

PD-ABD-834

75923

**A COUNTRY UPDATE REPORT ON
THE CENTRAL AMERICAN
PEACE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
IN PANAMA**

January, 1992

Submitted to:

Latin American and Caribbean Bureau
Office of Development Resources
Education and Human Resources Division
Agency for International Development

Submitted by:

Aguirre International
1735 North Lynn Street
Suite 1000
Rosslyn, VA 22209-2019

and

Checchi and Company Consulting, Inc.
1730 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-3193

Under Contract Number LAC-0001-C-00-9035-00
CLASP Follow-On
Project Number 598-0640

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
COUNTRY UPDATE – PANAMA	
Introduction	1
Description of Study	2
Long-Term CAPS Trainees	3
Follow-on	4
Description of Sample of Returned Trainees	5
Age	5
Selection Criteria	5
Sex	5
Rural Origins	5
Economic/Social Disadvantage	5
Leadership	6
Other Characteristics of the Sample	6
Level of Education Prior to Selection	6
Position or Occupation Prior to Selection	6
Training Objectives	7
Field of Study	7
The Results	8
Impact of Training on Returned Trainees	10
Conclusion and Recommendations	20

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP) was established by the U.S. Congress to foster ties between the peoples of Latin America and the United States, and to aid in the development of the Latin American countries by providing its people with the necessary skills for them to participate in a meaningful manner in the social, political, and economic evolution of their countries.

Aguirre International conducted its first evaluation of the Panama CLASP effort in December 1988; that evaluation took into account the Trainees who had participated in the Central American Peace Scholarship Program (CAPS), and the Central American Scholarship Program (CASP). The CAPS project was managed by USAID Panama and its contractor Georgetown University, although some Panamanian CAPS Trainees participated under the sponsorship of the USAID Regional Office for Central American Programs (ROCAP). CASP was administered by Georgetown University on the basis of a Congressional set-aside. The evaluation at that time focused on short-term Trainees, since the long-term academic Trainees were for the most part still in training in the United States. This update evaluation is a complement to the first one, and, as such, it addresses those participants not included in the first study, namely the long-term Trainees. This report, then, includes a sample of long-term Trainees who participated in the program from its beginning to June 1990. The sample was selected from the records in the CLASP Information System (CIS) which included 293 long-term returned Trainees.

SELECTION OF TRAINEES

Trainees selected to participate in the CLASP program have met AID's selection criteria targets for the most part. Of the long-term CAPS Trainees, 78 percent were economically disadvantaged, 10 percent met the ethnic disadvantaged criteria, and 91 percent met the leadership criteria. For CASP, 100 percent were economically disadvantaged and met the leadership criteria, and 13 percent were from ethnic minorities. Regarding the selection of women, Panama is slightly below the AID mandated minimum target of 40 percent, with 37 percent selected.

TRAINING PROGRAM

The CLASP Training program, which began in 1985, was suspended for political reasons as a result of AID being asked to leave Panama in 1987. Once the program was resumed in early 1990, two groups of long-term Trainees who had been selected prior to its interruption travelled to the U.S. to start their program.

Panamanian returned Trainees have consistently approved of their training program, with over 80 percent of the CAPS long-term Trainees being satisfied with the program at the time of exiting the U.S. and 86 percent declaring the same when interviewed in their country. Another measure of the success of the training program is the Trainees' eloquent statements regarding the impact the training experience has had on their lives.

The Experience America component of the training program has also been met very successfully according to the long-term Trainees. As they declared at the time of exiting the program, most had lived or visited with U.S. families (93.5%), attended cultural (89%) and athletic events (83.8%), and travelled around the U.S. (84.4%).

FOLLOW-ON

The Training Office has exciting and innovative plans regarding Follow-on and is placing great effort in that direction. A full-time Follow-on officer was hired for CAPS and is working with the CASP/CASS Country Coordinator to get some of the projects underway.

Follow-on for long-term Trainees includes a constellation of activities in the area of employment, as well as seminars and workshops, technical guidance for individual projects, and the activities and demands of the Association of Returned Trainees. Some of the activities in the area of employment include a job data bank, the idea of matching returned Trainees with mentors in the private sector, and workshops and individual counseling regarding the writing of resumes, comportment during job interviews, and other pertinent subjects.

CONCLUSIONS

After an interruption of approximately two years due to political reasons, the CLASP program is again functioning in Panama, and it is on solid ground. The Mission is to be commended for the expediency and proficiency with which it got the program back on its feet.

The greatest challenge for the Mission at this point is the Follow-on effort, given the fact that long-term Trainees are returning at a time when the economy has not recovered, and they are unable to find employment. Both the CAPS and CASP programs have Follow-on officers who are working assiduously to try to find solutions to this situation. The returned long-term Trainees arrive full of enthusiasm and new ideas, some of which can be implemented with a minimum of help from the Follow-on officers and the Mission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mission should continue its efforts to promote Follow-on support for returned Trainees, particularly in terms of helping them secure employment and in backing them with their innovative ideas such as their participation in voluntary efforts and in the plans to establish funds to help other Panamanian students. The work of the Association of Returned Trainees should also be encouraged and supported.

**COUNTRY UPDATE
REPORT — PANAMA**

COUNTRY UPDATE REPORT – PANAMA

INTRODUCTION

This Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP) evaluation update report is intended to complement earlier CLASP Country Evaluation reports done by Aguirre International under the CLASP Process Evaluation contract with AID. To understand the scope of this evaluation requires some background on the origin of the CLASP training initiative and the evaluation process.

The impetus for CLASP came from a recommendation in the 1984 Report of the National Bipartisan Commission for Central America (the Kissinger Commission) that the U.S. launch a specially designed training initiative in Central America. Under the resulting Central American Peace Scholarship (CAPS) program, Trainees from disadvantaged sectors of their societies would be brought to the U.S. to “Experience America” and to develop new skills which would benefit the economic and political development of their countries. The new training initiative began very quickly in 1985, and AID/W awarded a contract for the evaluation of that program in 1986.

