THE GRYD YSET/ SECONDARY PREVENTION MODEL

REPORT ON ADAPTATION AND TRANSFER TO CARSI COUNTRIES

November 2012

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CONTENTS

Background Information 1

Summary of the Phase 1 Trip 2

Overall Impressions 7

Recommendations for Phase 2 10

Annex: Background Research 11

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prior to the trip the Gang Reduction Youth Development (GRYD) foundation conducted background research of literature relevant to the GRYD Program Project in Central America. Studies of cross cultural comparisons show that although each culture has its own context, there are similarities among cultures. Peer influence is seen across cultures and multiple risks affect youth. The research also shows similarities between the risks associated with joining a gang in the US and Central America. The full research summary can be found in the annex.

Purpose of the Field Trip

The trip was structured as the first phase of introducing the GRYD Secondary Prevention Model to service providers in. The Model is comprised of two inter related processes, 1) the client selection process, and 2) the service delivery process. Clients between ages 10-15 are selected using the empirically derived Youth Service Eligibility Tool (YSET) is used to identify youth ages 10-15 years old that are at the highest risk for joining gangs. Once youth are identified via the YSET they enter a service delivery process comprised of 8 phases of family centered services that focus on risk factors and associated behaviors identified by the YSET tool

It was recommended to USAID/CARSI that the implementation of the GRYD Secondary Prevention Model be carried out in three phases in each one of the countries in the region, including Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. This report will focus on the work completed as part of phase 1 in Tegucigalpa, and will also make recommendations for Phase 2.

The Technical Assistance Team from Los Angeles team was comprised of:

- Guillermo Cespedes, MSW Deputy Mayor, Gang Reduction and Youth Development
- Miguel Leon, BA, GRYD Director of Prevention Programs
- Karen Hennigan, PhD University of Southern California, Researcher
- Floor Vindel, MSW University of Southern California YSET Project Coordinator

The Technical Assistance and Logistical Team from Honduras was comprised of:

- Anthony Brand, USAID Program Office, Tegucigalpa Honduras
- Sandra Gomez, PhD USAID Honduras Youth Development Coordinator
- Lissette Molina, USAID Honduras, Citizen Security Intern

In addition Enrique Roig, Project Coordinator for the Central America Regional Security Initiative, USAID Washington DC provided overall coordination, logistical direction, and consultation between Los Angeles and Honduras.

SUMMARY OF THE PHASE 1 TRIP

During the visit the team met with 268 family members, youth, teachers, researchers, practitioners, donors, and faith-based leaders. Two days were dedicated to intensive field work, and two days were dedicated to structured technical assistance training.

Tuesday, November 13, 2012: Proyecto de Vivienda, Villa Franco

FHI/IDB Pro-am Coordinator Ing. Diaz and her staff hosted our visit at Proyecto De Vivienda in Villa Franco. A group of parents and students were assembled to speak with us. After brief introductions, we split into two groups, with parents in one room and students in another.

One of the goals on this trip was to get feedback from young people in the neighborhoods with gang influence on: a) the ages they think youth typically join gangs and b) some of the reasons young people in their community join. The other goal was to get feedback on professional and community-based capacity to establish a family-centered strategy based on a vertical (multi-generational) strategy and a horizontal (problem-solving) strategy.

Flor Vindel and Miguel Leon worked with the children assembled, first to put them at ease and build rapport and then to ask questions about our key concerns. Detailed answers were collected through an exercise where each student wrote his or her answers (anonymously) on sticky notes and posted them on the board. Sandra Elizabeth Gomez Ventura was instrumental in convening the group, providing snacks, and assisting with the experience.

The youths provided rich answers to our key questions and qualitative information on the ways gangs in their neighborhood affect their lives. One young man's brother was recently killed by the gang, and several children described being assaulted or robbed by gang members. The children explained what precautions they needed to take to avoid confrontation and harm (e.g., walking the long way around to avoid areas where the gang members hang out). Fear of certain gang activities was evident.

