

CENTRAL AMERICA MIGRATION PRESSURES

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS



SECURITY

United States Government

Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI): \$161.5 million for programs to enable Central American countries to respond to region's security and governance challenges.

- \$65 million for Rule of Law, Human Rights and Transparency programs, activities to prevent at-risk youth from joining gangs and programs to expand education and job training.
- \$96.5 million to peace, security, stabilization, to strengthen immigration, law enforcement, and judicial authorities and promote anti-gang and human rights programs.

Goals:

- Create safe streets for citizens in the region
- Disrupt the movement of criminals and contraband to, within, and between the nations of Central America
- Support the development of strong, capable and accountable Central America governments
- Reestablish effective state presence, services and security in communities at risk
- Foster enhanced levels of coordination and cooperation between the nations of the region, other international partners and donors to combat regional security threats

Mexico

Merida Initiative: (2008, \$2.3 billion total funds) a new security cooperation initiative between Mexico and the U.S. to combat drug trafficking and organized crime.

Main goal: to produce a safer and more secure hemisphere and prevent the spread of illicit drugs and transnational threats.

Goals:

- Disrupt the capacity of organized crime to operate
- Institutionalize capacity to sustain rule of law
- Create a 21st century border structure
- Build strong and resilient communities

The Mérida Initiative allocated over \$1.5 billion to Mexico from 2008-2010. U.S. military and police aid in each of these years marked nearly a 10-fold increase over 2007 levels. USG will extend military/police aid to Mexico beyond Mérida's expiration date, requesting an additional \$310 million for 2011 and \$290 million for 2012. Congress put four human rights conditions on 15% of the funds: transparency and accountability in law enforcement, civilian trials for military officials accused of human rights violations, consultation with human rights groups, and prohibiting testimony obtained through torture. In 2010, the U.S. State Department withheld \$26 million in Mérida funds for training, drug interdiction equipment and aircrafts until the Mexican state passed human rights reforms to the constitution and the Military Code of Justice. Mexico has yet to pass either measure.

Challenges: The lack of transparency in disbursement of Mérida funds.

Gaps: The Mérida Initiative is ineffective because it ignores two major root causes of drug trafficking: U.S. demand and poverty in Mexico. Widespread drug use in the U.S. makes drug trafficking a lucrative venture. Currently 50 million people live in poverty with three options for survival: migration, tenuous and often dangerous work in the informal economy, or crime. Mérida Initiative lacks investment in drug prevention or rehabilitation programs in the U.S., nor has there been complementary domestic legislation to reduce demand in the U.S.

Binational Group on Bridges and Border Crossings: Mexico's enforcement response has included:

- Ramping up detention and deportation
- Speeding up La Bestia
- Higher penalties for private companies known to be facilitating illegal migration

Programa Frontera Sur: Implemented in response to the migration crisis and allegations of a porous border.

Goals:

- Organize migration via the documentation of seasonal CA workers in Mexico
- Improve infrastructure with mobile checkpoints and supportive services
- Ramp up support for migrant-friendly shelters and medical clinics
- Increase coordination with regional partners, particularly Guatemala
- Improve domestic interagency coordination on issues of migration

El Salvador:

\$25-million Crime and Violence Prevention - USAID program: The U.S. government has implemented a program to last over 5 years to establish 77 youth outreach centers in addition to the 30 already in existence.

“No pongas en riesgo sus vidas” campaign: aims to warn parents and persons responsible for the care of children and adolescents of all dangers to which they are exposed when they are left in hands of traffickers, who prioritize profit from the illegal activity over the welfare of children.

Plan El Salvador Seguro: Implemented September 2014, with the assistance of the National Council on Citizen Security and Coexistence, international organizations, churches, and representatives from civil society. Highlights joint collaboration among all sectors. Recommends urgent action, short, medium and long-term actions, to address violence and crime, ensuring access to justice and care and protection for victims.

Objectives:

- To provide input to help enrich national policies and plans of justice, public safety and coexistence.
- Gather contributions of different sectors and facilitate dialogue with society.
- Propose actions that enable the implementation of policies on justice, public safety and coexistence to find solutions together.

Guatemala:

The Pact for Security, Justice and Peace in Guatemala: a proposal in conjunction with other Ministries in the government and civil society.

Goal:

- To provide a broad conceptual framework for creating justice, order and peace, as well as a system of oversight and monitoring. According to the government common crimes are down 13%, while homicides are down 5%, to 34 per 100,000.

National Policy of Security: The Guatemalan National Security Council has proposed a plan to advance development, strengthen democracy, and overcome social inequalities.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program: The U.S. government has developed a \$40-million plan over 5 years to improve citizen security. This program will work in some of the most violent communities to reduce the risk factors for youth involvement in gangs and address factors driving migration to the United States.

