

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Brazil

As part of its At-Risk-Youth program, USAID/Brazil supports an effort to create opportunities for 14- to 21-year-olds to participate fully in Brazil's economic development. This program has established a goal of ensuring that 5 percent of the projected 4,000 participants are youth with disabilities. Thus, by the end of the project, 200 youth with disabilities will have received training and employment support. As of the submission of Brazil's report, 15 persons with disabilities had taken part in the program, which was still in its early stages.

Ecuador

USAID/Ecuador

Information for the Forth Disability Report

Ecuador has a population of about 13,000,000; approximately 13% have a disability distributed as follows:

- 592,000 people, physical
- 432,000 people, mental and psychological
- 363,000 people, visual
- 213,000 people, hearing and language.

The country has a strong legal framework starting with the Constitution and a disability law followed by other rules and norms that refer to the rights of persons with disabilities, such as technical norms for accessibility; even though private and government organizations perform a poor role on satisfying the needs of PWD that suffer from high levels of poverty due to the lack of access to an appropriate education and job opportunities.

USAID/Ecuador is developing a Disability Plan to explicitly include people with disabilities in its programs. Nonetheless, under the Special Development Assistance Activities (SDAA) that finances small activities up to \$5,000 - \$7,000, USAID/Ecuador has supported PWD organizations to install or improve productive projects to provide sources of income and job opportunities for their members. These microenterprise projects not only allow employment insertion of disabled persons to improve their living standard, but they also help to strengthen these PWD organizations.

Activities carried out in FY 03 and FY 04 are the following:

Indicator 1: People with disabilities (PWDs) included in programs or initiatives funded by USAID

- With FY03 funds under the Poverty Reduction Strategic Objective, two small grants were approved to benefit PWDs. The Foundation for Mentally Disabled Children received a grant in the amount of \$5,000 to equip a retail outlet to sell bread and bakery products made by its bakery. Also, the Association of Disabled Persons received \$5,000 to acquire materials to make wheelchairs and metallic furniture in general at its own small factory.
- With FY04 funds under the Poverty Reduction Strategic Objective, USAID/Ecuador supported two PWD organizations: the Association of Disabled Persons in Manta/Montecristi received a \$5,000 grant to equip a sewing workshop and the Association of Disabled Persons in El Jobo received \$5,000 to establish a microenterprise of peanut products.

- With FY04 funds under the Northern Border Strategic Objective, two small grants have been approved in the northern border region, one in the province of Esmeraldas and one in Carchi. The Association of Disabled Persons in Esmeraldas is receiving a grant in the amount of \$5,000 to buy 20 special wheel chairs for its members. With these chairs they will be able to move at a broader ratio of action to sell different products. The Association of Disabled Persons in Carchi is receiving \$5,000 to establish a computer and document center.

Indicator 2: Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) have increased capacity to provide assistance to PWDs and to advocate successfully for the rights of PWDs.

- USAID/Ecuador sponsored the participation of the Executive Director of the Foundation of Mentally Disabled Children to attend the 8th International Congress on Including Children and Youth with Disabilities in their Home Communities, in Stavanger, Norway on June 14-18, 2004. This Congress focused on the rights of people with disabilities, the implementation of inclusive programs at the local level, the critical role of families, and sustaining progress over time.
- Two important seminars were conducted in Quito: 1) The Americas Regional Seminar and Workshop on Norms and Standards Related to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Development, on April 9-11 2003, organized by PNUD. The seminar provided a forum for the exchange of knowledge and national experiences in promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. Also, it contributed to formulate strategic options for promoting rights based approaches to development and national capacity building. 2) II Jornadas Discapacidad y Desarrollo in Quito on July 22-24, 2004. The purpose of this seminar was to increase the social consciousness in the American continent about the work of organizations of people with disabilities in development processes.

Indicator 3: PWDs have access to, and are included in, the staff and activities of each USAID mission/office.

- Mission infrastructure (entrance gate, elevators, office space) has been adapted to provide facilities to PWD. Also, Evacuation Plan considers specific instructions for PWD. Mission staff includes one person with disabilities.

Indicator 4: USAID mission/offices implement activities in accordance with their own disability plans of action.

