

# Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment

## Annex 3: Honduras Profile<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this version of the USAID Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment was edited for public distribution. Certain sections, including specific country-level recommendations for USAID Missions, were omitted from the Country Profile Annexes. These recommendations are summarized in the Conclusions and Recommendations Section of this assessment.



## **Acknowledgments**

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## Historical Context

The Central American conflicts in the 1980s left deep scars throughout the region, including in Honduras. While not immersed in its own civil war, Honduras played host to the anti-Sandinista Nicaraguan Resistance fighters (Contras). During the 1980s, Honduras was considered a repressive society, and human rights abuses were a common occurrence. The signing of peace accords in the 1990s in neighboring countries signaled a turning point for the region, as economic reform and transitions to democracy became the dominant paradigm for development.

With a per capita income of US\$800 per year, Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the region. Overall, 71.1 percent of Hondurans lives in poverty, and 77.7 percent of the rural population is poor. In urban areas, some 63.1 percent are poor. Income inequality is a critical issue. The richest 20 percent of households receive 54.3 percent of the total income of the country, while the poorest 20 percent receive only 3.2 percent. Of the country's 7 million inhabitants, 41 percent are under age 14. Because the population is fairly young and economic conditions are harsh, a large number of marginalized youths struggle daily to subsist. Youths head 10 percent of Honduran households, and 68 percent of these households are below the poverty line.

Economic growth has been generally weak and is characterized by underproduction. From 1995 to 2002, average annual growth fluctuated between 2.6 and 5 percent. Hurricane Mitch, which caused US\$2 billion in damage and killed 5,000 people in 1998, affected growth negatively (-1.9 percent in 1999), but the economy grew 5 percent the following year before slowing to about 2 percent in 2002.

Honduras is creating a niche in textile manufacturing. The *maquila* (manufacturing plant) industries, which accounted for 6.5 percent of the growth in GDP last year, employ one in three Hondurans. Honduras' ratification of CAFTA in 2005 could help this industry expand.

Honduras's population is fairly young: 41 percent are under 15, and 20 percent are 15-24 years old. Approximately six percent of the youth population is illiterate. Twenty-nine percent of children drop out of school before grade 5.<sup>2</sup>

Honduras is considered one of the most violent countries in Latin America. In 1999, the homicide rate reached 154 per 100,000 inhabitants, which was attributed largely to juvenile gangs, organized crime, drug trafficking, and social violence. More recent levels are lower—46 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants—but are still higher than other countries in the region.<sup>3</sup>

A high homicide rate is coupled with a high rate of physical violence and crimes against property are prevalent. Most of the crime that does take place occurs in the major urban centers of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. There are claims that groups composed of

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO statistics. [www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org)

<sup>3</sup> Clare Ribando. CRS Report for Congress. Gangs in Central America. Order Code RS22141. September 21, 2005.

both public and private sector individuals have committed unsanctioned acts of violence against youth and gang members. During the last five years extra-judicial killings of street children have raised concerns about social cleansing and the possible involvement of police in some of these murders. Marta Sabellón from *Casa Alianza*, an international NGO involved with youth issues, reported that 2,825 youths had been killed in the last five years, and about 35 youths are killed each month. In at least 55 percent of the cases, the assassins have not been identified.

## Nature of the Gang Phenomenon in Honduras

The current level of youth violence in Honduras is among the worst in Central America. The gang phenomenon is considered by many as one of the biggest problems affecting Honduras. According to police statistics, at the end of 2003, there were 36,000 gang members in Honduras.<sup>4</sup> Gangs established themselves in Tegucigalpa in the 1980s. MS-13 became prominent in Honduras in 1989; 18th Street became prominent in 1993. These two gangs are now well entrenched, particularly in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, where they are responsible for many crimes. Their real growth was not felt, however, until the 1990s, which coincided with legal and illegal migration to the United States and subsequent deportations back to Honduras.<sup>5</sup>

