysts* and *partners*. As Najam has done, Lewis asserts that these three roles have the potential to occur simultaneously and should not be understood as mutually exclusive.

Lewis describes the *implementer* role as one in which an NGO would secure funds to directly provide specific goods and services. The *catalyst* NGO role attempts to stimulate change at the individual and/or organizational level. In the role of *partner*, the

NGO embarks on collaborative initiatives with governments, the private sector and donors. For the purposes of this dissertation, the role of *partners* helps illuminate factors related to NGO participation.

Lewis describes the NGO role of partners. While this description and activity lacks homogeneity, Lewis suggests that the blossoming of references to partnership seen in development literature in the 1990s was in direct response to a deficiency. The role of partners is generally seen as positive and one that has the potential to make better use of resources as well as to improve sustainability and participation. It can also be considered as strengthening civil society and breaking through a commonly “top-down institutional culture” (p. 93).

Partnership can be understood as directly related to the NGO role of implementer, specifically when NGOs are servicing a contract. A strictly contractual, financial partnership represents a privatization of public goods provision and can draw hostility from those who feel that it relinquishes responsibility and distances the accountability between the government and the citizens. Lewis describes his definition of a partnership role as one with multiple strands of connectivity, not simply financial or contractual.

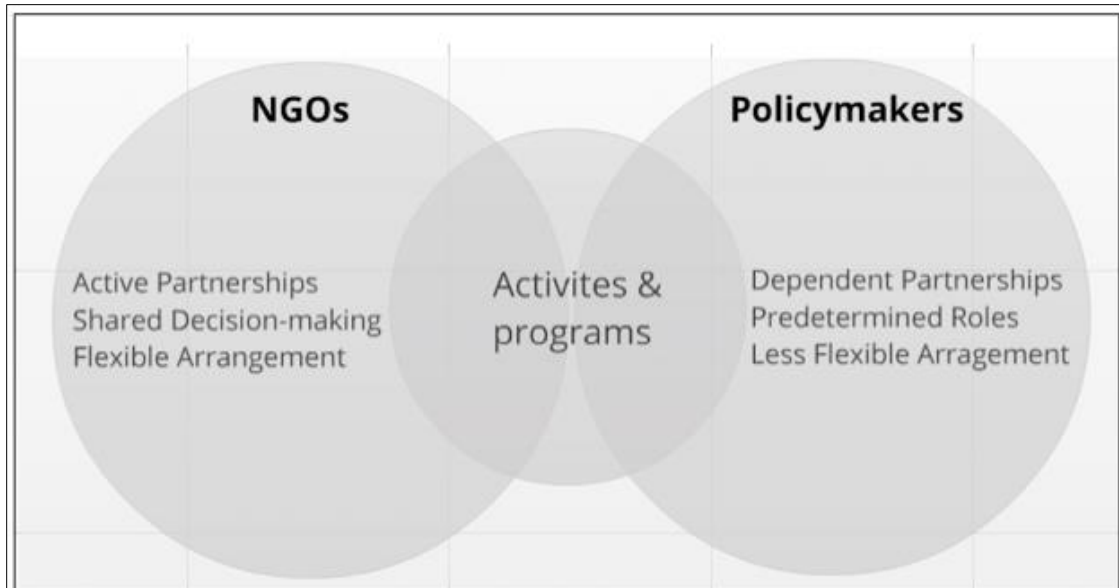
Two different types of partnerships are presented: active and dependent. Active partnerships characteristically include ongoing dialogue and debate about roles and responsibilities. While this type of partnership may include hostility at times, it is one in which the NGO ultimately has a higher level of influence in the decision-making process. Dependent partnerships, as described by Lewis, are typically those that are reliant upon a specific funding source and have less latitude for modification, such as a time-bound development project. Dependent partnerships may be less specific about role designations

but will have specific outcome expectations. These two types of partnerships are not static, and both are susceptible to change during the course of a partnership, depending on contextual factors.

Lewis states that motivations for pursuing such a relationship can be complicated. Different actors may have fundamentally different reasons for entering into a partnership, and so it is important for development NGOs to carefully consider the implications of any partnership. He asserts that successful partnerships include ways in which the collaboration can be monitored and adjusted when needed. The defining characteristic should be that a specific objective could not be otherwise achieved without entering into the partnership.

Drawing on both Najam's framework and on Lewis' roles of NGOs, my thesis proposed several conclusions. Among those conclusions is that NGOs and policymakers have different views about NGO partnerships within the Ministry of Education and, in general, within the public education sector. As seen in Figure 4 below, the different actors, although both interested in partnerships with the other to advance education, had fundamentally different ideas about the characteristics of such partnerships in the future.

This particular finding, along with other findings about the sector, served as an important antecedent to my dissertation research, as it provided foreshadowing for an MSPE like *Leamos Juntos*. Given the different notions about partnership and the conditions of NGOtenango, what would actually happen when the opportunity arose? Furthermore, the characteristics of *Leamos Juntos* as inviting voluntary and non-contractual partnerships with NGOs served as an optimal opportunity for a case study.



**Figure 4: Different views of educational partnerships between NGOs and Policymakers in Guatemala (Carter, 2012)**

For my comprehensive exam, I chose to explore one site in the case study. The vertical case study approach developed by Vavrus and Bartlett (2011, 2014) provided an opportunity to experiment with a new framework to examine the complex terrain of the global, national and local dimensions that influenced *Leamos Juntos* and NGOs in Guatemala. The conceptual framework for this dissertation has been informed by the Vertical Case Study (VCS) approach, which builds upon the notion of “policy as social practice,” providing methodological and analytical guidance on how to “explore the complex assemblages of power that come to bear on policy formation and appropriation across multiple sites and scales” (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2014, p. 131). The vertical case study approach draws on specific theoretical traditions that come together to create the foundational ideas that guide this approach. Specifically, Bartlett and Vavrus (2014) cite sociocultural studies of education policy, Actor Network Theory, new understandings of space within the field of ethnography, and *policyscapes* as providing significant

theoretical underpinnings. However, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to delve into additional theoretical traditions and they remain an opportunity for future research. Instead, and as a way to more narrowly incorporate the different dimensions of VCS—global, regional, national and local—I draw upon the phenomenon of NGOtenango as the vehicle for doing so.

Examining the perspectives of one *debutant* INGO and the public education staff working in one department where that *debutant* INGO worked revealed that many factors contributed to the *debutant* INGO's participation in *Leamos Juntos* that were not apparent in the reviewed literature. By segmenting the data into two groupings — *debutant* INGO staff and public education staff — I was able to compare the differing experiences and perspectives of these two groups, highlighting specific barriers and supportive factors that emerged for participation.

Supportive factors included:

1. INGO characteristics that supported INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*
  - a) Existing positive interactions between the INGO and government staff
  - b) Mission alignment with program goals
  - c) Implementing some Intercultural and Bilingual Education (EBI) programming
  - d) Race and nationality supported participation
2. Department characteristics that supported INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*
  - a) Intentional outreach and identification of NGOs working in the department
  - b) Demonstrated commitment to implementing *Leamos Juntos*
  - c) Public education staff with experience and positive opinions about INGO participation
3. *Leamos Juntos*' supportive factors
  - a) Good outreach and materials
  - b) Design and administrative structure open to INGO participation
  - c) Alignment with INGO reading approach
4. NGOtenango as a supportive factor
  - a) INGOs actively working on reading programming
  - b) Flexible and non-contractual participation



The history of positive interactions between the INGO and the department, along with the fact that both had aligned themselves with *Leamos Juntos*, played a significant role in supporting INGO participation. Thus, if either one of these factors were not present, it could significantly affect INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. Furthermore, a set of unique characteristics of both the INGO and the department allowed them to coordinate and work together towards their mutual goal of improving reading programming in the department, both through programming in the classroom and through teacher support. This suggests that INGO participation is directly affected by the context in which they are working, including a variety of actors in the areas in which they work, and that *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* may be occurring differently in different locations around the country.

Elements of the *Leamos Juntos* program itself played key roles in facilitating the participation of the *debutant* INGO. The *Leamos Juntos* Program Document provided policy directives and programming guidance for both INGO staff and public education staff and each used it to advance the program and, in the case of this *debutant* INGO, their own organization. Since the *debutant* INGO drew upon *Leamos Juntos* in order to advance their own organizational goals, it suggested that *debutant* INGOs may be doing this more broadly to negotiate their access into the public education sector. While many of these factors were supportive, some of these same factors also acted as barriers. Additionally, there were additional barriers that challenged the *debutant* INGO's participation in the program.

Barriers and overall issues that complicated *debutant* INGO participation included:

1. Existing barriers related to INGOs interfacing with government staff

- a) Difficulties in registering the INGO in the education sector
- b) Communication challenges between the INGO and the department
- c) Politicization of the education sector
- d) Ministry focus on auditing rather than implementing *Leamos Juntos*
- 2. Characteristics unique to the *debutant* INGO
- 3. Issues of race, nationality and colonization
- 4. Specific barriers related to *Leamos Juntos*
  - a) *Leamos Juntos* outreach not sufficient
  - b) Ambiguity in the *Leamos Juntos* program document
  - c) INGO lacking an official endorsement from *Leamos Juntos*
  - d) Resistance to using *Leamos Juntos* books
  - e) Teachers unsure what they are supposed to be doing with *Leamos Juntos*
  - f) *Leamos Juntos* Reading Committees with different levels of functionality
  - g) The slow pace of education reform and the temporal nature of policy
- 5. Barriers within the education system
  - a) Perception of inadequate teacher disposition and preparation
  - b) Not enough time in the school day
  - c) Discrepancies between policy and practice
  - d) Inadequate funding for the Ministry of Education
- 6. NGOtenango as a barrier
  - a) A history of nonaligned programming between NGOs and the state

Both the *debutant* INGO staff and the public education staff described a variety of barriers related to INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. Some barriers were directly related to *Leamos Juntos* while others could be described as aggravating factors that complicate INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. For example, the issue of race was seen as both a barrier and a supportive factor, underscoring the idea that the individual attributes of NGO staff and leadership influence how schools may be making decisions about working with INGOs.

Additionally, many of the comments were framed within the context of NGOtenango, which presents various challenges to the participants. Notably, barriers related to precarious funding for INGOs and inadequate investment in the education sector appear to be intractable. In contrast, barriers such as increased information and

communication may be less resource intensive and therefore more plausible points of entry to suggest strategies that could help the *debutant* INGO and the public education staff reduce these barriers. Given that the Force-Field Analysis approach asks for specific strategies to reduce these barriers, both the INGO and the public education staff had concrete suggestions on how to overcome some of these barriers, including:

1. Increased Collaboration:
  - a) INGO-Department
  - b) INGO-INGO
  - c) INGO-Ministry
  - d) School-School
  
2. Improving the *Leamos Juntos* Program Design

Both the public education staff and *debutant* INGO staff agreed on multiple strategies related to collaboration, such as increased communication, resource sharing, and knowledge sharing. Their suggested strategies also included specific points about who should collaborate and how, laying out different scenarios for collaboration between INGO-INGO, INGO-Department, and INGO-Ministry. Participants also described strategies for collaboration within school districts. They also discussed the locus of control, sharing thoughts about who, or which group, might be responsible for coordinating such collaborative efforts. There were also specific programmatic suggestions about *Leamos Juntos*, along with suggestions for both INGOs and the public sector working together.

The *debutant* INGO and the public education staff's proposed strategies to reduce barriers and increase supportive factors for INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* varied, although both focused on increased collaboration between the department and the INGOs. Both INGO staff and public education staff were imagining how to better work

with each other to advance the goals of *Leamos Juntos* but also how they might improve the overall quality of education. However, each also presented different ideas about the ways in which that collaboration might occur, with some discrepancies around who might play what role. For example, the public education staff provided some examples that would limit the decision-making power of INGOs and, in doing so, confirmed a concern of the *debutant* INGO staff that their organizational planning could become co-opted by the government.

Tellingly, the consequences of NGOtenango played a central role in the discussions. Even though the inquiry was specifically related to *Leamos Juntos*, participants' analysis was not confined to *Leamos Juntos*. In fact, the analysis and suggestions regularly jumped beyond *Leamos Juntos* to refer to the condition and consequence of INGOs working in that department. Given the history of this particular department and the fact that the *debutant* INGO had already begun working with the *Leamos Juntos* LJ Link<sup>14</sup> to coordinate efforts, it was perhaps unsurprising that both supervisors and the *debutant* INGO staff suggested they would welcome a convergence of goals, effort, and resources. Yet school directors, those closest to the day-to-day interactions at the school level, proposed strategies that would allow them to consolidate their strengths as a group, regardless of what INGOs may choose to do. Their exposure to “poor NGOs” and an under-resourced department may have made them less optimistic about potential collaborative efforts with NGOs or the department.

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<sup>14</sup> The LJ Links are administrators who, in addition to other administrative duties such as quality control or organizational planning, are tasked with implementing *Leamos Juntos* across the entire Department.

In addition to the force field analysis, I also analyzed the data drawing on the vertical case study approach with special attention towards policy appropriation in education (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2012, 2014), where:

*“social actors interpret and selectively implement policies, thereby adapting ideas and discourses developed in a different place and potentially at a different historical moment in accordance with their own interests as well as symbolic, material, and institutional constraints” (p.132).*

In doing so, I discussed the simultaneous coherence and incoherence that occurred in INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*, looking at instances of different scales, actors and times. Within that analysis, I highlighted how:

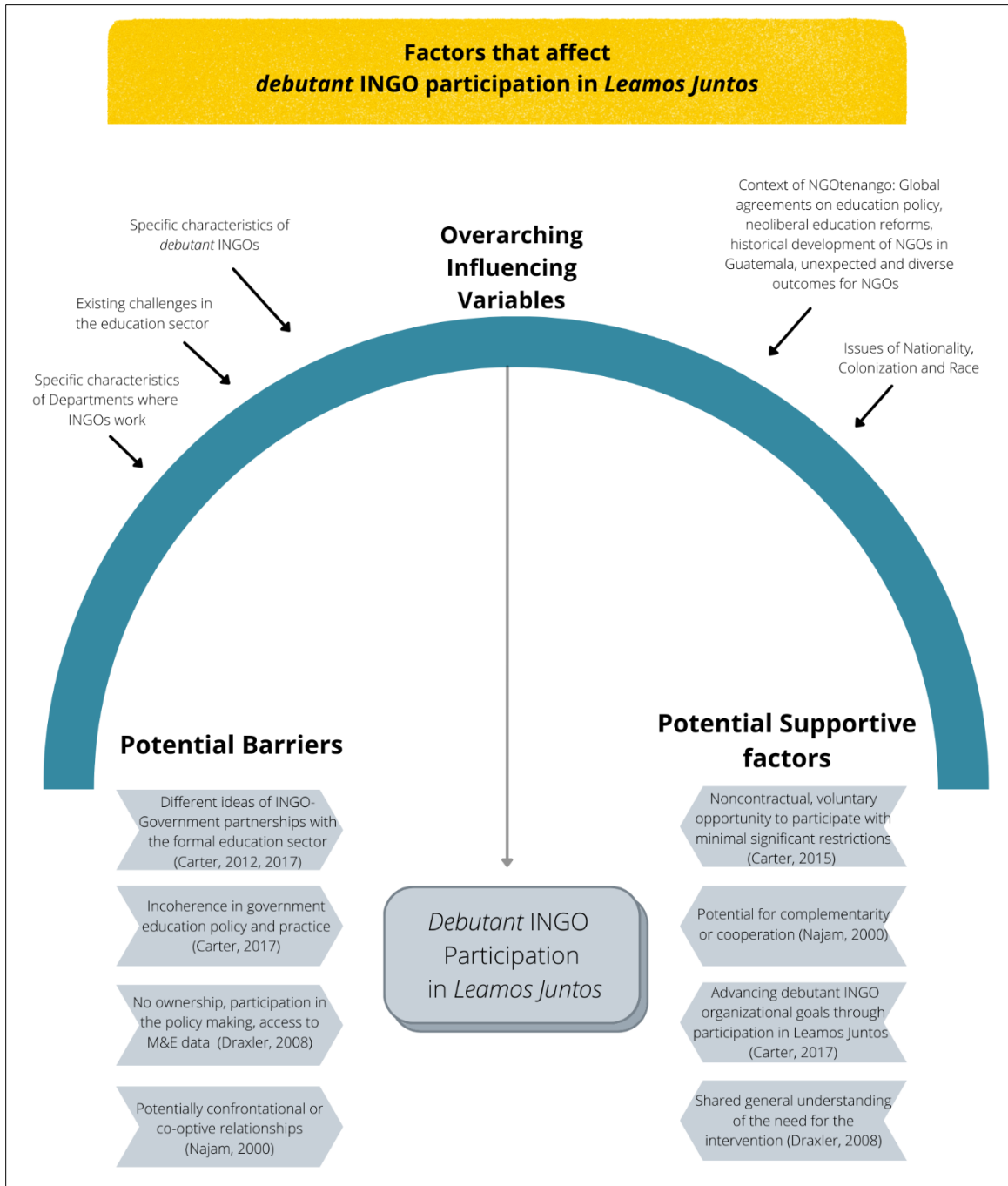
1. Authorization to participate in *Leamos Juntos* touched national, department and local issues for the public education staff and INGO staff;
2. The *Leamos Juntos* Policy Document (LJPD) helped circumvent existing issues with bureaucracy related to NGO registration while simultaneously substantiating permission to work within the policy context;
3. The *debutant* INGO drew upon the LJPD to legitimize and authorize their participation, even though they were simultaneously visible (as an NGO) and invisible (as a small international NGO) within the LJPD;
4. The *debutant* INGO used their accumulation of cultural and social capital along with a particular assemblage of influential actors to advance their own program within the policy context of *Leamos Juntos*;
5. The *debutant* INGO played a brokerage role, wherein they aided the implementation of the policy through both supporting compliance *and* defiance of the same policy;
6. The study participants describe a normalization of functional and dysfunctional NGOs where they have been subjected to dysfunctional NGOs *and* a dysfunctional State, corrupt NGOs *and* a corrupt State, poor NGOs *and* a poor State;
7. *Debutant* INGOs are engaged in a particular type of creative policy appropriation that is influencing the education sector mostly at the local levels in Guatemala, and
8. When the State defines the roles of NGOs in the education sector, such as they did with PRONADE and to a more limited extent within *Leamos Juntos*, it can significantly frame interactions between public education staff and *debutant* INGOs.

Drawing on this set of findings, the comprehensive paper presented a series of conclusions including:

1. The historical development of NGOtenango shapes INGO-State relationships in the education sector;
2. Education policy has the potential to circumvent national- and department-level incoherence related to INGO work in Guatemala;
3. Education policy has the potential to shape the ways in which *debutant* INGOs are engaging in the education sector in Guatemala without engaging in direct contractual relationships, and
4. *Debutant* INGOs have the potential to influence the ways in which schools adopt education policy.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

Drawing on these conclusions, along with the frameworks that have influenced my research in Guatemala since 2010, I have assembled a conceptual framework in the form of a diagram. This attempts to map out the factors that affect *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* while simultaneously illuminating what happens when *debutant* INGOs participate, particularly through a focus on the broader context of NGOtenango (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Factors that affect *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos***

In this dissertation, I provide data and findings on this case study with a particular focus on *debutant* INGOs participating in *Leamos Juntos*. This dissertation tests this framework and allows for further elaboration and refinement of ways to analyze *debutant*

INGO participation in national reading programs.

### ***Literature Review Summary***

In this section, I have highlighted *Leamos Juntos* as a recent, national education program that invites NGO participation. I reviewed how neoliberal reforms have taken shape in international education policy discourses and normalized NGO participation in the advancement of education goals and how these further intermingled with the pacification efforts happening in Central America in the late 1980s. I then discussed how this took shape in Guatemala in the 1990s and early 2000s, drawing a connection between EFA, PRONADE and the current phenomenon of NGO proliferation in the country, which I am calling NGOTenango. I then further situate *debutant* INGOs as a unique segment of INGOs that have taken shape in Guatemala in the education sector, contrasting them to the NGOs of PRONADE and considering their future existence in Guatemala in relation to the State. Then, drawing on this overview of the literature, I conclude with a conceptual framework that posits what factors affect *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*.



## Chapter Three: Methodology

This dissertation draws on original research I conducted in Guatemala for 10 months during 2015. I employed a mixed-methods approach; the bulk of the research is qualitative with supplementary survey data. My Fulbright proposal to the MINEDUC drew on Draxler's (2008) conception of Multi-stakeholder Partnerships for Education (MSPE) and Lewin's (1951) Force-Field Analysis (FFA) approach as both a way to frame questions and as an analytical tool. The guiding research question was: *how are international NGOs participating in Guatemala's national reading program Leamos Juntos?* Whereas that Fulbright proposal was to investigate all INGOs, this dissertation looks narrowly at *debutant* INGOs. In this dissertation, I used a multi-sited case study approach and Lewin's Force Field Analysis to analyze the data and draw upon a conceptual framework that blends elements of the existing research as set forth in the literature review, along with preliminary findings presented from my comprehensive exam. The sections below describe the FFA and the case study approach.

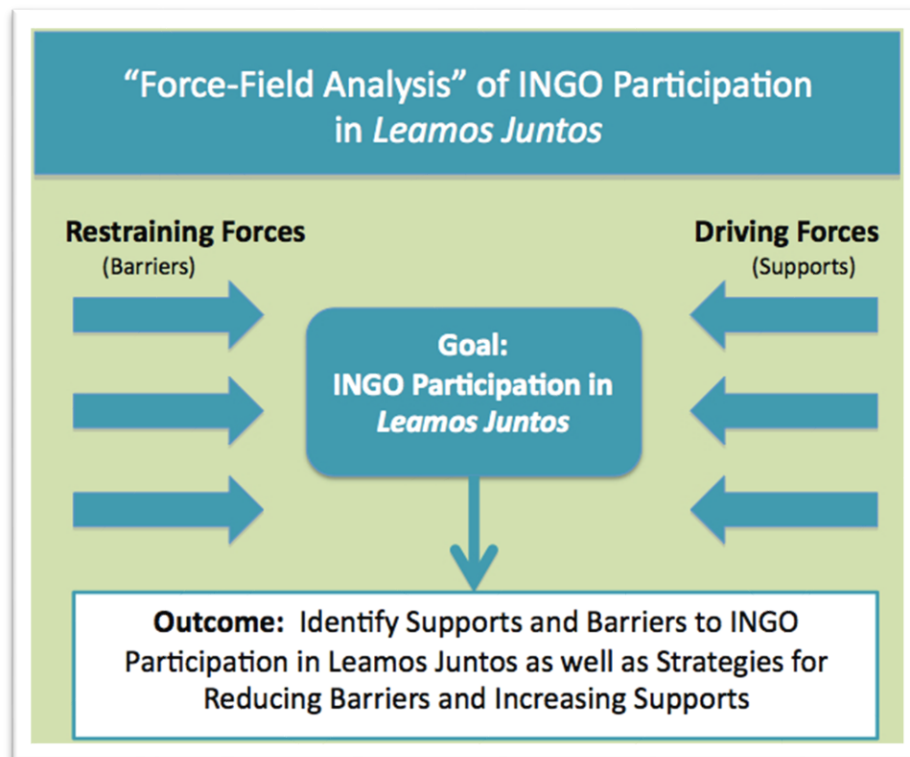
### ***Force-Field Analysis approach***

The Force-Field Analysis approach provides a process for investigating and analyzing a particular situation within the context of a process of change. Given that processes of change have driving factors and inhibiting factors, Lewin (1951) posits that one must take into consideration both sets of factors and then propose ways to increase driving factors for change and reduce inhibiting factors for change. *Leamos Juntos'* inclusion of NGOs diverged from previous Ministry programming, and this change was a central motivating factor for the study. This change is also reflected globally and

regionally and is part of a larger policy change process that includes the normalization of NGOs and other non-state actors in the education sector.

The Force Field Analysis provided a straightforward approach for investigating and analyzing INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* by engaging participants in a series of prompts. Given that *Leamos Juntos* had a stated goal of NGO participation, I drew on the Force Field Analysis to investigate:

1. The specific objective of INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*,
2. The supportive factors that contribute to INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*,
3. The barriers that restrict INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*, and
4. Some strategies for reducing barriers and increasing supportive factors for INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* (See Figure 6).



**Figure 6: Force Field Analysis of INGO Participation in *Leamos Juntos***

## ***Comparative and multi-sited case study approach***

Defining *debutant* INGOs helps to create a format for studying a particular grouping of INGOs that is not present in the contemporary scholarly literature. Not only are these INGOs absent from literature, but my research indicates that there are notable differences between INGOs and that no one *debutant* INGO can be representative of them all. Therefore, this dissertation uses a comparative and multi-sited case study approach by analyzing six cases broken up into two categories of cases: *debutant* INGOs and departments. The *debutant* INGO category includes three different *debutant* INGOs involved in reading programming. The department category includes three different public education departments in Guatemala. Creating these two categories of cases allows for comparison of objectives, barriers, supports, and strategies across all cases as well as within each category.

A comparative design allows researchers to “compare and contrast two or more instances of a phenomenon” (Rallis & Rossman, 2012, p. 121). Although I used a vertical case study (VCS) approach for analyzing data for my comprehensive paper, I determined not to use VCS for this dissertation. This is primarily because the focus of the dissertation is to look across the six cases to better understand the factors at the *debutant* INGO level and department levels—rather than across all levels up to the Ministry of Education—related to INGO participation in the reading program. However, NGOTenango serves to incorporate the global, regional, national, and local dimensions more narrowly. Thus, this dissertation draws on a limited subset of the data I collected in Guatemala during 2015.

## ***Sampling of INGOs and Departments/Public Education Staff***

I selected the case study *debutant* INGOs by cataloging and reviewing a list of 59 small- and medium-sized INGOs working specifically in education in Guatemala at the time of the study. Within this list, I identified 10 that had a specific focus on reading and for consideration as potential participants in a case study. Within these 10, I further scrutinized their websites and materials to better understand their focus on reading. Based on that review, I began reaching out to the different organizations to set up informational interviews and invite them to be a part of the study. Out of those 10, I was able to have ongoing communication with three that ultimately all agreed to be a part of the case study. Therefore, this is a convenience sample. Concurrently, I was learning about and meeting public education staff working on *Leamos Juntos* in different departments.

### **The Cases**

There are two categories of cases: (1) *debutant* INGOs and (2) public education departments. The *debutant* INGO category includes three separate *debutant* INGO cases, each one with a specific focus on reading and working in a variety of departments in Guatemala. In each of these cases, the participating *debutant* INGO staff and leadership were working in different areas of Guatemala and outside of the country. The department category includes three separate geographic department cases. In each of these cases, the participating public education staff members were working specifically in that department.

Importantly, the *debutant* INGOs work across multiple departments including, but not limited to, the case study departments. The three departments are geographically

bound, but the *debutant* INGO cases are not bounded geographically to a particular department. At times, *debutant* INGOs provide examples of specific departments and, when they do so, this is noted in the text. However, unless *debutant* INGO staff members specifically name a department, I expect that those examples could be from any of the departments where they are working. Similarly, at times, the public education staff in a department refer to specific *debutant* INGOs and, when they do so, this is noted in the text. However, unless public education staff are referring to a specific INGO, I expect that those examples could be about any of the INGOs working within their department's geographic/catchment area.

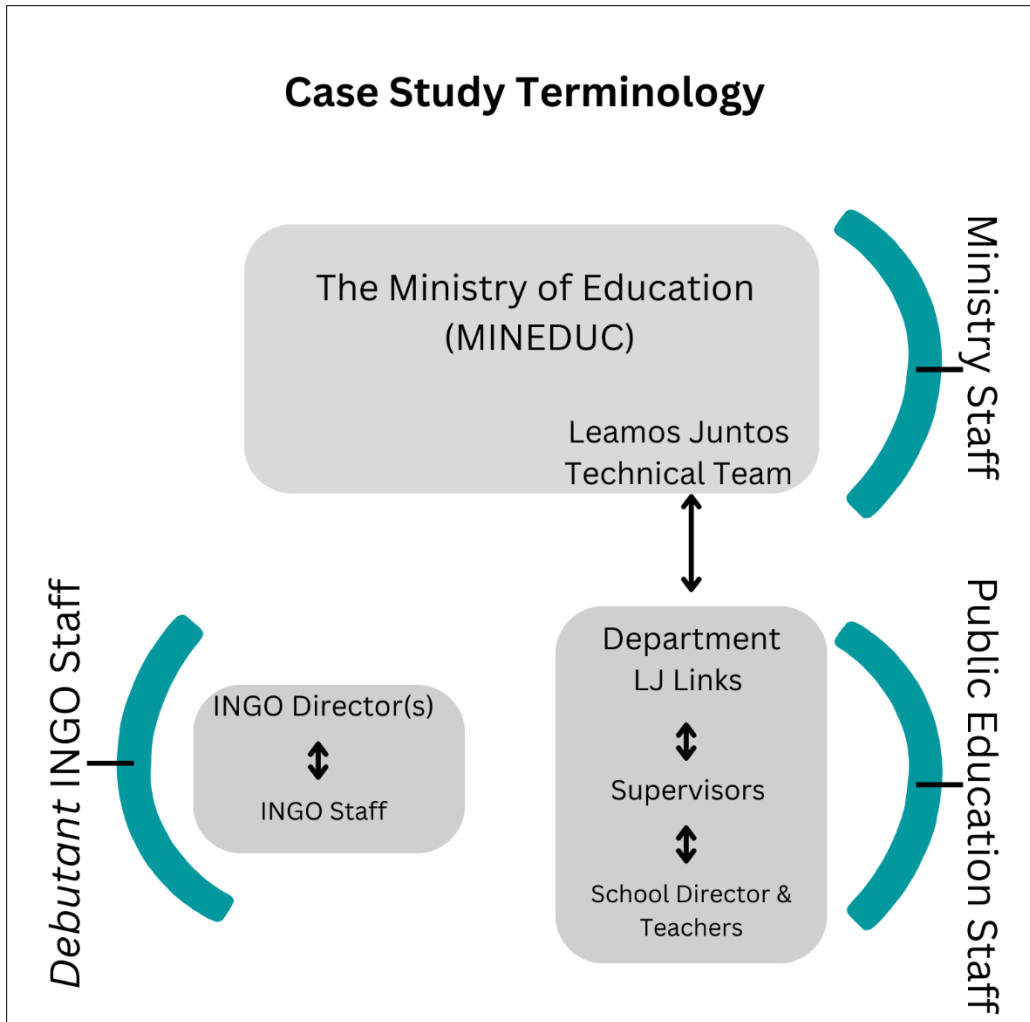
Within my description of the cases, I use the phrase “public education staff” as a way to group together the participants who are working in the public education system in the department. I delineate this group from the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) staff—that I will highlight by calling them such—given that the MINEDUC staff are working at the national level and across departments. The public education staff includes people who work in the public education sector for one Department Education Office (under the larger, national purview of the Ministry of Education). Staff members fall under the following titles:

1. The **LJ Links** are administrators who, in addition to other administrative duties such as quality control or organizational planning, are tasked with helping to implement *Leamos Juntos* across the entire department.
2. **Supervisors** are in charge of a particular grouping of schools within their department's catchment area and supervisors provide administrative oversight and support; they spend much of their time in the field, visiting schools.

3. **School Directors** are in charge of one school and, depending on the size of the school, may also be *a* or *the* teacher.
4. **Teachers** are in charge of one or more classrooms within a particular school.

Similarly, and when appropriate, I refer to the “INGO staff” as everyone working in the case study INGO. This includes the leadership—executive directors and in-country directors—and all supporting staff. These phrases, “public education staff” and “INGO staff,” allow me to highlight consensus and divergence within these groups and serve as a useful way to organize the different actors in this dissertation.

Finally, at times I refer to “Ministry staff” or simply “MINEDUC” as a way to identify the Ministry of Education. Additionally, I reference the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team, housed within the Ministry, and with representatives from different Ministry directorates. All of these terms and their relationship to each other are organized below in Figure 7: Case Study Site Terminology, below.



**Figure 7: Case Study Terminology**

In this section, I will describe the six cases that make up the case study and provide details about the three *debutant* INGOs and the three public education departments. Each case has a corresponding pseudonym. The pseudonyms for the *debutant* INGOs are: Activate Readers, Book Borrowers, and Chapter Readers. The pseudonyms for the public education departments are: Alo, Bello, and Cielo. Each case draws upon data from the LJ Link survey, individual interviews, focus groups, informational interviews, school visits, INGO site visits, field notes and observations.

## ***Debutant INGO cases***

There are three different *debutant* INGO cases: Activate Readers, Book Borrowers and Chapter Readers.

### ***Debutant INGO 1: Activate Readers***

Activate Readers worked in two of the three public education department cases (Alo and Cielo) and in several departments throughout Guatemala. The primary focus in the interviews and focus group was on the Alo Department. A North American couple founded this *debutant* INGO in the early 1990s while visiting the country to learn Spanish. Activate Readers provides training for teachers and librarians and also partners with schools to start and/or sustain school libraries. At the time of the research, they reached roughly 13,000 rural children through their training efforts and school partnerships. Their combined grants and donations in 2015 was close to \$950,000.

Over the years, Activate Readers began to work more through the formal, existing channels of hierarchy in the Department Education Office but, before *Leamos Juntos*, had never participated in a national-level program. They learned about *Leamos Juntos* on their own and considered how their own program overlapped with the national program. They approached the department office to learn more and, around the same time, I communicated with them and invited them to be a case study participant. Activate Readers then began collaborating with the Alo Department around *Leamos Juntos* initiatives.

Activate Readers was an ideal organization to serve in the case study because they were in an emergent phase in their relationship and engagement with the formal



education sector, had never participated in a State-sponsored program, were not beholden to large international development objectives, and operated independently and voluntarily. At the same time, they expressed their interest and curiosity about working with the Ministry on this national program and the ways in which they might evolve to partner with the Ministry in the future. During an informational interview with the director at the time, we discussed the opportunity to do a case study. The director consulted with their staff team and the team approved of the idea. Activate Readers was very supportive of the case study and provided me with a high level of access and dialogue throughout.

I conducted interviews with INGO Leadership, a focus group with staff, and conducted site visits with staff. This included: the director (White, North American female), the in-country director (White, North American male), and the director of pedagogy (White, North American female). Other senior staff members working in that office included two Guatemalan males and one Guatemalan female. Some senior Guatemalan staff members and other Guatemalan staff members spoke local languages.

### *Debutant INGO 2: Book Borrowers*

At the time of this research, Book Borrowers was working in two of the public education department cases (Bello and Cielo), although they had another branch of their organization that worked in the other public education department case (Alo). A Guatemalan woman founded this INGO to start one preschool in her community. She was introduced to a North American man who ultimately offered to fund and seek out resources for the program, which allowed it to expand. This began in 2008 and was a very small INGO. They had a storage space at the building of another more well-

established *debutant* INGO but no office of their own. They had a small network of paid staff and those that received stipends. The total amount of donations received in 2015 was around \$50,000.

They set up non-formal preschools in peri-urban and rural communities by training young people and unemployed teachers how to use 10 different books in the classroom. Their ongoing training included dynamic activities to engage children in reading and preparation for first grade. At the time of the study, they had programming in just over 25 communities and reaching over 300 children.

They were not intentionally participating in *Leamos Juntos*. However, because some of their preschool sites were housed within primary schools, some of those teachers used the *Leamos Juntos* books. During an informational interview with the director at the time, we discussed the opportunity to do a case study. The director consulted with their staff team and they approved of the idea.

Around the same time of formally agreeing to participate in the case study, some of the Book Borrowers staff members began actively trying to learn more about *Leamos Juntos* and considering how they might be involved. Therefore, the pursuit of participation in *Leamos Juntos* was relatively new to this INGO. This case therefore highlights Book Borrowers' incipient participation in *Leamos Juntos*.

I conducted interviews with INGO Leadership, a focus group with staff, conducted site visits with staff and observed a teacher training.<sup>15</sup> This included: the

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<sup>15</sup> At the beginning of the case study, I came to find out that I used to work with one of their lead staff members from 2004-2006. That was a surprise to us both.

director (White, North American male), an affiliate program director (White, North American, Male), and four senior Guatemalan staff members (two females, two males). Some of the Guatemalan staff members spoke local languages.

### *Debutant* INGO 3: Chapter Readers

At the time of the study, Chapter Readers worked in all of the public education department cases (Alo, Bello and Cielo) as well as several other departments. Founded in the mid-1990s by two North American men from the United States, this program had grown incrementally from providing access to schoolbooks in one community to working with over 165 schools. Their combined grants and donations in 2014 were roughly \$1,900,000 and they described reaching over 36,000 students that same year.

With a focus on education and reading specifically, they had a Ministry approved 1- and 2-year teacher-training program with an accompanying curriculum to support reading acquisition and comprehension, along with writing. Their program included in-depth, multi-day training as well as ongoing, in-service support for teachers. As a part of their curriculum, they provided books that were age- and grade-level appropriate and connected to content requirements in the Guatemalan national curriculum.

This *debutant* INGO, unlike the others, was formally invited by the Ministry to participate in *Leamos Juntos*. Given their very specific focus on reading and their success in their programming, they were known by different education officials in Guatemala as a reading program. Out of the three *debutant* INGO cases, Chapter Readers was working with the greatest number of schools and students and was the most well-resourced. For example, they had offices outside of Guatemala City and several all-wheel drive vehicles for reaching their program sites. Additionally, they had the most formal relationship with

the Ministry of Education as they had been certified to provide Ministry recognized teacher training.

I initially reached out to the in-country director and met them at a conference. After consulting with their key staff, they agreed to be a part of a case study. I conducted interviews with the in-country director, facilitated a focus group with staff, made visits to their office, and accompanied staff on three school visits. The participants included: the in-country director (Guatemalan male), and four senior Guatemalan staff members (three females, one male). I was not aware of whether or not senior Guatemalan staff spoke local languages but I did understand that many of the other Guatemalan staff spoke local languages.

### **Public education department cases**

There are three different public education departments: Alo, Bello and Cielo. Each of these departments had *debutant* INGO activity and was accessible within three hours from Guatemala City.