- As mentioned before, the Mission is developing the Disability Plan. It will be ready next month. The distribution of the Plan will be accompanied by a formal presentation and the promotion to the plan not only internally, but also to partners to raise awareness of this important topic and sensitize the inclusion of PWD in the programs.

Guatemala

Indicator 1: People with disabilities (PWDs) included in programs or initiatives funded by USAID.

USAID/Guatemala, in an alliance with the Kennedy Foundation and the Guatemalan Ministry of Education, recently concluded an education program focused on Guatemalan children with special needs. USAID channeled its contributions through the Access to Intercultural, Bilingual Education program (Proyecto Acceso a la Educación Bilingüe Intercultural or PAEBI), implemented by World Learning.

Among the program's specific activities and accomplishments was the development of modules on "Teaching Primary School Boys and Girls (ages 4 to 12) with Mild to Moderate Mental Retardation" for Guatemalan children. These modules, originally developed by the Kennedy Foundation, were adapted for Guatemala and one hundred copies were provided to the Guatemalan Ministry of Education, as well as to over 600 special education trainers, facilitators and teachers to support work with children with mild to moderate retardation. Training on the use of the modules was coordinated by World Learning/PAEBI, with technical assistance from the Kennedy Foundation. A total of 35 facilitators were trained in three successive workshops, including 25 from the Ministry of Education. The training received by the Ministry was then replicated for 500 teachers from teacher training schools located in Guatemala City, Cobán, Quetzaltenango, and Chiquimula. In addition, 75 employees of the Office of Social Initiatives of the First Lady (Secretaría de Obras Sociales de la Esposa del Presidente) as well as 75 students studying special education at San Carlos University were trained in issues related to cognitive disabilities.

USAID/Guatemala is also cognizant of AAPD 04-17 effective December 17, 2004, which requires the inclusion of the Disability Clause. The Mission has included this clause in all new awards after December 17, 2004.

Indicator 2: Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) have increased capacity to provide assistance to PWDs and to advocate successfully for the rights of PWDs.

Ten local non-governmental organizations were trained on the modules on "Teaching Primary School Boys and Girls (ages 4 to 12) with Mild to Moderate Mental Retardation."

Indicator 3: PWDs have access to, and are included in, the staff and activities of each USAID mission/office.

USAID/Guatemala facilities allow for universal accessibility.

Indicator 4: USAID missions/offices implement activities in accordance with their own disability plans of action.

USAID/Guatemala has no disability plan of action. Discrete activities related to people with disabilities, such as the program with the Kennedy Foundation, could be undertaken within the context of the mission's approved strategy and priorities.

Guyana

USAID/Guyana reports that it had no activities focusing on people with disabilities during the reporting period.

Peru

USAID/Peru Disability Report May 2005

Indicator 1: People with disabilities (PWDs) included in programs or initiatives funded by USAID.

Across all Strategic Objectives, USAID/Peru's portfolio is focused on assistance to improve the lives of poor marginalized people in Peru. In addition to national level programs in policy, USAID's geographic focus is located in the seven regions where coca (for elaborating cocaine) is cultivated and poverty levels are high. All SO programs working at the local level target marginalized people in rural areas with a high percentage of indigenous peoples, women and children. To the extent that disabled people are part of these populations, USAID provides support.

527-006 Local Management of Quality Basic Education in Selected Geographic Areas

At the local level, the program focuses on improving basic education in selected schools using the "active school" methodology. Children work with self paced modules in subject matter areas and local communities are actively involved with the school. PWD school children benefit from this program.

527-008 Improved Quality of Life of Peruvians Along the Peru-Ecuador Border Target Areas

Phase I of the Border program focused on integrated development and citizen empowerment to contribute to their development in three border areas. Programs in health, income generation, human rights, education, and local government increased the access of poor marginalized groups to development, including PWDs.

Phase II of the Border program focuses on economic development in two border areas, supporting small and medium businesses and developing markets for local products. To the extent that PWDs are involved in business, they will benefit.

527-009 Democratic Processes and Institutions Strengthened in Critical Areas

The program to increase capacities of local governments to respond to citizen needs has supported participatory budgeting and citizen monitoring and oversight of government. As a result, PWDs and PWD organizations have greater access and voice with local government.