Early CLASP/CAPS Country Report evaluations were conducted on the basis of interviews with those Trainees who had completed their training and had been back in their home country long enough so that their retrospective views on the value of their training experience would represent a valid commentary on their efforts to apply the training on the job and in the community. It is important to keep in mind that a large majority of the CAPS scholarship awards have gone to short-term Trainees. Additionally, the normally greater lead time associated with the increased complexity of long-term placement programs naturally resulted in those scholarship recipients beginning their training programs later than the early short-term Trainees. This meant in the case of the earliest evaluations, i.e., those conducted in the pioneering Central American CLASP countries, the survey population did not generally include Trainees who had been selected to participate in long-term programs.

The nature of long-term training is very different from short-term training, and the profile of the long-term Trainee differs from that of the short-term Trainee. It is, therefore, to be expected that an evaluation of the CLASP training programs for short-term Trainees might yield results that would be different from that portion of the training effort dedicated to long-term training. For that reason, the current extension to the CLASP evaluation contract included provision for further survey work to update the earlier evaluations in Central America to focus on Trainees who had returned from long-term training programs. Not only were sufficient returned long-term Trainees back in country for periods in excess of six-months to constitute an adequately large sample for the evaluation, but Exit Questionnaire data from this same population also had become available by then.

In addition to evaluating the long-term training programs, this update report will also build on the earlier evaluation results, in terms of the program data and its analysis, while avoiding duplicating the earlier process-oriented evaluation effort. The full picture of the CLASP

training program and the resultant observations will emerge from reading this update evaluation in conjunction with the earlier evaluation effort.

This update evaluation will not represent the final chapter in evaluation of the CLASP I training initiative. CLASP II, which will continue the program through 1996, has already begun. During the CLASP II evaluation process, there will be a heightened focus on the effect of the CLASP training experience. For example, efforts will be made to assess whether the Experience America activities have had any lasting impact on the outlook of the returned Trainees, to explore the relationship between the effort to identify leaders and potential leaders during the selection process and the leadership-enhancing effect of the training, and to explore the role of Follow-on programs, to name just a few of the areas that require more interactive evaluation approaches than have been applied during the CLASP I evaluation process. Depending on the evaluation priorities of the CLASP II Missions, the CLASP I Trainees, and the biographical and attitudinal data that has already been collected on them, represent a very rich resource for future evaluations.

The assessment of the CLASP program in Panama must be undertaken with special consideration to the specific goals of the program in that country and the internal political situation the country has experienced in the second half of the 1980s. When the CLASP program was established, the Country Training Plan (CTP) specified that one purpose of the program was to train sufficient personnel to run the Panama Canal once it reverts to Panama in the year 2000. Hence, great effort has been made to select Trainees for training in areas related to maritime endeavors, in engineering, and in administration, all areas in which trained personnel will be needed when Panama becomes responsible for running the Panama Canal. The second issue that makes the situation in Panama different has to do with the political developments of the last decade, of the international repercussions and of the economic impact it had on the country. This affected the CLASP program in a very direct way since, as an outcome of the U.S.'s imposed economic sanctions, AID was asked to leave the country in late 1987, and was not operational for almost two years. The Trainees who began their training program after December, 1989, had been selected almost two years before, and had spent part of that time studying English in the Canal Zone Junior College.

The political situation also affected the Trainees who were already in the U.S. since the turmoil suffered by the country included having up to three ambassadors in the U.S. at one point. The loyalties of Trainees were pulled at from different sides and at different levels, some of which influenced their program and their ability to finish and even receive their diplomas. Furthermore, Trainees who were in the U.S. during the U.S. invasion of Panama had to take stands and make statements, which at times are reflected in some of their responses to the interview questions.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

This report is an update report of the study entitled *A Preliminary Assessment of the Central American Peace Scholarships Program in Panama, 1985-1988*, an in-depth process evaluation of Panama's Caribbean and Latin American Scholarships Program (CLASP). This update

study is intended to complement and follow-up on the earlier evaluation which was based to a large extent on findings from questionnaires and interviews conducted with short-term Trainees who had participated in the program between 1985 and June 1988. In an attempt to capture the missing element from the earlier study, this updated study focusses on long-term Trainees who have returned to Panama.

This report, based on information and data collected in November and December, 1990, includes long-term Panamanian Trainees who returned from training between June 1988 and June 1990 and had been in-country six months or longer at the time of the survey. The CLASP Information System (CIS) database indicates that 293 long-term Trainees returned to Panama during that period.

The respondents to this study were derived from the group of 293 long-term returned Trainees from the CAPS and CASP Projects. A random sample was drawn proportional to the regional distribution of the universe, and a sample of 52 returned long-term Trainees was selected to be interviewed. The results, presented in this study, are based on 51 completed questionnaires from this group, 28 CAPS and 23 CASP participants.

Table 1 presents a comparison of the regional distribution of all the returned Trainees and of those selected for interviews. The sample selection is comparable to the total number of returned Trainees, even though it is slightly higher for Los Santos (3%), Herrera (4%), and Colon (3%).

	Returned Trainees			All Trainees*		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Bocas del Toro	6	1	2	2	7	5
Chiriquí	24	26	25	26	30	28
Coclé	18	9	12	19	5	11
Colón	6	12	10	9	5	7
Herrera	6	12	10	7	5	6
Los Santos	6	9	8	7	4	5
Panamá	18	18	18	16	23	21
Veraguas	6	9	8	9	10	9
Other	12	3	6	5	10	8
Number of cases	(17)	(34)	(51)	(57)	(94)	(151)

* Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding.
Source: CIS data through 6/30/90

It should be noted that the geographical distribution presented in Table 1 represents the distribution at the time of selection. At the time the survey was conducted many of the Trainees had moved, some to Panama City or Colon, and some to secondary cities in the country's interior. There is a widespread mobility among the returned Trainees, which is congruent with findings in other countries. Also, at least eight of the returned Trainees that we tried to locate for the survey were out of the country, either pursuing studies or at sea.