For many, however, immigration to the United States was not a dream come true. Instead of finding economic opportunities, many found gangs. As one gang member in the San Pedro Sula Prison stated, “I went to the U.S. because I dreamed a lot. I would say: ‘Hey man, I’m going to the U.S., I’m going to bring me back a car, and this and that.’ In the end, I didn’t bring back anything, instead I went to ruin my life . . . I didn’t go to get ahead, instead to ruin myself, to become a *marero*, to become a gangster.”<sup>6</sup>

In 1992, the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began to deport these youths in earnest. As one INS official explained, “If a gang member is out on the street and the police can’t make a charge, we will go out and deport them for being here illegally if they fit that criteria.”<sup>7</sup> Many people who work with gangs cite 1995 as a year of massive deportations of gang members to Honduras. Deportees who returned to Honduras were instrumental in the proliferation of the two dominant gangs there. At the outset of 1995, there was a significant assimilation of small-scale street gangs into the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs in Honduras. As the assimilation took place, members of smaller gangs began to imitate the two main rival gangs, adopting the hand signs, clothing, and language that originated on the streets of Los Angeles. In El Progreso in Honduras, for example, at least 10 gangs disappeared.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear whether the police

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<sup>4</sup> Ernesto Bardales, *La “Mara Salvatrucha” y el “Barrio 18 St”*: Un Fenómeno Transnacional, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Many Hondurans never made it as far as the United States and either attempted to work in Mexico or were seized by Mexican authorities on their way north. According to Honduran officials, Mexico deported 75,000 Hondurans in 2004, and deported 37,000 in 2005. Honduras is second in deportations from Mexico after Guatemala.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ernesto Bardales, *La “Mara Salvatrucha” y el “Barrio 18 Street.”*: Un Fenómeno Transnacional, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with unnamed gang member. September 2006. The ten gangs were los Shaggys, la 21, los Chucos, los Papi Chulos, los RT, los Pau, los Casi Natos, los Condor, los Demonios de la Noche, and the Los Muertos.

were involved in eliminating some of these young gang members or if they merged into other gangs. Regardless, the consolidation of the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs as the two main gangs has been felt throughout the country. Street graffiti, or “tagging,” delineates gang territories from one another.

For the most part, Honduran gangs exist to defend territory. Where there is an MS-13 gang, 18th Street gang members are generally close by. This naturally leads to many violent confrontations, including deaths.

Violence is one means to enhance the reputation of the gang. Honduran media have facilitated the glamorization of gangs by reporting gang violence on a daily basis. Rival gangs compete over who can demonstrate the most brutality or audacious delinquent behavior. Daily news in Honduras often shows gang members displaying their tattoos and using hand signs to show their gang affiliation.

Based on interviews, the field team estimates that the number of gang members in Honduras ranges from 5,000 to 70,000. Mario Fumero, Director of Proyecto Victoria, a rehabilitation center in the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, categorizes gang members according to four types: (1) Sympathizers; (2) Recruits; (3) Members; and (4) Leaders. Sympathizers start as lookouts on sidewalk corners and later become involved in selling drugs and other crimes. A sympathizer is voluntarily “jumped” into the gang two to three years later. The interview team was told that lately, before the new gang members are “jumped,” they are required to kill or commit a crime. As another aspect of gang initiation, the initiate is beaten. In the case of MS-13, the beating goes on symbolically for 13 seconds. According to Fumero, women make up 7 percent of gang membership.

Honduras implemented anti-maras legislation in 2001 after the National Congress approved an amendment to the Penal Code intended to deal with crimes committed by gangs. In response, gangs are now less territorial and have changed their dress, some members have fled to El Salvador and the United States, and some *clickas* still charge war taxes or extortion on bus drivers, taxi drivers, and small business owners. Others have been hired as mercenaries and are used for executions, drug distribution, and distractions for the police while other gang business is being conducted. As gangs have become more sophisticated, many have become involved in trafficking of drugs and arms. Many youths in gangs are also substance abusers, and their payment for services is often drugs, especially crack and marijuana. Up until 2000, gangs used homemade weapons, but gangs are becoming more sophisticated as some drug traffickers pay gang members with firearms. Honduran gangs tend to be located around prisons to allow easier communication with incarcerated leaders.

