SITUATION ASSESSMENT: RESTORATIVE JUVENILE JUSTICE AND YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION
THE NICARAGUA EXPERIENCE

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## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section I. Recommendations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section II. Nicaragua’s Juvenile Justice System</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section III. The Restorative Juvenile Justice Model</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, Central American institutions, including those in El Salvador and Nicaragua, have become increasingly alarmed about rising violence and juvenile delinquency, and gang violence in particular.

Justice and public security institutions are under pressure to clamp down on this problem with increasingly long prison terms imposed at ever younger ages. Yet the “zero tolerance” enforcement policies applied in recent years, particularly in the northern triangle of Central America, have failed to reduce levels of violence. Instead, they have contributed to a qualitative and quantitative rise in violence and crimes involving youth.¹

This type of violence has become a structural problem and it requires a comprehensive, coordinated response from government institutions and civil society. At the same time, government policies must prioritize prevention and strengthen the relevant institutions of the justice system.

Government institutions must replace a purely retributive vision with a restorative approach. Restorative juvenile justice (RJJ) encourages juvenile justice system operators to strike a balance between responsibility for the harm caused and protection, control, and education/socialization. It also takes the direct or indirect victim of the crime into consideration through direct or indirect reparations for the harm done, all in the framework of community involvement.

This restorative approach has already yielded positive results in some countries of the region, including Nicaragua, whose juvenile violence and crime rates are lower than those of other countries in the northern triangle (El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala). This report examines Nicaragua’s positive experience and offers recommendations geared towards scaling them up and replicating them in other countries in the region with a view to shifting the focus away from retribution as the operative paradigm in the fight against crime.

¹ Central American Observatory on Violence
SECTION I. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended to strengthen juvenile justice system institutions by replacing the retributive justice model with aspects of the restorative approach.

1. Identify and clearly distinguish activities, projects and programs that are working on violence and crime. It is important not to identify activities targeted towards young people who are not in conflict with the criminal legal system as juvenile justice efforts. Not all restorative practices and methods belong in the criminal justice realm. The justice system should not be allowed to encroach on noncriminal behaviors.

2. Design a communications strategy to publicize studies showing that it is widely accepted that iron fist, super iron fist, and zero tolerance policies have not worked.

3. Compile, examine, and systematize the most relevant studies and situation reports that merit further analysis. International cooperation should focus on “direct action and intervention” programs and projects for beneficiaries, of which there are very few.

4. Focus on preventive actions, projects, and programs. Support and work mainly with adolescents and young adults who exhibit pre-criminal behaviors.

5. Promote actions, projects, and programs to train youth for employment or self-employment, such as loans for microenterprises, for example. Support should also be offered for health by promoting addiction prevention and treatment, and mental health, sexuality and reproductive health services.

6. Promote specialized training for judges, prosecutors, defenders, and sentence execution offices in order to consolidate the various anticipated outcomes of criminal proceedings (conciliation, remission, deferred adjudication, reparation for the harm done, etc.), and to ensure proper execution of non-prison sentences.

7. Work on institutional strengthening and coordination, with a particular focus on institutions in the system that have been put on the back burner or neglected outright (prosecutors, defenders, interdisciplinary technical teams, and agencies responsible for executing alternative measures). These institutions should produce procedures manuals and codes of ethics for following up on court-ordered alternative measures. The idea is to computerize the processes, generate warnings, and obtain reliable data and indicators.

8. Create or reinforce specialized police units devoted exclusively to prevention (drawing from the good practices, experiences, and community intervention model adopted by the Juvenile Affairs Division of the Nicaraguan National Police).
9. Support institutions responsible for the detention of offenders in order to keep adults and adolescents segregated. This can facilitate the presence of social workers and psychologists to guide and assist adolescents and young adults.

10. Establish mechanisms for reparations to victims with a restorative justice focus and promote specialized criminal mediation services in the juvenile justice system (see the experience of USAID’s Restorative Juvenile Justice Project).

11. Work with incarceration facilities to identify youth in pretrial detention or with final sentences that might be eligible for review or modification. Semi-open and open custody settings can also be promoted, as well as pre-release programs.

12. Develop an accessible, practical specialized training plan on restorative juvenile justice for social and justice operators. Scholarships can be offered for this specialized training.

