

USAID/Central America Regional Program

Operational Plan

FY 2006

June 15, 2006

Please Note:

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Program Performance Summary FY 2005: Background: The past year was a watershed for Central America's economic development. The U.S. Congress and most of the congresses of the Central American countries ratified the Central American and Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), demonstrating the importance of rules-based free trade for Central America's economic future. Central America faces significant development challenges due to inconsistent leadership, weak institutions and corruption and almost 60 percent of its population living in poverty. Central American countries need to strengthen key institutions and increase competitiveness to overcome these challenges. Research has shown that freer trade alone is not sufficient to achieve sustainable economic growth. A recent study by the World Bank on the effects of 10 years of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) concluded that for Mexico, "free trade definitely brought new economic opportunities, but...that free trade alone is not enough without significant policy and institutional reforms." The study emphasizes that economic development also depends on good governance, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.

With individual country populations ranging from approximately four million in Costa Rica to almost 12 million in Guatemala, domestic markets in Central America are too small by themselves to generate the level of demand that would fuel significant growth. These countries need to link with each other to better compete in world markets. To achieve faster and broader economic growth, Central America must also to create a more integrated region, creating a single economy of more than 35 million inhabitants, freeing both inter and intra-regional trade and fostering true democratic governance. Recently, the Central American Presidents approved a plan for deeper integration--the Plan of Action for Central American Economic Integration. The Plan calls for the progressive implementation of the customs union, and all five of the CAFTA countries are now parties. Although regional integration has been a goal for decades, it was not until the private sector and political actors showed interest in promoting it jointly during these past two years that regional integration started to happen in earnest. The negotiating process of CAFTA with the United States and among the different countries itself has produced improved cooperation and coordination among the CAFTA countries.

The Challenges: The development challenge for Central America to promote more open, diversified expanding economies has come into sharp focus this year. Most of the region now understands that faster economic growth means competing in global markets, and competing in global markets requires meeting international standards for product quality and competing as a regional, diversified market. The regional economy is increasingly becoming more relevant than the economies of the individual countries. Central America's biggest trading partner, the United States, ratified a regional trade agreement with the region, CAFTA-DR, and governments are pursuing similar free trade agreements with Canada and the European Union. The Customs Union has advanced with the creation of 11 integrated border customs facilities. Recently, the largest company in the world, Walmart, made a major investment in the regional economy, purchasing 33% of over 300 Central American supermarkets held by CARHCO, the largest Central American company. The region is exploring new markets in Japan and China and Chiquita Brands also announced that it will risk its most valuable corporate asset, its "Chiquita" brand image, in the European market by co-branding with Rainforest Alliance.

There is increasing concern about the impact of trade-enhanced economic growth on the environment and the governments have decided to work together to improve and harmonize environmental management and standards. The inadequacy or lack of harmonized environmental laws and regulations compromises their effective application, and could lead to large penalties under trade agreements. CAFTA-DR includes an Environment Cooperation Agreement (ECA) that aims to protect, improve and conserve the environment, including natural resources. In the case of shared resources (e.g., watersheds and coastal areas) the problem is compounded by the lack of agreements based on harmonized cross-border environmental standards and regulations. To be effective regionally, these regulations, norms and standards need to be based on common principles and criteria, adapted to specific conditions in each country.

HIV/AIDS remains a serious threat for the future sustainable development of Central America as well as to the United States due to the region's proximity, trade and immigration. The principal challenges are to strengthen the policies and local capacities; increase awareness and commitment; increase the

extension, coverage and effectiveness of proven behavioral change interventions with high-prevalence groups; and collect and disseminate surveillance and other information for improved policies and decision-making. The establishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF) provides an opportunity as well as a challenge due to the limited absorptive capacity of the countries to effectively program the funds. It will be a further challenge to avoid duplication and to ensure complementarities and activity coherence with the GF. Recent experiences in Central America with tropical storms, drought, the coffee crisis, and cutting of forests have also highlighted the fragility of the region to economic as well as natural shocks, including fires and hurricanes, and the vulnerability of much of the population in the region to these crises, particularly the food insecure poor.