Sub-Commissioner Sabellon, from the Honduran police’s Frontier Program, believes that gangs have no ties to Colombian narco-trafficking; he says that gangs are normally at bottom of the food chain and work for a *Capo* (neighborhood drug wholesaler) and have no direct links to international narco-drug traffickers. He also states that in urban centers along the Atlantic coast, 60 percent of youths are involved in gangs.

Sub-Commissioner Sabellon's views do not correspond with those of other Honduran authorities. Oscar Alvarez, Secretary of Public Security, said that in 2002, Honduran communities were under siege and that President Maduro's hardline approach has allowed communities to breathe again.

There are lots of local opinions about what the problem is and what should be done to address the gang issue in Honduras. For example, Henry Fransen Jr., Executive Director, Association of Maquiladoras in San Pedro Sula and current funder for the Jovenes Hondureños Adelante, Juntos Avancemos (Jha-Ja – Young Hondurans Together Advance) program (see Current Responses to Gangs section later in this profile) said that Honduras needs 80,000-120,000 new jobs per year, and that the *maquila* industry plans on creating 15,000 jobs yearly. He said that gangs are a significant threat to the private sector, as many businesses are paying war taxes and businesses are spending lots of money on private security. Improving security would help improve the image of the country.

Fransen also stated that the new legislation, *Ley Anti-Maras* (see Current Responses to Gangs section later in this profile) does not get to the root of the problem, but is necessary for the moment to stop delinquent acts committed by gangs. Because gang members are often deported from the United States and elsewhere back to Honduras, he sees the anti-gang law as a positive move.

## **Costs and Impacts of Gang Activity**

### Impacts on Economic, Social, and Democratic/Political Development

Estimates of the costs related to gang violence are difficult to ascertain because no concrete data exist. Honduras has adopted a hard-line law enforcement approach to dealing with gangs. As a result, the majority of government resources goes towards law enforcement, and very little is allocated for prevention and intervention. Police officers nevertheless believe their efforts are under-funded. The Honduran Border Police and the Special Cobras Force do not have adequate resources to deal with the problem of youth violence. As the government responds aggressively to the gang phenomenon, there has been an increase in the execution of street children. As reported by Casa Alianza, some 2,825 have been killed in the last five years alone.

Almost a third of all Hondurans feel a sense of insecurity, which is exacerbated by the overwhelming attention given to gang violence by the media and government. In a survey conducted by Mitch Seligson in 2004, some 18 percent responded that public security and violence—delinquency, crime, violence, drug trafficking, and gangs—were the most serious problems facing the country.<sup>9</sup> The same survey found that those under age 26 accounted for almost 20 percent of those victimized by crime. Those who have higher feelings of insecurity also tend to have little faith in the workings of democracy

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<sup>9</sup> Seligson Survey on Honduras, 2004

and the police system and institutions in general. Perceived personal insecurity has triggered a tremendous growth in private security agencies and firearms sales.

Crime also can affect citizens' responsiveness to and confidence in the governing system. In Seligson's survey, only 32.7 percent of citizens reported crimes to the authorities. Thefts in general were not reported by 30 percent of the population, whereas more serious crimes had a higher reporting percentage.<sup>10</sup> Some 57.2 percent reported that they have little or no faith that the judicial system would punish those guilty of crimes. In the survey, those who had been a victim of crime were more apt to have a lessened trust in the overall institutions, and their levels of satisfaction with democratic performance were lowered.

## **Causes and Risk Factors of Gang Activity**

Youths join gangs in Honduras for many reasons; it is difficult to pinpoint any one cause. As in other parts of the world, there seem to be a series of risk factors that drive youths to become gang members. Some of these factors are discussed below.

**Lack of opportunities and alternatives for youth and adolescents.** There are too few educational opportunities, skills training, recreation and sports activities, and artistic and cultural activities for Honduran youths. Educational options are often of poor quality or irrelevant to their lives, this can lead to school drop-out, leaving youths open to gang recruitment.<sup>11</sup>

**Family breakdown.** Many families are single-parent households. In some cases, both parents are absent and other relatives (grandparents, aunts, and uncles) assume responsibility for raising the family. Many parents are forced to work long hours to earn enough income to subsist, which consequently means they have little time to spend with or supervise their children.

