



**Case title:**

The National Contraceptive Security Commission in Guatemala Addresses Political and Operational Challenges through Collaborating, Learning, Adapting, and Transforming

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**Summary: (word limit 200-250)**

The National Contraceptive Security Commission (CNAA) in Guatemala was established to ensure the availability of contraceptives and to guarantee the population's access to family planning. Representatives of public organizations, civil society, and trade associations participate in the group, however, the integration of representatives from different areas, with different responsibilities and interests, has posed a challenge.

To address the challenge, Health and Education Policy Plus (HEP+), funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, worked with the CNAA to apply the collaborate, learn, adapt (CLA) framework to identify strengths and develop bonds of trust among its members. In addition, HEP+ facilitated activities to acknowledge the contribution of each member and to achieve agreements in planning, decision making, potential allies, and joint action. These practices have generated important results such as:

1. Supporting the update of regulations surrounding the purchase of drugs (from international sources) to now include contraceptives



Members of the National Contraceptive Security Commission and institutional authorities during an annual meeting in May 2018 to present advances and challenges for contraceptive assurance. Credit: José Torres, HEP+

2. Promoting advocacy and dialogue when family planning financing or services are at risk due to political or institutional provisions
3. Helping to address barriers to expand coverage of family planning to include young people, among other results

This case study will focus on how HEP+ used CLA principles to help CNAA strengthen relationships and networks, and foster both internal and external collaboration to improve access to contraceptives in Guatemala.

**1. Which subcomponents of the Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Framework are reflected *most* in your case (select up to 5 subcomponents)?**



<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/> Openness
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External Collaboration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relationships & Networks
<input type="checkbox"/> Technical Evidence Base	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuous Learning & Improvement
<input type="checkbox"/> Theories of Change	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge Management
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scenario Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Institutional Memory
<input type="checkbox"/> M&E for Learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision-Making
<input type="checkbox"/> Pause & Reflect	<input type="checkbox"/> Mission Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Management	<input type="checkbox"/> CLA in Implementing Mechanisms

**2. What is the general context in which the case takes place?  
What organizational or development challenge (s) prompted you to collaborate, learn, and/or adapt (word limit 250-300)**

The CNAA was created as part of approval of the Universal and Equitable Access to Family Planning Services Act. As per the law, the commission is made up of nine organizations: the Ministry of Health, the Guatemala Institute of Social Security, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education, the Presidential Secretariat for Women, the Bureau for the Defense of Indigenous Women, the Instance for Health and Development of Women, the Guatemala Association of Female Physicians, and APROFAM. Their duties include ensuring the availability of funds to purchase contraceptives, developing strategies and mechanisms to access competitive prices, and ensure that institutions define and share policies and strategies for services.

HEP+ has provided technical and financial assistance to create the commission and for fulfillment of its functions. As part of the technical assistance, it worked to: facilitate consensus and collaboration agreements among the members of the CNAA; share information and evidence on topics of interest; and promoted sessions to exchange, discuss, and analyze information, among other actions that allow the CNAA to monitor the political environment and the situation of family planning services.

This case study outlines how the CLA framework was used with the CNAA to work together to stop a bill of law intended to divert funding for family planning and reproductive health to other Ministry of Health programs.

**3. Why did you decide to use a CLA approach? Why was CLA considered helpful for addressing your organizational or development challenge? (word limit 200-250)**

The application of the CLA framework was one of the fundamental strategies to transform conditions that threaten the sustainability of family planning services. Identifying lessons learned from past experiences and developing a strategy to face challenges, through collaboration, allowed HEP+ and CNAA to define the policy advocacy strategies that led to positive results.

To face the challenge of diverted funding for family planning, HEP+ identified and delivered data and information to the CNAA as well as facilitated meetings for members to share institutional information relevant to the challenge. HEP+ also created the conditions for CNAA members to share, analyze, and exchange information with decision-makers, to identify potential alliances, and to develop possible scenarios.

**4. Tell us the story of how you used a collaborating, learning and adapting approach to address the organizational or development challenge described in Question 2 (word limit 550-600)**

With support from HEP+ using the CLA guiding principles, the CNAA members created a safe environment to collaborate and learn from each other's experiences. Within this context, the CLA approach has proven useful for multisectoral groups, where a set of stakeholders interact with a common

objective. CLA provides tools so that collaboration is effective and generates results that encourage learning and allow the group to adapt to different scenarios.