#### **Department 1: Alo Department**

I chose this department primarily because it has seen an influx in INGOs in recent decades, including many *debutant* INGOs. Both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers were actively working in the Alo Department. Furthermore, I was familiar with the Alo Department from my previous work in Guatemala. Early on in the Fulbright, I came to the department and participated in a half-day event in support of *Leamos Juntos*. In this event, we had a public ceremony, visited a school, and had a small private breakfast with the Minister and other high-ranking officials. Then, at a *Leamos Juntos* event in the

capital, I conducted a survey of LJ Links and the LJ Link for that department indicated that they were actively working with INGOs on *Leamos Juntos* and generally trying to coordinate with INGOs. They expressed their interest in participating in the study.

The department's proximity to the capital made this an accessible case study site. Furthermore, I had a history of visiting and working in this region of the country and so I was familiar with the major roads. Since my time living and working in Guatemala, I have also visited this department for tourism, both on my own and with my family and friends. All of these factors, in addition to finding *debutant* INGOs working there that also wanted to participate in the case study, suggested that this would be excellent case.

## Department 2: Bello Department

I chose this department because I knew about several *debutant* INGOs working there as well as other INGO activity. Both Book Borrowers and Chapter Readers were actively working in the Bello Department. I had previously travelled in the Bello Department and was familiar with some of the larger roads and towns. This was also the location for the 3-day conference for LJ Links and so I was able to meet the Bello LJ Links. For my master's project, I had interviewed several *debutant* INGO representatives working in this department. I had repeat interviews as well as new interviews with other *debutant* INGOs working there.

The department education office was centrally located and easy to access. I conducted an interview with both of the LJ Links in their offices. Neither of the LJ Links was working with INGOs on *Leamos Juntos* although they each cited other INGOs or NGOs working in the department. They invited me to share my research study with

department staff at a meeting and this resulted in meeting and interviewing two supervisors. I also visited five schools in total, where I had conversations and informal interviews with a director, teachers, and school staff (three of the school visits were with Chapter Readers and two schools on my own). I also interviewed four other *debutant* INGOs working in Bello Department although those data are not included in this dissertation.

### Department 3: Cielo Department

I chose this department because I was aware of several *debutant* INGOs working there, including both Book Borrowers and Chapter Readers. I visited this department early on with MINEDUC staff, one of the department's LJ Links, and with a delegation from Honduras' Ministry of Education. After learning more about my study, the LJ Link expressed interest in my work and encouraged me to reach out. In the LJ Link survey, they indicated that there was a large INGO working with them on *Leamos Juntos*. Interestingly, when I followed up for an interview, they said that in fact they were not participating with any INGOs on *Leamos Juntos*. Ultimately, during our interview, they described that indeed they were working with an INGO on *Leamos Juntos*.

From my own research, I knew that this department had some INGOs working in education, including *debutant* INGOs. I had traveled through on multiple occasions, although I had not spent much time there. It was geographically convenient for me, given its proximity to Guatemala City.

After my first visit to the department, I attended a three-day training with all LJ Links and had conversations with the LJ Links from that specific department at the training. Following that, I had one formal interview with one LJ Link in the Department

Office, along with conversations with other public education staff during our school visits.

I visited eight schools in total as a visitor and, during those visits, I had informal conversations and interviews with teachers and supervisors. I also met separately with two other large INGO representatives working in that department. Both were working in the highlands and one was collaborating with an international chemical company, working with schools, and with the Cielo LJ Link.

### ***Data collection***

I collected a variety of different types of data for this study. This includes survey data, interviews, observations, focus groups, and field notes. I collected data from both INGO staff and public education staff. Drawing on the Force Field Analysis (FFA), I created interview and focus group instruments. Each interview and focus group included the four specific prompts outlined above. This structured format of using the FFA was useful for guiding conversations that were ultimately semi-structured and emergent. For the purposes of clarity, this section distinguishes between what happened with each *debutant* INGO case and what happened with each public education department case.

The set of three tables below provides information about the different cases. Table 2 shows the number and type of respondents among the *debutant* INGO cases that provided signed consent forms. The last row indicates the number of site visits to each INGO. Table 3 shows the number and type of respondents among the public education department cases that provided signed consent forms.<sup>16</sup> The last row indicates the number

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<sup>16</sup> Table 3 has empty cells because not everyone I met decided to sign the informed consent form. See Limitations section for further discussion on informed consent forms.

of schools visited in each department. Table 4 shows which *debutant* INGO cases are working in which public education department cases.

**Table 2: *Debutant* INGO Cases: Data by type of respondent and number of respondents**

Type of Respondent	Number of <i>debutant</i> INGO respondents		
	Activate Readers	Book Borrowers	Chapter Readers
INGO Leadership	2	2	1
INGO Staff	4	4	4
<i>Total participants</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
INGO Site Visits	2	2	3

**Table 3: Public Education Department Cases: Data by type of respondent and number of respondents**

Type of Respondent	Number of public education staff respondents by department		
	Alo	Bello	Cielo
LJ Link/s	1	2	1
Supervisors	6	2	
Teacher/Principal	7		
<i>Total participants</i>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
School Visits	3	5	8



**Table 4: *Debutant* INGO cases and their work in the case study Departments**

<i>Debutant</i> INGOs	Departments		
	Alo	Bello	Cielo
Activate Readers operating in	X		X
Book Borrowers operating in		X	X
Chapter Readers operating in	X	X	X

## Survey

I conducted a survey (see Appendix A) of the members of the departmental reading commissions, many of whom were also LJ Links. I worked with two colleagues at the Ministry to pilot the survey and refine the terminology. I implemented the survey with department reading commission members at a national meeting in Guatemala City. Given their presence in the capital and the opportunity to conduct a survey during their meeting, this was a “convenience sample” that consisted of 46 individuals, all of whom were members of the departmental reading commissions (Creswell, 2002, p. 156). I first explained the study to the group. Ministry officials working on *Leamos Juntos* then encouraged everyone to complete the survey as I passed out the survey to everyone in attendance.

The survey was completely in Spanish and included a cover letter explaining who I was and my research in Guatemala. Then, I included an overview of the study as well as the schematic of the Force Field Analysis. The survey itself consisted of 14 questions and also gathered basic demographic information. The survey included questions with “continuous scales and categorical scales” as well as open text entry (Creswell, 2002, p.

158). The survey included the specific questions drawn from the Force Field Analysis as well as other more general questions about INGOs working in the education sector in Guatemala. The survey also included an Informed Consent Form. Out of the 46 individuals, 26 completed the survey. This dissertation only draws on the survey responses from participating department LJ Links.

## **Interviews**

I began by reaching out to many different individuals, requesting informational interviews in order to better understand and gather information about the design, implementation, evaluation, and current state of *Leamos Juntos*. These interviews informed the design of the interview protocol and my approach to the case study sites. Interviews included both formal and informal structures.

I designed the study to look at all different kinds of INGOs, and so this meant that the size of the INGO was not a topic of discussion in the interviews and focus groups.<sup>17</sup> However, I spent time at the beginning of each interview session, and during the sessions, answering clarifying questions about who and what constituted an INGO within the context of this study. The idea of “international” was a continuous point of clarification during the interviews, as was the idea of an “international NGO.” This was because some Guatemalan NGOs receive support and financing from international groups. To complicate this further, some Guatemalan NGOs receive funding from international governments to conduct projects. Some international organizations are explicitly

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<sup>17</sup> The concept of a *debutant* INGO was not introduced to study participants and is instead an analytical construct that I have used in this paper.

governmental or inter-governmental, and these designations were understandably unfamiliar to some of the participants.

I used in-person, formal interviews at different times during my investigation as an important strategy for gathering information, conducted in English and Spanish. Due to the international nature of the study, some of the interviews were conducted by Skype. I audio recorded interviews (with permission, when permitted and when I deemed necessary), documented them through the use of field notes, and transcribed them as needed. Interviews were semi-structured, containing pre-scripted questions and opportunities for open-ended responses. All interviewees in this study received a summary of the study in either English or Spanish and signed informed consent forms as required by Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol.

I also conducted informal interviews and had conversations with different public education staff throughout the duration of the case studies. All of these conversations and informal interviews happened within the context of the study and with verbal consent. However, for whatever reason and without requirement to participate in the study, many of the teachers and directors did not sign the consent form. These conversations and informal interviews, which were less structured and more spontaneous, were also a part of my data collection. However, when describing the interview data collection in the following section I will only enumerate the formal interviews.

## Debutant INGO interviews

### *Activate Readers interviews*

At Activate Readers, I conducted three interviews with the executive director and three interviews with the in-country director. One of these interviews included both the executive director and the in-country director and this interview was held through a Skype audio call. The subsequent interviews with the executive director were all through Skype audio calls while the subsequent interviews with the in-country director were all in-person. In addition to these formal interviews, I engaged with both individuals in ongoing conversations over email, in-person and by phone during the study.

### *Book Borrowers interviews*

With Book Borrowers, I conducted two formal interviews with the co-founder/director. Both of the interviews took place over skype. The purpose of the first interview was to invite their participation in the study; the second occurred towards the end of the case study research. In between, we had ongoing conversations by phone and email. I also conducted an interview with their affiliate program director in-person.

### *Chapter Readers interviews*

With Chapter Readers, I had two formal interviews and ongoing conversations with the country director. Both of our interviews were in-person and in Guatemala.

## Public Education Department interviews

### *Alo Department Public Education Staff interviews*

I was unable to conduct an interview with the department director but I did meet him twice in a large group context and so I understood that he was aware of my research in his department. Despite multiple attempts to reach him, we were never able to schedule an interview. The highest person in the department that I interviewed was the Department LJ Link for *Leamos Juntos* (Guatemalan Man). We had one interview and ongoing conversations by email, phone and in-person both during school visits and focus groups as well as at official events in Guatemala City. The LJ Link also participated in the focus groups.

Additionally, I interviewed two school directors at two different schools in one hamlet (1 Guatemalan Man, 1 Guatemalan Woman). Each interview happened at their individual schools during the school day. At each interview I was also given a tour of the schools and had the opportunity to meet teachers and see classrooms. The Guatemalan Man also participated in a focus group.

### *Bello Department Public Education Staff interviews*

I was unable to conduct an interview with the department director. I was able to conduct an interview with both of the department LJ Links, together (1 Guatemalan Man, 1 Guatemalan Woman). This interview took place at their department office.

The LJ Links requested that the department director's staff invite me to share my research study at an already planned department staff meeting at the department offices. At that meeting, I handed out an explanation of my study and briefly explained the

research. After that meeting, two supervisors in the department agreed to have an interview then and there (2 Guatemalan Women). This interview was shorter than some of my other interviews and in a rather busy space. Nonetheless, both supervisors shared very helpful information and connected me with additional leads for interviews in the department.

### *Cielo Department Public Education Staff interviews*

I was unable to conduct a formal interview with the department director. I was able to conduct an interview and had ongoing conversations with one of the department LJ Links (Guatemalan Man). The interview took place at the department office. Although I met with several teachers at different schools, I did not conduct any formal interviews with teachers, supervisors or school directors.

### Focus groups

Focus groups were an important instrument in this study, and I conducted focus groups with both *debutant* INGO and public education staff. Each focus group lasted between 60-90 minutes and followed a focus group protocol. When conducting focus groups, I always began with a brief overview of the study. This included information on why I was interested in INGOs in education in Guatemala, my own experiences of working with an INGO in Guatemala, an overview of *Leamos Juntos*, and sharing a diagram of the Force-Field Analysis (FFA) as well as reviewing the questions of the FFA.

## Debutant INGO focus groups

### *Activate Readers focus group*

I conducted one focus group with Activate Readers' four senior staff members and their in-country director. The participants were selected in consultation with the executive and in-country directors because these senior staff members managed the program and oversaw the relationships with schools. They also oversaw other staff members who were working in different schools and reporting back about their work. It was important to meet with this group of staff members given their engagement with schools. The focus group occurred on a visit to the organization's office and followed their staff meeting.

### *Book Borrowers focus groups*

I conducted one focus group with Book Borrowers four staff members including their senior most staff member. The focus group took place in-person at a nearby INGO library. The participants were selected in consultation with the executive director because these staff members manage the program and oversee the relationships with schools. They also oversee other staff members who are working in different schools and report to them about their work. It was important to meet with this group of staff members given their engagement with schools. This focus group happened towards the end of my work with the organization and after my site visits.

### *Chapter Readers focus groups*

I conducted one focus group with three of Chapter Readers' senior staff members. The focus group took place in-person, in their office. The participants were selected in

consultation with the in-country director because these staff members manage the program, conduct teacher training and oversee the relationships with schools. They also oversee other staff members who are working in different schools and report to them about their work. This group also oversees teacher training and pedagogical content development. It was important to meet with this group of staff members given their engagement with schools. This focus group occurred towards the end of my work with the organization and after my site visits.

### Public Education Department focus groups

#### *Alo Department Public Education Staff focus groups*

The Alo Department LJ Link was exceptionally helpful in this case study. Because of this, I was able to hold a focus group in the Department Office with six district supervisors and a separate focus group with six school directors, some of whom were also teachers.

The supervisor focus group (6 Guatemalan Men) allowed me to hear from individuals who manage districts with many schools across the department and who see the ways in which NGOs interface with the schools in their areas. Three of the supervisors arrived halfway through the focus group but nonetheless were able to participate in all of the questions and provided valuable insights.

The school directors/teachers focus group (6 Guatemalan Men) allowed me to hear directly from people who are managing and teaching in schools. These individuals interface directly with NGOs at the school level and are also close to the communities in which they work. They were selected in conversation with the Department LJ Link based



on their geographic location and the participation of INGOs in their area. Furthermore, these individuals also served on the *Leamos Juntos* reading committees.

#### *Bello Department Public Education focus groups*

I did not conduct any focus groups with public education staff in this case.

#### *Cielo Department Public Education focus groups*

I did not conduct any focus groups with public education staff in this site.

#### Field notes and observations during site visits

Field notes and observations played an important role in my research process. This includes visits as a part of my work with the MINEDUC, as well as case study site visits and for additional interviews. While traveling, I always had several extra copies of the project description in Spanish as well as informed consent forms. I methodically used field notes to capture my own reflections, questions and ideas, as well as for documenting my activities.

Site visit locations included schools and offices—for *debutant* INGOs and departments—as well as other spaces for teacher trainings or conferences. I visited several kinds of elementary schools: public, private, and INGO as well as peri-urban, rural and multi-grade schools. On several occasions, visits included significant amounts of travel with staff during which time we had ongoing conversations. Field notes captured reflections from these conversations. At these locations, after describing my research and with verbal consent, I often had informal interviews with public education staff. I always shared the packet with information about my research project and also invited people to sign the consent form. Understandably, in these at times unannounced field visit

locations, some people did not opt-in to sign the consent form. Besides letting people know about the option to sign the consent form to formally participate, I did not put any pressure on individuals to sign. I believe that many people decided not to sign for a variety of reasons including because it was presented as an option and because I was an outsider with no basis for them to trust me beyond the fact that I had arrived with someone presumably familiar to them and/or their school and/or organization.

I conducted observations as part of these site visits, especially to schools and for teacher trainings. While observing, I asked that facilitators, teachers or directors introduce me and allow me to briefly describe the nature of my research. During that introduction I would always invite people to approach me after their planned activities or during breaks. Occasionally, I was also a participant-observer where I had either a formal role in an activity or was specifically invited to participate in one of the activities that I was observing.

### *Debutant INGO field notes and observations*

#### *Activate Readers field notes and observations*

I visited the INGO office on two separate occasions. Both times were for formal interviews and a focus group. This allowed me to see where their office was located in the town and observe their typical interactions on a weekday. I observed their staff meeting and heard about some of the more routine aspects of their work. Finally, I also wanted to learn more about the actual reading materials that they were using and hear from their staff about the implementation of their programming.

The first visit was on a typical weekday and included several hours at their office, during which time I observed the layout of their building and operations, the library and books, and participated in a staff meeting. The second visit was primarily for an interview; I also observed staff interactions and limited use of the library during that time.

Although I did not observe Activate Readers staff at a school, I visited a school where they were actively working. This allowed me to observe how their school library was set up as well as the use of books in a classroom.

### *Book Borrowers field notes and observations*

Book Borrowers did not have an office and so I met them at the library of another nearby *debutant* INGO. I had the opportunity to attend part of one of their teacher training sessions. I spent several hours observing the activities and instruction. This was a large group of teachers from different departments. I had the opportunity to tell the participants about the study and welcomed their participation. In total, I observed this training session for several hours.

With staff members, we visited three schools in three different areas. The first visit was to the very first preschool that they ever set up. This was formerly a private residence but had since become used specifically for the preschool. We stayed there for about an hour in which time I had the opportunity to speak with the teachers and observe their interactions with children. The second school was in a more rural location where Book Borrowers had set up in a shared community space. Here again we stayed for about an hour during which time I had the opportunity to meet the teacher as well as one of the

local women who helps prepare food for the children. The third school visit was different in that it was located inside of a public primary school. This was a rural school and had multi-grade classrooms. The preschool space itself was physically apart from the primary school but shared the resources of the school. Over the course of an hour, I had the opportunity to speak with teachers as well as the school director. I also observed children at the school in a classroom setting. Although the director offered to have a formal interview, I was unable to make it back out to the school for follow-up.

### *Chapter Readers field notes and observations*

I visited the INGO office on two separate occasions. I observed and participated in two teacher training sessions at an off-site location. The training sessions were for the entire morning. I was invited to introduce myself and to invite participants to speak with me at the lunch break. I had the opportunity to have a conversation within the context of the study with a few of the teachers at the lunch break. One teacher signed the consent form to be a part of the study but we did not have time to conduct an interview on-site. Primarily due to my busy schedule, we were never able to connect afterwards to complete a formal interview.

With INGO staff, I visited three schools. One school was a rural, public primary school designated as intercultural-bilingual school. This school also had multi-grade classrooms. I had the opportunity to enter one of the classrooms and observe the space. I also had a conversation with one of the teachers and observed the INGO staff doing a scheduled check-in with the teacher. We visited one private NGO school for orphans. I observed the space of one of the classrooms as well as one of the teachers in that classroom. I then observed the INGO staff doing a scheduled and final check-in with the

teacher. Lastly, we visited one public primary school centrally located in a small town. In this school, again I observed a classroom teacher in the classroom with students. The teacher was the same teacher who had agreed to participate in the study. We spoke briefly in between class sessions.

## Public Education Department field notes and observations

### *Alo Department field notes and observations*

My first visit to the department was to participate in a half-day event in support of *Leamos Juntos* with the Minister of Education in attendance. I used the opportunity as a participant-observer to take note of the interactions between the Minister and department staff. These observations were part of my general field observations that took place when I was accompanying Ministry staff at different times and in different places around the country.

For this case, I visited a hamlet where multiple INGOs were working with different schools. In each of the schools I conducted interviews with the school directors and then spent time visiting classrooms and the school libraries. I observed the ways in which the books were organized and also the children using books. I briefly observed teachers using books in their classroom. These observations helped to inform my own sense of a typical school day in a classroom given that there was not a significant amount of advance notice about my visit. They also allowed me to observe *Leamos Juntos* implementation in a school setting where INGOs were participating in the schools.

I later visited the department with the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team to conduct a two-day training in the capital city of this department. The training was for adult

literacy facilitators for the department's adult literacy program. At this training I engaged with adult literacy facilitators working around the department and tried to better understand their lived realities working in rural areas. In this environment, I was a participant-observer and took note on how the trainers interacted with the adult literacy facilitators and also considered the responses of the facilitators to the various activities and data that were presented. These were part of general field observations that took place while I had a more official role as a trainer working for the Ministry.

#### *Bello Department field notes and observations*

Independently, I visited two other schools in this department that did some work with *debutant* INGOs. At each location, I had conversations with teachers and toured the schools. At one of the schools I was invited to meet with the school director and we spoke about the study topic for about 30 minutes.

#### *Cielo Department field notes and observations*

Early on in my time in Guatemala, I visited two schools with a delegation from Honduras. This was with other staff from the MINEDUC. Both schools were small and in rural areas and designated as intercultural-bilingual schools. At the first school, we observed a reading activity in a classroom. We saw the boxes of *Leamos Juntos* books and how they were displayed in classrooms. We also had a lunch with school staff during which time I shared my research study. At the second school, I had the opportunity to observe another reading activity in a classroom. In that classroom, the students also sang a song in one of the regionally spoken Maya languages. We were then invited to an all-school ceremony where we were special guests. We enjoyed music and food.

With a different *debutant* INGO, I visited three additional schools with a North American colleague. We visited each school for about one hour. Each school was in a rural area and we had opportunities to speak with teachers and briefly observe classrooms. The first was a one-room, multi-grade classroom with one teacher. The second was a public primary school. We had the opportunity to meet the director, tour the school and then have an informal meeting with six teachers. The last school was a small public primary school. We had a tour of the school and saw several classroom spaces. I also attended a teacher training hosted by this *debutant* INGO that took place in a school space during the day. I was invited to briefly introduce myself and share the study.

### ***Data analysis***

To analyze the qualitative data, I used the Force Field Analysis (FFA) approach and selectively transcribed all interviews and field notes, coding for the four thematic areas within the FFA. Within each of the four thematic areas of the FFA, I also developed sub-coding themes. I used both excel documents and N-vivo to code and organize the data. The Force Field Analysis examined: 1) The specific objective of INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*, 2) the supportive factors that contribute to INGO participation, 3) the barriers that restrict INGO participation, and 4) some strategies for reducing barriers and increasing supportive factors for INGO participation.

I created a comprehensive overview of each case organized by the FFA. Then, I compared the cases and looked at commonalities and differences across the cases. I compiled the comparative data and noted experiences shared across all *debutant* INGOs and/or all public education staff, then shared among two or more cases but not all cases, and then individual outlying experiences in individual cases. Then, I used my conceptual

framework to analyze the data while also highlighting the constraints of the conceptual framework.

For the survey data, I conducted a content analysis to review responses to the scaled answers and text entry by organizing the information on an excel spreadsheet. I used the data as a reference point for follow-up interviews with LJ Links to both explore case study sites and, once sites were confirmed, to further learn about the case study sites. I also used the text entry from the survey to highlight different topics that were related to my conceptual framework. I did not use quantitative data analysis on the survey data given that only four participants were involved in the case study and that I was able to conduct interviews with each of those individuals.

### ***Researcher positionality***

My history, roles and experiences in Guatemala have had a significant impact on this research project. My personal history in Guatemala dates back to the fall of 2004 when I began working with a small, education focused international NGO in Guatemala City. I worked in Guatemala for almost two years at this NGO and also started a small enterprise working with a Women's Weaving Cooperative. After returning to the US, I became a Board Member for the same education INGO and continued to work with weaving cooperatives. I have undertaken paid consulting work in Guatemala and also continue to serve on the board of an INGO working in Guatemala and El Salvador. Between 2006 – 2019, aside from my fellowship in 2015, I travelled to Guatemala between 2 – 3 times a year for meetings and consultancies and remain in contact with many colleagues during the course of the year.



I am a White, North American male, a father and a husband. I know that my appearance alone, presenting as a white male, played a role in how people engaged with me on this project. This is actually borne out in the dissertation data as well. I also have significant generational privilege<sup>18</sup> and familial connections to Guatemala. I was on a prestigious fellowship to study in Guatemala at the highest office of education. My positionality shaped my perspective and the ways in which others viewed me and my work in Guatemala. I am an advocate for high quality, free public education and am critical of unequal power relations that disproportionately affect the quality of educational programming, especially for historically marginalized peoples. I am also sensitive to the positive and negative effects of INGOs working in ‘development’ and particularly in Guatemala. In my data collection and in my analysis, I have attempted to mitigate these biases through the following strategies discussed in literature on qualitative research:

1. Practicing reflexive thinking. Etherington (2007) describes the concept of *reflexivity* as “a tool where we can include our selves at any stage, making transparent the values and beliefs we hold that almost certainly influence the research process and its outcomes” (p. 601).
2. Understanding research as an interactive, interpretive process whereby I actively am constructing knowledge. Rossman and Rallis (2012) specifically describe qualitative research as “quintessentially interactive” where the researcher “draws on their own cultural knowledge” in order to interpret and make meaning of what has happened during a given interaction (p. 39, 47).
3. Being sensitive to the tensions of race and culture. As a researcher, I strive to “be actively engaged, thoughtful and forthright regarding tensions that can surface when conducting research where issues of race and culture are concerned” (Milner, 2007, p. 388). Here, the term *culture* includes issues of class, socio-economic status, and gender.

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<sup>18</sup> During my years conducting research about Guatemala, I came to learn about my great, great uncle—Dr. Walter Pettit—who worked with the United Nations in the late 1940s to support the creation of Guatemala’s national school of social work. While in Guatemala, I found a textbook on the history of the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security that features his name and contributions to the early stages of Guatemala’s welfare state development.

As a Fulbright-Clinton Fellow, I was awarded a 10-month fellowship to work at the Guatemalan Ministry of Education beginning in January of 2015. The application process required a proposed study in the host country and thus my award was based on my idea to investigate INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. A central component of the fellowship was the requirement to work roughly four days a week with the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team at the Ministry of Education and support the implementation of *Leamos Juntos*. Therefore, the majority of my time in Guatemala was spent working alongside this team in the implementation of the program while I conducted my own fieldwork during off days and weekends. My work was intended to serve the needs of the Ministry of Education to learn more about factors that affected INGO participation in the program.

My decision to pursue a graduate degree was based on my sense that the situation of INGOs in Guatemala was important and worth further exploration. This, based on my experience working in the country, grew into a more sustained sense of solidarity with Guatemalans struggling to survive and access high-quality, culturally responsive education. The more that I observed the roles of INGOs, the more I questioned their impact, their presence and their very legitimacy for being in Guatemala, working in education and humanitarian aid. I spent time exploring issues that intersected with education in Guatemala, such as language, history, reading, youth, and post-conflict settings. I came to learn about NGOs as a relatively new vehicle in international development for addressing social issues (particularly health and education). I also began learning about the complex assemblages of power that ultimately made up the State apparatus. I also learned about the historical progression of ‘development’ and spent time

problematizing development and our (scholar-practitioners') role in it.

In my master's work, I focused on an historical perspective, discussing the ways in which NGOs were financed and utilized in Guatemala and more specifically in the education sector. This revealed to me that until the 1980s, the majority of NGOs working in Guatemala were national although many were funded by international sources. The education projects in scholarly literature included USAID-funded projects but most of the focus was on PRONADE. I spent considerable time interrogating PRONADE and compared this approach to the current state of NGOs, which I termed NGOTenango as a way to make sense of this particular phenomenon in Guatemala.

Beginning my doctoral program, I had the opportunity to further explore issues of privatization and theories of the State in relation to education. In doing so, I attempted to situate small- and medium-sized international NGOs within the scholarly debates on privatization. I posited that they were both advancing and retreating from the push for privatization happening in education in Guatemala and around the world. Moving towards a more nuanced perspective and attempting to move away from binary explanations, I began to seek ways to describe the complicatedness of INGOs and their work in Guatemala. I explored the dynamics between private schools and public schools in Guatemala and then compared this to INGOs' decisions to work either in the public or private education sector. But the public/private and nonprofit/for-profit categorizations also seemed to miss a larger analytical context. Within the context of writing and discussions about the connections and assemblages of power that were at play—narcotrafficking, human smuggling, illegal trade, international mining interests, current and former military collaboration, international financing institutions, international

criminal courts, bi- and multi-lateral aid institutions, government, private sector, non-government, etc.—I felt that I needed to better identify what I meant by “the State” in order to situate INGOs and consider their presence as non-state actors in Guatemala.

I spent time considering the ways in which Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington (2007) had experimented with using Italian political scientist Antonio Gramsci’s theories of the State to situate NGOs within a contested space, one where elite and hegemonic interests sought domination while activist groups (NGOs, INGOs and community groups) sought a different path. I strongly identified with the idea that NGOs could be counter hegemonic in that they had a role to play in offering humanitarian aid *and* in pushing back against the powerful interests that disenfranchised so many Guatemalans. By situating INGOs within this historically contested space, I felt that I was able to analyze contemporary events and critique the potential trajectories of INGOs working in education. It also spoke to my own desire to work actively *with and within* the sector without simply being an ‘outside researcher’. Furthermore, it resonated with my own activist work beyond the education sector, partnering with solidarity and human rights groups in Central America to raise awareness about international mining and the role of the U.S. in contemporary Guatemala. However, from my observations, it also appeared that the *debutant* INGOs I encountered were less involved in overtly pushing back against powerful interests and more involved in education delivery and programming. I sought out further opportunities to explore what kinds of work they were actually doing and how they made decisions about their work in Guatemala.

By the time I received a Fulbright fellowship to study and work in Guatemala, my interests and experiences with both INGOs and literacy programming provided me with

some legitimacy to propose a study that would interrogate INGO participation in national education policy. By comparing the different eras of NGOs (PRONADE and NGOtenango), I endeavored to learn more generally about the variety of INGOs working in the education sector and identified a more appropriate term to describe these small- and medium-sized international NGOs; *debutant* INGOs. That focus on their emergence felt more applicable than on their relative size. In doing so, I focused on how these *debutant* INGOs would negotiate their work within the context of a well-organized policy intervention around reading.

Once in Guatemala, theorizing and research aside, the history of violence, the ongoing daily violence, and my own perceived threat of violence played a role in my fellowship and my research study. It directly influenced how I responded to different opportunities, chose a place to live, and my decision-making about locations for case study sites. My calculations were responsive to the situation and risk but also within the context of understanding my own privilege as well as my role and responsibility as a father and husband. At times, the threat of violence felt ever-present and was accentuated by different murders that happened while at work and on my commute to and from work, not to mention coverage in the news media.

For example, a lawyer for elite politicians was assassinated just blocks from the Ministry on the same street that I travelled each day. A motorcycle drove up beside the car and shot the driver until the car ran off of the road. My journal entry described this incident:

*June 3, 2015 Someone was assassinated 5-6 blocks from here at lunch yesterday. We passed around live photos, people read out loud the news lines. (A colleague) went to the scene to console the widow. The radio was buzzing on the drive home*

*about the increasing violence and political crisis.*

Author, Journal Entry

Several times, either on the drive to or from work, I passed by murder scenes. Bus drivers were a constant target for extortion and on numerous occasions I passed by dead bodies covered by tarps, and at least one time with a body in the street covered with a tarp and blood streaming out on to the road. In one of my journal entries, I am writing while stuck in traffic and I comment on how men are selling nuts in the middle of the road because another bus driver has been murdered up ahead.

Another example is from a site visit in Ajo Department where I attended an event with the Minister of Education and another member of the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team. During a small gathering for lunch, the department director arrived and looked unwell. The Minister got up and went over to speak with him. The member of the Technical Team explained to me that his daughter had been kidnapped and that it was taking a great toll on his health.

In addition to these contemporary scenes of violence, the recent civil war and the atrocities that occurred were also a part of my conversations with colleagues, neighbors and other Guatemalans. It was clear that these experiences and traumas were still very much present in the feelings and experiences of many of my colleagues and people who I met during the course of my research.

Our family decided to live in a small, gated community outside of Guatemala City with 24-hour security. We also decided to purchase a car so that we could commute and travel independently of the bus system. Understanding that these decisions also affected how I interacted with people, I strove to spend as much time as possible in public spaces

and meeting people casually. I was aware that private spaces and those that catered to tourists tended to be more expensive and therefore exclusive. Even still, I was very aware of the fact that my appearance would affect my daily interactions. My Spanish language skills helped me to navigate but also presented some limitations as well, given that it is my second language.

Three quarters of the way through my study, the executive branch leadership folded in a far-reaching and complicated grafting scandal. It underscored the incredibly complex nature of the Guatemalan State. A supra-state, international impunity court had worked with the CIA to record phone calls of Guatemalan politicians and business people to reveal far reaching corruption and abuse of power. I found myself interviewing INGOs about factors that contributed to and complicated their participation in a government policy as the highest-ranking officials—the President and Vice-President— were accused of high crimes and then summarily carted off to jail. I did not feel equipped to analyze and describe what was happening and was taken by the fact that there was no consensus about these events and the many levers that had been pulled that finally toppled the sitting President and Vice President.

From inside the Ministry, I saw many dedicated public servants trying to move their work forward despite the crisis; many were passionate advocates of *Leamos Juntos* and of early grade reading and they had been working on reading for many years. Others, equally passionate about education reform, shared with me their serious qualms about the Ministry and were deeply critical of a State that they experienced as extremely flawed and systematically racist against indigenous peoples. Outside of the Ministry, although most people were interested in participating in my study, I also met people who did not

want to participate. These people stated their deep distrust of the State as their reason for refusal. All of this helped me to see some of the many layers and the multiplicity of the Guatemalan government all the while continuing to advance my own research about INGO participation in State-sponsored education policy.

Upon returning to the US, I sought out ways to incorporate all of the different elements that I had observed while in Guatemala. I had learned about the vertical case study approach prior to my study and, when I returned, began reading additional literature about this comparative case study approach as a framework to examine the complex terrain of the global, national and local dimensions that influence education policy making, implementation and appropriation. I experimented with this approach in my comprehensive exams but ultimately, because the approach drew upon so many different and new-to-me theoretical traditions, it became clear that this was beyond the scope of what I could undertake in the dissertation. However, I came to see the overlap between this comparative case study approach and my conceptualization of NGOtenango as a way to make sense of the myriad historical and contemporary influences on INGOs working in Guatemala.

### ***Limitations***

This dissertation has a variety of limitations. First, there are some issues with terminology that remain unresolved in this paper. *Leamos Juntos* is the National Reading “Program” but it is also a “policy.” The *Leamos Juntos* “policy” includes multiple “programs.” At times the explanation of *Leamos Juntos* is framed in programmatic terms as opposed to policy, and at other times the reverse. Additionally, I have referenced the “public sector,” the “State,” and the “government” as ways to describe the Guatemalan



government and the public education sector. Participants also used those three terms in different ways and at times interchangeably. Given that the focus in the dissertation is primarily on the Ministry of Education, I address this limitation by simply focusing on the Ministry and, when needed, broaden the scope in response to the participants' use of the different terms.

Another issue with terminology is the term “INGO” or “NGO.” For the most part, interviewees referred to INGOs simply as NGOs. My use of the additional descriptor “international” NGO was one that somewhat complicated the conversations. This is because participants tended to think of *international* NGOs as very large international NGOs working around the globe, such as Save the Children or World Vision. To address this, I spent time explaining how I was using the term INGO and encouraged participants to clarify if I thought that they may be speaking about another kind of INGO. Still, in the interviews, most interviewees simply referred to “NGOs.”

Furthermore, the term “participation” is also not easily defined. Another limitation is that I believe my research questions carried an assumption that “participation” meant *intentional* participation and implicated some coordination whereas that was not always the case. In fact, the more that I investigated the case study sites, the more I became aware that the policy framing allowed for a kind of involuntary or unintended participation; *Leamos Juntos* was designed in such a way that if an INGO was working in reading programming, they might very well be participating without even knowing it. Because of this, in my findings I have highlighted and described the different kinds of participation as they arise.

There are certain limitations to the Force Field Analysis (FFA) as an organizing

framework for data collection and analysis. While the information coming out of the FFA is highly structured and geared towards gathering information particularly helpful for practitioners and policy makers, the structure has the potential to limit conversation. Additionally, the first question of the FFA (What is the specific objective of INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*?) was rarely answered as participants saw this as a given, underscoring the normalization of NGO participation in the education sector. In order to counteract the limitations of the FFA approach, I always explained the context of the research and reviewed each question with participants. I explained my understanding of some of the complicated features of the education sector and of NGOs—particularly about PRONADE and post-PRONADE—in Guatemala. In doing so, I hoped to encourage participants to answer all of the questions as well as to share comments, thoughts and reflections that went beyond the boundaries of *Leamos Juntos* and the FFA. This was the case in many of the interviews.

An additional limitation was that I was working in Spanish, which is my second language. I also do not speak any of the indigenous languages in Guatemala, outside of a few pleasantries in Kaqchikel. Although I have developed a high level of fluency, there were times that I did not know words, phrases or context. An early example came when I was interviewing a large international NGO. I realized early on in the interview that there was a misunderstanding about what I was asking in the FFA. I was trying to ask *what supports INGO participation*, but the interviewee thought I was asking “How could INGOs support *Leamos Juntos*.” I picked up on this but had to stop and reframe the FFA, further explaining my questions. I also spoke with Ministry colleagues about the terminology of “aportes y barreras” (supports and barriers) to identify adequate

synonyms. In doing so, I explained the FFA with terms such as “obstacles” or “facilitate participation.” Therefore, I was aware of the potential for misunderstanding and adapted the language of the FFA to convey the meaning of the research questions. I also created a visual diagram of the FFA within the context of the study and made sure to use this in interviews and site visits. This proved to be very helpful to explain the FFA process.

Another limitation is the possibility of case selection bias. Each case came to become a part of the case study based on a variety of factors and I chose to have six cases to maximize the opportunity for comparing across sites. In the Alo Department, the LJ Link approached me and invited my engagement with his department. Having someone who is eager and volunteering can influence their participation. It also meant that they were willing to use their convening power to gather together supervisors, school directors and teachers to meet with me. I sought out Chapter Readers’ participation because they were formally participating in *Leamos Juntos*. Certainly this affected their perspectives and interest in participating in the study as well. I also sought out Activate Readers’ participation because of their focus on reading and their work in two of the case study departments. Part of my rationale for working with a third *debutant* INGO was to work in a different department and with a *debutant* INGO with different characteristics from Activate Readers and Chapter Readers. Therefore, I attempted to address and limit case selection biases by having multiple sites with *debutant* INGOs that were quite different from each other.

An additional limitation is related to the ways that I identified Guatemalan public education staff members. The first limitation is related to their identity. Whereas I was able to identify some of the identity characteristics of the *debutant* INGO staff more

easily, I did not invite Guatemalan public education staff members to share their ethnic identity beyond being Guatemalan. From my experience working in Guatemala and during my time at the Ministry, I knew that many Guatemalans strongly identified as indigenous and having indigenous heritage. Not gathering this information limits the potential for analysis and so I do not attempt to analyze the different identity perspectives from Guatemalan public education staff. The second limitation is related to gender diversity among the respondents. The majority of the public education staff respondents were men and I do not believe that this is representative of the gender diversity in the public education sector, especially among teachers.<sup>19</sup>

Another challenge was related to the delineation of the case study cases from my entire data set. This required me to disentangle the data and selectively choose which data to use for the case study. The original data set included 101 people and, within that group, interviews with representatives from 15 INGOs working all around the country. Although I had designed the case study format during my time in Guatemala within three departments and with three *debutant* INGOs, ultimately this dissertation has modified that original format in order to ensure the most accurate and comparable units of analysis. Whereas I had originally intended there to be units of analysis that partnered one *debutant* INGO with one department, the reality as borne out in the process was that the *debutant* INGOs were working in overlapping departments and I could not attribute all of the INGO statements and examples to exclusively one department. Additionally, while the cases have uniformity across some participants (INGO Staff, LJ Link, Public

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<sup>19</sup> I did not conduct analysis to compare the gender diversity of my respondents to the gender diversity among public education staff.

