



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

January 2009

USAID Charts Response to Food Insecurity in LAC Region

A report commissioned by the LAC Bureau, *Confronting Food Insecurity in the LAC Region under Rising Food Prices*, provides a framework for Latin American and Caribbean countries to address the global food crisis. In contrast with other developing nations where the availability of food is an urgent concern, in Latin American countries it is citizens' ability to purchase food in the face of quickly rising prices that is a major challenge. Consequently, the report recommends a strategy that seeks to address the underlying poverty that causes food insecurity.

The report measures and assesses the three dimensions of food security -- food availability (the national supply of food), food access (a measurement of citizens' ability to purchase food), and food utilization (a measurement of indicators like malnutrition). Latin American and Caribbean countries suffer in each of these areas. For example, food availability in five LAC countries is on par with that of Sub-Saharan Africa, and malnutrition is a serious problem in some LAC countries, such as Guatemala, where more than 46 percent of young children suffer from chronic malnutrition, resulting in stunted growth.



Guatemala has the region's worst malnutrition rates

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AT SECURITY DIALOGUE, CÁRDENAS URGES COOPERATION ON GANGS

“Governments must recognize that youth in the region need alternatives to the gang life”

In remarks to a vice-ministerial level gathering on December 11, Acting Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean José R. Cárdenas presented USAID's gang prevention activities and urged his counterparts to take leadership in pursuing integrated policies that include not only law enforcement and justice but also prevention and rehabilitation.

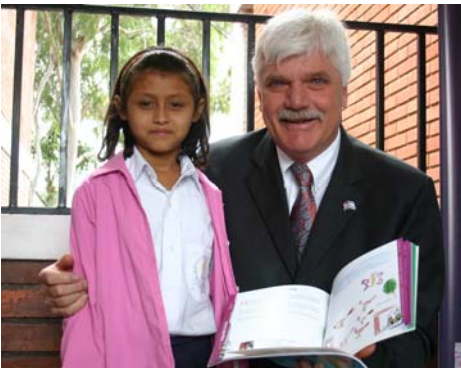
The meeting, hosted by the United States, was the second security dialogue with SICA (the Central American Integration System, comprised of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) countries. The first, held in July 2007 in Guatemala City, committed the United States and its Central American partners “to finding regional solutions to regional security problems,” prompted the seven Central American SICA nations to draft a joint security strategy, and provided an important foundation for greater cooperation through the Mérida Initiative.

Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas A. Shannon led the U.S. delegation to the second dialogue, which consisted of one day of technical talks and one day of vice-ministerial consultations. The consultations focused on advancing concrete and practical measures to combat the threats of criminal gangs, narco-trafficking and illicit trafficking of arms in Central America. The final Communiqué institutionalized the Dialogue and pledged continued support from all countries in the fight against transnational threats was signed by all countries at the end of the Dialogue, along with a Mechanism on follow-up details the procedures and focus of future dialogues.

In his remarks, Mr. Cárdenas also cited the success of USAID-supported justice sector reform across Central America, which has helped build capacity to combat crime effectively and transparently while increasing citizens' access to justice.

Honduras Adopts USAID Teacher Training Program as Model

In April 2001, the Centers for Excellence in Teacher Training were a dream – an initiative announced by President George W. Bush at the Summit of the Americas. The idea was to help children across the region improve their reading and writing skills, since children who are strong readers are more likely to stay in school. Seven years later, CETT



Mission Director William Brands and child author with "Let Me Tell You a Story"

has trained almost 8,000 teachers and helped 257,000 children become better readers and writers in Central America and the Dominican Republic.

CETT's comprehensive teacher training model delivers a program that really makes a difference in how well children learn to read. The training includes new teaching techniques, in-classroom follow-up support, new materials to support the learning of both teachers and their students, monthly planning guidelines, and monthly standardized testing that measure how well children are learning and keeps teachers on track.

Two features of CETT make it particularly unusual and successful. One is the follow-up coaching, modeling, and feedback provided by master trainers who visit CETT teachers in their own classrooms. This classroom support is what ensures that teachers apply the new knowledge and skills to more effectively teach reading to their students. The second is the use of per-

formance monitoring and testing to make trainers, teachers and the program itself accountable for improving learning. Through the use of diagnostic tools, assessments, and tests developed by the program, CETT is able to demonstrate the impact of the program on student learning, and use this data to make teacher training even more effective.

The difference comes through clearly in teachers' stories about their experiences, especially with disadvantaged "hopeless" children. Over and over, teachers describe new successes in teaching formerly struggling students. A forty-five year-old teacher in Honduras described his experience: "Because of the training I received with CETT, I have been able to help my flunking first graders pass to the second grade. Now they understand what they read."

To implement CETT, USAID has partnered with a consortium of six respected institutions in Central America and the Dominican Republic: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional in Honduras; Fundación Empresarial para el Desarrollo Educativo (FEPADE) in El Salvador; Universidad del Valle in Guatemala; Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in the Dominican Republic; Escuela Normal "Ricardo Morales Avilés" in Nicaragua; and Instituto Latinoamericano de Comunicación Educativa (ILCE) in Mexico.

In Honduras, 2008 was extremely important for the CETT program because the Honduras Ministry of Education adopted the CETT model for its own teacher training. The Ministry will now be able to train teachers nationwide from first through third grade to use a more child-centered approach to reading and writing. This agreement marks an important step in accomplishing

the Education for All (EFA) goal of "all children completing elementary school by the year 2015."

To commemorate this accomplishment, CETT closed out the school year with a celebration of reading. The event included the unveiling of *"Let Me Tell You a Story... from Honduran Boys and Girls."* The book is the result of a full year's school work where children learned to write their own stories. The project which stressed reading and writing skills, was a tribute to the 54 child authors whose stories were selected. In addition to improving reading and writing skills, the CETT program in Honduras has also been crucial in providing school libraries. Through a partnership with Scholastic, Inc., in the United States, CETT has been able to distribute nearly 120,000 books among participating schools.