**Movement of Hondurans to and from the United States.** There are large numbers of Honduran immigrants—both legal and illegal—in the United States. A cultural confrontation occurs when the children of these immigrants return to Honduras, either voluntarily or involuntarily, such as in the case of deportations. These youths, who may have belonged to gangs in the United States, return to Honduras with different customs and socialization, which clash with the Honduran culture.

**Abuse of drugs and alcohol.** Many youths who join gangs are often drug dependent, and commit delinquent acts to acquire more drugs. The proliferation of drugs like crack, marijuana, and glue seem to be on the increase and are cited by many for the increase in violence among gangs.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> This is the primary focus of the USAID/Honduras' current education portfolio.

**The presence of weapons.** The proliferation of weapons, many left over from the conflicts of the 1980s in Central America, has contributed to the gang violence. Whereas in the past gangs would use rocks or homemade weapons, gang members today are more prone to resort to deadly violence. During the 1990s, it became possible to buy an AK-47 for very little money. The lack of controls has allowed many citizens to have access to these weapons, in particular gang members. The Attorney General's Office declared in the mid 1990s, that there were 67,000 AK-47s in circulation.

## **Current Responses to Gangs**

Although the gang phenomenon in Honduras is fueled by a plethora of complicated issues, the Honduran Government reacts to gangs and gang violence with law enforcement alone. Many in the NGO community believe that the government's approach is too heavy-handed and violates basic human rights, and that it should spend more resources on prevention and intervention.

### **Government Response:**

The government of President Maduro has responded with a hard-line approach to gang activity, similar to that of El Salvador. Maduro's call for a zero-tolerance campaign against the *maras* resonated with voters, particularly given that Maduro's own son was killed by an organized crime group. The campaign against the *maras* is based on article 332 of the penal code—known as *Ley Anti-Maras*—to round up gang members using “illicit association” as the legal basis.<sup>12</sup> Youths with tattoos on their bodies can be detained and processed under this legislative reform. Intent to commit a crime is interpreted through article 332 as applying to youths who have the appearance of gang members and are found congregating in their neighborhoods.

President Maduro has also attempted to reform article 198 of the *Codigo de la Niñez y la Adolescencia* (Code of Children and Adolescents) in order to extend (from 8 to 12) the number of years that youths 12-18 years old can be incarcerated. Interestingly, statistics provided by the police indicate that only 7-8 percent of crimes are committed by youths associated with gangs. Massive government campaigns against gang activity and the media's tendency to over-exaggerate the problem have created a misinformed perception that youths in gangs are to blame for the majority of crimes in the country. Other organized crime syndicates and white collar criminals do not receive the same level of attention or notoriety that gangs receive.

Currently, it is difficult to determine precisely whether due process guarantees are respected in the application of the *Ley Anti-Maras*. Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that for the most part, they are. Assessment interviews indicated that there are

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<sup>12</sup> Illicit association, as used in Honduras, is generally accepted to mean (and contrary to normal convention) those that have as their objectives the commission of a crime or after their formation or promotion of the commission of crimes.

approximately 500 gang members currently in prison. About 40 percent have been sentenced, and the remaining inmates are awaiting sentencing. On the other hand, processing youths and branding them as gang members merely for having tattoos—which is not a crime—raises doubts about whether due process is indeed being respected. Moreover, the impunity exhibited in the recent deaths of some 235 gang members in the prisons of El Porvenir and San Pedro Sula, together with claims of extrajudicial killings of 2,825 youth in the last five years, further energizes critics who claim that human rights are not being respected by the Maduro government. The assessment team visited members of 18th Street in the San Pedro Sula prison, and the consensus among those interviewed is that eventually they will be killed in prison. There exists a high level of animosity toward the police and a perception that the private sector is out to kill gang members.

Prisons in Honduras are a serious problem in general. They are not built to house gang members, and overall security is bad. Drugs are consumed, and alcohol consumption within the prisons is not addressed. Sentences for gang members can average up to 15 years. Gangs are segregated, and rehabilitation programs in jails are targeted at the non-gang population only. Many gang members have died in prison. The government's response is to build a new prison, *Escorpion* (Scorpion), to deal exclusively with gang members.

