



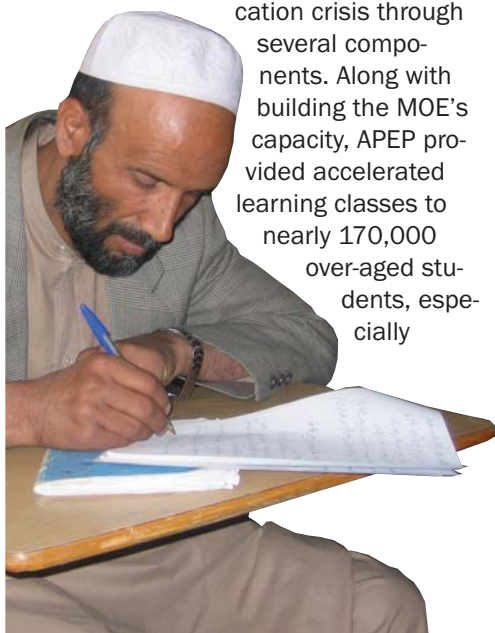
USAID AWARDS CREATIVE THE AFGHANISTAN BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Washington, D.C. — The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has recognized Creative Associates International, Inc.'s leadership in basic education by awarding the firm the Afghanistan Basic Education Program (ABEP).

ABEP is designed to strengthen the quality of teaching by all of Afghanistan's primary school teachers, build the capacity and systems in the Ministry of Education (MOE) that support primary school teaching and aid in the annual printing and distribution of textbooks.

By building the ministry's capacity to deliver quality teacher training, the five-year nearly \$73 million award is destined to have lasting impact on Afghanistan's children.

ABEP follows on the success of Creative's implementation of the Afghanistan Primary Education Program which improved the MOE's capacity to reform education in Afghanistan. Launched in 2003, APEP addressed Afghanistan's education crisis through several components. Along with building the MOE's capacity, APEP provided accelerated learning classes to nearly 170,000 over-aged students, especially



girls, produced a distance learning radio teacher training program that reached thousands of teachers throughout the country, and printed and distributed 27 million textbooks.

Under ABEP, Creative will work with three international and five local implementing partners to provide an advisory and technical assistance role to the MOE, including preparing curricula for in-service and pre-service teacher training. Working with its partners, Creative will produce analyses and technical assistance activities to bring about reforms in the policies that impact the quality of teaching.

ABEP will also provide for the ministry's longer-term needs, at the national and provincial levels, by aiding policy making, planning, budgeting, recruitment practices and methods to monitor and evaluate teachers' performance.

ABEP will also focus on policies that support teachers and their professional development at the central, provincial and district levels to provide critical skills to in-service teachers with little or no training and to improve and sustain pre-service teacher training at teacher training colleges.

The project's third component will provide for the annual printing and distribution of textbooks.

"ABEP's focus is to improve primary teacher quality which obviously will ultimately impact the children of Afghanistan," said Thea C. Anderson, Creative's ABEP project manager in Washington D.C.

Creative Associates is a 27-year-old minority women-owned professional services firm that currently works in 17 countries in addition to the United States.

CREATIVE POISED TO SHAPE FUTURE OF STABILITY AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS

The attack on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent, rapid military victory in Afghanistan effectively changed the paradigm of post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction, for the foreseeable future. Up to then, post-conflict transitions had been almost exclusively the province of the Department of State, USAID and other U.S. government agencies engaged in foreign assistance. Even where the peace-keeping operations were essential to stability, as in Bosnia and Kosovo, responsibility for reconstruction and nation-building fell primarily to the State Department and USAID, with little interaction with the military.

But military success in Afghanistan was so rapid, and the need for addressing stabilization and reconstruction so immediate, that State and USAID were unable to adequately respond to the needs. The exigencies forced the military to engage in nation-building efforts that it had historically sought to avoid. In the push to move the assistance program out of Kabul, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, led by the military, with participation by

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Making Connections 3
February 13th-15th

Open House
In Celebration of Chinese
New Year. February 15th



SOUTHERN SUDAN: ASSESSMENT INFORMS POLICY MAKERS ON URBAN PLANNING FOR JUBA

In January, southern Sudan marked the first year anniversary of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement amid widespread celebrations, commemorating the end of the 21-year civil war between the north and the south and an era of autonomy from the capital in Khartoum.

Just before the momentous anniversary, Creative Associates International, Inc.'s technical team presented an assessment to government officials and members of parliament that revealed town mapping and plans for Juba, the newly designated capital of southern Sudan. One of the Juba assessment's goals was to provide the government with specific information on the existing administrative structures of land management so that both long- and short-term policies could be designed to meet the city's expected rapid growth.

