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## NICARAGUA YOUTH ASSESSMENT



**FINAL REPORT**

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# NICARAGUA YOUTH ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY AND CRIME PREVENTION ACTIVITIES,  
WITH A FOCUS ON YOUTH AT RISK, ON THE CARIBBEAN COAST  
OF NICARAGUA

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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Any errors in the report are the sole responsibility of the assessment team. Kindly note that sources are very often referenced for critical data and information, although where no source is listed in specific instances, it is understood that the information was received second-hand from one or more reliable key informants. Several sources are not listed to protect their identities, as the information could be considered confidential and/or sensitive. We use “Bilwi” and “Puerto Cabezas” interchangeably in this report to refer to the principal city in the RAAN because both names were commonly encountered in all settings.

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## ACRONYMS

AACID	Andalusian Agency of International Cooperation for Development
AC	Austrian Cooperation
ACRIC	Regional Center Association for Information and Counseling on HIV-AIDS (Asociación Centro Regional de Información y Consejería en VIH/SIDA)
ADMAJC	Association of Caribbean Women, Adolescents and Youth (Asociación de Mujeres Adolescentes y Jóvenes Caribeñas)
AEIJSJA	Association for Comprehensive Education for Healthy Youth (Asociación Educativa Integral para una Juventud Sana)
AJECIM	Christian Force Youth Association of the Moravian Churches (Asociación de Jóvenes Esfuerzo Cristiano de la Iglesia Morava)
AMC	Christian Medical Action (Acción Médica Cristiana)
AYAR	Adolescents and Youth at Risk (10-24 years old)
BICU	Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University
BIE	Bilingual Intercultural Education
CAPS	Center for Psycho-Social Care (Centro de Atención Psicosocial en Ciudad Sandino)
CDC	U.S. Centers for Disease Control
CECNA	German Nicaraguan Training Center (Centro de Capacitación Profesional Nicaragüense Alemán)
CEDEHCA	Center for Human, Civil and Autonomous Rights (Centro de Derechos Humanos, Ciudadanos y Autonomicos)
CEPREV	Violence Prevention Center (Centro de Prevención de la Violencia)
CIDCA	Human Rights Observatory, Atlantic Coast Information Center (Centro de Investigación y Documentación de la Costa Atlántica)
CNA	Code for Children and Adolescents
COPRAJ	Occupational Prevention and Rehabilitation Center for Adolescents and Youth (Centro de Prevención y Rehabilitación de Adolescentes y Jóvenes)
CPCs	Citizen Power Councils
CRC	Career Resource Center
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DARE	Drug Abuse Resistance Education
DEA	U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency
DG	Democracy and Governance (USAID)
EDC	Education Development Center
EG	Economic Growth (USAID)

EIB	Educación Inter-Cultural Bilingüe (or Inter-Cultural Bi-Lingual Education)
ENTERATE	Educating and Eradicating Child Workers Work Activities and Operators (Educando Niños Trabajadores y Erradicando Actividades y Trabajos Explotadores)
EQUIP	Educational Quality Improvement Program
FADCANIC	Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (Fundación para la Autonomía y Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua)
FUP	Fundación Universitaria Panamericana de Bogotá in Colombia
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
GOA	Government of Austria
GREAT	Gang Resistance Education and Training
IEEPP	The Institute for Strategic Studies and Public Policy (Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas)
ILO	International Labor Organization
INATEC	National Technological Institute (Instituto Nacional Tecnológico)
INDES	Institute for Economic and Social Development (Instituto Interamericano para el Desarrollo Económico y Social)
INIDE	The National Development Information Institute (Instituto Nacional de Información de Desarrollo)
INJUDE	Nicaraguan Youth and Sports Institute (Instituto de Juventud y Deportes)
INL	Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
IPCC	Cristóbal Colón Polytechnic Institute (Instituto Politécnico Cristóbal Colón)
IYF	International Youth Foundation
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JP	Job Placement
KNLS	Kenya National Library Services
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Survey
MINED	Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación)
MITRAB	Ministry of Labor (Ministerio del Trabajo)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OEI	Organization of Iberian-American States (Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos)
OHE	Office of Health and Education (USAID)
OTSSPA-CSSJ	Technical Office for Monitoring of the Adolescent Criminal System – Supreme Court of Justice (Oficina Técnica para el Seguimiento del Sistema Penal de Adolescentes - Corte Suprema de Justicia)

PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PCVs	U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
PREVENSIDA	USAID Project for the Prevention of Transmission of HIV/AIDS (Prevención del VIH/SIDA)
RAAN	Northern Atlantic Autonomous Region (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte)
RAAS	Southern Atlantic Autonomous Region (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur)
RAPSA	Network for Psycho-social Care for Adolescent Offenders and High Risk Youth
SBD	Small Business Development
SCD	Sustainable Institutional Capacity Development
SEAR	Regional Autonomous Education Subsystem (Sistema Educativo Autonomico Regional)
SpO	Special Objective
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease (Same as STI – Sexually transmitted infection)
TESIS	Association of Workers for Education, Health and Social Integration (Asociación de Trabajadores para la Educación, Salud e Integración Social)
TOT	Training of Teachers
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Education Fund
URACCAN	University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe de Nicaragua)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDOL	United States Department of Labor

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID/Nicaragua is preparing a new Country Development Cooperative Strategy (CDCS) that will include a Special Objective (SpO) aimed at reducing crime and increasing personal, community and regional security in the Caribbean Coast region. This SpO will support formal and non-formal education and training opportunities for youth at-risk, ages 10-24, and build community cohesiveness to reduce chances of youth becoming involved in crime and illicit activities. Funds for this SpO are expected to come from the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) which focuses on crime and levels of citizen security, and USAID basic education funds, particularly goal 3 of the Education Strategy which concentrates on youth and young adults living in “crisis and conflict environments.”

The context in which young people live and attempt to thrive on the Caribbean Coast is characterized by multiple risk factors that contribute to their acute level of vulnerability. Principal risk factors—elements that greatly complicate their lives and which can lead to illicit activities—are prevalence of drugs and, worse, trafficking of drugs, along with alcohol abuse, disintegration of family and community ties, school abandonment, sexual abuse and risky sex, unemployment and bleak prospects for a job, and the weak presence of state institutions.

In RAAN (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Norte), the segment of the population under age 24 is 66 percent of the total; in RAAS, (Región Autónoma del Atlántico Sur) it is 63 percent. Some 70 percent of RAAN’s population is rural, while 60 percent of RAAS’s population lives in rural areas. Another trait of the Caribbean regions is the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural composition. Various peoples exist in both regions, such as Miskito, Rama, Sumu/Mayangna, Twahkas, Panamakás and Ulwas. The Afro-descendant population, Creoles, and Garifunas comprise the ethnic groups. One continuing trend in the RAAN is the arrival of more and more mestizos in the region, with the indigenous and Afro-descendant becoming even more of the minority as time goes on. This is especially true in the interior (central and western) parts of the RAAS and RAAN. The RAAS is much more in flux ethnically, with the biggest concentration of Afro-descendants, although the RAAN is still predominantly indigenous and Afro-descendant.

The number of violent deaths in RAAS and RAAN is rising sharply. In Bluefields in 2011, according to the Police Chief, there were 71 violent deaths or homicides, and in the first 11 weeks of 2012 there had been 18 more. Rates of incest, sexual abuse and rape of girls ages 6-16 are alarmingly high, with many cases not even reported. Criminal offenders are rarely brought to justice. In the RAAN, the National Police have registered 20 high-risk youth groups with a total of 313 male members from 12 to 18 years of age. According to the National Police, as well as others interviewed, the prostitution of adolescents, beginning at 14 years of age, is growing in the RAAS through the occurrence of parties and other “social events” organized by drug traffickers.<sup>1</sup>

The growing disintegration of family and community ties was noted by many people interviewed as a key factor in the worsening crisis and youths’ feelings of insecurity. The exposure of adolescents to STDs, including HIV, is also linked to violence and lack of values and direction from the family. Few adolescent

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<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from Police Chief in Bluefields, National Police in the RAAN and other interviewees.

men and women access health services because of shame or fear of reprimand, especially in relation to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS<sup>2</sup>. The rate of STDs in the RAAS is 164 per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest among all regions of Nicaragua. The national average is 43.9 per 100,000 people.<sup>3</sup> All indicators of education in the Caribbean region are poor; one of the most shocking indicators is that only two out of every ten young people in the corresponding age group are enrolled in secondary school, versus the national average of seven out of ten young people.

The team observed, and many interviewees stated, that there are insufficient spaces for sports and recreation, especially in the RAAS. There is no addiction rehabilitation center in the region to provide systematic and intensive care. Drugs are present in virtually the entire Caribbean region and are the major catalyst for social problems. Obtaining lethal weapons is relatively easy. Violence is spreading and is increasingly legitimated through criminal activities mainly connected to drugs. Inter-ethnic tensions, particularly in the RAAN, have percolated to the extent that several civic leaders told a team member that “it is a time bomb, waiting to explode.” Conflicts over property are the prime cause of daily conflicts and legal cases, and these are woven into tensions between ethnic groups which have different philosophies of land tenure and ownership: especially the perception of land as communal versus personal. Based on the risk factors listed above, and especially the prevalence of drugs and violence, the consulting team considers essentially all youth ages 10-24 in the RAAS and RAAN “at risk.”

The extensive document review, more than 100 interviews with key informants, focus group sessions with 76 youth at-risk, and nine days of field observation in the Caribbean region were critical in the team’s formulation of the proposed integrated strategy for these young people.

The recommended goal of this SpO is for “adolescents and youth at-risk (10-24 years old) in Nicaragua’s Caribbean coastal region to live in strengthened and secure communities and take advantage of more ample opportunities in education, vocational training, life skills, civic engagement, sports and recreation, and positive social inter-action.” Its three components are to:

1. Strengthen vulnerable communities so that youth and young adults feel safe and have a heightened sense of security, connectedness to their families, and feel positive about their futures.
2. Improve direct services to adolescents and youth at risk (AYAR), involving them as much as possible in the design, management and implementation of these services and opportunities.
3. Raise awareness, influence public opinion, and spur community action on a wide range of topics of concern to youth at-risk.

Cross-cutting themes in this strategy are to **strengthen knowledge management** related to AYAR, **be proactive regarding gender dynamics and equity** and **build alliances** and vibrant ties with universities, the private sector, media, faith-based organizations and others.

Based on the team’s field experiences and observations, seven inter-related programmatic areas evolve from the three strategic components, the mission statement, and the cross-cutting themes. They are to:

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<sup>2</sup> PrevenSida Project statistics, ENDESA, 2006 and information from interviewees

<sup>3</sup> UNDP, 2011. Informe Nacional sobre Desarrollo Humano, page 93

1. **Strengthen neighborhoods and communities** through local engagement, support, planning, increased community security measures, and other critical support. In particular, the initiative should **promote sports** as an incentive, a platform for dialogue and an attractive component of holistic, integrated, multi-faceted programs for girls and boys. Sports-related activities such as preparing fields for play, repairing and building minimal infrastructure, providing equipment and materials, strengthening leagues and organization will be integrated with, for example, vocational orientation, environmental cleanups, and mentoring programs for AYAR.
2. **Strengthen capacity of organizations which provide direct services to youth**, both in and out of school, especially vocational and life skills training, and by creating practical, tangible opportunities for AYAR through internships, apprenticeships, etc.
3. **Improve conflict management among community and youth leaders** through training of teachers, youth, parents and NGOs. For instance, the team recommends that BICU's Center for Mediation receive technical assistance for its volunteer lawyers and staff to improve upon their mediation techniques and skills, as well as beginning to impart these skills to school teachers.
4. **Strengthen BICU's and URACCAN's roles in knowledge management** by training teachers and trainers, carrying out security studies, monitoring longitudinal progress of initiatives, conducting workshops, assisting with publications, and strengthening their alliances with communities, the National Police, NGOs, the private sector and other groups.
5. **Prevent increased drug use and violence by multiplying rehabilitation and attention centers for drug addicts, victims of rape and sexual abuse, and other types of violence.** Much of this work will be conducted in collaboration with advocacy and media campaigns mentioned in the next point. The consultant team recommends increasing and extending geographically in RAAN and RAAS the very popular, much appreciated and effective DARE, GREAT and Second Step programs for youth in schools, made possible by the Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL). We also recommend assisting the Movimiento Nidia White Center in Bilwi and COPRAJ in Bluefields to benefit from a trained professional in social and psycho-social attention to/for AYAR.
6. **Promote positive youth development through campaigns** involving: enhanced radio programming for and with youth at-risk, community events and engagement with key public figures (e.g., well-known sports figures, political leaders). These activities will amplify youth voices, promote community values, echo anti-drug and anti-violence messages, highlight success stories, denounce crime, sexual abuse and drug use, and focus on promising practices in youth-led development.
7. **Increase school relevance through improved teaching and curricular offerings**, especially at the late primary (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years) and early secondary school levels (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of secondary education), through vocational training, enhanced reading proficiency, life skills, and other self-improvement approaches, as well as establishing and fortifying education/university-private sector linkages.
8. **Lastly, the team recommends the creation and crisp, effective functioning of a U.S. Embassy Youth Affairs Advisory Committee** to, among other tasks, exchange information

and coordinate programming options among various U.S.G. entities part of whose mandate and actual or potential funding is directed to youth at risk.

The team recommends that program implementation focus on ten neighborhoods in Bluefields, two in Pearl Lagoon and five in Bilwi and its environs. This is based on need, security concerns, potential for impact on AYAR and the communities in which they live, and cost-effectiveness. Concentrating attention and scarce resources in relatively few sites holds most promise in reducing crime and violence, increasing citizen security and making more significant and lasting results for children and youth at risk.

## SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

### a. Purpose

The purpose of this consultancy is to collect information on organizations and activities targeting at-risk youth and/or aiming to improve citizen security and contain the expansion of crime in the Caribbean Coast region of Nicaragua, and to provide recommendations of programming options to USAID/Nicaragua to inform the design of a Special Objective (SpO) for youth at risk.

### b. Methodology

The principal methods of collecting information were:

- A. Document review
- B. Interviews (based on 10 interview guides developed by the team) of 103 people, selected in accordance with a first classification: key informants on the issues of violence and citizen security; boards of directors of NGOs that work in the region; youth leaders and religious leaders residing in the region; directors and personnel from the universities on the Caribbean Coast; authorities from the National Police at the central and regional levels; officials from the regional government, the Public Ministry, the Ministry of Education, the National Technological Institute (INATEC); representatives from the private sector; and journalists.  
  
In addition, officials from the U.S. Embassy, Peace Corps and USAID were interviewed, along with personnel from USAID projects that work in the Caribbean region.
- C. Focus group discussions with 14 groups of at-risk youth totaling 76 youth: 49 boys and 27 girls. Additionally, 6 parents (all women) were interviewed in two groups. Thus, a total of 82 people were interviewed in 16 focus groups.

The analysis of documents included material provided by USAID, many additional documents obtained by team members, and some provided by informants identified by the team of consultants.

The team worked actively to gather national and regional studies, statistics and other data directly relevant to its tasks. The team had the opportunity to establish several contacts with national and regional-level National Police to obtain useful information on crime and citizen security. Furthermore, intensive work was undertaken to obtain interviews with people suggested by the Mission and others who were particularly recommended by the interviewees, all in a short period of time.

The interviews were conducted in Managua and the two Caribbean regions: RAAS and RAAN. The team interviewed people in Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, Kukra Hill, El Rama and Bilwi. Some of the interviews were conducted by two members of the team, but most were conducted individually. The information obtained from the interviews was circulated among the team to enable each member to understand the findings in every interview, and team members provided input to direct subsequent interviews.

The interview guides made it possible to organize the information according to the major requirements and sections established in the Scope of Work and ratified in the initial meeting with the USAID Mission. With these elements, the team proceeded to analyze the information and to develop the proposal on

priorities, areas of action and process indicators expected from the implementation of a USAID program for at-risk youth living on the Caribbean Coast.

Several other principles of the team's methodology should be mentioned. The report was written with the idea of providing USAID with pertinent, practical, "hands-on" information related to what is working well and what programming and aspects have shortcomings, making viable and sustainable recommendations to the Mission. For multiple reasons, including limited funding for programming, the team paid special attention to the analysis of positive alliances and public-private partnerships which can contribute to at-risk youth development in the RAAS and RAAN. To the extent possible, good, ongoing programs have been identified, and the primary recommendations contained in this report are based on the results obtained. In summary, the JBS/Aguirre team is presenting USAID with viable, practical options and recommendations for programming.

### **Constraints**

The primary constraint was a shortage of time to sufficiently review all documents recommended, meet with all organizations and persons we should have, conduct a most robust analysis, and generally to carry out the work in a full manner. This would have taken six to eight weeks, yet the timeframe was three weeks and two days.

## SECTION 2: CONTEXT AND STATISTICS

This section offers a succinct view of the major elements of the context of the Caribbean region, especially regarding those that constitute risk factors for youth, the main target group of this report. A portion of these contextual elements is from secondary information obtained from documentary analysis and from available statistical data. The other portion reflects the opinions of different people interviewed, especially young people on the Caribbean coast, who offered information and their perceptions and opinions regarding the environment that surrounds the youth of the Caribbean Coast.

The Caribbean regions of Nicaragua have the highest proportion of young population compared to the rest of the country. In the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN), the population under 24 years of age constitutes 66 percent of the total population; and in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS), it is 63 percent. Nationally, this segment comprises 55 percent of the overall population (see Table No. 1 in Annex 2). This is significant, because it means that the Caribbean regions, like Nicaragua and most of Latin America and the Caribbean, are undergoing a phase of demographic transition, known as the “youth bulge.”<sup>4</sup> As a result of this shift in the composition of Latin American populations, it is essential that young people have increased educational, health, recreational and work opportunities. It is an, albeit time-constrained, opportunity if the right decisions and investments are made; but also a risk, as a number of societal ills will result if wrong choices are made, potentially causing social unrest and heightened citizen insecurity.

Another important element is the dispersion of the population. Thirteen percent of the total population of the country lives in this extensive geographic region (RAAS and RAAN) which encompasses approximately half of the national territory. While nationally 57 percent lives in urban areas and 43 percent in rural areas, 70 percent of the population of the RAAN and 60 percent of the population of the RAAS lives in rural areas.<sup>5</sup>

Another characteristic that defines the population of the Caribbean regions is its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multicultural composition. Various peoples coexist in both regions, such as Miskito, Rama, Sumu/Mayangna, Twahkas, Panamakas and Ulwas.<sup>6</sup> The ethnic communities are comprised of the Afro-descendant population, Creoles, and Garífunas. There is a longstanding trend of Pacific-based mestizos moving east into the Caribbean coastal areas, a dynamic which is much more intensified in the south than the north.

In the opinion of many of the people interviewed, the ethnic differences and migrations create division, and discrimination among the population is visible. There are indications of problems with ethnic identity as well as discrimination among municipal seats and local communities, as these groups vie for land, civic leadership, financial and educational gain, and other opportunities. Prosecutors, judges and magistrates,

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<sup>4</sup> The youth bulge is the working age population that will continue to grow more quickly than the dependent population that is of school-age or retirement age. In this situation there is a higher proportion of the population at ages when they are saving, investing, working and producing, while an increasingly smaller proportion require investments in education and health care.

<sup>5</sup>The National Development Information Institute (INIDE), Anuario Estadístico, 2008.

<sup>6</sup>United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2005, Informe de Desarrollo Humano Las Regiones Autónomas de Costa Caribe, Nicaragua asume su diversidad, page 58.

many of whom are originally from or were educated in other regions of the country, reportedly do not demonstrate a willingness to understand the idiosyncrasies and ethnic conflicts of these populations.

In communities throughout the coastal region, tensions are often caused by the advancement of the agricultural frontier into communal lands governed by indigenous groups. Territorial disputes are extremely common as attempts are made to privatize communal areas into cultivated fields. Tensions also result from the clear-cutting of forests and struggles for control of the felled trees and sale of timber, as well as cattle rustling. All of this creates an environment of conflict between newcomers and local populations, the latter of which have historically lived in relative harmony with the environment, without significant conflicts or environmental degradation. There are new signs of conflict for many areas such as the National Bosawás Reserve, for example, without an improvement in the capacity of the State to resolve them.

Poverty affects the majority of people living in the RAAS and RAAN. According to figures from the 2009 Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS), the poverty rate is at least ten percentage points higher than the national level. Poverty affects 68.8 percent of the population in the rural Atlantic regions (see Table No. 1 in Annex 2). In 2009, the poverty rate was 42.5 percent in the country, overall.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> World Bank, 2011. *An Update on Poverty and Inequality in Nicaragua: 9 Stylized Facts (2005-2009)*. [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/05/29/000427087\\_20120529110223/Rendered/PDF/691770ESW0P1220Nicaragua020090Final.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/05/29/000427087_20120529110223/Rendered/PDF/691770ESW0P1220Nicaragua020090Final.pdf)

## RISK FACTORS

The context in which local populations, and especially youth, live and gain their livelihoods is characterized by multiple risk factors that contribute to their acute levels of vulnerability.