LONG-TERM CAPS TRAINEES

Long-term Trainees are pre-selected by Provincial Committees that receive applications and once they review them, they send them to the AID office in Panama City. The Provincial Committees are made up of teachers and school principals, representatives from civic

organizations, parish priests, and other local dignitaries, and returned Trainees. They help in the selection of Trainees and in a consultative capacity to returned Trainees.

Once candidates are pre-selected AID does a further screening and invites candidates to interviews. In the current competition, there are 3,000 applications for approximately fifty scholarships that AID expects to award.

When the selection is completed and the scholarships awarded, those Trainees selected begin to prepare for the training experience in the U.S. The preparation includes English Language Studies in the Canal Zone Junior College, which, along with the language instruction, also includes a gradual acculturation into U.S. customs and practices. The first group of long-term Trainees (152) that Panama sent to the U.S. received no language training. This created much hardship for the Trainees, and since then the Mission has required selected Trainees to study in the Canal Zone for a considerable time, before departure. Trainees selected in 1988 received 14 months of ELT; those selected in 1989 received 12 months, and those selected in 1990 received 10 months. Immediately prior to departure, selected Trainees attend a two to three day pre-departure orientation, where Trainees are given instruction regarding administrative matters.

FOLLOW-ON

At the time of the survey, one pressing concern of USAID/Panama's Training Office was to get the Follow-on activities underway to service the returned Trainees. Both the CAPS and CASP programs had hired Follow-on officers, and the two were making plans to coordinate their activities. Given the size of the country and the fact that the needs of both groups of returned long-term Trainees are similar, this joining of efforts makes sense.

The Follow-on officers were discussing a series of measures to aid young returned Trainees get settled back in their society. These included efforts toward securing employment, i.e., a databank of possible sources of employment, seminars and workshops on how to write-up resumes, and how to act during job interviews. The Follow-on officers were also looking into the issue of helping get U.S. degrees and credits accepted in Panama. Another tack was to help returned Trainees who had individual projects get the technical assistance and support to get those projects underway. One of the most ambitious was being organized by returned Trainees who had studied computers and who were planning a series of night courses to train others in computers.

For budgetary reasons, the joint Follow-on venture has not really taken hold, and both officers are proceeding somewhat separately with plans to service the returned Trainees in their programs. Trainees have participated in "Operation Smile" (Operacion Sonrisa) in which they donated their services to a group of U.S. doctors conducting a goodwill tour to perform surgery on severely malformed children, and they are also preparing a theater performance to secure funds to start providing small scholarships to students studying in Panama who need supplemental income.

Follow-on efforts also include an Association of Returned Trainees in which Trainees, both long-term and short-term, have placed a great value. The activities of the association are centered in Panama City, but there are plans for activities that will be inclusive of all the returned Trainees.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE OF RETURNED TRAINEES

AGE

The interviewed Trainees were all young, college-age individuals at time of departure. The ages for both males and females at the time of selection averaged 20.5 years, and ranged from 17 to 25 years for males, and 18 to 25 for females (see Table 2).

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Range	17-25	17-25	18-24
Average	20.5	20.5	20.5
No. of cases	(51)	(34)	(17)

Source: CIS data through 6/30/90

SELECTION CRITERIA

SEX

As shown in Table 1, which provides the geographical distribution of Trainees by sex, females represent 33 percent of the sample of returned Trainees interviewed for this report, while for the total sample of long-term Trainees, females represent 37.7 percent of the total. This is slightly lower than the AID mandated 40 percent minimum target for females.

RURAL ORIGINS

Although there is no specific mandate regarding the percentage of Trainees to be selected from rural origins, the CTP clearly states that an effort will be made to select rural Trainees. Of those interviewed for this study, 76.5 percent of the females and 55.9 percent of males were of rural origin (see Table 3).

	Returned Trainees			All Trainees	
	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>CAPS</u>	<u>CASP</u>
Rural	76.5	55.9	62.7	N/A	N/A
Economic Disad.	88.2	82.4	84.3	77.9	100.0
Ethnic Disad.	11.8	8.8	9.8	10.3	13.3
Leader	88.2	82.4	84.3	91.2	100.0
Number of cases	(17)	(34)	(51)	(68)	(83)

Source: CIS data through 6/30/90

ECONOMIC/SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE

Most of the interviewed Trainees as well as the total number of scholarship recipients meet the criteria of economic disadvantaged. The program minimum target is 70 percent. For the study sample, 84.3 percent met the economic disadvantaged criteria, while for the entire group, 77.9 percent of CAPS and 100 percent of CASP Trainees meet this criteria. The Mission also enters some Trainees in CIS as ethnically disadvantaged. There is no program

target associated with this section criteria. While in the sample 9.8 percent were identified as representing this selection criteria, the figures for the total number of ethnically disadvantaged CAPS Trainees from Panama is slightly higher (10.3%) and for CASP Trainees even higher (13.3%) (see Table 3).

LEADERSHIP

The percentage of Trainees who meet the leadership criteria, which like the rural criteria is left to the Mission to quantify, is very high. For the sample interviewed, 84.3 percent meet this criteria. For the total number of CAPS Trainees, those that meet the leadership criteria reach 91.2 percent, and all of the CASP Trainees meet the leadership criteria (see Table 3).

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

LEVEL OF EDUCATION PRIOR TO SELECTION

At the time of selection, the returned Trainees had completed 11.9 years of education, while their mothers had completed 7.4 and their fathers 7.7 years of education. For the total number of Panamanian long-term CLASP Trainees the figures are slightly lower, with 11.8 years completed by the Trainees, and 7.1 years completed by both their mothers and fathers (see Table 4).

	<u>Trainee</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>
Returnees (n=51)	11.9	7.4	7.7
All Trainees (n=151)	11.8	7.1	7.1

Source: CIS data through 6/30/90

POSITION OR OCCUPATION PRIOR TO SELECTION

Almost all of the Panamanian Trainees were selected to participate in the CLASP program because they were students or recent graduates. Of the Trainees in the sample of interviewees, 79.4 percent of the women and 88.2 percent of the men were thus selected, while for the entire group of Trainees, 92.4 percent of CAPS Trainees and 81.9 percent of CASP Trainees were selected because they were students or recent graduates (see Table 5).

