



# PRESS RELEASE

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## FIRST OUTREACH CENTER “FOR MY NEIGHBORHOOD” INAUGURATED

**SAN SALVADOR**– This afternoon, the first Outreach Center “For my neighborhood” was inaugurated at the Father Rafael Palacios Educational and Vocational Center (CFO) in Mejicanos, San Salvador.

This initiative was made possible through an agreement signed by representatives of the Regional Youth Alliance—of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Central American Integration System (SICA)—and representatives of the San Francisco Parish led by Father Antonio Rodríguez.

Regional Youth Alliance USAID-SICA was established this year with the signing of a cooperative agreement between USAID, SICA and Creative Associates International, Inc. This program, which is being implemented in Central America and Mexico, represents a comprehensive approach to the needs of youth at risk of being recruited by gangs.

The Outreach Centers are a juvenile violence prevention methodology, as they constitute a space where youth can meet and receive training. These centers are located in the very heart of high-risk communities. They are a place of hope where children, adolescents and at-risk-youth can attend and have other options that enable them to avoid getting involved with gangs, violence or drugs.

The Outreach Center will develop five program components:

- 1. Creative use of spare time.** Recreational opportunities will be offered to beneficiaries through sports, art, and games.
- 2. Job training.** Training sessions will allow youth to contribute to the family budget while at the same time motivate them to continue their education and pursue a more specialized learning level.
- 3. School tutoring and bringing students to the expected academic level.** Youth will be able to do their homework at the Outreach Center, which will help to improve their school performance and self-esteem, while avoiding the temptation to drop out. In addition, Outreach Center staff will identify those who have already dropped out of school to help them complete their studies.
- 4. Opportunities.** The Outreach Center will look for opportunities for educational and vocational development for youth.
- 5. Volunteering.** Outreach Center activities will be carried out through volunteer work from neighbors, youth and other people willing to give their time helping the Center.

Although the Outreach Centers are not yet a massive answer to juvenile violence and gangs, the ones established in other countries in the region have proved to be a low-cost initiative with positive results. In Honduras, through the Tegucigalpa Rotary Clubs, Regional Youth Alliance USAID-SICA signed agreements to establish six Outreach Centers in the capital. It is expected that four centers will also be established in San Pedro Sula. In Guatemala, seven Outreach Centers are operating through the USAID/Guatemala’s bilateral program, Youth Challenge.

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