In the meeting with parents and grandparents, community members talked openly about their daily participation in the lives of their children and grandchildren. Family structure was described as primarily vertical (multi-generational), with much emphasis on collaboration across generational lines. There were emotional descriptions of incidents of violence in which parents and grandparents had lost loved ones. The process of collaboration with Project Coordinator Diaz was reflected with a great deal of caring. A basic introduction to genogram construction was presented, and one of the parents was given the task of completing the genogram he started on his family.

Tuesday, November 13, 2012: Villa Nueva – Instituto Rafael Pineda Ponce

We were hosted by Assistant Director David Castellanos and his staff. Here we were able to meet with school staff and youth aged 14 and older.

We met with the students assembled. Flor and Miguel led the group in exercises meant to facilitate an open discussion. However, the youth remained reluctant and reticent most of the hour, Perhaps because the school director and counselor remained in the room or due to social dynamics in this school, most of the youths did not offer opinions. At a couple of points the lights in the room went out. We later learned that this was orchestrated by other students who wanted to coax a few of the girls in the room to leave.

After the session the director reported that there were times when the students "took over the school." Initially, this report was presented as a process that included active gang members; however, once students came back into the classroom, the director's report became vague. Both in the classroom and during conversations with the director, it was evident that the communication with our team was coded and that neither the director nor the students felt comfortable sharing information.

Our impression is that this would not be a favorable site for the GRYD Prevention test at this time, despite the fact that this school is a site for the METAS organization math/reading/writing program. The school is clearly in need of assistance, but improved administrative capacity and student buy-in would be a prerequisite.

Tuesday, November 13, 2012: Nueva Suyapa – Centro de Alcaze Alianza Joven Honduras

Our last stop on Tuesday was at an outreach center in Nueva Suyapa. The center was clearly a youth-centered place with strong leadership. A center director gave an overview via a PowerPoint presentation, and then the staff assembled to meet with Guillermo while the youth assembled to meet with Flor and Miguel. Karen chose to speak further with the director. The center director mentioned that they worked to recruit youth in the highest 10 percent of risk. Karen and the director spoke about methods of identifying these youths and the great success the center had had using attorneys and psychologists to press for remediation of child abuse and neglect by taking these and other cases to court. The director had to leave early to attend the funeral of a former center worker who had been "assassinated." The impression of the Los Angeles Team was that the agency was well-run, had an exceptional staff, and would be a good place to establish GRYD secondary prevention programs.

At the meeting with Guillermo, the youth volunteers demonstrated an unusually articulate and informed level of knowledge about the interplay of multiple risk factors that led their peers to join gangs. The youth also presented detailed illustrations of the differences between juvenile delinquency, "*barras*," *pandillas*, *maras*, *narco menudeo*, etc.

This is an exceptional and highly motivated group of youths who are dedicated to maintaining peace in their community. It was recommended that this site be chosen as

one of the pilot sites, and that the volunteer staff be trained in data collection and YSET evaluation process. In addition, it was recommended that these volunteers be given a stipend to help carry out Phases 2 and 3 of the prevention model development.

Wednesday, November 14, 2012: Day-Long Training

The technical assistance training assistance training was conducted by The Los Angeles Team. In attendance were 35 service providers and members of the USAID mission in Honduras. The following was provided:

- An overview of the Los Angeles GRYD comprehensive strategy document and PowerPoint presentation
- Differences between primary and secondary prevention
- The logic of secondary prevention
- Selection of risk factors based on empirical data
- Chart comparing accumulated risks for ineligible, eligible, and gang-involved youth
- Domains of risk factors
- An overview of the family-centered strategy
- The concept of self-differentiation
- An overview of the research on risk factors that led to development of the YSET tool
- Challenges in the development and implementation in Los Angeles
- An overview of the YSET interview process
- Process data on more than 6,000 youths in the Los Angeles program
- Outcome data on 1,200 youths in the Los Angeles program

See attached training materials in Annex B.