	<u>Returnees</u>		<u>All Trainees</u>	
	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>CAPS</u>	<u>CASP</u>
Student/Rec. Grad.	88.2	79.4	92.4	81.9
Unskilled Worker	-	8.8	4.5	6.0
Skilled Worker	-	-	1.5	3.6
Technician	5.9	5.9	-	4.8
Business	-	-	1.5	-
Other	5.9	5.9	-	3.6
Number of cases	(35)	(54)	(68)	(83)

Source: Returnee Interviews; CIS data through 6/30/90

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Most of the returned Trainees interviewed had been in A.A. programs (82.4% of the women and 88.2% of the men), while the remaining 17.6 percent of the men and 11.8 percent of the women had been in B.A. programs. For all the Trainees in the program covered by the time period of this study, data show that all CASP

Trainees (100%) were in A.A. programs, while two-thirds of CAPS Trainees (67.6%) were in that type of program, and 31 percent were in B.A. programs (see Table 6).

	Returnees		All Trainees	
	Female	Male	CAPS	CASP
A.A.	88.2	82.4	67.6	100.0
B.A., B.S.	11.8	17.6	30.9	-
Other	-	-	1.5	-
Number of cases	(17)	(34)	(68)	(83)

Source: CIS data through 6/30/90

FIELD OF STUDY

For the sample of returned Trainees, the fields of study most commonly represented were vocational home economics (21.5%), engineering and related areas (19.6%), computer sciences (13.7%), and business administration and related subjects (11.8%). The distribution changes somewhat for the fields of study on the basis of the sex of the Trainee. The most popular field of study for women was vocational

	Returnees			All Trainees		
	Female	Male	Total	CAPS	CASP	Total
Agriculture & RS	-	5.8	4.0	-	1.2	.7
Business	17.6	8.8	11.8	1.5	-	.7
Communications	5.9	-	2.0	-	-	-
Computer Science	-	20.6	13.7	-	27.7	15.2
Engineering	23.5	17.7	19.6	7.4	21.7	15.2
English	5.9	-	2.0	-	-	-
Health	-	2.9	2.0	-	1.2	.7
Voc. Home Econ.	35.3	14.7	21.5	-	37.3	20.5
Physical Science	-	5.9	3.9	-	-	-
Precision Prod.	-	5.9	3.9	-	10.8	6.0
Psychology	5.9	-	2.0	-	-	-
Public Affairs	5.9	-	2.0	-	-	-
Social Sciences	-	2.9	2.0	-	-	-
Transportation	-	14.7	9.8	22.1	-	9.9
Other	-	-	-	69.1	-	31.1
Number of cases	(17)	(34)	(51)	(68)	(83)	(151)

Sources: Returnee interviews & CIS data through 6/30/90

home economics (35.3% of the sample), while engineering and related subjects was second (23.5%) and business subjects third (17.6%). For men, the most popular field of study was computers (20.6%), with engineering and related subjects second (17.7%) and subjects related to transportation and vocational home economics third at 14.7 percent each (see Table 7).

For the entire group of returned Trainees, the distribution of the field of study varies considerably, especially for CAPS Trainees. For that group, the largest percentage (69.1%) falls in the Other category and probably represents the Trainees who participated in the program through the 4-H program. The second large group is in transportation and related subjects (22.1%), which is congruent with the CTP's objective of training people to work in the Panama Canal operations. For CASP Trainees, the largest percentage was in vocational

home economics (37.3%), followed by computer sciences (27.7%), engineering and related subjects (21.7%) and very distantly, precision production (10.8%).

THE RESULTS

Did training meet with expectations of the Trainee?

Yes. For the majority of the returned Trainees interviewed, their training experience met their expectations (53.6% for CAPS and 43.5% for CASP) or was better than expected (46.4% for CAPS and 39.1% for CASP). While these figures indicate 100 percent satisfaction for CAPS returned Trainees, for 17.4 percent of CASP Trainees, the training did not meet their expectations, and they reported it being “worse than expected.”

Comparing the responses of the returned long-term CAPS and CASP Trainees with the responses given to this same question at the time of completion of the program, the data show that the proportion that found the program “better than expected” has increased substantially for CAPS Trainees (11% increase) and slightly less for CASP Trainees (8% increase). For CAPS Trainees the overall assessment improved over time, while for CASP Trainees the assessment at both the positive end and the negative end (5.7%) increased (see Table 8).

	Returnees		Exit Q.	
	CAPS	CASP	CAPS	CASP
Worse than expected	-	17.4	6.6	11.7
Same as expected	53.6	43.5	57.9	57.1
Better than expected	46.4	39.1	35.5	31.2
Number of cases	(28)	(23)	(76)	(77)

Source: Returnee Interviews

Are Trainees studying now?

No. Of the Trainees interviewed, the great majority are not studying. Only 14.3 percent of CAPS and 9.1 percent of CASP are currently enrolled in some type of educational program.

Asked whether they had trouble with their U.S. credits and diplomas once they returned to Panama, 25.9 percent of CAPS Trainees and 38.1 percent of CASP Trainees reported trouble in getting their credits recognized (see Table 9).

	CAPS	CASP
Yes	25.9	38.1
No	48.1	33.3
N.A.	25.9	28.6
No. of cases	(27)	(23)

Source: Returnee Interviews

Are Trainees working now?

Yes, but there are many unemployed. Comparing the CAPS and CASP returned Trainees interviewed for this study, the employment situation for the CAPS Trainees is better with almost three-fourths (71.4%) working. A level of unemployment of 28.6 percent is quite high, but it reflects the country's unemployment situation and the fact that the recovery from the political turmoil of the Noriega years has still not taken place. Of

the CAPS Trainees not working (28.6%), all are looking for work. For the CASP returned Trainees the situation is quite different and considerably worse. In that case, less than half of the interviewed returned Trainees (43.5%) are working, while 56.5 percent are unemployed. Of the unemployed CASP Trainees, all but one are seeking employment (see Table 10).