Honduras:

CARSI: U.S. government to provide \$18.5 million to support community policing and law enforcement efforts to confront gangs and other sources of crime. USAID will build on an existing initiative to support 40 youth outreach centers through a substantial new Crime and Violence Prevention program.

Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT): U.S. funded training program to more than 100 Honduran National Police on the protection of minors and adolescents.

Inter-Institutional Task Force: Collaboration between United States and Honduras to create a task force of U.S. and international law enforcement and justice sector advisors.

International cooperation between the USG and Honduras's Supreme Court (CSJ): Use of the Ley Orgánica de Proceso Judicial; extradition as a core method to combat narco-trafficking; Honduras has extradited seven narco-traffickers for trial in the U.S.

Guardianes de la Patria: program launched in March 2014 implemented by the Honduran military for children ages 5-15. There are mixed reports on how this program is run, what is being taught to the children and the overall objective.

Goal:

- To provide children with productive activity, an alternative to gangs and teach them values

Challenges:

- Children might be receive weapons training, employees running the program don't have specific understanding how on to train or interact with children.

La Policia Militar Del Orden Publico (PMOP): The President has replaced part of the national police force with military personnel, reportedly to fight corruption and abuses present within the police force. Constitutional amendment to make PMOP the third arm of Honduran national security force, along with the national police and military; this attempt failed, but he wants a popular vote on its addition to the constitution during the next elections in 2017.

Challenges:

- Excessive militarization

Maritime shield with SOUTHCOM: GOH is cooperating with U.S. military to improve interception of water shipments of narcotics.

CIVIL SOCIETY, SOCIAL AFFAIRS, AND GOVERNANCE

Domestic Violence

CAPRODEM is a state run policy in Honduras (launched by the Supreme Court of Justice) that engages civil society in order to assist and advise women who are victims of domestic abuse and general violence. It is framed under the **Law Against Domestic Violence**, calling for the creation of a multi-sector center to break cycles of violence by working with men and women, beginning at the family level.

- Effectiveness: Because it was recently launched, it is too early to evaluate.

Transparency and Accountability

At the request of the Honduran President, the **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** will be establishing an office in Tegucigalpa to carry out objective observation and evaluation of human rights in the country. The U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa supports this decision. Similarly, the NGO **Alianza por una Sociedad más Justa (ASJ)** succeeded in getting the GOH to accept the entrance of Transparency International to oversee anti-corruption efforts.

- Effectiveness: Because both breakthroughs are recent, they will need to be evaluated following implementation.

The **International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)**: is a UN mandate created in 2006. In 2014, the USG signed a cooperation agreement of 4.8 million to continue the commission's work. CICIG mandate ends in September 2015.

- Effectiveness: The commission's work has been praised throughout different entities. Impunity has gone down 23% although it still remains high. Biden has continually expressed support and the importance of CICIG to end impunity in the country and as a model to be replicated in Honduras and El Salvador.

Immigration Policy

Applying refugee status to Central America (USA): DOS, DHS, USCIS developed the **Central American Migrant (CAM) program** to allow for parents in the United States to apply for refugee status for their children and bring them to live in the United States.

- Effectiveness: This is a new, innovative program that has addressed humanitarian issues. It is a brand new program, but it seems as though the process could be long and results will not be seen for some time.

Temporary Protected Status (USA) was extended to citizens from El Salvador and Honduras (resident since 2001 and 1999 respectively) in response to natural disasters from which many fled.

- This policy was effective at providing a proxy refugee status for these impacted individuals whose home countries lacked the capacity to provide crisis response. It appears to have had an unintended side effect of encouraging migration of those individuals' family members, up to and including in this recent flow. While this may be relevant for determinations of how to construct family member visa preference, the policy itself did as intended.

Programa Frontera Sur (Mexico) represents Mexico's response to the Northern Triangle migration pressures in terms of its own reaction to migrants in-country. It aims to: organize migration via the documentation of seasonal Central American workers in Mexico; improve infrastructure with mobile checkpoints and supportive services; ramp up support for migrant-friendly shelters and medical clinics; increase coordination with regional partners, particularly Guatemala; and improve domestic interagency coordination on issues of migration.

- *Programa Frontera Sur* has been partially effective. Progress has been made toward its goals of improving immigration infrastructure and legitimizing undocumented seasonal Central American workers. However, the portions related to migrant security and access to services, as well as improving domestic and intra-regional cooperation, have been less promising.

