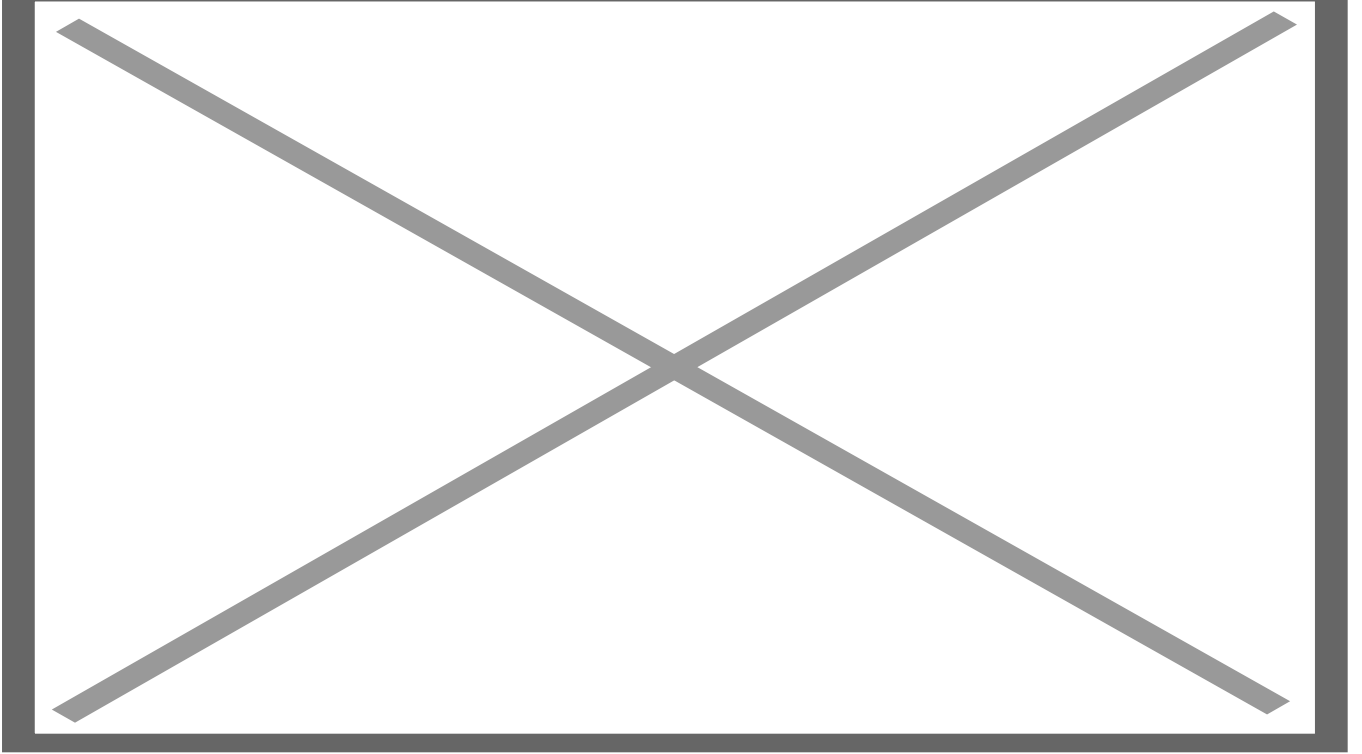


Guatemala: A focus on health care for children and young people

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President of Guatemala Bernardo Arévalo

By María Josefina Arce

Nearing his first month at the helm of Guatemala, President Bernardo Arévalo's strategy to reach out to various sectors of society, especially the most vulnerable, including children and young people, is taking shape.

In recent days, the governmental agreement that gave life to the questioned School Health Insurance Program, implemented by the previous government, headed by the then president Alejandro Giammattei and which was one of his campaign promises for the 2019 general elections, was repealed.

In 2020, this program was launched, but it did not meet the expectations of the population, and received multiple criticisms because the minors did not receive the required assistance, which in many cases was only by telephone.

Moreover, it did not benefit rural areas, where access to health care is deficient and there is a high rate of child malnutrition.

But the attention to children and young people is a priority of the current executive, so the repeal of the agreement is accompanied by an analysis between the Ministries of Education and Public Health and Social Assistance to achieve a new system that allows an effective school health care service.

The President has made it clear that the coverage, accessibility and quality of the service must be improved, which he said should be directed to students at all levels of the public education system.

The program also seeks to make the execution of funds transparent so that every quetzal invested, the authorities emphasized, translates into benefits for the students.

The program, promoted by former President Gianmattei, was in the public eye for various irregularities, such as the fact that students did not receive attention in accordance with the amounts disbursed.

Teachers from different Guatemalan departments denounced that the attention did not reach their communities.

As a result, a financial, operational and legal review of the program has been requested from the Comptroller General's Office and the Attorney General's Office, a request supported by the Central American country's Congress. Arévalo's new government is committed to fighting corruption and guaranteeing access to basic services for all Guatemalans; its measures in favor of health care for children and young people, a highly vulnerable sector, are part of this effort.

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