527-010 Increased Economic Opportunities for the Poor

Peru's PL 480 Title II program works in communities with the extremely poor, providing nutrition, health and income generation programs. Through a focus on the

nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, and children ages 0-3, the program aims to prevent mental and physical disabilities related to malnutrition.

Peru's poverty reduction activity, through helping increase business opportunities in poor regions by connecting producers and markets, benefits PWDs involved in small and medium businesses.

527-011 Improved Health for Peruvians at High Risk

Local level interventions focus on improved quality of health services in remote rural health posts and communities. PWDs in these poor areas benefit from improved health services and increased awareness of community health issues through participatory health planning.

527-012 Strengthened Environmental Management to Address Priority Problems

A solid waste program in Cusco specifically targeted the hearing impaired to work in a waste sorting facility, providing livelihoods as well as a safer, cleaner community for all citizens.

Programs in community forestry involving local populations also benefit PWDs.

527-013 Sustained Reduction of Illicit Coca Production in Targeted Areas of Peru

Peru's Alternative Development program targets communities that have volunteered to eradicate illicit coca, providing development interventions, selected by the communities, to improve their quality of life. PWDs, as part of these communities benefit from AD interventions. PWDs, as part of the community, also participate in community decision-making on the type of benefits the community prioritizes.

A youth program, focused on preventing drug use, also includes PWDs.

Indicator 2: Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) have increased capacity to provide assistance to PWDs and to advocate successfully for the rights of PWDs.

Not applicable to USAID/Peru's program.

Indicator 3: PWDs have access to, and are included in, the staff and activities of each USAID mission/office.

USAID/Peru is a fully accessible workplace and has a PWD on staff who fully participates in the activities of the office.

Indicator 4: USAID missions/offices implement activities in accordance with their own disability plans of action.

USAID/Peru does not have a disability plan.

Brief Report on CASS Participants with Disabilities

Background: Since the inception of the CASS program, the Center for Intercultural Education and Development has taken steps to ensure that potential leaders with disabilities are recruited for CASS scholarships.

The CASS program has granted scholarships to persons with varying disabilities including mobility impairments due to post polio and limb loss, as well as persons with vision and hearing loss. The most significant number of disability-related scholarships has been provided to persons who are deaf and hearing persons wishing to become sign language interpreters. The number of persons with mobility impairments such as post polio and single or double lower limb amputees has not been accurately tracked; however several of these individuals are mentioned in the vignette section of this report.

The CASS program has also provided scholarships to 129 deaf youth and sign language interpreters from Central America and the Caribbean. Currently, 20 deaf CASS youth from the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico are studying computer science/business applications in the United States and are scheduled to return to their home countries in 2006. CASS scholars are recruited from deaf-directed advocacy groups from throughout the region.

CASS training and support has ensured that over 95% of deaf CASS alumni are currently employed back in their home countries. Deaf CASS alumni are employed in public, private, and NGO institutions. These alumni have made many of their employers role models for other companies for how to integrate deaf workers into the workplace. Not only are they good employees, CASS deaf alumni are breaking down barriers in the workplace. They are teaching fellow hearing co-workers sign language and are serving as role models for other deaf youth who aspire to gainful employment.

Despite most CASS deaf students not having high school degrees prior to their CASS scholarships, CASS deaf participants have excelled academically in the USA, achieving Associate degrees in English within two years. Many alumni have continued their education in-country and some have completed both undergraduate as well as graduate degrees.

A new generation of deaf leadership for Central America and Caribbean:

CASS deaf alumni have returned to their home countries and are very actively involved in leadership, many being elected to lead national deaf associations.

Luis Vasquez, of Guatemala, works two jobs to support his family. He is also the current President of ASORGUA, the Guatemala national deaf association, recently being reelected to a second term as President. In his free time he is developing deaf association chapters throughout rural Guatemala and has led human rights workshops for the deaf. In 2000, he was invited to represent deaf Guatemalans at the World

Federation of the Deaf Congress in Canada and has represented Guatemala at a regional deaf conference in Costa Rica and at many events within Guatemala..

Other deaf CASS alumni elected as President to their national deaf associations include William Lazo of El Salvador, Virgilio Vizcalino in the Dominican Republic and Elmer Menendez of Honduras.