“No pongas en riesgo sus vidas” and similar campaigns have been initiated by Northern Triangle countries as well as the U.S. government as ‘scare tactic’ campaigns to deter migration. Such campaigns are premised on the belief that if migrants are made aware of their vulnerability to trafficking, sexual and physical assault, extortion, kidnapping, and other violence, they could therefore be convinced to remain home. Governments have used poster and radio campaigns for propaganda.

- While some of these initiatives are new, all evidence to this point suggests that these campaigns are highly ineffective. The risks of travel are well-known by many migrants, and their fear of those risks is inadequate to offset the pulling factor that is the possibility of a life in the United States and/or family reunification.

Youth

Jóvenes Contra la Violencia is a youth-centered nonprofit partnership network operating in all three Northern Triangle countries. Its projects include community-run violence prevention initiatives; partnerships with the national police and other security forces; development initiatives focused on everything from education and nutrition to employment and security; social networking outreach; youth empowerment programs; family strengthening & dialogue promotion; the creation of diverse community centers; promoting responsible parenting; increasing feelings of community ownership; media initiatives; and advocacy for better laws.

- Effectiveness: Effective. Although the goals of the particular chapters and their projects are disparate, the organization as a whole appears to be effective in fostering youth empowerment and community-building. Several of Jóvenes’ chapters have successfully gotten policies onto the legislative agenda of their respective countries, such as the First National Policy for Violence Prevention. By focusing on grassroots community organizing, the organization creates empowering youth social networks, performs important policy and community-building work, violence prevention, and promotes familial trust and strong relationships.

Casa Alianza chapters, with support of the EU and other organizations, has launched initiatives such as the Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth in Honduras, which, through research and analysis, actively advocates for better policies to protect them. It has become an active voice in denouncing human rights abuses and concerns for controversial policies.

- Effectiveness: Casa Alianza’s residential programs offering vulnerable children and youth alternative options to life on the streets through its Residential Program - Crisis Center seem to be effective in making social rehabilitation and reinsertion possible. Its advocacy activities have tremendous impact; however, due to the hostile/confrontational relationship with the government of Honduras, trust and cooperation are extremely difficult.

The Central American Integration System (SICA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), signed an agreement to start project implementation on "Integral Safety and Prevention of Violence affecting children, adolescents and youth in Central America."

- This is a new initiative, but appears to touch on key elements in the Northern Triangle and offers viable options to keep vulnerable youth away from violence.

Glasswing International (NGO) has various projects in each of the Northern Triangle countries that are aimed towards youth, education, and health. Together with the private sector, foreign aid, and donations it implements education initiatives that take the form of Extreme School Makeovers, to better the infrastructure, and “A Ganar,” a partnership funded by USAID to work with vulnerable youth by providing them with teamwork and skills training to find jobs. There is an estimated budget of \$400 per participant for a 9-month project. It also creates after school programs for youth.

- Effectiveness: These programs coordinate with both public and private sectors, internationally and domestically. Boast high volunteer support in Northern Triangle communities, youth participate in programs offered and gain from services provided.

“**Niños de Paz**” Initiative is a UNCHR and ECHO initiative that seeks to improve access to education, music, sports, protection and information to unaccompanied children who are already in shelters along the border between Mexico and Guatemala. It was established in January 2015.

- Effectiveness: Program launched recently; too early to evaluate.

Education

“**Full Time School**” is a project implemented by USAID, the World Bank, the ILO, El Salvador’s Ministry of Education, and others in 2011. The initiative was to keep kids in school and reduce number of dropouts to keep youths out of gangs. There was also an emphasis on infrastructure and resources.

- Effectiveness: While reports seem positive, El Salvador still has high numbers of drop-outs, short school days, poor school conditions, and poor education remains a prominent issue discussed by various sectors.

El Salvador and the Ministry of Education are reevaluating the Program **EDUCAME** to better the educational system and better help youth in marginalized areas finish secondary school.

- The project was implemented in in the mid 2000s, and since it has not been as effective as desired, the current Salvador administration is revamping the project and added the initiative to the governmental Plan 2021.

The U.S. Embassy is engaging **Fulbright** in recruiting Honduran students with potential to transform and make significant impact on the country upon their return. Desired candidates include emerging politicians, human rights activists, media professionals, and other identified leaders.

- Effectiveness: Effective but limited, since the number of candidates is very small and oftentimes limited to specific sectors.

USAID outlines its **education policy in El Salvador** as follows: Assistance for education in El Salvador will: Improve teaching and learning practices in basic education, Decrease the high dropout and repetition rates at the secondary level, expand out-of-school programs that provide remedial basic education academic skills and workforce readiness, increase access to higher

education opportunities for disadvantaged youth, strengthen higher education programs by establishing partnerships among Salvadoran, U.S. HEIs and private-sector partners.