The new seat of government in southern Sudan will be particularly affected by rapid growth. "Some estimates have it that Juba could double in size to half a million people in the next one or two years. There's going to be a huge pull, a magnetic attraction to Juba for internally displaced persons, refugees, ex-combatants and a rural-to-urban migration as people look for opportunities," said Richard Wagner, Creative Associates director of the Sudan Strategic participatory Town Planning Project which carried out the assessment.

As in all new beginnings, optimism hangs in the balance with concern at the enormous challenges ahead.

Southern Sudan is considered one of Africa's least developed regions. Juba has one main paved road where government ministries, the president's offices and other official residences will be located. Aside from some British colonial structures in one part of town, most of the residents live in



Creative's Sudan Strategic Participatory Town Planning team photograph the only map of Juba, which was hand drawn in the 1970s.

traditional tukul or thatched roof houses. Basic services, roads and other infrastructure have been nearly non-existent.

The assessment will not only help to draw a picture of the challenges but also the constraints and opportunities that the government will face in making policy decisions about urban planning. Some of Juba's critical needs include a comprehensive records review to determine land ownership and allocation to meet the demands of a growing population. The assessment, undertaken in September, was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

"The outcome of the assessment is that we have a better understanding about the system for land management and administration procedures," Wagner said. "We learned about the characteristics and dynamics of the greater Juba area, what the constraints will be for the new government and what opportunities exist to assist the new government to deal with the inevitable rapid growth and change that will occur in the city."

Although weak, Juba has a working system for land tenure and property. While public officials have a vision for the city and many possess skills in urban planning and management, there are shortages in staff, systems and operational capacity to enact changes and manage growth effectively. "For example, the land survey office, which would be the driver for surveying and plotting property for municipal expansion and property verification on border disputes, has only four surveyors with no new surveyors having been hired since 1989. The new government is inheriting a partially dysfunctional system where land records have lacked a legal framework which could lead to contested property and conflict," Wagner said.

But the assessment also raises hopes. Juba has a lot of resources. It sits on the famed trade route of the Nile River. Vast lands are available for development to meet the needs of a growing municipality that must accommodate a growing population.

And with growth comes the need for land use planning. The government

PHOTO BY: CREATIVE ASSOCIATES



washington, dc

CREATIVE OPENS ITS DOORS AND CELEBRATES YEAR OF THE DOG

Creative’s 8th Annual Chinese New Year’s Open House celebrated the Year of the Dog on February 15, at Creative’s headquarters.

Creative’s Chinese New Year’s Open House is well known as a mid-Winter event for the region’s development professionals to reconnect with colleagues and competitors alike. As in years past, the evening includes a Chinese culinary feast.

To the Chinese, the color red represents happiness and celebration. And true to custom, red is the color donned by many attending the Open House to ring in the new year.

According to the Chinese lunar calendar, the Year of the Dog is a time when recent setbacks or obstacles are overcome to provide a time to shine, both personally and professionally.

The longest and most important celebration in the Chinese calendar, the Chinese year 4704 begins January 29 and celebrations can last for several

weeks. Legend has it that in ancient times, Buddha asked all the animals to meet him on Chinese New Year. Twelve arrived and Buddha named a year after each one. He announced that the people born in each animal’s year would possess some of that animal’s personality traits. Those born in dog years tend to be loyal, kind and generous. They also work to right wrongs and are able to keep secrets.



CREATIVE HOSTS GLOBAL MEETING OF CHIEFS OF PARTY

Creative’s biennial gathering of the company’s Chiefs of Party called “Making Connections,” coincided with this year’s Open House will be Chiefs of Party from most of the 13 countries where Creative implements projects met in Washington to take part in forums where they shared best practices and field experiences with their colleagues. Field staff members also attended the Chinese New Year celebration. Chiefs of Party in attendance include John Knight of Afghanistan; Christina Ntchougan-Sonou, of Benin; Peter Parr of Creative’s East Africa Regional Office; Harold Sibaja of Guatemala; Yves Colon of Haiti; Nancy Parks of Iraq; Semere Solomon of Nigeria; Melinda west de Anguizola of Panama; Jon Silverstone of the Philippines; Hans-Christian Vejby of Sudan and Renuka Pillay of Uganda.

Southern Sudan continued from page 2

should consider policies regarding land use and designate certain areas for important public and commercial functions such as light industrial and market center zones, locations of roads and housing density schemes. “The risk really is that the growth in Juba will happen without Sudanese leading it in a planned manner. Right now there is no master plan to guide investment,” Wagner said.