The San Pedro Sula prison is especially overcrowded. The assessment team visited approximately 60 members of 18<sup>th</sup> Street gang who were housed in a one-story cinder block building with open roofs (allowing rain to come in) and tight sleeping quarters. They had few recreational activities, and they openly consumed drugs. The gang was separated from the rest of the prison population, and there were no rehabilitation programs offered to them.

Honduras has approximately 7,500 police officers, 2,500 of whom are on duty at any given time. In addition, the police force has over 1,000 investigators and Special Services and Investigations officials as well as several thousand correction officers in the penal facilities. Government officials believed this was not enough, and indicated that the number of police officers must be increased by about 60 percent if crime prevention is to be effective. The current police force is understaffed, underpaid, and it lacks training and resources such as vehicles and other equipment. Intelligence sharing or standardized types of information collected on gangs among various police divisions appear uncoordinated and usually does not occur.

The *Ley Anti-Maras* in Honduras has had mixed results. Gang violence has subsided somewhat. Many youths are having their tattoos removed. In San Pedro Sula, one group removing tattoos estimated some 16,000 youths had gone through their tattoo removal program. It is not clear if this figure is accurate. Some gang members have removed their tattoos to better disguise their gang affiliations.

While the hard-line policy has perhaps served as a deterrent for some at-risk youths, those remaining in the gangs have bonded together to resist the government's crackdown,

creating a cadre of much more violent youths. Anecdotal evidence about hardened initiation rites involving killing, drinking blood, and other violent behavior, as well as increased involvement in organized crime lead some to believe that gangs are making the leap to more mafia-type behavior.

Tomás Vaquero from the San Pedro Sula Chamber of Commerce said that the government's repressive tactics have had a negative impact on controlling gangs. Regarding the *Ley Anti-Maras*, Mario Fumero from *Proyecto Victoria* (Victory Project) said that although many gang members look for ways out of the gangs as a result of the law, a negative result is that gangs often take radical positions. In essence, he said, the law is not bad, but its implementation—indiscriminate detentions of gang members—is.

Marta Sabellón from Casa Alianza remarked that the Anti-Mara Law is a repressive response in that punishes youths for who they are rather than for what they've done. Not all gangs commit crimes. She is of the opinion that there has been a reduction in gang membership. Though even before *Ley Anti-Maras*, the numbers of gang members were going down. Another source said that as a result of Law 332 (*Anti-Maras*), there is an increase in detentions, extrajudicial killings by "death squads," overcrowding in jails, and fear in the communities.

Even some government officials in charge of public security acknowledge off the record that law enforcement has not been as effective as the public discourse would lead some to believe. The need for prevention and intervention programs is recognized as an integral component to any law enforcement effort. While Ricardo Maduro's term is coming to an end and Manuel Zelaya, from the opposition Liberal Party, won the recent election, Zelaya's win was only with a 40 percent voter turn out. President-elect Zelaya proposes to double the number of police officers and supports life sentences along with job training to minimize gang recruitment.

Many of those hyping the threat of gangs have tried to draw linkages with international terrorism to justify the hard-line law enforcement approaches. At this juncture, it is difficult to conclude that any such linkages exist. Even so, the same people within the Maduro government making the case for zero tolerance and the potential terrorist linkages now recognize that more could have been done to prevent at-risk youths from joining gangs and rehabilitating those who were willing to leave gang life. However, little money has been allocated for either prevention or intervention.

As in most countries, Honduras has countless laws and codes applying to children. Honduras also is signatory to numerous international conventions on children and youths, including the *Código de la Niñez y la Adolescencia*, the United Nations directive on the prevention of youth delinquency, the United Nations guidelines on the protection of detained youths, and the Convention on the Rights of Youth. As a result, the penalties for children committing crimes are not as severe as those for adults. Juvenile offenders are housed in less secure detention centers. Procedures with juveniles are more lenient, and juvenile convicts serve less time than adult offenders. Gangs take advantage of the juvenile offender procedures and recruit minors, since they know they will spend less

time in detention than adults. The 13-year-old gang member who recently killed a DEA agent on vacation in Honduras has been linked to 18 other homicides and has managed to escape from four juvenile detention centers.