Key achievements: During 1997-2005, USAID's regional programs in Central America had increasing impacts as they supported regional integration by promoting open trade and investment policies; promoted improved environmental and natural resource management and the use of clean production technologies; encouraged rural economic diversification; and controlled and contained the spread of HIV/AIDS.

1) Regional integration and promoting open trade and investment policies: The ratification of CAFTA-DR during this year was a major milestone for Central America and improves their economic growth prospects in the coming years; USAID's Regional Trade Program provided critical support toward this end. Three USAID programs are facilitating the reforms necessary to fully benefit from CAFTA-DR: (1) trade and labor market policies and regional integration in partnership with the Central American Secretariat for Economic Integration (SIECA); (2) meeting the commitments stated in CAFTA-DR Chapters 4 and 5, related to customs administration, trade facilitation, and rules of origin; and (3) other trade capacity building.

USAID support has greatly increased specialized knowledge about CAFTA-DR and its benefits. SIECA now maintains a highly-regarded web page (<<http://www.causa.sieca.org.gt>>) with detailed information about CAFTA-DR and Central America's international trade statistics. USAID has been instrumental in providing technical assistance and training to governments in customs valuation and procedures, as well as to private sector stakeholders in customs reform.

USAID helped establish national and regional public sector/private sector partnerships in trade facilitation ("pro-committees"), which are providing forums for government customs and trade agencies and providers and users of customs and trade services to discuss systemic trade and transport problems and to identify solutions. USAID carried out a high-level region-wide assessment of the institutional and legal framework related to international trade in each Central American country (available at www.bizlawreform.com <<http://www.bizlawreform.com>>), which identified strategies for improving the efficiency of trade flows and strengthening the business climate. Specific reforms in major business law and trade areas critical for implementing CAFTA-DR were identified by more than 100 representatives from government, business and civil society. After one presentation, the Vice President of El Salvador praised the El Salvador assessment. In Guatemala, the assessment was used by its Congress to define the legislative agenda for CAFTA-DR; in Nicaragua, by the presidential commission on private sector development to set its policy agenda.

With USAID assistance, the Central American countries promoted civil society awareness and education on trade agreements and their benefits. A workshop was held in each of the CAFTA-DR countries to inform the media about the agreement and 101 journalists were trained. In Guatemala more than 20,000 people from the public sector, private sector, universities, and academia were trained about CAFTA. In El Salvador, the government strengthened coordination among all the institutions related to international trade by sponsoring seminars on dispute resolution, rules of origin and customs procedures, benefiting over 1,000 persons. In Nicaragua, the program informed civil society about CAFTA-DR's opportunities and challenges.

Through its Global Development Alliance for "CAFTAction: Produce to Prosper" with Caribbean and Central American Action (CCAA), USAID obtained the commitment of Central America's best businesses and business leaders to work towards the implementation of the policy reforms needed to benefit fully

from CAFTA-DR. The most recent event of the alliance was held in Guatemala in which Guatemalan President Oscar Berger and U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez opened the workshop, "Compromiso CentroAmerica" attended by more than 100 government and business leaders from the region.

Through the USAID program, SIECA established a Labor Dispute Resolution Center in Guatemala with the Ministry of Labor and the Guatemala Apparel and Textile Industry Commission (VESTEX), as well as sponsored formal training on international and national labor legislation, worker's rights and obligations, and social responsibility on the part of the enterprise. Additionally, technical assistance was provided to strengthen a region-wide effort to standardize and certify labor competencies. The Continuous Improvement in the Central America Workplace (CIMCAW) Alliance organized a dialogue between the traditionally adversarial actors in the Nicaraguan apparel manufacturing sector (the manager-owners and labor and civil society organizations) to facilitate the competitive advantage of the maquila sector. USAID also supported a four-day training session on social auditing in the apparel sector and national labor laws. Results from pre- and post-tests demonstrated that training participants improved understanding of labor rights issues. In Honduras, 20 inspectors from the Ministry of Labor, members from unions, NGO's, the private sector, national and international monitoring organizations and well as voluntary compliance officers from the Gap, Inc., participated in a three-day training session on social auditing. This was the first time ministry of labor inspectors received training in conjunction with key representatives from the maquila sector.