While the Juba assessment is not a master plan, it provides information that informs the master plan process. For many members of parliament and officials who heard Creative’s presentation, it was the first time they had seen a full graphic display of the city and a visual representation of its

resources. With the assessment, policy makers will be more informed about protecting lands and allocating areas for roads, schools, health clinics and other institutions. Because the Juba assessment is a strong tool for policy considerations, several of the officials attending the presentation asked for similar assessments to be carried out in their own towns and cities.

The former garrison town along the Nile is changing. “There’s an optimism and excitement about the future. People have high expectations, commercial enterprise is beginning to flourish and there’s evidence of new construction in the city,” Wagner added.

— Alexandra Pratt

“The Outcome of the assessment is that we have a better understanding about the system for land management and administration procedures

Richard Wagner
Senior Associate
Sudan Strategic
Participatory Town
Planning (SPTP)



PANAMA: ACCESS TO EDUCATION IMPROVES WITH PROJECT DESTINO'S FARM SCHOOLS

PHOTO BY: JULIANA GUAQUETA



Beneficiaries at the Santa Teresa farm school in the Chiriqui province, Panama.

In a wooden shack in Volcan, a remote area in Panama's Chiriqui province, Osiris Villareal is leading a group activity for preschool and primary school children to improve their recognition of colors and vowels.

"I have learned teaching techniques here that I was never taught in school," says Osiris, a volunteer teacher at the Mother Teresa farm school, managed by one of Creative Associates International, Inc.'s local implementing partners in Panama, Casa Esperanza. "We use games to teach so that children get interested in learning and enjoy the process," she added.

Osiris is one of many volunteer teachers, who work with the Creative-managed DESTINO project, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to combat child labor through non-formal education opportunities. According to a recent study, 15 percent (109,000) of the total population of children in Panama between the ages of five and seventeen which number 729,299, have either abandoned the classroom or have never been enrolled. Among the most vulnerable are children of poor indigenous families who must help their parents during the three-month harvest season on coffee, watermelon, and sugar cane plantations instead of staying in school.

In 1999, Casa Esperanza started developing studies in child labor and along with UNICEF funding, and began

organizing awareness workshops for parents in forty communities in the Comarca Ngäbe Bugle province. Under DESTINO, the program has expanded its activities within the Comarcas and to central provinces. Roderick Castillo, program director at Casa Esperanza says, "DESTINO has allowed us to work with children. Before, we only worked with parents, teachers, local, and national authorities."

Today, DESTINO reaches children directly, having established schools on farms, where former child laborers have access to education and health services. But the farm school initiative was hardly an overnight success; it relied on continued efforts in anti-child labor consciousness-building and community mobilization.

Obtaining permission from farm owners to set up farm schools on their property was initially an overwhelming task for organization staff. "Back in 2000, there was a lot of discomfort among the farm owners and the initiative was rejected by many of them, so in the first year only four of them accepted to have farm schools in their lands," recalls Program Director Roderick Castillo. The farmers were concerned about the loss in profits that might ensue as a result of the reduced number of child laborers on the farms.

But the biggest challenge involved confronting local attitudes about child labor. In Panama, and in many other struggling economies, child labor exists as a common practice and children are often not recognized as having rights. Iris de Miranda, who co-owns a farm with her husband and currently cooperates with DESTINO, remembers that "at the beginning, the men in my family resisted to get involved with the NGO. However, thanks to the awareness raising workshops of Casa Esperanza and my persistence, we managed to convince

them to have one farm school in our lands."

De Miranda and her family have become staunch supporters of Casa Esperanza's mission and are currently involved in pioneering a pilot project in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in setting up night schools on their land for youths and adults who have never attended primary school. To elicit similar response from the farming community at large, DESTINO created a national awareness campaign. In the month of September alone, DESTINO's public service announcements were broadcast on 38 radio stations and seven national television and cable stations, and featured in major newspapers in Panama. Radio spots were translated to the language spoken by the Ngäbe Bugle to reach the homes of remote indigenous communities.

After generating publicity and open dialogue, Casa Esperanza has seen the increasing collaboration of farm owners. "In some cases, owners have approached us with a proposition to establish a school on their farm," says Castillo, program director. "There is a lot of attention to the child labor issue today in Panama, so one is perceived very positively when they choose to cooperate with the initiative."

In 2005, the number of farm schools grew to 17 and soon will reach 19. In addition to



PHOTO BY: JULIANA GUAQUETA



AFGHANISTAN: MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING TOWARD COMMON GOOD

In an ideal world, civil society organizations would be the message makers which would feed media outlets. But in Afghanistan, the media and civil society organizations, or CSOs, have little understanding of how they may work together toward a common good.