Thursday, November 15, 2012: Instituto Central Vicente Caceres and Universidad Pedagogica

We met with a group of researchers studying youth resiliency factors. The original study instrument was constructed in Canada, and this group adapted the questions for the Honduran population. (The Los Angeles Team would like to get a copy of the original assessment and the version adapted for Honduras.) They used a self-administered approach with youth older than those targeted for secondary prevention. The presence of this project will likely facilitate our development of procedures for the administration of the Honduran Secondary Prevention YSET Project.

Another important aspect discussed here was the use of informed consent and steps taken to maintain confidentiality in the resiliency project. The procedures used set a nice precedent for those that will be needed to implement the Honduran YSET. This conversation was very encouraging.

For the resiliency project, several hundred interviews were gathered over a few months, using consent and protection requirements that are similar to those commonly used in the United States. Suyapa Padilla, a professor at the Universidad Jose Cecilio del Valle who

was not present at this meeting, has been responsible for analyzing the data from this project. It may be possible to work with Dr. Padilla to develop the capacity to enter and score the YSET data and provide timely feedback reports to support the programs.

Thursday, November 15, 2012: Web Conference at Universidad Jose Cecilio del Valle

Guillermo and Enrique answered submitted questions, giving emphasis to helping participants differentiate between primary and secondary prevention, the concept of place-based strategies, and the need to engage youth who are already involved in early gang activity. Some emphasis was placed on the developmental process of joining gangs and the process of becoming "inactive."

Thursday, November 15, 2012: Compassion International

We traveled to the Compassion International – CDI and Church site. Some members of our group met with staff and others (Karen met with students). Flor and Miguel, with Sandra's support, met with a group of youths. Most were 10 to 14 years old, with some younger and some older. The youth were enthusiastic, at ease, and eager to participate. All in all, they appeared to be at much lower risk for gang involvement than youth of similar ages from Via Franco or the older/high-school-aged youth from Villa Nueva we met with on Tuesday. Our impression was that this program may be a haven for youth from Villa Nueva and elsewhere whose parents have made an effort to find a positive setting for their children. We do not know how these youths were recruited for the church program, but they seemed centered and lower-risk than the others we met.

At the meeting with staff, there were mostly complaints about the parents, most of which appeared rooted in the fact that the staff wanted the best for the children. These complaints, while raw, provided a window into the difficulties of working with what was described as "disintegrated" families. The staff shared much frustration, particularly in relation to single-parent family structures in which the head of household was emotionally and sometimes physically absent. Guillermo acknowledged the challenge and defined the disintegrated family as the type of family that requires the most emphasis in preventing youth from taking on the identity of a gang member. This appears to be a staff that is very committed to protecting children and supporting their participation in the church program. Overall, this program appears to be a good situation for the youth and parents involved.

The organization is structured to deal with a population that has some level of family organization. As teachers discussed the challenges of dealing with more chaotic family systems, it became clear that a great deal of training and conceptual redefinition would need to take place to help this agency adopt a coherent approach to families at a higher risk level. It appeared to be a primary rather than secondary prevention program that provides a protective setting for youth who are part of the general "at risk" population.

Thursday, November 15, 2012: Villa Nueva Public Primary School

Franklin Maradiaga accompanied us to the school; we were told that his presence would provide safety in entering the community. We formed in two groups, one working with youth and the other with parents.

Flor, Miguel, Sandra, and Lisette continued to gather feedback from the youth on key questions about joining gangs. Guillermo, Tony, and Karen elicited information from the teachers.

The meeting with the teachers was the most emotionally powerful hour of the trip. The teachers were highly vested in their work with the children. One by one, they spoke of their challenges trying to focus their students on positive progress in the face of tremendous social and survival challenges. Most of us listening were near tears as the teachers described these situations. The teachers also gave their ideas for needed support, much of which seems doable. In particular, the teachers appear to have an intuitive understanding of the benefits of engaging youth who are already involved in gangs. They openly discussed having carried out facility improvement projects in this community, in collaboration with gang-involved youth. This school could yield some YSETs of 10- to 15-year-olds at the highest levels of risk, as well as some who are already gang involved. This school could benefit greatly from an intentional family engagement strategy that could be used to build on their inclusive approach to neighborhood stakeholders.