Education Staff) certain sites have additional participants incorporated through focus groups, which allowed for additional analytical opportunities. While a limitation, I strive to highlight these differences in my analysis and also to use my literature review to highlight significant themes that broadly affect the sector and that are explored through the phenomenon of NGOtenango. The larger data set presents an opportunity for future study.

Additionally, I feel that the notion of informed consent was complicated when working as *a part of* while also *apart from* the Ministry of Education. I was working at the Ministry, embedded with the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team yet I was never an employee of the Ministry. My role was somewhat ambiguous and my affiliation with the Ministry likely projected that I had an official role beyond that of a visiting researcher. I feel that this ambiguity complicated the informed consent process. I interviewed members of the national reading commission, supervisors, school directors and teachers in this case study. All were public servants, i.e. working in the public education sector.

Many times, participants were invited to participate by a higher-ranking staff member. Most of the work occurred during official business hours, and in the Alo Department the higher-ranking staff member was present for the focus groups and also encouraged participants to sign informed consent forms. This certainly influenced how people responded and draws attention to the voluntary nature of ‘informed consent’ because, in some ways, this situation complicates the notion voluntary choice. However, I believe that because the study itself was technically part of public education staff’s everyday work that this ultimately did not compromise the data.

Additionally, and related to consent, I was particularly sensitive to the power dynamics inherent in my visiting schools and asking for signed consent from teachers and school directors. While on site visits, I always shared the packet of information that included the Informed Consent Form and invited people to sign. I also sought out verbal consent when we had a conversation or informal interview that was within the context of the study. But I never wanted to put pressure on anyone to sign the form and, by making it optional, many teachers or school directors did not sign. In addition to issues related to consent, there were also some challenges with key terminology.

There are several limitations in the literature review. For example, the historical review focuses primarily on the normalization of INGOs in the education sector driven in large part by the development of Education for All and concurrent neoliberal education policy reforms. Given space limitations, the literature review describes, but does not elaborate in detail, the interdisciplinary literature on NGOs in Guatemala related to the fields of health and environment. Including literature from other disciplines could provide examples of NGO- and INGO-State interactions that could inform analysis across sectors. However, cross-sector analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The historical analysis further suffers from a void between EFA and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), not to mention the policy developments in light of the New Policy Agenda and its focus on “shared responsibility” for the provision of public services (IDRC & Rutherford, 1997; Lewis & Kanji, 2009). These international education agreements and policy regimes have influenced the roles of NGOs and INGOs in the education sector, but given limitations of space, I have not included this as a part of my literature review, and therefore it does not appear in my discursive analysis. I also

considered including a substantial section on literature related to the rise of NGOs in international development. Ultimately I abandoned this in favor of literature that situates INGOs within a contested space of education reform and linking that to global, regional and national pressures.

This leads to yet another limitation, which is that this paper does not include a complete discussion of the radical and important education reform that resulted from the *Peace Accords* (PA) in 1996. Although such a detailed review is beyond the scope of what I can accomplish in this dissertation, having additional details would strengthen understanding of the historical context. While in Guatemala, I became acutely aware of the fact that many of the *debutant* INGOs I interacted with did not seem to draw connections between these education reforms and their own programming. Furthermore, many seemed distant from the issues that have shaped the contemporary struggles around education reform and that continue to drive some of the well-known national NGOs and INGOs working in the same sector. I question how the national curriculum and even *Leamos Juntos*, in a sense, have usurped the PA education reforms by instead focusing on increasing test scores and student advancement. Yet at the same time, that PA rationale was coupled with *Leamos Juntos* programmatic features that specifically privileged bilingual schools and the diffusion and production of literature in ten national languages.

To further elaborate on the intersection of the education reforms as set forth in the *Peace Accords* and *Leamos Juntos*, it is important to highlight the fact that education in the first language was a core element of the PA education reforms. The rationale for *Leamos Juntos* drew on the established policy goals of bilingual and intercultural education (EBI), particularly in its book selection and distribution. However, in my

conversations with INGOs working in reading, there did not seem to be a high priority given to learning how to read in the mother tongue.

Even though many INGOs are working with indigenous peoples in the country, including each of the case study INGOs, I sensed a dearth of urgency from many *debutant* INGOs to fulfill the ideals of the Peace Accords education reforms. There appeared to be a notable ideological divide in my interviews with different NGO and INGO staff working in the education sector. I sensed a tangible push by *debutant* INGOs to advance particular ways of seeing the world, which oftentimes included a focus on learning to read in Spanish even if it was a second language, an orientation towards learning English, ideas about entering the job-market, and the development of individual skill sets while notably not using pedagogy to generate a deeper analysis and response to larger, structural injustices that are at play. On the other side, in the full study, I interviewed staff from National NGOs and some high ranking staff in large INGOs who shared and demonstrated their commitment to advancing the Peace Accords reforms. This paper does not allow for a full discussion of the debates around EBI nor how the PA education reforms are integrated, or not, into *Leamos Juntos*. It remains an opportunity for future research.

Another limitation in the literature review is that I do not utilize the literature on INGOs in ‘development’ as a Western ideological construct and practice, one that attempts to promote a particular kind of human development, rooted in notions of white supremacy, modernization and human capital theories. This omission, particularly in the region of the Americas that continues to be deeply affected by U.S. foreign policy, limits my analysis particularly around the topics of race, colonialism and (inter)nationality that



arose in this case study and this remains an opportunity for future analysis of this data set.

Finally, this study was conducted in 2015 and so the findings and conclusions must be understood to be within that context. *Leamos Juntos* has remained the national reading program but has changed under two different administrations and three different Ministers of Education.

While I see many limitations to this dissertation, I do not believe that the data has been compromised by these limitations. I was aware of my own positionality, kept a reflexive practice and worked hard to identify and address potential limitations. The process has allowed me to become aware of new research approaches as well as opportunities for future learning and research opportunities for myself and the field of international education. Certainly, hindsight reveals much that can be the fodder for learning.

## Chapter Four: Analysis

In this chapter, I present the six cases (three *debutant* INGOs and three public education departments) and describe and organize their responses about INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. *Debutant* INGOs tended to talk primarily about their own experiences related to supports, barriers and strategies for their own participation in *Leamos Juntos*. There are exceptions to this that I will also note in the text. Department public education staff tended to talk about supports, barriers and strategies about *any* INGOs in their catchment area with a specific focus on *debutant* INGOs. Again, there are exceptions to this where department staff will refer to one of the case *debutant* INGOs. Importantly, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between departments and *debutant* INGOs. As highlighted in Table 6, the *debutant* INGO cases are working in overlapping departments and so their comments, unless noted, are not attributed exclusively to one department. The chapter is divided into three sections:

1. Supportive factors for *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*
2. Barriers to *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*
3. Strategies for reducing barriers and increasing supports

Each section is broken up into categories. Within each category, I will name and then describe different themes that emerged based on the review of the six different cases. In each theme, I will synthesize the information while providing illustrative quotes and examples from the different cases. The themes will include examples that will go in order from the most concurrence across cases to the least and will also include outlying examples at the end of the theme. When appropriate, I will organize information by case going in alphabetical order starting with *debutant* INGOs and then with public education departments. However, when there is concurrence but there are few illustrative examples,

I will not organize by case and instead will condense the descriptions across cases. In closing each theme, I will highlight similarities across the cases and case categories (*debutant* INGO or public education department) as well as outlying examples.

For a reminder of the case study terminology—INGO Staff, Public Education Staff, Ministry Staff, and *Leamos Juntos*—see Figure 7: Case Study Site Terminology.

## *Supportive factors for debutant INGO participation in Leamos Juntos*

These supportive factors fall into four categories:

1. *Debutant* INGO Characteristics
2. Department Characteristics
3. *Leamos Juntos* Supportive Factors
4. NGOtenango Supportive Factors

### **1. *Debutant* INGO characteristics**

The three *debutant* INGOs all had two characteristics that either actively supported INGO participation or insipient participation: (1) INGOs had existing positive working relationships with public education staff, and (2) INGOs missions aligned with *Leamos Juntos*, which included a focus on supporting public education.

Across the *debutant* INGO cases, there were certain characteristics of the INGOs that actively supported INGO participation or their nascent participation. The first example is that all of the **INGOs had existing positive working relationships with public education staff**. This appears to have provided a foundation upon which the INGOs could build upon in order to participate in in *Leamos Juntos*.

Each of the INGOs cited, for example, having some type of signed agreements with public education staff before *Leamos Juntos* started and, in the case of Chapter Readers, the Ministry of Education. Activate Readers described having signed agreements with all of the school directors in the schools where they worked and with some district supervisors. Chapter Readers' approach included a requirement for signed agreements with teachers and supervisors. One of the Chapter Readers staff members also described how they used a formal letter from the Ministry explaining their partnership with schools to further validate their authority to work within the public education system to advance the national reading program. Lastly, Book Borrowers described having "a very good relationship at the department level" and their lead staff member cited having a formal "convenio" (agreement) with the department to do work in that geographic area.

**Activate Readers.** In addition to a formal agreement, Activate Readers cited good relationships with school directors and teachers as well as some supervisors. The INGO staff members discussed how, when the organization was starting out, people in the communities they approached were skeptical and that supervisors were not always welcoming. Then, when the schools saw positive results, others who were previously skeptical wanted to participate. Now, Activate Readers staff said that supervisors do welcome them into the schools and that they are supportive:

*We haven't always been welcome in the school. We have grown from the bottom up. Now, the children demand the opportunity to read from their teachers, the teachers in turn want more tools and so they search for us or for their supervisor, and the supervisors go to the department office. It is very neat to have found this is happening.*

Activate Readers Staff Member, Translated

Activate Readers staff cited how, over the years, the public education staff they have worked with have been promoted within the hierarchy. These public education staff were now advocating for the Activate Readers program from within the department. The Activate Readers staff described how establishing and maintaining open lines of communication and credibility with schools and supervisors had provided them with a level of credibility in the eyes of the public education staff:

*Director: The history that an organization has in terms of relations and the confidence instilled in that organization. This provides a great deal of support when talking about the participation of INGOs.*

*Staff 1: Our credibility.*

*Director: Right.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director and Staff Member, Translated<sup>20</sup>

Supervisors as well as school directors and teachers in the Alo Department confirmed this, citing the importance of any INGO having direct support from both the school directors and the teachers in the schools where they work.

Finally, Activate Readers also described working hard to be trusted specifically by people in the Alo Department. The in-country director cited honest communication with public education staff as a key factor in trusting that they could work together with staff from the Alo Department office. For example, in discussing the implementation of the *Leamos Juntos* program, the Alo Department LJ Link told the Activate Readers In-Country Director that the department was having real challenges in the implementation, leading the director to feel that Activate Readers could work with the department staff:

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<sup>20</sup> I am indicating which quotes were translated from Spanish to English in order to flag to the reader that there is a certain amount of interpretation that happens with translation given that oftentimes a direct translation would not make sense to the reader.

*Me – So it sounds like honesty is a big part of the relationship.*

*Activate Readers In-Country Director – Yea, I was shocked that they said that (having real challenges implementing Leamos Juntos) because I feel like there is such a tendency to say “oh, it is working well, it's wonderful, it's working fine, what we're doing is fine.” When they said that, that was sort of an 'ah-ha' moment for me, like OK we can work together here because I feel like you guys have a realistic idea of what's actually happening. I mean NGOs do it too, they're like 'we're perfect, everything is great.' Whereas I feel like I'm constantly like 'that's not working at all. We need to change that.'*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

**Book Borrowers.** The Book Borrowers staff described how their relationships with community members helped public education staff recognize that Book Borrowers was not trying to compete with existing public education programming. Given that the INGO's programming was not accredited nor were they registered to conduct work in Guatemala, Book Borrowers sought out anyone in a community that wanted to start a pre-school program. Unlike the other INGO cases, Book Borrowers' model included working in collaboration with local formal governing bodies called COCODEs (Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo Urbano y Rural, *or in English*, Urban and Rural Community Development Councils). COCODES are separate from the schools but are important stakeholders for Book Borrowers especially since the programming is not accredited. Book Borrowers described working directly with the COCODEs as a requirement for engagement in any community and a way to ensure that they were welcomed to work in the community. In doing so, Book Borrowers also presented their approach of intentionally not competing with existing public programming:

*We have relationships with the COCODE as well. That's part of the requirements. If we're going to come to the community, we got to be welcomed. We're not trying to sell something that the community doesn't want or compete with the Department of Education.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

Book Borrowers also described helping schools meet the nutritional and health needs of students and that this, in turn, strengthened the relationships with schools and community members. The INGO Director mentioned that one of the benefits of working within a public school location was that the school directors would oftentimes try to reciprocate by helping Book Borrowers acquire additional resources to support Book Borrowers' programming. The INGO Director also mentioned that the supervisors would invite the Book Borrowers teachers to participate in trainings. These reciprocal relationships were important to Book Borrowers' model. The INGO Director described how the differing circumstances in different communities required Book Borrowers to be flexible in how they worked with local schools:

*In every community...we have local people that are doing the teaching, often in public school classrooms... Sometimes we team up with the government in the local school and the mothers prepare (snack) for all 7 grades. Sometimes we give them a stove because the government has them cooking over open fires. A sponsor from another NGO is having a stove put in. You get in the rural areas and you just do whatever makes sense.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff emphasized their strong relationships with supervisors and especially with teachers. The staff described how the training and certifications that their INGO offers helped to create those strong relationships. Public education staff in different departments recognized the 1- and 2-year Ministry-approved teacher certification—and a teacher's ability to implement the Chapter Readers methodology—as an asset that had built the credibility of Chapter Readers. Chapter Readers staff described an instance where a supervisor identified a teacher who had received the Chapter Readers' certificate and asked the teacher to train other teachers on the methods:

*The supervisor identified a teacher that was working with Chapter Readers and said, 'look, I want you to teach the other teachers that are not a part of the program' ...and the teacher called us. They said, 'I was invited to give a training. Do you have additional materials, or can you tell me how to do it?'. And so we gave them an orientation.*

Chapter Readers Focus Group, Translated

The second supportive characteristic shared by all the *debutant* INGO cases was that **each had a mission that aligned with *Leamos Juntos*, including a specific focus on working in the public schools** on improving the quality of reading.<sup>21</sup> All *debutant* INGO cases reported their mission as a supportive factor for participation in *Leamos Juntos*.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers' previous and ongoing explicit focus on reading supported their involvement in *Leamos Juntos*. Activate Readers made a conscious decision to work in support of public schools and within the public system. Activate Readers already had books and programming in multiple schools and was well positioned to participate in *Leamos Juntos*:

*The fact that we already have books in the classroom. And that we have worked in some of the schools for a few years while the Ministry has also been promoting reading.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, Translated

School directors in the Alo Department confirmed this, reporting that it was helpful that Activate Readers specialized in reading and that the INGO had a comprehensive program to support schools on reading.

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<sup>21</sup> Since a focus on reading instruction was a criterion for my selection of INGOs to participate in the study, that they had a focus on reading is not surprising nor accidental.



That being said, Activate Readers' in-country leadership had not always looked favorably on engaging with the Guatemalan government. The executive director described how Activate Readers had changed their thinking over the years:

*(The previous Activate Readers' Director) really was coming into the INGO world in Guatemala at a time when the received wisdom was keep your head down and don't let the government know about you. And then I think that remained the ethos in the organization...until a couple of years ago when personnel switched a lot and I said, Good God! You know, there is a whole world out here. There's this national curriculum, there's all this stuff going on, why are we acting like we're a universe unto ourselves?*

Activate Readers Executive Director, English

Under new leadership, Activate Readers made significant programmatic changes that had included an alignment with the National Curriculum and a heightened interest in national educational reform efforts.

**Book Borrowers.** The staff of Book Borrowers, which had had minimal participation in *Leamos Juntos* to date, suggested that the overlap with reading programming would be a natural entry point for them to participate. The Bello Department LJ Links described how NGOs that already had reading programming would be a natural entry point for *Leamos Juntos*, confirming the thoughts of Book Borrowers staff:

*(INGOs) may already have a reading program, have already trained their teachers, have already put in the time and resources to do their own reading program... some INGOs are involved in reading specifically, even if the program is different from Leamos Juntos.*

Bello Department LJ Links, Translation

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers was the most established INGO of the three and was the only INGO whose director and staff were all Guatemalan and not North American. The mission alignment between Chapter Readers and *Leamos Juntos* was very strong and

played a significant factor in supporting their participation. Chapter Readers had developed and was implementing a specific methodology to support teachers in their efforts to teach reading and writing by using engaging picture books. As a part of that methodology, Chapter Readers already required 30-minutes of reading time each day in the classroom. They were actively using picture books and some of these were even the same as the books provided by *Leamos Juntos*. Thus, Chapter Readers' work was in alignment with core *Leamos Juntos* project goals from the outset of the program. The Chapter Readers Director spoke about how there was a natural convergence between *Leamos Juntos* and their own programming:

*In our case, Leamos Juntos and our organization are an example of convergent development in reality. It's that we were both going in the same direction. And when Leamos Juntos came along, we did a crash course with Leamos Juntos. And it was like both of us benefitted a little bit from that opportunity.*

Chapter Reader In-Country Director, Translated

While an existing positive relationship and a convergent mission were the only characteristics shared by all INGOs and related department staff, each of the INGOs also had characteristics that were unique to their organization and that they described as important and connected to INGO participation.

**Activate Readers' uniquely identified characteristics.** Activate Readers identified certain characteristics of their INGO that were not mentioned by the other *debutant* INGO cases. For example, Activate Readers was the only *debutant* INGO case that was actively collaborating with a department LJ Link. They were growing their collaboration with the Alo Department LJ Link and so some of the characteristics that follow are connected to that collaborative effort. For example, Activate Readers identified **having a**

**physical office in the center of a large town** in the department's catchment area as an important factor. Given that *debutant* INGOs come and go, Activate Readers staff felt that this physical space communicated their intention to work in the area long term. Their physical presence also allowed for government and public education staff to stop by and check in, which added to the legitimacy of their work and communicated their permanence, as the in-country director stated:

*That we had an office to bring someone to, invite them. Actually having this physical space, they can stop by and visit. They can put a face with our program and see what we're doing. A different kind of legitimacy. Communicates that we're here for a while, not going anywhere.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

Activate Readers was also **aspiring to be a potential partner for national programs**.

The in-country director commented on this:

*We've gotten to a place in terms of size and coverage that we can have a meaningful relationship with the Ministry. I know that it doesn't behoove the Ministry to coordinate a tiny program in one school. We're at the place where we can command a little bit of attention. We have the ability to work in all number of schools, tal<sup>22</sup> (so many) number of books and we have some impact. We came from the small, but we had the mentality to work with the Ministry.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

The Activate Readers In-Country Director also cited race and nationality as playing a direct role in their experience working in the education sector in Guatemala.

The in-country director described how **having a white, international presence** was an asset. The director discussed how these outwardly noticeable characteristics affected

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<sup>22</sup> Frequently, participants blended English and Spanish. When this occurs, I have left the original quote but added the translation in parenthesis.

people's perception of their organization. They drew a connection between race and wealth and how people in that department may have perceived these two factors:

*I don't like saying it, but having a white face or international people on your team, people go 'oh, you are from someplace else. You probably have money. You probably have some thing that can help here.' That certainly didn't hurt us and it probably helped us... Being perceived as a International NGO is definitely helpful.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

This sentiment runs parallel with comments from the public education staff in the Alo Department, not specifically about Activate Readers but about INGOs in general:

*...they are foreigners and they have connections.*

Alo Department School Director, Translation

It is perhaps unsurprising that both a public education staff member and an Activate Readers staff member mention these topics because they are certainly relevant for understanding the broad dynamics that shape INGO work in the department and in Guatemala.<sup>23</sup> Yet none of the other *debutant* INGOs nor public education staff mentioned these factors.

Activate Readers was also the only organization **implementing aspects of bilingual and intercultural education (EBI) programming**. The Alo Department LJ Link cited this as a supportive factor, since this is one of the stated policies to be addressed within *Leamos Juntos*. The Activate Readers strategy was described to me as

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<sup>23</sup> The study took place during a time and a year when there were protests around the United States of America against police violence and the killings of black people. Based on our conversations, I was aware that the In-Country Director was following these news events in the US and the growing national conversation about the role of race and inequality in American society.

using bridging techniques to facilitate multilingual programming, including having their trainers begin an activity in the first language most spoken in a given classroom, reading a book in Spanish, and then asking questions in the first language. The Alo Department LJ Link described this positively saying that Activate Readers was providing money that could be used to purchase bilingual books, which was part of the overall EBI focus of *Leamos Juntos*. This convergence around EBI programming was a supportive factor for Activate Readers' participation in *Leamos Juntos*.

**Book Borrowers uniquely identified characteristics.** Book Borrowers was just learning about *Leamos Juntos* and therefore their participation was in a nascent stage. Book Borrowers was the only INGO providing programming both within and outside of public schools, the only INGO that was working on pre-school programming, and the only INGO that was unregistered. One of the characteristics that set them apart was their **adaptive approach to implementing pre-school programming:**

*We find the space in a public building, or find a local person willing to let us use the house for 2-3 hours a day. Whatever it takes, they are willing to do it. Because the parents want their kids in school. They want them to be prepared so they don't fail first grade. The mothers especially.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

The INGO Director described how **providing services from within public schools** and at times with public school teachers was a necessary reality of working in rural areas as opposed to urban areas:

*In every community, we have local people - sometimes teachers - helping out. Once you get away from the urban areas, all of the bureaucratic stuff goes away.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

Unlike Activate Readers and Chapter Readers, which were legally registered as NGOs in Guatemala and therefore approved to work with teachers and schools within the formal education system, Book Borrowers involvement inside of schools was, as the director put it “under the radar.” Also, Book Borrowers was the only INGO that described **working directly with local governing bodies** (COCODES) as a point of entry into the communities. This, coupled with high demand, led Book Borrowers to launch programming in a variety of locations, in and out of public schools. They were also the only INGO that described actively collaborating with other INGOs to set up and equip programming sites. Thus, Book Borrowers was able to quickly consider participation with *Leamos Juntos* once they learned about the program because of their specific focus on reading.

**Chapter Readers uniquely identified characteristics.** Unlike the other two *debutant* INGOs in this case study, Chapter Readers was **formally invited—and agreed—to participate in *Leamos Juntos*** by the Ministry of Education because they were known as an organization that worked specifically in reading. Chapter Readers was the only INGO of the three that had Ministry-accredited training programming for teachers and was recognized by some public education staff as a provider of teacher training in that area, allowing them to extend their credibility around the country, including validation of their work for other Ministry officials. For example, the INGO In-Country Director described going to a conference and being able to ask a MINEDUC staff member for a particular list of information and being granted access. Formal participation brought additional access to information and information sharing. The INGO Director talked about having information from the Ministry about the books that would be included in the boxes of

books. Even though this did not happen in the first year of implementation, it did happen in 2015 and was described as a supportive factor because it allowed Chapter Readers to avoid duplication when they made their own book orders.

**To synthesize, comparing across all cases,** there were two common factors among participating INGOs: (1) they all had previous and current positive relationships with public education staff in the departments, including school level staff (teachers, school directors, supervisors), and (2) their missions were already aligned with *Leamos Juntos* and they had been intentionally working with public schools and within the public school system. For the first factor, it appears that their previous positive work relationships with the public education system meant that starting to collaborate or partner on the national reading program was not a big leap, as it might have been for a *debutant* INGO with no previous connection. Furthermore, the fact that all three *debutant* INGOs already had a specific focus on reading meant that there was an easy alignment with their previously established mission. That, in addition to their stated and demonstrated commitment to working with public schools—different that some *debutant* INGOs which set up their own private schools—meant that perhaps adopting *Leamos Juntos* also was not a big leap.

## **2. Department characteristics**

The three departments interviewed all had two characteristics that either actively supported *debutant* INGO participation or insipient participation: (1) departments were proactively supportive of the *Leamos Juntos* program, and (2) public education staff had awareness of and experience working with INGOs, as well as an eagerness for INGO participation.

The first example is that **all of the department were proactively supportive of the *Leamos Juntos* program.** This appears to have provided a foundation upon which INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* could be supported.

**Alo Department.** I was told by staff in the Ministry that Alo Department was the only department that owned their own building and that all of the other department offices around the country were in rented spaces, which if true may have indicated a kind of stability and prestige in this particular department that could have also played a factor in their functioning.

The public education staff in the Alo Department had taken extra steps to implement *Leamos Juntos* within their area, including intensive organizational planning not required by *Leamos Juntos*. Specifically, the Alo Department LJ Link involved all 21 of their districts in the planning. The department also created an additional, supplemental organizational structure to support coherence of the reading committees across the department. Led by the department LJ Link, public education staff in the Alo Department had also taken the support structure articulated in the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD) and adapted it to the reality and different needs of their department education system. This planning process ended with signed agreements from all districts, used both for planning as well as evaluating their progress:

*We had a meeting with everyone, each district committee, within one working day, we presented the objectives and the format for the planning. So there, around a table, in about 8 hours, they worked. Ok, what are we going to do from here and moving forward, from here and moving forward, from here and moving forward. Each commission typed it up, the 21 districts. We installed computers, we installed printers, and they worked, printed it, and signed it. In one working day, they created what they were going to do moving toward the future.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translated



The Alo Department had a highly engaged LJ Link who took on significant efforts not only to implement *Leamos Juntos*, but to tailor the programming to the particular needs and characteristics of this department. This included the advancement of intercultural and bilingual education (EBI) within the context of *Leamos Juntos*. This kind of intensive planning specifically for district committees demonstrated their commitment to the implementation of *Leamos Juntos*. It also indicated a particular type of work practice along with technical and administrative skills to organize and implement department-wide programming.

In addition, the LJ Link described an active Department Reading Committee. In addition to the school-level committees prescribed in the LJPD, focus group participants described putting into place an additional supplemental structure—District-level reading committees—to support the school-level committees, further demonstrating their engagement in *Leamos Juntos*:

*The Capital City, for example, has 5 educational districts. Should we do 1 committee? That's a little bit difficult. So instead of having 1, we have 5.*

Alo Department District Supervisor, Translated

Despite the extra work involved, the LJ Link cited the benefits:

*So instead of having fewer, we have more. That makes it much more work. But in terms of functionality, it is better.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translated

**Bello Department.** In the Bello Department, the commitment to *Leamos Juntos* was evident in interviews with the LJ Links. However, given that the LJ Links in this department were not working with any particular NGO on the program, it was the

supervisors who described their implementation of *Leamos Juntos* and the connection to INGOs; in their view, having NGOs working in their areas was a supportive factor for the work on *Leamos Juntos*:

*We work on everything. That is part of our obligation to make sure that they are following the (Leamos Juntos) program...At least the 30 minutes a day of reading. It doesn't matter if they are an NGO or not, the laws and the norms are that all programs have to have reading for no less than 30 minutes (daily).*

Bello Department Supervisor, Translated

This knowledge of the policy as well as the commitment to carrying out *Leamos Juntos* programming was evident in my interactions with all of the public education staff in this department.

**Cielo Department.** In the Cielo Department, during a school visit, I spoke with the department director about *Leamos Juntos*. He spoke favorably of *Leamos Juntos* and mentioned coordination between the department, municipal and school reading commissions, describing how reading had always been a priority but had never been so structured into the day-to-day schedule at the school level. This interaction touched upon both the awareness of the program as well as the support for *Leamos Juntos*. This support for the program was evident in my interactions with the LJ Link and public education staff in this department.

Additionally, the Cielo Department LJ Links had described themselves as actively engaged in promoting EBI in their department; I observed staff from this department (including the LJ Link interviewed in this case study) lead a workshop on EBI at a

conference for LJ Links. And, during a site visit in the Cielo Department, I was able to visit a bilingual school and to view bilingual books in the *Leamos Juntos* boxes.

The second common characteristic among these three departments was that that the **public education staff**—Department leadership, LJ Links, supervisors, school directors and teachers—**were aware of and eager to work with INGOs on *Leamos Juntos***. In all of the cases, supervisors appeared to have the most direct experience working with INGOs.

**Alo Department.** The Alo Department staff were aware of two of the *debutant* INGOs (Activate Readers and Chapter Readers) involved in this study, as well as numerous others and gave specific examples of collaborating with Activate Readers on their implementation of *Leamos Juntos*. The LJ Link was actively collaborating with INGOs on *Leamos Juntos* although, different from the supervisors, the collaboration appeared to be within the understanding of an agreement about INGO participation as opposed to actually working together on activities.

Their favorable outlook on INGOs and NGOs was illuminated in the school visits, the supervisor focus group, and with teachers. Additionally, this was the only department where the LJ Link was aware of, not to mention favorable of, two of the specific participating *debutant* INGOs<sup>24</sup>.

The Alo Department LJ Link had taken proactive measures to reach out to and gather INGOs on two different occasions. First, the LJ Link had undertaken planning efforts to try to identify organizations that were working in each school district and also

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<sup>24</sup> The LJ Link and the supervisors referenced *Activate Readers* at times during data collection.

organized meetings and invited as many NGOs and INGOs as possible so that the department could learn about their programs. At the time of collecting data, the LJ Link had also planned a third meeting of INGOs. The LJ Link cited these events as contributing to strengthened communication between the INGOs and the department office and as a supportive factor for INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*:

*Us reaching out to the NGOs. At the department level, we have had two meetings with all NGOs present. We have brought everyone together and, in years past, asked that they give us a list of their strengths in terms of institutions that are working in each school district, an idea of who is working in each district, and so we brought everyone together based on that information. One in X City and one here in the department... This has helped to strengthen a little bit our communication.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translated

The Alo Department staff showed a **particular interest in working with NGOs**, national and international, to advance their goals. In fact, the public education staff that I interviewed had a variety of experiences working with different non-state actors, including multi-lateral organizations, universities, and international NGOs. One school director described how they had experienced starting a PRONADE school and how that was accompanied by continually growing collaborative efforts between the school, district, department and inter-governmental bodies and donors. During PRONADE, that school also partnered with a small INGO. After PRONADE ended, the school director continued collaborating with different international government agencies, along with INGOs, in a piecemeal fashion to keep the school going:

*The school began in 1999. First there were no buildings, then it was one made of sugar cane stalks...I worked with (an INGO) and they helped me to buy the land. It was a real puzzle putting it all together...(One group) built the rooms, the Swiss also helped to build it, the Embassy of Japan also...*

Alo Department School Director, Translated and Paraphrased in Field Notes

This experience of collaboration with international groups and NGOs was a supportive factor for INGO participation in this department.

**Bello Department.** In the Bello Department, the LJ links were aware of some INGO activity in the department but were not working with any on reading or *Leamos Juntos*. The LJ Links were less familiar with specific INGOs working in the department although they described seeing a natural opportunity with any INGO that had a focus on reading. The Bello Department supervisors, however, were able to name many of the different NGOs working in their areas, and this awareness contributed to the potential for participation.

For example, all public education staff members described positive interactions with large and small INGOs in the department. Also, the LJ Links described working with small organizations and had some experiences, although limited, with INGOs. While visiting a school in the Bello Department with Book Borrowers staff, the school director described how collaboration with Book Borrowers was helpful and relatively easy, although the school director also mentioned knowing about other schools working with NGOs where the relationship was not so easy.

**Cielo Department.** Like the Alo Department although to a much lesser extent, the **LJ Link in this department was collaborating with INGOs around reading programming and *Leamos Juntos***. Specifically, the LJ Link was collaborating with a large INGO on *Leamos Juntos*. Although the LJ Link was unaware of the extensive work of Chapter Readers in the Cielo Department, he did suggest that there could be other INGOs working on the program. This person had listed the large INGO on the LJ Link

Survey and indicated that the large INGO was participating in *Leamos Juntos*. For reasons unknown to me, he followed up with correspondence stating explicitly that there were no INGOs participating in *Leamos Juntos* in their department. However, during our interview the LJ link confirmed the participation of two INGOs in reading and *Leamos Juntos*, describing collaboration with both INGOs and their participation in other multi-sector collaborations that included INGOs<sup>25</sup>.

The Cielo Department LJ Link stated the belief that INGOs are and could be extremely useful in *Leamos Juntos* and the public education sector, even if participation was not widespread:

*Implementing Leamos Juntos, in their potential to support Leamos Juntos, their potential to support public education policy in their department, and in their potential to support public education policy in Guatemala... (Another INGO) is working with two out of our 527 schools. This is still a support, and maybe 600 students are benefitting. This is relatively small but important.*

Cielo Department LJ Link Survey response and interview, Paraphrased Translated

This LJ Link also described how there had recently been a shift in how their offices were meant to interact with other governmental offices, again suggesting that a positive disposition towards collaboration—both with INGOs and with other governmental offices—can be a supportive factor:

*...something new that was happening was that (the LJ Link) was encouraged to work more closely with the other government bodies to tackle education. (The LJ Link) gave the example of working with the Environmental office on a school garden project and working with the Ministry of Health on issues related to reproductive health.*

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<sup>25</sup> The discrepancy in accounts about participating INGOs in this department was unexplained although the LJ Link did describe collaboration with a large INGO as relatively new. It is also possible that my language use of “participation” was unclear. Certainly there is a large spectrum with regards to what participation could look like and so this could be one explanation. Regardless, it further revealed some of the challenges related to gathering information about this topic and, more generally, about INGO work in Guatemala.

**Comparing across all cases**, key supportive characteristics of departments were that: (1) each department was supportive of *Leamos Juntos* and actively involved in implementing the programming in their department; and (2) public education staff were favorable towards and eager to collaborate with INGOs on *Leamos Juntos*.

For the first factor, having public education staff in support *Leamos Juntos* suggested that this was a foundation for *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. Without that support for this national program—and during my research I did find other Ministry directives that were less supported—it likely would have been more difficult for *debutant* INGO participation and certainly for any collaboration with department public education staff. For the second factor and in combination with the first factor, having public education staff who are eager to work with NGOs and INGOs alike meant that *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* was also desirable and therefore not a big leap. This combination of awareness of INGOs, experience working with INGOs and support for *Leamos Juntos* created a strong support and a foundation for INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* in these departments.

These cases also show the difference between a proactive approach to INGO participation in the Alo Department—where there is more awareness and active outreach—versus a less proactive or absent approach in the other departments. In the Alo Department, this proactive outreach appeared to be a supportive factor for INGO participation in that the department was already aware of and collaborating with some INGOs on *Leamos Juntos*.

### 3. *Leamos Juntos* supportive factors

The four common supportive factors of the *Leamos Juntos* program itself that occurred across all three *debutant* INGOs included: (1) Specific mention of INGO involvement in *Leamos Juntos* from the Ministry, (2) The *Leamos Juntos* national outreach efforts, (3) The *Leamos Juntos* books themselves, (4) Alignment between *Leamos Juntos* program goals and INGO mission and activities.

In Activate Readers and Chapter Readers, where these two INGOs were actively participating in the *Leamos Juntos* program, common factors also included: (5) *Leamos Juntos* and INGO work in book lending (6) Guidance of *Leamos Juntos* Program Document for implementation, (7) *Leamos Juntos* teacher training, and (8) Flexible participation for INGOs.

The first common supportive factor of the *Leamos Juntos* program itself that occurred across all *debutant* INGO cases was that the *Leamos Juntos* design not only incorporated NGOs in name, but ***Leamos Juntos* provided an explicit directive for INGO participation.** It did so because it invited INGOs and NGOs to participate, stating that the public sector could and should work with NGOs to achieve these goals. This was mentioned across all cases by INGO staff.

**Activate Readers.** For example, all Activate Readers staff commented that having INGO participation stated explicitly in the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD) contributed to their participation:

*Leamos Juntos and the fact that they took NGOs into account is the first factor that is supporting our participation.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translated



*The diagram shows that we are included and so that is a kind of invitation. So it explicitly says that INGOs should participate.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, Translated

*Leamos Juntos* significantly changed the way that Activate Readers interacted with public schools and public education staff. Activate Readers staff stated that some schools used to say that they could not work with Activate Readers but then, because schools knew that INGOs programming would now help schools reach the *Leamos Juntos* policy directives, they welcomed Activate Readers into their schools. According to Activate Readers staff, other INGOs not working specifically on reading did not receive the same welcome from the schools, indicating that *Leamos Juntos* had opened up a new opportunity for Activate Readers and perhaps other INGOs as well:

*Another factor, specifically related to supervisors, is that Leamos Juntos has given supervisors the opportunity to be able to have an NGO participate in their district...So it's not like what we have heard many times when a supervisor says, 'I cannot let these NGOs work here because I have to comply with the 180 days of school required by the Ministry of Education.' So when Leamos Juntos gives supervisors the opportunity to decide if an NGO will be allowed to work in their district...and they (supervisors) decide if they will give them time or not, that is an important factor that has allowed us to work with them...The flexibility inherent in Leamos Juntos has provided us with the possibility of participating in Leamos Juntos.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translated

This was an interesting example of how a *debutant* INGO employed *Leamos Juntos* to gain access into districts that were previously unwilling to collaborate.

**Book Borrowers.** Once Book Borrowers staff learned about *Leamos Juntos* and that INGOs were encouraged to participate, they began considering the ways in which their organization could participate in the program.

**Chapter Readers.** Because Chapter Readers was invited by the Ministry to participate in *Leamos Juntos*, this factor (the explicit directive for INGO participation) was clear to them and their understanding of the program.