But through a series of media forums and roundtables, Creative Associates International, Inc. is working to build strategic partnerships with media and CSOs to increase their respective roles and viability of Afghanistan's emerging civil society.

"Media plays a key and important role in the development of civil society as well as in the development of the country, ensuring peace and national unification," said Hakim Taniwal, governor of Paktia Province and a participant of one of the civil society and media forums.

"We should work for the

promotion and development of this sector. We can use media to portray truths, convey the right messages, increase people's awareness and strengthen their understanding of the country, people and government."

Through the Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS) project, media and CSO representatives have been brought together. I-PACS is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and implemented by Counterpart International. Creative Associates manages the media component of the project.

According to M. Halim Fidai, I-PACS media and communications program coordinator, discussions have helped dispel assumptions and provide basic information.

"Most of the media thought that 'civil society' only meant organizations that bear the 'civil' term in their project or titles without understanding the civic functions of these organizations," Fidai said. "These forums will

“Media plays a key and important role in the development of the country, ensuring peace and national unification,”

Hakim Taniwal
Governor Paktia Province

surely have an impact on building alliances between CSOs and the media particularly to understand each other and share their resources."

Forum participants highlighted areas for partnership specifying that CSOs are working in communities and in the far reaches of the provinces and, as such, are the best primary source of information for reporters. One participant at the media forum held in Khost, Afghanistan, in October 2005 said, "Through this forum, I have understood for the first time that media is also part of civil society; I think we should strengthen each other."

— Alexandra Pratt

In Afghanistan, media professionals and non-profit organizations are building the foundations of Afghanistan's emerging civil society.

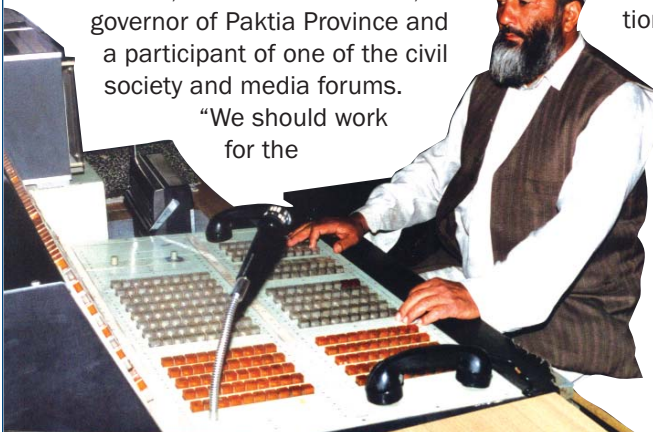


PHOTO BY ERICH VOGT

Panama continued from page 4

farm owners' cooperation, the project relies on grassroots mobilization and community participation, such as the contributions of volunteer teachers who travel to rural areas to conduct their practicums. Casa Esperanza has ensured the collaboration of academic institutions such as the Unachi University in David, Chiriqui, which creates an incentive for university students like Osiris by providing them with a certificate upon the completion of their degree in exchange for volunteering on the farm schools.

Despite the project's recent success, Casa Esperanza's vision has yet to be fulfilled. While the organization plans

to continue strengthening the impact and increasing the numbers of farm schools, the project's objective is also to combat child labor by seeking and providing better economic opportunities for low income families. Most recently, a workshop was held in the city of David, Panama, to exchange information about possible income generation projects in ethno- and eco-tourism in Chiriqui and the Ngäbe Bugle province. DESTINO staff, Comarca Ngäbe Bugle authorities, and representatives from indigenous artisan organizations attended the workshop.

With so much achieved by Casa Esperanza and much more to be accomplished, Castillo is confident of the success of the organization's future endeavors. When asked about the most significant episode in his experience with DESTINO, he brightens: "In Hato Corotu in the Comarca Ngäbe Bugle province, a group of parents approached me to thank DESTINO for having chosen to work with that community. It was a very special moment, because in this job you don't always expect people to thank you for the work we do."

— Lazarina Todorova and
Juliana Guaqueta



CENTRAL AMERICA: CREATIVE AND USAID GANG STUDY FINDS COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL APPROACH NEEDED



Graffiti marks walls in a gang-ridden neighborhood in Guatemala City.

PHOTO BY: ROB DAVENPORT

A study led by Creative Associates International, Inc. for the U.S. Agency for International Development finds that a balanced application of prevention, rehabilitation and law enforcement mechanisms is the most effective way to address gang issues.

