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FACT SHEET

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

Within Central America a rapidly deteriorating security situation has led to significantly decreased levels of citizen safety, fueled in part by the social and economic exclusion of large parts of the population. The U.S. government has developed a new vision on how to assist Central American governments as they work to address this critical issue. This new vision of citizen security is based on three pillars: 1) helping vulnerable youth integrate into society; 2) fighting the corrosive effects of illegal trafficking; 3) and strengthening democratic institutions that are crucial to the rule of law.

Providing opportunities to these youth is a key focus of the U.S. Embassy in Panama, and our government and civil society partners. Many young Panamanians seek identity and acceptance on the streets and as a result fall into drug trafficking, gang life, and violence. Using funds from the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), USAID is working with the government of Panama and many civil society organizations to help open the doors of opportunity for young Panamanians, from vulnerable communities and neighborhoods, so that they have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. USAID is establishing a broad network to allow all the key actors – the government, police, schools, businesses, churches, community groups and non-governmental organizations – to work together.

USAID-Supported Youth Engagement Initiatives and Assistance Will:

- Foster community partnerships among community policing, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses;
- Develop viable youth education, technical and entrepreneurial opportunities;
- Launch a small grants program for community youth projects;
- Create an interactive Web site for community dialogue and coordination; and
- Establish a youth radio broadcast in the Darien.

Highlights Include:

- Over 100 NGOs, which provide these youth with opportunities, trained on grant proposal writing, corporate social responsibility and NGO management;
- Approximately 230 community leaders, including 136 women, acquired skills to apply for small grants and build alliances;
- Eight small grants awarded to local NGOs for activities in life skills; dance and music opportunities; and educational recreational activities; and
- Business leaders' roundtable held to identify best practices and mobilize private sector support for prevention activities in communities.