The second supportive factor of the *Leamos Juntos* program itself that occurred across all *debutant* INGO cases was the *Leamos Juntos* outreach efforts, which included a website, marketing and public communications as well as a national conference in 2015. Participants felt that **the outreach done by *Leamos Juntos* was a supportive factor for INGO participation.**

This coordinated outreach effort organized high profile public events along with the president and vice president visiting schools to read. At the National level, the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team coordinated a conference in April 2015 called “Innovations” and invited groups from around the country to share their innovative reading programming.<sup>26</sup> This was a collaborative effort between USAID and the Ministry of Education and was promoted around the country. All of the participating INGOs mentioned the Innovations Conference and all had staff members who attended. This was an opportunity for the Ministry to communicate the significance of the program as well as for the INGOs to learn about *Leamos Juntos* and to connect with other organizations and public education staff working on *Leamos Juntos*.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers described finding out about the conference through Facebook. They submitted a presentation and were accepted. This allowed them to

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<sup>26</sup> As a part of my work with the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team, I supported the conference organizing including reviewing proposals and providing technical support on the day of the conference. The results were compiled by USAID and are available online: <http://www.usaidlea.org/publicaciones/buenaspr225cticasdelectura.html>

demonstrate their overlapping goals with *Leamos Juntos* and present their programming to other people working in reading around the country:

*The Innovaciones conference encouraged us to make the connection.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

**Book Borrowers.** A North American Book Borrowers staff member “*liked*” the “USAID Guatemala” page on Facebook and, after doing so, they saw an announcement about the conference and at least one of the staff members attended. Thus, the outreach efforts reached Book Borrowers and shows the potency of social media as a way to connect with groups who may otherwise be unaware of national programming.

**Chapter Readers.** One of the staff members in the Chapter Readers focus group elaborated further on the breadth of the outreach strategies and how they had raised awareness nationally and garnered attention:

*From the beginning, I think that they knew how to sell it well. The idea of marketing, I believe that they knew how to do it well. And so the first impact was that they caused a sensation...it wasn't just the Ministry, but they included more people, NGOs, and business. Then the book editors. The exes (ex-president and ex-vice president) went to schools and did an activity with children. That caused a lot of impact.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

The third common factor of the *Leamos Juntos* program itself that occurred across all *debutant* INGO cases was the ***Leamos Juntos* books themselves**. This highlighted the importance of books as catalysts for INGO participation. *Leamos Juntos* had provided each school in the country with a small lending library by distributing plastic boxes filled with books. The boxes of books also included a Teacher Guide. The guide included basic

information about the program as well as pedagogical guidance and the *Leamos Juntos* levels of reading comprehension. Both Activate Readers staff and Chapter Readers staff were aware of the guide and felt that it was a support for INGOs because it gave additional information about the *Leamos Juntos* programming.

**Activate Readers.** The overlap between *Leamos Juntos* and Activate Readers' activities around books demonstrated how the structure and language from *Leamos Juntos* was picked up and utilized by both public education staff and the *debutant* INGO. An example came from the Alo Department public education staff where the supervisors combined the books and materials from Activate Readers with the materials from *Leamos Juntos* to implement the policy. The books themselves allowed for a tangible overlap in programming efforts.

**Book Borrowers.** Staff members indicated that they had seen *Leamos Juntos* books being used alongside their own books in different classrooms. Additionally, in one of my site visits with Book Borrowers staff in the Bello Department, I saw *Leamos Juntos* books in use as well as seeing them displayed in a school library.

**Chapter Readers.** The Chapter Readers staff described that simply having the boxes of books (and books in general) was supportive in part because it sent a signal of importance. In an interview, the in-country director described the books as creating an opportunity for INGO participation:

*And so they sent books to all of the schools and this, for us as an NGO and I believe other NGOs, we saw this as an opportunity for us...*

Chapter Readers In-Country Director, Translated

Chapter Readers staff described how they encouraged teachers to use the *Leamos Juntos* books. Even so, they described how teachers preferred to use the Chapter Readers books instead:

*When Leamos Juntos came to the schools, our discourse was to say, 'Look, we are going to give you books. But if you want to use the books from the Ministry of Education you can use them with total liberty because we are going to teach you the methodology, how to use the books.' But even still, the teachers preferred to use our books.*

*That's because there are few teachers who are going to use the books sent by the ministry.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

The fourth common supportive factor of the *Leamos Juntos* program itself that occurred across all *debutant* INGO cases and the Alo Department was an **alignment between *Leamos Juntos* program goals and the INGO's reading activities**. This supportive factor was also described by the Alo Department staff.

**Activate Readers and the Alo Department.** During the supervisor focus group in the Alo Department, participants described that the extensive alignment between the Activate Readers and *Leamos Juntos* programs made it easy to work together. Activate Readers Technical Advisors (referred to as *técnicos* in the following quote) and Alo Department Technical Advisors did the same activities. The Department LJ Link cited the similarity of reading methodologies as contributing to INGO participation in the program:

*And the strategies for reading comprehension that they (Activate Readers) are providing are exactly what our técnicos have told to our supervisors and our key reading staff. Sure they have other programming too, but we're working along the same lines. We had a meeting between their técnicos and our técnicos, to share what everyone is doing. Obviously as an organization, they have more resources. For example, they work in one school for 4 years. Each year they give them two reading stands that roll so that they can be brought into the classrooms. So, over the years, they will have 4 different stands, 2-3 trainings a year, handing out*

*books. They have Spanish language books donated from the US, also money to buy Maya language books. We should recognize that they are working with the department in the accompaniment of the teachers, not just workshops. They have técnicos and the promise is to help with more técnicos. And so they provide model classes for the teachers. So we're working with them 100% within the policy directives of Leamos Juntos.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translation

The Activate Readers staff also cited an overlap with *Leamos Juntos* key programmatic activities that influenced the INGO's interaction with schools. For example, *Leamos Juntos* included a mandate for 30-minutes of daily reading during school, which provided an entry point for Activate Readers to offer and provide strategies for that time duration:

*We tried to make connections, maybe when we get a little push back from either a director or a teacher saying, "I have to do these things" and we say, "We're going to help you, we're going to give you the "how" to do what it is that Leamos Juntos is asking you to do."*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

This overlap between *Leamos Juntos* and Activate Readers activities demonstrates that *Leamos Juntos* created a structure and language that was then picked up and utilized by both public education staff and Activate Readers. Furthermore, public education staff combined the materials from Activate Readers with the materials from *Leamos Juntos* to implement the policy:

*They (Activate Readers) provide us with books for reading, a mobile library...because that has allowed us to create moments of reading, hours of reading, afternoons of reading, through the reading kiosks. We can even take these directly to the central park. This year we have promoted three reading kiosks, because of (Activate Readers) materials and the materials from the Ministry of Education, we have facilitated the reading to not just the boys and girls but to everyone who visits the park.*

Alo Department District Supervisor, Translated

**Book Borrowers.** Because of their focus on early grade reading, Book Borrowers staff immediately understood the overlap between their reading programming and *Leamos Juntos* and set out to find ways to articulate those connections.

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff also provided specific details about the benefit of the overlap of the 30-minute requirement for reading each day. They described this as a significant contributing factor to their ability to advance both their own program and *Leamos Juntos*. Not only that, but the overlap allowed them to validate their own methodology through *Leamos Juntos*:

*When Leamos Juntos started, they said that it was obligatory to have 30 minutes of reading daily. For us, this was a great support because we could then go to the schools and say, 'we are not Leamos Juntos but we are supporting Leamos Juntos and your own reading program. You can use the time (30 minutes) as if you were doing it in our program.' And the teachers would say, 'I don't have to do both times, Leamos Juntos and the Chapter Readers program?' And so that was a real hook for us and it helped us out greatly because it was almost as if we were coming (in the name of the Ministry). Not with funding from the Ministry nor resources from the Ministry, but almost in the name of the Ministry to support Leamos Juntos.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

Given that Book Borrowers was just learning about *Leamos Juntos*, it is unsurprising that **Activate Readers and Chapter Readers identified additional common factors.** At times the Alo Department public education staff also reinforce some of these additional factors. This additional set of factors occurred only across the Activate Readers and Chapter Readers cases given that these were the only two INGOs actively participating in the *Leamos Juntos* program and included: (5) *Leamos Juntos* teacher training (6) *Leamos Juntos* and INGO work in book lending, (7) Guidance of *Leamos Juntos* Program Document for implementation, and (8) Flexible participation for INGOs.

The fifth common supportive factor across Activate Readers, Chapter Readers and the Alo Department was the ***Leamos Juntos* teacher trainings** in learning how to use the books as a pedagogical tool to support reading. Both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers included teacher training as a part of their approach. In the Alo Department, the Alo Department LJ Link described teacher trainings as a concrete way to collaborate with Activate Readers staff on *Leamos Juntos*. Public education staff in the department there were directly working with INGO staff to implement teacher training but also to align the content in the trainings themselves. Chapter Readers staff described instances where teachers participating in their program were invited to train their peers which, in turn, gave Chapter Readers an opportunity to orient that staff member to training activities.

The sixth common factor, and an extension of the fourth and fifth common factor, was the overlap of programming whereby **both *Leamos Juntos* and the debutant INGOs included book lending as a part of their programming.** Activate Readers and Chapter Readers were already involved in book lending as a key feature of their programs. Although book lending had not been common in the Guatemalan school system, *Leamos Juntos* was attempting to normalize this practice by lending books to families. During a school visit in the Cielo Department, I spoke with a teacher about the books and they described favorably this opportunity to lend *Leamos Juntos* books to children and families.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers staff described how this overlap with *Leamos Juntos* bolstered their own rationale for book lending given that *Leamos Juntos* expected the same. In this way, Activate Readers drew upon the *Leamos Juntos* policy to further



legitimize their own programming, while at the same time encouraging participation in the book lending aspect of *Leamos Juntos*:

*Leamos Juntos gives us a kind of backing. When a teacher says, 'I don't feel comfortable lending the children the books because they will hurt them, they will damage them and get them dirty.' (We say), 'But Leamos Juntos says that you can lend out the books. And this is the same thing that our INGO is promoting.' When they realize this, they see that we aren't asking them to do anything different than what they are already supposed to be doing.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translation

Activate Readers was the only *debutant* INGO case that worked with the *Leamos Juntos* school reading committees. The *Leamos Juntos* policy mandate included the explicit formation of reading committees (*Comisión de Lectura*) at the school, municipal and department level. This meant that the intention was for the committees to be actively involved in implementing *Leamos Juntos*, including book lending. Activate Readers described working with the committees:

*We do stuff at the school level with the Comisión de Lectura. Like loaning books. We did a thing for the 'day of the book', and the focus was working with that Comisión de Lectura.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

Although Activate Readers had not worked with the district-level committees, they described how they used the school-level committee to approach teachers when they visited the schools:

*...the members of the Comisión have to do something. They are usually a group of teachers who are looking for how they will do what they are expected to do...so we have members of our staff coming into the school who says 'oh, you guys are the Comisión de Lectura, let's work on classifying your books, let's work on setting up a loaning system.' I think that the reception is pretty positive.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

**Chapter Readers.** Because the schools that were already working with Chapter Readers were participating in book lending, and because book lending was a core part of Chapter Readers' programming, the *debutant* INGO also saw this overlap as a supportive factor.

The seventh common factor was **the importance of the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD)** as a supportive factor for INGO participation in the program. The LJPD laid out the entire program including key initiatives, objectives and details for implementation. Activate Readers described the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD) as particularly helpful because it provided policy directives and programming guidance for both public education staff and INGOs. While Chapter Readers staff described the LJPD as useful, it appeared to be of less significance to them. Perhaps this is because they were more established than Activate Readers and were already working in tandem with *Leamos Juntos*.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers found the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD) online and their director of pedagogy decided to show how the Activate Readers goals were aligned with *Leamos Juntos*. Therefore, one of the simplest yet nontrivial factors that contributed to Activate Readers' participation in *Leamos Juntos* was simply knowing about the program. Once they found out about *Leamos Juntos*, and even more so as they began participating in this case study, the in-country director felt that mention of *Leamos Juntos* was arising all the time:

*You can't see the jellyfish in the ocean until you see one, then you see a ton. Until you have that initial 'toque' (touch) you don't see anything. I feel like Leamos Juntos is coming up all the time and it's creating dialogue that is not occurring before.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

For Activate Readers, the LJPD allowed them to see how their own goals had significant overlap with *Leamos Juntos* and they annotated the LJPD to highlight congruence with their own programming. The in-country director also stated that, while the LJPD was helpful as a document, even more helpful was that Activate Readers staff had seen *Leamos Juntos* put into practice at the different levels of the Ministry of Education:

*I always think about the diagram in the Leamos Juntos document on page 16, how all of the actors are shown...And I think that this invitation can be seen in practice because of the demonstrated openness at the different levels of the Ministry of Education. Whether it is a director, supervisor, or the Department Office, and the teachers.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, Translated

**Chapters Readers.** Chapter Readers staff found the LJPD useful and agreed that it was a supportive factor. They had reviewed the document although they said in the interviews that it was not very influential on their programming. Perhaps given the high levels of overlap with their own programming they did not feel the need to draw upon it extensively. Furthermore, their participation was already formally established and documented.

The eighth common supportive factor was the **flexible structure for INGO participation**. This flexibility around INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* was an important stand-alone factor as it also sent a signal to the public education staff about the relative importance of INGOs in the sector. This, along with the real opportunities to get involved, almost ensured the participation of Activate Readers and Chapter Readers. It also lowered the bar for participation whereby an INGO could simply learn about the program and then participate at their own will. This kind of INGO autonomy appeared to

be an important feature of *Leamos Juntos*. Lastly, Chapter Readers went so far as to say that, without a flexible arrangement, their participation would have been unlikely.

**Activate Readers.** The In-Country Activate Readers Director reflected upon the benefits of ambiguity regarding INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*:

*...I kind of like that it is ill defined, because it gives us room to go in, and because we already have a defined program...we can go in and we have a little bit more flexibility.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff described how the design of the program facilitated INGO participation in a variety of ways. One design aspect was how the program was national in nature and included some coordination between different levels of the public system and INGOs. Chapter Readers staff also described how the program allowed for simple and flexible participation while simultaneously stating that such flexibility was a requirement for their participation:

*...the simplicity and the flexibility, absolutely. It was very flexible and, if it hadn't been, we would not have participated.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

**Chapter Readers also had described additional aspects** of the design of *Leamos Juntos* as supportive factors for INGO participation, not mentioned by Activate Readers. For example, Chapter Readers' staff described **the importance of involving families**, particularly as it created a kind of accountability between families and teachers. The Chapter Readers staff suggested that the demand put upon the teachers meant opportunities for Chapter Readers to work with the teachers:

*They (Leamos Juntos) tried to get them to take the books home, to the houses, that parents would be involved...in the writing contest that (Leamos Juntos) did...asking them (schools) to involve the parents, the siblings or someone else. It was important to involve the family. Because when you invite the family in, the family can make demands of the teachers.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

Additionally, the Chapter Readers Director placed significance on the fact that this was a **Ministry led multi-sector partnership**. The director compared it to a different kind of multi-sector partnership based on USAID funding that led to a supportive *Leamos Juntos* program design:

*For example, USAID says 'we're going to make a multisector partnership.' It never works because what everyone really wants is the USAID money. In contrast, in Leamos Juntos, reading is the theme and everyone comes with the money that they have because the Ministry doesn't have the money to pay for it...*

Chapter Readers In-Country Director, Translated

The in-country director went on to explain that they see a difference between an initiative that is driven by an organization's (INGO, NGO, consultant, private company) motivation to get funding as opposed to an initiative that is centered on something like reading. Furthermore, since the *Leamos Juntos* resources prioritized getting books out to schools combined with the intention of teacher training, it opened up additional opportunities for INGOs to participate by supporting the use of the books as well as the trainings. They went on to insinuate how there may even be a benefit of having limited funding because it created more opportunities for partnership.

Chapter Readers also identified how, at the level of the school and the teachers, **a program like *Leamos Juntos* is less politically charged** than some other existing public education policies, giving the example of the national curriculum. The director described

the national curriculum as controversial and heavy handed, while *Leamos Juntos* was more well received because it was a flexible opportunity:

*...if you go to the schools and say, 'we are going to teach you how to teach reading because that is what the national curriculum says you must do', half of the teachers will crucify you. However, if you say that this is a part of Leamos Juntos, part of it is that they wouldn't necessarily know that it was connected to the national curriculum, but...it is a much gentler opportunity as opposed to a specific policy like those related to the national curriculum.*

Chapter Readers In-Country Director, Translated

Finally, and something specific to my own observation, was the creation of ***Leamos Juntos Links in each Department***, which created a network of public education staff assigned to advance the program. For this research, it allowed me to include this group of department staff in this project. I was able to identify them and meet with them on a variety of occasions as well as to conduct a survey, interviews and site visits. There certainly were variations across the department cases in terms of how each LJ Link was involved in advancing INGO participation and, at the same time, their existence appeared to be a supportive factor for INGO participation.

**Comparing across all *debutant* INGO cases**, the *Leamos Juntos* program itself was supportive of INGO participation through: (1) Specific mention of INGO involvement in *Leamos Juntos* from the Ministry, (2) The *Leamos Juntos* national outreach efforts, (3) The *Leamos Juntos* books themselves, and (4) Alignment between *Leamos Juntos* program goals and INGO mission and activities. Furthermore, both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers shared additional common factors: (5) *Leamos Juntos* teacher trainings (6) Guidance of *Leamos Juntos* Program Document for

implementation, (7) *Leamos Juntos* and INGO work in book lending, and (8) Flexible participation for INGOs.

Given that INGO participation was a part of the *Leamos Juntos* design, it is understandable that this directive could appeal to and support the participation of *debutant* INGOs already involved in reading programming. Furthermore, the broad national outreach efforts (including specifically a seemingly effective social media campaign and a national conference) combined with *Leamos Juntos* books in schools meant additional opportunities for *debutant* INGOs to learn about and participate in *Leamos Juntos*. Lastly, because the department implementation plans for *Leamos Juntos* overlapped with *debutant* INGO activities, it provided an incentive to participate for anyone open to that possibility. Therefore, it was not a stretch for Activate Readers, Book Borrowers and Chapter Readers to see these factors as supportive for their participation and insipient participation.

The additional factors common across the two *debutant* INGO cases—Activate Readers and Chapter Readers—provided specific examples from actively participating *debutant* INGOs. Having the programmatic overlap of book lending between the INGOs and *Leamos Juntos* meant that there was an immediate opportunity to put their participation into practice. Having an immediate overlap made participating in that aspect easy. Because the INGOs were already working with public schools and in support of teachers, the teacher training aspect of *Leamos Juntos* provided yet another point of common ground. The LJPD spoke to each INGO differently, having a significant impact on Activate Readers and an insignificant impact on Chapter Readers, but ultimately provided a useful resource by which INGOs could see themselves written into the

program. Lastly, the opportunity for voluntary and flexible INGO participation meant that the *debutant* INGOs felt no coercion and could adopt and adapt the program in a way that allowed them to advance their own programmatic goals or, as Chapter Readers staff put it, coming “almost in the name of the Ministry to support *Leamos Juntos*.”

Finally, Both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers’ staff and public education staff described employing *Leamos Juntos* to advance their own programming goals. In the Alo Department, public education staff described how they worked with INGOs to amplify the reach of *Leamos Juntos*. Activate Readers described leveraging *Leamos Juntos* as a way to work in districts where they had previously been denied access by supervisors. Chapter Readers gave an example of how their own programming allowed teachers to engage in *Leamos Juntos* even though some teachers may have been resistant to using the *Leamos Juntos* books. The examples show how both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff, along with public education staff, each drew upon *Leamos Juntos* as a way to advance their own organizational goals while simultaneously advancing *Leamos Juntos*. This speaks to the ways in which *debutant* INGOs may be doing this more broadly to negotiate their access in and/or navigate within the public education sector. It also speaks to the potential for a *debutant* INGO like Book Borrowers to align their activities with *Leamos Juntos* and begin participating.

#### **4. NGOtenango supportive factors**

Across all cases, the context of NGOtenango included some supportive factors for INGO participation: (1) An unchecked proliferation of NGOs participating in the education sector in the last 25 years, (2) The change in approach from the Ministry of Education regarding the inclusion of NGOs, (3) The continued dearth of resources



directed towards public education, and (4) The alignment and advancement of global, national and local agendas around reading.

The first common supportive factor identified and observed across all cases was related to the **unchecked growth and proliferation of NGOs working in education over the past decades**. All *debutant* INGO cases and all department cases described a variety of effects related to the proliferation of NGOs and INGOs in education. For example, all participants acknowledged that there were unknown numbers of NGOs working in the education sector. *Debutant* INGO staff shared favorable ideas about the potential this proliferation had created. The public education staff across all department cases saw these unknown NGOs and INGOs as a potential resource to help them reach their own objectives. The following are several elaborations from different cases.

**Activate Readers and the Alo Department.** Both Activate Readers staff and the Alo Department public education staff cited the difference between past and present NGOs whereby the present conditions were more conducive to collaboration. The Alo Department LJ Link described these newer NGOs favorably and more open to collaboration, drawing a contrast to the “old NGOs”, who the LJ Link saw as less likely to collaborate. The LJ Link had observed this change in disposition towards collaboration and saw it as an opportunity to leverage collaborative efforts with INGOs to advance the department’s educational goals and programming. This also provided an example of the increased alignment between NGOs and the public education sector in Guatemala and the distancing of hostile NGO-State relationships at least within the context of education.

**Book Borrowers.** Although Book Borrowers was unaware of *Leamos Juntos*, the context of NGOTenango—in addition to supporting their very existence—created supportive

factors for their incipient participation. Firstly, Book Borrowers being “under the radar” and unregistered is only possible because of the unchecked proliferation of NGOs in the education sector. At the same time, they were intentional about their detectability and were only “under the radar” to Ministry and administrative government staff but clearly not to public education staff with whom they worked nor the local governmental bodies. In that sense, the fact that their programming was informal, unaccredited and unregistered appeared to be irrelevant to many of their public sector collaborators.

In the case of Book Borrowers, their commitment to working with and not replacing the public sector education programming suggested a complicated path wherein they engaged how they wanted, in the way that they wanted, but in consultation with official town governing bodies. Therefore, Book Borrowers’ approach and focus on reading, along with their close collaboration with local town governing bodies and schools, created a kind of momentum and a foundation amenable to *debutant* INGO participation and one that was possible within the context of NGOTenango. The notion of “participation” itself in *Leamos Juntos* is not clearly defined, which appears to allow for the broadest sense of the understanding of the term. In fact, the term is so broad and lightly defined that one could argue that a *debutant* INGO like Book Borrowers was actually unknowingly advancing the goals of *Leamos Juntos* by virtue of having a focus on reading programming.

Book Borrowers staff were unaware of *Leamos Juntos* despite the direct programmatic overlap even when that occurred within a school setting where teachers were implementing *Leamos Juntos*. During one of my site visits with Book Borrowers staff to an elementary school in the Bello Department, the public school director and

teacher were both aware of *Leamos Juntos* and showed how they as a school were participating. However, those public education staff members did not describe any connection between their implementation of *Leamos Juntos* and Book Borrowers' work at their school either. This brings up the notion of 'unintentional participation' and suggests that, because of the minimal oversight of the NGO sector combined with a broad conceptualization of participation, a *debutant* INGO may be unknowingly advancing public education policy like *Leamos Juntos*. Within the context of the study, I believe that my questions carried an assumption that participation was intentional and implicated some coordination whereas this example from Book Borrowers and the Bello Department suggests that this may not always be the case. This was an interesting aspect of the Book Borrowers case and suggested that, within the context of NGOTenango, a national reading program like *Leamos Juntos* may be able to bring in actors who typically prefer to work outside of the formal channels of the Ministry of Education, whether they know it or not.

**Bello Department.** The Bello Department LJ Links described how there were many NGOs working in their department and they saw this as an opportunity. The supervisors in the same department knew more about the NGOs working in the Department and also described this circumstance as an opportunity for INGO participation. The proliferation of NGOs was seen as a good and desirable attribute for the department.

**Cielo Department.** The Cielo Department LJ Link, although lamenting that there were not more INGOs working in their department, described their optimism related to having many NGOs working in a department. Again, the proliferation of NGOs was seen as a good and desirable attribute for any department. Of course, in this case, the LJ Link was

unaware of Chapter Readers and Book Borrowers' work in the department but that subject will be touched upon later in this chapter.

The second common supportive factor across all cases was the effect of **the Ministry's shift away from the strictly contractual NGO-State collaborations** that were emblematic of PRONADE and **towards more flexible, voluntary and non-contractual participation by NGOs**. This was a relatively new shift and was a configuration welcomed by all of the INGO cases and was seen as an opportunity by all of the department cases. The following are several elaborations from different cases.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers staff cited this factor specifically in their interviews. Additionally, they described their corresponding evolution towards increased openness towards Ministry of Education programming based upon a new kind of dynamic—one that was not hostile—that existed within the public education sector. Tellingly, the INGO Director stated their openness to a contractual relationship with the Ministry as a service provider, showing just how differently they were imagining a partnership with the department office. This sense of trust and openness to partnership can be considered an outgrowth of both the positive interactions occurring in the Alo department but also as a shift from the Ministry towards less restrictive parameters around NGOs.

**Book Borrowers.** The case of Book Borrowers provided an example of how the Ministry's shift towards more flexible participation by NGOs had also created a space where Book Borrowers was actually advancing *Leamos Juntos* unknowingly. Although this complicates the notion of "INGO participation" in *Leamos Juntos*—which could be formal (agreed upon in consultation with stakeholders) or informal (no, minimal or selective consultation

with stakeholders)—it also signals a move away from restrictive policies around INGO participation.

**Chapter Readers.** The Chapter Readers staff also specifically cited flexible participation as important for their involvement. Although Chapter Readers was formally participating in *Leamos Juntos*, their work was invisible to the LJ Links in the Bello and Cielo Departments. Therefore, even though this highlighted low awareness of INGOs by LJ Links, it also showed how Chapter Readers appeared to be relatively unaffected by their invisibility to the LJ Links and was able to continue advancing *Leamos Juntos*. It underscored how such a broad conceptualization of participation can generally be supportive of INGO participation and even cut through some of the challenges around communication.

**Alo, Bello and Cielo Departments.** In each department, public education staff described the possibility created by the proliferation of INGOs and imagined favorable opportunities. I observed that the department's ability to partner at the local levels and without Ministry intervention as a shift away from previous policies that centralized the control over INGOs. Although some of that control is still centralized, the open call for participation was a step towards more autonomy for the departments as well when it came to collaborating with INGOs.

The third common factor across all cases was related to **the absence of sufficient government support for education**, especially in the rural areas. The *debutant* INGOs were responding directly to under-resourced schools and therefore arguably may not have been in existence without this deficit. In all cases, the absence of sufficient government

support in the rural areas created a particular kind of space and opportunity for INGO participation.

In addition to my own observations on this factor, Book Borrowers staff spoke directly to this during a site visit where they described how the characteristics of their department—which had many rural and remote villages—lent itself to INGO participation because there were many “forgotten areas.” Although this was in the context of lamenting the absence of government support, in this case, the absence of government was directly connected to the potential for INGO participation. It also suggested that INGOs would be looking for and would find these areas that had been excluded.

Finally, the fourth supportive factor that affected all cases was **the confluence of the international, national, and local focus on reading**. As a part of my observations, I saw the connection between the international focus on reading—as incorporated in the USAID education strategy<sup>27</sup> at the time and, in this study, their technical support for a national reading conference—combined with the national *Leamos Juntos* program that was implemented in schools around the country. The three *debutant* INGO cases—each quite different—all became connected to this international agenda through the Innovations Conference and, more generally, the space created by *Leamos Juntos* where *debutant* INGOs and public education staff could see an alignment in their agendas. This finding is important because it highlights how global education priorities can become

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<sup>27</sup> The USAID education strategy from 2011-2015 included three goals, the first of which was specific to reading and “improved reading skills.” The education strategy document can be found here [https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/USAID\\_Education%20Strategy\\_2011-2015.pdf](https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/USAID_Education%20Strategy_2011-2015.pdf)

aligned with and influence *debutant* INGO participation in national education programming.

**Comparing across all cases,** the context of NGOtenango included four supportive factors for INGO participation: (1) An unchecked proliferation of NGOs participating in the education sector in the last 25 years, (2) The change in approach from the government regarding the inclusion of NGOs, (3) The continued dearth of resources directed towards public education and (4) The alignment and advancement of global, national and local agendas around reading. *Leamos Juntos* interacted with the history of chronic underfunding in the education sector, the proliferation of NGOs, and NGOs' increased variety of affiliations and interactions with the public education sector. All cases provided examples of how non-contractual and more flexible options for INGO participation were supportive factors for INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. In each case, the unchecked proliferation of NGOs working in public education meant that public education staff acknowledged that they did not know many of the INGOs working in their department. However, even if “under the radar,” the INGO presence—known and unknown—was seen to be a supportive factor and one that created the conditions, and even a foundation, for not only potential INGO participation but as a vehicle for advancing department objectives. In this sense, it becomes apparent how the unchecked proliferation of INGOs created opportunities for advancing a program like *Leamos Juntos*.

That all three *debutant* INGOs were working inside and in support of the public schools also speaks to an interesting aspect of NGOtenango. These non-state actors were invited to take on a formal role in the implementation of new education policy in the

public schools. Beyond acknowledging the existence of INGOs, the INGOs were now in a position to advance public policy at the direction of the Ministry. In both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers, the *debutant* INGOs appear to have played an important role in the implementation of the policy and Chapter Readers even described their work as similar to coming in the name of the Ministry. Indeed, both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers described leveraging the overlap with *Leamos Juntos* to enact the policy in a way that advanced their own INGOs programming and agenda.

The variation across the cases, both among public education staff and *debutant* INGOs, suggests that NGOtenango takes shape quite differently in different departments and with different *debutant* INGOs. Whereas a *debutant* INGO like Book Borrowers can be unknowingly advancing *Leamos Juntos*, Activate Readers can have an active collaboration within the Alo Department and Chapter Readers can be formally participating in *Leamos Juntos* irrespective of their invisibility to the LJ Links. These idiosyncratic examples demonstrate how the features of NGOtenango, and *debutant* INGOs and public education departments themselves, interact with *Leamos Juntos* in different and at times unpredictable ways.

### ***Barriers for debutant INGO participation in Leamos Juntos***

Following a parallel structure to the Supports section, this section identifies barriers to *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*:

1. *Debutant* INGO Characteristics
2. Department Characteristics
3. *Leamos Juntos* Barriers
4. National Education System Barriers
5. NGOtenango Barriers



## 1. *Debutant* INGO characteristics

Given that Chapter Readers was already recognized as formally participating in *Leamos Juntos*, I did not identify any specific characteristics about their organization that posed a barrier for their participation. There was one common barrier across Activate Readers and Book Borrowers which was about **differing levels of knowledge about the public education system in Guatemala and about the *Leamos Juntos* program itself.**

**Activate Readers.** The Activate Readers In-Country Director talked about how he had limited knowledge about the education system in Guatemala and that at times he felt embarrassed and ignorant. He described how his Guatemalan colleagues knew so much more and that, until he asked the right questions, he would not find out about what was going on around them. In a discussion focused on learning about a specific Ministry program (called PADEP), the in-country director shared surprise at discovering that all of INGO staff members already knew about this program:

*I didn't know how much my colleagues already knew about PADEP...It embarrasses me from time to time, and I feel ignorant. There are so many unknowns in the ed sector here in Guatemala....I asked our staff if they had PADEP teachers and they all raise their hands!*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

Highlighting limited knowledge of the Guatemalan education system, the in-country director also suggested that being non-Guatemalan was a potential impediment and reason for criticism from others:

*There are things that are so obvious and so clear to someone else...We actually got criticized recently for not having more Guatemalan leadership.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

**Book Borrowers.** The Book Borrowers staff had varying levels of awareness and knowledge of *Leamos Juntos* as well as their own INGO's operations. At the beginning of the case study, I learned that Book Borrowers had only recently become aware of *Leamos Juntos* despite the fact that it was the third year of program implementation. I also became aware of a gap between what the director knew about some aspects of the operations versus what staff know, specifically that staff members varied in their knowledge about the existing relationship with the department and also about *Leamos Juntos*.

For example, in my early interviews with the director, he described not having any formal agreements with the department. However, during a site visit, a lead staff member described a formal agreement that existed with the department and assured me that the department was aware of their programming. I did not confirm or disconfirm this with the department office but the discrepancy was notable and I believed the lead staff member given their close proximity to program activities.

In a focus group towards the end of the case study, a Book Borrowers Guatemalan staff member described having no knowledge at all of either the national reading program or *Leamos Juntos*:

*In my case, if it wasn't for you, I would have never heard anything about Leamos Juntos...It's a question of, this is something that started in 2004 and we're finding out about it 10 years later, for the love of God.*

Book Borrowers Staff, Translated

Furthermore, the Book Borrowers Director described how the INGO had no official status to work in Guatemala and because of this, they were operating outside of the legal requirements related to paying staff members. At the beginning, this led to fears

of them being shut down and so they preferred to stay “*under the radar*” and not draw attention to themselves:

*I think that my biggest concern as we were starting to expand from the first 5 teachers in the first year...was that I knew I wasn't paying them according to the government pay scale. Of course the local governments don't pay them to that pay scale either when they do a contract with people. So, I wasn't the only one that wasn't doing it. My concern there was that, well, I know I'm not...giving them any benefits, not filing reports, not paying into social security system, we're not paying into the medical system, we're not doing any of that we don't even have any paperwork in Guatemala. And so I'm afraid that somebody one day is going to tell us to stop.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

However, in an early interview during the case study, the INGO Director described how he had changed his position on this:

*At the beginning (of our conversations), I said I had some concerns. The more I think about that, it's an old concern.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

Even though the concern about operating under the radar had changed, it was still cited as a potential reason for having communication challenges with the department.

One of the Book Borrowers staff members compared their organization to another INGO with whom the staff member collaborates in that same department. Whereas that INGO is recognized internationally and locally more well known, Book Borrowers is not and so they felt treated differently:

*I believe that what we find, and I believe that this has been the case during all of our time that we have been working, is that at the department level...there is always a “but....” In truth, perhaps because we are small, or not known, or not formal...*

Book Borrowers Staff Member, Translated

**Comparing across the cases**, a common barrier across Activate Readers and Book Borrowers was differing levels of knowledge about the public education system in Guatemala and about the *Leamos Juntos* program itself. In both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers, the leadership most present in Guatemala were North American men who had limited experience with and knowledge about the Guatemalan education system. Of the three *debutant* INGO cases, Book Borrowers was the smallest and least formalized which could account for why I encountered discrepancies about the INGO's programming itself among staff. Furthermore, this was the only case where a Guatemalan staff member demonstrated low knowledge about the Guatemalan education system, underscoring that simply being Guatemalan does not denote knowledge of *Leamos Juntos* or the education sector. In both Activate Readers and Book Borrowers, the INGO leadership appeared to use the interviews to critically reflect on some of the issues within their own organization and to acknowledge that some of the barriers to their participation were directly related to the makeup of their organizations and the ways that they operated.

## **2. Department characteristics**

In all of the public education department cases, public education staff described and demonstrated two common barriers for INGO participation: (1) Limited information about INGOs and their work in the departments, (2) Low information sharing and fragmented knowledge about INGOs within the different levels of the departments, and (3) Communication challenges between INGOs and the department.

The first common barrier shared across department cases was that the **public education staff had limited information about INGOs and the work that INGOs were doing in their departments.**

**Alo Department.** For example, Alo Department LJ Link had the highest level of awareness of any LJ Link, as demonstrated through their ongoing outreach and collaborative efforts with Activate Readers and other NGOs in that department. However, this LJ Link still described lacking basic information about the variety and scope of INGOs working in the department. The supervisors, school directors and teachers all described a high level of awareness of INGOs working in their specific areas and communities but, again, lacked basic information about the breadth of INGO work happening in the department.

**Bello Department.** This was also the case in the Bello Department where, despite the presence of numerous INGOs working in education in their department, the LJ Links were generally not aware of the different INGOs nor the breadth of INGO work happening in the department. These LJ Links were also the only LJ Links among the department cases not actively working with INGOs to implement *Leamos Juntos*. The supervisors in this department described a higher level of awareness but still lacked basic information about all of the INGOs working in their areas.

**Cielo Department.** The Cielo Department LJ Link was actively partnering with a large INGO but generally appeared to be unaware of significant INGO activity in the department, namely that Chapter Readers was working with 38 schools in the department and, on a smaller scale, that Book Borrowers was also working in that department. In

fact, in an interview with the LJ Link they said that the biggest barrier was that INGOs were not there:

*Other areas with tourists have more INGOs...not working with many NGOs because there are very few here. The biggest barrier is that they are not here...*

Cielo Department LJ Link, Translated and paraphrased in interview notes

They went on to describe having limited information about INGOs including the changes that occur within INGOs:

*Not knowing all of the details about who (INGOs) is working where and what they are doing...sometimes staff changes at organizations and that makes it difficult, or they change projects.*

Cielo Department LJ Link, Translated and Paraphrased in interview notes

The LJ Link also voiced some doubt about INGO availability to participate citing other areas of focus:

*The vision of NGOs is often in other areas, such as nutrition, safety or the natural environment.*

Cielo Department LJ Link, Translated and paraphrased in interview notes

Lastly, I was able to review the Cielo Departmental Plan to implement *Leamos Juntos* and it appears to have also under-identified INGO opportunity to participate. Within the plan, NGOs are listed once—alongside a variety of other actors—as groups who can help spread information about the program. They are not specifically listed anywhere else in the document, which suggests that they were not conceived of as an integral part of the overall strategy. Furthermore, it suggests that even though many in the department and at the Ministry level knew about Chapter Readers’ work that, for whatever reason, Chapter Readers was not considered within the Department Plan.

The second common barrier across the department cases was **low information sharing and fragmented knowledge about INGOs within the different levels of the departments**. For example, in Bello and Cielo Departments, during interviews with LJ Links at their Department Offices, other staff members that joined in briefly shared information about INGOs working in the departments that was unknown to the LJ Links. Furthermore, supervisors and school directors in Alo and Bello Departments held information that was not readily apparent to the LJ Links.

**Alo Department.** The Alo Department school director and teacher focus group revealed that some schools were actively working with one or more INGOs whereas others were working with none. This appeared to be a revelation—or perhaps an unspoken truth—to the assembled group and one that was seen as unfair and concerning. The LJ Link was present and they used the opportunity for problem-solving and planning. However, much of the details about INGO activity appeared to be new information for the LJ Link, underscoring low or slow information sharing within this department at least around INGO activity.

**Bello Department.** While interviewing the Bello Department LJ Links I encountered other department staff members who had significantly more information about INGOs working in the department. For example, another department staff member stopped into the office during the interview. I explained the study and we briefly engaged them in our conversation. That visiting staff member immediately knew of several *debutant* INGOs that were working in education locally and that were apparently unknown to the LJ Links.