	<u>Yes</u>
Is Returned Trainee Working? (n=78)	71.4
Is job better? (n=18)	11.1
Did Trainee receive salary increase? (n=20)	15.0
Was salary increase due to training? (n=20)	75.0
Source: Returnee Interviews	

The employed returned CASP Trainees are all either working for private firms (80%) or are self-employed (20%). The employed CAPS Trainees have a broader range of places of employment with almost half (47.8%) working for private firms, over one-fourth (26%) working in other types of employment situations, and 8.6 percent working for private non-profit firms and for the public sector, while 4.3 percent are self-employed and the same percentage work for mixed corporations.

Have Trainees been able to put into practice what they learned?

Yes. Almost all the employed CAPS Trainees (91%) stated that they had been able to put into practice what they learned, with 27.3 percent declaring that they had been able to do this to a great degree, while 36.4 percent said they had put what they learned into practice somewhat, and 27.3 percent gave the more ambivalent answer "other." For CASP Trainees, 75 percent had been able to put what they learned into practice, while 8.3 percent said they were unable because the training was not appropriate, and 16.7 percent gave other reasons for not applying what they learned (see Table 11).

	<u>CAPS</u>	<u>CASP</u>
To a great extent	27.3	16.7
Yes, somewhat	36.4	33.3
Yes, other	27.3	25.0
No, training not appropriate	4.5	8.3
No, other	4.5	16.7
Number of cases	(22)	(12)
Source: Returnee Interviews		

How useful do Trainees consider training to have been?

Very useful. The survey instrument asked a series of questions aimed at capturing how useful the Trainees perceived the training to have been in various areas. The results point to an overwhelmingly positive perception on the part of returned Trainees regarding the usefulness of the training they received. All CASP Trainees and 92.6 percent of CAPS returned

Trainees felt the training was very useful in improving their job competency, while about 90 percent or more of all Trainees felt the training was very useful for their career goals and in learning new skills. For 85.7 percent of CAPS working Trainees the training was useful for their present job, while only for 56.3 percent of CASP working Trainees perceived it useful (see Table 12).

The training was found useful to meet U.S. individuals with similar interests, to meet other Latin Americans, and to meet other Panamanians; by about half of CAPS Trainees and about 80 percent of CASP Trainees.

	(-) 1	2	3	4	5 (+)
To improve job performance					
CAPS (n=27)	3.7	3.7	-	29.6	63.0
CASP (n=23)	-	-	-	26.1	73.9
To learn new skills					
CAPS (n=28)	-	7.1	3.6	28.6	60.7
CASP (n=23)	4.3	-	-	17.4	78.3
For present job					
CAPS (n=28)	7.1	7.1	-	39.3	46.4
CASP (n=16)	31.3	6.3	-	25.0	31.3
For career goals					
CAPS (n=28)	-	3.6	-	32.1	64.3
CASP (n=23)	-	8.7	-	34.8	56.5
For meeting U.S. people					
CAPS (n=27)	11.1	29.6	3.7	29.6	25.9
CASP (n=22)	9.1	13.6	-	27.3	50.0
For meeting other Latin Americans					
CAPS (n=27)	11.1	29.6	7.4	33.3	18.5
CASP (n=22)	4.5	13.6	-	27.3	54.5
For meeting other Costa Ricans					
CAPS (n=27)	18.5	25.9	7.4	29.6	18.5
CASP (n=22)	4.5	13.6	-	27.3	54.5

Source: Returnee Interviews

IMPACT OF TRAINING ON RETURNED TRAINEES

What did Trainees like most about their training experience in the U.S.?

Both the Experience America and training aspects. The returned Trainees interviewed had many positive comments to make about the experience they had through their participation in the CLASP program. These related to the experience of the culture and values of the U.S., to the educational system, to the training program itself, to the interpersonal relations they developed, and to their growth and maturation during the process of the training experience.

Overwhelmingly, these comments about what they had liked the most were related to two categories: 1) experiencing U.S. culture and values or the Trainees' growth because of this experience; and 2) to the educational system and their experience of it through the training program.

Items expressed related to the experience of U.S. culture and values included the opportunity to live with U.S. families and get to know their ways of life, to travel and get to know people from different parts of the country, and to learn English. One Trainee mentioned "the respect that U.S. citizens have for the privacy of others." Of importance also was the experience of being able to exchange ideas and thoughts with students of different cultures, including U.S. students, as well as students from other Latin American countries and from other parts of the world.

Among the issues highlighted regarding the educational system were the teaching methods they were exposed to, the facilities and equipment found in U.S. educational establishments, and the attitudes of the faculty. One Trainee mentioned that what he liked most was that “professors were willing to help students.”

Related to this educational opportunity, some Trainees stressed the new opportunities that would be open to them at a professional level due to their having participated in the training program.

Trainees were also impressed with the technological advancement they found in the U.S. in general and in their specific areas of interest in particular, as well as with U.S. cities.

Finally, several Trainees mentioned that what they liked most was “the form of government of the U.S.”

What did Trainees like least?

From administrative problems to political and cultural differences. The majority of the comments regarding negative aspects of the training experience were related to issues pertaining to the training program and its administration and to aspects of U.S. culture. Negative comments also were related to U.S. foreign policy, to the climate and food, to the widespread use of drugs and alcohol in the U.S., and to Trainees being subject to discrimination.

Comments related to the program and its administration included the following:

“The lack of preparation that the program had related to us, in comparison to the groups that went later.”

Several Trainees mentioned “the inflexibility and negligence of some coordinators in the program.”

“The coordinator did not provide the support we expected.”

Comments regarding the program also had to do with the areas of study or the content matter of the subjects:

“I expected to return as a computer technician . . . better prepared at the technical level.”

“Most of the technical subjects were very superficial. The titles of the courses were appropriate but the content was not. I had already had those subjects in Panama.”

“What was offered was not available.”

“The program was slanted toward pure agriculture and had little regarding food technology.”

Comments were offered regarding structural aspects of the program, that in the eyes of the Trainees created hardships for them:

“Not being able to return to Panama in 21 months.”

“Having to abandon the degree candidacy after having advanced more than 70 percent toward its completion, for reasons unknown to me.”

