

Description

Assistance Objective: Governing Justly and Democratically Community Youth at Risk (CYAR) Activity

Objective: To strengthen the capacity of governmental and nongovernmental actors to respond effectively to youth involvement in crime, violence, and gangs in high risk areas and to promote positive youth development

Overall Strategic Approach: USAID/Panama will strategically focus its investments to address key threats currently facing youth at risk in vulnerable, high crime, and violence-prone communities. Issues ranging from limited educational and employment opportunities to social exclusion will be targeted using a variety of promising approaches that demonstrate innovation, sustainability, and replicability.

This CYAR Activity aims to provide opportunities for youth at risk in target geographic areas by working within the community to improve and expand service provision by government and non-government entities alike. Work will target type I, II and III youth at risk, as illustrated in Box 1, distinguishing among levels of risk that young people face at various stages of their development to formulate the most appropriate policies. State of the art principles, approaches, and programs in youth and gang violence prevention, positive youth development, multi-sectoral approaches, and community policing precepts will be employed.

In addition to working with youth directly, the CYAR Activity will strengthen non-governmental organizations (NGOs), notably community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) to respond to youth needs while advocating for improved government services. Of critical importance will be the development of positive relationships between the community, local governments, and law enforcement personnel, among others. These relationships will be established based on the identification of common goals and specific activities bringing together diverse sectors.

Common Performance Indicators: The LAC Bureau has established the following common indicators for the portions of the Merida Initiative it is implementing.

1) Number of communities assisted in crime prevention with USG support

Baseline: Zero Target: 26

2) Number of communities with joint police-citizen groups actively operating to reduce crime activity

Baseline: Zero Target: 5

BOX 1

Types of Youth at risk

- **Type I**—Young people who face risk factors in their lives but who have not yet engaged in risky behavior (for example, those living in disadvantaged situations that are at risk of dropping out of school or of being unemployed).
- **Type II**—Young people who engage in risky behavior but have not yet suffered severe negative consequences (for example, youth who are often absent from school but have not yet dropped out, or youth who are involved in delinquent activities but have not yet been arrested, youth who have joined a gang).
- **Type III**—Young people who are experiencing severe negative consequences as a result of risky behavior (for example, youth who have dropped out of school, youth who are incarcerated).

In order to achieve the above USAID Merida Initiative Common Performance Indicators, USAID/Panama has identified two interrelated strategic focus areas for its activities with youth at risk:

1. Expanded opportunities for youth at risk in target geographic areas
2. Improved sectorial capacity to provide coordinated and comprehensive responses for youth at risk

Strategic Focus Area 1: Expanded Opportunities for Youth at Risk in Target Geographic Areas

While the Panamanian government is relatively well positioned to address the needs of its large youth population, efforts have been hampered by various limitations, such as lack of secondary and technical education prospects, scarce recreation and after-school facilities, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, insufficiently developed child, youth, and family health and social welfare institutions, and high levels of social exclusion. In the most vulnerable target geographic areas, service provision is particularly sparse, as it is difficult to attract and maintain professional providers (i.e. teachers and health care workers) and mobility within the communities is often limited by turf battles. Youth at risk must have access to increased opportunities, within their neighborhoods, to engage in positive and productive behavior offering them an alternative to the lures of criminal activities.

Strategic Focus Area 2: Improved Sectorial Capacity for Coordinated and Comprehensive Responses for Youth at Risk

Comprehensive and coordinated initiatives targeting youth at risk require the involvement of a multitude of actors and institutions including, but not limited to, centralized and local government (law enforcement, social services, health, education, juvenile justice), non-governmental organizations (i.e., CSOs and FBOs, advocacy and analysis groups) and private sector representatives (i.e., organized interest groups such as chambers of commerce, individual business owners, media, etc.). Including nongovernment actors such as civil society and private sector associations is a key element to achieving sustainable results.

USAID will prioritize three key sectors, whose potential in addressing the needs of youth at risk is underutilized: 1) NGO and CSOs; 2) private sector including media; and 3) community and youth-oriented policing initiatives.

Geographic Focus: USAID/Panama will focus activities in three priority urban areas within Panama which have high crime and violence, and have significant numbers of youth at risk. In addition, USAID/Panama will initiate limited activities in the rural Darien region as part of a staged approach for future work in this geographic area. This will permit a more strategic use of limited resources available, and foster greater cross-sector integration and synergy as activities are co-located in the highly vulnerable communities. Within target geographic areas, the proposed program will include the most strategic mix of actions at all geographic levels ranging from the local (neighborhood, municipality/*corregimiento*) to the sectoral level (civil society, including the private

sector), and including national level interventions, as appropriate. Pending funds availability, we envision the program expanding to the province of Chiriqui and incorporating additional communities in the interior of Darien.

Program Framework: This assistance will initiate a new area of programming for USAID/Panama, with an emphasis on both direct service provision for youth at risk and the strengthening of institutions and networks to ensure continued impact over time. This activity will specifically address the individual and environmental risk factors most strongly associated with youth involvement in criminality and gangs by promoting effective, coordinated action by governmental and non-governmental actors (i.e., social services, education, police, NGOs, community organizations, and the private sector) and by incorporating state of the art principles, approaches, and programs in youth and gang violence prevention.

Ref. Merida Assistance Objective

Drafted by: PROG, NVarela Date 05/11/2009

Clearances:

DG, CBlandon: In Draft Date 06/02/2009 (with edits)

Supervisory PROG, CCushing: In Draft Date 06/05/2009

Doc.: P:/USAID Public Folders/Program Office/PROG/Merida/Assistance Objective Description_May 11, 2009.doc