Three recently approved laws awaiting implementation aim to prevent youth violence: the *Ley de Prevención, Rehabilitación y Reinserción Social de Personas Vinculadas a Maras y Pandillas* (approved by Congress in October 2001); the *Política Nacional de Salud Mental* for the period 2004– 2021; and the *Ley Marco para el Desarrollo Integral de la Juventud y Propuesta de Política Nacional de Juventud* (the Law for Integrated Youth Development and the National Youth Policy Proposal), an initiative that was approved in September 2005. The two main promoters of this legislation have been the *Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes* (ACJ – Association of Christian Youth) and the *Foro Nacional de Juventud* (National Youth Forum). Both organizations have worked for many years with youths and understand the challenges facing this group.

### **Donor and Civil Society Response:**

USAID/Honduras does not have a specific strategic objective or and intermediate results dealing with youth violence or gangs. However, the Mission has several programs that attack the risk factors associated with gang membership and violence, such as the Strengthened Rule of Law Program, 2004-2009, which aims to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the justice system; the Advisory Center for Human Resources Development (CADERH), 2003-2009, which addresses socioeconomic issues that are the root causes of gang membership and violence; and Education for All (EDUCATODOS), 1995-2009, which provides at-risk youths who have dropped out of the formal education system with the opportunity to acquire basic education skills needed to gain and keep employment and increase income.

Other donors have supported anti-gang activities. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), for example, has provided the major share of external assistance, with a \$32 million violence reduction loan program, *Paz y Convivencia*. About US\$8 million, will go towards training gang members in micro-entrepreneurship and reintegrating them back into society. The training component of the IDB project, which is expected to reach 400 youths, will be implemented by the Fundación Unidos por la Vida. The intervention process will include diagnosis, psychological tests, social work, therapy, skills training, and employment opportunities.<sup>13</sup>

In 2003, the World Bank developed a Resource Guide for Municipalities to help Latin American mayors design and develop violence and crime reduction programs.<sup>14</sup> Since

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<sup>13</sup> The loan was approved in 2001 and it has been delayed four years, with only \$1 million implemented to date. However, a recent meeting with IDB indicates that the GOH will obligate approximately \$15 million in 2006 and IDB feels significant progress will be made in the short term.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank. A Resource Guide for Municipalities – Community-based Crime and Violence Prevention for Urban Latin America. November 2003.

that time, the World Bank has been sponsoring workshops and other events to help bring attention to these issues.

Save/UK has focused on political advocacy on children's issues and has been an active part of the Global Working Group on Children in Conflict. Four years ago, they started a small center with the NGO Jha-Ja (*Jovenes Hondureños Adelante Juntos* – Young Hondurans Together Advance) in San Pedro Sula, which offers skills training former gang members and builds bridges between police and gangs. Young Hondurans Together Advance focuses on five phases to engage and eventually assist gang members to reintegrate into society: 1) Investigative and networking – provides insights of the situation and the geographic environment; 2) Engagement and reconciliation of gang-related conflict—shows gang leaders and members that the program is not a threat and takes into account the gang code of honor; 3) Individual and group programs – provides psychological support, vocational training, the identification of job opportunities,<sup>15</sup> and assistance in exploring family conflicts and drug rehabilitation; and 4) follow-up with families – involves family and attempts to reconcile conflicts; and 5) social reintegration, which pulls all of the phases together, resulting in reconciliation, regained trust by gang members and community, and reintegration of gang members into society.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, since its start, 23 youth participating in this program have been killed. Save the Children/UK is closing operations in Honduras in March 2007.

GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) is helping to systematize a local program that since 1996 has had 120 Honduran community police training nearly 120,000 school-age children in grades 5 and 6. GTZ's program includes drug and gang prevention units with parental and teacher involvement.

The Mennonite Church supports the *Paz y Justicia* (Peace and Justice) program, which worked with MS-13, Barrios 18, and the *Batos Locos* gangs to paint murals and play in soccer competitions.