The regional energy program contributed to the power sector efficiency in Central America by helping to build consensus among all stakeholders (private and public sector) in achieving financial sustainability in the sector. USAID is assisting the region to move forward on the restructuring and privatization of the power sector by focusing on high priority strategic and operational reform initiatives. With the ratification of CAFTA-DR, expanded access to an efficient, reliable and competitive electricity supply is even more critical; power sector reform is essential to fuel economic development and reduce poverty in the region.

2) Improved environmental and natural resource management and clean production technologies: USAID's regional environment program improved emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation, environmental policy implementation, forest fire prevention, economic valuation of environmental services, and clean production methodologies. USAID improved emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation through the provision of web-based environmental decision making tools and data. Central American governments relied upon the Mesoamerican Monitoring and Visualization System (SERVIR) <<http://servir.nsstc.nasa.gov/home.html>> website to meet their data requirements during several natural disasters, including hurricane Stan, floods, and fires. SERVIR was identified as the model for the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS)--a major international effort to develop a 21st century system for environmental management and disaster response. Management of natural resources and biodiversity conservation were improved through the implementation of co-management policies in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and a national policy for Private Nature Reserves that was developed in Honduras. A Regional Strategy for Forest Fires was approved by the Environment Ministers and is being implemented. Based on training in the "Economic Valuation of Damage to Natural Resources Caused by Wildfires, " the Panamanian Environment Ministry set aside a portion of its budget to apply such valuation to environmental disasters. Following training in climate change modeling, El Salvador's Meteorological Service is currently running its own simulations, and using the information to prepare policy inputs for climate change mitigation. USAID helped mitigate pollution in the region through the certification of small and medium sized tourism enterprises in the Gulf of Honduras, incorporating clean production improvements. A model Wastewater Regulation was developed with national and private water and sanitation businesses, and approved by the Central American Council of Environmental Ministers. USAID contributed to the establishment of the Directorate of Environmental Inspectors in El Salvador's Ministry of Environment. Beneficiaries of the program included local and indigenous communities, local and regional governments, and the private sector.

3) Rural economic diversification: USAID has successfully established and strengthened quality standards across the region focusing primarily on quality coffee, food safety standards for fruits and vegetables for the regional supermarkets, social and environmental certification of bananas, timber, and

coffee, and sanitary-phytosanitary norms and standards for agricultural exports to the United States. Even though this program has only been underway for two years or crop cycles, significant results have also been achieved related to increasing sales based on the adoption of these new market standards.

The volume of exports for direct project beneficiaries exceeded targets in all cases. The Certified Sustainable Products Alliance (CSPA) implemented by Rainforest Alliance met or surpassed targets for sales of both certified bananas and certified timber. Actual sales for certified bananas increased 29% from last year. Cumulative CSPA results to date on volume of certified wood products sold are 1.8 million board feet, equivalent to over \$3.3 million dollars. In 2005 the CSPA reported more than 1.5 million board feet sold. This is only 8 percent less than the expected target due to a change in reporting only the volume of wood already shipped. With pending purchase orders in process included, the target would be surpassed.

4) HIV/AIDS: USAID's regional program to contain HIV/AIDS and other Infectious diseases supports the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Agency's goal of protecting human health, and the UN Millennium Development Goal to "Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS." Working closely with a variety of partners including the United Nations Joint Program on AIDS (UNAIDS); the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF), and other bilateral agencies and regional groups, the program includes participation of affected groups in decision-making and strategic planning and strengthens local capacity of non-governmental organizations, and ministries of health in more effective interventions.