Friday, November 16, 2012: USAID/Honduras Training

We started the day by providing an opportunity for participants to ask questions, as a way to identify additional training needs. We then assembled six working groups (avoided having people who work together in the same group). Flor Vindel and Miguel Leon led an exercise to:

- Propose the feedback needed to adapt YSET in relation to language
- Proposed the feedback needed to adapt YSET as it relates to specific additions/removal of current risk factors.
- Emphasize the need for input on the “critical life events” risk factor to make it more congruent with the levels of crisis identified by providers as typical of Honduras

The suggestions will be reviewed and used to create a first draft of an adapted Honduran YSET for Phase 2.

Friday, November 16, 2012: Meeting with Potential Research Partner

After the morning presentations, Karen had the opportunity to meet with Suyapa Padilla and provide an overview of the research partner’s role in supporting secondary prevention work in Los Angeles. Dr. Padilla provided a detailed description of her work on the resiliency project. She plans to discuss the possibility of a playing a role on this project with her director. We will need further discussions to determine whether this is the right partnership.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

The YSET Process

Based on the feedback we have received so far (we have not yet carefully reviewed the group feedback from the last day), we suspect that each of the risk factors on YSET will prove to be useful in Honduras, except perhaps family gang influence. In the Los Angeles context, gang membership stretches back several generations — some gangs date back to five generations. Most of the questions on the YSET may need wording adaptations in the form of synonyms. Our guess is that the "critical life events" risk factor will need to be reworked substantially to include events that are stressful in the lives of Honduran youth. We may include a longer list of options and provide open options in the first pilot test for this factor. All of these decisions, however, should ultimately be based on the pilot test data collected in Honduras during Phase 2.

Our review of the feedback will include a list of proposed risk factors that are not included in the YSET. We heard much concern about physical and sexual abuse of children and infer that this may be a risk factor. Our thought is that these youth will likely be selected for the program; it is after they are participating in the program that abuse should be addressed when it can be done in a supportive context (service delivery) rather than in an intake interview.

We are not yet sure how the "*barras*" fit into the prevention picture, except that we are likely to find that many of youth scoring as eligible on the Honduran YSET are likely to be involved in these groups.

It is our opinion that the secondary prevention program might be more successfully run out of the outreach centers in Tegucigalpa. Karen is interested to learn that the GREAT primary prevention program is being implemented in some places in Honduras. Although these programs target middle school age in the United States, she suspects it would be advantageous to adapt GREAT for Grade 5 or 6 in Honduras (in part because it seems that many have left the schools by Grade 7). The ideal situation would be to implement GREAT in schools — assuming that responsible community police officers are involved — in at least one area where a GRYD secondary prevention program is implemented.

The Family-Centered Model

Unlike the client selection tool (YSET), the family-centered model is more culturally congruent with the dominant culture of service provision in Honduras. There appears to be a profound and intuitive understanding of the role of the multi-generational process. This understanding can and should be easily reinforced with a family systems theory and practice curriculum that can be implemented by practitioners of all levels. The goal would be to implement a training methodology that is geared not to the mental health professional but to those that have face-to-face contact with youth and families in the CARSI-funded programs.

In previous meetings with the president of Honduras, mayors from Choloma and La Ceiba, and USAID mission directors, the concept of moving to a family-based strategy seems congruent and desirable, and makes sense at an intuitive level. The challenge is likely to be in engaging families as collaborative partners rather than the source of the problem. It may be that a family systems conceptual framework (map) can serve as a blueprint for strengthening and or anchoring the coordination of USAID-funded strategies such as education, food, and economic development.

The main challenge may be at the implementation level, more than at a strategic planning level. There is an established culture in which issues of violence are framed around an individual youth, with an unspoken and perhaps unintended dismissal of the role families can play in the secondary prevention process. Some of this can be attributed to established international notions of serving youth as individual entities; some of it may be reinforced by economic conditions in Honduras, which make it more difficult to engage families in the problem-solving process. The issue of working with unstable, fragmented family structures would need to part of an intentional strategy. Training on family engagement would be helpful.