### ***Drug Trafficking and Consumption***

Drug trafficking, which has transformed Central America into part of the drug corridor to North America, also directly affects the two Caribbean Coast regions along the 700 kilometers of coastline. The 560 metric tons of cocaine shipped through the region are equivalent to 14 grams for each of the 40 million people in Central America—an amount that carries a street value in the United States of about US\$2,300 per capita.<sup>8</sup> Given such figures, the resources of traffickers are massive. The value added to cocaine as it moves through the region is roughly 20 times Panama’s and Guatemala’s 2007 defense budgets of US\$364 million. It also dwarfs (by more than 100 times) the relatively small US\$65 million allocated by the United States under the Mérida Initiative to assist interdiction efforts by Central American nations.<sup>9</sup>

In her 2011 report, the First Commissioner of the National Police, Aminta Granera, reported that there are 16 domestic groups coordinating with drug traffickers, acting as logistical support, providing security services and supporting the transport of drugs, at the national level. The international organizations pay the local groups with drugs; and the latter then introduce these drugs onto the local market. The three largest drug markets are Managua, Bluefields and Rivas, which have been producing weekly earnings of some eight million dollars, for the past two years. Drug trafficking is also linked to the high number of deaths related to property conflicts and land control in the Caribbean region.

According to the previously cited World Bank report, there are 268 gangs or criminal groups in Nicaragua, comprised of 4,500 people<sup>10</sup> (see Table No. 3 in Annex 2). Virtually all of the people interviewed believe that drug consumption is directly affecting the population of the Caribbean region. They indicate that this is affecting community, family and individual relationships among community members, and youth in particular. They state that drug trafficking is the major catalyst of social problems, incentivizing individual and community complicity in order to engage people in illegal activity. Among young people, there is a strong tendency to combine the consumption of illegal drugs, especially marijuana, crack and cocaine, with the consumption of alcohol,<sup>11</sup> thereby multiplying the negative effects for youth and their health as they react to peer pressure and attempt to socialize.

<sup>8</sup> This sum is equivalent to approximately double the per capita GDP of Nicaragua, estimated at US\$1,132. World Bank. (2010). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, 2011 *Crime and Violence in Central America: A Development Challenge*, page 19.

<sup>10</sup> Though this report does not explore deeply the issue of “gangs”, the consultant team finds it necessary to cite sources when using this term. Authors of reports by USAID as well as other experts agree that there is no commonly used definition, either globally or in Central America in particular. However, according to researchers cited by the National Gang Center ([www.nationalgangcenter.gov](http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov)), to qualify as a “gang”, five criteria are generally met: a group with three or more members, most often aged 12-24; members share an identity, typically linked to a name, and often other symbols; members view themselves as a gang, and they are recognized by others as a gang; the group has some permanence and a degree of organization; the group is involved in an elevated level of criminal activity. This is the definition of “gang” used in the present report.

<sup>11</sup> According to one of our interviewees, the RAAS is now the area with the highest beer sales in the country.

### **Violence associated with Drug Trafficking**

The corridor in the RAAS established for drug traffic has led four large groups to struggle for the Bluefields market, the major city of the region. The number of violent deaths has been on the rise:

**Table 1: Number of Homicides in the RAAS by Year<sup>12</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Homicides</b>
<b>2006</b>	15
<b>2007</b>	30
<b>2008</b>	24
<b>2009</b>	28
<b>2010</b>	40

Most of these homicides have been in Bluefields municipality, with 33 violent deaths in 2010, and 44 in 2011. With a total population of 45,500 in the municipality, that translates into a rate of 73 and 97 homicides per 100,000 people, respectively, for the past two years. Nearby Pearl Lagoon is not far behind with six homicides in 2011, and with a population of just 10,700, this translates into 56 homicides per 100,000 people.<sup>13</sup> Seventy percent of Bluefields deaths were young people (18 to 25 years of age) linked to drug dealers and drug trafficking. The involvement of local populations in trafficking is explained by the sparse presence of public institutions and the fear of the population of being left unprotected and becoming a target for punishment by the drug traffickers if they do not assist them.<sup>14</sup>

According to a respected journalist the team interviewed, the Police Chief of RAAS reported on March 21 at a press conference at the Bluefields police station that so far in 2012 there had been 17-18 violent deaths in Bluefields. Only seven alleged murderers have been accused before a judge or prosecutor, and the other 10-11 are free, according to the Police Chief. It is commonly accepted that despite increasing assassinations, impunity is also increasing, and those who have committed murders are often not punished. The Police Chief revealed that 71 violent deaths actually occurred in Bluefields in 2011 (higher than the 44 indicated by IEEPP, noted above), of which 42 went to the justice system, while 29 cases

<sup>12</sup> Source: IEEPP. (2011). *Delitos y drogas en Bluefields*.

<sup>13</sup> Kukra Hill has not had a murder in over a year, and El Rama data (which was partial) revealed a homicide rate of approximately 15 per 100,000 inhabitants for the first half of 2011 – with the police estimating that the rate for the whole of 2011 was roughly constant.

<sup>14</sup> The Institute for Strategic Studies and Public Policy (IEEPP) 2011, *Delitos y Drogas en Bluefields*; and also conversation with one of the authors of the report, Roberto Orozco on March 16, 2012 (specifically, the statistic of 44 homicides for Bluefields for 2011 was given verbally).

remain outstanding. This would translate into a homicide rate of 156 per 100,000 people in the Bluefields municipality.

In the Caribbean region, the increase in drug trafficking activity has brought with it the formation of groups of highly at-risk youth who commit crimes against their neighbors and their neighborhoods, often under the effects of drugs. Furthermore, fights are reported between youth who have dropped out of school and are not working. In Bluefields, the National Police reported that there are 24 groups; of these only 12 receive social or psychological attention. The groups of highly at-risk youth are comprised of young people, generally males, from 11 to 17 years of age who often commit armed robbery, carry homemade weapons, and are occasionally arrested for aggravated assault with knives when they fight over territory and seek revenge after being attacked. In the RAAN, the National Police have registered 20 groups of youth highly at risk with a total of 313 male members from 12 to 18 years of age; of these, 166 are in school: primary, secondary and university.

The Adolescent Court in the RAAS has heard 15 cases so far in 2012, and in 2011 it heard 18 cases with final verdict and 169 cases total. All of these were cases of young men from 15 to 18 years of age.

Women seldom participate in these groups directly, but they are vulnerable because they live in the community and are often girlfriends or friends of the youth involved. Their partners are generally not monogamous and this increases their risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV. Young women who are involved with the groups are usually between 15 and 25 years of age.

According to the team's interview with the above-mentioned journalist, the Chief of the National Police for RAAS shared some statistics on crimes against girls and women at the March 21<sup>st</sup> press conference in Bluefields. The National Police stated there were more than 1,095 reported rapes of girls and women ages six and above last year in RAAS. Some 855 were presented to the police for formal charges, and 240 more to the Comisaría de la Mujer. Most of these were the result of violence within families. In the municipality of Tortuguero, there were an estimated 65 rapes of girls ages 6-16 in 2011 where victims did not report the crimes to the police because of possible reprisals. There were also 10 cases of incest which resulted in the birth of a child. Of the 65 rapes, no one is in jail; it is the same with the 10 known incest cases. There were 46 reported cases of girls raped in the La Cruz de Rio Grande community last year. No one is in jail or being processed by the judicial system.

There has been an increase in the number of youth seeking quick and easy money. Traffickers encourage them to protect internal drug routes, and women are frequently in charge of the points of sale. It is clear that the drug traffickers have learned to use youth to recruit other youth (a peer/youth-to-youth methodology). In particular, they recruit those who can cause fear in the neighborhood, or those who are most attractive to young women. The women are less visible in this panorama although they, in fact, are the ones responsible for moving drugs from one neighborhood to another, and often for selling them in the schools. The percentage of women charged with crimes, according to the Regional Prosecutors' Office, is approximately 10 percent, and they are mainly between the ages of 15 and 17 and are no longer in school.

In the RAAS, prostitution of adolescents, beginning at 14 years of age, is growing through parties organized by the drug traffickers. According to reports, daily payment to these young girls ranges from \$100 to \$500 or in-kind payment of drugs. Some 70 adolescent women have been identified as

responsible for direct sales of drugs in the bathrooms of discotheques in Bluefields. Frequently, the discotheques, which serve as meeting places for youth, become the location of fights, uncontrolled rage on the part of the involved youth, and destruction of property. The prevalence of drugs and prostitution may also be related to high rates of teenage sexual activity and pregnancy. One indicator of the high rate of sexual activity of young women without the use of contraceptives is that, in the small neighborhood of Pointe-en, there are some 13 adolescents who are already young single mothers. Nicaragua has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Central America with 111 births for every 100,000 young women, and the rate of teenage pregnancy is even higher on the Caribbean Coast<sup>15</sup>. Further exacerbating the situation, abortion is illegal in Nicaragua, and the ban applies even in situations where continued pregnancy risks the life or health of the woman, and where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest<sup>16</sup>.

In communities of the RAAN, retail drug trafficking is based on payment in kind by the traffickers, and this has permeated local communities. Talamana is an ancient practice of the Miskito people (RAAN) which means that if crimes such as rape and abduction are committed, the family of the victim should be given some payment as restitution.<sup>17</sup> Talamana is being utilized by the drug traffickers for the purchase and sale of girls and adolescents.

### ***Deterioration of Social Fabric Family and Community***

The growing disintegration of family and community ties is noted by the people interviewed as one of the factors that worsen the crisis and insecurity perceived in the Caribbean regions. Migration, increasingly due to the lack of jobs in the region, fosters this situation, as many parents, including mothers, are forced to seek work outside the region, leaving their children in the care of relatives or neighbors. This is compounded by eventual divorce or abandonment, primarily because fathers leave the region to work and eventually take new wives and have more children. Interviews in two depressed neighborhoods of Bluefields revealed estimates that around one in ten families is “traditional,” with both father and mother present. The rest consist mostly of single mothers and their children, but also there were cases of grandparents raising their grandchildren, and even adolescents and late-teenagers living together unsupervised. In that latter situation, it is not uncommon to see teenagers raising younger siblings while raising their own children as well.

One aspect that was mentioned by many of those interviewed was the family violence that affects women, girls, boys, adolescents and youth. Girls and young women make up the vast majority of victims of sexual and domestic abuse. They often become mothers while in their early teens, without any profession, and in many cases as a result of rape. The young mothers often depend on their partners, if the male stays and supports her. The generally low level of schooling of adolescent girls causes greater subjugation, and *machismo* becomes more acute. Sexual norms are such that a girl is considered ‘eligible’ once she reaches puberty, and it is not uncommon, especially among out-of-school girl youth, for them fall prey to sexual attacks as young as 11 or 12 years old.

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<sup>15</sup> World Bank. (2008). *Adolescent fertility rate*. <http://data.worldbank.org>

<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International. (2009). *Nicaragua: Amnesty International Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review*

<sup>17</sup> UNDP, 2011. *Informe Nacional sobre Desarrollo Humano*, page 112

The exposure of adolescents to STDs such as HIV is also linked to violence and the lack of direction and oversight from the family. Few adolescent men and women use public health services because of shame or fear of reprimand. The rate of STDs in the RAAS is 164 per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest in Nicaragua.<sup>18</sup> The rate of HIV in the RAAN is 21 per 100,000 inhabitants, the fourth highest in the country, after Chinandega and Managua. HIV prevalence rates have increased considerably in the RAAS and RAAN in recent years.<sup>19</sup>

### **School Abandonment**

School abandonment<sup>20</sup> is a key risk factor for youth, aggravated by the situations of violence and family disintegration described above. In both coastal regions, only two of every ten youth who are the appropriate age attend the first cycle of secondary school<sup>21</sup>; and for the second cycle, only one of every ten youth attends school. These are the lowest rates in the country.<sup>22</sup> In Managua and Carazo, which have the highest rates of enrollment in Nicaragua, five out of ten youth (50%) attend the first cycle and 26 percent attend the second cycle of secondary school.

Not all children, adolescents and youth who begin school remain there. The Caribbean regions have the highest school drop-out rate in the entire country and, particularly, the RAAS is the highest in the nation. Seventeen percent of those who begin primary school and more than 20 percent of those who begin the first cycle of secondary school leave school. In the RAAN, the figures are 14.9 percent in primary and 17.5 percent in the first cycle of secondary.<sup>23</sup> Dropping out of school can be related to a variety of factors including domestic violence and the inability of the family to meet the costs associated with education, such as transportation, clothing, and school supplies.<sup>24</sup> Another element mentioned by some of the youth interviewed is that the drop-out rate becomes worse with the absence of one or both parents due to migration.

These drop-out rates in both Caribbean regions explains why “only 43 and 42 percent of youth from 15 to 19 years of age would have finished primary school in 2010, while the national average is 65 percent.”<sup>25</sup> The same source reports that only 44 percent of the population from 15 to 24 years of age in the RAAN and 45 percent of that population in the RAAS have at least a fourth grade education.

The few job opportunities and low levels of schooling, together with the high school drop-out rates, by themselves place the large majority of the youth population of the region in a situation of high vulnerability and risk.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP, 2011. *Informe Nacional sobre Desarrollo Humano*, page 93

<sup>19</sup> World Bank, 2006. *Reducing HIV/AIDS Vulnerability in Central America: Nicaragua: HIV/AIDS Situation and Response to the Epidemic*, page 2

<sup>20</sup> In this context, this includes those who have never been to school.

<sup>21</sup> From first to third year of secondary school, or seventh to ninth grades. The second cycle encompasses fourth and fifth year of secondary school or 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Education (MINED), 2011, *Plan Estratégico de Educación 2011-2015*.

<sup>23</sup> Idem.

<sup>24</sup> MINED, *Plan Estratégico de Educación*.

<sup>25</sup> Asensio, C. (2011) “*Situación y Perspectivas en Nicaragua para Universalizar una Educación Primaria de Calidad*” *Avances y Retos para cumplir con el Objetivo de Desarrollo del Milenio No.2*.” Eduquemos- UNICEF, Managua, Nicaragua.

### Weak Presence of State Institutions

Frequently, those who are arrested on drug charges are quickly freed from jail by lawyers hired by traffickers, resulting in an increasing perception of impunity. It is noted that this does not happen when they are captured by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) as they are then transferred to Managua. Also, the hiring of assassins is increasing, although none has been captured thus far; therefore there is little information about their recruitment and operations. It is known that many appear to be peasants who live in the mountainous areas of the interior and it is assumed that they are mestizos.

In the communities, the state is perceived as weak even though there are officials of the Naval Forces, teachers, nurses and National Police. Criminal legislation of the country also exists, although people do not perceive it in practice. “References are made to the law as if it existed and was properly enforced, but as long as it doesn’t affect them, it doesn’t exist for them,” stated one of our interviewees.

The penitentiary system of the RAAS is overcrowded, and incarcerated youth do not have opportunities to learn an occupation or trade. There is no juvenile penitentiary system in the RAAN. In one case, eleven young people sentenced to four years share one small jail cell, and youth are kept in jail alongside adult criminals with no access to any rehabilitation activity. No addiction rehabilitation center has been established in the RAAN to provide even periodic, let alone full-time, care. The very few “facilities” which do exist are managed by small civil society organizations, are only open during the day or for a few hours, and do not have the capacity to provide follow-up assistance.

There are insufficient spaces for sports or recreation in the RAAS. There is only one park in the entire city of Bluefields and, although there are four basketball courts, only two are in suitable condition, the others lack electricity, so they cannot be used at night.

The Public Ministry in the RAAS only has a presence in Bluefields and Corn Island. Due to the distance, budget and the limited personnel, government institutions offer little coverage. There are currently 290 prosecutors in the Public Ministry, and it is estimated that there should be at least 800 to cover the national territory and deal with the enormous number of files. It would be ideal for a prosecutor to handle 12 cases per month, but currently he or she handles 50 cases.<sup>26</sup> One of the interviewees stated:

*“Justice is not accessible or prompt, which sends a message that there is impunity; you can commit a crime and nothing happens. There are places that are very far away and the victims have to come in to Bluefields. That travel takes time and they have to transport their witnesses. Therefore, people do not want to come in, the cost is high and it takes a long time. Under those conditions, people don’t report crimes. So access to justice is difficult. In those places, a person who is a victim has two paths: either put up with it or take justice into their own hands. The State is not able to look for evidence, so rapes are not reported. A rape victim, after the rape, must spend money to get justice.”<sup>27</sup>*

The lack of prosecutors is illustrated well in Pearl Lagoon. With no prosecutor locally, cases have to be reported to Bluefields which, as noted, is already overloaded. According to the local police chief in Pearl Lagoon, the Bluefields prosecutor will only look into a case of (a) homicide, (b) assault/rape or (c)

<sup>26</sup>RAAS Regional Prosecutors’ Office.

<sup>27</sup> The names of many interviewees are being kept confidential due to the sensitive nature of the subjects discussed.

property theft of more than 15,000 cordobas (~\$650). Possession of drugs, common property theft, and much more go unreported as there is certainty there would be no follow-up by the police. With Pearl Lagoon relatively close to Bluefields (50 minute boat ride), one can easily imagine how little rule of law actually exists outside these near-urban areas.

## **SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FEATURES OF THE CONTEXT OF THE CARIBBEAN REGION**

- Drugs are present in virtually the entire Caribbean coastal region and are the major catalyst for social problems.
- The major risks faced by youth are: (1) drugs and alcohol; (2) violence, crime,<sup>28</sup> delinquency as well as sexual abuse, early pregnancy and the spread of STDs; (3) family and community disintegration; (4) school abandonment along with a lack of educational and employment opportunities for youth, and (5) the weak presence of state institutions.
- One can consider virtually all the youth in the RAAS and the RAAN “at risk”: they see dealing and use of drugs at a high frequency, from once daily to at least once a week; violence surrounds them and affects them at home, in school and in the community. A gender analysis of risk authored by the team finds that adolescent girls and young women in the urban areas suffer under commercial sexual exploitation and the transportation and sale of drugs; adolescent girls and young women in the rural areas are subjected to sexual abuse accompanied by impunity and the deterioration of traditional practices for social protection due to the acceptance of payment to compensate for sexual crimes against children, adolescents and youth.
- Violence is spreading through criminal activities mainly connected to drugs, inter-ethnic tensions, particularly in the RAAN, and poor ability to manage and resolve social conflicts.
- In the RAAS and RAAN, youth at risk are clustered in groups that often commit crimes of theft and assault and are seen fighting amongst each other, but which have not yet become “gangs.”

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<sup>28</sup>Conflicts over property are the prime cause of every day tension, conflicts and cases being brought – and these are woven into tensions between ethnic groups which have a different understanding of property rights.

## SECTION 3: PROGRAMMATIC MODELS

### PAST AND CURRENT PROJECTS/EXPERIENCES

This section presents a description of the social and organizational fabric encountered in the Caribbean regions – and to some measure in Managua – after having identified programs, core work areas and activities aimed at serving adolescents and youth in situations of risk. This synthesis is a product of the data obtained through the interviews conducted with representatives and individuals that provided information about the context and scope of their activities. The interviews covered a broad spectrum of representatives from the following organizations:

**Table 2: Interviews Conducted with Persons from these Organizations**

Type of organization	Stakeholder/Org name	Where they work	What they do
NGO's (Non-governmental Organizations)	Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (FADCANIC)	RAAN and RAAS	Agroforestry and sustainable development, promoting education and autonomy; a major implementer of development projects with particular focus on environmental, agricultural, education and youth development programs
	Center for Human, Civil and Autonomous Rights (CEDEHCA)	RAAS	Promoting and defending human rights of indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and mestizos in the Caribbean regions; Youth empowerment through the Youth Movement Establishing New Horizons
	Christian Medical Action (AMC – Acción Médica Cristiana)	RAAS, RAAN, Managua and Matagalpa	Promoting community development through a focus on health, HIV/AIDS, prevention of violence, gender equality, food security and the environment
	Youth Voice Program-United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	RAAS, RAAN, Managua, Estelí, Matagalpa	Training program for youth leaders run by World Youth Alliance; on the Caribbean Coast promoting youth empowerment through the development of Life Skills and demand for regional youth policies on health and education; supporting Municipal Youth Houses in coordination with Municipal Governments. Providing population data for policies/programs to reduce poverty, improve community/maternal health, increase gender equity (UNFPA in general)
	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	RAAS (Nicaragua in general)	Assisting countries and helping them focus on democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention & recovery, the environment, HIV/AIDS
	Regional Center Association for Information and Counseling on HIV/AIDS (ACRIC)	RAAS (Bluefields)	Providing info and counseling on HIV/AIDS

Nidia White Movement (Asociación de Movimiento de Mujeres Nidia White)	RAAN	Promoting women's rights, reducing gender-based violence, providing attention to victims of family violence and sexual abuse; running the only shelter for victims in the region
Association for Comprehensive Education for Healthy Youth (AEIJS)	RAAN (Bilwi)	Promoting healthy choices and continued education for young people; preventing violence, and organizing sports, camps, cultural and communication activities among youth and with their families.
Caribbean Voices	RAAN, RAAS and Managua	Women's organization and movement; an initiative to articulate exchanges, agendas and proposals to strengthen women's autonomy
Association of Workers for Education, Health and Social Integration (TESIS)	RAAN, Managua	Advocating for equal opportunities for youth-at-risk and those affected by sexual exploitation, drugs and HIV/AIDS; offering information, formal education and vocational courses to youth and families; promoting Girl Power program with vocational workshops; sustainable development
Marijn Foundation (Dutch organization)	RAAN	Implementing education and vocational services for children through sponsorship; offering parents' orientation and psychological support.
Violence Prevention Center (CEPREV)	Managua	Educating through workshops, manuals etc. about violence prevention, reducing domestic violence and integration of youth gangs into society. (Recognized methodology and approach against violence)
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Managua	Providing emergency preparedness/relief and long-term development assistance, implementing projects in natural resource management, health, agriculture, microfinance, emergency response and risk management, and human rights and civil society.
Fundación Leon 2000	Managua	Financial services, providing development opportunities
Asociación Nicaragüense de Instituciones de Microfinanzas (ASOMIF)	Managua	Promoting entrepreneurship through microfinance services, business and social development
Moravian, Anglican and the Catholic Vicariate of Bluefields	RAAS and RAAN	Beyond their spiritual and religious roles, these organizations provide emergency and long term developmental services: education/schools, youth training, prevention of violence and much more – all have influential voice on social matters.