Important achievements this year were 14 new, positive policy changes in four countries. These include, among others, establishment of a national-level HIV/AIDS authority in Panama and El Salvador, protection of rights for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in Panama through an HIV Legal Support Network, amendments to El Salvador's Labor Code and involvement of Ombudsman offices in Nicaragua and Panama to mitigate discrimination against PLWHA. This was a transition year for implementation and prevention mechanisms with limited bridge-funding for the last six months of the fiscal year. Nonetheless, the program maintained high coverage of behavior change communication activities with various hard-to-reach high-risk groups. The percent of female sex workers (FSW) and men who have sex with men participating in activities increased dramatically in all countries. Preliminary results of a secondary analysis of the 2004 behavior surveys compared with the 2001-02 Multi-Site Study showed some increases in "always use condoms with new and regular clients" self-reports among ambulatory FSW, the subgroup with the highest HIV-seroprevalence.

By working with a variety of public, private, and civil society partners in coordination with other agencies, USAID built strong consensus which ensure continuity despite the vagaries of changing governments. The USAID-assisted National AIDS Strategic Plans (NSPs) have also proven to be effective mechanisms for bridging changes in governments. NSPs have multisectoral support that can effectively advocate for the continuity of policies and programs. Finally, USAID contributed to the design of a major World Bank grant as part of our program.

The Bank made the first disbursement of this \$8 million regional grant to strengthen surveillance and strategic information systems, including support for a regional reference laboratory.

FY 2006 Program**SO: 596-022 Economic Freedom: Open, Diversified Expanding Economies****Improve Sustainable Management Of Natural Resources & Biodiversity**

Improve Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Biodiversity (\$1,421,000 DA). USAID is establishing reliable funding mechanisms to implement environmental management plans for priority watersheds. At least two governments in the region are expected to dedicate funding for the administration and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, including funding for protected areas. Through public/private alliances, leveraged government funds and other financial mechanisms, program partners are able to generate 20% of the revenues necessary to manage key transnational protected areas and implement management plans. Policy changes necessary for financial sustainability of critical watersheds and protected areas, including payment for environmental services and other user fees, and local retention of fees and environmental fines for management, should be in place in three countries. Principal contractors and grantees: General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SG-SICA), Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Increase Trade and Investment

Increase Trade and Investment (\$3,955,000 DA; \$7,500,000 ESF Prior Year Unobligated). CAFTA-DR is the driving force for growth in the region. USAID's program is addressing policy and procedural bottlenecks by partnering with regional organizations to assist in the development of customs reforms, environmental legislation, labor laws, and improved SPS standards. USAID is working closely with private and public partners, including U.S. agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and EPA. USAID is continuing to strengthen the government's trade policy implementation, assist with CAFTA-DR implementation, and help countries meet obligations acquired as members of the World Trade Organization and CAFTA-DR. USAID concludes its support for quality coffee marketing and the development of private industry standards to help small farmers access the regional supermarket trade in fruits and vegetables. Labor activities are improving workplace conditions in the region and contribute to improved compliance with local labor laws. USAID is also seeking international markets for products made from certified timber by communities and increase the amount of certified coffee and bananas exported from the region. Mexico and Panama are also benefiting from greater regional trade integration. Principal contractors and grantees: SG-SICA, CCAD, EPA, USDA, Central American Secretariat for Economic Integration (SIECA), Rainforest Alliance, and other contractors and grantees to be determined through competition.

FY 2007 Program**SO: 596-022 Economic Freedom: Open, Diversified Expanding Economies****Improve Sustainable Management Of Natural Resources & Biodiversity**

Improve Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Biodiversity (\$845,000 DA). USAID will improve financial analysis and implement business plans for key protected areas and will increase the long term funding available for these sites. USAID will provide technical assistance to improve data quality for forestry, agriculture and other activities in watersheds and protected areas, to monitor land cover, and to establish an alert system for natural disasters including fire. Same partners as above.

Increase Trade and Investment

Increase Trade and Investment (\$4,655,000 DA). USAID will continue to strengthen trade policy and work to promote a harmonized legal and institutional framework for secure commercial transitions. USAID will work to develop a regional agreement to recognize contracts that have been notarized in one country as valid in all countries and establish a regional database on loan guarantee programs. Regulations and

administrative procedures will be developed so that the countries have the means to enforce the law and address waste water effluents from priority industry sectors, solid waste disposal and air quality. The program will continue to support voluntary compliance mechanisms that encourage the private sector to manage their waste and thus reduce costs. USAID will help develop standards and requirements that facilitate trade in goods. Promotion of regional markets for fair trade and environmentally sustainable certified products will continue. The program will promote business to business partnerships to improve labor conditions and competitiveness. Same partners as above.