- Effectiveness: USAID is involved on a large scale in the country with various civil society organizations. A lot of money is allocated, and there could be more effective usage of funds.

Poverty/Nutrition

Pacto Hambre Cero Guatemala is a program instituted by the government to reduce chronic malnutrition by 10% by the year 2015. The program also has the objective of reducing childhood mortality rates.

- This project was able to create partnerships between the government, religious organizations, NGOs and civil society in general creating projects and programs throughout the rural communities. Its effectiveness is still unknown since many of these programs have been recently implemented. It is expected to have positive results.

Feed the Future is part of the USG's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative (USA) and operates in all of Guatemala and Honduras, along with seventeen other focus countries, to eliminate extreme poverty and address deep-rooted hunger and malnutrition via a combination of capacity-building, empowerment, economic, and research and innovation methods.

- Partially effective. While the initiative has received criticism from various institutions on the basis that its work has been ineffective and has lacked proper planning and risk assessment, more recent evaluations seem to show improved food price stability and crisis resiliency in agricultural communities in certain target countries. Independent evaluations for Guatemala and Honduras need to be commissioned to determine the specific effectiveness of this program in those countries.

Development

League Collegiate Wear is a small textile company that has created a business based on community, and provides its employees with housing, day care, meals, English courses, rehabilitates gang members and gives them jobs, and creates work spaces for handicapped and homeless persons.

- Effectiveness: These projects are highly effective within the company. Production teams comprised of all former gang members prove to be the most efficient, employees learn English, donate money for common causes, and the business has created a safe, family-like environment for productivity.

USAID's Guatemala Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2012-2016 aims to support sustainable development mainly in the Western Highlands. (1) They aim to increase citizen security by reducing trafficking in persons and by fostering civic responsibility. (2) It aims to improve the transparency, policies and efficient management of existing GOG programs and, increase investment in local governance. (3) They will focus on vocational trainings and improving literacy rates. (4) Increase resources for agriculture. (5) Expand environmental

programs to reduce climate vulnerability. (6) Expand public-private partnerships by creating new projects and initiatives.

- Many of these programs have had positive results especially those that are youth related. It is important to note the mismanagement of funds due to lack of training and oversight over funds. Some organizations, although they praise USAID's programs and support, call for better screening of NGOs to avoid corruption.

The Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle seeks to stimulate economic growth, reduce inequality, promote educational opportunities, target criminal networks responsible for human trafficking, and help create governance and institutions that are transparent and accountable in the region. This plan is promoted by the leaders of the three countries, the U.S. Vice President and the President of the Inter-American Development Bank.

- This plan is brand new and its effectiveness will be reliant on the details of implementation.

Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural y Urbano Sostenible “PRONADERS” is the Honduran national policy of targeting vulnerable populations for development projects. However, its projects are not transparent and there is criticism of corruption, diversion of funds, and general unawareness.

USAID's 2015-2019 Development and Cooperation Plan for Honduras has the overarching goal of fostering a more prosperous and safer Honduras that advances inclusive social and economic development among vulnerable populations in urban, high-crime areas as well as Western Honduras, where extreme poverty is widespread.

- Effectiveness: Although recently approved, in development stage these programs have the potential to improve transparency and accountability mechanisms through community based initiatives, such as community policing and community infrastructure projects, advocating for GOH funds for such projects.

Migrant

El Salvador government signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with the Mexican government** to adopt legislative measures against irregular migration, especially of children traveling alone to the United States. It was signed at the end of “Parliamentary Forum on Human Rights of Migrant Girls and Boys: Experiences Mexico-El Salvador.”

- Effectiveness: This is a new agreement, but it demonstrates the solidarity of Mexico alongside its southern neighbors.

Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería (DGME) of El Salvador offers Medical, Psychological and Educational Assistance and preparation for **work assistance** to repatriated citizens that come through service centers: La Chacra and Bienvenido a Casa. In Honduras, the Centros de Atención al Migrante Retornado (CAMRs) serve the same purpose of offering support.

- Effectiveness: To date these programs, while important, are insufficient to tackle the magnitude of the problem, and lack effective capacity. Some repatriated citizens return, receive these services at these centers, and then try to make the

journey again. The ideas are solid, but the follow through and results are not significant. There is a gap between implementation and results.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

National initiatives such as: “Honduras por Una Vida Mejor,” Fund For Solidarity with the Honduran Migrant, and “Con Chamba Vivis Mejor” in conjunction with the private sector in Honduras; Anti-extortion task force and Investment Stability Law in El Salvador; and “Plan Nacional de Desarrollo K’atun: Nuestra Guatemala 2032” in Guatemala, have centered on promoting social cohesion and welfare, expanding informal educational options and supporting local businesses to engender economic growth. Although these policies represent the countries’ political will and commitment to the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle, they were all recently implemented and, therefore, there is insufficient data to analyze their effectiveness and impact yet.