**Cielo Department.** While interviewing the Cielo Department LJ Link, he directed me to a colleague to learn more about INGOs working in education in their department.

Working together, that colleague and I were able to find at least one list of INGOs working in the department and it included Chapter Readers. The LJ Link, however, did not seem to be aware of all the INGOs listed in their department and I am not aware of whether or not they drew upon the list of INGOs after that interview.

In the Cielo department, the fragmented awareness and low information sharing occurred despite Chapter Readers: working actively with supervisors, school directors and teachers across the department; having self-described open communication with the department office, and formally participating in *Leamos Juntos*. This included signed agreements with supervisors and teachers as well as direct communication with the department director. This absence of information sharing, at least between INGO and LJ Link but also between the LJ Link and other members of the department staff, complicated awareness about INGOs as well as their participation in *Leamos Juntos*.

This fragmentation of knowledge about INGOs is perhaps unsurprising given the breadth of a department's work, the divisions of tasks, and the additional non-*Leamos Juntos* related work. Yet these encounters confirmed that information about INGOs did exist in the departments but that for whatever reason that was not shared with the LJ Links. This indicated that just because someone is an LJ Link does not mean that they have all of the information needed to engage INGOs in participating. It also appeared that LJ Links in Bello and Cielo Departments knew who to talk to in order to learn about INGO activity in the department but that, for whatever reason, they had not done so. This



leads to the question of whether or not LJ Links felt that stimulating INGO participation was actually pertinent to their role.

The third common barrier across the department cases was the issue of **communication challenges between INGOs and the Department**. It is perhaps unsurprising that where there are variations of awareness, fragmented knowledge and low information sharing that such communication issues would arise.

**Alo Department.** In the Alo Department, the Activate Readers In-Country Director described a time when they called the department office to ask for the *Leamos Juntos* LJ Link, but the person who answered the phone had no knowledge of this position and was unable to help.

The Activate Readers Executive Director also mentioned the inaccessibility of the Alo Department Director. They described two occasions when they had scheduled meetings but when they arrived at the Alo Department office they were told that the director had been called into a meeting. The executive director described this with some frustration:

*...(Our in-country director) has set up two very explicit appointments and...then be handed a note by someone in his office saying 'look, I'm really, really, really, really, sorry but once again I just all of a sudden got called into a whole day meeting.'*

Activate Readers Executive Director, English

**Bello Department.** In the Bello Department, the LJ Links had no communication with either Chapter Readers or Book Borrowers. The Book Borrowers staff cited limited, poor or no communication with Bello Department staff. One Book Borrower's staff member described an exchange with Bello Department staff when they were trying to learn about

the *Leamos Juntos* books; the department office staff members simply told them that they did not have a copy of the books and that they could not help.

Book Borrowers staff further described that instance of going to the Bello Department to ask for additional information on *Leamos Juntos*. They were told that they would receive information about the program by email but they described never receiving follow-up:

*And so we arrived at the department and have the opportunity to speak with them. Afterwards, they said that they would follow-up by sending us the (Leamos Juntos) guide that they give to the teachers. But I never received it.*

Book Borrowers Staff Member, Translated

**Cielo Department.** In the Cielo Department, the absence of communication between either Chapter Readers or Book Borrowers and the LJ Link complicated awareness about INGO participation in the program. This lack of communication occurred despite Chapter Readers staff working actively with supervisors, school directors and teachers across the department and having open communication with the department director.

Two additional outlying barriers were described separately in two different cases. Activate Readers described experiencing a **great deal of variation within the different districts and regions within a given Department**. The in-country director described how this had affected their ability to participate in the program:

*The variability in different districts, just depending who the supervisor is and what level of experience they have and what level of confidence they have in their own ability to say yes or say no to things... There is a huge amount of variability.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

The Bello Department LJ Links described how limited funding created a barrier to working on *Leamos Juntos* within the department. They described how there was **no**

**specific budget within the department for reading** programming nor was there any funding to bring people or NGOs together to establish alliances.

**Comparing across all cases**, there were three common barriers for INGO participation: (1) Limited information about INGOs and their work in the departments, (2) Low information sharing and fragmented knowledge about INGOs within the different levels of the departments, and (3) Communication challenges between INGOs and the department. This combination of barriers complicated or thwarted efforts to participate.

The Alo Department had the highest amount of collaboration and engagement with INGOs working in the department and yet there were numerous examples of low or no information sharing among public education staff and between public education staff and INGOs. Given that, it is not surprising that in the Bello and Cielo Departments, where there is no coordinated effort by LJ links to work with INGOs, that this was even more pronounced. The lack of information sharing was apparent across all departments and suggests that this issue may exist in other departments. Across all cases, the supervisors—and in the Alo Department the school directors and teachers working directly with INGOs—appeared to have the most information about and awareness of INGOs working in their areas. However, it did not appear that such information was being shared with LJ Links or at least, if the information was being shared, that for whatever reason it was not reaching the LJ Link. It also did not appear that the LJ Links in either the Bello or Cielo Departments had actively tried to identify INGOs to invite participation.

### 3. *Leamos Juntos* barriers

There were two common barriers<sup>28</sup> across all cases related to the *Leamos Juntos* program itself, with the first barrier occurring in a variety of different ways across different cases. The two common barriers were: (1) The specific *Leamos Juntos* design and administrative structure, and (2) A lack of outreach to all potential INGOs.

The first common barrier included **design complications and an administrative structure in *Leamos Juntos* that made it more difficult for INGOs to participate** and manifested in six different examples: (1) the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD) and other program documents, (2) the LJ Link role, (3) the reading committees, (4) the teacher trainings and support, (5) the bilingual and intercultural education (EBI) approach, and (6) the *Leamos Juntos* books.

The Chapter Readers In-Country Director commented on the administrative structure of *Leamos Juntos*, suggesting that there were good points and bad points about the structure. However, he described that the administrative structure was disconnected from reality:

*How does the administrative structure appear on the ground? There is not an administrative structure in reality. Instead, it depends on the person in that structure...the administrative structure is very important for sustainability, to give it credibility, for a variety of things, but I think that it is very disconnected.*

Chapter Readers In-Country Director, Translated

This observation is borne out in some of the experiences described by both the public education staff and the INGO staff. For the first example, **the *Leamos Juntos***

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<sup>28</sup> Among the debutant INGOs, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers identified the most barriers whereas Book Borrowers' incipient participation prevented them from experiencing much of the *Leamos Juntos* program.

**Program Document (LJPD) and other program documents were limited in scope and not shared.** For example, the LJPD did not provide enough clear direction on how INGOs could participate. For example, beyond a blanket invitation to all NGOs to participate, the LJPD provided very limited guidance, instructions, or suggestions about how to participate and it did not provide contact information for people to facilitate communication.

Activate Readers staff described this barrier when discussing the LJPD (as seen in Figure 2: Coordination, Planning and Execution of the Program):

*That's nice that you're supposed to be communicating and being included but it does seem like, I don't know what those arrows are, or when they are, or where they are...Or how to grab the end of the arrow.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

Additionally, the design as presented in the LJPD was limited in scope. For example, the LJ Link role does not appear in the LJPD despite this being a key interlocutor for the program at the department level. It is perhaps expected then that communication between the LJ Links and INGOs would be limited or at least hindered by this oversight, if present at all.

Furthermore, none of the INGOs received *Leamos Juntos* program materials, including the LJPD. Even Chapter Readers staff (the only formally participating INGO) described how they did not receive any documents or correspondence during their time participating in *Leamos Juntos*:

*Nothing arrived. There was no correspondence, no packets, no copies arrived...*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

Public education staff also described having limited or no access to *Leamos Juntos* planning materials. For example, the Cielo Department LJ Link specifically mentioned that they and their team did not have easy access to all of the *Leamos Juntos* program documents. Because many of the program documents were available on the Ministry website, this comment suggests that having the materials online may not be sufficient for department staff.

As a second example of barriers related to the administrative structure and design was the **variability within the LJ Link role** as it related to INGO participation. My interviews and time with the different LJ Links and *debutant* INGOs revealed this barrier across the three departments. For example, the Alo Department LJ Link was the only LJ link actively seeking out INGOs to participate. In Bello and Cielo Departments, the LJ Links were not aware of either Book Borrowers or Chapter Readers and vice versa.

Chapter Readers staff described not knowing that the LJ Link role even existed. This came as a surprise to Chapter Readers staff to learn about the LJ Link role, which was particularly remarkable given that they were the only formally participating INGO in the case study. Upon learning about the role, Chapter Readers staff also suggested that the schools certainly did not know about that role either. Because of these examples, it is likely that there was variability happening in other departments as it related to how the LJ Link role was applied and its relative visibility as a point person for *Leamos Juntos*.

The third example of barriers related to the administrative structure and design was with the reading committees, which were presented as a key element in the design of *Leamos Juntos* at the local level. Within the context of INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers' staff described experiences whereby

**reading committees had different levels of functionality** within the schools making them an unreliable school-based point for *Leamos Juntos* participation. This included a spectrum from functioning committees to non-existent committees.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers staff worked actively with the reading committees. Staff talked about how these school-based reading committees were functioning quite differently depending on the department or district:

*I think that there is a big variability about just how functional those committees actually are...*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff also described how there was a broad variability among how and if the committees worked in different schools. Partly because of this factor they chose not to rely on the committees and instead continue their model of working with individual teachers. Despite working in 38 schools, they described not working with the reading committees and instead they worked with individual teachers in the schools.

These examples suggest that the significant variation with how the reading committees functioned could pose some barriers for INGOs attempting to participate in *Leamos Juntos* through working with the reading committees.

The fourth example of barriers related to the administrative structure and design was related to the *Leamos Juntos* teacher training and in-service support for teachers. I was told that only 150 teachers in each department received training as a part of *Leamos Juntos*. Debutant INGO staff in the different cases all commented on **the limited scope of the teacher training and in-service support efforts** saying that not enough teachers

received the *Leamos Juntos* training.<sup>29</sup> All INGO cases commented on how *Leamos Juntos* needed to incorporate more training and for more teachers.

Because of the lack of training, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff described how teachers were unsure what to actually do with *Leamos Juntos*. The Activate Readers In-Country Director described this as a barrier to INGO participation:

*On the school level, to generalize, the lack of knowledge...a lot of teachers and also directors, of what it is they are supposed to be doing for Leamos Juntos.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

Additionally, Book Borrowers described not being allowed to join the training. Book Borrowers staff described how they wanted to participate in the department teacher training sessions but were told that the training was only for teachers and not INGO staff:

*For example, the trainings that they are providing on reading here in the department. Because I had the opportunity to speak with the people in charge of Leamos Juntos and I asked them if we could attend the training...They said no and that it was only for teachers.*

Book Borrowers Staff, Translated

Coming from a *debutant* INGO that is interested in participating, the inability to have access to a training was a barrier for their insipient participation.

In addition to the trainings, the boxes of books were accompanied by a Teacher Guide, which was intended to be a pedagogical support for the teachers as they implemented the program. Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff connected barriers

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<sup>29</sup> For perspective, the case departments had a range of 1,400 - 3,400 primary school teachers in 2015. <http://estadistica.mineduc.gob.gt/anuario/home.html#>



related to the Teacher Guide within the context that teachers were not receiving enough support to implement *Leamos Juntos*.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers staff speculated that the Teacher Guide may go unused and also that it was inadequate:

*You get that packet in those plastic bins but I don't think that anyone is reading it and, I don't know, that even if people did read it, that they would have the tools necessary to implement what is expected.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

The Activate Readers staff suggested that the Teacher Guide itself was burdensome for the teachers:

*Staff 1: On top of the boxes of books there was a document directed towards teachers telling them what they are supposed to do with the books, a manual...*

*Staff 2: But the manual is just one more book for them to read!*

Activate Readers Program Staff members, Translated

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff, while praising the Teacher Guide itself, critiqued the way that it was shared and were skeptical about whether or not it was being used:

*Staff 1: I have seen it (the Teacher Guide) and I consider it to be good. The problem is that it is not being applied exactly in the way that it is presented in the guide...*

*Staff 2: The way that it is given to them (the teachers) is that it is just presented. If they just bring it to them and say, 'Here, read it!' they will never use it.*

*Staff 1: And I hate to say it but there are many schools that don't even know about the Teacher Guide, because they were never brought to a training session or the (LJ Link) never arrived... They will not read it.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

In each of these instances, the conversation suggested that *debutant* INGO staff felt that if more teachers had training, there was more in-service support for teachers, and if teachers knew more about how to use reading as a pedagogical tool, that it would be easier for the INGO to participate in *Leamos Juntos*.

The fifth example of barriers related to the administrative structure and design had to do with *debutant* INGOs' described **challenges implementing the bilingual and intercultural education component of *Leamos Juntos***. As a national directive, all departments are supposed to incorporate a specific focus on bilingual and intercultural education (EBI) with Spanish and the most predominant indigenous language/s spoken in the department. Both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff were familiar with the *Leamos Juntos* inventory of books but their staff described never seeing any bilingual books from *Leamos Juntos* in the classrooms. Chapter Readers also elaborated on the organization's rationale for not incorporating EBI within the context of *Leamos Juntos*.

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers described previous experiences with EBI as a barrier to participating in this aspect of *Leamos Juntos*. Chapter Readers staff shared an instance when there they were trying to get bilingual books for teachers. When they did get books, they realized that the teachers did not read in their first language. Chapter Readers staff also described an experience where the books that they wanted to use, that were translated, were not received well by community members. Chapter Readers staff explained that community members described the books—which were about anatomy and body parts—as not culturally appropriate:

*We brought a book that talked about body parts in (that indigenous language). Well, the pictures, the images were semi-nude and they really looked more like actual images than drawings. And we had problems because the parents said,*

*'Look, what are you teaching our children? The teachers never told us about this'...*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

Furthermore, Chapter Readers described having negative prior experience using bilingual books whereby the books were not reflective of the language used by the teachers:

*...The university has a linguistics department and many times they produce books in different languages from Guatemala. But it turns out that the language used...is very academic and technical. And so the moment that the teacher arrives...the teacher says that, for example, 'the book says that this is the way to say thank you, but that is not how I say thank you.' This was the barrier, it was very academic.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

Especially for Chapter Readers, their previous experiences working on EBI and with bilingual books presented barriers for their engagement in this aspect of the program.

The sixth example of barriers related to the administrative structure and design had to do with the *Leamos Juntos* books. *Leamos Juntos* provided each school in the country with a small lending library by distributing plastic boxes of books. Specifically, *debutant* INGO staff members described how **teachers were afraid to use the *Leamos Juntos* books** along with other barriers related to the books.<sup>30</sup> Across all *debutant* INGO cases, participants described that they saw the books under lock and key in the schools. This meant that many of the boxes appeared to be unopened and unused.

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<sup>30</sup> During a school visit in the Cielo Department, a teacher spoke to our group stating that, although the books were very useful, that the box did not contain enough books for their entire school. They asked officials who were present for more books. Although not within the context of INGO participation, this suggested that there were other challenges related to the books.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers staff members described the issue of boxes being unopened:

Staff 1: *Many of the boxes aren't even opened, they are under lock and key even today...*

Staff 2: *...sometimes we find that the Leamos Juntos books are in the offices...*

Activate Readers Program Staff Members, Translated

Activate Readers staff described how teachers were afraid to use the books for fear of damaging the books and needing to personally replace (and pay for) the books. The Activate Readers staff spoke about how past policy required the school to pay for any damaged or missing books, and the books are very expensive. The Activate Readers In-Country Director described an exchange they had with a Ministry administrator where the administrator said that this simply was not true for the *Leamos Juntos* books. However, based on the experiences across the *debutant* INGO cases, it appeared to remain a truth to the teachers, highlighting a discrepancy between the policy's design and the implementation:

*There was this fear, and I think that there still is in a lot of places, that if something happens to those books that teachers are going to be responsible for them and have to pay for them...I was at one presentation on Thursday morning where someone in MINEDUC said 'that's not true, you don't have to worry about it, teachers don't have to pay for the books if they get damaged' or whatever, but that's not the message that's getting down to the level of the schools.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

Activate Readers staff also commented on the challenging relationship between some offices within the Ministry of Education and the Department Office. The staff said that some central Ministry offices were concerned with auditing the schools, which tended to be a punitive practice where the school would be penalized for losing or

damaging materials including books. However, despite the fact that this practice might dissuade teachers from using the *Leamos Juntos* books, Activate Readers still implemented *Leamos Juntos* because they had their own books already in the schools:

*One of the barriers is that there are many administrative offices in the Ministry of Education that are primarily interested in statistics and auditing, more so than the actual practice and use of the materials...In this case, we are minimally affected by this because of the resources that we have. If the teacher wants to store the books sent by the Ministry of Education then that is not a problem, store them if the teacher wants to. But we have our own resources to work within the program and support this Ministry program.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translation

This example also highlighted how Activate Readers was able to maneuver around this barrier. It is an instance where Activate Readers was able to support compliance with *Leamos Juntos* while simultaneously allowing policy defiance by a teacher or school. Their role does not require them to be punitive but instead appears to be one of support.

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff described how teachers were afraid to use the books for fear of damaging the books and needing to personally replace (and pay for) the books. Chapter Readers staff described how teachers preferred to use the Chapter Readers books given the fear of an inventory process that could make them responsible for a *Leamos Juntos* book:

*Some teachers say no, they prefer not to use the Leamos Juntos boxes (of books) for fear of losing them and then having to pay for them.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

Chapter Readers staff provided an additional reason why teachers may be rejecting the *Leamos Juntos* books. They cited their own experience identifying great

variation of reading levels between classrooms and schools and they suspected that the *Leamos Juntos* program had books that were not appropriately leveled to the early grades:

*...because the teachers find the books that have been sent to them to be very difficult for their grade. I believe that this too is part of the reason why they reject those books.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

**Chapter Readers described an outlying factor** and seemingly a fundamental challenge related to working within the scope of the national reading program. The in-country director commented on the difficulty of working in reading when the **Ministry did not have a specific methodology for teaching how to read**. Chapter Readers staff also illuminated this challenge:

*...When the teachers use them (the books) they are using different methodologies...*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

The second common factor across all cases was that the ***Leamos Juntos* outreach efforts under-identified the number of potential INGOs**. The *Leamos Juntos* program included outreach to different INGOs, NGOs, and businesses to seek partnerships to leverage the impact of the program. However, the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team members described only asking people from within their offices about different organizations but did not conduct any research to find out about groups working in reading in the country. As a result of this process, the *Leamos Juntos* outreach efforts under-identified the number of potential INGOs. Chapter Readers was the only INGO in this study that was identified by the Technical Team early on and invited to participate.

Neither Book Borrowers nor Activate Readers were identified as potential collaborators. Instead, Activate Readers and Book Borrowers staff members learned about *Leamos Juntos* by news media and social media advertisements for the Innovations Conference. The result of this limited outreach effort was evident in my discussions with all INGOs.

**Activate Readers.** An Activate Readers staff member highlighted the lack of direct outreach as a clear barrier for participation:

*Leamos Juntos has not taken the initiative to try and understand at a deep level what each NGO is doing and what they are doing in relation to education...For example, we have been here 8 years and it is just now that they are learning about our work. It's as if they did not make the initiative to go find out what people are doing...*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translated

Even though Activate Readers did not expect to be invited by the Technical Team or the Ministry, the in-country director cited this as a barrier to their participation:

*Nobody has invited us to have any interaction with Leamos Juntos.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

This omission of a specific direct invitation to participate in *Leamos Juntos* was a significant barrier that affected Activate Readers and Book Borrowers. Thus, even a registered *debutant* INGO like Activate Readers with an explicit focus on reading did not receive an official endorsement to advance *Leamos Juntos* programming. And, even though they were participating, because *Leamos Juntos* did not explicitly recommend that teachers work with Activate Readers, it added a barrier for the INGO:

*One big barrier for our work is that Leamos Juntos does not give this option, it does not support NGOs by recommending them to the teachers...(a teacher*

says) '*Leamos Juntos* asks for this, and you ask for that, and so I am going to do what *Leamos Juntos* asks me to do.'

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translated

This also indicates that at least one school was using *Leamos Juntos* as a way to resist engagement with a *debutant* INGO.

**Comparing across all cases**, the two key barriers were: (1) The specific *Leamos Juntos* design and administrative structure, and (2) A lack of outreach to all potential INGOs. All INGO staff found challenges within the design and administrative structure. With such an ambitious national program still in its first years of implementation, it may have been that the Ministry still had a lot to learn about the actual effectiveness of the program. While INGO participation was included in the design, the conceptualization of INGO participation appeared to be inchoate but especially for *debutant* INGOs who did not fit neatly into the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document. The *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD) was also missing critical information, such as the LJ Link role, which could explain why Chapter Readers had never heard of the role.

Furthermore, the variability within the LJ Link role itself may be because the LJ Link role was in addition to that staff person's many other roles. It is also possible that not all LJ Links necessarily saw INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* as within their purview, particularly in the case of Cielo Department where the LJ Link kindly introduced me to someone who would know more about INGOs in the department. If this is the case, it could explain why INGO participation did not appear to be a high priority for LJ Links in the Bello and Cielo Departments. The Chapter Readers Director predicted that the structure depended very much on different individuals and this was borne out in



these findings. The examples show that *Leamos Juntos*—at least through the LJ Link—functioned quite differently in each department.

Given the comments around teacher training and support along with the reading committees, it suggested that the reach of *Leamos Juntos* within the actual school setting was both limited in scope and also mixed in terms of implementation. I suspect that the limit to 150 teachers per department in each training was related to finances as opposed to the desire of the Ministry to train teachers. From what I understand, there was no training about how to host a reading committee and so that could further explain why this element of the design was highly variable school to school.

The challenge of implementing intercultural and bilingual education (EBI) within the context of teaching children how to read is complicated. Activate Readers' narrow approach to incorporating EBI meant that they did not necessarily see the bilingual books as within their own EBI approach and therefore did not seek out nor perhaps notice bilingual books. And given that Chapter Readers was not incorporating EBI (in terms of learning to read in an indigenous first language), it is perhaps also unsurprising that they did not seek out or notice the *Leamos Juntos* bilingual books in the schools. These examples demonstrate the existence of even greater challenges when it comes to INGO participation related to EBI elements of *Leamos Juntos*.

The issue of teachers and schools being afraid to use books would be understandably hard to overcome until the past practices of auditing are clearly absent. The defiance by teachers and schools around using the books provided an interesting example of how *debutant* INGOs may be able to circumvent such defiance while simultaneously enabling policy compliance. Both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers

provided examples of how they enabled such policy defiance of *Leamos Juntos* by overlooking the issue of teachers and schools not using the *Leamos Juntos* books. However, they also enabled policy compliance by working with those same schools and teachers to implement *Leamos Juntos* but by using the INGO's books. This is an interesting finding in that it demonstrates how *debutant* INGOs adeptly navigate school and teacher resistance to Ministry initiatives while simultaneously advancing the Ministry initiative and their own programming goals.

Finally, the lack of outreach and research about potential NGO or INGO participants in *Leamos Juntos* speaks to the idea that, although national reading programs like *Leamos Juntos* see INGO participation as inherently positive, there is no specific guidance around how to go about doing so. It also may speak to the relatively low importance of gathering smaller INGOs—*debutant* INGOs—as participants. As Activate Readers staff described, if there had been a more comprehensive review of the INGOs working in reading then this would not have happened.

#### **4. National Education System**

There were six common barriers across all cases related to the National Education System: (1) Dearth of funding for the Ministry's existing programming, (2) Government bureaucracy, (3) National context of hunger and malnutrition, (4) Challenges related to education policy and reform, (5) Challenges related to the teaching profession, and (6) challenges implementing bilingual and intercultural education (EBI).

This section includes a variety of barriers accompanied by short explanations indicating concurrence from different cases. It is thematically organized by barriers

similar to the previous sections but does not always break out into case-by-case descriptions and, in that sense, follows the same structure as the preceding section on *Leamos Juntos* Barriers.

The first common barrier across all cases was the **dearth of funding for the Ministry's existing programming**, let alone for new educational initiatives, like *Leamos Juntos*. The Activate Readers Executive Director referred to *Leamos Juntos* as an “*unfunded mandate*.” Book Borrowers described how their organization's work was in the “*forgotten areas*” and the Book Borrowers staff specifically lamented the lack of funding for pre-primary education.

The Alo and Cielo Department LJ Links specifically described the inadequate funding from the Ministry with frustration. The Cielo Department LJ Link described how this resulted in school directors not getting the funding that they need. The Alo Department LJ Link described how this affected funding for staff at the department level making it difficult to know exactly what was happening:

*It is impossible for us as a Departmental Office to go out and see everything that is happening in the schools because we are so few.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translated

During school visits the Bello Department, public education staff frequently mentioned and lamented the lack of resources. Bello Department LJ Links described having no funding at the department level to convene people and organizations in order to create alliances.

The second common barrier across all cases was that the **government bureaucracy was a barrier** and a complicating factor for INGO participation in *Leamos*

*Juntos*. The Chapter Readers In-Country Director captured a sentiment described across all cases when they shared that their organization was going through “*terrible bureaucratic processes.*”

**Activate Readers.** The Activate Readers staff described frustration with the challenge of simply becoming registered as an INGO in Guatemala. Activate Readers staff discussed this from the perspective of being an international NGO, not understanding with whom they needed to register to declare that they were officially working in the education sector:

*It has been incredibly complicated to understand exactly what our role is in all of this, and with whom we need to register.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translated

The Activate Readers Executive Director commented on their frustration about the inability to communicate with national government offices:

*From the side of a small, growing to slightly medium NGO, you know, the silence is deafening.*

Activate Readers Executive Director, English

**Book Borrowers.** The Book Borrowers Director discussed several times how the bureaucracy in the education sector was a barrier and had influenced their decisions on the evolution of their INGO. He described a particular situation related to Guatemalan law about the need for pre-schools to be registered but that, in actuality, this law did not respond to the reality of pre-primary education in Guatemala in rural areas:

*It's the bureaucracy. Yeah, that's been the barrier for me. I just, I just don't want to go through all that... Like the kids in, in some of our areas, were not going to school with us. Even though we had a teacher that was going to have 12 to 15 kids and books and teaching materials, but they (families) didn't want to send*

*their kids... they would rather send them to a classroom with 40 kids and no materials, because the government said, 'you gotta have a number for matriculating, ' you know...and we're (Book Borrowers) not going give any numbers to kids even though they finished the preschool with more qualifications... You know, because of the class sizes and well there wasn't even a preschool in that area. And so...they'd scare parents to tell them...if you don't have this number... your kid's not going to be able to get in first grade. Yeah. And, and the fact is, most situations, if not all that I've heard of, they take them in first grade anyway, because it would be so stupid not to.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

He went on to describe how they conceived of the discrepancies between what happens in rural areas and urban areas. He suggested a mismatch between what is required by law and what “*makes sense*” in a rural area:

*So...you don't want to have bureaucracy telling you that you can't do something that in the rural areas makes a lot of sense, because they (Ministry of Education) aren't even in the rural areas. And they really don't care about the rural areas, or it sure seems like it because they're not doing any work there.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

Additionally, he described how he decided on their programming based on the absence of government schools:

*So our mission is to be where they (government schools) are not...we're not trying to repeat their education program, just trying to go where they aren't.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

In these descriptions, the Book Borrowers Director described how he had encountered rules within the public education sector with which they disagreed. Furthermore, that in the rural context where they work, that the application of these laws could slow down or prevent them from doing their work altogether. In response, they chose not to follow those rules and suggested that most of the families and schools with whom they work are not concerned about such rules.

**Alo Department.** The Alo Department public education staff also described frustration with Ministry bureaucracy describing how they did not receive any pertinent information about INGOs registered in their department. In the supervisor focus group, supervisors discussed the issue of registration within the context of the authorization to work in their department. While they knew with whom an INGO is supposed to register, the supervisors did not receive any of that registration information, and this posed a big challenge:

*...when NGOs arrive, the truth is that we don't know, for example, who has authorized this INGO? We don't know how they get here...not knowing this is a big barrier. They choose and select and go to the place that they want to go to.*

Alo Department Supervisor, Translated

The third common barrier identified across all cases was the **national context of hunger and malnutrition** and its intersection with education and learning.<sup>31</sup> This was brought up across all cases and specifically mentioned in some interviews as a barrier. This is a critical national level issue that came up for me during my years of living and working in Guatemala and was also prevalent in interviews beyond this case study. The Book Borrowers staff mentioned the challenges related to working in communities with high levels of malnutrition. Even though Book Borrowers had a reading focus, they described the need to seek out additional funding specifically to address malnutrition.

In the Cielo Department, the LJ link described hunger and malnutrition as the root cause for challenges, extending this to reading:

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<sup>31</sup> According to reporting from the World Food Program, nearly 60% of indigenous children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition leading to the highest rate of stunting among children in Latin America, 45% nationally but up to 90% in some municipalities. <https://www.wfp.org/stories/guatemala-indigenous-when-it-comes-climate-change>

*If I am trying to read a book with worms in my tummy, how am I going to read for comprehension? For decodifying?*

Cielo Department LJ Link, Translated and paraphrased

Further evidence of the intersection of reading and nutrition occurred during a school visit in the Cielo Department when I came across a school budget. As I read through the school's budget that was posted on the wall, I observed the discrepancy between the budget for school supplies and school snack. The budget for snacks was more than three times larger than the budget for supplies. Although I did not have a discussion about the budget with the teacher and did not learn about this data in other areas, this, along with national level data on childhood malnutrition, confirmed what the LJ Link was describing.

The fourth common barrier identified across all cases was about **challenges related to education policy and reform** within the context of barriers to INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. For example, the Activate Readers staff described not knowing how long the program would be around and that this affected their thinking about participation. The executive director described their uncertainty about the continuity of this policy across administrations and whether or not their INGO would continue to work on *Leamos Juntos*, given that it was in its last official year:

*I'm not aware of how Leamos Juntos is going forward. Given that, I don't think that we had any particular plans because I really wasn't aware of their continuation.*

Activate Readers Executive Director, English

In this instance, the temporal and uncertain nature of education policy in Guatemala influenced how Activate Readers imagined participation in the program into

the future. Activate Readers and Chapter Readers' staff also cited the discrepancy between policy and practice in the classroom as a barrier, highlighting the limited reach of policy, let alone policy change. The Activate Readers Director of Pedagogy described how what happens in the school is different than it might be imagined in policy and programming documents:

*The difference between what is written and what actually happens here. There are many great things written in Leamos Juntos or in the CNB (National Curriculum) but visit a school and it's not happening.*

Activate Readers Director of Pedagogy, Translated

An Alo Department district supervisor stated that one of the barriers was that *Leamos Juntos* was a very new program. They suggested that new reforms take a long time to become established:

*Leamos Juntos is still a new program. Sure, we have 2 or 3 years working in it but it takes a lot to get something going. We just got the Ministry accord last year in 2014. Maybe some haven't become interested because it is a new program.*

Alo Department District Supervisor, Translated

Aside from the fact that the accord was actually signed into law in 2013, this suggestion speaks to a larger issue about the slow pace of national educational reform efforts in Guatemala.

Participants also described the challenge of implementing *Leamos Juntos* amidst many other national programs and priorities. For example, the Bello Department LJ Links described how *Leamos Juntos* was not the only new national program that the department was implementing. They mentioned the National Math Program (*Contemos Juntos*) and their uncertainty around which program would be prioritized. Furthermore, in my site



visits across all of the departments, I became more aware of the fact that *Leamos Juntos* was just one small part of the overall curriculum and focus of teachers and school directors.

The Cielo Department LJ Link commented on challenges related to the sheer number of initiatives happening while again citing a lack of resources in the MINEDUC to implement them. During a site visit in the Cielo Department, a teacher facetiously described how reading time often gets skipped:

*Reading time is often skipped because of other required activities by the Ministry of Recess.*

Cielo Department Teacher, Translated and paraphrased in field notes

The fifth common barrier identified across all cases was about the **challenges related to the teaching profession** and, in some cases, the teachers themselves. Beginning before they even enter the classroom, participants commented on inadequate teacher preparation programs. INGO staff talked about how teachers referenced these administrative burdens as a reason for not being able to participate in the INGO's programs. Compounding this burden, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff also described limited or no in-service support for teachers. This was seen as detrimental to teachers' ability to implement reading programming. During site visits in all department cases, I observed teachers in settings with scant resources and heard stories about the stress of teaching.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers staff highlighted their perception of a disconnect between what teachers learn and the reality of being in a classroom. They also cited that teachers have a lack of familiarity with the National Curriculum (CNB):

*The schools that prepare teachers actually don't teach them about being in a classroom with children. And forget about anything related to the CNB. We go to classrooms and it is the first time that the teachers have seen the CNB.*

Activate Readers Staff Member, Translated

Furthermore, the National Curriculum (CNB) itself was described as yet another barrier because of the large amount of content the teacher was expected to cover, adding an administrative burden for teachers and others in the system:

*...another restrictive barrier is the number of contents in the National Curriculum in our country...what the teacher ends up doing is dedicating themselves to more administrative tasks...*

Activate Readers Staff Member, Translation

Activate Readers staff also cited the numerous national and local holidays and celebrations and their effect on the quality of the schooling. This was mentioned somewhat in jest as school bands were playing outside of the office, preparing for a parade, during our focus group interview. However, the staff member seemed sincere about the barrier that it presented:

*The national education system - you can see it with these bands going on outside right now - there is a celebration day for everything: day of the elephant, of the bear, and these activities. The preparation for them actually restricts our ability to work with them (schools) on reading.*

Activate Readers Staff Member, Translated

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff shared their skepticism about the effectiveness of pre-service teacher preparation:

Staff 1: *I believe that it is the training that the teacher receives, not in the classroom, but at their (teacher training program or degree program)...*

Staff 2: *they can't read well...*

*Staff 1: or they cannot read the errors in handwriting, or they have horrible spelling, or their ability to analyze is very low...*

*they don't know the difference between a fact and an opinion, what is cause and effect, they can't even imagine...*

*these are details that need to be in their training.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

Chapter Readers' staff also cited the overwhelming number of roles and demands assigned to a teacher as a barrier:

*It is a barrier sometimes for us as an NGO. The Ministry of Education has many activities both in the classroom and outside of the classroom, the teacher has administrative roles, things with their unions, they might need to go get a signature in the department office...A teacher could have 20 roles...for example the snack doesn't arrive and they have to go to the department and wait in line to find out what happened...NGOs put in time and resources, schedule activities and then when we think we have something planned, something else comes up. To a certain point, it has been a fight negotiating and we have worked with the supervisors asking them to please give us the space. We have gained a lot of ground but it continues to be a challenge.*

Chapter Readers Staff Focus Group, Translated

Chapter Readers staff further cited policies related to teacher rotation and the year-to-year teacher placement in different grades as a challenge to effectively working with teachers on reading.

Perhaps given this immensely challenging context for teaching and teaching reading in Guatemala, it was not surprising to hear INGO staff describe teachers as being resistant to change and having low morale and that these were barriers for their participation in *Leamos Juntos*. Chapter Readers staff described how they found it common for teachers to reject initiatives that come from the Ministry. During one of my site visits to a Chapter Readers training, I had lunch with two teachers. When I asked them about *Leamos Juntos*, one of the teachers stated:

*They treat us like rats. First, they make decisions and then, they experiment on us.*

Cielo Department Teacher, Translated and paraphrased in field notes

This sentiment of frustration from teachers was common and something that I found regularly during the entire study.

**Alo Department.** Supervisors in the Alo Department discussed the challenges related to teachers not having enough time because of the structure of the school day, citing time as a critical barrier for implementing the *Leamos Juntos* program. They spoke about how the half-day school day was very restrictive and that there was not enough time in the school day for teachers to do everything expected of them, including the *Leamos Juntos* policy mandating 30 minutes of reading:

*...the schools don't have a lot of time. We're promoting 30 minutes a day. Because there is such little time, we take advantage of the recess time... Teachers read very few books, as do students.*

Alo Department District Supervisor, Translated

The sixth common barrier identified and observed across all cases was about the **challenges implementing bilingual and intercultural education (EBI)** based on national policy. For example, in the Alo Department the LJ Link described how many classrooms were multi-lingual, not bilingual. This was described as being immensely challenging for the teachers. During school visits in the Cielo Department, I met teachers in bilingual schools who were multilingual but I also met teachers who were not able to speak the assigned Maya language, even though they had been assigned to a bilingual classroom. Chapter Readers staff described their own challenges trying to implement EBI

policies citing that many teachers have not learned to read in their first language, despite being asked to teach reading and writing in that language.

**Activate Readers described an outlying barrier** which was **the intense politicization of the education sector** and how political affiliations affect key hiring decisions. This topic did not arise significantly in the other cases but did come up more prominently in other interviews during my research. Activate Readers staff described their hesitancy to work in certain areas where positions were heavily politicized:

*The problem is very deeply rooted because the majority of these positions from any official agency are political. The positions are politicized. The positions from the Ministry such as supervisors, those are political too.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translated

Activate Readers staff also commented on their fear that the Ministry may co-opt an NGO that becomes too closely aligned with government programming. Activate Readers staff members cited instances in the past where this had happened:

*...the fear is really...those (NGOs) where the Ministry of Education can be making decisions from within the NGOs because they convert them into political organizations. Because these are the experiences that happened with PRONADE, it also happened with the cooperative schools, they have converted them in this politicized way.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translation

The Activate Readers staff also described their suspicion towards Ministry officials assigning INGOs to schools or even presenting information about where an INGO should work:

*Because if we see that the Ministry of Education says, 'there are schools where you should work' possibly that person has a reason for inviting you. They might have a (political) sympathy for that school. Or perhaps they say 'this study says*

*that this school needs something, or this other school needs something' ...it is a little bit political.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translated

**Comparing across all cases,** there were six common barriers related to the National Education System: (1) A dearth of funding for the Ministry's existing programming, (2) Government bureaucracy, (3) National context of hunger and malnutrition, (4) Challenges related to education policy and reform, (5) Challenges related to the teaching profession, and (6) Challenges implementing bilingual and intercultural education (EBI). These existing challenges within the national education system complicated INGO participation and presented significant barriers. Inadequate funding for and from the Ministry of Education affected the day-to-day functioning from the school level upwards. Public education staff and INGO staff lamented this and made the connection between the lack of funding and the high numbers of INGOs working in Guatemala. All of the INGOs experienced these barriers but also seemed to understand them to simply be part of working in the context of Guatemala.