In addition, local NGOs are operating programs:

- *Centro para la Prevención Victoria* works on prevention and rehabilitation of drug addicts. Approximately 30 percent of the center's interns are former gang members.
- *Centro para la Tortura* implements the Club de Sofia discussion groups with gang members in prisons. The center also provides intervention activities through art. Approximately, 200 gang members have attended this intervention program.

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<sup>15</sup> *Jha-Ja* and local NGO, FUNDESERH, helped 60 ex-gang members found the Generation X cooperative. Generation X formed out of the fact that local businesses were reluctant to employ rehabilitated gang members. Generation X operates a metal shop and a tortilla factory to generate income. Save the Children UK. 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Martin and Parry-Williams. *The Right Not to Lose Hope*. Save the Children UK. 2005.

- *Casa Alianza* works with vulnerable youths 12-18 years old, helping them to tackle employment issues, drug addiction problems, and incidents of sexual abuse. Currently 100 youths are at the center.
- *Instituto Hondureño de la Niñez y la Familia* (IHNFA – Honduran Institute of Children and Family), headed by the First Lady of Honduras, has three detoxification centers, with a capacity for 800 youths. One hundred and twenty youths that have attended the centers were gang members.
- Jha-Ja helps gang members eventually reintegrate into society.<sup>17</sup>

Development assistance to Honduras in 2004 totaled approximately \$308 million (\$65 million in grants and \$243 million in loans). The United States, Sweden, and Japan were the largest providers of grant funding. Spain, Germany, United Kingdom, World Bank, IDB, IMF, the European Union, UNDP, and numerous others provide development assistance to Honduras. Further investigation is needed to identify synergies between these programs and potential anti-gang work considered by USAID.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## **Individuals and Organizations Consulted**

### **United States Government**

Brad Fujimoto, Director, Office of Municipal Development and Democratic Initiatives, USAID  
Derrck Olsen, Political Office Chief, US Embassy  
Benjamin A. Brown, Political/Military Officer, US Embassy  
Robert Coronado, Director of Training and Political Development, INL, US Embassy

### **Honduras Government**

Oscar Álvarez, State Secretary, Security Secretariat  
Hilda Caldera, Programa Presidencial de Pandillas  
Deputy Commissioner Carlos Chinchilla, Executive Director Secure Community under the Presidential Program  
Deputy Commissioner Mejia, D.A.R.E. Community Police  
Lieutenant Oseguera, Policía Nacional Preventiva, Unidad Prevención de Maras  
Deputy Commissioner Sabellón, Frontier Program Honduras Police  
Hernán López, Chief of the Education Department, IHADFA  
Alex Moraes, Coordinator, Instituto Hondureño de la Niñez y la Familia (INHFA)  
Sub-Commissioner Rosa Argentina Vilchez, Juvenile Department, National Police

### **Civil Society**

Mario Fumero, Director, Proyecto Victoria Alba Mejía, Centro para la Tortura  
Maria Bonilla, Programa Adios Tatuajes  
Argentina Valle, Fundación Unidos por la Vida  
Marta Sabellón, Casa Alianza  
Olga Mendoza de Pauck, Gang Expert  
Alfredo Landaverde, Narco Trafficking Expert and political analyst  
Diana Pineda, Technical Unit, Foro Valle del Sula 2020  
Ernesto Bardales, Director, Fundación Jha-Ja  
Gang members, Prison San Pedro Sula

### **Church**

Ricardo Torres, Menonita Church  
Dennis Mota, Proyecto Paz y Justicia, Menonites Church  
Fermín Lainez, Fundación Unidos por la Vida, Bishop Rómulo Emiliani  
María Bonilla, Programa Adiós Tatuajes, Maryknoll's Catholic Church

### **International NGO/Donor Community**

Robyn Braverman, Co-Director, Save The Children U.K.

**Private Sector**

Henry Fransen Jr., Executive Director, Honduran Manufacturers Association

Jorge Interiano, Asociació Hondureña de Maquiladores

Tomas Vaquero, Chamber of Commerce