Commissioned by USAID, the Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment focused on El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the northern and southern borders of Mexico. While analyzing the transnational nature of gangs, the study also aimed to evaluate policies and programs addressing the impact of gangs, and provide recommendations to USAID for developing future policy and programs to address the gang issue. The Central America and Mexico gang assessment will be finalized and disseminated in February 2006.

“The gang issue is not only threatening democracy and economic growth in Central America and Mexico, but is also affecting our communities in the United States. It is clear that the U.S. needs to work in partnership with Central America and Mexico to develop programs to both prevent youths from joining gangs and to deal with the gang members in a manner that respects the rule of law and human

rights,” said Anu Rajaraman, democracy officer responsible for managing this activity at USAID’s Office of Regional and Sustainable Development for the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The study’s preliminary findings and recommendations are based on research and interviews in the five Central American countries between September and October 2005. Researchers met with representatives from government, civil society, churches, and the private sector. Also consulted were gang members in prison and on the streets and former gang members.

The study suggests that a comprehensive regional approach with country-level plans is needed to address the gang problem at the local and national levels. Programs should address the underlying factors that are fueling the gang problem including youth unemployment, insufficient education, family disintegration, and overwhelmed and ineffective justice systems. Advocacy work should be promoted to monitor youth violence and oversee police operations. The study also highlights the need for collaboration among countries to take advantage of best practices such as community-based policing and multi-sectoral crime prevention committees.

Building on the success of U.S. gang programs and those within the region was noted as a sure way to begin to think about developing a regional approach.

Of the Central American and Mexican communities studied, most countries were found to lack any comprehensive approach that addresses the multiple dimensions of the gang problem. Responses to the gang problem have led some governments such as El Salvador and Honduras to adopt anti-gang laws such as “mano dura,” or “firm hand.” These laws give law enforcement a mechanism to deal with gang related issues. Ironically, in spite of aggressive Honduran law enforcement approaches, and where it costs very little to imprison gang members, gangs are growing under the mano dura laws because prisons often serve as gang training camps.

Representatives from the U.S. government along with gang experts from the United States and abroad met in December of 2005 to discuss whether program efforts should be focused on prevention or rehabilitation. Most agreed that prevention was the most cost effective, long-term method to keep at-risk youths out of gangs. In fact, Nicaragua, which ranks as the second poorest nation in the region, was cited as having mitigated the

Gang Study continued from page 6

growth of gangs through community policing, prevention and rehabilitation programs.

“Creative’s work on this assessment will provide critical inputs to USAID as the Agency develops its responses to the gang problem in Central America and Mexico,” USAID’s Rajaraman said.

While investigators found that data on gangs are weak in all five countries, they nevertheless estimate 30,000 to 285,000 gang members in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In the northern and southern borders of Mexico, the number of gang members are believed to number 19,000. The



“Mara Salvatrucha” gang – also known as MS-13 and the 18th Street gang – are the pre-

dominant gangs in all countries except Nicaragua, where prevention mechanisms and different migration patterns have kept them at bay.

“Creative’s work on this assessment will provide critical inputs to USAID as the Agency develops its responses to the gang problem in Central America and Mexico,”

Anu Rajaraman
Democracy Officer

But rehabilitation is also a mixed bag. As one participant noted, a former gang member is like a recovering alcoholic; it’s much easier to join a gang than to leave it. “In some ways you can never leave the gang,” said Harold Sibaja, assessment field team leader

for Creative Associates, based in Guatemala.

One of the few ways gang members can try to leave the gang is by becoming active in the church. “We found that 80 percent of former gang members belonged to a religious organization,” Sibaja said. Otherwise, if a member tries to leave the gang on his or her own, they may be killed by fellow gang members. Many gang members bear tattoos all over their bodies, further stigmatizing them and preventing them from fully reintegrating into society.

The Organization of American States members have talked about building a network identifying contact persons to work on gang issues, but the issue has stalled and the implementation of programs seems far off, for now.

To be sure, the needs may only become more urgent.

— Alexandra Pratt and Lynn Sheldon

PHOTO BY: ROB DAVENPORT

CREATIVE POISED TO SHAPE FUTURE OF STABILITY AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT continued from cover

State, USAID and U.S. Department of Agriculture representatives, became the vehicles of choice for extending the reach of the central government, providing security assistance, and conducting reconstruction activities. By necessity, the military had moved from a primary focus on combat operations to a focus on full-spectrum operations, where “non-lethal” weapons were assuming as much importance as the lethality of maneuver units.

The experience in Afghanistan heavily influenced the planning for and implementation of post-war reconstruction in Iraq. The challenges, successes and failures of that effort led to a widespread reexamination of how the USG should plan for and deploy in conflict and post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction programs, and to the creation of the State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization

(S/CRS); USAID’s Office of Military Affairs; and the Department of Defense’s Office of Stability Operations.