Churches	Christian Force Youth Association of the Moravian Churches (AJECIM)	RAAS	
Youth Organization	Youth Movement Establishing New Horizons (JENH-CEDEHCA)	RAAS	Its agenda includes education against discrimination, prevention of violence, advocacy campaigns and lobby with authorities with active youth participation.
	Association of Young Struggling Women	RAAS	A young women's initiative promoting public awareness on their rights as well as providing training.
	The Municipal Adolescent and Youth Center (administered by the municipal government)	Municipalities in RAAS and other parts of the country	Youth point of reference funded by the Municipal Government; assigning of a Youth Technician to support activities supported by NGO's and local stakeholders for youth development.
	Association of Caribbean Women, Adolescents and Youth (ADMAJC)	RAAN	Young women preventing violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation providing training, exchanges, support group, information and public awareness.
Universities	Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University (BICU)	RAAS-Bluefields	Started in 1992, has degree programs in education, civil engineering, management, agriculture and forestry, among others.
	University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (URACCAN)	RAAS & RAAN, 3 campuses: Bluefields, Bilwi/Puerto Cabezas, Siuna	Started in 1995, has degree programs in teacher education, nursing sciences, sociology/anthropology, sustainable resource management (fishing, mining, and forestry), etc.
University-affiliated Research and Extension Centers	Human Rights Observatory (at BICU)	RAAS-Bluefields	Center for the monitoring of the fulfillment of Human Rights documentation, providing legal advice as long as funds are available, funded by USAID. Provides support to Youth Coalition at municipal levels with Oxfam GB funds.
	BICU Mediation Center	RAAS-Bluefields	Center certified by Supreme Court of Justice to provide legal attention to judicial cases transferred by judges and national police. Their aim is to exercise conflict resolution and to present the center as a model to be replicated elsewhere in the region.
	Atlantic Coast Information Center (CIDCA)	RAAN- Bilwi	Information center about history and autonomy of the Atlantic Coast. Maintains a museum located in Bluefields
Centers for Psycho-social Care of Addicted Youth and Victims of	Center for Psycho-social Care (CAPS)	RAAS-Bluefields	Founded in 2008, the center promotes a prevention program against drugs and works to fulfill children's and youth's rights in coordination with MINED at preschools and school; provides detoxification treatments in coordination

Sexual Abuse			with MINSAs.
	Occupational Prevention and Rehabilitation Center for Adolescents and Youth (COPRAJ) in Bluefields	RAAS-Bluefields	Founded in 2010, provides daily attention to youth addicts through vocational activities and psychological support.
	Nidia White Movement- Shelter in Bilwi	RAAN- Bilwi	See above
Government Institutions and Regional Autonomous Governments	Municipal governments: RAAS ( <i>Bluefields, Kukrahill, Pearl Lagoon, Corn Island</i> ); RAAN ( <i>Bilwi, Waspan, Siuna, Rosita, Bonanza</i> ) AND Territorial Governments ( <i>Miskito, Rama, Sumu/Mayangna - Twahkas, Panamakas, Ulwas</i> )	Throughout RAAS and RAAN	Governmental instances created within the Autonomy Framework Law and the presidential line of authority. Territorial governments are set up at indigenous areas and there can be more than one in a municipal area.
	National Technological Institute (Instituto Tecnológico Nacional, INATEC)	Bilwi, Bluefields and throughout Nicaragua	Institute offers a wide variety of technical and vocational courses at the secondary school level; open to adults, as well as youth
	Secretariats of Education and Youth, respectively	RAAS	Secretariats have a mandate from Regional Governments to develop policies and programs for youth and women. They are in charge of articulating initiatives and supporting them financially and through programming
	National Police	Nicaragua	A military institution in charge of protecting life, integrity, security and the exercise of citizen's rights. Prevents crime, prosecutes criminals and preserves public and social order.
	Public Ministry		A public entity that serves victims of crime and is in charge of the penal prosecution process.
	Adolescent Courts		Government entity in charge of preventing violence among youth (15 – 18 years) and providing penalties to those who commit robbery and other crimes. It also provides a rehabilitation program to youth who pass through the courts
Public and Private Schools	Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon	RAAS	
Private Sector	Youth Entrepreneurship Program - Inter-American Institute for Economic and Social Development (INDES)	Bluefields, Managua, Leon, Chinandega and others.	A program offered by a private sector institute with courses and seed capital to students or youth no longer in school
	President of the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism	Bluefields	A private sector organization leader of Commerce and Services; provides information, training and advice to its members.
	El Verdugo Store	Bluefields and	A private retail store that sells electrical

		other main cities	appliances.
	Britton Exports	RAAN	A recently launched company which extracts timber, makes furniture for local markets, and exports lumber
<b>Other Individuals Interviewed</b>			
Sports promoters, journalists, students, youth who are church members and youth at risk because they are not in school, working, abandoned or young mothers.			

### **Strengths and Potential Encountered**

There appears to be a genuine openness among stakeholders and institutions both in the RAAS and the RAAN to act in a coordinated fashion to confront the risks that affect youth. The churches are gathered around the Ecumenical Council of the Caribbean Coast. In the RAAS, there are two municipal agencies: the Municipal Commission on Children and Adolescents, and the recently created Pro-Gender Alliance in which both governmental stakeholders and private organizations converge. And in Bluefields the headmasters of public and private schools have formed a legally recognized committee in order to discuss issues they are facing and to coordinate collective activities and actions – they elect representatives who participate in meetings in Managua and elsewhere to voice support for their interest. In the RAAN, similar agencies were not identified and a need is seen for greater coordination by NGOs and churches with government institutions.

There is some social fabric in the region's communities, but it is deteriorating because of a lack of support for the proper protection of children and youth from the risks caused by social and family-based violence, poverty, and drug trafficking and use. It is vital that all current and future actions be directed at strengthening community capacity for those entities which support the welfare and care of youth and creating a network that would coordinate the efforts of families, schools, civic bodies and churches. In the RAAN, the *Wihtas*<sup>29</sup> and *Síndicos*<sup>30</sup> in rural communities should also be involved to ensure channels of communication with the population.

Churches are very important spiritual and social reference points in the region, bringing together young people in Sunday schools, neighborhood gatherings, and youth and community groups. It would be important to leverage the extensive territorial presence of the churches to activate communication with youth at risk and families and to multiply opportunities for recreation, culture and sports.

In general, NGOs promote human rights of youth and mobilize projects and resources to provide direct services. Most are recognized by society, although very few have interventions in rural areas of the region because of limited staff and insufficient funding to travel distances, given the high cost of transportation. They have committed personnel with cumulative experience in serving youth but need to strengthen and update their understanding of approaches and methodologies regarding human rights for youth, development of life skills, protective factors, and the promotion of citizenship and youth

<sup>29</sup> A *Wihta* is a community judge in charge of providing solutions to conflicts among neighbors and violence within and against members of the community. These judges use the Talamana tradition.

<sup>30</sup> A *Síndico* is an authority elected by the community for a one year period and certified by the Territorial Government and the Regional Council to rent properties while maintaining that all properties belong to the community.

participation. It is imperative that they are supported in expanding the geographic coverage of their activities and in directing greater efforts at involving parents in prevention efforts.

The BICU and URACCAN universities are the major reference points for academic training of youth and are directly involved in analyzing and attempting to address the social problems of their autonomous regions. Their agenda includes- among other aspects- assessments, applied research, training and workshops, monitoring of social indicators, conflict resolution, conferences, pilot development projects, publications assistance, and the defense of human rights. This diversity of actions holds the potential for facilitating alliances to benefit youth at risk, especially in the incorporation of youth into academic and work life. They have personnel who are qualified and committed to social change and the strengthening of learning processes. While URACCAN and BICU are capable of the tasks listed above and others, their funds are extremely limited. Thus, funding must frequently come externally for these outside, “at-large” projects.

Radio is an effective communication medium with extensive coverage throughout Nicaragua’s Caribbean region. It is a useful way to reach young people, their parents and guardians, teachers, community leaders and others. However, there is a need to create attractive programs for youth that enable them to present their opinions on issues that affect them.<sup>31</sup> Few radio programs are educational and tailored for youth, let alone youth at risk. In the RAAN, there are 19 radio stations and two local cable television channels; and in the RAAS, there are 12 radio stations. It is recommended that a small portion of these media be considered as a non-formal educational alternative for investment in higher quality messages and programming. This would respond to Goal 3 of USAID’s Education Strategy.

These strengths confirm “the capacity and willingness of multi-ethnic stakeholders on the Coast to associate, contributing to the development of their proactive capacity and impact.”<sup>32</sup> This aspect is broadly recognized and valued as a basic factor for enforcement of the autonomous laws and may be fundamental in the execution of private initiatives that contribute to public policy and the development of the Caribbean Coast. A multiplicity of programs and initiatives with very rich and relevant experiences is presented below.<sup>33</sup>

## **Notable Programs, Projects and Initiatives Underway**

### **Prevention of School Desertion**

The Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (FADCANIC), with offices in Bluefields, Puerto Cabezas and Managua, directs a school called Academy of Excellence in Pearl Lagoon, as well as a Technical Training Center in Wawashang, near Orinoco, some 30 minutes by boat from Pearl Lagoon.

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<sup>31</sup>In the RAAN, many youth made positive comments about the Sat Wala program because it addresses their problems, makes them think and then discuss among themselves, and encourages them to voice their opinions. In the RAAS, La Costeñísima radio station has educational and interactive programs employing and attractive to youth and young adults. (<http://www.bluefieldsradios.com/online.html>)

<sup>32</sup> UNDP, 2005 Informe de Desarrollo Humano Las Regiones autónomas de la Costa Caribe, page 148.

<sup>33</sup> Each of these is presented with more detail, according to the objectives sought through the service to youth.

For three years, URACCAN in Bilwi has supported an Accelerated Secondary School, with almost 100 percent of graduates entering university. Financial support for this project from Austrian Cooperation may end in 2013. URACCAN, in alliance with the AEIJS<sup>34</sup>, directs specific efforts at young people who are students in the rural areas, Mayangnas, Miskitos and mestizos in the prep school of this center.

### **Promoting Involvement of Family, Community and Schools to Prevent Violence**

FADCANIC, with financing from the U.S. Embassy, is implementing the pilot project for Organization for Safe and Healthy Communities in Corn Island, Pearl Lagoon and Bluefields (2011 - May 2012), focusing on the prevention of drug use and violence through workshops for parents and promotion of sports. The project fosters dialogue between youth and the police in order to reduce confrontations and the use of force. It also involves parents in educational workshops. A priority is helping re-establish a safe environment for youth in the communities impacted by drug use. FADCANIC is applying for further funding and plans on adding the municipalities of Kukra Hill and La Desembocadura del Rio Grande. Furthermore, the new initiative would include a rehabilitation center for young addicts, possibly located in Pearl Lagoon.

The Organization for Safe and Healthy Communities project allows FADCANIC to work in each community with a broad front of citizens, public officials, church leaders, and selected police. The project goal is to create a permanent forum to discuss ways and means of fighting criminal activities and increasing citizen security. This group meets every three months in each of the selected municipalities over the 18 month-long-pilot, and allocates grant funds to training programs on the following topics: Good Parenting to Create Drug-Free Kids, the Role of Schools and Communities in Creating a Protective Environment for Adolescents, Race Discrimination and the Vulnerable Situation of Minorities, and Gender Discrimination and the Vulnerable Situation of Women. The pilot project also supports the organization of baseball, basketball and soccer tournaments with the provision of equipment, involving primary and secondary students.

FADCANIC also manages the Cultural Revitalization Program in Pearl Lagoon which facilitates life-long learning and fosters community and economic development. The program intends to strengthen partnerships and satisfy a broad range of needs of the growing local-area businesses and industries. Those needs include artistic, life-skills, academic and technical workforce development.

The National Police in Bluefields, in conjunction with BICU and URACCAN are conducting assessments of families at risk in the San Mateo neighborhood, as a pilot project with the participation of medical and law students. According to the chief of police in Bluefields, there is also a process under way which – on the face of it – resembles community policing: at least yearly discussions with communities, receiving input, using this input for the police to plan, having volunteer police in the communities, forming linkages with neighborhoods, etc. Given that no one interviewed in the communities had ever heard of such a meeting, it is surmised that if meetings and consultation actually do take place, they are sporadic. On the other hand, community members are aware of who are or should be the volunteer policemen.

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<sup>34</sup> Association for Comprehensive Education for Healthy Youth in the RAAN

The National Police in the RAAN, in coordination with the teacher training school, are available to train volunteers as promoters of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) methodology among 470 future primary teachers through 11 sessions facilitated by five already-trained officers. The 2012 goal of the National Police is to reach 2,500 students with the DARE program, but it needs sufficient materials. In El Rama, the Police Youth Coordinator works with two groups considered highly at risk, developing trust, leading regular structured meetings on various topics, organizing sports activities, and generally serving as an adult role model. However, there are other groups in the city that exhibit gang-like behavior which the police have not yet been able to reach for lack of human and material resources.

In five neighborhoods in Bilwi, AEIJS<sup>35</sup> serves some 700 adolescents and youth between 12 and 30 years of age. It is present in 26 schools, making violence prevention presentations and promoting sports teams for soccer, volleyball and basketball. In addition, it organizes Sharing Groups<sup>36</sup> in the neighborhoods. The association works with role models (parents, teachers), providing them with information and tools to dialogue with their children. The central office offers a broad range of free courses in dance, guitar, drawing and painting over a ten-month term that concludes with presentations to family and friends. It has a public library that registers visits by some 1,000 students annually. AEIJS<sup>35</sup> organizes a youth camp each year with young people ages 15 to 22 to reflect on sexual and reproductive health, violence, drugs, abuse of children and adolescents, HIV and other topics. It also broadcasts a weekly program on Radio Juvenil. Since 2011, it has provided assistance to four groups of high risk youth in the El Cocal, Libertad and El Muelle neighborhoods, although it does not have any coordination activities with the police.

The Mediation Center of the BICU, in an agreement with the municipal government of Bluefields – and operating in its offices – serves some 6,000 people yearly who seek assistance from the center to resolve their conflicts, generally family issues. Of the cases attended, at least 50 percent conclude with mediation. The center coordinates with the police, the Public Ministry, the courts, civic organizations, the Human Rights Ombudsperson, the Ministry of the Family and women’s organizations. Churches also refer cases to the center. The Mediation Center mainly serves women and children. It has trained members of the police and expressed willingness to train teachers so that they can instruct their students.

The Violence Prevention Center (CEPREV) in Managua works in 36 neighborhoods and trains some 1,500 people per month with support from Austrian Cooperation. It uses a non-formal educational model for working with at-risk youth based on psycho-social care to achieve changes in violent behavior. Its methodology was validated eight years ago, with the development of its first violence prevention manual for facilitators, based on community experience. This manual is now used by churches, schools and communities. A second manual, “Violence of Men as a Result of *Machismo*”, has led to successful reflection on masculinity among youth, with a methodology for teaching field tested and validated three years ago.

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<sup>35</sup>Association for Comprehensive Education for Healthy Youth in the RAAN.

<sup>36</sup> Sharing Groups is a non-formal education modality organized after-school that responds to youth’s needs to socialize, exchange and learn with peers, and strengthen their life skills, self-esteem and personal capacities.

### **Education and Life Skills**

FADCANIC, in its Education for Success Project, targets at-risk youth and focuses on employment, incorporates a life skills component and thus ensures a comprehensive education that complements the technical learning. It intends to help youth at-risk develop the skills necessary for a productive life and to face the challenges of their environment. See more details in the next section.

The Youth Movement of the Center for Human, Civil and Autonomous Rights (CEDEHCA) promotes the human rights of youth and their participation in the formulation of social and cultural projects, leadership training, and fundraising for their activities.

### **Preparing Youth for the World of Work**

With the Education for Success Project, FADCANIC offers vocational courses in agro-forestry and carpentry in Pearl Lagoon and in plumbing, electricity, eco-tourism and employability in Bluefields, in coordination with the Moravian School. The cross-cutting theme of its programs is to learn life skills, and it implements the employability component through internships sponsored by employers in Bluefields. Its goal is to support some 170 youth with scholarships and materials. FADCANIC also has made formal learning of English a priority in the training of the young people to prepare them for future employability. The Wawashang Technical Institute also offers courses to prepare agro-forestry technicians and cabinetmakers with scholarships for youth from nearby communities.

The Entrepreneurship Program of INDES (Instituto Interamericano para el Desarrollo Económico y Social) in Bluefields is aimed at students who did not finish secondary school, but that meet the basic requirement of knowing how to read and write. It serves two groups of 46 youth, of whom 38 are women. It uses a motivational and participatory methodology as, at the beginning, the youth do not know what to do and do not yet see the importance of being entrepreneurs. The business projects selected receive seed capital of up to 100 dollars. This program may serve as a transition to university and promotes life skills by providing the youth with the tools to express themselves and perform critical analysis. It motivates adolescents and youth between 16 and 27 years to develop a life plan and a business plan.

The Cristóbal Colón Polytechnic Institute of INATEC in Bluefields offers short courses on topics related to cooking, beauty and baking at the request of social organizations and of the Citizen Power Councils (CPCs). In addition, it offers courses to qualify as a Mid-level Technician in industrial and household electricity, automotive mechanics, and cabinetmaking and, soon, it will offer technical training in alternative energy in coordination with Blue Energy.

Microfinance programs in Nicaragua are numerous, although very few operate in the RAAS and RAAN, and most of those which do have a presence have operations only in the western-most/interior parts of the regions in cities such as Nueva Guinea, El Rama and Siuna. None was found to have products which focus on youth and young entrepreneurs. One (PRODESA) does have extensive operations in Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, El Rama and Nueva Guinea, although, again, does not have specific products for young people starting and growing businesses.

It should be stated clearly that the team did not encounter a rigorous youth employability program in the Caribbean coastal region. There are quality elements such as building vocational training (see examples above) and public private partnerships (PPP component which is part of the USAID-

funded Education for Success project); and the private sector did express an interest in providing internship opportunities. The tourism sector has engaged BICU in training programs, and there are other promising university-private sector programs, although none was found which engage youth at risk.

### **Promoting Recreational Opportunities Programs**

There is a variety of sports and recreation initiatives in the region promoted by NGOs, churches and sometimes the private sector. All the stakeholders interviewed are clear that these activities are a means for educating young people as well as providing much needed diversion. It is important to combine educational elements and provide opportunities for adolescents and youth to express themselves, socialize, exchange ideas, reflect on, learn and reinforce life skills, vocalize their opinions, and even hold discussions on rights and responsibilities.

The breadth of these opportunities in the RAAS and RAAN, however, is very small, and resources dedicated for recreational activities must be significantly increased to meet the needs of youth. Baseball is the favorite sport in Siuna and Rosita. Soccer is played by about 700 youth under 30 years of age who are barely organized. Basketball is the favorite sport in Bonanza. The (Girls) Basketball Academy<sup>37</sup> in Bluefields attracts some 200 girls from 7 to 17 years of age, and also reportedly does fine work in imparting life skills, civic responsibility, saving and managing money, leadership and other valuable skills to/with these girls. We believe this program could be a good, modest investment for USAID, likely in expanding the number of girls participating and in recruiting more and honing the skills of its adult mentors. The private schools also have sports, arts and cultural activities as well as do some of the public schools; the latter depends on a teacher volunteering her/his time.