13. Review indicators to measure the efficiency of institutions working with juvenile offenders. The results should be evaluated using indicators for re-socialization, effective sentence compliance, recidivism rates, youth participation in programs, volume of individual case work with youth, etc.

14. Promote or strengthen the work of institutions responsible for executing alternative measures or for the incarceration of adolescent girls and young mothers in order to help them care properly for their children. They can be offered information and guidance to prevent child abandonment and mistreatment.

15. Develop strategies to involve young people’s families in the work of the various professionals and implementing agencies, including the establishment, promotion, and support of family associations, schools for parents, or “self-help” groups.

16. Promote the participation of nongovernmental aid organizations (NGOs) in strategic planning processes tailored to the plans of the countries where they will be working.

17. Replicate positive experiences in other countries of the region. Some of the positive practices and experiences from Nicaragua and El Salvador could be replicated in other Central American countries. In general terms, any experience is replicable if there is a will to implement it.
Although violence is pervasive and endemic throughout the region, there are pronounced differences between countries.

Although youth gangs are present in Nicaragua, they do not feature the level of structure and organization as those operating in El Salvador and northern Central America. In Nicaragua, the gangs tend to be smaller in number and the crimes they commit are not as violent or brutal as those registered in El Salvador. And while the social perception of insecurity associated with young people is observed throughout the region, it is not as acute in Nicaragua as in El Salvador.

A. The Specific Situation in Nicaragua

Nicaragua has the lowest juvenile incarceration rate of the American continent. As of January 2011, 152 adolescents were reported to be incarcerated in eight penitentiaries around the country. Two of them are adolescent girls, and 84 (55.3 percent) are “special cases,” or young adults over the age of 18 who were convicted as minors, in which case they completed their sentences in a Specialized Adolescent Center or were subsequently transferred to an adult prison.

At present, there is no specialized penitentiary unit exclusively for minors. Adolescents are segregated from adults in their own cells or facilities in the country’s eight penitentiaries.

There is a genuine ray of hope in this clearly precarious and deficient state of affairs. Ground has been broken for the construction and operation of a Specialized Multipurpose Center for Adolescents in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS by its Spanish acronym).2 This new center is poised to become a prototype for the country and for the entire region. Exclusively for adolescents, its psychosocial and educational services model will be based on the restorative approach (classification, individualized and evidence-based treatment, specialized staff, an education program, and a pre-release program). Several international agencies3 are providing advisory services on the educational concept and development. The Terre des Hommes Foundations in Lausanne, Switzerland and Italy are also providing ongoing assistance to the center (with specific contributions by other specialized European agencies).

The construction of this center is a step forward not only for the penitentiary system but for the restorative justice movement. Incarceration does have a role in the concept of restorative justice. Were that not the case, a significant group of young people would be excluded from the benefits offered by this approach.

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2 The Andalusian Agency for International Development Cooperation in Spain has provided funding for this project.
3 The State Society of Penitentiary Infrastructures and Equipment of Spain and Specialized Centers for Youth Offenders in Spain and Switzerland.
B. Discussion of Key Institutions: Nicaragua

Juvenile justice system institutions employ organizational models based on successive chains of improvised political decisions. They are totally inappropriate and unresponsive to the demands of contemporary law to address today’s problems.

Legislation. The basic legal framework offers genuine potential for the implementation of a system premised on restorative justice.

Nicaraguan law recognizes basic criminal due process guarantees for adolescent offenders and the preferential use of social and educational measures proportionate to the offense, and stipulates that incarceration should be used as a last resort. It also recognizes the need to pay special attention to the interests of young adults and adolescents from indigenous communities.

Police forces as critical for prevention. Nicaragua has a specialized police division for juvenile affairs that is focused on prevention and is not involved in investigations. This community policing division is totally devoted to juvenile promotion activities and accompanies juvenile offenders in investigation proceedings. It is regarded as an ally of young people and the community.

In Nicaragua, the investigative (judicial assistance) police division is not specialized in juvenile matters. Detention centers do not offer the conditions or protections that adolescents and young adults require. The success of the police juvenile affairs division is due in large part to the fact that it is not involved in the investigations.

Prosecutors. Their role is mainly accusatory from a retributive justice perspective. Only a few prosecutors in Nicaragua are specialized and have begun to assimilate a restorative approach, use mediation or reparations, or promote alternatives to incarceration where possible based on the type of offense.