The future of post-conflict intervention is being intensely studied by S/CRS, Joint Forces Command, the National War College, the Army War College, and various policy institutes. What’s clear is that future deployments of U.S. forces will be accompanied by joint planning, training and implementation with civilian agencies and contractors.

As a practitioner of conflict and post-conflict assistance, Creative has a vital interest in how assistance is planned and implemented in the future. Some months ago, Creative’s President and CEO, M. Charito Kruvant, supported increasing Creative’s intellectual capacity to enter and contribute to the debate and to help shape consensus on the way forward.

With the addition of James “Spike” Stephenson, Sarah Farnsworth and Norman Rifkin to Creative’s family, the firm is well positioned to bring to the debate the practitioner’s perspectives. The team is already engaged in publishing articles, serving on panels, and speaking on the subject. Planning is underway for co-sponsoring a conference for senior policy makers, focused on civilian-military cooperation in future conflicts. Sarah is heavily engaged in improving Creative’s capacity to continue to deliver quality assistance in the post-conflict environment. Norman is strengthening Creative’s responsiveness and implementation capacities for USAID education sector activities in fragile states. The combined experiences of the team in planning U.S. government post-conflict programs, combined with Creative’s long history of implementation, can have a significant impact on the finding the right path forward.



GUATEMALA: REALITY TV SHINES LIGHTS ON EX-GANG MEMBERS STRIVING TO DO GOOD

Guatemala's prime time is about to get the latest in reality TV – one with competition, suspense and a healthy dose of social responsibility.

A new reality show is challenging hardened former members of international gangs to make new lives for themselves by succeeding at a legitimate business endeavor with the help of private sector mentors.

“The message that the show is going to send is that it's going to put a human face on the former gang members and that's never been done before,” said Jose Garzon, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Guatemala Chief of Democracy and Governance, who approved the project.

The show, called Desafio 10-Paz para los Ex in Spanish or Challenge 10 Peace for Ex (gang members), is the brainchild of Harold Sibaja, Creative Associates International, Inc.'s regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Youth Alliance Program. Having just completed a gang assessment study which evaluated the impact and nature of gangs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico, Sibaja finds that former gang members are the best examples to get others to turn their lives around. (Read about the Gang Study on Page 6.)

“My goal is to sensitize the entire population to the fact that gang members are people for whom gangs offered an alternative to their dysfunctional families and other bad circumstances. Once they're rehabilitated, they need a chance, an opportunity to become responsible citizens,” Sibaja said. But he also saw a way “to sensitize the private sector to gang members' potential as wage earners and would-be consumers.”

The five-episode reality program will be broadcast in March on a local televi-

sion station. The show gathers 10 former gang members divided into two groups of five, who compete to establish a sustainable car wash and shoe repair business in two weeks. The ex-gang members have assumed names and wear masks to protect their identities.

When first approached by Sibaja with the idea for the show, Garzon said he was skeptical. “The idea sounded almost off the wall, but sometimes you accomplish the greatest development breakthroughs with off the wall ideas. What was attractive about it is that it had strong backing from business and civic leaders.”

The 10 young men were recruited from local churches, where many former gang members are “hiding” from gangs, and NGOs. More than 25 youths were interviewed for the final 10 who range in age from 19 to 26. Each team was provided with \$3,200 that it uses to build their businesses; self reliance is key and so is the advice of two Guatemalan businessmen who mentor them along the way.

Challenge 10 offers an opportunity to actively engage the private sector to invest in the lives of former gang members. “Presently, the fragile state of security that exists in many neighborhoods in Guatemala City and other minor cities in the country make the private sector hesitant to openly engage in supporting anti-gang activities,” explained Lynn Sheldon, the Washington-based director of the Youth Alliance Program, the USAID funded effort, which partially sponsored Challenge 10.

Two successful businessmen agreed to mentor 10 former gang members to help them take advantage of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be trained and learn how to develop a business plan that could transform them from former gang members into small business owners in Guatemala, Sheldon said.

The teams must provide market research, a feasibility study and business plan, its implementation and launch the business. They must also live in the same house for the duration of Challenge 10.

“One of the major successes of the project was that the gang members who come from different gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha, 18th Street, White Fence and North Hollywood, and never thought they could work together, actually lived together,” Sibaja said.

Challenge 10 is an attempt to introduce new prevention and rehabilitation methods for dealing with the problem of gangs.

