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## ADDRESSING THE DRIVERS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: USAID RESULTS IN THE NORTHERN TRIANGLE

Nearly 70,000 children from Central America made the dangerous journey alone to the U.S. southwest border in Fiscal Year 2014. Through the government-wide U.S. Strategy for Central America, a multi-faceted approach to address the security, governance, and economic drivers of illegal migration to the United States, USAID is combating rampant crime and violence, tackling corruption and impunity, helping to disrupt the influence and activities of transnational criminal organizations, and providing greater economic opportunity. Together with Northern Triangle governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the private sector, and civil society, USAID's efforts help to foster an environment where families can envision their futures in their home countries.

The U.S. Strategy for Central America is closely aligned with the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity -- a regional strategy drafted and endorsed by the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. For 2016 and 2017, the governments pledged \$5.4 billion for the Alliance for Prosperity.

## GUATEMALA

### SECURITY: INCREASED INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF EXTORTION

The Northern Triangle represents the epicenter of criminal extortion in Central America; in Guatemala alone, annual losses have been valued at between \$60 to \$400 million.<sup>1</sup> Extortion threatens citizen security and negatively affects the economy; according to the Inter-American Development Bank, crime and violence are believed to cost more than three percent of GDP in Guatemala.<sup>2</sup> USAID support to the Guatemalan Office of the Attorney General has led to **dramatic improvements in extortion investigation and case management**. From 2015 to 2017, the **number of final verdicts in extortion cases saw a near twenty-fold increase -- from 26 to 512 --** and in the first six months of 2018 alone, a total of 482 final verdicts were reached. The number of people found guilty of extortion increased **from 41 in 2015 to 735 in 2017**, with 609 people found guilty in the first six months of 2018; and the number of extortion-related search warrants issued increased **from 122 to 1,038 between 2015 and 2017**, with 900 warrants requested in the first six months of 2018. In addition, USAID-supported improvements to methods for investigation and criminal prosecution of extortion helped to **dismantle 15 criminal structures and resolve 1,000 cases** in 2017.

### PROSPERITY: INCREASED INCOMES IN HIGH-MIGRATION RURAL AREAS

In Guatemala, rural poverty is a key driver of illegal immigration to the United States. Based on U.S. Customs and Border Protection data on apprehensions of unaccompanied migrant children, USAID has geographically targeted programming to focus on areas with a history of out-migration, principally, the Western Highlands of Guatemala. Through agriculture and natural resources management programming, USAID is helping to create jobs, increase sales, and improve incomes. From 2013 to 2017, USAID programming in the Western Highlands and Peten Departments of Guatemala resulted in the **creation of more than 78,000 new jobs and generated \$160 million in sales**.

### GOVERNANCE: JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most common crimes in Guatemala. Since 2008, USAID has worked with the Guatemalan government to address violence against women and femicide, supporting the passage of a **law criminalizing gender-based violence and the implementation of 12 specialized courts to address GBV cases**. These courts are composed of judges and support personnel trained and sensitized to GBV, as well as specialized personnel to assist victims and survivors of GBV. This assistance has made the justice sector more effective and prompted greater confidence in the judicial system, as indicated by a significant increase in reporting of GBV. In 2008, just over 12,000 cases of violence against women were reported in Guatemala; by 2017, GBV had become the most reported crime in the country, with **more than 66,000 cases reported**. In FY 2017, USAID supported the creation of **two additional femicide courts** in Chimaltenango and Suchitepéquez, as well as an **appeals court** that specifically **focuses on femicide and other forms of violence against women**.

## EL SALVADOR

### SECURITY: DECREASED HOMICIDES IN HIGH-CRIME MUNICIPALITIES

Insecurity from gang-related violence drives thousands of Salvadorans to attempt to migrate to the United States. Working in close partnership with the U.S. Department of State Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and through joint targeting of the 50 municipalities that are part

of the Government of El Salvador’s national security plan, Plan El Salvador Seguro, USAID is intensifying proven “place-based” approaches that integrate law enforcement efforts with community-level prevention programs and the creation of safe spaces within schools and public areas. These efforts contributed to an **average 45 percent decline in homicides** in Plan El Salvador Seguro municipalities between 2015 and 2017. In addition, municipalities with the largest integrated USAID and INL programming saw **even higher declines**; for example, in Zacatecoluca, **homicides dropped by over 66 percent** from 2015 to 2017.