Prosecutors do not have the support of interdisciplinary teams and therefore have little access to relevant information on the young people or their environment. This information is critical for investigating and classifying the offense.

Judges. Juvenile judges in Nicaragua are qualified to conduct pre-trial proceedings, issue rulings, and supervise sentence execution. There are no specialized appeals courts. The pre-trial, resolution, and sentence execution phases continue to rely heavily on a retributive or custodial approach. Although a shift towards a restorative approach has been observed in recent years, there are significant gaps in this process.

Since judges play such a predominant role vis-à-vis the rest of the system’s operators, they sometimes encroach on other areas, taking on roles that are not inherently jurisdictional in contravention of the principle of ensuring that judicial actions do not become tainted. As a result of this protagonism on the part of judges, public opinion has come to associate the perceived increase in criminal violence with the performance of the court system.
Interdisciplinary teams. These teams play a very important role in the pre-trial phase by contributing information about the young people (background, environment, circumstances). Unfortunately, judges rarely request the services of these teams. Their role is both undervalued and underutilized.

Mistaken notion of efficiency: “requirements” concerning results. Several justice or police institutions require “minimum results” plans based on a misguided notion of tracking, supervising, and measuring performance efficiency. These practices are conducive to “over-activity” on the part of judges, prosecutors, and police with respect to cases involving juveniles in conflict with the law. They also foster repressive policies and excessive criminalization of youth. A perverse logic takes over in which operators are compelled to act in ways that run counter to restorative juvenile justice models, since professional outcomes are measured in statistics on convictions, indictments, etc.
SECTION III. THE RESTORATIVE JUVENILE JUSTICE MODEL

Restorative juvenile justice is a vision, approach, and attitude in the day-to-day work of the justice system. It does not dismiss the danger or harm an adolescent boy or girl can cause, but seeks to strike a balance between protection, control, and education/socialization. In contrast to retributive justice, which revolves around the offense and attendant punishment, RJJ focuses on the impact of the offense on a specific individual and the need to make reparations for it. To this end, the strategy of restorative justice is based on comprehensive processes involving all stakeholders.

RJJ operates in three spheres, each of which actively involves a specific actor: the accountability of the perpetrator, reparations for the victim, and the community’s shared responsibility to reintegrate the young offender.

Currently, a number of random activities are ascribed to the restorative justice category even though it is unclear in which sphere they are operating. Violence prevention is not the same as crime prevention. Conflict resolution using a restorative method is not the same as intervening in an adversarial criminal proceeding derived from the commission of a crime.

There is no question that restorative methods play a critical role in peaceful conflict resolution. These methods can also be very useful in cases where the conflict has arisen from the commission of a crime and they sometimes contribute to a resolution of the matter outside of the criminal sphere.

Criminal mediation can be extremely useful in the removing youth from the judicial system and even in making reparations to the victims and to society. It is important to use caution, however, to ensure that the implementation of such methods does not undermine the restorative approach in other areas of the criminal justice sphere. It is also important to avoid using the justice system or criminal courts to deal with youth involved in conflictive situations that do not constitute crimes or misdemeanors.

The RJJ model is reparative, reconciliatory, respectful of the rights of the victims, supportive of social peace, and geared towards the positive social reinsertion of offenders. All of these things foster the development of alternative measures that benefit adolescents and the community, while not discarding the importance of incarceration when it is absolutely necessary and always in exceptional cases (for crimes that cause particular social disruption), for the least possible time period, and with a spirit of reinsertion and preparation for release.

A. Positive Experiences in Nicaragua and El Salvador

The institutional situation and stakeholder support in both countries were conducive to promoting the restorative approach in both of these countries, as well as others on the isthmus. RJJ projects carried out in conjunction with USAID, such as the Regional Youth
Alliance (USAID/SICA) and USAID’s Restorative Juvenile Justice Project, have created high expectations in the region.

*The Nicaraguan government’s endorsement of restorative justice.* In recent years, Nicaragua has taken the truly laudable step of incorporating the restorative approach into its juvenile justice model. It is important to outline what this has meant in practice.

Nicaragua has been fully engaged in the process of applying and integrating the RJJ model, especially since 2007. This has required specialized training for all those involved in the juvenile administration of justice system.