Deaf alumnus William Lazo of El Salvador has worked in the Information Systems Department of the Ministry of Public Works since 1992, when he returned from his CASS scholarship. Together with other CASS deaf alumni, he is preparing testimony, policy papers and other activities that are changing the legal and economic framework for disabled persons in El Salvador. As current President of the El Salvador deaf association, he is also collaborating with the Ministry of Education in developing a national strategy for the education of deaf children.

Elmer Josue Menendez Aleman, deaf alumnus from Honduras, currently works for the Honduran government's Social Investment Fund (FHIS). With the support of CASS and the government of Canada, he had the opportunity in 2000 to represent the deaf community of Honduras at the XVI Annual Congress of the World Deaf Federation in Montreal, Canada. He is currently President of the national deaf association in Honduras, and in 2003 was elected Treasurer. He is currently also the Coordinator of Sport Activities, and in 2004 organized sport meets for deaf children in three cities of the country.

Also from Honduras, Melvin Giovanni Lazo works alongside Elmer Menendez at the Honduras Social Investment Fund (FHIS). He was elected President of the Honduras national deaf association from 2000-2002 and has worked at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras as a professor of sign language for students who are training to become future sign language interpreters. Melvin collaborates as interpreter for other students, and has traveled to San Pedro Sula to teach hearing people and TELETON participants sign language. In 2004 he participated in the edition of a book using Honduran on sign language, "Manos Felices", for children and their families. Melvin is an active member of his church and teaches sign language to children helping them integrate them more rapidly into society.

In Nicaragua, deaf CASS alumnus Willy Dauria, facilitates leadership modules and teaches deaf students at the 'Escuela Melania Morales' during the week, and spends his Saturdays doing community service for the APRIAS, the deaf association. He is currently running for President of APRIAS-2006, the national deaf association for Nicaragua.

Individual impact vignettes:

In addition to deaf CASS alumni elected to head national deaf associations, many other CASS deaf, blind as well as hearing sign language alumni are making significant contributions. Several individual vignettes follow:

Miriam Encarnación of the Dominican Republic was trained by CASS as a sign interpreter. She returned to the Dominican Republic and secured the first job as a sign language interpreter for local television stations and the Dominican Republic emergency

broadcast system. Miriam is also the official interpreter for the Dominican Congress and the office of the President. Prior to Miriam Encarnacion, no news broadcast, emergency weather broadcast or session of Congress had been interpreted in sign language. Recently, she was selected as one of *The Top Ten Women* leaders in the Dominican Republic and was the winner of the National Youth Award due to her work on TV and with the deaf community. Miriam is also an active participant in the National Council for Disabled Persons of the Dominican Republic.

Myrthil Baylord: From 1994 through 1996, CASS participant, Myrthil Baylord attended the Missouri School for the Blind and studied education management and administration at Harris Stowe State College in St. Louis. As a blind alumnus, Myrthil has been very active in Haiti. After completing his CASS scholarship, Myrthil returned to Haiti where he founded “Clair-Voyance”, a non-profit organization which raises money to sponsor scholarships, working with schools, parents, and disabled children to promote the inclusion of disabled children in school. Recipients of Clair-Voyance scholarships have gone on to graduate from high school and others have attended the local university, something that was previously unheard of in Haiti.

In addition to Clair Voyance, Myrthil is the owner of an import export business and has used the profits to buy four acres of land on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince where he is building the first Haitian school for the blind. In 1998, he was elected President of the CASS/Haiti alumni association and has been an active member of the Haitian blind association, ‘Societe Haitienne d’Aide aux Aveugles’ (SHAA) where he shares his knowledge and experience.

Danis Rodriguez and Evelyn Rodriguez, two CASS sign language alumni have founded a classroom for deaf children in San Salvador at the Centro Escolar Catolica Imaculada Concepcion. Grisel Flores, a deaf CASS alumnus also works there as a teacher of deaf children. In 2000, Danis Rodriguez coordinated the first CASS alumni sign language interpreter’s conference held in Central America and he is currently exploring ways to develop a sign language association..

Alicia Garcia, a post polio CASS alumnus from El Salvador studied sign language on a CASS scholarship. Upon her return to El Salvador, she founded a special education school where she now is the school director.