“I would hope that the show will first of all mobilize the private sector to be real participants in dealing with the gang issue, of being proactive and try to address rehabilitation,” Garzon said. “I would also hope that the show sensitizes the Guatemalan public to the idea of rehabilitation not jail or doing away with gang members, but bring about a positive solution. We're trying to make the public aware that there are other solutions out there.”

Obtaining funding for the production wasn't easy. “I started out with only \$15,000,” Sibaja said. “But I got the support of the private sector which provided about \$50,000 in cash as well as in-kind grants. You can really mobilize the private sector if you give them a win-win situation,” Sibaja said.

“It's a fantastic story. At the inauguration of the businesses that the former gang members created as a result of the competition, one of them apologized for the crimes he had committed. Suddenly, there is an enormous humanity coming out. The fact that you can save some, even if it's only 10 – we have to try to save those we can,” Garzon said.

—Alexandra Pratt



LIBERIA: PRESIDENT JOHNSON-SIRLEAF LAUDS OTI'S YOUTH IN ACTION FOR A CLEANER, BRIGHTER MONROVIA

After a thunderous round of applause and spontaneous singing of the national anthem, Liberia President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf thanked the nation's youths and said: "You are the future of Liberia. You are the ones who are going to stand up and take this country forward."

The president's remarks were in appreciation of a cleanup effort that gathered 2,500 youths in early January to give the capital Monrovia a facelift just in time for the president's inauguration on January 16.

The Liberia Transition Initiative (LTI) sponsored the Youth in Action program to bring together youths from across religious, ethnic and city lines to work toward a cleaner, brighter future. The youths spent the first of the 10-day program in an intensive workshop discussing the need to work collectively for Liberia's future. The remaining 9 days were spent hauling away more than 250 truckloads of rubbish, sweeping streets and painting public bridges and buildings. After a tour of many of Monrovia's

streets, the newly elected president said she sees a much tidier city.

"I told my driver to go here, and I did not see any garbage. So I told my driver to go down this street, and I did not see any garbage," Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf told the youth volunteers at the conclusion of the Youth in Action program.

Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI), the Liberia Transition Initiative was launched after the signing of the peace accords in early 2004 to help the government in its transition process. One of LTI's main components is to work with war-affected youths to give them the skills to reintegrate into society. Creative Associates International, Inc. implements LTI.

For much of the past 15 years of civil war, there has been little action for public sanitation. Infrastructure has seriously deteriorated, and buildings have not been maintained. The citi-

zens of Monrovia – many of whom remain displaced from the war – were left to fend for themselves and garbage piled up, posing serious health risks.

The Youth in Action program shows that a positive spirit, and a unified goal, can make for a cleaner, brighter future.

LTI worked with three local NGO partners – Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY), Organization of Liberian Muslim Youth (OLMY), and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), mobilizing and galvanizing young people between the ages of 18 and 35 to clean up Monrovia in time for the presidential inauguration.

Additional assistance for garbage removal was provided by the UNDP, UNMIL, the Ministry of Public Works and the Monrovia City Corporation.

— Shannon Fischer, Chief of Party, Liberia Transition Initiative



“You are the future of Liberia. You are the ones who are going to stand up and take this country forward.”

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Liberia's new President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf presented a certificate of appreciation to Youth in Action partners, a grantee of the Liberia Transition Initiative, during the closing of the program on January 14th in Monrovia.

PHOTO BY: LTI STAFF



NEW FACES IN WASHINGTON, D.C. AND FIELD



Alex Dunlop joins the Business Development Unit as a Proposal Coordinator. Before joining Creative, Alex worked at The Services Group, Inc. where he coordinated multi-million dollar economic development project proposals to USAID, the World Bank, and other donor organizations and tracked new business opportunities. Alex has also consulted for Urban-In in Novi Pazar, Serbia, where he proposed long-term strategic planning priorities and facilitated collaboration between Urban-In and partners. Alex has taught English conversation and writing at Árpád Secondary School in Tatabánya, Hungary for two years. He speaks Hungarian, Serbian and Croatian and some Spanish. He received master's degrees in public administration and in Russian and East European Studies, both from Indiana University, Bloomington and a bachelor's degree in English Literature and Secondary Education from the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Va.

Sarah Farnsworth joins Creative as Senior Division Manager for the Communities in Transition division. Sarah has extensive international development experience as USAID's Team Leader in the Balkans at the Office of European Country Affairs Bureau of Eurasia and Europe. There, she served as the Agency's pre-eminent advisor for policy and background on USAID's activities in the former Yugoslavia and on the Agency's Task Forces to develop U.S. Government's policies on Internally Displaced Persons and Fragile States. Sarah has also served as a Country Director and Political Party Trainer and Coordinator at the National Democratic Institute's Ukraine office. She developed a training strategy and implemented a nationwide political party training program. Sarah also has extensive congressional, as well as communications and public relations experiences. She received a bachelor's degree in international relations and law at Tufts University in Medford, Mass.