In 2007, the International Terre des Hommes Foundation based in Lausanne, Switzerland, took the decisive step of launching the Pilot Project on RJJ and Prevention of Urban Juvenile Violence, Phase I 2007 – 2010. Its objectives were to advise and strengthen the Nicaraguan judiciary and all of the institutions responsible for the monitoring, control, and treatment of juvenile offenders. The project focused on five pilot areas in five judicial districts.

In the wake of the many successes registered in the first phase, this year (2011) Terre des Hommes carried out a second phase of the project in conjunction with high-level officials of the Supreme Court of Justice, the Ministry of Government, the Juvenile Affairs Division of the National Police, the Office of the Public Defender (under the judiciary), and the Public Ministry. It is titled, “Restorative Juvenile Justice in Nicaragua Program – Strengthening of the Specialized Juvenile Justice System and the Prevention of Urban Juvenile Violence Plan.” In this case, the approach is systemic and countrywide, encompassing all nine judicial districts where a Juvenile Court is present. The purpose of the new program is to establish and consolidate the RJJ model begun in the pilot phase. The outcomes of the RJJ project in Nicaragua include:

1. Key institutions of the juvenile criminal justice system have taken responsibility for strengthening their processes with a view to universal application. These institutions, which include the Juvenile Affairs Division of the National Police, have adopted a comprehensive and systemic approach and have identified other entities besides the traditional ones as well as additional community resources for the young offender.

2. These institutions have clearly opted to prioritize primary prevention (before the act occurs), secondary prevention (at the onset of violence) and tertiary prevention (after the violent act has occurred). They have set out to strengthen previously overlooked entities that are also critical to the process (OTSSPA, OEVSPA, and the penitentiary system).

3. Work is being done with defenders, police, prosecutors, judges, and sentence execution offices. Methods are being identified to constructively examine the implementation of new procedures. Other initiatives focus on developing norms, procedures, and protocols to coordinate this systemic vision, particularly at the level of sentence execution.
Justice operators within the judicial branch (judges, interdisciplinary teams, and teams from sentence execution offices,), the Office of the Public Defender and the Public Ministry, and public security institutions (police and penitentiary system), as well as actors from other governmental and private entities (community groups, civil society, NGOs, and the like) are receiving specialized, interdisciplinary training in the guiding principles of this justice model.

4. New technologies are now being employed to effectively buttress the system. A computerized management tool called Kaikaia has been developed with the support of the Swiss Tutator Foundations in Aubonne and Terre des Hommes in Lausanne.

Growing interest in RJJ in El Salvador. Several recent RJJ successes in El Salvador are worth examining, since they have yielded positive results in a short time. The initiatives of the Pro Youth [Pro Jóvenes] Project of the National Council on Public Security (CNSP), for example, have reduced crime rates significantly, particularly homicides.

Also noteworthy is the attitude and political will demonstrated by the new heads of the ISNA, who have taken responsibility for reinforcing the institution’s structure and organizational model so that it will be able to fulfill its mandates. These officials have stated that they will adopt a comprehensive restorative vision.

Several other initiatives should also be mentioned in light of their outcomes. These include the USAID/SICA Regional Youth Alliance project and the USAID Restorative Juvenile Justice Project, as well as the prevention initiatives sponsored by Passionist Social Services. A USAID-funded pilot project has been underway since October 2010 in San Salvador and Santa Tecla to introduce options for restorative dialogue in juvenile criminal cases. This is a process in which accused youth speak directly to the victim about his or her responsibility for the actions and the steps that should be taken to make reparations for the harm done. A meeting is held with the victim’s family, the victim, and a community representative to discuss the impact of the crime on the victim and the circumstances in which the young person committed the crime, and to explore the types of commitments, whether pecuniary or otherwise, that the young person will make in the form of reparations for the harm done. Reparations, which are the basis for restoring the relationship with the victim and the community, will be made with the support of community services and parole programs, as well as the project, while the families and sentence execution offices and programs are responsible for supervision.

The project’s first phase has focused on assessments, consultations with judges, prosecutors, and defenders in the juvenile justice system, and professional training for juvenile court professional staff, the Office of the Public Prosecutor and the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic, the Institute for Childhood and Adolescence, the Juvenile Justice Unit of the Supreme Court of Justice, and civil society organizations. Training of restorative meeting facilitators is ongoing. The handbook for organizing and facilitating restorative meetings is ready for use in the second phase of case management with restorative options scheduled for the second half of 2011.
The Salvadoran context is obviously very complex. Nonetheless, some professionals working in the juvenile justice system and other relevant institutions have adopted the restorative approach and have initiated the process of structural adaptation.