Luz Marlene Aguilar, a post polio CASS alumnus also from El Salvador studied sign language interpreter training with a CASS scholarship. Currently she works as an accountant with the Land Mine Survivors Network in San Salvador. Luz Marlene Aguilar is also very active in disability advocacy. She was elected Vice President of ACOGIPRI, disabled-directed women’s pottery and advocacy collective. She has been active on many disability commissions in El Salvador including election reform, and the establishment of new disability policy by the government of El Salvador. Last year she accompanied the President of El Salvador to the United Nations in New York where they supported the creation of a new disability rights convention. Currently, she has been elected to represent persons with disabilities to the government of El Salvador.

Efrain Aguilar, CASS deaf alumnus from Honduras, is currently working on the creation of a manual for a codified Honduran national sign language. He is active at deaf church and in the national deaf association, teaches sign language to parents of

deaf children, and works in the computer services department of the Honduran government family assistance department (PRAF).

Aldo Mejia and Misael Melgar, deaf alumni from El Salvador returned from their CASS scholarships to their home country and developed a deaf literacy campaign. In 2002, they were recognized by the President of El Salvador at a formal ceremony for their work and appeared in an article by Rehabilitation International.

Erika Mariela Palacios, deaf CASS alumnus from Honduras volunteers at the Red Cross teaching staff sign language. She is also professor at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma of Honduras where she teaches LESHO (Honduras Sign Language) and teaches hearing people to become future LESHO sign language interpreters. Erika is active in the national deaf association where she creates signs for the use of deaf people and interpreters.

Dominican Republic deaf alumni work in information systems as data processors, editors, graphic designers, and accounting data processors. Ricardo Teresita works in the statistics department of the National Planning Office of the Dominican Republic (ONAP); Virgilio Viscaino works in Dalbert Printing; Zahira Hernandez in Editora Santo Domingo; Richard Gomez in the Caribbean Data Service; and Irma Garcia in Verizon. These and many other deaf CASS Dominican Republic alumni are changing and expanding the employment potential for the disability community. In addition to their work, over 90% of the deaf alumni volunteer in non-profit organizations, and many are still continuing their education.

Maria Valerio, a CASS sign language interpreter in the Dominican Republic works to make the courts in the Dominican Republic responsive to the rights of deaf citizens. Key landmark court cases including the rape of a 15 year old deaf girl and a personal injury suit of an elderly deaf woman would not have been heard without the advocacy of Maria. Maria is very involved in supporting a deaf school with 195 students in her home town. After receiving a scholarship from the Rotary Club of Maine, she learned to become a skillful repair technician for hearing aid devices.

Emma Flores, CASS deaf alumnus from El Salvador has been a teacher for over 8 years at the Centro de Audicion y Lenguaje (Center for Hearing and Language), a deaf school for children. In addition to improving the quality of education for deaf children, she has taught their parents sign language.

Wendy Padilla, deaf CASS alumnus from Honduras, has been back in her country for five years and has been very active in the community. Wendy helps deaf children and adults by teaching them to read and write. She also teaches sign language so that they can communicate with their family and the rest of the community. Through the national deaf association, she visits poor communities to search for more deaf people and integrate them into the deaf association. In case they find a deaf person with alcohol or drug addictions or someone who has run away from home, she helps them in their rehabilitation. Wendy also helps organize a yearly camp for 200 people, including deaf Americans, and has a paid position with the Honduran government Social Investment Fund (FHIS).

Edwin Rene Jimenez, deaf alumnus from Honduras, is cooperating in the creation of a book and CD to teach sign language with images obtained using graphic design for the use and teaching of the Sign Language of Honduras (LESHO).

Pedro Alvarado, deaf alumnus from Honduras, also works at the Honduran government's Social Investment Fund (FHIS). In his free time, he actively volunteers at the national deaf association where he is designing sign images for words that will be used to teach deaf as well as hearing persons.

Belkis Leticia Reyes, deaf alumnus from Honduras is an active member of the national deaf association and teaches sign language to other deaf people.

Gerardo Ivan Orellana, deaf CASS alumnus from Honduras now uses his CASS computer/business skills with COVELO, a well known microfinance organization in Honduras where he is responsible for the data of COVELO clients.

These are a few of the many vignettes of CASS alumni with disabilities. For additional information, please contact:

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