Issues related to cultural differences that Trainees assessed in a negative way included:

“The way people treat others – cold, indifferent.” And, “the lack of interest of people in helping others.”

Also, “materialism,” . . . “how expensive it is to live.”

And, “how little U.S. people know about Latin America.”

One Trainee mentioned “the ignorance of the Americans regarding the geographical, political, and cultural aspects at the international level, and even at the national level.” And another one “the lack of knowledge of many people of so many things; for instance, of where Panama is, or even, who is the president of the U.S. . . This is a general cultural deficiency.”

What aspect of their experience in the U.S. surprised Trainees the most?

Issues that caused surprise to returned Trainees can be divided among those related to U.S. culture and to the Trainees’ interrelationships that brought them face to face with those cultural aspects, as well as the technological advances they saw, the cities, their services and facilities, and environmental issues. Negative elements of surprise included the ignorance of Americans regarding the rest of the world and the discrimination encountered by many of the Trainees. The issue of discrimination will be addressed in a separate section.

Comments regarding issues of culture and interpersonal relations included:

“It is a very dynamic country – everyone works.” And, “the individuality of Americans.”

“The kindness of people – how they helped me learn English.”

“The way they (U.S. citizens) take advantage of the positive aspects of each individual.”

“The way I was treated by the families that invited me to visit. . .” and “the magnificent treatment I received . . . the good relations I had with ‘my family.’”

“The lifestyle is not what one thinks – what we see in the movies and T.V.” Another one commented “our life together (convivencia) – I did not think I would be able to interrelate.”

Sometimes the U.S. individuality and freedom was almost overwhelming. Quite a few Trainees mentioned that they were very surprised about “women’s liberation,” which seemed to translate into young women sunbathing “almost naked” which apparently was more than these Trainees bargained for.

Technological advances which surprised them included specific aspects of the Trainees’ fields, such as embryo transplants and radar technology.

One Trainee summarized what many expressed about the educational system:

“The educational system is more liberal, flexible, and effective than the one we have in Panama.”

Most Trainees were surprised and liked the snow, although many also complained about not liking the cold weather.

Perhaps the most touching comment regarding what surprised Trainees came from a young man in the CAPS program: “What surprised me the most was to hear myself speaking English. To hear my voice on a tape recorder in English.” This Trainee has a harelip and his speech is difficult to understand.

Did Trainees experience racism and discrimination in the U.S.?

Yes, some did. Concerned about comments that often surface in the open-ended questions of the Exit Questionnaires about Trainees being upset with problems of discrimination and racism as well as with issues related to situations of crime and violence, the Aguirre International Evaluation Team included some pilot questions that would probe these areas in the interviews with the long-term returned Trainees.

Returned Trainees were asked whether they felt they had been mistreated due to their race or ethnicity as evidenced by the way they looked, spoke, dressed, their mannerisms, their color, etc. They were also asked whether they had experienced a violent crime or been in a situation in which they felt unsafe due to violence.

Regarding racism and discrimination, of the 51 Trainees interviewed 43 responded to this question, and twenty (46.5% of the sample) said that they had experienced some type of ill treatment due to their race or ethnicity. From the responses of these Trainees, there is no doubt that some were mistreated, made to feel uncomfortable, or discriminated against. Some of the comments that Trainees made related to minor issues such as being made fun

of because of the way they spoke, the way they mispronounced words, or because they spoke in Spanish among themselves. But even at this innocuous level, some Trainees mentioned that in public places like the bus or the cafeteria, they were asked to speak in English in a hostile manner, because those around them could not understand what they were saying.

Some Trainees mentioned that, "because we were Latin," they were rejected or looked down upon by classmates. Some mentioned that professors in some cases, and students more generally, ostracized them. They also mentioned that they were immediately looked upon with suspicion when they entered stores and other businesses.

One Trainee mentioned that the first family he was with treated him badly, and another one said that the son of the family took a dislike toward him because of his color, and he had to move. He went on to tell that the next family he went to was wonderful and treated him very nicely.

One Trainee said he was refused service because of his color and several others mentioned that their color was a problem. One Trainee mentioned that his U.S. classmates told him how they paid taxes so the "Latins" could have a free education.

Many of the Trainees who were in the U.S. during the invasion to Panama had comments regarding their ill feeling during the discussions that ensued after this political situation.

Probably the most serious of these perceptions of discrimination came from a female student who said that she was sure that the English instructor in Florida discriminated in favor of those students of higher socio-economic status to have them selected into four-year programs, while those of more disadvantaged backgrounds were recommended for two-year programs (CAPS Trainee in 4-year program).

Were Trainees exposed to violence or were they victims of a crime?

No. Only two returned Trainees reported having been affected by a situation involving a crime. One Trainee had his bike stolen. The other one was stopped and accused of a robbery. He explained that he was near a place right when a robbery was committed by a black man, and since he "was the only black around" he was arrested. Later on, the real thief was found and he was released.

Did training increase Trainees standing with their peers and community?

Yes. The returned Trainees were asked a series of questions regarding whether they thought that the training had affected their standing in their community, as well as their status with their peers and family.

In all of the questioned areas, Trainees perceived a positive impact from the training, but the greatest impact according to the Trainees' perception was in their self-esteem. Ninety three percent of CAPS Trainees and 95.6 percent of CASP Trainees attributed their self-esteem to be higher or much higher because of the program.

The next area in which Trainees perceived a very high positive impact from the training experience was in their stature in the community. Over 85 percent of both CAPS and CASP Trainees declared that their stature in their community was higher or much higher upon their return from their U.S. training experience.

Improved status with their family as an outgrowth of the program was acknowledged by 75 percent of CAPS Trainees and 72.8 percent of CASP Trainees. This is not to say that one fourth of the parents of these Trainees do not place value in the training program, but rather that those Trainees do not perceive that in the eyes of their parents and family their status has changed because they participated in the program.

The last area of inquiry regarding perceived change in status is in the area related to co-workers. Three-fourths of CAPS Trainees and two-thirds of CASP Trainees said that their status had increased. The proportion of Trainees who did not acknowledge a positive impact coincides with the Trainees who are currently unemployed.