The following illustrates how HEP+ applied CLA principles to build the capacity of the CNAA to address the challenge of a bill to divert family planning funds:

- **Identify the problem and clarify the context:** HEP+ convened a meeting with the CNAA and the Instance for Health and Development of Women to identify the challenges associated with ensuring the availability of funds to purchase contraceptives. The members of the CNAA agreed to gather more information—the representative of the Ministry of Finance provided information on the execution of the budget for the Reproductive Health Program, the Ministry of Health representative reported on advances to purchase and distribute contraceptives, the Instance for Health and Development of Women provided information on reports it had received on shortages or political threats to the CNAA, and organizations such as the Presidential Secretariat for Women and the Bureau for the Defense of Indigenous Women analyzed official reports and institutional positions on the subject.
- **Foster internal collaboration:** The collaboration between civil society organizations and government organizations was considered by HEP+ as a key element of this effort. The CNAA appointed an advocacy subcommittee, which created a map of stakeholders and possible allies, developed materials that showed the economic and social benefits of family planning, and established a series of public actions and scheduled meetings with decision-makers.
- **Strengthen collaboration and external alliances:** Based on the stakeholder analysis, relevant interlocutors—such as directors of reproductive health service organizations, congressmen, the vice minister of health, journalists, and civil society leaders—publicly announced their support to not change the destiny of funds allocated to family planning.

- **Develop scenarios and key actions:** Together with the map of stakeholders, scenarios to guide different courses of action were developed. For each scenario, the CNAA identified central actions that had to be executed to trigger a series of events. A key action was to call a press conference that publicly questioned congressmen with the intention to modify the allocation of family planning funds, as well as TV interviews.
- **Leadership and strong commitment:** Leadership and commitment of each of the members of the CNAA was acknowledged as their networks and relationships supported different steps in the process.
- **Collective results:** The results of the actions were strong and boosted the leadership of the members of the advocacy subcommittee. This led to members of the commission continuing to contribute information at CNAA meetings to be considered and analyzed for further action.

**5. Organizational Effectiveness: How has collaborating, learning and adapting affected your team and/or organization? If it's too early to tell, what effects do you expect to see in the future? (word limit 250-300)**

- Most of the members of the CNAA are committed to group's purpose, are more confident with their colleagues, and share information and their perspective on different situations.
- It is always a challenge when CNAA representatives change, but in general the new members learn the dynamics of the job and in most cases, they adapt.
- The members of the CNAA are considered a successful team because of the results they've been acknowledged for. This has led to an environment in which the institutional representatives collaborate and learn from experiences to face challenges.
- The CNAA members organize and distribute tasks according to needs for each situation; they know the strengths of each member and they collaborate with each other to develop products, conduct activities, and achieve results.

- As time goes by, the CNAA requires less technical assistance, is more independent, and has the capacity to manage the resources it needs for its activities.

**6. Development Results: How has using a CLA approach contributed to your development outcomes? What evidence can you provide? If it's too early to tell, what effects do you expect to see in the future? (word limit 250-300)**

In recent years, as a result of joint action, within a framework of collaboration, learning, and adaptation, the CNAA has:

- Achieved the approval of permanent regulations for international purchases of contraceptives
- Stopped a bill of law to remove financial resources allocated to family planning
- Achieved an automated information system that records the results of the three main institutions that provide family planning services

**7. What factors affected the success or shortcomings of your collaborating, learning and adapting approach? What were the main enablers or obstacles? (word limit 250-300)**

The favorable conditions for the process of collaboration, learning, and adaptation among the CNAA include the following:

- The institutions that participate in the commission are defined in the Universal and Equitable Access to Family Planning Services Act, which obliges institutions to appoint a representative and to participate in meetings.
- The reproductive health program of the Ministry of Health, the main provider of health services, showed strong leadership and was always willing to provide financial, supply, and other information that was required. This practice was an example that other organizations replicated later.
- The representatives of civil society that participate in the CNAA contributed with the discussion topics. This led the group to address

relevant processes, such as the low execution of the budget allocated for family planning or the shortage of contraceptives in some services. Another important contribution of civil society is to provide balance, so as not to focus only on services provided by the Ministry and to extend the commission's surveillance to services provided by social security, APROFAM, and other organizations such as the Ministry of Education and SEPREM.

Obstacles include the following:

- Political crises that dominate the political and public agenda.
- The rotation of the representatives, especially when governments change.
- Changes in authorities, especially in the Ministry of Health, which generally means that the coordinator of the Reproductive Health Program changes.

## **8. Based on your experience and lessons learned, what advice would you share with colleagues about using a collaborating, learning and adapting approach? (word limit 250-300)**

From the experience of HEP+ supporting the integration and functioning of the CNAA, the following lessons were learned:

- Take the time to get to know people, how they work individually, and how they work as a team.
- Generate opportunities for coexistence and for teamwork. Avoid generating divisions by treating the participants in the process differently.
- Share and analyze information with people; when people feel comfortable talking about information they use it in their discussions. Share data sources so that people can obtain and process data periodically.
- Always assess actions and lessons learned. Build collective memory so that best practices are captured and can serve as a source for learning.
- When it is successful, integration is quite easy. If it is not successful, it is necessary to create conditions to raise the spirit of the group and

initiate small actions that have a high probability of success to create a resilient and winning culture.

- When people no longer need your support, it is necessary to step back and let them create their own experiences.