### **Alternative Health Support, Psycho-social Rehabilitation for Addictions**

The Nidia White Movement works in seven communities of the RAAN located in El Llano Norte (Tuapi, Krukira, Bunsirpi, Wakuil, Betania, Kamla, Lamlaya) and the community of Betania in El Llano Sur. Its main strategy is prevention of violence and sexual abuse in 22 neighborhoods, with a particular focus on five neighborhoods (San Judas, Wuaylalaya, Nueva Jerusalén, Libertad and El Cocal) selected for the high rates of violence against women. It has the only shelter in the region to provide direct assistance to victims of sexual abuse; it even provides assistance to women from Bluefields who require protection.

For the last two years, the Occupational Prevention and Rehabilitation Center for Adolescents and Youth (COPRAJ) in the San Mateo neighborhood of Bluefields has provided assistance to some 150 young addicts--and children with their mothers--through the production of crafts, handicrafts and a plant nursery; the participants can later sell these items and obtain income. The youth attend during the day; this is a problem however, because when they return home, they relapse into drug use. Therefore, the proposed construction of a shelter is essential. Resources are also needed to expand assistance to parents in support groups that now meet monthly. (See Table No. 4 in Annex 2 for an overview of existing programs in the RAAS and RAAN.)

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<sup>37</sup>Directed by Doleen Miller with volunteer staff.

## Promoting Relevant Approaches and Methodologies for Youth

A number of the NGOs indicated the ability to use the following methodologies:

- i) *Ten Skills for Life* with cross-cutting issues addressing the family, HIV, adolescent pregnancy, violence prevention, from UNFPA, UN Women, UNICEF. Its core areas are knowledge of oneself, empathy, inter-personal relations, conflict management and resolution, stress management, management of emotions and feelings, critical thinking, assertive communication, creative thinking, and assertive decision-making. It provides methodologies and manuals.
- ii) *Silent Audio-visuals* from Pro Mundo used for reflective sessions with youth and adults.
- iii) *Manuals for Violence Prevention and Masculinity with an Alternative Approach* developed by CEPREV, used in training teachers, parents, community leaders, police, officials, and others.
- iv) *Guide for Health Officials* developed by USAID (2008) for community mobilization in STD prevention and health programs.

## PROMISING PRACTICES AND MODELS

In the field of youth development and prevention, there are numerous experiences which have yielded interesting results, and quite a few of them are in Central America. While Nicaragua does not present a context which is as serious as other Central American countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in terms of violence, homicides, gang activity and narco-trafficking, there are approaches which are working in the Central American sub-region which should be considered in Nicaragua's RAAS and RAAN. This is true despite the fact that violence is increasing in these regions of the country, and drug trafficking is reaching significant levels, both in terms of supporting the international drug trade and serving internal markets. As with urban areas of neighboring countries, drug use and abuse are reaching crisis levels in some neighborhoods of Bluefields.

## Prevention of Youth Violence, Community Strengthening

The prevention of youth violence is a priority in the Central American sub-region, and there are various strategies which should be considered in the RAAS and RAAN:

- **Geographic/community approach:** The community is defined geographically and its physical assets include schools, churches and common areas such as playgrounds. Generally speaking, all actors in the community are brought into a common conversation, even if some are known to be part of violent groups. A central tenet is that if all stakeholders are engaged, then key needs can be identified and tensions and crime can be reduced. The rule of law should not be undermined, and, if a law is broken, consequences follow.
- **Three pillar approach:** education, employability and specific prevention of violence activities. Education (with a focus on keeping youth in school and re-integrating out-of-school youth) ensures young people understand social norms and stay connected to society, as well as helping them learn, work and engage in society. A focus on employability supports youth in developing skills and confidence and building resilience for the job market. Training is incorporated to teach specific strategies to prevent violence.

Public and private school infrastructure is a key asset which is invariably underutilized in a community, and a number of **after school/ extra-scholastic programs** have shown much promise, serving both in-school and out-of-school youth:

- After school “Interest Groups” in Nicaragua: sports, dancing, pageants, environmental care and more have been promoted by many projects in Nicaragua (e.g., ENTERATE, supported by USDOL). The groups are organized by facilitators, preferably in the community. Activities take place after school, and results have been very positive, especially in environments where such activities had been lacking. Youth have a thirst for activities which allow them to socialize and build healthy relationships among peers and with adults, acquire skills, learn how to work in groups, understand each other and build solidarity.
- *Escuelas Abiertas* is a weekend program in Guatemala based on similar experiences in Brazil, Chile, and Mexico that engages over 250,000 youth throughout the country. The idea is simple: open up school on weekends for sports, cultural and vocational training activities, providing youth with an outlet and an opportunity to have fun and to build social relationships and cohesion. The school transformation is often one of simply being an educational institution, to being the community center of sports, play, expression, art and job-specific learning. Virtually all of the high schools throughout Guatemala have been utilized to date, and the program has been attributed with providing viable outlets for youth during the time when they are most likely to commit crimes- the weekends. The program has been wildly popular, to the extent that the initial pilot program was taken over by the Government and expanded throughout the country. Similar results have been seen in Mexico and Brazil. El Salvador is experimenting with a similar methodology, opening schools on evenings as well as weekends.

**Life-skills training** is critical in all youth programming, and the teaching of these skills in public and private schools is gaining momentum. As UNICEF notes in its document “Promoting Adolescent Development in Latin America”<sup>38</sup>: “Life skills help build confidence, coping mechanisms, and character. They equip adolescents with the tools they need to become responsible citizens and life-long learners. In addition, life skills help to protect adolescents, by empowering them to develop positive relationships and make healthy choices. They can improve academic performance, teach anger management, promote citizenship and prevent high-risk sexual behaviors.” There are numerous successful examples of teaching life skills in secondary schools:

- In Nicaragua, the New Curriculum for Secondary School includes life skill training, and the consulting team believes that, if correctly implemented and if teachers are properly trained, would prove successful. The Accelerated learning program for over-age students has already begun training youth, and is supported by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI).
- A ground-breaking program in Mexico, launched by the Ministry of Education, named Construye T ([www.construye-t.sems.gob.mx](http://www.construye-t.sems.gob.mx)), helps keep high-risk teens in school by strengthening their

<sup>38</sup>UNICEF.(n.d.).*What works: Positive adolescent development in Latin America and the Caribbean*.  
<http://www.scribd.com/UNICEF/d/34585087-What-Works-Positive-Adolescent-Development-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean>.

life skills and abilities to cope with challenging situations. The initiative, an alliance among the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, UNDP and a network of Mexican civil society organizations, including world renowned writers, promotes inclusion, equity, democratic participation and non-violence. Since the project was launched in 2008, Construye T has been implemented in over 1,000 schools nationwide, reaching more than 750,000 high school students.

- Additional examples are in the UNICEF document cited in the footnote.

### **Community-building, citizen security**

The approach to building cohesion in local neighborhoods through workshops, recreation, cultural activities, sports and training has a number of local examples operated by FADCANIC:

- Cultural Revitalization Program, which is described above in the section on “Promoting Involvement of the Family, the Community and the Schools in order to Prevent Violence,” works on community-building.
- Organization of Safe and Healthy Communities, which is also described above in the section on “Promoting Involvement of the Family, the Community and the Schools in order to Prevent Violence,” improves citizen security and builds communities.

A number of excellent community based policing models exist across the LAC region involving several key strategies that are applicable to the situation in the RAAS and RAAN. However, it appears as if the National Police of Nicaragua already take a community approach, as conversations in Managua and Bluefields indicate that the police are already executing a number of strategies such as regular consultations within the community, taking inputs from those meetings to plan its work for the year, setting up community security structures and communications protocols and more. With these in place, the following community policing strategies are relevant to the Caribbean coast:

- Develop trust and close relationships between the police and neighborhoods, establishing a true partnership
- Ensure the community is involved in all levels of security: prevention, enforcement and maintenance of order
- Build confidence over time as issues are identified and problems are solved
- Plan and implement community activities which involve the police such as sports, cultural activities, citizen security training, etc.

These activities should be taken as illustrative, as the community policing strategy is quite comprehensive. A primary contextual point is that the police already have the mindset and are already making efforts to reach out, and the consulting team feels it would take minimal effort for communities to do their part, especially with modest support and structure.

### **Supporting Out-of-school Youth: Second chance programs in Education and Employment**

The following programs and concepts work toward the reintegration of out-of-school youth into educational activities through incentives and relationship building:

- See programs listed in the Past and Current Experiences sections. They all give scholarships or are free to begin with, provide safe and healthy environments, promote development of adult-youth relationships and relevant curricula. Some examples are Education for Success, Accelerated Education Center and the Technical Institute in Wawashang, among others.
- Flexible **education programs** are numerous on the coast, with youth having multiple options, especially for secondary school, where enrollment is lowest:
  - Morning or afternoon classes – many schools have both options
  - Night classes (usually Monday to Friday 6-9pm)
  - Saturday classes (‘sabatino’)
  - Sunday classes (albeit the least offered option)

The latter options are all private, although incentives such as scholarships combined with teachers or other adults engaging directly with youth is a promising practice.

**Youth employability** is a growing field of intervention, and its strategies hold much promise in addressing needs of youth at risk, particularly in the context of the youth bulge across the LAC region, Nicaragua and especially on the Caribbean coast. Tremendous opportunity awaits societies which can harness the creativity, flexibility and dynamism of the young labor force. At the same time, risks of social problems await those regions which leave youth to their own devices, with little or inadequate support, as noted previously in this document. There are numerous vocational education programs across the LAC region promoted by governments, NGOs, training institutes and even the private sector, although only few of them place a significant percentage of youth in jobs (i.e., more than 10-20 percent) at the end of training. Key strategies among the most successful programs are:

- Involve the **private sector** from the start of program design and throughout planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation. Companies and business associations are involved in a) collaborating in labor market surveys, identifying labor needs as well as the skills needed in those jobs which will be available once youth are trained, b) serving as trainers and mentors, c) continually providing labor market feedback on opportunities after the initial market survey is complete, d) providing internships for all youth in a given initiative, and e) making available job opportunities. Some of the most innovative employability models have a specific emphasis on **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**, with an explicit **alliance-building** objective, and even conducting training at company work sites.
- Strike a **balance between meeting the needs of youth and requirements of the labor market**.
  - On the one hand, youth need safe spaces, caring adults who can “connect” with them, and a relevant curriculum. They need their family’s moral and possibly financial support (bus fare, general sustenance, etc.). Their needs and interests must be continually monitored.
  - On the other hand, employers need well-trained employees who understand the work environment, arrive on time, know how to function in teams, work diligently, etc. Employees need both strong life skills and basic technical skills.

- Balancing these two “clients” within a strong employability business model requires establishment and maintenance of solid relationships with both youth and businesses.
- **Train youth in a comprehensive manner** to include: (a) technical skills; (b) life skills; (c) internships and on-the-job training; and (d) job-seeking skills. A number of innovative models involve the use of technology, such as e-dúcate in Ecuador (digital coursework, use of Facebook to follow up on internships and to connect youth with employment opportunities),<sup>39</sup> Fundación Universitaria Panamericana de Bogota in Colombia (FUP digital coursework, flexible schedules),<sup>40</sup> and Fundación Chile (web portal to link youth with job opportunities, blended training, virtual profiles).<sup>41</sup> Large World Bank-funded youth projects in the Dominican Republic and Honduras connect youth with national training agencies and then assist them with internships in local businesses, industries and provincial governmental offices.
- **Focus on Job Placement (JP) in partnerships with employers** via hiring of JP staff who have experience and connections in the private sector; again, job placement must be designed from the start, building relationships and obtaining internship commitments long before the first cohort of youth finish training.

There are several programs in the LAC region which have achieved significant results in training youth at risk in “decent work”<sup>42</sup>, and even taking these programs to significant scale.

- ⇒ *entra21*, Youth:Work (*Obra*, Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program, Youth:Work Mexico) – International Youth Foundation (IYF) has trained over 120,000 youth in the LAC region in IT and other job skills as well as life skills over the past 10 years, including 1,000 in Central Nicaragua through the Fundación Leon 2000 and Cantare. Unfortunately, neither IYF nor these foundations have operations on the Coast, nor do they have any intention of working there.
- ⇒ A Ganar (or Vencer in Brazil) – Partners of the Americas. By utilizing soccer and other team sports to help youth in Latin America, ages 16-24, find jobs, learn entrepreneurial skills, or re-enter the formal education system, A Ganar combats youth unemployment. A Ganar has trained over 4,000 youth in Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay, and Colombia and has now expanded to Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and St. Kitts and Nevis. Its goals are to a) provide sports-based employability training to at-risk and economically disadvantaged youth in Latin America and the Caribbean; b) increase capacity of partner institutions to implement sport-for-development training which is flexible to meet local needs; c) mobilize a broad range of donors and stakeholders, including sports organizations, businesses, foundations, individuals, Partners’ chapters, and others to advocate and promote youth opportunity; d) strengthen alumni support creating a network that supports safe spaces for youth that promote identity formation, civic engagement, and service learning; e) develop a network of organizations capable and committed to utilizing sport for youth development.

<sup>39</sup> E-dúcate. *Aprendizaje, Innovación, Superación*. <http://www.e-ducate.org/>

<sup>40</sup> Unipanamericana. <http://www.unipanamericana.edu.co/>

<sup>41</sup> Fundación Chile. *Movemos la frontera de lo posible*. <http://www.fundacionchile.com/home>

<sup>42</sup> The International Labour Organization definition for ‘decent work’ is productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

- ⇒ Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP3) – Education Development Center (EDC). This was a USAID worldwide program designed to improve earning, learning, and skill development opportunities for out-of-school and, to a much lesser extent, in-school youth in developing countries.

An EQUIP 3 program not in LAC though nonetheless instructive for Nicaragua is the large, comprehensive, vibrant and successful Garissa Youth (Development) Project (G-Youth) funded by USAID/Kenya for principally Somali youth in eastern Kenya who are severely at-risk.<sup>43</sup> A team member visited and assessed the G-Youth project, studying its many relationships (public-private partnerships) with four banks and Star FM Radio, 10 participating high schools, the Garissa Teachers Training College, a regional technical training institute, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (whose Representative in Garissa actively participates on G-Youth's 10-member Project Advisory Committee, PAC), The Supreme Council of Muslim Clerics (which also has a seat on the PAC), Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) and the local Garissa Library, among others. In May, 2010, the G-Youth Career Resource Center (CRC) opened to provide in-school and out-of-school youth with structured career development information, practical options to pursue jobs, data on labor market information and skills training, and possibilities in/for higher education. A labor market survey and analysis, career counseling services, and a community marketing and outreach plan were all carried out to market services to and with at-risk youth. The CRC gives Somali and Kenyan youth at-risk a trusted stopping place and site to gather, meet one another, socialize, explore opportunities and become involved in positive cultural and recreational activities. Internet and computer services are available for Garissa youth. The Library Services Division of the U.S. Department of State helped procure library books and furniture for the CRC, contributing \$US 60,000 in materials, in addition to technical assistance. (See Table No. 5 in Annex 2 for a summary of projects to model or expand upon.)

**Entrepreneurship** can be combined with employability (job-specific training and placement), although higher impact programs most often focus specifically on small business creation and growth. They take an ecosystems approach and focus on all of the essential elements necessary in the local context in order for businesses to be created and thrive. They include an entrepreneurial spirit in local culture, availability of quality education and training institutes capable of imparting entrepreneurial competencies, social capital and networks, dynamic markets, and policy frameworks which at best promote business creation and growth, or at a minimum do not hinder them. The consulting team did not locate any business creation or expansion programs in the RAAS or RAAN, nor did it identify any organizations based elsewhere in the country which were planning on extending activities to the Caribbean coast.

A number of complementary activities can be undertaken which engage youth, teach them vocational skills or entrepreneurial skills, and/or promote businesses which are already in existence. These can be integrated into education programs, form part of the support to in-school or out-of-school youth and/or young people with micro-businesses.

<sup>43</sup> G Youth. *Skilled Youth Our Future*. <http://www.g-youth.org/main/>

- **Peace Corps – Small Business Development (SBD) program** – teaching entrepreneurship as a life skill in secondary schools. The program has had success in imparting skills and to assist a number of youth to start their own businesses. Peace Corps currently has four SBD volunteers in the RAAS: El Rama, Muelle de los Bueyes, Bluefields and Pearl Lagoon, of which the first two have volunteers, and the latter two are currently vacant but will be filled by the summer of 2012.
- **INDES** is a non-profit entity created by the private sector that uses a motivational and participatory methodology for **training entrepreneurs and an entrepreneurial spirit** in those who choose other career routes. In programs run by INDES, participants are able to develop communications skills, form groups to role play and socialize, and address many social myths on sexuality and gender. INDES also teaches how to resolve conflicts in a productive manner. At the end of the program, participants develop a social project within the community.
- **Microfinance programming** which focuses on growing existing micro-businesses, village-banking, solidarity models and other small group models have shown much success in strengthening and growing businesses, increasing incomes and increasing social cohesion. In recent years models have extended to reach youth, and even those with specific risks. There are over 30 microfinance organizations operating in Nicaragua, of which at least 10 have reached significant size (10,000 clients or more). Per research carried out by the consulting team there is very little microfinance activity in the RAAS and RAAN, and almost none on the coastal side of these regions. The few organizations which have activities are operational in larger in-land centers, e.g., Nueva Guinea, El Rama and El Ayote in the south, and Siuna and Waslala in the north.

## **OTHER DONORS' ACTIVITIES IN NICARAGUA**

USAID/Nicaragua and the consulting team wish to build upon positive initiatives, programs and alliances already underway or planned, rather than attempt to create new organizations and projects that would be more costly and time-consuming. This approach follows the Obama Administration's policies which advocate multilateralism in its international development and diplomacy endeavors, stressing cooperation with other international donors and lenders. There are approximately 10 or 12 other international donors, some bilateral and others multilateral, from whom USAID can potentially learn related to its development and implementation of the proposed SpO for at-risk youth on the Caribbean Coast.

Some of the most notable donors include Austrian Cooperation, the U.N. Development Program (UNDP), U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), U.N. Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank. Other donors who have recently and/or are currently assisting youth on the Caribbean Coast include the Andalusian Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AACID, Spain), Finland, Japan, South Korea, Luxembourg and IBIS-Denmark. Denmark (DANIDA) and the European Union which have carried out education activities on the Caribbean coast, are departing Nicaragua in mid-2013.

1. The Austrian Cooperation (AC) appears to be strategically placed and respected in RAAN and RAAS and carries out activities that are much appreciated by youth, civil society and

governmental bodies at various levels. Its cooperation and assistance are guaranteed to last until 2015. For the last three years, AC has supported the Secundaria Acelerada at URACCAN whereby poor, promising youth ages 16-18 from rural areas of RAAN live on URACCAN campus in Bilwi to study for three years for their high school diplomas. There are currently 75 youth now in this program; they represent the fifth generation of beneficiaries. Previous years have seen 100 or more of these student leaders enrolled, however funds have been diminishing. Between 85-92 percent of these youth obtain their secondary school diplomas, and nearly 100 percent of them go on to university study, principally at URACCAN.

The Austrians view URACCAN and BICU as trainers and capacity builders offering mid-level technical and vocational skills. For instance, the URACCAN branch campus at Waslala trains teachers in pedagogical skills and other integral topics. AC supports URACCAN and, to a lesser degree, BICU, to train teachers selected from and who return to work in their local communities. It also collaborates with FADCANIC to implement a semi-private inter-cultural bilingual education program in Pearl Lagoon. In RAAN, AC gives health and institutional support to URACCAN for the Las Minas and Bilwi areas; in LAS Minas, AC helped build URACCAN's branch campus with its 800 students, 120 of whom it supports through food, lodging and academic tutoring, as long as these youth return to their communities.

2. UNDP generally emphasizes the strengthening of governmental autonomy on the Caribbean Coast. UNDP's budget for 2012 for the Caribbean Coast is US\$ 2.8 million. UNDP operates in three program areas: (1) governability of water and hygiene; (2) cultural and productive development revitalization; and (3) food and nutritional security. UNDP has four people in its RAAS office, and five people, including one with whom the team met, in its RAAN office in Bilwi. One UNDP initiative is a BICU/Puerto Cabezas leadership project, funded also by the Ford Foundation, which trains leaders in legal and administrative topics. The idea is that the university should have a faculty or school for training leaders. This program operates in three territories: Prinzapolka; Wanki Maya (Rio Coco Abajo); and Tuaska in Rosita.
3. UNFPA considers that prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and drug use is crucial and focuses its efforts on adolescents ages 10-14 both in-school and out of school. Its personnel see the need to work with values that have been distorted or forgotten. UNFPA processes its strategy of advocacy and communication through facilitators in the Municipal Houses of Adolescents and Youth with sports, cultural, radio and video production, as well as written communication. UNFPA also has an array of games and publications for youth at-risk, including Magical Trunk of Self-Learning (frequent questions from youth about sexuality and its effects), Labyrinth of Life (a game with trivia and significant questions, meant as a tool to provoke educational discussion among normally-reticent boys and young men), Alternatives (gender-themed), You, Your Life and Dreams (developed by Family Care International), and others. In 2012, UNFPA will be developing a manual of the learning tools and methods that social promoters in rural and urban areas need.
4. UNICEF works with governmental entities at all levels, as well as with NGOs, regional bodies, community groups and others. The range of UNICEF-affiliated activities is so broad and its specific actions, collaborative working relationships and funding so varied, that explanations here

will be limited. Additional information on UNICEF activities will be provided in a separate document. UNICEF works on the basis of five-year plans, with the 2008-2012 plan expiring. UNICEF personnel are presently formulating the 2013-2017 plan which will feature: (1) early infancy and childhood; (2) quality and inclusive education, from pre-school to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, including technical education; and (3) protective methods and measures for at-risk youth and adolescents, including shared responsibility on the part of the youth for their own development and behavior. Citizen security, treatment, recognition and reaction(s) to risk and gender are among the topics to be covered. UNICEF's Caribbean Coast programs cost an initial US\$5 million yearly, and will increase later on, since there are funds of US\$34 million for five years. UNICEF funnels funds by two means: (1) through the work plan with MINED headquarters; and (2) through regional and municipal governments. Presently, UNICEF is providing regular funding to eight Caribbean coast municipalities, in addition to seven central Nicaraguan towns.

5. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) just announced a new project (NI-M1018) titled "Sustainable System for the Training and Placement of Youth" with US\$810,000 from IDB's Small Enterprise Development Facility, complemented by US\$341,800 in Nicaraguan counterpart financing.<sup>44</sup> The overall objective is to improve Nicaragua's competitiveness in the "Business Process Outsourcing (TPN)" industry to assist vulnerable Nicaraguan young people, mainly on the Caribbean coast, to prepare for and retain well-paying jobs in this field. The specific objective is to design and implement a model of continuous training and qualification of labor supply for the sustained growth of this TPN industry in Nicaragua.
6. The World Bank has two larger programs operating on the Caribbean coast, as well as a smaller program with which the USAID youth at-risk SpO will likely be related, formally or informally. They are the (a) Second Educational Sector Support Project (PASEN II), a US\$ 25 million loan, a project which will be executed by the MINED over a four-year period from March 31, 2012 through March 31, 2016;<sup>45</sup> (b) the additional credit of US \$5 million, announced June 14, 2012, for the Rural Telecommunications Project in Nicaragua, whose first phase began in 2007 with US\$ 7 million in World Bank financing; and (c) and the Civil Society Fund 2011: Planting Seeds for a Youth Without Risk.<sup>46</sup>

PASEN II, which is just beginning to be implemented, will reportedly benefit 220,000 primary school students and 80,000 children currently outside the educational system, RAAN and RAAS are priority areas, as are the departments of Chontales, Jinotega, Madriz, Nueva Segovia, Matagalpa and Rio San Juan; 40 municipalities will be implementation sites. School children are slated to receive textbooks, notebooks, math study guides, and learning and reading materials to create small school libraries. Another PASEN II component is a teacher training program on learning techniques in multi-grade schools and bilingual education, designed to benefit approximately 8,703 teachers in priority municipalities.

<sup>44</sup> IDB Inter-American Development Bank. <http://www.iadb.org/en/projects/project-description-title,I303.html?id=ni-m1018>

<sup>45</sup> World Bank. *Projects and Operations*. Project: Second Support to the Education Sector Project PASEN 2 <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/PI26357/second-support-education-sector-project-pasen-2?lang=en>

<sup>46</sup> World Bank. *Projects and Operations*. <http://www.worldbank.org/projects>

The new, second phase of the World Bank's Rural Telecommunications Project aims to increase access to and improve services for 200,000 Nicaraguans, with the focus evidently on the residents of RAAN and RAAS. The project has clear implications for such aspects as reducing the cost of telecommunications, expansion of opportunities for residents in those areas, better access to low-cost mobile phone and Internet service in rural communities, institutional strengthening of TELCOR, and possible distance learning opportunities. The team wonders if there will be formal or informal information exchange and coordination between this project and the IDB's new NI-MI018 described above.

The World Bank's "Civil Society Fund 2011: Planting the Seeds for a Youth Without Risk" was a modestly-funded, experimental program announced on August 31, 2011 to reintegrate youth at-risk into society through a series of initiatives in health, education access to information, and leadership to improve their lives. Seven NGOs, funded at an average of US\$4,000 each, carried out pilot activities around the country during a six-month period. For example, the Alistar Foundation taught a human rights and indigenous rights course to a group of 30 teenagers and young leaders, both male and female between the ages of 15 and 25, in Sikilta, in the Territorial Government MayangnaSauni Bas, RAAN.

Two current initiatives under the World Bank's Caribbean Coast Development Program are: (1) implementation by FADCANIC, OXFAM and Save the Children of a US\$ 2.47 million grant; and (2) Save the Children is implementing a separate US\$ 1.2 million grant.

Other international donors include:

7. AACID of Spain carries out a wide array of activities, including the training of INATEC instructors and technicians and in teaching methodologies for Intercultural Bilingual Education (EIB) for RAAS and RAAN. It has assisted with the design and construction of school structures, construction of lodging for girls and boys in Siuna, rehabilitation of a hydro-sanitary network in Bilwi, and construction of a workshop school in Rosita. AACID gives scholarships to woodworking and agricultural students from the municipalities of Waspam, Puerto Cabezas and Siuna, and funds an experimental program to support agricultural producers from rural indigenous areas to guarantee food and nutritional security.
8. The Government of Finland, through URACCAN, several years ago contributed to the strengthening of the EIB in RAAN and RAAS, working with the Normal Schools of both zones, reportedly helping transform the primary education curriculum and teacher training.
9. Japan (JICA) has financed school infrastructure in RAAS and RAAN, working through MINED.
10. South Korea has done esteemed work in strengthening INATEC in RAAS and RAAN. On a visit to INATEC/Bluefields, team members witnessed and spoke with secondary school-level students busy at work, with apparently good instruction, in auto mechanics and machine tool classes, utilizing modern, state-of-the-art equipment provided by Korea, including various recent-year models of Hyundai and other Korean-made vehicles.

11. Luxembourg provided resources for the construction of infrastructure for teacher training in RAAN and RAAS, as well as the first program of scholarships for students of the teacher training schools from faraway rural communities.
12. IBIS-Denmark is an independent NGO which has two programs in Nicaragua, one on governability and other education. Its principal counterpart is URACCAN and geographically it prioritizes the watershed of Pearl Lagoon, Orinoco, Marshall Point and a community in Bluefields to fortify the SEAR in the region, creating textbooks from pre-school to the 6th grade in Garifuna, a program of teacher training in EIB in rural communities of RAAN. The teacher training program has not had the support of MINED in recent years; however, teachers value IBIS's work highly as filling a decided void in their professional training.

Of all the activities mentioned above, the consultant team recommends USAID assistance to the Accelerated Secondary program at URACCAN for its effectiveness, relatively low cost and solid record in forming youth leaders and tomorrow's adult leaders for the Caribbean coast. Also, there may be opportunities to join forces with South Korea on technical/vocational training. (See Table No. 6 in Annex 2 for a list of these donors with corresponding amounts of funding.)

## SECTION 4: OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

### POTENTIAL PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

The private sector in the coastal areas of the RAAS and RAAN is developing, although it still contains relatively few major companies. There are selected industries such as African palm oil extraction, bamboo and hardwood production and mining, in addition to the fishing industry which traditionally has been the base of the economy.<sup>47</sup>

In the RAAS, the Bluefields Chamber of Commerce has a broad membership of approximately 35 local firms, mostly small companies, although it has been weakened in recent years by three factors: a declining fish industry, larger companies coming in and competing with numerous smaller ones who are its members, and a legal issue which had lingered on for a long period of time. Furthermore, companies based elsewhere in the country which have branches on the coast are generally not members of the Chamber, and these include stores such as El Verdugo, Curacao, El Gallo mas Gallo and Claro. The Chamber's efforts to strengthen its base include lobbying so that firms from the outside pay local taxes equal to indigenous companies. They have also joined with other chambers around the country in lobbying the high courts to have the larger companies be obliged to become members of the chambers and pay dues, so they can properly function and develop.

The result is that the Chamber in Bluefields represents only indigenous companies and their interests, and there is no semblance of a unified voice representing business interests within the community, such as improving security. It also means that programs intending to engage the private sector must do so one by one for many firms, and often the largest ones. FADCANIC faced this situation when engaging employers as part of the Public-Private Partnership efforts under Education for Success, and found they had to go to employers individually.

The private sector managers interviewed in Bluefields had a number of clear opinions about the region and its development. First, security for them is indeed getting worse, although they generally have yet not taken a lot of precautions; for example, they do not have armed guards at the doors of their stores, even where valuable merchandise is visible. Armed robbery has yet to become a major issue, although recent assassinations have made them wonder if other types of crime are imminent. They are well aware of the role drugs play in the most severe acts of violence, and are convinced that political will and effectiveness to tackle the problem are lacking. Police do occasionally make raids on known "drug houses" although they often find nothing, with the traffickers seemingly tipped off a day or so earlier, leading to the conventional perception often expressed by community members that there is collusion. Despite the widespread nature of that belief, nothing has been proven.

The Bluefields Chamber of Tourism is active, with 70 members and tour operators, bars, restaurants, hotels and even CIDCA (Center for Research and Documentation of the Atlantic Coast) of BICU. They have shown particular interest in supporting social programs which involve sports and culture. These fit nicely into the image that it wants to portray of Bluefields being a great destination with rich local

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<sup>47</sup> Nicaragua: A Country Study (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). 1994. Washington DC: Library of Congress. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/nitoc.html>

culture and vibrant local communities. For example, it supported an event at the end of March in the Orinoco community, where there were youth dance groups and also skilled artisans producing crafts for sale.

The consultant team learned of two other private sector initiatives that assist at-risk youth, one of them more directly. When team members visited the Bluefields Instituto Politécnico Cristóbal Colón (i.e., part of INATEC), they learned that U.S.-based Blue Energy, an alternative energy company recently active in the Bluefields area, has joined forces with INATEC to launch an alternative energy curriculum this summer. Team members toured classrooms and laboratories that are being upgraded and having equipment installed for this exciting new vocational opportunity for youth.

Except for mining firms, most of which are foreign-owned, there seem to be few large businesses or companies in RAAN. The President of the RAAN Regional Council said there are about 50 mining concessions in RAAN, each approved by the Regional Council. HEMCONIC, a Canadian-owned mining company which employs approximately 1,100 persons in Bonanza, sponsors a sports program for youth and adults, and pays for 40 percent of the energy costs in this town of about 10,000.<sup>48</sup> Team members also noted that HEMCONIC pays for the uniforms, much of the equipment and other costs of the Costa Caribe professional baseball team based in Puerto Cabezas.

An observation about the prevalence of drug sales can be made when simply considering the industries present and the amount of consumption estimated to take place in the RAAS capital of Bluefields. For example, there are four prominent stores selling televisions, stoves, washing machines, furniture and other major appliances in a two-block area of downtown. There is also a fair amount of construction taking place. This in a context where there is little industry to speak of besides fishing and local merchants, tourism, plus a few industries such as bamboo and African palm oil. It is generally accepted that the strong influx of remittances into the Coast region is one of the main engines for the active economy, despite high levels of unemployment. However, everyone interviewed with an opinion on the subject felt that drug money is also propping up the local economy to some degree, and it can be quite visible. There is a saying locally that when US \$20 bills are in high circulation, that a drug shipment has come in. And it is widely known that regular packets of cocaine wash up on the shore (“white lobsters”), as evidenced by the finder of the package building new additions on to his/her house or suddenly spending on lavish or luxury goods, such as flat-screen televisions, stoves and washing machines.

Contrary to the opinion of local companies that the non-indigenous firms do not give back to the community, the consulting team found that all companies interviewed gave back in one form or another, although most often it is a modest contribution to the community.<sup>49</sup> El Verdugo, through an application process, gives scholarships to four young people each year, starting in grade school and keeps supporting until the youth finishes high school (El Verdugo does all it can to stay in touch with the child and family so the student does not drop out of school and the investment can be as worthwhile as

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<sup>48</sup> Notably, this subsidy to the town might be better spent if the funds were used on other activities such as educating and training youth, rather than making electricity cheap.

<sup>49</sup> This is balanced by comments by FADCANIC that they have faced challenges in their PPP program in obtaining commitments from non-indigenous businesses.

possible). This includes school supplies and uniforms. Similarly, El Gallo Mas Gallo does the same for three students each year, and also includes shoes and medical costs. All companies interviewed said they would gladly accept interns if requested, including the two Chambers of Bluefields, and sounded enthusiastic about collaborating on youth employment initiatives. There is a general complaint from non-indigenous companies that local youth lack the commitment and work ethic to compete for jobs, although they would certainly rather hire locally than incur the cost of bringing in personnel from other areas of the country to staff their stores. From an employability point of view, this is a good fit with programs which have shown promise in imparting job-relevant life skills. However, these models need strengthening in terms of methodology and scale, as they do not employ the latest techniques and only serve a handful of youth. As noted previously, the consultant team did not find the approach or the capacity to carry out a rigorous employability program, and advises that, if this component is included, a Managua-based national or international NGO be contracted or be part of the consortium of organizations to carry this out.

Two business ideas which have shown promise with regard to youth employment, one of which is working on international cruise and freighter ships, which has been taking place for decades. Moreover, BICU is launching a year-long program to strengthen youth skills so as to professionalize the labor market for this ship employment, putting Nicaragua in a stronger position. The second is to take advantage of the English-language abilities of the Caribbean youth by establishing call centers. BICU and several companies have been in discussion regarding training of youth, business strategies and concrete plans.

One additional hindrance to business development in the region is that for its two regional capitals, Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas, there is no paved road to either city from the rest of the country. They are the only regional capitals in the country which do not have paved roads in and out of the city. This dramatically increases the cost of doing business, being a base cost or “tax” of operating along the coast. It is also expensive for locals to travel, e.g., more than half the fare of a trip from Bluefields to Managua consists in paying for the boat ride to El Rama, which is less than 1/5<sup>th</sup> the total distance to the capital. In the north, the dirt roads go through forested areas in which it rains nine months of the year. If a truck gets stuck and cannot move, it may block the road entirely for days, weeks or longer. Fortunate if true, there is talk of the Japanese government and the Nicaraguan government negotiating a project whereby a road would be extended from Nueva Guinea to Bluefields; and little by little the road to Puerto Cabezas has been constructed when donor funding becomes available, although over 150 miles remain to be completed.

Finally, the municipal and regional governments do not promote local investment, according to the Chambers. Without “selling” the region to outside companies, both national and international, a destination such as Bluefields would not naturally be a place to do business. The town is not on the way to anywhere but the ocean, and thus is not a natural crossroads for business opportunities other than at the port. Bluefields is in a region which has been traditionally neglected; as noted, it has no paved road to it from the outside.

Despite these drawbacks, the business persons interviewed by the consulting team all spoke of the tremendous opportunities which exist along the coast, from call centers (because of the English language abilities), to natural resource development (timber, bamboo, African palm oil), to tourism (there are some hospitable beaches, and opportunities for snorkeling, exploring, hiking in the jungle, etc.) and much

more. An outside observer could imagine what industries might come if a) businesses were promoted, b) specific life skills and technical competencies were taught, c) the drug problem was contained, and d) if citizen and community security were to improve. Also, given the nascent Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts already under way along the coast, there is much promise to build upon for engagement, dialogue, planning and programming in key sectors such as community security and youth employability.

## **CROSS-SECTORAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The team's observations and conversations in the field and our own instincts tell us that the most effective and best activities and programs for youth at-risk and youth and young adults are generally those that are more comprehensive, holistic and have more than one activity to attract and retain youth on the one hand, while helping them grow by acquiring new skills, attitudes and behaviors on the other. In essence, programs that will be most enticing are multi- and inter-disciplinary, multi-faceted and involve two or more sectors in their philosophies and content.

We have discussed the enormous importance of sports for girls, boys and young adults at-risk, but we do not advocate sports and recreation in an isolated fashion. We strongly recommend sports and recreation as an incentive or "hook" to attract youth into social situations where they can benefit from integrated activities such as vocational training, civic comportment, awareness and best methods of avoiding sexually-related diseases, internship experiences in the community, life skills training, community service, mentoring programs, career orientation and guidance, and other positive activities.

Sports can also serve as a platform for building social cohesion, with in-school and out-of-school youth interacting more, community members (including school teachers and administrators from the community) interacting in a non-threatening manner with out-of-school youth, and provide other opportunities for bonding moments.

"Sports are a great attraction for young females and males and are easily integrated with such individual and group-building activities as pre-vocational and vocational training, civic participation, life skills training, anti-violence and anti-drug programming, mentoring activities, and others," proclaimed one civic leader, echoing many other interviewees.

USAID/Nicaragua currently has programs in economic growth (EG), democracy and governance (DG) and health which, together with their experiences and lessons learned, relate to existing activities as well as those we propose for the new youth at-risk SpO. URACCAN, through agro-forestry and other experts from its Siuna campus, recently completed a six-month course involving one week per month of hands-on, field-based instruction in cacao technology and production for 30 young farmers ages 15-30. ECO Holland provided the funds for this course. Among other things, these youth learned that the cacao grows abundantly and with higher quality if plantain and banana plants are interspersed amidst the cacao to give them shade and help prevent disease. As URACCAN Rector Alta Hooker said, "These young men and women learned techniques and acquired skills that will stay with them and that they can build upon. Cacao grows beautifully in this region near Siuna, and growing cacao will give these youth and their families a solid, decent income for the rest of their lives."

USAID/Nicaragua, under DG's Political Parties rubric, helps fund the certificate program in Political Leadership at URACCAN, with assistance from George Washington University and the National

Democratic Institute. Fifty youth leaders ages 15-30 in both RAAN and RAAS are being trained in a six-month course with four major political parties in the region represented among these youth: PLC; PLI; FSLN; and Yatama. The program stresses dialogue, collaboration, and cooperation among political parties and ethnic groups. It began in 2010 and lasts five years, with the proviso that URACCAN continues the program after 2015. URACCAN has previously received \$52,500 for this program, and is slated to receive another \$26,000 this year. USAID's Sustainable Institutional Capacity Development (SCD) program can be instructive for youth-at-risk planning and programming, as it aims to improve the strategic vision, organizational capacity, governance structure, and operational efficiency of selected civil society organizations in Nicaragua.

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) and Second Step programs facilitated by personnel of the Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) from the U.S. Department of State are three initiatives thoroughly appreciated by the National Police, local government officials, school directors and teachers, parents, youth and general citizens in the communities where they operate. Police officers give the DARE and GREAT courses in public schools, with parent participation, and they are considered to be wonderful, non-threatening contexts in which young people can interact with police, often for the first time.

The DARE and GREAT programs are adaptations of programs that have proven to be successful in the U.S. INL and its Nicaraguan partners reached 18,000 junior high and high school students in Nicaragua through DARE in 2011. The consultant team found DARE and GREAT to be immensely popular with the National Police in both RAAS and RAAN where activities are concentrated mainly in Bluefields and Bilwi, although the demand is much greater in these cities and throughout the two regions, according to the charismatic and widely-respected Inspector and Youth Affairs Officer for the National Police in RAAS, who promotes these two programs and their quality in the region. GREAT began in Nicaragua in 2010; in 2011, 3,500 adolescents and 17 instructors participated in the program. As with DARE, there is much more demand for GREAT than funding and the limited number of trained instructors permit, and it does not exist at all in RAAN where there is an enormous need, with Police, school and civic leaders strongly advocating its introduction. The Second Step (Segundo Paso) program is for kindergarten children and is designed to help them deal with stress and tension in their homes and with peers. The program is praised for its involvement of parents who learn strategies and practical tips for family harmony. Second Step is new in Nicaragua and only exists in 10 private pre-schools. The pre-school teachers are the instructors.

The INL's current modest budget of \$100,000 for these programs limits their use, unfortunately, to only a small percentage of Nicaraguan youth and parents who need them. The Chief of Police and other officials in RAAN strongly desire to implement the GREAT program, due to the presence of highly at-risk youth in Bilwi who exhibit gang-like behavior. However, a minimum of three instructors should be trained to teach the course, and it costs \$3,000 to train just one police officer for this task.

The USAID-funded PREVENSIDA Project is of direct benefit to selected at-risk youth on the Caribbean Coast. PREVENSIDA works individually with youth age 16 and older to prevent HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases. According to a household survey in 2010 by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), many gay youth in Nicaragua begin sexual activities by age 10, especially along the Caribbean coast. There will be another CDC household survey in 2013. Training and capacity building

are given to NGOs in 9 of Nicaragua's 17 departments, including RAAS and RAAN. PREVENSIDA Project Director Oscar Nunez says, "There is much sexual promiscuity among the youth, yet they have limited knowledge of sexual activity and reproductive health. Nevertheless, we find the people of the Caribbean Coast anxious to progress and work together."