Book Borrowers was the only unregistered INGO and cited its unregistered status as a direct response to their concerns about working within the formal system. As a small INGO, they had been able to navigate rural areas and the specific challenges in those contexts without being registered. Their focus on pre-primary education—a particularly underfunded part of the education sector—and their work outside of the formal system may have meant that they did not face as many bureaucratic challenges. Nevertheless, the threat of such bureaucratic challenges were present in their decision-making.

Both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers were more integrated into the public education system and therefore had more direct experience navigating challenges related to the national system. Furthermore, their focus on teacher training allowed them to comment on the ways that this played out in the teacher profession where the teacher was both under- and un-supported, under- and un-funded, under- and un-appreciated and over tasked. Comments from teachers were also particularly useful to reinforce the validity of the barriers described by INGO and department staff and further suggested the importance of including more teacher perspectives in future study.

Finally, Activate Readers' outlying discussion about the politicization of the education sector suggests that this may be a barrier experienced by other *debutant* INGOs.

## **5. NGOtenango barriers**

As a brief reminder, NGOtenango is a country-specific phenomenon in Guatemala and represents a confluence of neoliberal education reforms in Latin America over the past decades with a specific shift towards the increasing inclusion of non-state actors in education provision. It is a phenomenon that it is both emergent and grounded in the history of Guatemala.

The one common barrier experienced across all of the cases was the negative effects of the unchecked proliferation of NGOs working in the education sector. An additional barrier mentioned in two of the cases was related to how the history of the country and the education sector shapes contemporary decisions around collaboration between INGOs and public education staff.

The primary common barrier across all cases and related to NGOtenango was how **the negative effects of unchecked proliferation of NGOs working in the education sector** complicated INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. Because of the very limited regulation from the government, INGOs were exercising significant autonomy from the government and the public education sector. This was illuminated in a number of different examples where participants described the challenges this posed, some of the consequences and also the negative impacts. The examples included: the lack of accountability; the lack of coordination; *debutant* INGO nonalignment and nonengagement with public education staff and with each other, and complications of simultaneous visibility and invisibility.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers staff understood that there were many NGOs working in the department and commented on how the sheer number of NGOs presented a barrier for them and for public education staff:

*I can see how the quantity of international NGOs can be a barrier. For us, it is difficult to distinguish ourselves, or for the teacher, director or supervisor to know, really, which NGO is better? Which ones should we allow?*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, Translated

Activate Readers staff also understood that they did not know the details about many of the NGOs working nearby. Furthermore, they understood that they too were one of those *debutant* INGOs that many others did not know about. Even though they had been working for years in reading, the organization felt invisible to the Ministry and gave the example of not being noticed and approached to participate in *Leamos Juntos*.

Additionally, an Activate Readers staff member recalled being asked by a community member about how long they would work with the community, indicating a



lack of trust on the part of the community member. That question was asked because that community had experienced an NGO coming in, doing a project, and then disappearing:

*Just recently, someone at a school said 'How long will you be with our school? You're not going to be like the other NGOs that just show up to test something out, make your numbers and then leave?' ...the credibility of NGOs gets lost...*

Activate Readers Staff Member, Translated

This kind of residual impact from a negative experience with INGOs is related to the issue that there was minimal or no accountability or oversight for INGOs.

Another challenge created by the proliferation without coordination has been that INGOs do not know about each other and/or may not be interested in engaging with each other. For example, the Activate Readers Director described their experiences where INGOs were not necessarily interested in collaboration with each other:

*I have found them (other NGOs) through the years to be a lot more into building out their own organization than partnering.*

Activate Readers Executive Director, English

Even when *debutant* INGOs want to collaborate, Activate Readers described how limited time and resources hinder their collaboration with other INGOs. The executive director described a situation where she and another executive director wanted to partner but could not seem to find the time to do so:

*It takes us a long time to even have a second or third conversation, we're both scrambling to get funding.*

Activate Readers Executive Director, English

The executive director also underscored the stress of INGOs not having enough resources, saying:

*...we're all worried about surviving and getting money.*

Activate Readers Executive Director, English

**Book Borrowers.** Book Borrowers—as an unregistered INGO and therefore also not accredited to work with schools—was a particularly noticeable byproduct of the unchecked proliferation of NGOs in Guatemala in the education sector. Because there is very little oversight of the sector, they were able to work ‘under the radar.’ As the director pointed out, that status meant that the organization was not able to pay people legally and that the organization’s programs were not formally recognized within the public system. Although the director had described that the organization would be moving towards a legal status, this transition phase before being legally registered presented some precarity for workers. This highlights an important lack of accountability and oversight of INGOs; it is not insignificant as a worker to be working outside of the formal sector and to not have contributions to social security as a result.

Book Borrowers was the only INGO that showed a deliberate and strategic invisibility to conduct their work. This was only possible because of the context of NGOtenango. However, by remaining invisible within the system it also made it more difficult for their participation in *Leamos Juntos*. Even though the director’s thinking about this strategy had recently changed to be less wary of their visibility, this was a defining feature of Book Borrowers; they saw themselves and their work as addressing invisibility in “forgotten areas” where the public education system was absent and/or not providing early childhood education.

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff described a variety of different negative experiences that they had with NGOs. For example, a staff member described an instance where a private NGO school that was flooded with resources was negatively impacting the local public school. My field notes captured this reflection of our conversation:

*...there was an (NGO)...that was providing schools with everything one could imagine: pencils, uniforms, backpacks, shoes, etc. and that it was (negatively) affecting the local public schools. That no one wanted to go to the public schools anymore because the nonprofit was giving so much more.*

Chapter Readers Staff, Paraphrased and translated from field notes

This same staff member also described an instance where she knew of an NGO that tried to start building a school but then failed to do so and simply abandoned the project and disappeared. Additionally, she was frustrated by not knowing about all of the INGOs in their area and what they were doing, that there was no coordinated effort. She cited an instance where she was trying to identify schools to work with but would quickly find out that, unbeknownst to them, the school they were visiting was actually already being supported by another NGO.

Chapter Readers was invisible to the LJ Links in the Bello and Cielo Departments and vice versa. Neither was aware of the other's work. However, Chapter Readers' invisibility was unintentional and limited to specific parts of *Leamos Juntos*. Ironically, Chapter Readers was the only formally participating *debutant* INGO—and therefore visible within the context of *Leamos Juntos*—and yet there were still parts of the *Leamos Juntos* program where they remained invisible. The unchecked proliferation had created a context of low visibility, which in turn complicated INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*.

**Alo Department.** In the Alo Department, public education staff described situations of unequal coverage and unequal distribution of NGO resources. For example, one of the supervisors pointed out the unequal distribution of NGO resources within the department:

*I remember a school...when we arrived there was a health NGO, a construction NGO, and we were there too...for (just) three teachers.*

Alo Department District Supervisor, Translation

As a result, supervisors described not knowing what is actually happening in their department; for example, at one point, they found an NGO that falsely reported delivering breakfast in schools. This example speaks to the lack of accountability and the suspicion of corruption being carried out through NGOs.

Furthermore, a supervisor provided an extreme example of complete non-coordination with public education staff. A district supervisor in the Alo Department described an instance of how an NGO built a school without any consultation with public education staff:

*Sometimes, they (NGOs) just show up and they don't go to the teachers or the supervision or the parents. It's true that the school is very beautiful but they didn't even talk to a teacher, principal, or supervisor about it at all. They might just go directly to an individual. And then they'll just do something.*

Alo Department District Supervisor, Translated

The Alo Department supervisor focus group included a discussion about the Ministry's data release on the reading scores in their department. Although the supervisors were using this data to make decisions and plan for the future, they felt the INGOs were not taking data on reading scores into consideration when deciding where to

work. In summarizing our discussion, I paraphrased the barriers to the group and participants responded in the affirmative:

*...each one has their own profile...they decide where they want to go and what they want to do and how to do it. And so it is not necessarily a collaboration with you all (supervisors) based on the data that you have about the specific areas of necessity.*

Researcher, Translated

In this sense, the needs and strategies of these supervisors—and even their work as a whole—was invisible to INGOs in the sense that irrespective of what and where the supervisors wanted to direct support, INGOs did what INGOs wanted to do.

School directors in the Alo Department described an instance where INGO protocol on “community participation” had a negative effect on parent involvement in the schools. School directors in the Alo Department described a kind of *participation fatigue*<sup>32</sup> by parents. They described how parents no longer wanted to participate in NGO-sponsored community projects because these projects were contingent upon parents’ participation. These parents had been asked to participate too many times and had become frustrated and developed a negative association with NGO projects.

During the school director focus group, the directors described INGOs as having limited resources and being unable to address all of the needs experienced by the people with whom they worked. A school director provided one example, describing a time when they were soliciting help from a (small) INGO for a school project, and the INGO reported not having the money to do so:

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<sup>32</sup> This is a phrase that I use to describe the situation described by one of the participating school directors whereby parents and community members were tired of participation requirements in new projects.

*I was saying, 'there is this other school that is really lacking.' They said, 'we don't have much money. We're a poor NGO.'*

School Director, Translated

The notion of a 'poor NGO' was described by the school directors in a way that suggested his skepticism. It also highlighted how *debutant* INGOs may not be open to suggestions about where to work along with how they address issues in a piecemeal nature within a community, unable to comprehensively respond to all of the community's needs.

**Bello Department.** In the Bello department, again, the LJ Links were invisible to Book Borrowers and Chapter Readers. The LJ Links were aware of the proliferation of INGOs but that at the same time the LJ Links themselves did not know all of the NGOs. Again here, the lack of accountability and oversight of NGOs created barriers to INGO participation.

**Cielo Department.** The Cielo Department LJ Link lamented the distribution of INGOs throughout the country, suggesting that their coverage was not evenly nor equitably distributed. Again in this department, the LJ Link was invisible to Book Borrowers and Chapter Readers and vice versa.

**Activate Readers and the Alo Department described an outlying example** by highlighting the ways in which the **historical context of Guatemala complicates INGO participation.** For example, Activate Readers staff were the only group to comment on barriers to partnering with local communities on the *Leamos Juntos* program within a context of a history of colonization. An Activate Readers staff member described

approaching a school to invite participation in the INGO's programming. The staff member described the reaction and rejection by one of the teachers in that community:

*First the Spaniards invaded us, now it is the Americans.*

Activate Readers Program Staff, Translated

This comment suggested that historical factors related to nationality, colonialism and potentially race influenced public education staff's decisions about working with INGOs on education programming, and perhaps more broadly on decisions about whether or not to work with INGOs at all. The comment suggests a connection between Activate Reader's work and the continuation of colonialist intervention in indigenous communities in Guatemala, moving from light skinned Spaniards to light skinned "Americans." Furthermore, it complicates the positive narrative of the INGO given the outright rejection on these deeply historical grounds.

Another example came from the Ato Department supervisor focus group. The Ato Department LJ Link described how they observed a difference between older NGOs who were less open to collaboration and newer NGOs. Whereas newer NGOs were more open to collaboration, the LJ Link was skeptical about older NGOs aligning themselves with the department objectives around *Leamos Juntos*:

*The older NGOs are less likely to transform themselves to change their objectives to ours.*

Department LJ Link, Translated

This was a revealing reflection on how the NGO sector has changed over the years and highlighted a particular group of NGOs that were less likely to participate in *Leamos*

*Juntos*. These instances illuminated how NGOtenango was affecting the landscape of the education sector and complicating *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. These examples spoke to how the NGO sector is entangled with history of the region and country. The examples underscored the contemporary variety and breadth of NGOs along with ways that INGOs themselves but also communities may reject INGO participation.

**Comparing across all cases,** the one common barrier was how the negative effects of unchecked proliferation of NGOs working in the education sector complicated INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. Each INGO and each department had their own experiences within the context of NGOtenango. Across the cases, public education staff and INGO staff described the frustration of knowing— and not knowing—about the NGOs working in their departments. This INGO invisibility complicated INGO participation especially from the vantage point of the public education staff. The sentiment of inequality by school directors in the Alo Department revealed an unfortunate implication where, through no fault of their own, some schools were supported by multiple NGOs and others, none. Furthermore, the notions of “disappearing NGOs,” and “poor NGOs,” and *participation fatigue*—all described by the school directors and teachers—underscored the existing and potential negative ripple effects that *debutant* INGOs have in communities. Furthermore, these public education staff were experiencing the simultaneity of challenges between INGOs and the Guatemalan government through poor INGOs and a poor state; corrupt INGOs and a corrupt state; dysfunctional INGOs and a dysfunctional state. The direct connection between high numbers of NGOs and chronic underfunding of the education system also highlighted the piecemeal nature of *debutant* INGO work in relation to expansive community needs.



These important revelations by teachers suggested the importance of further inquiry with teachers in other sites impacted by numerous INGOs.

Even though all INGOs were aligned in their focus on reading programming, Activate Readers and Book Borrowers described their hesitancy to open themselves up to different levels of government and in doing so revealed a tension between their commitment to their own autonomy and the needs of the departments. Activate Readers leadership was interested in working more with the department on reading programming but staff members expressed real concern about taking direction from department staff on where to work. Book Borrowers was the only INGO that had opted to have signed agreements with local formal governing bodies but was fearful of national level scrutiny. These tensions around participation with public education staff and formal governing bodies highlight the newness of this kind of voluntary INGO participation, which was significantly different than the contractual participation of NGOs during PRONADE.

The examples from the teachers, school directors and supervisors in the Alo Department underscored the frustration that existed when it came to public education staff in communities partnering with NGOs, whether it was within a specific context of *Leamos Juntos*, or not. They also highlighted the ways in which the rapid growth of NGOs alongside low financial investment in education were shaping the education sector along with the perceptions of NGOs. This idea that *debutant* INGOs are just one more group struggling to survive highlights the relative precarity of their work in Guatemala. It also could suggest that INGOs are deciding to use their resources in ways that are not always in alignment with the needs of the communities where they are working.

Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff were frustrated by their awareness of other INGOs but their seeming inability to learn about and, presumably, communicate or collaborate with these other organizations. These two INGOs also described having and/or learning about negative experiences with other INGOs. This may be because these INGOs did not rely on other organizations to implement their own programming or perhaps because they spent more time working with primary schools. Book Borrowers staff did not describe having any negative experiences with other INGOs. This may be because the organization's model relied on collaboration with other INGOs.

Across all the INGOs, each was invisible to at least one of the LJ Links. Across all of the departments, the LJ Links were invisible to Book Borrowers and Chapter Readers. The barrier here was that, particularly since this appeared to be unintentional, INGOs may miss out on anything related to *Leamos Juntos* that was happening in that department. Furthermore, LJ Links may be overlooking potential *debutant* INGO partners to advance *Leamos Juntos*. Book Borrowers was the only case that was deliberately and strategically staying invisible to the Ministry or other government offices that might try to shut them down. While being unregistered and invisible to the Ministry did not prevent them from participating, it created a barrier that could have prevented them from being noticed or sought out by department public education staff seeking INGOs to participate in *Leamos Juntos*. The case of Book Borrowers suggests that being unregistered may present barriers to participation as it relates to work with the Ministry but not at the local levels.

The Alo and Cielo Department LJ Links both expressed frustration with the ways that INGOs had populated those departments without consulting public education staff. This barrier appeared to be about their inability to connect with the INGOs but also about

equity. The Alo Department provided the most examples of the problematic issues of INGOs in the department. This was the only department case where I was able to have a focus group with school directors, teachers and supervisors. These public education staff had the most experience working with or near NGOs. This remains an opportunity for future research.

One could suggest that uncanny and puzzling activities happen in NGOtenango: NGOs appear and disappear; they can be simultaneously visible and invisible; they can evoke a colonial past or work with an individual as if nothing else existed. Interrogating these idiosyncrasies helped to illuminate some of the ways in which the context of NGOtenango affected INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* but also more broadly in the education sector in Guatemala.

### ***Strategies for reducing barriers and increasing supports***

In this section, I will name and then describe different strategies for reducing barriers and increasing supports along with the themes that emerged based on the review of the different cases. This will include common themes across the sites as well as outlying themes.

There were two common strategies across the cases:

1. Increased communication as well as joint planning and coordination, and
2. Improving the *Leamos Juntos* program design

## ***1. Increased communication as well as joint planning and coordination***

Across the cases, participants described the importance of increasing communication, planning and coordination in order to overcome barriers and to increase supportive factors for INGO participation. These strategies responded to the barriers of no or little communication, collaboration and/or coordination as well the supports that such communication, joint planning and coordination had created. There were four examples related to the different stakeholders and an additional fifth example related to a specific practice. The five examples were: (1) Between INGOs and the department, (2) Between INGOs and the Ministry of Education, (3) Between INGOs, (4) Between public education staff in the department, and (5) Providing oversight and auditing.

Across all cases, the first example was related to **increased communication as well as joint planning and coordination between INGOs and the department** offices as a strategy to reduce barriers and increase supportive factors. Each case provided different examples at different levels of the department. In addition to INGO collaboration with staff working in the department offices, it included public education staff at all levels. It also included collaborating with municipalities, a lower-level governing structure within the department.

Across all cases, both public education staff and INGO staff described the need for increased awareness of INGOs in the department. Awareness was understood to be a foundational step and part of a strategy of increased communication, planning and collaboration. In this sense, it also directly responded to one of the effects of

NGOtenango whereby the rapid proliferation of NGOs had created large gaps in information about who was doing what, where. Additionally, participants described increased communication between INGOs and the department as a strategy to overcome barriers of low or no communication.

**Activate Readers.** Activate Readers staff described how a strategy of collaborative planning with the Alo Department was already taking shape. Specifically, they highlighted the way in which an INGO could fulfill the Ministry requirements on behalf of the department. One Activate Readers staff member suggested continuing that strategy and provided an example of the results of that strategy thus far:

*...approach the Department Office of Education in order to enter into conversation. Because when we approached them previously...now they have told us that in the schools where we are working, that the department will no longer come and give trainings and work there, because our organization is working and satisfying what is required by the Ministry of Education...*

Activate Readers Staff Member, Translation

**Chapter Readers.** Chapter Readers staff suggested the basic need to know who was working on *Leamos Juntos* in the department:

*If we had more communication, or relations with the department delegates, in the central offices of Leamos Juntos. We do not have any information on that office. Who are the delegates (in the different department offices)? If we had this information and these contacts and could invite these people so that they could support us, or least have their presence...*

Chapter Readers Focus Group, Translated

This was interesting in that Chapter Readers is suggesting that *Leamos Juntos* should be supporting *them*.

**Alo Department.** The Alo Department provided a variety of strategies. This may be because they were already actively working to improve INGO-Department planning and coordination and so this topic was building on their existing work. Notably, the public education staff's strategies shared a theme of increasing their influence over INGO work in the department.

The Alo Department public education staff suggested that INGOs should be directly communicating with the department and/or municipal governing bodies. The supervisors underscored the importance of in-person communication, by physically visiting the department office. The Alo Department supervisor focus group described their preference for in-person communication as part of a department strategy that had recently been taking shape in order to enhance collaboration between the Department Office and newer INGOs working in the department.

For example, the Alo Department LJ Link stated that they now expect that all NGOs come in-person to the Department Office to check in with them, “*not like before,*” indicating that they wanted to move away from NGOs working independently and move towards more interaction, specifically in-person visits, as a strategy for improving collaboration. Another example came from a supervisor:

*(INGOs) should be communicating and approaching the authorities at the department and/or municipal levels. They are the ones that will be best able to orient (INGOs) towards the schools that are in need...*

Alo Department District Supervisor, Translated

The Alo Department LJ Link described a strategy related to shared planning. They provided a rationale based on the department's need to direct INGOs in order to address the unique needs of their department:

*...working with an NGO to not work in a location that already has so many NGOs. If X City has so many, then don't work there. So, go work somewhere that has really low scores, they need the help. Some NGOs are entertaining this proposal. We are on a good path because we are transforming.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translated

Another rationale included planning together to maximize resources directed towards education in that department. The Alo Department LJ Link described how such a collaborative effort could help each group work towards common goals:

*At the root of what we are trying to create, what our department needs, is a fusion...so that with their own monies they can transform their own, and we can work together towards common goals.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translated

The Alo Department LJ Link also described how collaborative planning could reduce the duplication of training activities for teachers and amplify the department and INGO joint overall coverage in order to reach places that had no support at all:

*In the future, we won't duplicate our trainings...they will work in one place and we'll work in one place...that way we can cover more areas... We'll go to another sector where there is no presence from any other institution.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translated

**Bello Department.** The Bello Department supervisors suggested a strategy whereby, instead of only working with some groups of students or schools, INGOs should have to work with all schools. Supervisors also described a strategy of integrating INGOs in the strategic planning process so that the department could leverage INGO resources:

*Perhaps integrating them into the strategic planning for reading. Because perhaps they could give some other strategies. It is true that the participation, what they have done until now, has been quite good. But we could do much more because they have resources and other things that we do not have.*

Bello Department Supervisor, Translated

The Bello Department supervisors gave a specific example of how the INGOs could support department efforts through financing. They shared an example of a national organization that was able to work with their department for one year, providing books for children and teacher training. Funding was limited in that program and there was not enough money to do this across the entire department. Only municipalities that agreed to pay for the services could access them while other municipalities could not access the services because they would not (or could not) pay for them.

This example was connected to suggested strategies for coordination between the department, the municipality and INGOs. The Bello Department supervisors suggested that INGOs could work more with municipalities and mayors because municipalities have a budget for education. Within this context, the supervisors suggested that INGOs could donate funds to the department in order to scale up implementation:

*Because of a lack of money, we weren't able to do this (reach the entire department). If they (INGOs) had an option to donate a certain amount of money for this, then we could all do this together...*

Bello Department Supervisor, Translated

**Cielo Department.** The Cielo Department LJ Link also described additional strategies for the department to reach out to INGOs including:

- *Having a "Call" for INGOs to join the department's efforts and to participate in the program,*
- *That the department should actively invite INGOs to come work there, and*
- *Coordinating resources to work in the rural areas.*

Cielo Department LJ Link, Translated and paraphrased in interview notes and field notes, Survey responses



Across all cases, the second example was about different **strategies to facilitate INGO-Ministry collaboration**. For example, INGO staff emphasized that the Ministry should be more aware of INGOs working in the education sector and should communicate with them. This directly addressed a barrier related to the context of NGOTenango whereby the unchecked proliferation of NGOs has meant that the Ministry had not sought out information about INGOs working in education or reading. It also addressed that the Ministry generally had limited information about NGOs working in the sector and provided little or no direct communication with INGOs.

**Activate Readers.** The Activate Readers Director suggested a strategy of collaboration that would create opportunities for their INGO to become a service provider. This was the only INGO that suggested a contractual relationship with the Ministry as a way to increase supportive factors:

*I would obviously be ecstatic to find out about such opportunities where it was actually possible to work in a partnership, or at least explore the idea of a partnership and provision of services by an NGO that the Ministry wanted done.*

Activate Readers Executive Director, English

**Alo Department.** The Alo Department supervisor focus group discussed the possibility of having the Ministry credential INGOs. This would mean that INGOs would help to reduce the barrier related to public education staff not being able to know if an INGO is legally registered to work in the country. I brought this question to them based on the practices at the Ministry at the time of the study but also on the fact that, although it was possible to receive a credential from the Ministry, for whatever reason this was not happening. The supervisors agreed that having the Ministry credential INGOs would be

helpful and might provide them with basic information about whether or not the INGO was registered to legally work in the country.

**Bello Department.** The Bello Department LJ Links provided an outlying strategy related to joint planning and coordination. They suggested that INGOs could “*Support with EBI in the language of the community.*” This was the only case that proposed a specific strategy for INGOs to support implementing Bilingual and Intercultural Education (EBI) within the context of *Leamos Juntos*. EBI has its own Directorate within the Ministry of Education and so this suggestion has implications at the level of the Ministry.

Across all *debutant* INGO cases, the third example was related to strategies to increase **INGOs collaborating with other INGO**. This strategy especially addressed reducing barriers. This included an increased awareness about each other’s work and information sharing among INGOs.

**Activate Readers.** The Activate Readers In-Country Director, in a discussion about how to increase the supportive resources for INGOs, suggested that INGOs needed to work together more and provide support for each other. He pondered the different ways in which such communication and collaboration could occur:

*I don’t know if its conferences, or written materials. There needs to be some shared learning, or some bank of institutional knowledge of all different NGOs...that there needs to be, I don't know if it is some sort of umbrella organization, or a part of the Ministry, or some sort of depository of knowledge, or a website. 'Oh, you're an NGO working in the Education sector? Here is a website that has just a wealth of information about current practices happening at the Ministry of Education, or current programs that the Ministry is running, or an index of NGOs working in the education sector with a short description of what they are doing, where they are working'...*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

Although INGO staff at each of the INGOs cited the need to know more about other INGOs and to increase coordination, only Activate Readers staff spent time discussing who or what entity might take that on. The Activate Readers In-Country Director felt clear that this was not a task that would be taken on by the Ministry:

*The key to success, the importance of communication between NGOs can't be stressed enough. They are not going to be made for us. The Ministry is not going to make that happen.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

Assuming that such INGO collaboration would not be instigated by the Ministry, both the public education staff and the Activate Readers staff discussed how the department office could facilitate INGO to INGO collaboration and communication:

*We see that...particularly the Department Office, does have a role and they should be sort of this rallying point for organizing or facilitating communication between NGOs working in the educational sector...It seems like they are a logical (pause)...I have this idea of a flag...*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

The in-country director also suggested that Activate Readers could provide financial support for the Department Office to help facilitate communication.

During the Activate Readers focus group, as a part of a discussion about the vulnerability of smaller INGOs, an Activate Readers staff member and the in-country director had an exchange about how a non-governmental actor or some governmental group other than the Ministry or department could play the role of coordinator:

*In-Country director: An organization or an office of some kind should exist that works specifically with these organizations...*

*Staff 1: ...and they should be neutral...*

In-Country director: *...Right, neutral...not part of the government...it should be someone or some institution like an umbrella, trying to coordinate all of the NGOs' efforts.*

Staff 2: *Or it could also be the municipality, someone that we would really need to respond to...*

Activate Readers Staff and In-Country Director, Translated

This exchange suggested that the convening role is one that people see differently even within the same organization. It also suggests that there is not a clear group or institution to do this work.

**Book Borrowers.** The Book Borrowers Director described specific instances of partnering with INGOs and the added value when NGOs cooperate:

*I think there are opportunities for real cooperation...you can establish very strong relationships between NGOs that really do have a lot of value.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

They too discussed opportunities for different kinds of collaboration among INGOs. This was based on the premise that INGOs are advancing innovation:

*In general, the kinds of people who start NGOs are entrepreneurial...There are a lot of really quite talented people and hard working people. And well intentioned people...have tried a lot of different things. And maybe that is the secret, is try a lot of different things.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

They went on to describe how some INGOs are simply looking for good ideas that might apply to their own work. Other INGOs, however, see it as part of their approach:

*...those that see themselves as being able to accomplish more by cooperating with other organizations.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

They gave the example of a collaboration that their INGO developed with an INGO that built a school but did not have any pre-school teachers for the school:

*...the one where they (another INGO) built the school and don't have any preschool teachers in a rural area...They can either go through trying to do that themselves, and they're really good at building schools, you know, not teaching the government provided teachers...but the government's not providing any preschool teachers and they see it as a big hole...that their investment in the school isn't paying off...so they see it as a natural partnership (with us).*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

Across the Alo and Bello Departments, the fourth example was about ways to **enhance the coordination efforts among public education staff within the departments.** The public education staff provided examples of how such coordination could take place among department staff, supervisors, school directors and teachers.

**Alo Department.** The Alo Department supervisors discussed strategies to expand and extend strategic planning processes within the department as it related to the possibilities for effective collaboration with INGOs. The supervisors agreed with the LJ Link that the department should use information gathered about INGOs to direct INGOs working in the department based on needs.

In the Alo Department supervisor focus group, there was a suggestion that the department needed a comprehensive list of INGOs. This arose within the context of the existence of a list but also the realization that it was not comprehensive or updated. In discussing strategies for moving forward, the Alo Department LJ Link stressed the need for more and better information to support the strategic planning efforts within the department. They articulated how they needed more information on INGOs working in

their department but also how the ability to effectively direct NGOs was dependent upon the department's own strategic planning and direction:

*To do this, we need to have both the information and also to bring them together and move together based on the goals of the department. The Ministry of Education directions are very general. But we must evaluate how we are doing as a department so that we can project those ideas and goals to the NGOs. What theme do we need and where? If we don't have clear institutional direction, everyone takes their own path. And the point here is that it benefits the children.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translated

Effective collaboration as designed by their own department was thus linked directly to improved educational benefits for the children attending schools in that department and dependent upon the department playing an increased role in directing INGO work.

Furthermore, the Alo Department interviews and focus groups with school directors and teachers revealed that the different schools want to collaborate with each other to leverage INGO resources. Our focus group conversation confirmed that INGO interventions were unevenly spread across the hamlet. It appeared that this information had not been discussed openly within the group before in such detail. Thus, the focus group became an opportunity for those participants to reflect upon and discuss what this situation meant to them and how they might move forward together in an underfunded and uncertain context.

The school directors and teachers discussed how several schools would be losing INGO support in the near future. In this sense, their responses were more directly related to NGOtenango than to *Leamos Juntos* as a program. The focus group participants described strategies to increase the preparedness and solidarity among schools where some were collaborating with INGOs and others not. This included their desire to share

amongst each other the wealth of knowledge and resources that INGOs were providing to some but not all schools.

The Alo Department LJ Link's view was that some school staff had become specialists after participating in NGO programs, suggesting that the hamlet should not wait for outside resources to appear:

*We don't have to wait for some specialist to come in from somewhere else...we know that someone who has gone through the NGO training and really picked it up can help out someone else...There is this idea that someone comes from outside, but no, the NGO provides some capacity building sessions, they install and prepare you. And once you have been prepared you become the specialist.*

Alo Department LJ Link, Translation

A school director followed up on this comment, describing their work with other school directors, and advocating for school directors and teachers to adopt a proactive strategy to foster sharing of new knowledge and resources provided by INGOs:

*As a group of directors, we are trying to organize ourselves to figure out how to best take advantage of these resources...We have to figure out how to take the benefit of the INGOs and use it to benefit our entire community.*

Alo Department School Director, Translated

Interestingly, this focus group evolved into a kind of staff strategy session in that it allowed for a group awareness and discussion and, in doing so, confirmed some effects of NGOtenango. The school directors and teachers clearly felt the effects of the underfunded education system combined with high and even unattainable expectations within *Leamos Juntos* but also more broadly in their day-to-day work. Their discussion touched upon uneven resource distribution within the hamlet, highlighted an emerging commitment to greater unity, and fostered a new sense of shared knowledge about the

movements of INGOs in that hamlet. Additionally, the lack of focus on *Leamos Juntos* suggested that the broader effects of NGOtenango were palpable and merited discussion beyond simply describing them within the context of one national program.

**Bello Department.** The Bello Department LJ Links also discussed strategies for their own department staff for identifying INGOs:

*We can approach the INGOs. First work with supervisors, then the supervisors can come to us and tell us who is working where. Then we invite them in... In (our town), they can detect them. Or the INGOs can come to us.*

Bello Department LJ Links, Translated and paraphrased in Interview Notes

The fourth example, which was identified in both the Alo and Cielo Departments, was about **strategies for providing oversight or auditing**. In the Alo Department supervisor focus group, one of the supervisors suggested auditing INGOs to check if they are spending the money appropriately, based on previous experience of suspecting NGOs' misdirection of funding:

*We're not auditing people (fiscalizando) but that's good too, to know if people are actually spending the money that they say there are.*

Alo Department Supervisor, Translated

In the Cielo Department, a teacher suggested that INGOs could provide oversight to supervisors to hold them accountable on their commitment to institutionalize *Leamos Juntos*. These were the only strategies suggested that were related to holding NGOs or public education staff accountable. In this instance, the two ideas diverge in terms of what entity needs the oversight or auditing.

**Comparing across all cases**, there was an overall common strategy across all cases of increasing communication as well as joint planning and coordination. Across all



cases, public education staff proposed strategies whereby INGOs could support the department's efforts. The Alo Department public education staff shared the most ideas, which may be because the department was already actively working with INGOs and had existing practices and ideas for improvement. Bello and Cielo Departments did not already have in place strategies for engaging INGOs. The public education staff across the department cases described ways that INGOs could work towards the department/district/school's goals whereas the INGO staff described collaboration with the department primarily as supporting the INGO's goals. Only Chapter Readers explicitly suggested that the public education staff should show up and support the Chapter Readers program. This may be because Chapter Readers appeared to draw much of their legitimacy from the support of the Ministry and department staff and/or perhaps they felt under-supported by the public education staff.

Whereas participants across all cases agreed that the Ministry needed to increase awareness and communication about INGOs, only Activate Readers described the idea of contracting with the Ministry. These kinds of contracts had typically been reserved for larger, more established NGOs and INGOs. During PRONADE, contracts were an essential part of the delivery mechanism but were reserved only for Guatemalan NGOs. The desire to break into contracting work indicated Activate Readers' aspiration, or at least interest, to become more involved in the public education sector as a service provider. However, the Activate Readers staff appeared to be more skeptical of engagement with the Ministry and the national government as a whole. This tension underscored the emergent state of Activate Readers and their evolving role in the education sector. It also demonstrated the variety of roles imagined by *debutant* INGOs.

Of the three INGOs, Book Borrowers and Activate Readers were the most vocal about the value of INGO-INGO collaboration. Chapter Readers, although highlighting this as important, provided more feedback on different ways to engage the department and Ministry. This could be because Chapter Readers was the most established of the group and had already dedicated time and resources to collaborate with the Ministry and departments. It could also have something to do with the fact that all their in-country staff were Guatemalan and this may have brought a different perspective to the work, one that did not see a need to emphasize collaboration with other international NGOs. Regardless, the difference in emphasis on INGO-INGO collaboration was notable across the cases.

The different strategies also highlighted some divergence of opinion about the idea of neutrality within and among the INGOs and public education staff. The Activate Readers In-Country Director suggested that any governmental group would not be neutral whereas a Activate Readers staff member suggested the possibility of working with local governing bodies as a potential strategy. The difference of ideas within Activate Readers spoke to the multiplicity of the notion of “neutrality,” where in this case there were different ideas about whether or not any government body could be neutral. It also highlighted a difference of opinion, and perhaps approach, between a Guatemalan staff member and North American director. These proposed strategies underscored the nuance in the generally positive relationships between the INGO and the department, revealing some of the tensions between the INGO’s desire to collaborate but with a limited or restricted role for government bodies within that collaboration.

Only in the Alo Department was there a school director and teacher focus group and an extensive discussion about intra-departmental collaboration, especially between

schools. This focus group became a strategy session where participants came up with next steps to address the existing disparity. This may be because, as participants who were directly impacted by the uneven resource distribution, the practical details were more important and urgent. It could also be that this particular group of participants had a history of working together within their district. Whatever the case, there appeared to be a strong sense of and urgency for solidarity among the participants in the focus group.

Lastly, ideas about accountability through oversight and auditing spoke to the barriers and supports created partly by NGOTenango, namely that the government had allowed unchecked proliferation of NGOs and allowed INGOs to be relatively autonomous. In the Alo Department, the public education staff suggested the strategy to audit NGOs. This appeared to address the barrier related to NGOs doing whatever they wanted and oftentimes outside of the knowledge of the public education staff. In the Cielo Department, however, a teacher suggested a strategy to increase the supportive factors created by NGOTenango—INGO presence and work in education—by inviting INGOs to provide oversight of public education staff. These very different examples highlight the myriad roles that public education staff imagine for NGOs along with some exasperation about the challenges that they face.

## ***2. Improving the Leamos Juntos program design***

All cases provided strategies related to reducing barriers and improving the *Leamos Juntos* program design. These included examples related to materials, books, training and the administrative structure. Across the cases, there were common suggestions to remedy low resources with additional financial resources for materials, training and collaboration. There were four specific examples: (1) Outreach and direct

communication with INGOs about *Leamos Juntos*, (2) Increased access to *Leamos Juntos* materials and books, (3) More and better training and support for teachers, and (4) More direction and clarity around INGO participation.

Across all *debutant* INGO cases and in the Alo Department, the first example was related to the need for the Ministry to employ **outreach and direct communication with INGOs about *Leamos Juntos***. INGO staff found the Innovations conference to be a supportive factor and all INGOs suggested continuing that conference. Both Activate Readers staff and Alo Department supervisors suggested that the Ministry could continue to facilitate communication between INGOs, citing the example of the Innovations conference as a way to establish and grow connections. The Chapter Readers In-Country Director suggested that the *Leamos Juntos* program have a strategy of identifying local structures to support *Leamos Juntos*. This could help to overcome the barriers of ambiguity about participation at the local level.

Across all *debutant* INGOs cases and in the Cielo Department, the second example was related to **increasing access to the program materials and specifically the *Leamos Juntos* books**. The strategies included modifying existing materials and creating new materials and resources. They also included increased access to materials at the department levels. For example, Book Borrowers and Chapter Readers staff suggested increasing the access to *Leamos Juntos* materials. Book Borrowers staff shared strategies to decrease barriers related to accessing and learning about the *Leamos Juntos* books and other materials. The INGO stated that having access to materials—books and teacher guides—and the opportunity to learn how the program worked was an essential strategy to increase INGO participation:

*At the very least there needs to be better coordination and access at the department level...So that when someone comes to see the books or wants to know more about the program that they can access the basic materials.*

Book Borrowers Staff, Translated

In addition to simply having access to the books through the department office, Book Borrowers provided strategies for learning about the books, which included giving INGOs the opportunity to have their own set of books to work with. This included having their own box of books but also included purchasing books:

*That's why I was so interested at the very beginning in the Leamos Juntos program, is to try and get more access to books. Because that's a big part of what we spend money on. And if we can either get them through a government program, or get them at a reduced price, or at all.*

Book Borrowers Executive Director, English

Understanding that might not be possible, they suggested using technology to share the books:

*Even if they (the department) had a photocopy of the book, or a digital copy that could be shared.*

Book Borrowers Staff, Translated

Digital or online access, as suggested by Book Borrowers, does not necessarily mean access for all. In other comments, there appeared to be a preference for hard copy books from Book Borrowers as well as hard copies of documents for the Cielo Department LJ Link.

