

## HONDURAS: Two New Outreach Centers Provide Safe Havens for At-Risk Youth



Two Outreach Centers serving at-risk youth were inaugurated on June 11, 2009 in Honduras through the Creative Associates-implemented USAID-SICA program.

The newest Outreach Centers are among a total of 17 in Central America established by Creative Associates International, Inc. of Washington, D.C. Outreach Centers provide a safe and constructive environment for vulnerable youth who are at risk of being recruited by gangs or coerced into the drug trade in neighborhoods with high rates of delinquency and violence.

More than 700 young people of all ages are expected to benefit from the new Outreach Centers supported by USAID-SICA, Save the Children Honduras and the Rotary Clubs of Tegucigalpa in the neighborhoods of Villafranca and Buenas Nuevas of Comayagüela in Tegucigalpa, the capital. Creative has also established an Outreach Center in Rivera Hernandez in San Pedro Sula.

In addition to Honduras, the USAID-SICA program is implemented in Guatemala and El Salvador and serves as a catalyst for regional solutions to address youth gang violence, including looking for common policies and best practices. Creative efforts also help rehabilitate and prevent youth from falling prey to gangs through successful participatory approaches.

USAID-SICA is a joint program between the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Central American Integration System (SICA).

The Outreach Centers are “true sanctuaries for youth of these communities afflicted by violence and gangs,” said U.S. Ambassador to Honduras, Hugo Llorens. “It is important to support efforts in the alliances between civil society, private enterprise, churches, NGOs and other actors, since they are all seeking a solution to involvement of Honduran youths in crime.”

The Outreach Center approach, which has been successfully implemented by Creative throughout the Central America region, offers sports, arts and entertainment activities to young beneficiaries and provides job training, academic tutoring, and enables youth to develop life skills with the aim of diminishing dropout rates. Outreach Center activities are undertaken under the leadership of a network of neighborhood volunteers. This methodology unites communities and teaches youth that they can be agents of change in their communities.

According to USAID, Honduras is the third-poorest country in the Western Hemisphere with 42.6 percent of its people living on \$2 a day. About 40 percent of Hondurans are unemployed or underemployed, with predictable consequences in terms of crime, especially among marginalized youth. Consequently, the Outreach Centers offer training in computers, hands-on courses in the repair of household appliances and bicycles, sewing and tailoring, hairdressing, among other courses.

The Villafranca and Buenas Nuevas of Comayagüela Outreach Centers will operate under the direction of Save the Children Honduras, which has a history of working in the neighborhood and its surrounding areas.

German Barahona, a community leader in Villafranca said: “This Center will contribute to breaking barriers between neighborhood volunteers and youths and give young people a chance to share, grow, learn and become new leaders committed to preventing violence.”

Save the Children Honduras has been working in the country since 1968 supporting communities to plan and implement integrated development programs that improve the quality of life for Hondurans. The project also has support from seven Rotary Clubs of the Tegucigalpa Central District

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