FY 2006 Program

SO: 596-023 Investing in People: Healthier, Better-Educated People

Prevent & Control Infectious Diseases Of Major Importance

Prevent and Control Infectious Diseases of Major Importance (\$693,000 CSH). USAID is promoting the integration and improvement of the TB and HIV/AIDS surveillance systems, including reviewing and revising the case reporting and referral systems, the information flows for consistency and accuracy of reporting, improved laboratory diagnostics, special studies of co-infection, and multi-drug resistance. The program is also building the capacity of clinics on the co-infection of HIV and TB at all levels of the health care system, including improved pre-service and in-service training, updating of training modules, and dissemination of state of the art treatment technology. The program is paying special attention to supporting Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria projects in the region. Partners are the Global Health Tuberculosis Control Assistance Program and Centers for Disease Control/Global AIDS Control Program (CDC/GAP).

Reduce Transmission & Impact Of HIV/AIDS

Reduce Transmission and Impact of HIV/AIDS (\$1,399,000 Prior CSH Year funds, \$5,346,000 CSH). USAID's prevention program is focusing heavily on targeted interpersonal behavior change for "most at-risk populations" in concentrated epidemics. These populations include often "hidden" high-risk populations including prostitutes, men who have sex with men, and people living with HIV/AIDS. The program emphasizes smaller groups with more intensive and face-to-face interpersonal contacts. An additional 330,000 contacts are being targeted for 2006. The new behavior change program promotes more coordinated and improved access to services for voluntary counseling and testing and sexually transmitted infections services. These behavior change activities are being complemented by a distribution program that makes condoms available in outlets where high-risk behaviors take place. This component is also integrating USAID supported policy reform, human rights, and stigma reduction activities, thereby reducing the conditions of vulnerability that affect the ability of the target population to make decisions freely with regard to safer sexual practices. Partners to be determined through a competitive process.

USAID will pursue positive policy changes through the provision of technical and financial support for the development and implementation of the National AIDS Strategic Plans (NPSs). Emphasis is on the development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation strategies. The regional HIV/AIDS program is assisting Global Fund projects in scaling up and monitoring their efforts within the context of the NSPs. The program addresses the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS through technical assistance to improve their networking capabilities within the multisector strategic alliances. Additionally, the program is supporting campaigns to increase the general public's tolerance towards people living with HIV/AIDS. Faith-based and human rights groups, as well as other related sectors, are involved in advocating for the improvement and implementation of AIDS related policies. The specific policy actions that are being achieved in 2006 include: the official release and dissemination of the National AIDS Policy in Guatemala; a declaration on HIV/AIDS by the Central American Presidents at the Central American AIDS Congress; further modifications to the labor code and a National HIV/AIDS Policy in El Salvador; the completion of the National AIDS Strategic Plans and associated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan in Nicaragua; and completion of the National HIV/AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Plan in Panama. Principal grantees are: Academy for Educational Development and Futures Group.

The program is assisting National AIDS Programs in Central America to disseminate National HIV/AIDS Surveillance Plans among key stakeholders, decision makers and policy makers to ensure support and leveraging of resources and to establish reporting frameworks for communication and dissemination of key HIV/AIDS surveillance data. The program also promotes inter-agency and cross-country collaboration to develop country monitoring and evaluation plans under a regional strategic framework. Among others, the program is providing technical assistance to relevant Ministries of Health, Global Fund-El Salvador, the University del Valle/Guatemala (in the development and implementation of a surveillance survey of male prisoners), the World Bank Regional HIV/AIDS Grant Project (for the establishment of the regional HIV/AIDS reference laboratory at the Gorgas Institute of Panama), and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (in the development and implementation of national Behavioral Science Surveys in Panama for high-risk groups), and Kunas as a follow-up to the Multi-Site Study. Principal partner: CDC/GAP.