#### **PROSPERITY: INCREASED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

USAID helps to stem migration by facilitating greater economic opportunities for Salvadorans, with a focus on programs that help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to increase sales and create new jobs. USAID partners with the Salvadoran government and the private sector to provide effective trade and business development services to MSMEs, primarily through a local network of small business development centers, which has become a model for the region. **From FY 2013 to FY 2017, USAID activities helped MSMEs to create more than 26,500 new jobs and helped smallholder farmers to increase sales by \$147 million. In addition, USAID mobilized more than \$19.6 million in private sector financing during the same period for small business growth.**

#### **GOVERNANCE: IMPROVED CAPACITY TO PREVENT, DETECT, AND PROSECUTE CORRUPTION**

In 2012, USAID supported the establishment of a Freedom of Information Institute, which has resulted in unprecedented access to official documents. Disclosure of information ordered by the Institute has triggered investigations on waste and abuse of public funds, nepotism, and illicit enrichment of public officials—including three former presidents. This support, coupled with USAID assistance to the Attorney General’s Office and other regulatory agencies, has been **instrumental in the unprecedented prosecution of more than 20 high-level public officials. In one such case in 2018, former President Antonio Saca was prosecuted for misuse of public resources; he pled guilty to embezzlement and money and assets laundering in a plea deal and faces up to 10 years in prison.**

## **HONDURAS**

#### **SECURITY: DECREASED HOMICIDES IN HIGH-CRIME DISTRICTS**

Honduras has one of the highest homicide rates in the world, with insecurity as the primary driver for illegal migration. USAID works with INL and local actors to combine community-based prevention programs with justice reform and law enforcement activities in the country’s most violent urban areas. These coordinated efforts contributed to a 36 percent drop in Honduras’ national homicide from 2014 to 2017 (from 68 homicides/100,000 in 2014 to 43.6/100,000 in 2017). **Decreases were even higher in communities with active USAID programs: urban, high-crime districts in which USAID works with INL saw an average 54 percent decline in homicide rates from 2014-2017.** These programs will help to sustain this downward trend so that families can return safely to their homes.

#### **PROSPERITY: 90,000 MOVED OUT OF POVERTY IN TARGET AREAS**

According to the International Organization for Migration, a quarter of returning unaccompanied Honduran children cite a lack of economic opportunity as their primary motivation for seeking to illegally migrate north. USAID is helping to improve incomes, increase sales, and create jobs. Our

agriculture investments have lifted nearly 18,000 families - or roughly 90,000 people - out of extreme poverty since 2011, and we have leveraged \$56 million from the Government of Honduras to co-invest and expand this model. In addition, in FY 2017, USAID's agriculture investments generated **more than 4,300 full-time-equivalent jobs, approximately 1,860 of which were filled by women.**

### **GOVERNANCE: ENHANCED GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO PROSECUTE CORRUPTION**

The 2017 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index ranked Honduras 135 of 180 countries, one measure of the deep lack of trust in government institutions. Since 2016, USAID has supported the Organization of American States Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), an independent, international anti-corruption body designed to improve the Honduran justice system's ability to effectively combat corruption and impunity. In little more than two years, MACCIH has enabled **the hiring of a record number of anti-corruption judges, prosecutors, and investigators. Thanks to USAID support for these and other anti-corruption initiatives, including to civil society groups in 2017, the Honduran Attorney General's Office successful prosecution led to the court handing down the toughest corruption sentence for a public official in Honduras' history when the former director of the Honduran Social Security Institute was sentenced to a minimum of 25 years in prison.**

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

USAID takes its responsibility to the U.S. taxpayer seriously, and we are committed to accountability, transparency, and evidence-based management for all our programs. We use a full range of monitoring and evaluation tools, including performance and context indicator monitoring, survey data collection, analyses, studies, and external evaluations, to generate the quality data and robust evidence needed to maximize our impact. Between fiscal years 2013 and 2017, we completed 33 evaluations of programs relevant for U.S. Strategy for Central America implementation; all of these are available on USAID's [Development Experience Clearinghouse](https://dec.usaid.gov) website (<https://dec.usaid.gov>).

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

USAID works with a diverse array of partners in the Northern Triangle -- both local and international -- to leverage their know-how, resources, and expertise to accelerate development outcomes. Our partners include the private sector, faith-based organizations, civil society, universities, and local officials. USAID partners with more than 300 private sector organizations in the Northern Triangle to jointly support our vocational training, education, and employment work for at-risk youth, and increase food security and incomes for vulnerable communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Luis Fernando Alonso, "Guatemala Struggles to Prosecute Extortion in Capital," InSight Crime, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/guatemala-struggles-to-prosecute-extortion-in-capital>.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Jaitman et. al., "The Costs of Crime and Violence: New Evidence and Insights in Latin America and the Caribbean," Inter-American Development Bank, accessed May 17, 2017, <https://publications.iadb.org/handle/11319/8133>.