Jeanne Moulton joins the Education, Mobilization and Communication division as a Senior Associate. She brings more than 15 years of professional experience as an education consultant in developing countries in the field of strategic planning, evaluation, research and training. Before joining Creative, Jeanne participated in the basic education project design for USAID/ Afghanistan, a 10-year education sector strategic plan for the Ministry of Education in Uganda, and in a project development of non-formal (adult) education in Lesotho and Bangladesh for the World Bank. Jeanne received a doctorate in international education from the University of Massachusetts, a master's degree in organizational development from California State University at Hayward, a master's degree in English and education from Stanford University, and a bachelor's degree in English from Wellesley College in Wellesley, Mass. She speaks French and German.

Nancy Parks joins Creative as the Chief of Party for the Education II project in Baghdad, Iraq. Nancy brings years of professional experience in the Middle East in executive management of academic and vocational training programs. She also has worked as a professional educator and curriculum designer. Previously, she served as Chief of Party and Deputy Chief of Party for the Iraq Vocational Training Project with the Louis Berger Group in Baghdad. Before that, she was the Director of English and Vocational Center at the Mamoun International Corporation in Syria, where she managed its English language and computer centers in Damascus and regional cities. Nancy received a master's degree in linguistics from the American University in Cairo, a master's degree in teaching at the University of Texas in Arlington, and a bachelor's degree in science from Baylor University, Texas.





Koebel Price joins the Communities in Transition division as a Management Associate. Koebel has extensive international and domestic experience in advocacy, organizing and capacity building for NGOs, trade unions and political parties. He has also worked in elections, issue education, proposal writing and fundraising. Before Creative, Koebel was a Field Representative for the Middle East region at the American Center for International Labor Solidarity in Washington, D.C., where he conducted country assessments, developed proposals and lead training programs for partners in the Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Tunisia and Jordan. He also served as chief of party for both Bulgaria and Kosovo.

He has also served as a Senior Field Program Officer at the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in Washington, D.C., where he helped build a sustainable field program that continues to educate Kosovars in democratic principles in more than 100 communities. Koebel received a graduate certificate in nonprofit management from the University of St. Thomas, in St. Paul, Minn., and a bachelor's degree in labor studies from National Labor College, Silver Spring, Md.

Norman Rifkin joins the Office of Operations as a Senior Advisor for Education Market Planning. Norman returns to Creative after a consultancy in 2003 when he was a team leader on the design of a major new education sector initiative in India that targeted the entry and retention of vulnerable out-of-school children into the formal school system. He brings more than 20 years of diverse experience in design, implementation and evaluation of social sector development activities in Asia, South Asia, Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the Caribbean. Before joining Creative, Norman served as USAID's Senior Policy Advisor. He received a master's degree in educational administration at Hofstra University, Hempstead, N.Y., and a bachelor's degree in humanities at the State University of New York in Binghamton. He is fluent in French and Indonesian.



Marion Rimmer joins the Education, Mobilization and Communication division in the Support to Iraqi Basic Education project in Baghdad, as a Teacher Training Coordinator. Marion has extensive international teacher training experience in Pakistan and Ireland, and ESL teaching experience in Mozambique, Hungary, Vietnam and Egypt. Before joining Creative, Marion served as a Literacy Coordinator and Specialist for the Education Development Center in Kabul, Afghanistan. She also served as the Director of Studies at the Capital Language Academy in Wellington, New Zealand. There, she focused on developing educational policy and strategies specific to the needs of the institution, which teaches English as a Foreign Language. Marion received a post graduate diploma in education and a bachelor's degree in education at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

James "Spike" Stephenson joins the Office of Programs as a Senior Advisor for Post-conflict and Transitional Development. Before Creative, Spike served as a Senior Advisor to the U.S. Department of State Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. He has also authored papers on civilian and military cooperation in Iraq and implementation of assistance in high-threat environments. Spike's USAID experience spans over more than 25 years. He has served as Mission Director in Iraq, Serbia and Montenegro, Lebanon and has served in other capacities in USAID missions in Egypt, Barbados, Grenada, El Salvador and at the bureau in Washington, D.C. A former practicing attorney, Spike received a juris doctor and a bachelor's degree in English from the University of South Carolina. He has lectured at the Army War College and USAID.





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PHOTO OF THE SEASON



PHOTOS BY: JULIANA GUAQUETA

DESTINO beneficiaries of the Santa Teresa farm school, Chiriqui province, Panama, November 2005.

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