	(-)	1	2	3	4	5 (+)
Status with co-workers						
CAPS (n=25)	4.0	-	20.0	40.0	36.0	
CASP (n=15)	6.7	6.7	20.0	46.7	20.0	
Stature with family						
CAPS (n=28)	-	7.1	17.9	42.9	32.1	
CASP (n=22)	-	4.5	22.7	45.5	27.3	
Status in community						
CAPS (n=28)	-	3.6	10.7	46.4	39.3	
CASP (n=23)	-	-	8.7	56.5	30.4	
Self-esteem						
CAPS (n=28)	-	-	7.1	35.7	57.1	
CASP (n=23)	-	-	4.3	30.4	65.2	

Source: Returnee interviews

Another factor to consider regarding job related issues is that most of these Trainees were students or recent graduates when they were selected to participate in the program, and even if they are working now, they are in jobs that they entered after they returned from the training, and this provides very little basis on which to gauge a change of status (see Table 13).

What impact has training had on returned Trainees?

Positive. Most interviewed returned Trainees assessed the impact of their training experience as a positive and momentous one in their lives, and described it in terms of having matured, become more independent, learned a new language, acquired a profession, broadened their perspectives, and in general, grown.

A few examples can help illustrate the intensity of the feelings articulated by the Trainees regarding their perception of the program's impact on their lives.

"I have acquired more security and stability, which will enable me to define my future as a professional."

"My vision of the world has broadened, allowing me to be a better person."

"Personally, I became more mature and I am able to see life in a broader way, not only related to Panama but also related to other countries."

“My life has become more disciplined, and also my determination to complete any task I take on. I feel that my affable side has diminished somewhat.”

“I had never travelled outside of my country . . . I had the opportunity to learn a new language and the experience of living in a different culture.”

“I learned that nothing is impossible. It does not matter much where one lives or at what socio-economic level, because there may always be opportunities that arise and that one can take advantage of.”

“The profession I chose is one of the best, and that has changed my life and I feel very proud.”

What activities do returned Trainees do as a result of the program?

Ongoing contacts. The sample of long-term returned Trainees were asked a series of questions about contacts, activities, and other involvements that may be a result of having participated in the training program. The results, summarized in Table 14, show that CASP Trainees have slightly higher levels of involvement than CAPS Trainees. Overall, the areas in which the effects of the program seem to be of some consequence to returned Trainees are in keeping in touch with each other, reading professional literature, and attending professional meetings. Almost all returned CAPS and CASP Trainees said that they keep in touch with other returned Trainees, while three-fourth of CASP Trainees and two-third of CAPS Trainees said they read professional literature. More than half of the CASP Trainees attend professional meetings (60.9%) while the CAPS Trainees who do so is much lower (35.7%).

TABLE 14 Trainees' Contacts and Involvement with U.S. After Their Return (Percentages)

	<u>CAPS</u>	<u>CASP</u>
Contact with other Trainees	96.4	95.7
Read professional literature	64.3	78.3
Attend professional meetings	35.7	60.9
Buy goods from the U.S.	42.9	56.5
Buy services from the U.S.	10.7	13.0
Sell goods to the U.S.	10.7	17.4
Offer services to the U.S.	7.1	8.7
Other business aspects with U.S.	7.1	13.0
Other activities related to the U.S.	17.9	17.4
Number of cases	(28)	(23)

Source: Returnee Interviews

What type of Follow-on has been provided to Returned Trainees?

Different, depending on the project. The majority of the interviewed returned Trainees (85.7% of CAPS Trainees and 73.9% of CASP Trainees) had been involved in some type of Follow-on activity.

For CAPS Trainees, 79.2 percent had been in contact with people whom they met in the U.S., and 75 percent had received some Follow-on from the AID Mission, while 37.5% had received Follow-on from their contractors. More than half of the Trainees reported that the follow-on from AID had been useful, while 88.9 percent found follow-on from the contractors useful, and 84.2 percent found Follow-on from U.S. people useful.

Follow-on provided to returned CAPS Trainees by AID consisted of the provision of literature (52.9%) and help with interviews (11.8%), while that provided by the placement contractor consisted of literature (44.4%) and correspondence (33.3%). People they met in the U.S. corresponded with them (47.1%) and provided other services (47.1%).

For CASP Trainees, slightly more than half (52.9%) maintained contact with people from the U.S., and slightly less than half (47.1%) had received some type of Follow-on from their placement contractor and from AID. Follow-on from AID consisted primarily of some undefined services (62.5%), while that of the contractors consisted of literature (25%), correspondence (25%), and other services (37.5%). Contact with U.S. people centered around correspondence (44.4%) and other services (55.5%).

When queried about the usefulness of the Follow-on services received, 62.5 percent of the CASP Trainees felt that the AID Follow-on was useful; 87.5 percent felt that the Follow-on from contractors was useful, and all (100%) felt that their contact with U.S. people was useful.

What type of Follow-on would Trainees like to have?

Table 15, summarizes the results of the survey regarding the preference of returned Trainees for Follow-on activities to be provided through AID efforts or with its support. Returned Trainees were asked to rank their preference for Follow on activities in order of importance to them. CAPS returned Trainees voiced a strong preference for an Alumni Association as a first choice, for seminars and workshops as a second choice, followed very closely by a third choice for a newsletter. CASP Trainees preference was slightly different. Their first choice was for seminars and workshops, and their second choice was for an Alumni Association. They did not show any strong preference for a third choice.

Were returned Trainees satisfied with the program?

Definitely satisfied. Responses to the question of how satisfied returned Trainees had been with their training program elicited very similar results for both CAPS and CASP Trainees. Almost 80 percent of both CAPS and CASP Trainees said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the program, and close to 20 percent registered a neutral stance, being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. However, the results point toward more enthusiasm for the program from CAPS Trainees than CASP Trainees if the focus is on the number who declared to be very satisfied with the program. CAPS Trainees were in much greater proportion "very satisfied" with the training program than CASP Trainees (35.7% as compared to 21.7%).