More established programs are targeted towards specifically vulnerable populations. These include: Program Nacional de Desarrollo Rural y Urbano Sostenible, Programa de acceso a la tierra, and BONO 10,000 in Honduras; and the Pact for Security, Justice and Peace, and the Plan Hambre Cero, a program instituted by the government to reduce chronic malnutrition in Guatemala. Despite being more narrowly defined and limited in scope, the lack of technical capacity and transparency especially concerning eligibility criteria has opened these policies to criticisms of corruption and ineffectiveness.

Bilaterally, the United States **Agency for International Development (USAID)** is an active partner for all three Northern Triangle countries. In El Salvador, USAID focuses on creating a policy environment conducive to private sector growth, increased investment and a strengthened skilled labor force. Similarly, in Honduras USAID has an overarching goal of a more prosperous and safer Honduras that advances social and economic development among vulnerable populations. Likewise, Guatemala and USAID have established a Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2012-2016, aimed to support sustainable development in the country in terms of citizen security, government governance and transparency, public-private partnerships, environmental programs to reduce vulnerability, and vocational trainings to improve literacy rates.

On the multilateral front, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala have been signatories to CAFTA-DR since 2007. While a free trade agreement with the United States could be an impetus for foreign direct investment flows, this accord has had mixed results in that regard. For example, FDI flows in Honduras have been stagnant (1 billion in 2008 v 1 billion in 2013), while they have increased in Guatemala (754 million in 2008 v 1.3 billion in 2013) and decreased significantly in El Salvador (from 903 million in 2008 to 140 million in 2013).

- In the particular case of **Guatemala**, the government has implemented the Fiscal and Competitiveness Pact, which seeks to open its economy to international investment, and to make it more competitive on the world stage. The Fiscal Pact involves ensuring sufficient resources for the government, to foster conditions

that will allow all Guatemalans to overcome poverty and benefit from development.

- Of particular note, **Honduras** stands out in two regards. First, it is the only Highly Indebted Poor Country in the Northern Triangle as classified by the International Monetary Fund. Therefore, it is eligible for debt relief and has a stand-by agreement with the IMF in case of economic crisis or other emergency. Secondly, the country modified extradition laws to allow the extradition of its citizens to the United States for drug trafficking and terrorism charges. Thus far, Honduras has allowed the extradition of seven nationals on these grounds.

Economic policies

El Salvador

To further the goal of spurring economic development and helping local businesses, the government of El Salvador has recently established an Anti-extortion task force and passed an Investment Stability law intended to give investors more confidence. As new policies, there is not enough data to analyze their effectiveness. USAID's focus in El Salvador is to create a policy environment conducive to private sector growth, increased investment and a strengthened skilled labor force. This effort could be considered a partial success as evidenced by the passage of the new investment law.

Guatemala

Guatemala is undertaking several programs:

- Plan Nacional de Desarrollo K'atun: Nuestra Guatemala 2032 (Government)
- Fiscal and Competitiveness Pact (Government)
- Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle (Regional Governments)
- \$40-million U.S. Agency for International Development program to improve citizen security (USAID)

The abovementioned policies are the more relevant policies toward economic development implemented in Guatemala. The Plan Nacional de Desarrollo K'atun is a long term government strategy.

Mexico

Last year, \$400 billion USD in trade passed through the U.S.-Mexico border. Today Mexico is an economic powerhouse, yet its economic policies can do little to slow current migration flows. Policies like NAFTA, the Mesoamerica Project, and the proposed TPP do little for the rural and local level areas where economic development is needed the most. Furthermore, it is the poor and uneducated from these underdeveloped areas that make up the bulk of the migrant population. As far as policy goes, more of the same is not going to be enough to curb migration flows from Mexico. At the same time, Mexico is now becoming an attractive destination point for NT migrants looking for economic opportunity among other possibilities.

- USAID 47.7 Million to Mexico in 2013
- From 1960-1980, Mexican real GDP per person almost doubled, growing by 98.7 percent. Since NAFTA, it has grown by just 18.6 percent. Real (inflation-

adjusted) wages for Mexico were almost the same in 2012 as in 1994, up just 2.3 percent over 18 years, and barely above their level of 1980.