Another strategy would be an in-person presentation for INGOs to learn about the books. In paraphrasing part of our conversation, the Book Borrowers staff agreed with me when I said:

*Like an in-person presentation, where you all could see the books and look at the titles of the books so that you would know what books were in the boxes.*

Researcher, Translated

Chapter Readers suggested a strategy whereby INGOs would be notified about what books are in the *Leamos Juntos* inventory as soon as possible. This was in the context of reducing barriers related to duplicating books in the schools. It would also address the barriers faced by Book Borrowers to access the books.

Across all *debutant* INGO cases and in the Bello Department, the third example was about the *Leamos Juntos* teacher training and that **teachers needed more and better training and support**. They saw the *Leamos Juntos* teacher training that involved training 150 teachers in each department as well as the Teacher Guide to be inadequate both for teachers as well as INGOs that work with or employ teachers.

**Activate Readers.** The Activate Readers staff commented that the single workshop training model implemented by the Ministry needed “rethinking.” The in-country director critiqued the large-scale model of “cascade training,” suggesting that it was unlikely to change teacher habits in the classroom and suggesting a more intensive and sustained focus on teacher training. The Activate Readers staff also described the Teacher Guide as needing “rethinking” in order to provide more guidance for implementing *Leamos Juntos* in the classroom. Although the staff did not give specific suggestions, they felt that if teachers had a better understanding of how to implement the program, it would be easier for the INGO to work with teachers on implementing specific, Ministry-approved strategies.

**Book Borrowers.** The Book Borrowers staff suggested including opportunities for INGO staff to participate in the *Leamos Juntos* teacher trainings:

*Not just books, but also (access to) the trainings that are happening on reading at the department level...I asked if it would be possible for us to participate but they said no and that it was only for teachers in the schools.*

Book Borrowers Staff, Translated

Book Borrowers staff said that having access to books and trainings would allow them to pursue strategies that would specifically advance *Leamos Juntos*:

*We could pick a book from the inventory – or we could say to the teachers, you pick a book – and give them a month to work on it...a trial run and they can come up with ideas for activities...The teachers have excellent ideas, they are very capable...developing (activities) for a Leamos Juntos book. Why not?*

Book Borrowers Staff, Translated

Book Borrowers staff suggested having a training session in the department focused on how to use the 30 minutes of reading, again with the understanding the INGOs would have the opportunity to participate:

*...A training session at the department level so that the teachers could have ideas about how to work with the children during the 30 minutes. And the result could be a manual that would be shared.*

Book Borrowers Staff, Translated

**Chapter Readers.** The Chapter Readers In-Country Director also described a strategy to draw upon and divulge existing research about teacher training in Guatemala to improve training. They described being aware of research that had been conducted for the Ministry about training teachers but was inaccessible:

*What makes me angry...is that I am sure that all of this has already been investigated and is written down. The USAID Program...brought the most expert, experts of expertise in this (topic of training teachers). And there are manuals that*

*the Ministry has. But they are manuals...there is a need to interpret the manuals to describe the teacher training...that you need to give teachers practical materials, that the materials need to be well organized, teach them how to facilitate their planning for their classes. But all of this scientific investigation that tells us what to do is already written...in the context of Guatemala and in the context of the rural areas...*

Chapter Readers In-Country Director, Translated

Chapter Readers also suggested creating more basic materials and concrete activities that teachers could easily use to teach reading. These suggestions were connected to their suggestion that the Ministry needs to decide upon and endorse a specific methodology for teaching how to read.

**Bello Department.** The Bello Department LJ Links suggested the need for ongoing training and support for teachers based on the success that they observed in a year-long teacher training and support initiative that partnered with an NGO.

Activate Readers and Chapter Readers' staff provided a fourth example by suggesting that *Leamos Juntos* should have more direction and clarity around INGO participation.

**Activate Readers.** The Activate Readers staff described a lack of clarity within the LJPD in terms of exactly what INGOs could do to participate in the program. They suggested that the LJPD should articulate specific guidance for INGO participation. The Activate Readers In-Country Director suggested that, depending on the size of the INGO, the Ministry could provide a variety of options for who that INGO should communicate with, based on the INGO's organizational characteristics:

*I would like there to be something in the document that more clearly defines with whom you should be...something that guided NGOs, that at what point of their*



*growth or when they should be having direct communication or collaboration with the Ministry.*

Activate Readers In-Country Director, English

The Activate Readers In-Country Director also suggested an explanatory supplementary document to the LJPD. This would provide more direction to INGOs on the “how.”

**Chapter Readers.** The Chapter Readers In-Country Director suggested that *Leamos Juntos* should provide additional guidance to INGOs and encourage attention to reading:

*Be a little bit more direct and proactive in telling the NGOs the conditions that exist related to reading, and that they should study it and begin to work in it (reading)...*

Chapter Readers In-Country Director, Translated

The Chapter Readers staff also underscored the importance of having and continuing to have a flexible arrangement for INGO participation. They suggested that this could be even more supportive if *Leamos Juntos* placed additional emphasis on the importance of reading to all INGOs working in the education sector.

**Chapter Readers suggested an outlying strategy** regarding how *Leamos Juntos* **needs better monitoring and evaluation** to better understand how the program was actually being implemented and then to adjust what they are doing according to that information. Chapter Readers staff described this as essential and that their organization would also be able to use that information.

**Comparing across all cases**, the common strategy was about improving the *Leamos Juntos* program design. Each INGO had a different experience with *Leamos Juntos* and the program also played out differently in each of the department cases. Again, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers had suggestions related to the overall program and

the different focus areas. Book Borrowers, having just recently learned about *Leamos Juntos* and being the smallest and least formal of the group, had many ideas for ways to learn about and participate in *Leamos Juntos*. Book Borrowers' interactions with department staff prompted the INGO to share several ways that INGOs, like their own, could learn about and then get involved with *Leamos Juntos*.

Activate Readers and Chapter Readers provided strategies related to improving the program components such as the materials, books, teacher guide and teacher training. Each also stressed the importance of flexible participation for INGOs but also requested more direction for specific ways to participate. However, Chapter Readers suggestions tended to be directed towards strengthening the way that the public education system functions. Perhaps because they had the most experiences actively working within the public education system, they could see the gaps in a way Activate Readers did not. It could also be that having an all-Guatemalan team affects the way that they see and experience their role in the education sector. Chapter Readers staff presented as more embedded and secure in their work in a way that Activate Readers was still developing, and to a certain extent, still figuring out their role.

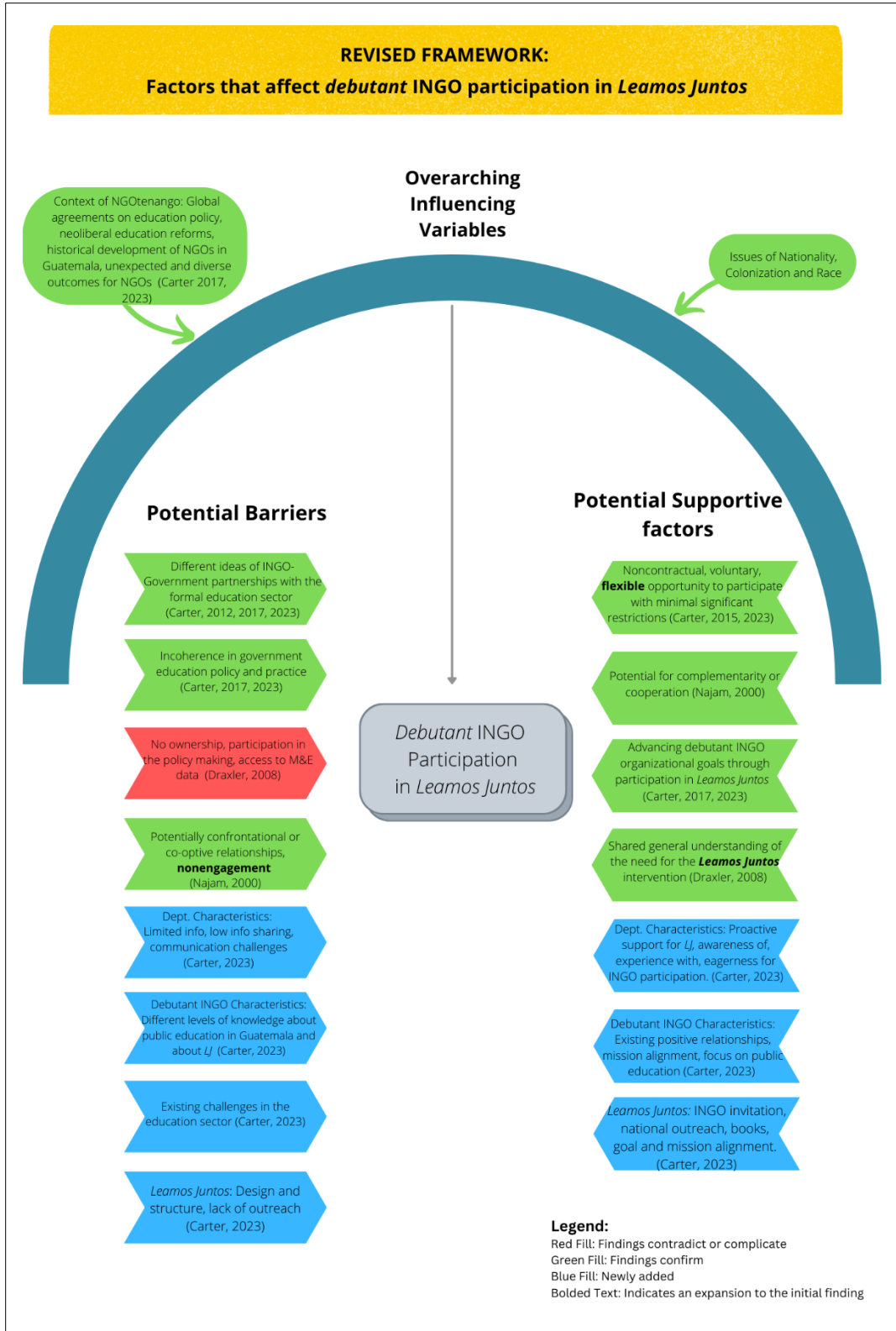
Lastly, Chapter Readers was the only INGO that specifically suggested that the Ministry needed to define and endorse a specific methodology for learning how to read. Such a policy would provide clear guidance to all teachers but also all INGOs working in reading and working with teachers so that the INGOs could better support teachers. Given their focus on providing training for teachers, it is understandable that this lack of clarity around methodology complicated their daily work with teachers. Chapter Readers was also the only INGO to describe the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation and the need

for sharing this information back with INGOs. Again, their higher level of familiarity with the lack of monitoring and evaluation within the education sector may have informed the suggestion of this strategy.

## Chapter Five: Conclusions

In this section, I will draw upon the findings and describe how they do and/or do not support my conceptual framework. I will begin by presenting a revised version of my conceptual framework that highlights where the findings support the framework as well as where the findings deny or challenge the framework. The revised version also incorporates relevant new findings and reorganizes some of the data. I will then describe each of the aspects of the framework in turn. Then, I will present the implications of these conclusions for policy, practice and future research. Finally, I will share a final note about updates that have occurred since this research has taken place.

The revised framework (see Figure 8) incorporates the findings and presents a more comprehensive framework for understanding what affects *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. In order to delineate from the initial framework (as presented in Figure 5) this revised framework indicates where the findings were confirmed, disconfirmed or where there was no new data. When appropriate, it also includes bolded text to indicate where the findings require an elaboration on a particular factor. A factor that has been filled red indicates that the findings contradict or complicate that factor. A factor that has been filled green indicates that the findings confirm that factor. A factor that has been filled blue indicates a new factor to the framework.



**Figure 8: Revised Framework: Factors that contribute to *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos***

### ***Framework highlights overarching influencing variables***

The initial framework highlighted several overarching influencing variables, and the findings confirmed these variables in the case study. Some variables were illuminated through the case study and were not evident in the framework. Additionally, some of the variables were complicated by the findings. I will start with the leftmost variable and move clockwise.

The findings indicate that across all cases, **the specific characteristics of the localities where INGOs work do affect *debutant* INGO participation** in *Leamos Juntos*. Because the findings illuminated specific supportive factors and barriers related to department characteristics, the revised framework incorporates this variable into the potential supports and potential barriers.

In all cases, the public education staff, and particularly the LJ Links role, affected how *debutant* INGOs participated, or not. For example, all participating public education staff were proactively supportive of *Leamos Juntos*. Furthermore, public education staff had awareness of and experience working with INGOs as well as an eagerness for INGO participation. Both factors contributed to INGO participation. For example, the Alo Department LJ Link had taken on additional planning to incorporate their school districts into *Leamos Juntos*. They were also implementing a vision of increased collaboration with INGOs to improve coverage across the department. In both the Alo and Bello Departments, supervisors demonstrated a high level of awareness of INGOs working in the departments. In these same departments, school directors and teachers had experience working directly with INGOs. In the Alo and Cielo Departments, LJ Links were already

collaborating with INGOs on reading programming and on *Leamos Juntos*. Because of these existing factors, it was not a stretch for the public education staff to consider INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. These were all supportive factors for participation.

At the same time, there were characteristics within and across the different departments that hindered INGO participation. Across all department cases, there were three common barriers: (1) Limited information about INGOs and their work in the departments, (2) Low information sharing and fragmented knowledge about INGOs within the different levels of the departments, and (3) Communication challenges between INGOs and the department. For example, in the Bello and Cielo Departments, the LJ Links had the least amount of knowledge about INGOs working in their departments and they directed me towards other staff members to learn about INGOs. In the Alo Department, the school director and teacher focus group highlighted that there were INGOs working with some schools and other schools were working with no INGOs. Alo Department supervisors, school directors, and teachers all described having past negative experiences with INGOs and this affected their ideas about INGO participation. All of these department-specific factors affected *debutant* INGO participation or not in *Leamos Juntos*.

This variable, as initially included in the framework, was further illuminated in the case study and has been changed within the revised framework in several ways. The initial term “localities” has been replaced with the word “departments” because the departments were the formal unit of analysis. Furthermore, because clear supportive factors and barriers emerged from the analysis, I have broken this variable up into supports and barriers within the revised framework. The revised framework now has

“department characteristics” on both the potential barrier side and the potential support side.

The findings indicate across all cases that **existing challenges in the education sector did complicate and at times hinder INGO participation** in *Leamos Juntos*. This variable was described primarily within the context of barriers and so the revised framework moves this variable to the potential barrier column.

There were six common barriers across all cases related to the National Education System: (1) A dearth of funding for the Ministry’s existing programming, (2) Government bureaucracy, (3) National context of hunger and malnutrition, (4) Challenges related to education policy and reform, (5) Challenges related to the teaching profession, and (6) challenges implementing bilingual and intercultural education (EBI). For example, in addition to repeated descriptions of a dearth of funding for the public education system, both the Alo Department public education staff and Activate Readers staff attributed the lack of information sharing about INGOs and the overall lack of awareness about INGOs to the existing government bureaucracy and incoherence. In addition to all participants describing chronic childhood malnutrition as a complicating factor for their work, the Bello Department LJ Links described another national program focused on math and expressed uncertainty about which program would be prioritized. In an example about the teaching profession, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers described excessive administrative burdens on teachers as hindering INGO participation. Lastly, during school visits in the Cielo Department, I met teachers in bilingual schools who were multilingual, but I also met teachers who were not able to speak the assigned Maya language, even though they had been assigned to a bilingual classroom. All of



these existing challenges were described as complicating and/or hindering factors for INGO participation.

Missing from the framework was a factor described by Draxler (2008) as *sustainability*. Whereas I posited that the sustainability of the initiative may not affect *debutant* INGO participation given their focus on reading, the opposite was suggested in an example whereby Activate Readers described being uncertain about continuing their participation in *Leamos Juntos* partly because of uncertainty of whether or not *Leamos Juntos* would continue into the next administration. There was only one example of this in the findings but nevertheless it suggested that there may be merit to the importance of sustainability when it comes to supporting *debutant* INGO participation.

The findings indicate across all *debutant* INGO cases that **the specific characteristics of the INGOs affected participation** in *Leamos Juntos*. Because the findings illuminated specific supportive factors and barriers related to *debutant* INGO characteristics, the revised framework incorporates this variable into the potential supports and potential barriers.

The characteristics of the different *debutant* INGOs affected both how and if they participated. There were two common characteristics that either actively supported INGO participation or insipient participation: (1) INGOs had existing positive working relationships with public education staff, and (2) INGO missions aligned with *Leamos Juntos*, which included a focus on supporting public education. For example, all *debutant* INGOs had some kind of formal agreement with public education staff and/or governing bodies in their departments. Additionally, all *debutant* INGO cases had existing positive relationships with public education staff prior to *Leamos Juntos*. Further, the INGO

missions all aligned with the *Leamos Juntos* goals. Chapter Readers was formally participating after being invited by the Ministry of Education and this, of course, was an outlying factor that affected their participation.

There were also characteristics of the INGOs that presented barriers for participation. Chapter Readers was already formally participating in *Leamos Juntos* and so I did not identify any specific characteristics that posed a barrier for their participation. However, there was one common barrier across Activate Readers and Book Borrowers which was about differing levels of knowledge about the public education system in Guatemala and about the *Leamos Juntos* program itself. For example, even though Activate Readers became aware of *Leamos Juntos* and began participating, the in-country director also described not knowing a lot about the public education system in Guatemala. Book Borrowers was not registered as an INGO in Guatemala and this also posed some challenges for their communication with and relative visibility within the Bello Department.

This variable, as initially included in the framework, was further illuminated in the case study and has been changed within the revised framework. Because clear supportive factors and barriers emerged from the analysis, I have broken this variable up into supports and barriers within the revised framework. The revised framework now has “INGO characteristics” on both the potential barrier side and the potential support side.

The findings confirm that **NGOtenango does affect *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos***. The phenomenon of NGOtenango intends to encapsulate a context of the globalization of education reforms, neoliberal policy reforms and the increasing involvement of NGOs in Guatemala despite a recent period of intense

antagonism between NGOs and the Guatemalan State. My study zeros in on *debutant* INGOs, working in the education sector since the mid-1990s and not subjected to intense antagonism from the state. Because the findings related to NGOtenango are expansive and resist binaries of supports/barriers, it remains a variable in the revised framework.

Across all cases, the context of NGOtenango included some supportive factors for INGO participation: (1) An unchecked proliferation of NGOs participating in the education sector in the last 25 years, (2) The change in approach from the Ministry regarding the inclusion of NGOs, (3) The continued dearth of resources directed towards public education, and (4) The alignment and advancement of global, national and local agendas around reading. For example, *debutant* INGO staff shared favorable ideas about the potential this proliferation had created while the public education staff across all department cases saw INGOs as a potential resource to help them reach their own objectives. The Ministry's shift away from the strictly contractual NGO-State collaborations that were emblematic of PRONADE and towards more flexible, voluntary and non-contractual participation by NGOs was welcomed by all of the *debutant* INGO cases. Book Borrowers staff spoke directly to the connection between a dearth of funding and INGO participation where they described how the rural and remote villages lent itself to INGO participation because these were "forgotten areas." Lastly, the Innovations Conference became a vehicle for linking global education goals around reading with *Leamos Juntos* and creating a space where *debutant* INGOs and public education staff could see an alignment in their agendas.

The context of NGOtenango also complicated and at times hindered INGO participation. The one common barrier experienced across all cases was the negative

effects of the unchecked proliferation of NGOs working in the education sector. An additional barrier mentioned in two cases was about how the history of the country shaped contemporary decisions about INGO participation. Specific examples included: the lack of accountability both for INGOs and for public education staff; the described and demonstrated lack of coordination across departments; testimonials from school directors and teachers in the Alo Department along with Chapter Readers staff about *debutant* INGO nonalignment and nonengagement with public education staff and with each other, and the complicated interplay of simultaneous visibility and invisibility between LJ Links and INGOs, INGOs with other INGOs, and INGOs with the Ministry.

Additionally, the findings **confirmed and complicated different aspects of *debutant* INGOs in NGOtenango**. In my literature review, in addition to setting *debutant* INGOs apart from the NGOs in PRONADE, I posited seven characteristics of *debutant* INGOs: (1) The government has minimal influence over their direction yet the distance between the two groups is diminishing, (2) They are not beholden to the international development project priorities, (3) Were not subjected to the intense State antagonism towards NGOs during the civil war, (4) Many *debutant* INGOs have not participated in national education programs, although they are involved in the public education sector at the local levels, (5) They are not always intentionally in alignment with larger, global goals in the education sector, (6) They are working in different locations around the country, and their interactions are at the same time highly contextualized and a part of broader phenomenon of international interventions in Guatemala, (7) They have an emergent nature and nascent integration within the

education sector, yet they are steeped and steered by national and international histories that have taken shape in Guatemala.

The findings confirm the first characteristic that **the government has minimal influence over the direction of *debutant* INGOs and yet the distance between the two groups is diminishing.** All *debutant* INGO cases were engaged in the education sector primarily on their own terms and demonstrated a significant amount of autonomy over decisions about where to work and with whom. None of the INGO staff described the Ministry having any significant influence over their direction. Whereas *Leamos Juntos* offered an opportunity for INGO participation, it did so without exerting any coercive action to prescribe the INGO participation and programming. Yet at the same time, through *Leamos Juntos* the Ministry did influence the INGO cases' work, particularly for Activate Readers and Chapter Readers. Additionally, the threat of being shut down influenced Book Borrowers to avoid contact with government officials who might restrict their activities. *Leamos Juntos* did influence all INGO cases and suggests that the national program diminished the distance between the Ministry and *debutant* INGOs that were both, a) focused on reading, and b) working in the public sector. The findings suggest that the relative distance was between the Ministry of Education itself and less so the government as a whole. At the same time, the *debutant* INGOs continued to wield a great deal of independence and decision-making autonomy.

This finding also confirms the research which highlights a global shift of NGOs in education where NGOs are defined less by their opposition and more by their provision of education and the myriad affiliations with the state (Batley and Rose, 2010; Rose, 2011). All the *debutant* INGO cases were involved in the provision of education in some

way. Activate Readers provided a potent example of how they have increasingly diminished their distance from the Ministry. This was evident both through their own actions as they increased collaboration at the department level on *Leamos Juntos* and also as they described their interest in further increasing their collaboration, including through contracts. Chapter Readers also had a pronounced proximity to the Ministry in that they were the only *debutant* INGO case that was also authorized to provide MINEDUC recognized training not to mention being invited to participate in *Leamos Juntos*. Book Borrowers, unaware of *Leamos Juntos* and working “under the radar,” described a closeness to the town governing bodies along with their intention to eventually become registered. In that sense, Book Borrowers demonstrated the greatest amount of distance from the Ministry and yet their trajectory was bringing them closer.

The findings confirmed the second characteristic that ***debutant* INGOs were not beholden to international development project priorities**. Although the Innovations Conference was connected to a global education priority around reading as well as a USAID focus on reading, none of the *debutant* INGOs were obligated to join or participate and instead did so of their own volition. However, the existence of and penetration of the global priority of reading did reach and influence the *debutant* INGO cases. This finding suggests that although *debutant* INGOs may not be beholden to the priorities, under specific circumstances—at least when *debutant* INGOs are dedicated to working with the public education system and have a mission alignment with those priorities—the distance is diminished. Although the *debutant* INGOs were not relying on these priorities to determine their own programming, *Leamos Juntos* created the conditions whereby these *debutant* INGOs increased their proximity to these priorities.

The findings added no new data to the third characteristic in that **none of the INGOs described ever being subjected to an antagonistic State**. However, because this was not a specific topic of discussion it is possible that this had occurred among staff members. The descriptions and examples from the Activate Readers staff members about the state co-opting NGOs along with the intense politicization of the sector suggest that antagonism, although presumably non-violent, may still be occurring.

The findings confirmed the fourth characteristic in that **many *debutant* INGOs have not participated in national education programs, although they are involved in the public education sector at the local levels**. All INGO cases were involved at the local levels of the public education sector and none of them had previously participated in a national education program. This finding further validates the rationale for the study of INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. However, it also suggests that this aspect of *debutant* INGOs may be fading given the participation and insipient participation of the *debutant* INGO cases in *Leamos Juntos*. This could also suggest a particular kind of evolution by some *debutant* INGOs towards participation in national education programs.

The findings partially confirmed the fifth characteristic that ***debutant* INGOs were not always intentionally in alignment with larger, global education goals**. The case of Book Borrowers highlighted how one *debutant* INGO was unknowingly working towards similar goals of *Leamos Juntos*. The findings did indicate that Book Borrowers was, in a sense, unknowingly and unintentionally advancing *Leamos Juntos* by the virtue of having a focus on reading programming but in our interviews, it was also clear that Book Borrowers was indeed aware of global education goals related to technology.

Because of this important distinction, I have collapsed this aspect within the aspect related to international development project priorities. A combined version reads, *debutant INGOs are not beholden to international development project priorities or global education goals and yet they may be advancing these priorities and goals unintentionally.*

The findings partially confirm the sixth characteristic that ***debutant* INGOs were working in different locations around the country, and their interactions were at the same time highly contextualized and a part of a broader phenomenon of international interventions in Guatemala.** Each *debutant* INGO is working in different departments and their interactions with the public education sector are highly contextualized on a case-by-case basis with schools and individuals. Additionally, across all cases, participants described their awareness of the proliferation of INGOs working in Guatemala and that the participants were lacking information about those INGOs. This aspect of *debutant* INGOs leaves out that, while *debutant* INGO interactions may be highly contextualized, there are also similarities among *debutant* INGOs. The findings highlight some similarities, as well as some divergence, among *debutant* INGOs working in the education sector in Guatemala. The findings do not touch upon the broader phenomenon of international *interventions* in Guatemala. Based on the findings, this can be updated to emphasize the broader phenomenon of *INGO proliferation in Guatemala.*

The findings partially confirmed the seventh characteristic, ***debutant* INGOs have an emergent nature and nascent integration within the education sector; they were also steeped and steered by national and international histories that have taken**



**shape in Guatemala.** Each of the *debutant* INGO cases can be described as emergent<sup>33</sup> within Guatemala and within the education sector, as each demonstrated some unique adaptation to the new conditions of *Leamos Juntos*. However, the findings also indicated that *debutant* INGO integration varied widely. Whereas Chapter Readers provided Ministry authorized training and was formally invited to participate in *Leamos Juntos* and therefore showed a significant level of integration within the education sector, Book Borrowers was not legally registered and was creating non-formal preschools in rural communities and was much less integrated in the public education sector.

National and international histories influenced *debutant* INGOs in both tangible and less tangible ways. For example, Activate Readers described their own work as being interpreted within the context of colonialist intervention when a teacher rejected their program by comparing it to the Spanish colonization of Guatemala. While my own conceptualization of NGOtenango begins in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this instance suggested that a deeper history continues to influence INGO participation and possibilities of participation. It also highlighted the agency of teachers to reject INGOs, something that merits additional research. Furthermore, the Alo Department described a difference between “old NGOs and new NGOs” whereby older NGOs were less likely to collaborate. This alluded to a less tangible or explicit factor in that previous, intense antagonism from the state may still be a guiding compass for older NGOs when it comes to participation in any state or Ministry endorsed programming. Based on the findings, this characteristic would be more accurate if updated to highlight the *various levels of integration* within the education sector.

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<sup>33</sup>Emergent is defined as “arising as an effect of complex causes and not analyzable simply as the sum of their effects.” Oxford Languages, 2023

Based on these conclusions, and in addition to the characteristics that set *debutant* INGOs apart from PRONADE NGOs (as seen in Table 1) the following are updated and revised defining characteristics of *debutant* INGOs:

1. The government has minimal influence over the direction of *debutant* INGOs and yet the distance between the two groups is diminishing;
2. *Debutant* INGOs are not beholden to international development project priorities or global education goals and yet they may be advancing these priorities and goals unintentionally;
3. *Debutant* INGOs were not subjected to the intense State antagonism towards NGOs during the civil war;
4. Many *debutant* INGOs have not participated in national education programs, although they are involved in the public education sector at the local levels;
5. *Debutant* INGOs are working in different locations around the country, and their interactions were at the same time highly contextualized and a part of a broader phenomenon of INGO proliferation in Guatemala, and
6. *Debutant* INGOs have an emergent nature and various levels of integration within the education sector and are steeped and steered by national and international histories that have taken shape in Guatemala.

The findings also confirmed that **there are unexpected and diverse outcomes among the participating *debutant* INGOs**. Simultaneity emerged as a theme across all cases and particularly within and among the *debutant* INGOs. It appeared in a variety of ways: INGOs being both visible *and* invisible; INGOs supporting both policy compliance *and* policy defiance; INGOs and public education staff experiencing both coherence *and* incoherence within the public education sector; *Debutant* INGOs perpetuating *and* providing a countervailing force to the dominant neoliberal policy reforms; dysfunctional NGOs *and* a dysfunctional government; corrupt NGOs *and* a corrupt government; poor NGOs *and* a poor government.

The findings confirmed that **participants were simultaneously visible and invisible within the context of *Leamos Juntos*** and this complicated their participation.

In each case, this came about in different ways and also had different outcomes.

Across all *debutant* INGO cases, the INGO staff were the most visible at the local levels and with school directors, teachers and supervisors. For example, Activate Readers appeared to have a high level of visibility within the Alo Department as they were collaborating with the Alo Department LJ Link, had signed agreements with school directors, and were working directly with supervisors and teachers. They were, however, invisible to the Cielo Department LJ Link and lamented being invisible to the Ministry despite having worked in reading programming for eight years in Guatemala. They described this invisibility as a barrier to participate with some schools where the staff would only participate with formally documented participating INGOs. Thus, Activate Readers' visibility within the Alo Department created supportive factors for participation but their invisibility at the Ministry level created barriers for participation.

Another example came from Chapter Readers who was officially visible within *Leamos Juntos* as well as having significant visibility with teachers, school directors and supervisors. While the Alo Department LJ Link was aware of Chapter Readers, at the time of the study, this had not resulted in any collaboration. Furthermore, Chapter Readers was unaware of the LJ Link role itself not to mention also being invisible to the LJ Links in the Bello and Cielo Departments. These different layers of visibility and invisibility for Chapter Readers created a missed opportunity for collaboration with LJ Links and indicated a breakdown in the *Leamos Juntos* administrative structure.

Therefore, it cannot be assumed that formal invitations to participate in *Leamos Juntos*—

or another national education program—necessarily make a *debutant* INGO and LJ Links participate.

The findings in this study suggest that *debutant* INGOs were largely invisible to the Ministry of Education, or at least to the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team. Within the *Leamos Juntos* planning documents, this was borne out by the fact that international actors were not conceived of as working below the MINEDUC level (see Figure 2: Coordination, Planning and Execution of the Program). Therefore, *debutant* INGO were in a sense both visible as NGOs and key actors while also invisible as *international NGOs* within the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD).

The findings confirmed that many *debutant* INGOs were invisible to each other. All cases described an awareness of INGOs but simultaneously not knowing about the INGOs. For example, Chapter Readers staff described visiting schools only to find the school was already being supported by other NGOs. Alo department supervisors described learning about an INGO building a school but without any consultation with the district. The many *invisible INGOs* hindered coordination among INGOs or between INGOs and the department staff. Although the findings suggested that one trajectory of *debutant* INGOs is towards increased their visibility, when invisible, the *debutant* INGOs hinder and complicate participation and coordination.

Both Activate Readers and the Alo Department public education staff described the appearance—the visibility—of being white and/or international in different ways. Here, the visibility of one’s skin color or appearance as non-Guatemalan was revelatory and an indication of wealth and connections. As an asset, both the Activate Readers In-Country Director and members of the Alo Department supervisor focus group connected

the appearance of being international to resources. The in-country director went on to describe how they understand that their skin color creates a kind of opening that may not otherwise exist. However, this also became the basis for rejection by a teacher when approached by Activate Readers staff who wanted to work with that school.

The findings confirm that ***debutant* INGOs are engaged in enabling policy compliance and policy defiance in *Leamos Juntos***. Activate Readers described a strategy of appropriating *Leamos Juntos* whereby they advanced *Leamos Juntos* program goals while at the same time supporting a school's policy defiance. Chapter Readers also described how teachers preferred to use the Chapter Readers books over the *Leamos Juntos* books and that Chapter Readers encouraged teachers to do so, particularly if it was because the teachers would not use *Leamos Juntos* books. In both examples, the INGOs were not interested in forcing policy compliance to use the assigned books. Instead, these examples illuminated how *debutant* INGOs simultaneously supported policy compliance with and policy defiance but ultimately cut through a barrier and advanced *Leamos Juntos* in a setting that might have otherwise rejected the program. The fear of previous policies—namely the need for teachers to pay for damaged or lost books—combined with books that were untethered to the MINEDUC also created an opportunity for teachers to implement *Leamos Juntos* while at the same time establishing some defiance towards the Ministry. This is an example of an unexpected and diverse outcome of INGO work.

The findings partially confirm that *Leamos Juntos* created the conditions whereby ***debutant* INGOs could both perpetuate and provide a countervailing force to the dominant neoliberal policy reforms**. In this case study of *Leamos Juntos*, the program design was shaped by evolving neoliberal education reforms and therefore contained

features of such reforms: ambitious goals that far exceeded the available resources; a chronically underfunded system; privatization of once public services; a diminishing of the state's role in educational provision and the corresponding, increased reliance on civil society and non-state actors. I will review these features now.

For example, *Leamos Juntos* had ambitious goals that far exceeded the available resources of the Ministry to implement them. *Leamos Juntos* did not address critical underfunding of the education system, nor did it intend to do so. Instead, *Leamos Juntos* circumvented the issue of underfunding by financing the program with loans from the Interamerican Development Bank. That such a national program was not financed by the government and instead through a private financial vehicle, highlighted a kind of privatization coupled with a lack of public investment in public education. Although the findings of this case study do not shed light on the state's diminishing role in education specifically, the findings do confirm that *Leamos Juntos*—as a multi-stakeholder partnership for education—had an increased reliance on civil society and non-state actors as demonstrated by the strategy of incorporating NGOs, INGOs, and private businesses as key partners.

Because of these features, it can be argued that, in some ways, the *debutant* INGOs perpetuated the dominant neoliberal reforms as enacted through *Leamos Juntos*. Within a program that had ambitions far beyond what it could achieve with the available resources, the *debutant* INGO cases enabled this program to move forward through their own participation and insipient participation in *Leamos Juntos*. The *debutant* INGOs did not attempt to address the chronic underfunding of the sector and, instead, subsidized the

activities that were unachievable by the available resources, ultimately amplifying the reach of *Leamos Juntos*.

However, it can also be argued that, in some ways, the *debutant* INGOs participation in *Leamos Juntos* also provided a countervailing force to the neoliberal reforms embedded in *Leamos Juntos*. For example, the *debutant* INGOs did not appear to be eroding the public sector in favor of private interests and instead sought to strengthen the possibilities for the public education system. Notably, all the participating *debutant* INGOs were intentionally working with and within public schools and with public education staff. Importantly, these *debutant* INGOs were working through both the conditions of neoliberal education reforms while simultaneously staking out the importance of the public school system.

At a more localized level, one of the ways that the Alo Department appropriated *Leamos Juntos* was by dividing up training for different schools between the department office and the Activate Readers INGO. Activate Readers was taking on a new role as a non-state actor replacing the public education staff to provide these essential services. Yet, as opposed to simply replacing education services and perpetuating the status of an underfunded system, they were both replacing services and expanding the overall capacity of the department to reach more teachers, doing so in concert with and at the request of the public education staff. This underscores the myriad affiliations *debutant* INGOs have with the public education staff within a department. Were the department offices to provide sufficient oversight of Activate Readers while also holding them accountable when/if their services were rendered inadequate or harmful, it could also be understood as a countervailing force. Were the department to neglect Activate Readers

and diminish their support for those areas completely, it could be understood as perpetuating these neoliberal reforms. Ultimately, this study did not gather any additional details about this particular example.

The findings do confirm that the department public education staff saw the *debutant* INGOs as a way to extend their public services and as a way to increase coverage overall. Activate Readers saw it as an opportunity to collaborate in a way that also benefited their own programming by having designated schools to work with and expanding their own coverage. Furthermore, working with the department is also seen within the context of their ambition to increase collaboration with the public education sector including as a service provider. That could suggest a fee-for-service arrangement, which could then become a variant of privatization. Whether or not that actually happens is also not a part of this case study but, again, it highlights the nuances of how the *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* can evolve in a variety of different ways. These examples show how *debutant* INGOs are engaged in both perpetuating and providing a countervailing force to the dominant neoliberal policy reforms as enacted in *Leamos Juntos*. The examples also suggest the diversity among *debutant* INGOs and public education staff in the ways that each appropriates and navigates a complicated educational terrain in Guatemala.

The findings confirm that **positive and negative experiences with INGOs exist across INGOs and the department cases**. The proliferation of NGOs, coupled with the government's increasing reliance on non-state actors, appears to have had significant implications for the ways in which INGOs and public education staff interacted with and enacted *Leamos Juntos*. Although public education staff in all cases spoke positively about



some aspects of partnering with INGOs, they also described negative associations with NGOs, citing potential corruption, political cooptation, and insufficient resources. School directors also commented on “participation fatigue” by parents complicating INGO demands for parent participation as a requisite for their support. From a different perspective, Activate Readers staff described a predicament where other INGOs were operating in a manner that could damage Activate Readers’ possibility of working with communities in that department. It appeared that the study participants had been subjected to dysfunctional NGOs and a dysfunctional State, corrupt NGOs and a corrupt State, poor NGOs and a poor State. In NGOTenango, functional and dysfunctional NGOs appeared to be normalized, or at least a regular or typical experience for participants.

Whereas NGOs associated with PRONADE were regulated and accounted for by the State, even if primarily through technical and bureaucratic measures, NGOTenango presents a new terrain where relationships appear to be more tenuous, unregulated, undefined and hyper-contextualized to the micro-level interactions between *debutant* INGOs and schools. In such a terrain, the case study participants demonstrated a certain kind of agility to negotiate with organizations and individuals, across different levels, be it in alignment or not with government policy. It also suggests, however, that when the Ministry defines the roles of NGOs in the education sector, such as they did with PRONADE and to a more limited extent within *Leamos Juntos*, it can significantly frame interactions between public education staff and INGOs, thereby working through some of the incoherence experienced by the actors working in the education sector.