Homicides

If the ultimate goal is to reduce homicides in Honduras, the approach that is most likely to succeed at this goal would layer primary and secondary prevention in the same area along with some elements of an intervention approach. At this time, this would take a somewhat different form than the “violence interruption strategies” that are in practice in Los Angeles and other cities, because the culture of gang intervention would need to be carefully nurtured. The basic principle of engaging those most likely to be perpetrators or victims of violence would need to become an intentional strategy. There appears to be strong and understandable emphasis on engaging the potential victim of violence, less so the potential perpetrator.

It has been suggested that a version of Los Angeles’ Summer Night Lights Program could be a vehicle for disrupting some of the violence when youth are not in school. This would also require a period of development before implementation can take place. A central component of Summer Night Lights requires a cohort of “staff with influence” (intervention workers or interrupters) to engage with the part of the community that is potentially perpetrating the violence.

We were impressed by the capacity of staff who attended the training sessions; however, this program represents a change in practices that will challenge even the most accomplished providers. Ample support and supervision of the demonstration sites will be desirable.

Potential Test Sites for the GRYD Model

Potential test sites include the Centro de Alcanze Alianza Joven in Nueva Suyapa and the Proyecto Villanueva Primary School. Additional sites will be identified by the USAID/Honduras team.

Potential Research Partners

Instituto Vicente Caceres and Universidad Pedagogica have been identified as potential data collecting entities. Suyapa Padilla has been identified as lead researcher and data co-analyst. The process for confirming this partnership will be based on phone and e-mail discussions between Dr. Hennigan from USC and Dr. Padilla. Before a formal partnership can be formed:

- Dr. Padilla needs to get approval from her director
- An agreement, including method of compensation by USAID would need to be drawn up with Universidad Pedagogica and Dr. Hennigan's Lab at USC.

Assuming Dr. Padilla gets the go ahead from her director, The Los Angeles Team and USAID would develop an agreement for the data collection and data analysis as part of the Phase 2 of the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASE 2: (NEXT STEPS)

- Incorporate feedback from service providers, provided during two days of technical assistance about language, critical life events, and process for conducting interviews.

- Establish a formal relationship with a research partner in Honduras that will monitor and assure the following: a) informed consent forms are completed; b) interviews are properly stored and protected; c) no answers are left blank; d) there is a central point of contact to coordinate communication among data collectors, researchers and service providers.

- Arrange to have YSET data entered locally by a research partner or arrange to temporarily transfer the YSETs for processing in the Hennigan research lab at USC (perhaps for the first year of the project).

- Establish multiple data collection sites to be coordinated by USAID/Honduras. These sites would collect 500 YSET interviews.

- Consideration for adding or removing risk factors would be made once USC analyzes the data from the 500 interviews. Of these 500 youths to be evaluated, 100 are to be already gang involved and 400 at the highest level of risk but not yet gang involved.

- Train a selected group of data collectors (Centro de Alcanza youth volunteers along with graduate level social work students) to conduct YSET interviews. It was recommended that these data collectors be paid a TBD stipend to start developing professional capacity in the *centros de alcanze*. This approach would build internal capacity and serve as vocational training.

- Train a select group of service providers to provide family-centered services to youth who are identified as being at the highest level of risk for becoming gang members.

- Provide family systems specific training on structural theory and practice, multi-generational theory and practice, and planned family interventions.

- Expand the role of the *centros de alcanze* to serve as testing sites and service delivery sites for families in which one or more of its members have been identified as at "the highest level of risk for gang joining."

- Implement intentional family engagement strategies in the *centros de alcanze* to build community resistance to violence.

- Establish a training timeline for Phase 2 of Secondary Prevention Development in Honduras, to include additional technical assistance by the same teams from LA and Honduras.