The U.S. Peace Corps has over 200 Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) working in Nicaragua in health, environment, small business development and English/TOEFL. Six Volunteers are posted in RAAS, in the towns of Laguna de Perlas, Kukra Hill (2), Bluefields, and El Rama (2). All six work with youth and young adults in one way or another. Current PCVs would be ideally suited to work with the proposed SpO, e.g., conducting training in entrepreneurship-as-a-life-skill, and assigning volunteers to the project either full time or part time. Peace Corps represents a valuable resource, especially given the Obama Administration's "whole of government" approach, and that less than a year ago the Peace Corps and USAID signed a Global Education Framework to encourage working together in non-formal and formal education in countries where both agencies operate.

The consultant team strongly recommends that the much-esteemed DARE, GREAT and Second Step programs expand to as many schools as possible in RAAS and RAAN, concentrating on those communities and neighborhoods with high crime rates where youth are most at risk.

### **U.S. EMBASSY YOUTH AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The team found, as it met with and interviewed Embassy personnel, that one section of the Embassy was frequently not aware of programs, their content and implications for youth at risk that are current or contemplated by other sections of the Embassy. This is not difficult to understand, as each person and office is involved in her/his or its own duties and responsibilities. Yet, especially in a relatively small Embassy, there should be sharing of information, coordination of effort, and mutual learning of program results. Moreover, and as noted in the immediately preceding section, USG agencies have formal agreements already in place to work together, such as the Peace Corps and USAID with their Global Education Framework. Thus, the team recommends the creation of an Embassy Youth Advisory Committee which would have among its functions: (a) information exchange on youth at risk in Nicaragua; (b) idea generation; (c) strategy development; (d) short, medium and long-term planning; (e) pooling and coordination of resources; (f) evaluation and assessment of AYAR programs and projects; (g) representational opportunities; and perhaps other tasks. The committee could meet, for instance, once monthly for the first three months and quarterly thereafter. It could be linked to a Donor Working Group on Youth, if such an entity exists in Nicaragua.

The Embassy Youth Affairs Advisory Committee would logically be composed of representatives from the Peace Corps, the Embassy's INL, Security, Public Affairs, Political, Economic, Agricultural and other offices and sections, and the DG, EG, Health, Environment and Agriculture, and Program Offices of USAID. Other representatives, either permanent or occasional, could come from other USG agencies which are working in Nicaragua and have youth at risk as a significant group in their mandates, such as the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Department of Labor. As stated earlier, the Committee's operation and scope should be crisp, effective, practical, mutually informative and not overly time-consuming. The benefits to Nicaragua youth at risk, their families and friends and to the various U.S. Embassy entities involved should be well worth the time and effort.

## SECTION 5: POLICY FRAMEWORK

This section highlights the major policies promoted by the Government of Nicaragua (GON) that are directed specifically at youth, indicating the progress, pending issues and limitations of these policies.

The GON, in its updated version of its National Human Development Plan, has as one of its five areas of challenges “Reducing inter-regional disparities by promoting the development of the autonomous regions along the Caribbean coast.”

Nicaragua passed a *Law to Promote the Comprehensive Development of Youth*,<sup>50</sup> published on July 4, 2001, mandating the formulation of a *National Youth Policy*, published in August 2004. Its overall objective is to provide the opportunities and conditions required by young men and women in Nicaragua to incorporate themselves as active participants, endowed with rights, into the economic, social, cultural and political life of society. These opportunities relate to education, especially technical training, health care services, particularly in reproductive health, the creation of opportunities for youth to contribute to different artistic expressions, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and facilitation of youth into the job market through internships and work opportunities.

The Caribbean region, through the Development Council of the Caribbean Coast, promulgated a program document in 2009 that was directed specifically at the region: *The Nicaraguan Caribbean Region, Toward Human Development*. It states that its main objective is to: “Develop an economic, political and social reality that restores the rights of the inhabitants of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean to have quality basic human services and equitable and fair opportunities for production, supported by dynamic and coordinated autonomous citizen power with a programmatic approach.”

A strategic framework of priorities was developed including three core areas aimed at establishing an equitable development model which, by 2012 would: (1) increase socio-economic well-being of the Caribbean population; (2) achieve equitable and sustainable economic transformation while taking care of the environment; and (3) strengthen self-led human development. This framework is relevant for all institutional and private initiatives aimed at serving adolescents and at-risk youth.

Education is considered the cornerstone of human development. Law 28 and the General Law on Education recognize the *Regional Autonomous Education Sub-system (SEAR)*. The document prepared by the Caribbean Coast Development Council for the RAAN, the RAAS and the Upper Coco-Bocay areas supports two elements: the training of human resources to sustain development and the revitalization of cultural identity.<sup>51</sup> The document does not supply sufficient data to chart progress; however, it was possible to confirm some of the relevant aspects during the visits conducted for this report. The following objectives proposed by the SEAR should be highlighted:

- a) Preschool programs, textbooks and guides were developed for first, second and third (kindergarten) levels in the regional languages. The materials were validated and the teachers have been trained, although the materials are not yet printed and distributed.

<sup>50</sup>For attention to and development of Nicaraguan youth from 18 to 30 years of age.

<sup>51</sup>Caribbean Coast Development Council for the RAAN, the RAAS and the Upper Coco-Bocay Areas (2012) *Valoración del Avance en la implementación de la estrategia de desarrollo Costa Caribe 2007-2011*.

- b) Transformation of the primary school curriculum within the framework of SEAR, from first to sixth grades. The adjustment of the curriculum for the multi-grade primary classroom and for Spanish-speaking students is still pending. The printing of the fifth and sixth grade textbooks has not yet occurred.
- c) The Regional Education Secretary states, *“The use of regional languages in schools is a pending issue. There is a lack of linguistic and pedagogical information for the communities to be able to define linguistic policies that are free from prejudices and discrimination.”*<sup>52</sup>
- d) The Normal School has a Bilingual Intercultural Education (BIE, or EIB) curriculum.
- e) The equipping of the Cristóbal Colón Polytechnic Institute (IPCC), affiliated with the National Technological Institute (INATEC), in the city of Bluefields. In the view of some of those interviewed, its enrollment had decreased a great deal due to the deterioration of its infrastructure. Now, however, it has new equipment from the Republic of Korea in the areas of industrial and household electricity, automotive mechanics and computers. It is also increasing its number of students to 272 this school year. The Blue Energy Company has joined forces with the Institute to create a new renewable energy training program which has equipment and laboratories. In addition, the IPCC offers mobile courses to communities that request them. One of its directors states, *“It involves strengthening communities, with courses in making jewelry, candies and jams, baking, floral arrangements, and maintenance of outboard motors. Some courses are offered in remote communities, others are offered here in Bluefields.”*
- f) The Technical Training Institute administered by FADCANIC in Wawashang offers a specialization as an agro-forestry technician and another in cabinetmaking. These courses are offered for students of the neighboring communities, for whom they represent an option for training without having to incur the high cost of traveling to Bluefields or Managua.
- g) According to the report of the Council, they have also equipped the INATEC centers in Puerto Cabezas and Siuna. In the latter, they improved the accommodations for the students who come from rural communities and indigenous areas.<sup>53</sup>

As a result of these advancements, according to the same report, 1,919 young people have enrolled in technical education and 6,151 have taken some of the short courses offered. However, statistical information for comparison with previous years is not available.<sup>54</sup> Some of those interviewed agreed that INATEC is a key institution for offering vocational training to at-risk youth through courses in renewable energy, electricity, automotive mechanics, household plumbing, general construction, computer science and other selected fields.

<sup>52</sup>Nubia Ordonez (2012) Presentation at the Education Forum entitled, *“Let’s All Contribute to SEAR and Strengthen Autonomy,”* Bluefields, Nicaragua: Education Forum, February 23, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Caribbean Coast Development Council for the RAAN, the RAAS and the Upper Coco-Bocay Areas, 2012, page 25.

<sup>54</sup>The survey of youth conducted by the UNDP for the 2011 Human Development Report states that only 2 percent of youth at the national level surveyed for this study had any technical training.

While the opening of options through the modernization of the INATEC centers is seen as progress in the training of young people, many challenges are recognized in the Caribbean region. One of these is the linking of the educational sub-systems that would facilitate a more active role for INATEC in the training of basic education teachers, complying with the mandate of offering occupational instruction and skills for all students at the basic education level. Another is that coverage of technical education could be expanded through the affiliated centers or through centers administered by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities and the private sector, with INATEC ensuring the quality of teaching and the certification of learning.

Another program which has benefited young people primarily is the *Cultural and Sport Revitalization Program*, as part of the process for restitution of the rights of the indigenous peoples and the Afro-descendant communities. It includes training of youth on cultural and artistic topics and has a pro-culture fund for the purpose of revitalizing cultural aspects that already exist but are being lost.<sup>55</sup>

In matters related to the human rights of children and adolescents, it is important to mention the *Code for Children and Adolescents* (CNA), approved in 1998 for those under 18 years of age. Fulfilling the provisions of the CNA, the Supreme Court of Justice has defined a *Specialized Criminal Justice System for Adolescents*. It created the Technical Office for Monitoring of the Adolescent Criminal System (OTSSPA-CSSJ) for this purpose. The most significant advancements under this office include the organization and operation of 18 Adolescent Courts; of these, two are in Managua, one serves the two Atlantic Autonomous Regions and 15 are located in the rest of the country. The adolescent justice system rests on three dimensions: (a) responsibility of the perpetrator, (b) restitution to the victim, and (c) re-incorporation of the offender into the community. According to the OTSSPA-CSSJ, the advantages of this model include decreasing the jail population, making it less onerous for the state, and decreasing the recidivism rate.<sup>56</sup>

According to the official statistics of the OTSSPA-CSSJ, the offenses of adolescents who were criminally charged in 2010 include rape (22.2%), aggravated robbery (21.4%), assault (12.3%) and homicide (6.5%). The same source indicates that, in 2011, 214 adolescents were in prison in the RAAS and RAAN, compared to 6,800 adults. "For adults, there are custodial and non-custodial measures and for adolescents there are also custodial and non-custodial measures; for adults, the maximum sentence is 30 years, for adolescents, the maximum sentence is six years. In addition, the Code indicates that the adolescent offender should be transferred to a special center, isolated from adults."<sup>57</sup> Despite these clarifications, the CNA was cited by some of those interviewed as a source of impunity for adolescents who commit crimes encouraged by adults and, frequently, is associated with the absence of efficacious preventive programs.

In *security policies for youth*, one of the most important aspects has been the creation of divisions in the National Police for: (a) Co-existence and Citizen Security; (b) Youth Affairs; and (c) the Commissariat for Women, Children and Adolescents. The Commission on Youth Affairs performs intense preventive

<sup>55</sup>For example, the King Pulanka is a dance associated with the tradition of the Rey Mosco which is a celebration held in December, it is now coordinated with the municipal government of Puerto Cabezas.

<sup>56</sup>See difficulties identified in the section on Context.

<sup>57</sup> Fonseca, R. (2011). Código <http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4230/codigo-de-la-ninez-bajo-quot-fuego-quot>

work in the neighborhoods with youth at risk that, in the opinion of those interviewed, is still insufficient. This division receives support from projects such as the DARE and GREAT programs, promoted by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

In Managua, the Division of Youth Affairs of the National Police has operated a prevention center since August 2011 which is currently attended by 197 youth that are classified by agents in different neighborhoods as at-risk youth. These young people receive courses to improve their levels in basic subjects such as Language, Mathematics, Citizenship and Civic Values, along with technical training in the center's workshops on different specialties including barbering, baking, automotive mechanics, and household electricity. It would be ideal to have similar centers in at least the provincial capitals and particularly on the Caribbean Coast. In Bluefields, this division undertakes preventive work with the universities and civic organizations. In the RAAN, it does this work in schools, neighborhoods and with the *Wihitas* (indigenous, community judges) in the rural communities.

In Bluefields, there is a *Youth Secretariat* attached to the regional government, for the purpose of coordinating policies and programs directed at the youth population. The Youth Secretariat has a 2010-2015 Youth Plan<sup>58</sup> and manages the core areas for youth in the National Development Plan. It acts in coordination with NGOs and governmental institutions on issues to promote the participation of youth in educational activities related to employment promotion and recreation, as established by the National Policy. Young people from different groups and ethnicities from the region participated in the development of agendas related to their own interests. Thus far, they have a regional agenda, an Afro-descendant agenda, a parliamentary agenda and an indigenous agenda.

The *municipal governments* of the two regional capitals, in coordination with the UNFPA, are fostering the creation of adolescent and youth centers through which they promote cultural, sports and artistic activities. The interviewees stated that the lack of budget allocations and some politically-based decisions have reduced the activities favoring the participation of youth.

In general, the assessments culled from the interviews regarding compliance with public policies agree that the state institutions have a greater presence in the municipal and regional seats than in the rural communities, where their presence is very weak and insufficient, especially the National Police and the Public Ministry. The officials have positive intentions and willingness to fulfill the institutional goals, but the limitations on resources cause frustration and generate tension. In particular, the delay in justice reinforces the perception of impunity enjoyed by those that commit crimes and gives rise to a feeling of defenselessness and vulnerability, especially among children and adolescents.

Moreover, in terms of community action by the police, the population perceives that security plans are insufficient in responding to crimes reported and in applying the corresponding sanctions for the most common crimes, such as robberies, murders and rapes, which are committed on a daily basis. The officials, in turn, believe that it is essential to have institutional budgets and the proper security for mobilization. There is a need for coordination, particularly inter-institutional coordination, and a

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<sup>58</sup> This was reported during an interview with the RAAS Youth Secretary. The Youth Plan document is still in the revision/validation process, but is forthcoming.

willingness to use preventive measures over punitive measures for youth in situations of risk or at the margins of the law.

Some of the alternative solutions mentioned were to: (1) involve the prosecutors from the Public Ministry, along with doctors and police, in the different presentations held in the schools to raise awareness and provide information to officials and youth; (2) organize short courses on alternative conflict resolution for teachers and secondary students through the Mediation Center of the BICU; (3) include the *Wihatas* and syndics (or *sindicicos*) in these training sessions in the RAAN and as justice facilitators, joining forces with the police and the Supreme Court of Justice; and (4) generally promote sanctions in the form of community tasks to educate and compensate for the damage to the community itself.

In general, those interviewed feel that, although government policies state that they seek poverty reduction, they are not sufficiently effective and, as a result, cause discontent with the general populace. Organized crime then capitalizes on this discontent. Even well-operated social investment programs without sufficient budgets do not respond to the loss of jobs and the disintegrating effects of migration or to the need to fulfill social rights and reduce the conditions of extreme poverty in which people live. These are challenges to achieving compliance with and sustainability of public policies.

## SECTION 6: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### Background

The consultant team has focused on providing USAID/Nicaragua with relevant, practical and “hands-on” information related to what youth programs are working well and what programming and components have shortcomings. Then, the team focused on making recommendations to USAID, which are viable and sustainable. To the extent possible, we have sought to build upon existing, ongoing positive community networks, alliances and successful initiatives for at-risk youth that can be expanded by USAID assistance. (See Table No. 7 in Annex 2 for a tabular representation of the team’s strategic recommendations.)

It is anticipated that much of the funds for this SpO for youth at-risk, focusing on young people ages 10-24, will come from the CARSI program with its concentration on reducing criminality in Nicaragua and other Central American nations, and strengthening citizen security. USAID basic education funds linked to Goals 1 and 3 of the Agency’s Education Strategy are expected to supply the remainder of U.S. Government investment for this SpO. While Goal 1 of the Strategy aims to improve reading skills for children in primary grades, Goal 3 supports learning opportunities for children and youth, strengthens crisis prevention efforts, and develops host country institutional capacity to provide education services, both non-formal and formal. Goal 3 formally calls for “increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015.” Goal 3’s Result 3.1 is “safe learning opportunities for children and youth provided,” something much needed in the troubled, crime-afflicted Caribbean coast area. Result 3.2 advocates for “crisis prevention efforts [to be] strengthened,” and Result 3.3 the “institutional capacity to provide services [is] strengthened.” Goal 3 and its three Results sub-statements directly apply to the RAAN and RAAS regions, and the precarious situation of the youth at risk.<sup>59</sup>

### **An Integrated and Geographically Focused Strategy:**

The team proposes the following **Special Objective (SpO)**:

*Adolescents and youth at risk (AYAR, 10-24 years old) in the Caribbean coastal region of Nicaragua live in strengthened and secure communities, and take advantage of ample opportunities in education, life skills and vocational training, and community engagement.*

Three components are proposed for an integrated strategic approach:

- I. **Strengthen vulnerable communities** so that youth and young adults can have a heightened sense of security, connectedness to their families, and feel positive about their futures. This invites parent and citizen participation, neighborhood security activities, and youth and adult involvement in civic life, and various social, health and community endeavors. Activities such as social outreach, community planning, parent workshops, coordination with police on neighborhood security, refurbishment of common spaces, leadership training, creation of sports

<sup>59</sup> Results 3.1 through 3.3 are described in Goal 3 of the USAID Education Strategy. ([http://transition.usaid.gov/our\\_work/education\\_and\\_universities/documents/USAID\\_ED\\_Strategy\\_feb2011.pdf](http://transition.usaid.gov/our_work/education_and_universities/documents/USAID_ED_Strategy_feb2011.pdf))

teams and leagues, cultural activities, conflict resolution training, youth-led initiatives, etc., all can spur re-activation of safe and healthy community life.

2. **Improve direct services to adolescents and youth at risk**, involving young people as much as possible in the design, management and implementation of these services and opportunities. These services can be “single programs” such as vocational training, vocational education, dance and music activities, mentoring programs, etc. Importantly, a holistic approach is recommended by which youth programs combine two or more activities such as life skills training, drug and alcohol avoidance measures, Girls Forums, internships and a variety of other possibilities frequently integrated with sports and recreational activities, both to use sports as a positive “hook” to attract youth and to take advantage of the tremendous interest of young men and women who are highly at risk.
3. **Raise awareness, influence public opinion**, and spur community action on a range of issues of concern to adolescents and youth at risk. This includes taking advantage of the pervasiveness and popularity of radios in the region, as by far the most significant medium to reach and affect youth at risk, their lives and behaviors. Yet, the consultant team found that very little good, high-quality radio programming exists that attracts youth and helps them analyze and discuss their lives and situations. Advocacy and public interest campaigns can be single-topic or integrated with several related topics to form a more holistic program, as suggested for the direct services to youth in the previous numbered point above.

### Cross cutting themes

- ⇒ **Improve knowledge management** regarding adolescents and youth at risk. This includes a gamut of measures including teacher training and training of trainers, studies, assessments, applied research, adaptation of appropriate technology, and diffusion of information for socio-economic improvement.
- ⇒ Interventions will need to conduct a **gender analysis** and ensure that (a) the overall interventions take into account particular vulnerabilities, (b) all partners consider gender when selecting participants, and (c) interventions are tailored where appropriate.
- ⇒ **Alliance-building** will be critical to ensure the government, private sector and civil society are working toward common goals, strengthen and expand youth employability services, connect the private sector with education and much more. Coordination should be at the national (Managua), regional (Bluefields and Bilwi) and municipal levels.

### Build upon existing assets

There are community assets in RAAS and RAAN which can be built upon for this SpO. The universities, BICU and URACCAN, are strong in their public outreach and service missions, are highly respected in the region and, despite their meager budgets, carry out a wide range of technical and vocational training, technical assistance, applied research, publications assistance, workshops, students performing community service and other valued projects throughout the Caribbean coast. Given tight budgets, many of these activities require external funding. Though various neighborhood organizations are politically affiliated, some are not. Schools, many of which are operated by churches, are natural

community and gathering sites for youth at risk, and they frequently have unused capacity, especially in the afternoons and on weekends. The Moravian, Catholic, Anglican and Baptist churches are the “traditional” churches of the region. Churches, particularly the Moravian and Catholic, reach large numbers of youth in dominical sessions and territory networking, though the link between spiritual and social matters needs to be strengthened. Many radio stations exist in RAAN and RAAS, and their programming and listener base can be built upon. Lastly, the consultant team found that organizational coordination in the region is generally strong. In Bluefields, for example, churches have a coordinating mechanism for addressing common issues; schools have an overall elected education council and send the chairman (currently the director of the Anglican school) to seminars as well as meetings in Managua to represent their interests; the local chamber of commerce links most local businesses (and is attempting to bring in those coming in from the outside); the shipping businesses have links with both the local tourism sectors such as hotels as well as their counterparts in Managua.

### **Target group: prioritize geographically**

The team proposes working on youth who are at particularly high risk. School-age youth who are out of the education system are particularly at risk in all of the areas cited in Section I. Added to this are youth who are in school, currently in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year of primary school up through 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of high school who live in neighborhoods which are most vulnerable. Data show clearly that young people progressively drop out during that five year window:<sup>60</sup> over three quarters of youth are in school at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> year of primary, and only 10 percent make it to their fourth year of high school. Girls in this window are particularly at risk as the chance of early pregnancy rises dramatically if they drop out of school.