Finally, the findings confirmed that **issues of race, nationality and colonization affect debutant INGO participation** in *Leamos Juntos*. This was evident in comments from both Activate Readers and the Alo Department public education staff. This appeared in two cases but did not appear in the other four cases. Therefore, it is an opportunity for future research to explore this as an influencing variable for other INGOs and public education staff.

### ***Potential barriers to debutant INGO participation***

I will now review the “Potential Barriers” segment of the framework and start by discussing each factor beginning at the top of the list.

The findings indicate that, across all cases, **INGOs and government staff do have different ideas about the roles of INGOs**. Whereas public education staff proposed strategies whereby INGOs could support department efforts and priorities, INGO staff proposed strategies that would advance their own INGO’s priorities while maintaining their independence. INGO staff described a desire for more information and more direction from either the Ministry or the department but without losing their autonomous decision-making about where to work. For example, Activate Readers staff described how they would not trust direction from department staff about where to work. Conversely, public education staff discussed ways to direct where INGOs would work, and Alo Department staff provided the example of directing INGOs based on the department’s needs and the existing data on reading. Another example came from the Bello Department supervisors when they suggested that INGOs should be required to work with all schools. This tension between INGOs and public education staff around ideas about the role of INGOs confirmed this factor as a potential barrier.

The findings confirm across all cases that **incoherence in government education policy and practice is a barrier for *debutant* INGO participation** in *Leamos Juntos*.

For example, the Chapter Readers staff discussed the disconnect between policy and practice, saying that, for example, there is a difference between what is written in policy and what actually happens. Examples from the Bello and Cielo Departments included instances of low or no information sharing within the department. In the Alo and Bello Departments, the supervisors held information that was not readily available to LJ Links, such as exactly how some *debutant* INGOs were collaborating on *Leamos Juntos* or collaborating with schools. Book Borrowers, along with other participants, also described great frustration with the government bureaucracy and how it unnecessarily impeded and complicated their work. The disconnects among public education staff in the respective department cases contributed to a disconnect between the *Leamos Juntos* policy and the practice of INGO participation. However, coherence and incoherence can simultaneously exist. For example, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers did in fact put *Leamos Juntos* into practice with public education staff at the local levels. Thus, regardless of the incoherence(s) that may exist from the national to the local levels of the public education system, both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers appropriated the policy into their own programming.

The findings disconfirm parts of Draxler's (2008) framework on NGO participation in multi-stakeholder partnerships for education because ***debutant* INGOs did not have ownership over the policy, nor did they participate in the policy making, nor did they have access to monitoring and evaluation data** and yet these factors did not prevent or dissuade their participation or insipient participation. Draxler

(2008) suggested that NGO participation in Multi-Sector Partnerships for Education (MSPE) was challenging when NGOs do not feel ownership, are not participating in policy making, and do not have access to monitoring and evaluation data. The case study in this dissertation focuses on *debutant* INGOs, which are different than the higher-level partnerships and with larger NGOs and INGOs as described in Draxler's work.

The findings confirm that these *debutant* INGOs behaved and responded differently than larger NGOs and INGOs. For example, the *debutant* INGOs in this multi-sited case study were in fact not dissuaded to participate because of a lack of ownership or participation in the policy making process. None of the INGO cases identified "ownership," or lack thereof, as a factor related to their participation. Also, none of the *debutant* INGOs participated in the policy making process. Although the INGOs and public education staff had policy suggestions, the participants were not and did not suggest being involved in the policymaking. For example, Chapter Readers staff suggested the importance of gathering and sharing monitoring and evaluation data. They did not, however, say that without that data they would not consider participating. In this sense, access to monitoring and evaluation data could be understood as a potential incentive for *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*.

The findings suggest that involvement in the policy-making process may not have been an expectation nor a desire of *debutant* INGOs. It could also suggest that the historical distrust between INGOs and the government—and the high-level dysfunction of the government at the time of this study—may have made the kind of voluntary INGO participation afforded in *Leamos Juntos* palatable to *debutant* INGOs, especially since it allowed them to keep a certain amount of distance from a government that was dissolving

around them. Finally, it could also have to do with the fact that these INGO cases had a focus on implementing programs and not on changing national education policy.

Regardless, the findings from the *debutant* INGOs challenge these particular elements of the framework.

The findings partially confirm that Najam's (2000) scenarios of confrontation and/or cooptation affected potential INGO participation by confirming **a fear of confrontation or a co-optive relationship with the government as a potential barrier for participation** in the public education sector but perhaps less so within *Leamos Juntos*. Because nonengagement also appeared as a potential barrier, the revised framework incorporates "nonengagement" into this factor.

The Book Borrowers director described their fear of confrontation with the government whereby their work would be shut down because Book Borrowers was working without authorization, not legally registered to work in the country. This example from Book Borrowers illuminated their *defiance*, a term used by Najam to describe confrontation that is not violent. However, this is not simply related to a situation where the "preferred ends and means of the two are dissimilar" (Najam, 2000, p. 386). Using that definition, the *means* are different only in the sense that Book Borrowers is not following Guatemalan law to work as an organization. Otherwise, their *ends*, or their work with teachers and schools with a focus on supporting reading, were similar to the goals of *Leamos Juntos*.

Aside from the (dissipating) fear of confrontation expressed by Book Borrowers, none of the other participants in the case study sites described confrontation—or the threat of confrontation—as a barrier to participation. This could be because, at the time of

the study, *debutant* INGOs working in education were not having openly confrontational relationships with the Ministry. Therefore, the case of Book Borrowers partially confirms the scenario of NGO-government confrontation as a potential barrier for participation. But this factor falls short of the nuance required to understand both this specific kind of confrontation and defiance, as well as how *debutant* INGOs, and in this case Book Borrowers, was not dissuaded to participate in *Leamos Juntos*. To the contrary, when they learned about the program they quickly tried to learn how to participate. That being said, a history of confrontation between NGOs and the government is a part of the context described in NGOTenango but the findings do not show any significant residual effects of this hostility with the *debutant* INGO cases.

Activate Readers staff specifically cited the fear of co-optation by the government as a concern related to their participation in *Leamos Juntos*. Describing previous and existing examples of the co-optation, their concern was that the political party in power would use influence within an NGO to assert the political party's agenda. Activate Readers staff described a fear of being too close to government staff and a fear of taking direction from the Ministry or other officials about where to work. Both concerns were related to being co-opted and used as a pawn to advance political goals. However, the concerns did not prevent Activate Readers from working closely with the department staff on implementing *Leamos Juntos*. It did highlight a difference between concerns with partnerships at the department level versus concerns with partnerships at the Ministry level. *Debutant* INGOs work at more localized levels of government; the findings confirm that these interactions factor into their decision-making about participation but

with specific attention to the level of government (i.e. ministry, department, municipality, COCODES).

Based on this research, *debutant* INGOs are able to conduct much of their work without strong participation from or collaboration with higher level government officials. In fact, Book Borrowers was almost exclusively collaborating with local level actors and had actively avoided engaging with higher-level governmental staff. Therefore, Najam's framework is limited in that it provides categories for considering NGO-government relationships, but the findings suggest that, at least with *debutant* INGOs, the multiplicity of interactions with the public education sector staff—from teachers up to the Ministry—requires additional descriptions to better understand the actual nature of the relationship. Therefore, Najam's framework is only one part of the framework used to analyze this case study.

Absent from the framework but nonetheless confirmed is that **nonengagement turned out to be a barrier for INGO participation**. This was not originally conceived of within the framework as a barrier and yet the case study illuminated examples of how this created challenges for Book Borrowers in particular. The revised framework reflects this.

Book Borrowers employed a kind of strategic nonengagement towards government actors that could shut them down while simultaneously seeking out and identifying places where the Ministry was not reaching. Partially because of this nonengagement strategy, Book Borrowers was unaware of *Leamos Juntos*. However, the data showed that they were indeed actively engaging with supervisors, school directors and teachers in different schools. Therefore, their intentional nonengagement was specific

to different actors in government specifically towards interactions with government actors that could have regulatory consequences.

Additionally, findings from across the cases illuminated how nonengagement could happen across different levels of the departments and in simultaneity with active engagement and collaboration. Activate Readers and Chapter Readers were both engaging with different public education staff from the local to the department levels. Yet in the case of Chapter Readers, they were unaware of and not connected with any of the LJ Links. The Chapter Readers networks with public education staff appeared to have happened in emergent ways and not necessarily as a systematic approach to partnership with public education staff. In this way, their nonengagement was unintentional. Because one of the goals of the dissertation is to show “what happens” when *debutant* INGOs participate, these examples are an important part of the findings.

It is also notable that the concept of “government” is likely to be different among the participants and that the term was used in a variety of ways. This concept of government could be further explored in a future study.

### Barriers missing from the initial framework:

The framework **did not capture the barriers related to *Leamos Juntos*** and therefore new factors have been added to the revised framework. There were two common barriers<sup>34</sup> across all cases related to the *Leamos Juntos* program itself, with the first barrier occurring in a variety of different ways across different cases. The two

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<sup>34</sup> Among the debutant INGOs, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers identified the most barriers whereas Book Borrowers' incipient participation prevented them from experiencing much of the *Leamos Juntos* program.



common barriers were: (1) The specific *Leamos Juntos* design and administrative structure, and (2) A lack of outreach to all potential INGOs.

The first common barrier included design complications and an administrative structure in *Leamos Juntos* that made it more difficult for INGOs to participate and manifested in six different examples: (1) the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document (LJPD) and other program documents, (2) the LJ Link role, (3) the reading committees, (4) the teacher trainings and support, (5) the bilingual and intercultural education (EBI) approach, and (6) the *Leamos Juntos* books.

For example, Activate Readers described how the LJPD and other program documents provided insufficient information for INGO participation and the LJPD did not identify the LJ Link role or provide contact information. Activate Readers and Chapter Readers described how the school-based reading committees were an unreliable avenue for INGO participation. Activate Readers and Chapter Readers described how the limited number of trained teachers and opportunities for training teachers in *Leamos Juntos* meant that they regularly encountered teachers who did not know what to do with *Leamos Juntos*. Both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff described never seeing any of the *Leamos Juntos* bilingual books. Additionally, Chapter Readers share examples of complicated experiences attempting to implement reading programming in indigenous languages as a rationale for not incorporating EBI within the context of *Leamos Juntos*. Lastly, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers described how teachers were afraid to use the books because of past (and perhaps present) practice that required teachers to pay for damaged or lost books.

The second common barrier was the lack of outreach to potential INGOs. For example, the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team under-identified the number of potential INGOs that could participate in *Leamos Juntos* by not carrying out any research on potential participants. This meant that many INGOs that could have potentially participated, such as Activate Readers or Book Borrowers, did not learn about the program until years after its launch. It also meant that, in an example from Activate Readers, an INGO could be rejected by a school because Activate Readers was not formally deputized to implement *Leamos Juntos*. This is an interesting and outlying example of how a school employed *Leamos Juntos* to reject a *debutant* INGO's participation.

### ***Potential supportive factors for debutant INGO participation***

The framework highlights several potential supportive factors that are borne out in the case study. Some supportive factors were illuminated through the case study and were not evident in the framework. Additionally, some of the findings complicate the potential supportive factors from the framework. I will review all of the factors listed under "Potential Supportive factors" beginning at the top and working downwards. The revised framework incorporates and updates supportive factors.

The findings confirm that the **non-contractual and voluntary opportunity to participate without significant restrictions was a support factor for *debutant* INGO participation**. For example, both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff described this as supportive factors. Both shared how they were able to get involved without contracts and voluntarily decide the contours of their participation.

Because participation was non-contractual and voluntary, this created an opportunity to participate devoid of significant restrictions and meant that all the *debutant*

INGO cases then participated or began participating. Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff commented on the ambiguity and flexibility allotted to them as a supportive factor for their participation. In fact, Chapter Readers staff went further to suggest that if the design were not flexible that they would not have participated. The revised framework is expanded to include the notion of “flexibility” as an additional supportive factor.

However, notably, both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers also suggest strategies that would create additional guidance on how INGOs can participate in the program. This suggested that, while flexibility was seen as valuable, in this case study, two of the *debutant* INGOs described having additional, limited direction within a positive light.

The findings confirm that Najam’s (2000) two scenarios **complementary and/or cooperative relationships were supportive factors for potential INGO participation.** Najam (2000) states that where governments and NGOs have comparable goals but differentiating medium of realization, there exists the opportunity for *complementarity*. Najam importantly highlights how NGOs and the government can work towards the same ends—in this case on reading programming—without government contracts or direct funding, “they work separately but not antagonistically” (p. 388). For example, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers’ staff described how they were working with different public education staff to advance *Leamos Juntos*. Importantly, their complementarity within Najam’s definition appears to fall specifically within the confines of *Leamos Juntos*, which is different than their more collaborative relationship with the department and local public education staff.

The findings also highlight the limits of Najam's complementarity to fully describe *debutant* INGO participation *Leamos Juntos*. Book Borrowers provides an example whereby an INGO is unknowingly and presumably unintentionally in a complementary relationship with the Ministry and *Leamos Juntos*. Book Borrowers intentionally avoids government interaction at the level of the Ministry and yet they understand that reading and learning to read is a priority for the Ministry. This case example falls beyond the scope of the 4-Cs approach partly because the examples provided by Najam are of larger non-government organizations. Yet this case example highlights how a *debutant* INGO can unknowingly be complementing a national program such as *Leamos Juntos* while still being aware that their overall mission is shared with the Ministry.

The Bello and Cielo Department case examples further complicate the notion of "relations" since the LJ Links in each of these sites were unaware of the INGOs, and vice versa. It suggests that *debutant* INGOs, because of their work with local actors and their relative invisibility at higher levels of government, regularly span the 4 C's framework and have a multiplicity of relationships, which ultimately limits the utility of the 4-C's framework but does indicate the complicated nature of *debutant* INGOs. For *debutant* INGOs, it appears to be more nuanced and dependent upon the local level interactions with public education staff.

The findings confirm that cooperation is a supportive factor for participation, particularly with Chapter Readers as a formally participating INGO. Cooperative relationships are likely, posits Najam (2000), when the government and NGOs have goals

and strategies that are aligned in a situation where both groups work together to promote or provide a specific service or stance. The alignment of mission and programmatic activities, for example, the overlap of book lending with *Leamos Juntos*, Activate Readers, and Chapter Readers, meant that the *debutant* INGOs were able to easily incorporate elements of *Leamos Juntos*. It was also apparent in the collaboration between Activate Readers and the Alo Department LJ Link on teacher training and other reading activities. Interestingly, the Alo Department's strategic planning about how to collaborate with INGOs presented yet another possible supportive factor for INGO participation.

Although the case study demonstrated cooperation as a supportive factor, there were several issues that complicated the notion of *cooperation* and speak to Najam's brief mentioning of multiplicity within government. For example, Chapter Readers staff, although formally participating in *Leamos Juntos*, describe how the limit of their cooperation at least with the Ministry was in name only. Therefore, simply labeling their relationship as "cooperative" oversimplifies the actual nature of the relationship. Additionally, Activate Readers, the Alo Department LJ Link, and public education staff were cooperating on *Leamos Juntos* but each had strong feelings about the lack of cooperation from the Ministry of Education and other government offices. Whereas Najam suggests that such multiplicity does exist, the 4 C's model provides limited examples to demonstrate how this happens. Again, these findings continue to illuminate "what happens" and, in doing so, fill a gap in the literature.

Overall, the conceptualization of *debutant* INGOs and NGOtenango complicates Najam's "strategic interest" lens by identifying a broad array of factors that influence *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*. My framework therefore necessarily

addresses the limits of the “strategic interests” lens by highlighting how the evolution of individual relationships, the particular characteristics of INGOs, and the departments where they work, along with the historical development of the NGO sector all play out differently across cases.

The findings confirm that **advancing *debutant* INGO organizational goals through participation in *Leamos Juntos* is a supportive factor** for INGO participation. For example, Activate Readers and Chapter Readers staff described how the overlap between their own organizational goals and the *Leamos Juntos* goals was a supportive factor for their participation. The case study illuminated how this advancement of INGO goals factored into *debutant* INGO decisions to adopt the *Leamos Juntos* programming, for example when Book Borrowers, upon learning about *Leamos Juntos*, was easily able to see the overlap and the convergence of goals. The findings also confirm that public education staff see *debutant* INGOs as a vehicle for advancing their own interests, for example when the Bello Department LJ Links suggest that *debutant* INGOs could provide financing so that the department would be able to fund teacher training. This potential factor, which adds to the original framework by highlighting that department staff that are strategically planning on INGO participation because they have an alignment with the INGO goals, is also a supportive factor. This is captured in the revised framework within department characteristics. The findings show how the INGOs advance *Leamos Juntos* while also using it as an opportunity to justify their own programming. This is particularly evident with Activate Readers.

The findings partially confirm Draxler's (2008) assertion that **a shared general understanding of the need for the intervention contributed to the success of INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos*** because the findings do not speak to the overall success of *Leamos Juntos* as a multi-stakeholder partnership for education (MSPE). All public education staff and INGOs shared the understanding that *Leamos Juntos* was worthwhile, and all were actively supporting it and, in the case of Book Borrowers, was eager to learn more about how to participate. Because the specific focus of this study was around *Leamos Juntos*, the revised framework incorporates this important detail.

### Supports missing from the framework

The findings confirm that **certain aspects of the *Leamos Juntos* program were supportive factors for *debutant* INGO participation**. For example, there were four common supportive factors of the *Leamos Juntos* program itself that occurred across all three *debutant* INGOs included: (1) Specific mention of INGO involvement in *Leamos Juntos* from the Ministry, (2) The *Leamos Juntos* national outreach efforts, (3) The *Leamos Juntos* books themselves, and (4) Alignment between *Leamos Juntos* program goals and INGO mission and activities. In Activate Readers and Chapter Readers, where these two INGOs were actively participating in the *Leamos Juntos* program, common factors also included: (5) *Leamos Juntos* and INGO work in book lending, (6) Guidance of *Leamos Juntos* Program Document for implementation, (7) *Leamos Juntos* teacher training, and (8) Flexible participation for INGOs. The revised framework incorporates characteristics from *Leamos Juntos* on both potential supports and potential barriers.

*Leamos Juntos* explicitly invited INGOs and NGOs to participate, stating that the public sector could and should work with NGOs to achieve these goals. All *debutant*

INGO cases described this invitation as well as the national outreach efforts that amplified awareness about *Leamos Juntos* as supportive factors. For example, Chapter Readers staff described the variety of outreach and marketing activities conducted by *Leamos Juntos* and all the *debutant* INGOs learned about and participated in the Innovations Conference. The books themselves, as described by Chapter Readers, indicated a certain sincerity in the program's goals through that strategic investment. The Alo Department supervisors described the alignment between the Activate Readers and *Leamos Juntos* programs and how that alignment made it easy to work together.

Since Activate Readers and Chapter Readers were actively participating, they also gave examples of the programmatic overlap in activities between *Leamos Juntos* and the INGOs around book lending, saying that this made it particularly easy for them to advance *Leamos Juntos*. In addition to the *Leamos Juntos* Program Document as a helpful guide, the *Leamos Juntos* teacher trainings also provided additional opportunities for Activate Readers and Chapter Readers to collaborate, since each already included teacher training as a part of their approach. Finally, also described as a separate factor, both Activate Readers and Chapter Readers gave the example of this model of INGO participation, namely that it allowed for flexible participation by the INGOs, allowing them to adapt the program as it fit and aligned with their own goals.

### ***Conclusions Summary***

These conclusions indicate that the framework provided a new tool for analyzing the variety of factors that help and hinder *debutant* INGO participation in a government education program. Particularly, the framework supports analyzing a national reading program. The framework also has some limitations. It does not include proposed



strategies for increasing supportive factors and decreasing barriers. It also does not provide a clear way to incorporate other elements of the findings such as the limitations related to intercultural and bilingual education.

In spite of the limitations, the revised framework is a valuable resource and one that future researchers can utilize. The revised framework incorporates the initial factors and then draws on the conclusions to elaborate on additional, specific potential supports and potential barriers. This revised framework provides a way to systematically review the supports and barriers related to *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* and although it focuses on this one case study in Guatemala, it may have utility in other countries with national reading programs and a proliferation of small INGOs.

Furthermore, I provide two new useful conceptual terms—NGOtenango and *debutant* INGO—and these allow for a better understanding of the context in Guatemala. These new terms contribute to the scholarly discussion on NGO and government partnerships as well as NGO participation in government education programs. Although specific to the Guatemalan context, these terms may also help to illuminate situations in other countries. Defining a new category of INGOs—*debutant* INGOs—I create an opportunity for future researchers to delve deeper and to further understand their work and impacts in Guatemala.

### ***Implications for practice, policy and future research***

Based on the conclusions, there are a variety of implications for practice. The implications for practice are intended for practitioners—*debutant* INGOs and public

education staff—who are not creating policy but instead enacting and implementing policy.

**Implications for Practice.** The first implication for practice is directed towards public education staff in departments (teachers, school directors, supervisors, department staff, LJ Links). The primary implication for practice is that public education staff across a department can plan strategically about how to identify and invite *debutant* INGO participation in *Leamos Juntos* and potentially other national programs.

The findings confirm that both *debutant* INGO staff and public education staff are interested in collaboration in a national reading program when there are: (1) existing positive relationships, (2) the INGO mission is in alignment with the program goals, and (3) where the INGOs have an existing commitment to public education. Since this study was completed, a new online directory called “El Directorio” has created a space for INGOs and NGOs to list themselves in an online directory format. El Directorio has also sponsored gatherings of INGOs. El Directorio can be used as a tool and presents an opportunity for public education staff to identify *debutant* INGOs working in their departments and districts. Another way to identify *debutant* INGOs is for department staff to work directly with supervisors, school directors and teachers to identify the *debutant* INGOs working in the area. This latter strategy was identified by the Alo and Bello Department cases and is worth trying.

Once the public education staff have identified *debutant* INGOs, consider an invitation that will bring together *debutant* INGOs that meet the three criteria above. Within the context of *Leamos Juntos*, the focus of the invitation can emphasize reading.

This could also be attempted for other national programs such as *Contemos Juntos* as long as the focus of the national program is clear to the *debutant* INGOs. Public education practitioners should bear in mind that *debutant* INGOs are also cautious about their participation and that it may take time to cultivate trusting relationships.

The second implication for practice is directed towards *debutant* INGO staff. Consider identifying the current roles and relationships that your organization has with the public education sector. Has your organization participated in National Programs before? What conditions would your organization need to participate in *Leamos Juntos* or another national program? Does your organization's mission align neatly with *Leamos Juntos* or another national program? If so, consider taking steps to document and identify any overlapping goals and programmatic activities.

Public education staff in the departments where you work and at the national level have valuable insights and important information about education. Seek out public education staff to learn about ways to support the existing public education efforts where you work. Learn about the history of education in Guatemala to find out about the ongoing struggles in the sector. Learn about the education reforms as laid out in the Peace Accords and identify national organizations working to further these goals. Consider partnering with established national NGOs or indigenous organizations that are advancing the education reforms. Learn about techniques to incorporate bilingual and intercultural education into reading activities and strategies for teaching children how to read in their local language/s. The legacy of colonization is still very present and *debutant* INGOs should take it upon themselves to ensure that they are not reproducing colonial relationships.

Consider seeking out opportunities to learn from other INGOs working in Guatemala and consider using the online NGO directory called “El Directorio” or other directories to learn about and communicate with other INGOs. In this case study, the *debutant* INGO cases’ participation in *Leamos Juntos* amplified the program’s reach and, although I do not have data that would indicate this has changed children’s ability to read, more exposure to and support for reading and books is a positive developmental step towards reading fluency and comprehension.

**Implications for Policy.** Based on the conclusions, where the findings support the framework, there are three recommendations for policy makers who wish to stimulate INGO participation in national reading programs: (1) national reading program planning processes can incorporate activities to identify not only the large and well known INGOs but as many *debutant* INGOs as possible that are working in reading in that country; (2) INGO participation in national reading programs can be designed in a way that is voluntary and flexible for *debutant* INGO participation while also providing some specific guidance on how that participation can take shape with an aim towards strengthening the reach and capacity of the public education sector, and (3) INGOs and public education staff will have different ideas about what a partnership should look like and these ideas can be explored with an aim towards identifying common ground.

Until now, the national reading program planning processes have placed limited if any attention on *debutant* INGOs as potential partners to advance their programs. The findings in this dissertation suggest that planning processes need to include stakeholders who work directly with *debutant* INGOs—such as supervisors, school directors and teachers— as well as available online tools to identify all the potential INGO participants

more accurately. The goal is to add *debutant* INGOs to the group of already well known larger INGOs and NGOs that, (1) have a mission alignment with the national reading program, and (2) are already committed to and working in the public education sector.

When conceptualizing INGO participation in any national reading program, consider voluntary participation as a viable way to invite *debutant* INGO participation. However, policy makers can also provide specific guidance on how INGOs might participate. Consider providing several different examples that can be used by teachers to invite *debutant* INGOs in a way that makes sense for their classroom or school and be used by *debutant* INGO staff alike. Consider also how to make clear communication channels between public education staff and *debutant* INGOs so that *debutant* INGOs know who to communicate with to learn more or participate.

Given that the *debutant* INGO cases and the public education staff in the department cases described different ideas about what their partnership would look like, policymakers can consider this dynamic when planning. Existing positive relationships between *debutant* INGOs and public education staff provide a foundation on which to build. Consider first identifying these instances where positive relationships exist. Consider allocating time to stimulate shared planning efforts. By building on positive relationships and creating opportunities for shared planning, practitioners may be able to further advance their relationships with each other and further expand the reach of a national reading program.

**Implications for future research.** Based on the conclusions, where the findings do not support or complicate the framework, I propose the following questions for future research.

**Question one.** *In what ways do teachers and school directors negotiate debutant INGO access into their schools along with participation in Leamos Juntos?* This research question would specifically focus on the experiences of teachers and school directors.

The perspectives of teachers and school directors in this study were particularly revealing in that these participants were directly impacted by *debutant* INGO activity, both negatively and positively. The Alo Department interviews and focus groups with teachers and school directors provided the most in-depth and detailed examples of the ways in which *debutant* INGOs were impacting their operations.

**Question two.** *How are debutant INGOs training teachers to teach reading in a student's first language? As identified by different stakeholders (INGO staff, teachers, parents, children), what are the supports, barriers and strategies moving forward?* The findings suggest that *debutant* INGOs have difficulty implementing intercultural and bilingual education (EBI) as it relates specifically to training teachers how to teach students to read in the language that the student knows best (L1). However, there is limited information about the existing efforts, supports and barriers for *debutant* INGOs to incorporate teacher training around teaching reading in L1. Given the explicit directive within the Peace Accords education reforms to implement EBI and the existing challenges experiences within the education sector in Guatemala, *debutant* INGOs may be in a position to play a role in advancing that reform.

**Question three.** *To what extent do issues of race, nationality and colonization affect debutant INGO participation in schools in areas with a majority indigenous population?*

Given that issues of race, nationality, and colonization were highlighted across two cases in the findings, but not across the other four cases, it is an area for future research. The case study did not specifically include questions about race, nationality and/or colonization meaning that these issues may be impacting more communities and *debutant* INGOs. This research could be approached by working with teachers in majority indigenous populations to learn about their experiences. Additionally or alternatively, one could approach this by learning about the ways in which *debutant* INGOs themselves consider these issues in their own work, or not, as well as how it affects their approach, or not.

### ***A final note***

When I began thinking about the design of this project in 2014, *Leamos Juntos* was a very new program and it seemed like the opportune moment to further explore *debutant* INGO participation in this new kind of multi-stakeholder partnership for education. The year of my study, the Perez-Molina government collapsed, which included the resignations of the Minister of Education and other high-ranking officials just before the president and vice president were arrested. Since that administration, successive administrations have become more restrictive of NGOs. The Guatemalan government passed a new NGO law in 2021 curtailing the rights of all NGOs and increasing the executive power to intervene and even dissolve NGOs at their discretion (UNHCA, 2021). This restriction and escalation of tension, while affecting all NGOs, appears to have been targeting those NGOs that are especially outspoken on human rights

issues. I have not seen state violence targeting education focused NGOs but the state has increasingly gone after organizations and former officials involved in prosecuting war crimes and/or advocating for the victims of these war crimes. To my knowledge, *debutant* INGOs working in education have not been targeted even though the change in laws has had a chilling effect.

*Leamos Juntos* has continued as the national reading program although I have not had significant contact with officials working in the Ministry since my departure at the end of 2015. Before completing my fellowship, I conducted a pre-analysis drawing on my entire data set and hosted a presentation on the preliminary findings for the *Leamos Juntos* Technical Team, several INGO staff members, and other colleagues. I then disseminated those preliminary findings to all of the participants in my research as a part of my commitment to make available the findings in Spanish and before returning home. It was my hope that some of the lessons learned could be applied immediately or in the near future. The case study in this dissertation speaks to a particular moment in time and does not necessarily reflect current practice in *Leamos Juntos*. New tools like El Directorio and a continually growing population of *debutant* INGOs suggests that there continue to be opportunities for advancing this research, to learn how more about the ways in which *debutant* INGOs are shaping and being shaped by the public education system in Guatemala.



## Appendices

## ***Appendix A***

### **Cuestionario para Enlaces de Lectura de *Leamos Juntos* - Survey for LJ Links**

**Instrucciones:** Por favor, lea cuidadosamente cada pregunta o aviso y siga las instrucciones. Elabore la mejor respuesta con la información que ya tiene sobre este tema. Las palabras escritas en letras itálicas son instrucciones específicas para las preguntas.

**Escriba el nombre de su departamento:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Etnicidad - Marque su respuesta:** Maya, Mestizo, Ladino, Garifuna, Xinca, otra

**Sexo - Marque su respuesta:** Hombre o Mujer

**Edad:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nivel de educación:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Idioma/s:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. ¿Es usted miembro de la Comisión Departamental de Lectura en su departamento?**  
*Marque su respuesta*

SÍ o NO

**2.** Describa su rol en su departamento con respecto al diseño, implementación, monitoreo, y / o evaluación del Programa Nacional de Lectura *Leamos Juntos* incluyendo el plan Departamental de Lectura. *Escriba su respuesta en el espacio de abajo.*

**3.** ¿Tiene usted experiencia trabajando directamente con organizaciones no-gubernamentales (ONG) internacionales? *Marque su respuesta*

SÍ o NO

**4.** ¿Conoce cualquier ONG internacional que está trabajando en escuelas, con maestros/as, o en general en áreas de educación dentro de su departamento? *Marque su respuesta.*

SÍ o NO - *Si marcó "SÍ" por favor hacer una lista de ellas en el espacio abajo.*

5. ¿Está usted u otros en su departamento, trabajando con las ONG internacionales para implementar el Programa Nacional de Lectura *Leamos Juntos*? Marque su respuesta.

SÍ o NO - Si marcó "SÍ", en el espacio de abajo nombre la/s organización/s y escriba una descripción acerca de su trabajo con esta/s organización/s para implementar *Leamos Juntos*.

6. Una de las acciones claves del Programa Nacional de Lectura *Leamos Juntos* es el "establecimiento de alianzas y participación comunitaria" a nivel nacional, tanto como departamentales y locales. Favor marcar con una "X" a cada grupo que está participando actualmente en la implementación de *Leamos Juntos*.

- Instituciones gubernamentales
- Organizaciones no-gubernamentales
- Organizaciones no-gubernamentales internacionales
- Empresas o Negocios
- Diarios de circulación
- Radios
- Padres de Familia
- Otros

Si marcó "Otros", por favor explíquelo en el espacio de abajo.

**7.** ¿Cuáles han sido los aportes para trabajar con las ONG internacionales para la implementación de *Leamos Juntos* en su departamento? Si no trabajó con ONG internacionales para implementar Leamos Junto pero sí ha trabajado con ONG internacionales en otro contexto, explica el contexto y los aportes. *Escriba su respuesta en el espacio de abajo.*

**8.** ¿Cuáles han sido las barreras para trabajar con las ONG internacionales para la implementación de *Leamos Juntos* en su departamento? Si no trabajó con las ONG internacionales para implementar Leamos Junto pero sí ha trabajado con las ONG internacionales en otro contexto, explica las barreras abajo. *Escriba su respuesta en el espacio de abajo.*

**9.** Basado en su experiencia personal, escriba recomendaciones específicas acerca de: 1) como disminuir las barreras que existen para la participación de las ONG internacionales y, 2) como aumentar los aportes que existen, o recomienda aquellos aportes que todavía no existen, para la participación de las ONG internacionales en la implementación de *Leamos Juntos*. *Escriba su respuesta en el espacio de abajo.*

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**10.** Basado en su experiencia, ¿Qué tan útiles son las ONG internacionales en la implementación de *Leamos Juntos* en su departamento? *Marque su respuesta.*

Extremadamente útil	Ligeramente útil	Ni útil ni inútil	Ligeramente inútil	Extremadamente inútil
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**11.** Basado en su experiencia, ¿Qué tan útiles podrían ser las ONG internacionales en la implementación de *Leamos Juntos* en su departamento? *Marque su respuesta.*

Extremadamente útil	Ligeramente útil	Ni útil ni inútil	Ligeramente inútil	Extremadamente inútil
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**12.** Basado en su experiencia, ¿Qué tan útiles podrían ser las ONG internacionales en apoyar las políticas públicas de la educación en su departamento? *Marque su respuesta.*

Extremadamente útil	Ligeramente útil	Ni útil ni inútil	Ligeramente inútil	Extremadamente inútil
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**13.** Basado en su experiencia, ¿Qué tan útiles podrían ser las ONG internacionales en apoyar las políticas públicas de la educación en Guatemala? *Marque su respuesta.*

Extremadamente útil	Ligeramente útil	Ni útil ni inútil	Ligeramente inútil	Extremadamente inútil
---------------------	------------------	-------------------	--------------------	-----------------------

**14.** ¿Desea usted compartir cualquier otro comentario sobre la participación de las ONG internacionales en *Leamos Juntos*? *Escriba su respuesta en el espacio de abajo.*

MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU PARTICIPACION

## ***Appendix B***

### **Brief Overview of the NGO Landscape in Guatemala**

The NGO sector has grown considerably over the last 60 years and several events emerge from the literature as nodes of NGO growth.<sup>35</sup> These are: the 10 year period of democratically elected governments (1944 - 1954); the Catholic Action movement with its spreading of cooperatives (1955 - 1975); the impact of the U.S. foreign policy initiative called the Alliance for Progress (1961); the earthquake of 1976 and the 10 years corresponding to the most brutal oppression during the armed conflict (1976 - 1986); the years leading up to the Peace Accords (1990 -1996), and the PRONADE initiative for community-managed schools (1994 - 2007) (MacDonald, 1995; Marques & Bannon, 2003; Poppema, 2008; Sanford, 2003; Sollis, 1995; Sridhar, 2007; Streeter, 2006; Alvarado Browning, 1998; Cardelle, 2003; IHERC, 1988). This dissertation addressed a gap in the literature by elaborating on the recent phenomenon of NGO growth that I call NGOTenango.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has slowly changed its stance towards NGO and INGO programming in the education sector. In 2010, the Ministry of Education began an initiative within the Office of Accreditation and Certification (DIGEACE) to invite NGOs to register with the Ministry of Education. This initiative asked for voluntary registration by NGOs so that NGOs could become affiliated and accredited by the Ministry. The process would start with a self-audit conducted by the NGO followed

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<sup>35</sup> For a full discussion of these nodes of NGO growth in Guatemala, see *Beyond Pronade: NGOs and the Formal Education Sector in Guatemala* (Carter, 2012) [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie\\_capstones/15/](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_capstones/15/)



by an audit by DIGEACE to determine whether the NGO met their standards. Depending on the results, the NGO could be certified for between one and three years or would be given requirements for improvement and could attempt to become accredited later. This new policy mechanism was described to me by a Ministry official as a way for the Ministry to take responsibility for the organizations working in the education sector and for NGOs to benefit from becoming accredited with the formal education sector. However, they also described how few NGOs had done this accreditation process and none of the *debutant* INGOs that I spoke with in the study were aware of this mechanism.

During this study, I identified many different groups that collect information and/or served as organizing groups for NGOs in Guatemala. These included groups that were officially part of the Ministry of Education: the Office of Accreditation and Certification (DIGEACE) and the Office of National and International Cooperation (DICONIME), which were both collecting information on NGOs. One of the most visibly active umbrella groups was the Grand Campaign for Education with at least 77 different organizations and agencies as affiliates. Since 2004, they have initiated “social audits” of the education system to draw attention to areas of success and areas that need improvement (Méndez, 2012).

The Association for the Coordination of NGOs and Cooperatives in Guatemala (CONGCOOP), the Consortium for Development NGOs in Guatemala and the Council of International Development Organizations (FONGI) all served as umbrella groups that were connecting NGOs. Two other groups referenced in the literature included the Council of Social Well-Being in Guatemala (COBISAGUA) the Association for Civil Society (ASC) (Sridhar, 2007; Poppema, 2009). I also identified hemispheric

collaborative efforts that had affiliates in Guatemala, specifically the Latin American Campaign for the Rights to Education (CLADE) and their Guatemalan affiliate comprised of different national organizations, the Colectivo de Educación para Todas y Todos de Guatemala.<sup>36</sup>

Lastly, at the time of the study, I identified three online groups that collected information about NGOs through a self-registration process: WEGuatemala.org, Idealist.org, and The Guatemala NGO Network. Because these were self-registering websites, they were undoubtedly missing NGOs. Furthermore, the sites allowed NGOs to tag themselves with the term “education” whether or not that was their specific focus.

Using these lists, and by identifying the largest international INGOs working in Guatemala, I was able to identify 72 INGOs working specifically in education. Within those 72, I identified 59 small- and medium-sized INGOs that fit my parameters for *debutant* INGOs. I reviewed their websites to better understand their work in reading programming. After this review, I identified 10 that had a specific focus on reading and reached out to each of the organizations to invite them to be a part of the study. I was able to have ongoing communication with three of those *debutant* INGOs and ultimately each of those three agreed to be a part of the case study. In addition to those three that participated in the case study, I interviewed 12 other INGOs: nine were *debutant* INGOs and three were large international NGOs.

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<sup>36</sup> Find recent activity at the CLADE website: <https://redclade.org/autoria/colectivo-de-educacion-para-todas-y-todos-guatemala/>

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