The agreement signed by the government of Honduras, along with public-private partnerships like the



Honduran children display "Let Me Tell you a Story" with USAID and CETT staff

one with Scholastic Inc., will help the project achieve long-term sustainability once USAID funding expires at the end of FY2009. The regional Central American and Dominican Republic (CARD) CETT has received over \$16 million.

USAID Named “Organization of the Year” by Bolivian Daily *El Diario*

Bolivian newspaper *El Diario* named USAID the “Organization of the Year” for the second year running. According to Jorge Carrasco Guzman, General Manager of *El Diario*, the daily recognized USAID in 2007 because of the Agency’s strong support for Bolivia’s development. Mr. Carrasco noted the paper decided to recognize USAID again in 2008 because, despite fragile bilateral relations, the United States continued its significant development support to Bolivia through USAID. Acting USAID Bolivia Mission Director Peter Natiello visited *El Diario* to receive the award and to discuss USAID’s work in support of Bolivia’s development during 2008. On December 31, *El Diario* announced the award on its front page, as well as on the cover of its special annual edition, and included the interview with Natiello, plus a fact sheet on USAID accomplishments inside its regular edition. *El Diario* is Bolivia’s oldest national daily with the second largest circulation in La Paz.

USAID’s development support to Bolivia in 2008 benefited the country’s neediest population and continued to support the Government of Bolivia’s National Development Plan. Achievements include: USAID-assisted partners provided preventative vaccinations for three childhood diseases to 32,000 children and prenatal care to 150,000 women; the export value of USAID-assisted products from the Yungas and the Cochabamba Tropics regions surpassed \$35 million, benefiting over 13,000 families; more than 6,600 Bolivians became clients of formal financial institutions in areas that did not previously have access to financial services; and 11 USAID-supported Integrated Justice Centers (IJC) handled 28,613 cases from low income citizens in peri-urban areas (60% women), successfully resolving 22,379 (78%) of the cases.

USAID development support to Bolivia is also directed to long-term achievements: over the past seven years, through well targeted food security programs, USAID has helped increase small farmer incomes in the poorest areas of Bolivia from \$683 to \$2,588 and reduce chronic malnutrition by approximately 17% versus an approximately 1% decrease in other geographical areas. Additionally, working closely with key stakeholders over the last several years, USAID has helped Bolivia to become the world’s leader in forest certification, with more than two million hectares of forest voluntarily certified; forestry-related products have reached over 10% of Bolivia’s non-traditional exports value. With USAID assistance through a dynamic Bolivian NGO, more than 110 local firms are now applying clean production technologies that reduce pollution, improve efficiencies, and increase the bottom line.



Bolivia Mission Director Peter Natiello receiving award from El Diario’s Jorge Carrasco

USAID ANNOUNCES NEW REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

USAID announced the award of a new \$50 million, five-year regional higher education scholarship and training program on December 24. Scholarships for Education and Economic Development (SEED) will be implemented by Georgetown University in collaboration with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACU) and their large network of other higher education associations and U.S. training institutions.

SEED is the successor to the Cooperative Agreement for the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarships (CASS) program and will provide higher education scholarships and training to disadvantaged young people in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Haiti. SEED supports U.S. economic and governance goals for the region by strengthening human and institutional capacity in ways that increase equity, experience, and cultural understanding.

Disadvantaged Brazilian Youth Receive Training Through USAID-Supported Initiative

Over one hundred youngsters started classes on January 10 at Instituto de Educação Jandaia, a recently inaugurated educational institution founded to provide technical and professional training to at-risk youth in Paracajus, northeast Brazil. USAID and corporate social responsibility group +Unidos supported the initiative through IBM’s donation of a computer lab. Classes at Instituto Jandaia are free and offer training in Math, Information Technology, Foreign Languages and other subjects.

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However, the most immediate food security issue in the LAC region is food access. The lack of food access is due to the low purchasing power of many citizens in LAC countries. In Haiti, almost 54 percent of the population lives on less than \$1 a day; in Nicaragua, over 45 percent of the population fall below this threshold. Widespread poverty results in the poor not being able to purchase food that is widely available. With rapidly rising food prices, especially with basic staples such as grains, the region's poor are being hit especially hard. This lack of purchasing power is also the ultimate cause of another dimension of food insecurity – food availability. Because of the low purchasing power of so many poor citizens, the demand for food is low, and market forces that might otherwise work to help meet demand do not come into play.

Based on assessments of these three elements of food insecurity, the report identifies Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua as having the greatest food insecurity in the region. The study replicates a methodology used by USAID's Food for Peace for allocating Title II funding, but a more complex methodology by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) also identifies these six countries as the most food insecure.

The report outlines a strategy with a primary focus on increasing food access, by supporting policies and expanding programs designed to increase employment and incomes of poor households through support to value-added cash crops, agribusiness development, and urban-based private investment. It also recommends working to improve food utilization – specifically, addressing chronic child malnutrition by strengthening the nutrition components of ongoing maternal and child health programs. Finally, it proposes increasing food availability by facilitating improvements in the efficiency of both domestic food markets and food trade (such as measures to lower shipping and logistics costs).

The report also recommends continuing the Title II programs in Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua that are scheduled to close out in 2009, noting that the withdrawal of resources would not only have adverse effects on participating households and communities, but could also contribute to greater social and political instability, including backsliding on democracy and unraveling of market-oriented economic policies.



USAID Bureau for Latin
America and the Caribbean
Tel. (202) 712-4800
Email: LACnews@usaid.gov