FY 2007 Program

SO: 596-023 Investing in People: Healthier, Better-Educated People

Reduce Transmission & Impact Of HIV/AIDS

Reduce Transmission and Impact of HIV/AIDS (\$5,700,000 CSH). The program will target behavior-change interventions with high prevalence groups complemented by a distribution program for making condoms available in outlets where high risk behaviors take place. The annual target for number of contacts with high risk populations is estimated in the 300,000 range, to be refined once the implementers are in place. The policy component will be transitioning into a new implementing mechanism. Specific policy initiatives to be undertaken will be defined. Partners for the behavior change, condom distribution and policy change activities in FY 2007 are to be determined.

Program activities will include a heavy focus on information from the previous behavior science surveys, which will follow up on the 2001-2002 multisite surveys. Results will be presented and used for monitoring and evaluating impact within the context of the National AIDS Strategic Plans, leveraging policy support and resources, and for guiding future strategies. Further training for HIV/AIDS epidemiologists may also be pursued in 2007. The program plans to continue strengthening human resources at all levels to efficiently and effectively manage the scaling up of care and treatment programs and to strengthen the continuum between care and prevention through a Global Health Bureau field support mechanism. However, a final decision will be made after the Program Review with the Extended Team scheduled for FY 2006. Principal grantee/contractor is the CDC/GAP.

FY 2006 Program

SO: 596-024 Timely Humanitarian Assistance and Humanitarian Response

Improve Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Mitigation

Improve Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Mitigation (\$500,000 DA). A follow-on MFEWS contract was awarded in September 2005 for early warning systems worldwide. The MFEWS regional office in El Salvador is monitoring food security and livelihood crises in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. It is building local and regional institution capacity to establish mapping zones and profiles, based on household livelihood and food security, in order to project the impact of weather events and negative socioeconomic conditions. Field personnel are monitoring natural disasters, food policies and price increases, conflicts, and border or port closures, to determine threats to food security. When hazards occur, MFEWS' partner institutions are assessing impacts on household food availability and market systems and dissemination of early warnings. Principal contractor: Chemonics International, Inc.

FY 2007 Program

SO: 596-024 Timely Humanitarian Assistance and Humanitarian Response

Improve Emergency Preparedness & Disaster Mitigation

Improve Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Mitigation (\$500,000 DA). USAID will continue its disaster and livelihood monitoring activities to reduce or prevent food insecurity. MFEWS will also develop and implement monitoring and assessment activities to ensure progress towards local and regional institutional management of early warning systems. MFEWS will also train these partners to monitor and assess the performance of food markets aimed at ensuring consumer access to food in normal or crisis period. Same partner as above.

Results Framework

596-005 Increased Central American Competitiveness in Global Markets

Program Title: Regional Trade and Investment

- 1: More Open Trade and Investment Policies
- 2: Accelerated Central American Market Integration
- 3: More Equitable and Efficient Labor Markets
- 4: Effective Preparation of Central America for Trade Negotiations

596-006 Improved Environmental Management in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor

Program Title: Central America Regional Environment Program

- 1: Improved protected area management in the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor
- 2: Expanded market access for environmentally sound products and services
- 3: Harmonized environmental regulations
- 4: Increased use of less polluting technologies and practices

596-009 Increased Diversification of the Rural Economy

Program Title: Increased Diversification of the Rural Economy

- 1: Improved competitiveness and sustainability of quality coffee exports
- 2: Improved competitiveness of the rural economy

596-022 Economic Freedom: Open, Diversified Expanding Economies

Program Title: Economic Freedom

- 1: Laws, policies and regulations that promote trade and investment
- 4: Improved management and conservation of critical watersheds

596-023 Investing in People: Healthier, Better-Educated People

Program Title: Investing in People

- 1: Increased use of prevention practices and services to combat HIV/AIDS
- 2: Improved policies implemented
- 3: Effective and efficient delivery of comprehensive care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS

596-024 Timely Humanitarian Assistance and Humanitarian Response

Program Title: Meso-American Food Early Warning System

- 1: Disaster/crisis prevention and preparedness