ANNEX. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Esbensen, F. A., and Maxson, C. (Eds). (2012) *Youth Gangs in International Perspective: Results from the Eurogang Program of Research*.

Includes several chapters that involve cross-cultural comparisons including work in Trinidad, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the United States, Israel, Sweden, and Denmark. Consistent use of concepts and shared scales and measures suggests that cross-cultural research has a base of continuity.

Katz, C.M. and Fox, A.M. (2010) Risk and protective factors associated with gang-involved youth in Trinidad and Tobago, *Rev Panam Salud Publica* 27(3) p187-201.

An empirical study of risk and protective factors associated with gang involvement among school-aged youth in Trinidad and Tobago. Tentatively findings show similar rates of gang involvement among public school youth between Trinidad and the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. The study highlights the role of peer influence risk factors and the role of belief in a moral order. This study is also useful because we can review the wording used to measure the risk factors; it is also available in Spanish. It is important that they replicate the common finding (in the United States) that gang-involvement is not so much associated with a few particular risk factors as it is associated with multiple risks and risks across domains.

Katz, C. M. Fox, A., Nuno, L. and Choate, D. Confidential report in progress.

We read an advance copy of Dr. Katz report, but the report is confidential. This report has several relevant aspects for our work. It measures some of the same constructs that we need to measure, it confirms (as do other reports above) that there are some basic similarities between the risks associated with joining gangs in the United States and Central America, and provides some unique aspects.

Kliewer, W. and Murrelle, Lenn (2006) Risk and protective factors for adolescent substance use: findings from a study in selected Central American counties, *Journal of Adolescent Health* 40, p448-455.

This study focuses on substance use rather than gang involvement, but some of the risk factors over lap. The authors gathered a large set of data (n=17,215) from students during 2000 to 2001, finding that risk factors are more strongly related to substance use than protective factors. They also find that the preponderance of multiple risks is more predictive than any particular risk. Belief in God and religiosity are key themes. This study is useful for our work because we can examine the scale and wording used to adapt measures for the gang-related risk factors.

Olate, R., Salas-Wright, C. and Vaughn, M.G. (2012) *Predictors of violence and delinquency among high risk youth and youth gang members in San Salvador, El Salvador*. International Social Work, 55, p383-401.

This work focuses on risk factors associated with violence, including gang membership, in El Salvador. Respondents (174 gang-involved youth, aged 13 to 24) were interviewed by staff members from a “nongovernmental high-risk youth and development organization” that works with active gang members and high-risk youth who hang out

with them. The authors highlight several factors, including low future orientation, low empathy, school difficulty or expulsion, low social support. The authors used the commonly used self-report delinquency scale — similar to the one used on YSET in Los Angeles. A Spanish version is available. The authors cite other related studies from the region that may be useful.

Rodgers, D., Muggah, R., and Stevenson, C. (2009) *Gangs in Central America: Causes, Costs, and Interventions*.

Background reading: Provides a broad overview of gangs in Central America and their "war on gangs."

Vigil, J.D. (2002) *A rainbow of gangs*. Austin: University of Texas Press / (1988) Barrio Gangs Austin: University of Texas Press

In-depth field work with Latino gang in the Los Angeles area over a few decades. Observations with regard to group processes and social identity are likely to be relevant to our work in Central America.

Ward, T. W. (2011). *Gangsters without Borders: An Ethnography of a Salvadoran Street Gang*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press

Tom Ward's description of his long-term "participant" observation with Mara Salvatrucha members in Los Angeles who emigrated from El Salvador. Excellent background for our work.

Winton, Ailsa (2004) Young people's views on how to tackle gang violence in "post conflict" Guatemala, *Environment and Urbanization*, 16 (2) p83-99.

A qualitative study in two communities in Guatemala City focused on youths' opinion of reasons people join gangs (e.g., lack of family support, peer social influence, and need for belonging) and the critical role gang violence plays in the lives of youth.

Wolf, Sonja (2012) The Mara Salvatrucha: The Most Dangerous Street gang in the Americas? *Latin American Politics and Society, DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-2456.2012.00143.x*