The team proposes to **target geographically** rather than programmatically. The programmatic model is much more effective if it integrates sectors, and provides youth with real and tangible opportunities; this can only be done if the communities are strengthened, vocational and educational opportunities are increased significantly, and awareness is raised. One option could be to phase in neighborhoods, e.g., two year “package” of interventions, working in four neighborhoods initially, phasing in four more in year two, four more in year three (and phasing out the first four), and so on. The package would include: community planning, support for small projects, strengthened vocational services, etc. Radio and advocacy campaigns and other outreach can span the full geographic area during the life of programs.

The team proposes to work primarily in urban areas because of the combined drug, violence and family/community disintegration risks which are strongest there.

- Bluefields: urban neighborhoods of Beholden, Old Bank, Pointeen, El Canal, Cotton Tree, 19 de Julio, Santa Rosa, San Mateo, Pancasan, Fatima as well as Bluff
- Pearl Lagoon: Two Backtown neighborhoods
- Bilwi: Barrio el Cocal, Barrio Spanishtown, Barrio Los Angeles, Barrio Aleman, Barrio Nueva Jerusalem (all urban) and, if resources permit, the Community of Lamlaya, 12 kms. from the city

<sup>60</sup> MINED, 2011, Plan Estratégico de Educación 2011-2015, page 14. Table 2. Gross and net enrollment 2009

of Puerto Cabezas where a youth group has caused serious public altercations, including at the Duke of Luxembourg Normal School.

### **Programmatic Areas Recommended**

Flowing from the three pillars of the youth at-risk strategy mentioned above, the following programmatic interventions are recommended. They are listed in order of priority, understanding that these areas are inter-related and should be integrated.

- I. **Strengthen neighborhoods** through a number of interventions:
  - a. Reaching out to communities through a local NGO with capacity in community development, identifying leadership and specific organizational structures in place, building rapport with leaders, developing community support, and beginning planning processes.
  - b. Working with neighborhood structures to identify assets (organizations, talented residents and potential mentors, physical structures, relationships in place, etc.) and working with leaders to formulate community plans which identify priorities and solutions that strengthen cohesion, focus on activities for youth (sports, culture and training), and provide safe and healthy spaces for AYAR to interact, socialize and play.
  - c. Improving security is a central focus, i.e., reaching out to police and formulating plans and protocols based on a community-based policing (CBP) approach.

In particular the team believes sports should be supported and expanded in a holistic manner, and then organically linked and integrated with other useful, non-sports facets of young people's lives. This includes any number of measures, such as helping communities expand their infrastructure, creating and strengthening leagues, providing uniforms and materials, and integrating sports with cultural and vocational training. Very significantly, the consultant team learned through numerous interviews that many of the young adult, middle-aged and older leaders of their communities are former athletes themselves who have a passion for sports, engaging youth, and teaching values. Illustrative activities could be to:

- d. Assist the girls and women who play softball on the Loma Fresca field in Bluefields to upgrade the field in a self-help way so more of them can play, play better and be witnessed by more people. It could be linked to other positive activities.
  - e. Increase the number of sports facilities in Bluefields through self-help community action. There is reportedly no baseball field, especially for youngsters 10-12 years of age. The Pointen stadium for youth baseball is in disrepair. A park is needed in the 19 of July Barrio, adjacent to the municipal garbage dump where numerous residents live.
  - f. Support the (Girls') Academia de Basquetbol de Bluefields, which is a powerful program for girls ages 7-17 years that teaches life skills and values. It should be expanded.
2. **Strengthen the capacity of organizations which provide direct services to youth**, both in and out of school. This element of the strategy is very important, and has been explained in some detail above. It includes direct services and means of engagement for youth highly at risk, as well as the organizational leadership, vision, minimal material resources, development of

buy-in on the part of youth at risk and adults, and engagement of the private sector, NGOs, government offices and personnel, schools and other entities. FADCANIC, generally accepted as the strongest NGO in the region focused on youth at-risk program areas, should be the focus of institutional strengthening in various ways. There is a constant need for fortifying community and citizens' groups as they take positive, sometimes assertive, action to promote their own security, reduce criminality, and promote the general welfare. Also, the few centers that do offer vocational training in the Caribbean coast region, beginning with the INATEC institutes in Bluefields and Bilwi, should reach out more to the private sector and their surrounding communities to advertise their services and better understand the area's realities.

3. **Improve and increase training and services in conflict resolution** and amelioration of differences within households, among specific persons and within communities. This should be carried out by training teachers and trainers who will multiply their efforts in a "cascade" fashion, training youth and youth leaders, NGOs, and community activists. Two specific recommendations are to:
  - a. Increase and geographically extend in RAAN and RAAS the popular and effective DARE, GREAT and Second Step programs for youth in schools, made possible by the INL. These programs are immensely appreciated by the National Police, which operates them and whose officers serve as instructors, and by school children, parents, school directors and teachers, and communities at large. For very modest USG funding, Caribbean youth at risk, their neighborhoods and the U.S. receive considerable benefits. Specifically, we strongly recommend that at least three police officers in RAAN receive training, at \$3,000 per officer, to administer the GREAT program in RAAN, as a needed prevention measure and especially due to two large groups of youth highly at risk who have armed confrontations in Bilwi on the beach most afternoons.
  - b. Support BICU's Center for Mediation in Bluefields through technical assistance, materials and publications. To seriously make an impact, it needs more training for its volunteer lawyers and other staff, especially training to update conflict resolution techniques and settle disputes without violence. The center could also train school directors and teachers as indicated previously.
4. **Strengthen the two regional universities and their knowledge management** regarding youth at-risk. In the Caribbean Coast region where few trained human resources, infrastructure, private sector and financial resources, and strong organizations exist, BICU and URACCAN – with their talent, structure and mission of community service – stand out as sources of experience and expertise for at-risk youth programming.

It is evident to the team that BICU and URACCAN could be of further significant importance to youth, youth programs, their parents and the communities through many means, including: (a) studies and assessments, such as the assessment psychology students of URACCAN and medical students of BICU are doing to assist the National Police in Barrio San Mateo of Bluefields to decrease tensions, create opportunities and curtail youth violence in that community; (b) training of different types and sectors of the population, beginning with youth and their parents;

(c) workshops of various types; (d) mentoring of youth and youth groups, including the fact that all BICU and URACCAN students must do 60 hours of community service during their university lives;<sup>61</sup> (e) applied research; (f) assisting youth at-risk and youth groups with publications; and (g) helping with advocacy campaigns aimed at improving the lives of youth.

Again, specific recommendations are to:

- a. Assist the *Secundaria Acelerada* at URACCAN/Bilwi to educate promising young leaders of the region who otherwise would have no access to secondary education. The University has space for 120 students, but dwindling funds have brought the total down to 75 students presently, with enrollment next year likely to drop more without additional assistance.
  - b. Provide targeted technical assistance and material support to the approximately 30 psychologists trained yearly at URACCAN's Bluefields campus. Their program needs improved and upgraded and their practical field experiences enhanced to serve the many needs of tens of thousands of youth at risk and other citizens facing social, psycho-social and other problems in the region. These psychologists are also needed for attention centers for the prevention of drug-users, alcohol addicts, potential and actual victims of rape, and other types of violence.
  - c. Strengthen the Human Rights Observatory of BICU to improve credibility of information received by communities, especially regarding severe crimes such as homicides and assaults.
5. Prevent further drug dealing and drug use - and also prevent violence - through **increased rehabilitation services to youth with addiction problems**, and also **increased capacity to assist victims of sexual violence**. Given that many addicts deal drugs locally, increasing access to rehabilitation services for youth with drug addiction issues would reduce supply and also the number of people taking and pushing drugs. It would also lessen theft and violence as addicts are notorious for thievery to support their habit, and they can also be violent with each other and their peers. Enhanced capacity would be provided through increasing qualified personnel and training parents and community leaders in first responders to address issues and behaviors of addicts. This would also be combined with campaigns and training for these youth, in order to help them turn their lives around.
  6. **Promote positive youth development through radio programming and advocacy campaigns** involving enhanced radio programming for and with youth at risk and young adults, community events and engagement with key public figures (e.g., well-known sports figures, political leaders). With a modicum of funding and technical assistance, most of it coming from the region itself, selective radio programming could be strengthened which attracts youth and addresses issues which are most relevant to them.

For instance, an esteemed youth leader who has worked creatively with and across all religious and ethnic groups in RAAN has a very popular daily (Monday through Saturday) two-hour radio

<sup>61</sup> See University websites: <http://www.uraccan.edu.ni/uraccan/home.seam> and <http://www.bicu.edu.ni/>

program with a large youth audience. It is interactive and has a call-in feature attracting scores of calls daily. The station oscillates between the third and fourth largest in geographical area covered in Nicaragua. With a modest investment of USAID funds, this popular program could be expanded to three hours daily, with its discussions of drug use, conflict resolution, how to prepare for and find jobs, youth and domestic violence, life skills, violent groups and their dangers, amelioration of racial tensions and differences, alcoholism, prostitution, peer relationships, working in teams, and other topics of interest to youth. To best attract young people, these topics are usually interspersed with music that youth particularly enjoy such as reggae, socca, soul and romantic soul, dance hall, etc.

**Specific recommendations:**

- a. Expand Radio Yapti Tasba (Earth/Mother) in Bilwi at 103.1 FM, particularly the “Sat Wala” (Different) program created and managed/hosted by Dorwell Denmore Welch Wilson, popularly known by at-risk youth in the area as “Sat Wala.” Expand this program from two to three hours daily, six days a week, enlarging and fine tuning the time devoted to at-risk youth, their lives and interactively discussing problems.
  - b. Expand Radio La Costeñísima of Bluefields, directed and managed by Sergio Leon, Bluefields correspondent for the “La Prensa” newspaper.<sup>62</sup> The station employs youth who serve as news gatherers, regular reporters and in other functions. Determine if the radio’s programming for youth could be improved and/or expanded.
  - c. Ascertain if there are socio-economic and civic benefits in strengthening young adult and youth at-risk programming with the five community radio stations URACCAN operates in RAAS and RAAN.
7. **Improve teaching and curricular offerings**, especially at the late primary (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years) and early secondary school (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years) levels, through vocational training, enhanced reading proficiency, life skills, and other self-improvement experiences, as well as establishing and fortifying links to the private sector and universities. In addition to CARSI funding, Goal 3 of the Education Strategy was formulated for many such activities for at-risk youth in crisis and conflict situations. More specific recommendations in this realm include the need to:
- a. Initiate vocational orientation and guidance at the primary and secondary school level in the RAAS and RAAN. Various youth leaders, university personnel and others stressed that amidst all the family disintegration, unemployment, drugs, crime, sex, alcohol and other pressures and ills of their lives, youth of the region have little concept of what different jobs – whether manual labor or more professional jobs- entail and what is needed to attain those jobs as accountants, nurses, master carpenters, auto mechanics, business managers, bankers, etc.

<sup>62</sup>Sergio Leon was selected by the Department of State for a 15-day International Visitor program to the U.S. last year.

- b. The Academy of Excellence, operated by FADCANIC in Pearl Lagoon, should offer assistance to, for example, three neighboring schools whose quality has fallen markedly in recent years. This upgrading of nearby schools could be accomplished with relatively modest funding.
8. **Establish an agile, practical U.S. Embassy Youth Affairs Advisory Committee**, as discussed in Section 4, U.S. Embassy Youth Affairs Advisory Committee.

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## ANNEX I: PROPOSED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### Special Objective

Adolescents and youth at risk (AYAR, 10-24 years old) in the Caribbean coastal region of Nicaragua live in strengthened and secure communities, and take advantage of ample opportunities in education, life skills and vocational training, and community participation.

**IR1 - Strengthen Vulnerable Communities where AYAR live**

**IR2 - Improve Direct Services to AYAR**

**IR3 - Raise Awareness, Influence Public Opinion regarding AYAR**

### Cross-Cutting

- ⇒ Strengthen Knowledge Mgmt regarding AYAR
- ⇒ Analyze gender dynamics, tailor programming
- ⇒ Build alliances with universities, private sector, media, faith-based orgs & others

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY PLANNING, LEADERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES, IN PARTICULAR: integrating sports, cultural activities and vocational orientation; improving infrastructure, providing materials, strengthening organization; and increasing capacity to maintain safe and secure neighborhoods (CBP)

IMPROVE SCHOOL RELEVANCE AND IMPACT IN LATE PRIMARY AND EARLY SECONDARY years via teacher training in comprehensive reading, life skills training and vocational orientation

STRENGTHEN CAPACITY of organizations which provide direct services to in-school and out-of-school youth, through the Improvement of prevention of violence approaches, including life skills and vocational training, creating tangible opportunities for AYAR

IMPROVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT through training of teachers, youth, parents, and community and Youth leaders, NGOs.

STRENGTHEN UNIVERSITIES' ROLE IN KNOWLEDGE RE: AYAR: conduct studies, train teachers and trainers, monitor progress over long term, carry out security diagnostics

PREVENT INCREASED DRUG USE AND VIOLENCE BY MULTIPLYING REHAB AND ATTENTION CENTERS for drug addicts, victims of rape and other types of violence

PROMOTE POSITIVE YOUTH DEV'T & YOUTH PARTICIPATION THROUGH CAMPAIGNS (RADIO, EVENTS, etc.): amplifying youth voices, highlighting success stories, promoting communities values, denouncing delitos, crimes and drug use, highlighting promising practices in youth-led development

## **List of potential indicators**

### **Strengthen Vulnerable Communities where AYAR live**

1. Youth perception of improved community protection and security.
2. Parental and guardian involvement in youth programs and training activities and after school activities.
3. Number of youth served
4. Linkages among NGOs to work more effectively with youth at-risk on the Caribbean coast.
5. Efforts to mediate conflicts among youth groups

### **Improve Direct Services to AYAR**

1. Number of youth-friendly services, frequently including sports and recreation.
2. Degree of change in AYAR satisfaction with pre-vocational and vocational information and guidance for youth.
3. Degrees of change in AYAR satisfaction on opportunities of cultural, sports and recreation activities organized by, with and/or for AYAR.
4. Amount and quality of information provided to youth about vocational training options.
5. Quality of assistance for sexual abuse victims in both Regions.
6. Number and capacity of drug addiction services and centers for youth at-risk.

### **Raise Awareness, Influence Public Opinion regarding AYAR**

1. Number and quality of radio programs for youth and youth at-risk in RAAN and RAAS.
2. Percentage of AYAR's active participation in radio programs expressing their opinions and interests.

### **Strengthen Knowledge Management regarding AYAR**

1. Number of local trainers and trainees applying a common understanding approach on prevention of violence and AYAR's rights in schools and communities.
2. Number of lessons learned on knowledge management developed and applied to sustain training processes regarding AYAR.
3. Systems in place for ensuring action-learning processes among partners

## ANNEX 2: RAAS/RAAN Population and Poverty Data; Gang Statistics in Central America

**Table 3: Population of the Caribbean Regions by Age Group, 2011<sup>63</sup>**

Age Groups	Under 10 years old	10 to 17 years old	18 to 24 years old	Under 24 years old	Over 24 years old	Total Population	Population under 24 (%)
<b>RAAN</b>	126,486	87,893	61,866	276,245	144,289	420,534	66
<b>RAAS</b>	95,253	74,567	54,317	224,137	133,494	357,631	63
<b>Total</b>	221,739	162,460	116,183	500,382	277,783	778,165	64

**Table 4: Poverty Situation in 2009 in Percentages of the Total Population<sup>64</sup>**

Area	Poverty Rate (%)
<b>Urban Atlantic</b>	36.3
<b>Rural Atlantic</b>	68.8
<b>Urban Nationally</b>	26.8
<b>Rural Nationally</b>	63.3

<sup>63</sup>Source: Estimaciones y Proyecciones de Población 1950-2025. INIDE-CELADE.Revisión 2007.

<sup>64</sup>Source: INIDE, 2011, 2009 Living Standards Measurement Survey.

**Table 5: Number of Gang Members and Gangs per Country<sup>65</sup>**

Country	Gang Members	Number of Gangs
Honduras	36,000	112
Guatemala	14,000	434
El Salvador	10,500	4
Nicaragua	4,500	268
Costa Rica	2,660	6
Panama	1,385	94
Belize	100	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,145</b>	<b>920</b>

<sup>65</sup> Source: Central American and Caribbean Commission of Police Chiefs in World Bank 2011, Crime and Violence in Central America: A Development Challenge. Washington, DC.

### ANNEX 3: Summary Tables: Existing Programs, Exemplary Models, Donor Activity, and Recommendations for Youth in RAAS and RAAN

**Table 6: Existing Projects and Programs supporting Youth At-Risk in the Caribbean Regions**

Organization	Program/Project or School/Center	Location	Initiative
AEIJS	Violence prevention presentations, promoting sports, Sharing Groups, etc.	Bilwi	Promoting youth development and involvement of family/community to prevent violence
CEPREV	Non-formal educational model to reduce violence; published manual called "Violence of Men as result of Machismo"	Managua	Promoting involvement of family/community to prevent violence; preventing youth violence
COPRAJ	Rehabilitation center for young addicts, limited due to lack of resources	San Mateo (Bluefields)	Providing rehabilitation
Cristobal Colon Polytechnic Institute of INATEC	Professional training institution that provides life-skills courses and technical training (mechanics, electricity etc.)	Bluefields	Preparing youth for employment
FADCANIC	Cultural Revitalization Program	Pearl Lagoon	Community building, increasing citizen security
FADCANIC	Academy of Excellence (PLACE) is FADCANIC's model for community-based schooling for pre-school, primary and secondary levels in RAAS	Pearl Lagoon	Prevention of school desertion
FADCANIC	Technical Training Center that offers 3-year courses in agro-forestry and carpentry	Wawachang	Prevention of school desertion
FADCANIC (support from U.S. Embassy)	Organization for Safe and Healthy Communities (dialogue between youth and police; educating parents; introducing a rehabilitation center)	Pearl Lagoon and Bluefields	Promoting involvement of family/community to prevent violence
FADCANIC	Education for Success Project (courses in vocational and life-skills)	Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, Kukra Hill	Preparing youth for employment
INDES	The Entrepreneurship Program that teaches about business, and provides small seed capital to students	Bluefields	Preparing youth for employment
Mediation Center-BICU	Conflict resolution and mediation, mainly family issues	Bluefields	Promoting involvement of family/community to prevent violence
Movimiento Nidia White	Prevention of violence against women	RAAN- various neighborhoods	Providing rehabilitation (to women and children)
National Police (with BICU, URACCAN)	Assessment of youth at-risk and their families; community policing	Bluefields	Promoting involvement of family/community to prevent violence

National Police and Normal School	Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) (Police and Normal School can train DARE volunteers)	RAAN, El Rama	Promoting involvement of family/community to prevent violence
Peace Corps	Small Business Development Program (4 volunteers)	El Rama, Muelle de los Bueyes, Bluefields and Pearl Lagoon	Promoting entrepreneurship
URACCAN (and AEIJSa) (support from AC)	Accelerated Secondary School (nearly 100% of graduates enter university)	Bilwi	Prevention of school desertion
Volunteers	Children's Baseball Academy (children, 9 to 14 years old)	Bilwi	Promoting recreational opportunities
Volunteers	The Basketball Academy (girls, 7 to 17 years old)	Bluefields	Promoting recreational opportunities
World Bank	See table on Specific Programs on next page		

**Table 7: Specific Programs to Model or Expand on Nicaragua’s Caribbean Coast, for USAID Consideration**

<b>Opportunity or Program</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Program Description</b>	<b>Current Location(s)</b>	<b>Comments for USAID</b>
After-school “Interest Groups”	ENTERATE Project run by American Institutes for Research funded by United States Department of Labor (DOL)	Interest groups provide a non-formal education opportunity and may focus on sports, dance, the environment, etc.; provide students with positive environment and relationships	Nicaragua: Jinotega and Madriz – municipalities of San Sebastian de Yali, Somoto, Totogalpa & San Lucas (not RAAS/RAAN)	This program, which focuses on youth empowerment, has effective methodology that could be replicated
Escuelas Abiertas	National and municipal governments in the LAC region	Schools are kept open on weekends or nights and weekends for sports and to provide cultural events and vocational training	Guatemala (similar programs in Brazil, Chile, Mexico)	This is a modality that can be taken over by stakeholders and expanded throughout the region.
Linking youth with national training agencies	World Bank	Connects youth with national training agencies and assists them with internships	D.R. and Honduras	
PASEN II (Second Educational Sector Support Project)	World Bank (managed by the Ministry of Education)	Will benefit 300,000 primary school and out-of-school children; will provide students with materials and small, school libraries; has a teacher training component on multi-grade and bilingual learning	RAAS/RAAN and other areas of Nicaragua (2012-2016)	This program is already planned to take place in RAAS/RAAN but is still important because the potential USAID program would likely interact with it
Civil Society Fund 2011: Planting Seeds for a Youth Without Risk	World Bank	Provides seven NGOs with small funds to carry out initiatives around the country focused on reintegrating at-risk youth into society	Throughout Nicaragua (began late 2011)	Same situation as PASENII with components planned for RAAS/RAAN
Construye T	UNESCO and UNDP with the Secretary of Public Education and other organizations	Helps keep high-risk teens in school by teaching life-skills and coping abilities. The program intends to help implement public policy to support youth development	Mexico	
Accelerated learning program for overage students	Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI)	A holistic educational program to improve employability and provide life-skills training for youth in secondary school	Nicaragua (not RAAS/RAAN)	It could be replicated in the region based on an alliance with OEI
entra21, Youth:Work	International Youth Foundation,	Provides job skills training to youth	22 countries in LAC, including	At this time, these orgs do not have

