



FACT SHEET

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

United States Government assistance in Central America, through USAID regional programs, addresses environment and health challenges that transcend borders. Two programs support Panamanian efforts to tackle threats to a significant coastal ecosystem and combat HIV/AIDS.

The Regional **Management of Aquatic Resources and Alternative Development (MAREA)** program aims to strengthen coastal and marine resources management in order to reduce environmental threats, conserve biodiversity, and improve livelihoods. One area targeted of the program is the Caribbean Cahuita-Bocas del Toro coastal ecosystem shared by Panama and Costa Rica. Increased development in the area, overfishing, marine pollution, runoff caused by deforestation and agriculture practices, along with industrial and urban pollution threaten the fragile and unique ecosystem along this coastline.

USAID, through MAREA, promotes effective monitoring and enforcement of coastal and marine resource policies and legislation. Assistance also fosters incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine ecosystems.

To reduce threats posed by unsustainable fishing practices and coastal development in Cahuita-Bocas del Toro, USAID-financed technical assistance and training focuses on:

- Promoting rights-based management regimes and best fisheries practices;
- Conserving critical marine biodiversity; and
- Improving economic well-being of marine resource stakeholders.

U.S. supported Central America Regional **HIV/AIDS** programs managed by USAID, provide a response to the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in the region. Migration and the difficulty in containing HIV/AIDS transmission contribute to the problem. In Panama, USAID works in partnership with the Government of Panama's (GOP) National HIV/AIDS Program, public and private sector institutions, civil society organizations to improve awareness and advocacy, and enhance detection and treatment. USAID supports activities that improve the policy environment to facilitate the implementation of a national advocacy agenda and promote behavioral change in order to prevent the spread of the disease. In addition, assistance is provided for health system capacity building and for developing and disseminating strategic information.

Key results of USAID-supported HIV/AIDS activities in Panama include:

- The launching of the GOP's National HIV/AIDS Policy, focused on prevention, comprehensive care, community participation, and the protection of human rights;
- Approximately 15,000 behavior change activities to reduce stigma and discrimination reaching over 144,000 individuals in target populations;
- Improved hospital performance and supervision systems, using standards developed in collaboration with Panama's National HIV Program;
- Training of nearly 400 health workers to provide quality service and reduce stigma; and
- The establishment of a strategic alliance between Panama's National Private Sector Council (CONEP) and USAID's Program for Strengthening the Central American Response to HIV/AIDS (PASCA) to help Panamanian firms prepare, adopt, and implement HIV policies in the workplace.