**B. Replicability in Other Countries in the Region**

The model for instituting an ongoing, systemic and interdisciplinary training program developed in Nicaragua (with support from Terre des Hommes) and directed by justice system operators can be replicated in other countries in the region. Moreover, the Central American Court of Justice could adopt and promote this model and provide advisory services. Some contracts and preparatory work are already in place with projects working along these same lines. The Court could act as a bridge between the various judicial entities of the countries on the isthmus. Indeed, it has already expressed an interest in doing so, as well as in working with other stakeholders and major donors to establish a Central American observatory on RJJ.

The preventive intervention model of the Juvenile Affairs Division of the Nicaraguan Police could also be replicated in several countries in the region and therefore merits further study.

The pilot project establishing a Specialized Multipurpose Center for the Care and Treatment of Adolescents in Conflict with the Law in Nicaragua (located in Bluefields) should be closely monitored as another replicable model. This pilot center’s restorative approach to specialized services is unique in the region and on the Latin American continent.

The evolution of norms governing the application of alternative measures in Nicaragua is replicable in any country in the region. In fact, similar processes are already underway in El Salvador, through ISNA; in Guatemala, through the Secretariat of Social Welfare; and in Honduras, through the Honduran Institute for Children and Families. Similarly, the development of procedures manuals for judges, defenders, and prosecutors initially undertaken in Nicaragua can be replicated elsewhere. To this end, it would be very useful to share positive experiences and encourage visits between the relevant professionals.

The Kaikaia software program (http://tutator.net/) for the management, monitoring, and control of alternative measures has already been launched in Nicaragua. This software represents an international milestone that could radically change the way such measures are implemented insofar as it requires a review of processes, technical procedures, and supporting documentation, and generates extremely reliable indicators.

These processes should be replicated in the countries of the northern triangle and could also be applied in Panama and Costa Rica. The latter are in the throes of an institutional deterioration process that could complicate the situation throughout the region.

A regional strategy is needed to halt institutional deterioration and keep youth from turning to crime, consolidate current positive experiences, ensure progress in implanting the restorative approach, and expand to Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, and Honduras.
C. Limitations, Barriers, and Risks

Weak civil society. Civil society is virtually absent from the juvenile justice system. Where it is present, it is disorganized, volunteer-dependent, and sometimes counter-productive. Although there are registries of organizations, the latter are not accredited and there are no protocols in place for coordination with the institutions responsible for sentence execution. It would therefore be worthwhile to pay close attention to the work that USAID’s Restorative Juvenile Justice Project is doing.

It is also important to take into account traditional administration of justice practices in indigenous communities. In Nicaragua, for example, the judiciary’s organic law urges it to uphold the justice meted out by indigenous peoples. Some of these practices can be considered fully restorative, although others violate certain basic rights.

Egocentrism of judicial institutions and lack of a system-wide vision. Judicial institutions have dominated the limelight up to now, while key juvenile justice institutions have remained in the shadows. This has contributed to a lack of comprehensive approaches and the failure of judicial action.

In general, there is no systemic vision of juvenile justice, understood as coordination among the different institutions and operators involved with the young offender in the criminal justice system and in the community.

Agencies of the justice ministries, penitentiary systems, and agencies working with children or families have allowed judicial institutions to predominate due to their own internal weakness and disorganization. This has led to role confusion, disjointed interventions, and even encroachment, all of which has contributed to a pervasive sense of institutional “chaos.”

While a fair amount of work has been devoted to the investigation, pre-trial, and sentencing phases of the judicial process, the execution of measures has been mostly (if not totally) overlooked.

Execution of alternative measures. Over the past two years, Nicaragua has made significant progress in the execution of alternative measures, including the use of such measures by judges, and monitoring and supervision by the OEVSPA.

A procedural regulation has been established (Agreement No. 68 of the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice) which has organized and systematized monitoring and supervision of sentence execution. At the same time, processes have been automated, along with data and warning systems, so that the Agreement issued by the Chamber can be carried out uniformly around the country.