	Fundación Leon 2000 and Cantare		Nicaragua (not the Caribbean Coast)	intentions to work in RAAS/RAAN
A Ganar	Partners of the Americas	Teaches life-skills to youth through soccer and other sports, especially skills which will help youth ages 16-24 in the job market	Ecuador, Brazil (called Vencer), Uruguay, Colombia, and has expanded to Jamaica, D.R., and the Caribbean	Adult volunteers act as mentors in this program
Garissa Youth Development Project (G-Youth)	EDC through EQUIP3	Provides opportunities for youth to socialize and become involved in positive cultural and recreational activities	Kenya (Somali youth)	Although not a LAC program, highly representative of USAID goals in Nicaragua
INDES (non-profit entity)	INDES entrepreneur programs and EDUCREDITO, an educational credit program	Uses a motivational and participatory method for training entrepreneurs, teaches about conflict resolution; participants develop a social project in their communities	Nicaragua	Present on the Caribbean Coast, but could be further utilized
Peace Corps	Small Business Development	PC volunteers teach entrepreneurship as a life skill in secondary schools; assists students in starting businesses	Nicaragua (and other developing countries)	Present on the Caribbean Coast but the project could be expanded or used as a model
Microfinance programming	PRODESA	PRODESA is one of the few microfinance firms on the Caribbean Coast- it provides financial and non-financial services to families without access to large financial institutions, raises financial awareness, provides credit	Nicaragua, RAAS/RAAN	Already present on Caribbean Coast, but perhaps youth-focused programming could be developed

**Existing Programs to support:**

Goal	Current Programs/Strategies
Improvement of sports and recreation options and quality	Assist the girls and women who play softball on the Loma Fresca field in Bluefields to upgrade the field in a self-help way so more of them can play and word can spread
	Increase the number of sports facilities in Bluefields through self-help community action
	Support the Academia de Basquetbol de Bluefields (a powerful program for girls ages 7-17 years that teaches life skills and values)

<b>Table 8: Donor Activity on Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast</b>		
<b>Donor</b>	<b>Programs/Areas of Focus</b>	<b>Funds Donated</b>
Austrian Cooperation	Support for the Accelerated Secondary School; collaboration with BICU, URACCAN and FADCANIC	Budget of US\$3 million for all projects in RAAS/RAAN up to 2015
UNDP	Governmental autonomy on the Caribbean Coast; governability of water and hygiene; cultural and productive development; food and nutritional security; support for the BICU/Puerto Cabezas leadership project	Budget of US\$2.8 million for RAAS/RAAN in 2012
UNICEF	Early infancy and childhood; quality and inclusive education through 9 <sup>th</sup> grade; protective measures for youth at-risk	Projected US\$5 million per year (\$34 million for 5 years)
UNFPA	Educational games and publications; the use of video, radio and other forms of communication to strengthen values that have been lost or distorted	Regional budget in 2012 of US\$450,000.
World Bank	PASEN II (Second Educational Sector Support Project)	US\$25 million (loan provided by International Development Association)
	Civil Society Fund 2011 I: Planting Seeds for a Youth Without Risk	About US\$4,000 per NGO (US\$28,000 total)
Spain, AACID	Training of INATEC instructors and technicians and with teaching methodologies for Intercultural Bilingual Education; construction of schools; rehabilitation of a hydro-sanitary network in Bilwi, and construction of a workshop school in Rosita; support for agriculture	€400,000 for RAAS/RAAN in 2011-2012
Finland	Support for Normal Schools and teacher training, and the primary education curriculum; collaboration with URACCAN to help transform the primary education curriculum and teacher training	Finland has suspended governmental aid. Its new development program focuses on human rights
Japan	Funding for school infrastructure; support for MINED; support for the improvement on the quality of mathematics teaching in primary education	Country grant of US\$24.2 million ending in 2014
South Korea	Support for INATEC; donated equipment and vehicles for technical training in mechanics, etc.	
Luxembourg	Resources for the construction of infrastructure; scholarships for rural students at the teacher training schools; vocational training and access to employment with INATEC (tourism) and primary health care	Country grant of US\$34 million ending in 2014
IBIS-Denmark (independent NGO)	Two main programs: one related to non-formal education and the other to government; provision of textbooks, teacher training; collaboration with URACCAN	Budget of US\$250,000 for 2012
Denmark (DANIDA)	Supports Voz Joven-UNFPA program and IBIS-Denmark. See above.	Funding is ending in mid-2013
European Union	From 2007 until 2013, the EU has been focusing on governance and democracy, education and especially vocational training, macroeconomic support and making Nicaragua investor-friendly, etc.	€214M, funding is ending in mid-2013

**Table 9: Programmatic Recommendations to support Youth At-Risk on Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast, for USAID Consideration**

Goal	Interventions
Strengthen vulnerable communities and neighborhoods	Community planning, parent workshops, coordination with police on neighborhood security (community policing), refurbishment of common spaces, leadership training, creation of sports teams and leagues, cultural activities, conflict resolution training, youth-led initiatives, linkages to NGOs through outreach, etc.
Improve direct services to adolescents and youth at risk	Involve young people in the creation of holistic programs that include life-skills training, prevention of drug and alcohol abuse, Girls' Forums, internships, sports and recreation, etc.
Raise awareness, influence public opinion through advocacy campaigns	The use of radio to spur community action through advocacy and public interest campaigns; engage existing stations and popular programs; highlight "champions" for youth and success stories; amplify youth voices, promote community values; expand Radio Yapti Tasba (Earth/Mother) in Bilwi and Radio La Costenisima of Bluefields and possibly five community radio stations (URACCAN)
Strengthen capacity of organizations which provide direct services to youth	Utilize organizations such as NGO's, especially FADCANIC, vocational training centers and other entities; involve the private sector to a greater extent
Increase rehabilitation services to youth with addiction problems	Expand the number, capacity and quality of rehabilitation centers to young people addicted to drugs and alcohol
Increase capacity to assist victims of sexual violence	Expand services among existing providers, churches and NGOs to compassionately meet the needs of victims of sexual violence.
Improve and increase training and services in conflict resolution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expand DARE, GREAT and Second Step programs for youth in schools</li> <li>2. Support BICU's Center for Mediation through technical assistance, materials, etc.</li> </ol>
Strengthen the two regional universities and their knowledge management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assist the Secundaria Acelerada at URACCAN/Bilwi to educate promising young leaders</li> <li>2. Provide modest, targeted technical assistance and material support for the (approx. 30) psychologists trained yearly at URACCAN's Bluefields campus</li> <li>3. Strengthen the Human Rights Observatory of BICU</li> </ol>
Improve teaching and curricular offerings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initiate vocational orientation and guidance at the primary and secondary school level</li> <li>2. The Academy of Excellence should offer assistance to neighboring schools</li> </ol>
Other Recommended Strategies	
Goal	Interventions/Strategies
Prevent youth violence and support community building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Geographic/community approach: All actors in the community are brought into a conversation in order to reduce tensions and identify needs; programs are targeted geographically</li> <li>2. Three pillar approach: In order to keep youth connected to society, there should be a focus on (1) education, (2) employability and (3) violence prevention.</li> <li>3. Building upon existing assets such as universities, churches, schools, etc.</li> <li>4. Utilizing school infrastructure for extra-scholastic activities; can serve both in-school and out-of-school youth</li> </ol>
Support out of school youth, prevent school desertion	Flexible education programs (Youth, especially those in secondary school, are provided with multiple options to attend school - morning classes, night classes, weekend classes, etc.)

<p>Prepare youth for employment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Alliance-building and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): The private sector becomes involved in identifying labor needs, providing internships to youth, offering job opportunities and serving as trainers and mentors.</li> <li>2. Comprehensive training : Youth are provided with a wide variety of training including technical skills, life skills, internships and job-seeking skills</li> <li>3. Job Placement partnerships with employers: Job placement occurs with the building of relationships and obtaining internship commitments well in advance of need</li> </ol>
<p>Improve teaching and curricular offerings</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initiate vocational orientation and guidance at the primary and secondary school level</li> <li>2. The Academy of Excellence should offer assistance to neighboring schools</li> </ol>

## **ANNEX 4: Complementary information of Notable Programs, Projects and Initiatives Underway in RAAS and RAAN**

Christian Medical Action (AMC) in the RAAS and RAAN focuses on community development with cross-cutting issues of violence, gender and the environment. Territorially, it covers Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon and Kukra River (a community to the southeast of Bluefields). In the RAAN, it has programs in Prinzapolka, Sasha, Siuna and Bonanza. It prioritizes adolescents and women. AMC promotes sports and cultural activities with youth; organizes pastoral networks to talk about the message of God in an understandable way and in the native tongues of the area.

The Youth Movement of the Center for Human, Civil and Autonomous Rights (CEDEHCA) promotes the human rights of youth and their participation in the formulation of social and cultural projects, leadership training, and fundraising for their activities. It fosters youth participation and education against discrimination, prevention of violence, educational campaigns and advocacy for youth in political spaces and before decision-makers. It uses methodologies to promote life skills through crafts workshops.

URACCAN has five centers in Las Minas to reincorporate graduates from its university campus into their communities of origin and, in conjunction with the municipal governments, it offers seed capital for projects. This initiative will conclude in 2012 and is a good practice with results that reveal that 95 percent of the graduates already have work.

Since 2008, the Center for Psycho-social Care (CAPS) has conducted a drug prevention and human rights promotion program which, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, includes preschool and the teachers in the schools. It uses a methodology based on stories written with assistance from Catalan cooperation. Its two facilitators cover almost all the schools in Bluefields and some 8,000 students with the support of the trained teachers accompanied by CAPS. They form groups of at-risk youth in the schools, with no more than 10 participants each. The groups meet for eight sessions on issues related to prevention. CAPS has served some 20 groups. It has a detoxification unit in the hospital. In coordination with the Adolescent Court, addicted youth who have been charged are attended in the clinic and the detoxification unit in the hospital.

The Regional Center Association for Information and Counseling on HIV-AIDS (ACRIC) in Bluefields (in El Bluff and the community of Rama Key) and in La Desembocadura del Río Grande (in five communities: Kara, La Barra, Wualpa, Sandy Bay and Karawala) provides HIV diagnosis and counseling, complemented by HIV tests, care for women of childbearing age, and training of midwives and health care personnel. ACRIC is part of the Caribbean Coast Campaign for the Right to Comprehensive Health.

The Adolescent Court in the RAAS works on the prevention of violence among school age youth (15 to 18 years of age) that commit crimes, mainly robbery and assault. It establishes agreements with secondary school principals to make presentations and raise awareness about the Code on Children, and especially Book III and the consequences for violating the law. *For those who are sentenced*, an individual rehabilitation plan is developed in accordance with the measures decided by the court and lasting as long as the sentence (three months to six years). It ensures that the measures are not custodial and that they involve reincorporation into school and taking vocational courses during free time, with follow-up and home visits. It has an agreement with the URACCAN School of Psychology to

attend the youth and the meetings with their parents and younger siblings to restore communication and take action against family violence.

The Adolescent Court in the RAAS and the BICU, within the framework of an agreement between the BICU and the Supreme Court of Justice, have an agreement to enable youth in custody who are in fourth or fifth year of secondary school to learn about the offerings of the university and to set a goal for their studies. It involves three visits per week to the library and to the Human Rights Observatory of the BICU.

## ANNEX 5: List of Persons Met and Interviewed

### **RAAN**

#### **UNIVERSITY PERSONNEL**

1. Reynaldo Figueroa, Vice Rector, Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University (BICU)
2. Milton Zamora, Professor of Tourism and Hotel Management, BICU; co-founder and Board Member of Association of Women, Adolescents and Youth (ADMAJC)
3. Alta Suzanne Hooker Blandford, Rector, URACCAN
4. (Dr.) Cyril Omier Green, Secretary General, URACCAN
5. Yuri Zapata Webb, Director of Institutional Analysis, Planning and Evaluation, URACCAN
6. Oslund Rains Franklin, Director, Economic Analysis, URACCAN
7. Marcos Williamson, Director, Center of Socio-Environmental Information, URACCAN

#### **NGOREPRESENTATIVES**

8. Shira Miguel, Coordinator, Nydia White Movement
9. Karen Salomón, Coordinator, Voces Caribeñas, RAAN
10. Adela Grey, Social Work Coordinator, TESIS, Health Education and Social Integration Workers
11. Alicia Martin Watson, Coordinator Programa Voz Joven UNFPA/ RAAN
12. Norma Morazán, Coordinator, Integral Education Program
13. Jennifer Chávez, Coordinator of ADMAJC, Association of Women, Adolescents and Youth
14. José Enrique Rosman Wilson, Program Coordinator, AEIJA, Integral Education Association for Bilwi Healthy Youth

#### **GOVERNMENT**

15. Yuri Valle Olivares, Commissioner Major, National Police, RAAN
16. Emilio Morales, Secretary for Youth Affairs, Regional Government, RAAN
17. Carlos Alemán, President, Regional Council, RAAN
18. Cesar Arana, Controller, INATEC/Bilwi

#### **MEDIA**

19. Dorwell Denmore Welch Wilson, Creator, Manager and Host of “Sat Wala” (Different) daily radio program on Radio Yapti Tasba (Earth/Mother), 103.1 FM, Bilwi; Diffusion and Press Technician, Regional Government of RAAN

## **MULTILATERAL DONOR PERSONNEL**

20. Betty Rigby Brooks, Program Officer, Caribbean Coast Program, UNDP

## **RAAS**

### **UNIVERSITY PERSONNEL**

21. Roy Lopez Williamson, Vice-Rector, BICU; Professor of Mathematics and Statistics
22. Angelica Brown, Head of English Department, BICU
23. Gustavo Castro, Rector, BICU
24. Donald Byers, Director, Centro for Research and Documentation of the Caribbean Coast, BICU
25. Kevin López, Director, Human Rights Observatory, BICU
26. Zarifeth Bolanos Chow, Vice Rector, URACCAN
27. Alba Luz Dávila , Academic Secretary, URACCAN
28. Ledia Arroliga, Director, Mediation Center, BUCU

### **NGO REPRESENTATIVES**

29. Annette Fenton and Hazel Wilson, Head of Private Sector Relations and Coordinator of Education Program, respectively, FADCANIC
30. Annette Delgado, Interim Director, Center of Psycho-Social Attention (CAPS)
31. Georgina Perret, Director and four Collaborators, Adolescent and Youth Occupational and Rehabilitation Center (COPRAJ)
32. Irene Cuthbert, Program Director, FADCANIC/Pearl Lagoon
33. Grace Gordon, Director, Education for Success Program
34. Gustavo Estrada, Food Security Specialist, Help in Action (Ayuda en Acción)
35. Víctor González, Unit Chief, Central Regional Association of Information and Counseling in VIH - SIDA (ACRIC)
36. Xiomara Ibarra, Association of Young Women Fighters
37. Gorman Jaenstzhke, Coordinador, Regional Youth Program, Moravian Church
38. Dominga Hernández, Head of Regional Youth Leadership, INDES
39. Jayrizna Gadea, Promotor, Hermanamiento Maastrich Rama (HMR)
40. Yolanda Flores, Advisor in School Counseling, Departmental Office, RAAS
41. Centro de Información de la Costa Atlántica (CIDCA)

### **GOVERNMENT**

42. Nubia Ordoñez, Secretary of Education, Regional Government, RAAS

43. Carmen Dixon, Municipal Education Delegate, Municipality of Kukra Hill
44. Boanerges Fornos, Regional Fiscal Officer, Public Ministry, RAAS
45. Aide Flores, Mirna Villalba, Dulce María, Cesar Delegado, Municipal Education, Inspector Municipal, Principal of Secondary School, Municipality of Kukra Hill, MINED
46. Rolando Colson, Deputy Commissioner, National Police, RAAS
47. Yukari Murakami, Office Director, Office of Adolescent Legal Sanctions
48. Marlene Galeano, Administrative Deputy Director, INATEC/Bluefields
49. Rolando Colson, Deputy Commissioner, National Police, RAAS
50. Eleazar Oporta, Inspector and Youth Affairs Officer, National Police, RAAS
51. Victor Lopez, Deputy Commissioner, National Police, Pearl Lagoon
52. Esperanza Urrutia, Deputy Inspector, National Police, El Rama Office
53. The Municipal House of Adolescents and Youth, RAAS

#### **PRIVATE SECTOR**

54. Erasmo Flores, President, Bluefields Chamber of Commerce
55. Carlos Eddie Monterrey, President, Chamber of Tourism
56. Iván Rodríguez, Branch Director, El Verdugo

#### **CHURCH PERSONNEL**

57. Bishop Oliver Hudson, Bishop Moravian Church
58. Allan Budier, Head of Moravian Secondary School
59. Jose Lopez, Diocesan Director of Finances; ex-teacher, Catholic Vicariate of Bluefield
60. Ricardo Carlson Taylor, Headmaster, Anglican school
61. Bishop David Zyweic, Auxiliary Bishop, Vicariate of Bluefields
62. Bishop Paul Schmitz, Bishop, Vicariate of Bluefields

#### **MULTILATERAL DONOR PERSONNEL**

63. Marieliz Belinda Rodríguez, Program Coordinator, Voz Joven, UNFPA/ RAAS
64. Francisco González, Municipal Coordinador, Voz Joven , UNFPA

#### **U.S. INSTITUTIONS**

65. Chris Brennan, TOEFL Volunteer in Pearl Lagoon, Peace Corps
66. Martin Donascimento, TOEFL Volunteer in Kukra Hill, Peace Corps

#### **MEDIA**

67. Erwin Espinoza, Press Chief, Radio Bluefields, and Director of Radio Kukra Hill

68. Sergio León, Director and Manager, Radio La Costeñísima; Correspondent, La Prensa

### **YOUTH LEADERS**

69. William Pineer, President, Christian Force Youth Association, Moravian Churches, AJECIM

70. Roy Brooks, Coordinator, Municipal House of Adolescents and Youth

71. Edmundo Gómez, President, CDS

### **MANAGUA**

#### **NGO REPRESENTATIVES**

72. Evelyn Pinto, Program Coordinator, IBIS-Denmark

73. Oscar Núñez, Director, PREVENSIDA Project

74. Ray Hooker, Director, FADCANIC

75. Mónica Zalaquett, Director, Center for Violence Prevention

76. Christina Hoernicke, Interim Director and Social Sector Advisor, Austrian Cooperation

77. Chantal Pallais, National Official, Program for Adolescents and Youth

78. Raquel María Flores, Board Member, Fundación León 2000

#### **CHURCH PERSONNEL**

79. Padre Floriano, Parish Priest (of Misquito origin), San Rafael Arcángel Parish

80. Marta Irene Vargas, Vice Coordinator, Education, Vicariate of Bluefield's office in Managua

81. Cairo Jaquin, Project Manager, Catholic Relief Services

82. Hugh Aprile, Country Representative, Catholic Relief Services

#### **U.S.G. INSTITUTIONS**

83. Brian Conneely, Country Attaché, Drug Enforcement Administration (part of the U.S. Department of Justice), U.S. Embassy

84. Erica Smith, Security Officer, Regional Security Office, U.S. Embassy

85. Nicholas Griffith, Narcotics Affairs Officer, INL, U.S. Embassy

86. Gloria Rodríguez, Program Manager, INL, U.S. Embassy

87. Ricardo Zambrano, Small Business Development Volunteer in El Rama, Peace Corps

#### **USAID PERSONNEL**

88. Kirk Dahlgren, Acting Mission Director

89. Gabriel Grau, Program Officer and Acting Deputy Mission Director

90. Alicia Dinerstein, Chief, Office of Health and Education

- 91. Alicia Slate, Education Specialist
- 92. Marcela Villagra, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
- 93. Julie Boccanera, Health Officer
- 94. Jessica Zaman, Democracy and Governance Officer
- 95. Aaron Ruble, Regional Contracting Officer
- 96. Chris Cole, Program Officer
- 97. Rosa Jimenez, Supervisor, Office of Acquisition and Assistance
- 98. Clelia Valverde, Health Specialist

**MULTILATERAL DONOR PERSONNEL**

- 99. Virgilio Rivera and Galio Gurdian, Program Officer and Coordinator, Caribbean Coast Program, UNDP
- 100. Roberto Paramo, Program Officer for Education, UNICEF

**KEY INFORMANTS**

- 101. Eduardo Cuadra, Consultant
- 102. Roberto Orozco, Researcher, IEEPP

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