	Rank of Choices		
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Alumni Association			
CAPS	46.4	14.2	7.1
CASP	21.7	21.7	34.7
Seminars/Workshops			
CAPS	25.0	28.5	17.8
CASP	43.4	30.4	21.7
AID Publications			
CAPS	-	7.1	17.8
CASP	4.3	4.3	-
Professional Publications			
CAPS	14.2	10.7	17.8
CASP	-	8.6	8.6
Newsletter			
CAPS	3.5	25.0	14.2
CASP	-	8.6	8.6
Number of cases:			
	CAPS = 28	CASP = 23	
Source: Interview with Returnees			

The responses of returned Trainees are not significantly different from those offered by Trainees at the time of exiting the program (see Table 16).

Would Trainees recommend program?

Yes. The responses of interviewed returned Trainees on whether they would recommend the program are the strongest indicator of the vote of confidence this program receives from all of its participants. All returned Trainees from both the CAPS and CASP projects would recommend the program, and on a scale from one to seven, 85.8 percent of returned CAPS Trainees would recommend it at the two highest levels, while 86.9 percent of CASP Trainees would recommend it at those levels (see Table 17).

	Returnees		Exit Q.	
	CAPS	CASP	CAPS	CASP
Very dissatisfied	-	-	2.6	2.6
Dissatisfied	-	4.3	2.6	2.6
-/+	17.9	17.4	13.0	21.1
Satisfied	42.9	56.5	57.1	59.2
Very satisfied	35.7	21.7	24.7	14.5
Number of cases	(28)	(23)	(77)	(76)

Source: Returnee Interviews

	(No)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Yes)
CAPS (n=28)	-	-	-	-	-	14.3	17.9	67.9
CASP (n=23)	-	-	-	-	-	13.0	39.1	47.8

Source: Returnee Interviews

Congruent with the findings for other countries, the proportion of Trainees who would recommend the program increases when a comparison is made between responses given at time of exiting the program and when the Trainees are interviewed in their own countries some months after their return.

What recommendations do Trainees have for improving the program?

The interview questionnaire includes the returned Trainees' comments and recommendations. The responses offered can be divided among those that have to do with the program, with the coordination, and with Follow-on, as well as some miscellaneous comments.

Regarding pre-departure orientation, Trainees recommended that they be given more accurate information about what to expect in the U.S., and that returned Trainees be used in the pre-departure orientation of future groups so that they can share their experiences with newly selected participants. Some Trainees also recommended that special care be given in the selection of families with whom they will be living.

Regarding the programs and their content, the academic aspect of the training, the following comments were made:

“That the studies include more practical or hands-on experience.” And “that the program consider operational practices that are more dynamic and less theoretical.” “That the studies be more focused on the practice. . .”

“That we be sent to universities recognized in Panama.”

“That we know ahead of time what university we will be attending and what subjects we can take at that university.”

Related to the coordination of the program:

“That the placement contractors visit more often.”

“ . . . more care in the selection of the families chosen for students to live with.”

“Better supervision and monitoring on the part of AID and the coordinators, and more contact between AID and [the placement contractor].” This was a comment made by quite a few of the Trainees.

One Trainee is still waiting for the diploma to arrive from the U.S., and several mentioned the problem of getting the degrees and credits accepted in Panama. A suggestion was that AID should establish some mechanism for this to be expedited.

One Trainee explained that until the issue of the credits is settled, the opportunity to compete for jobs at a formal level is not an option.

Regarding Follow-on once they are back in the country, returned Trainees made the following comments:

“They need more help in getting jobs.” This was a generalized plea primarily from those unemployed but from the employed also.

“That there be more contact with the Association of Returned Trainees on the part of AID,” and “more contact with returned Trainees that live in the interior of the country.”

Many Trainees, especially those who had been in two year programs, asked for help in finishing their B.A. degrees. There are several possibilities in Panama for this, including through branches of U.S. universities established in that country for students to complete degrees, without undue hassle about comparability of courses and other problems that would arise at the University of Panama or the Catholic University (Universidad Santa María la Antigua).

A final poignant recommendation given by some Trainees was that their comments and recommendations be given some heed. One Trainee expressed his exasperation in making

recommendations, because, he said, that they offer the same recommendations again and again, and nothing is changed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After an auspicious beginning, the CLASP program in Panama suffered considerable reverses when AID was asked to leave the country, and relations between the U.S. and Panama were severely impaired for about two years. The Trainees who had been selected for long-term academic training in the U.S. and were awaiting placement spent part of the intervening time studying English in the Canal Zone Junior College, and a new group of selected Trainees also began ELT at that time.

The CLASP program has enjoyed enormous popularity in Panama and is considered highly successful by all those who know about it. An example of this is the number of applicants who meet the selection criteria, which this year number 3,000 for the approximate 50 scholarships the Mission plans to award.

A challenge to the Mission project officers and to the returning Trainees has been the chaotic economic and political situation found in the country. Open unemployment has reached close to 30 percent in Panama City and almost 50 percent in Colon during the 1987-1990 period. A stagnant economy in the country's principal cities has had an even more devastating effect in the rest of the country. Many of the returning Trainees have been unsuccessful in securing employment, a distressing situation which has caused them extreme anxiety.

The Follow-on efforts are geared toward helping returned Trainees readjust to their society and maintain the ties established with the U.S., and the positive feelings toward U.S. customs and practices. The greatest effort in this direction has been placed on helping returned Trainees find jobs and maintain a viable Association of Returned Trainees.

The Follow-on activities promoted by CAPS and CASP are right on target and merit full encouragement and support. Also, the Mission's idea of helping to establish a mentoring system to match returned Trainees and local business people should be pursued.

The CLASP program is again on solid ground in Panama, and the Mission is to be commended for having overcome the extremely difficult situation of the latter part of the 1980s decade. As it moves forward, the benefits of the U.S. investment in the CAPS and CASP training programs will be maximized if the Mission's energies are directed to helping returned Trainees become fully integrated and productive members of their society. This is the only way in which the full impact of the program will have the desired effect on the returned Trainees, their families, and their country.