Execution of prison terms. Incarceration rates are particularly low in Nicaragua (the lowest on the Latin American continent) and according to recent trends, they are still declining in direct proportion to the increase in (alternative) socio-educational measures.
Since 2008, the Ministry of Government has been making a significant effort to improve the conditions and life of incarcerated youth by introducing occupational activities (sports, education, health, and the like). Work is also being done to strengthen coordination between the experts and teams in the penitenciaries and OEVSPA professional staff and on the classification and progressive nature of the measures, all in the framework of the RJJ model.

Violence: Clearly, extreme violence in El Salvador is a serious barrier to efforts to institute a restorative approach. Organized criminal networks and drug and weapons trafficking in the region complicate any action targeting youth. The persistent use of violence as a political weapon and the powerful pressure brought to bear by the media hamper assimilation of the restorative approach. This is compounded by the extreme weakness and disorganization of the institutions of jurisdiction.

The situation of young adults ages 18 to 25. The data obtained reveals that there is a significant population of young (adult) offenders between the ages of 18 and 25. Many of these offenders committed a crime as minors and were transferred to adult centers when they came of age. At the same time, many young adults are finishing out their sentences in juvenile facilities. This complicates intervention and treatment and leaves some of these young people in a state of particular vulnerability.

Young adults who are serving prison terms do not receive support, guidance, or assistance for reinsertion into society (pre-release services).

Few specialized services for auxiliary problems. There are no specific, specialized treatment programs for incarcerated youth. Public health (and mental health) agencies have little involvement in the institutions responsible for juvenile sentence execution.

Adolescents and young adults involved in criminal proceedings need to know exactly what to expect as far as job opportunities that will enable them to support themselves and achieve personal growth. Very little work has been done in this area. The only existing programs for these young people are vocational in nature.

There is a serious lack of appropriate information on topics such as physical development, general health, and particularly mental and sexual and reproductive health. The problem becomes much more acute for girls/adolescents/young women who become pregnant at a very early age.

Assistance to victims: There are no defined plans to provide victims’ services in general, much less for adolescents and young adults, especially adolescent girls or young women.

There is a tangible risk inherent to including victims in all of the projects associated with the restorative approach. Risk in the sense that in some cases, the matter of the victim is introduced as a necessary and indispensable ingredient without really gauging the type of intervention sought, who should carry it out, and the proper timing.
International cooperation: When international donors burst on the scene in a disorganized manner and with diverse discourses, it tends to create confusion over the concept of restorative justice. Restrictive or dogmatic positions can also jeopardize progress in the juvenile justice sphere.

An increasing number of donors have become involved in this issue over the past three years. This is particularly true in El Salvador where a number of different international agencies are working on juvenile justice, and less so in Nicaragua, where very few donors are operating and their contributions are sporadic or less targeted. The presence of various donors in El Salvador has contributed to the impression that certain related actions are improvised, opportunistic, and conceptually disparate.

The profusion of assessments, studies and situation reports carried out in the region has yielded sufficient data to develop action plans. Despite this, very few actually materialize or are translated into actions. The time has come to transform some of these proposals into specific and useful measures for the juvenile justice system, and to invest in, reflect on, and support different initiatives, policies, intervention models, and judicial responses.

D. Support for the Restorative Approach in Nicaragua and Central America: The Need for a Regional Strategy

The profusion of assessments, studies, and situation reports carried out in the region has yielded sufficient data to develop action plans, yet little has been done to implement the specific actions and proposals set out in the various reports. It should be noted that several of the stakeholders interviewed concurred on this point. The time has come to turn some of these proposals into specific and useful actions for the juvenile justice system, and to invest in, reflect on, and support different initiatives, policies, intervention models, and judicial responses.

The RJJ model is reparative, reconciliatory, respectful of the rights of the victims, supportive of social peace, and geared towards the positive social reinsertion of offenders. All of these things foster the development of alternative measures that benefit adolescents and the community, while not discarding the importance of incarceration when it is absolutely necessary and always in exceptional cases (for crimes that cause particular social disruption), for the least possible time period, and with a spirit of reinsertion and preparation for release.

What is needed is a regional strategy that would halt this deterioration, consolidate experiences, ensure progress, and expand:

- Consolidate current positive experiences
- Stop institutional deterioration and keep youth from turning to crime
- Make progress in implanting the restorative approach
- Expand to countries such as Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala, and Honduras.