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DEL PUEBLO DE LOS ESTADOS
UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2008

2008-023

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FIRST OUTREACH CENTER “FOR MY NEIGHBORHOOD” INAUGURATED IN LOURDES COLON

SAN SALVADOR –This afternoon was inaugurated the Outreach Center “For My Neighborhood”, located in a property in Lourdes Colon, La Libertad. This initiative is the result of the agreement signed by representatives of the USAID-SICA Regional Youth Alliance Program and the Church of the Way, Lourdes affiliate.

The USAID-SICA Regional Youth Alliance Program was established this year with the signing of a cooperative agreement between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the organization Creative Associates International, Inc. The program, which is executed at a Central American level, presents an integral approach to the needs of the youth at risk of being recruited by gangs. To implement this initiative, USAID has assigned 2.8 millions of dollars.

The Outreach Centers constitute a prevention methodology for youth violence, since they are a meeting and training point in the center of an area with high youth violence incidence. It is a space of hope that vulnerable boys, girls, teenagers and youths can attend and have other options that will allow them to avoid the temptation of engaging gangs, using youth violence, or the danger of getting involved with drugs.

Lourdes is a county located at 24 kilometers to the west of San Salvador. It has 130 communities, neighborhoods and developments, and in more than 100 there is gangs presence. It pertains to the Municipality of Colon, one of the 10 more violent in the country, where 190,000 persons live in an extension of 86.7 square kilometers, it means, there are 2,248 inhabitants per square kilometer. Lourdes is considered one of the most unsafe places in the country.

The Lourdes Outreach Center is the second one inaugurated in El Salvador, after the Outreach Center Mejicanos was launched, on the last July 30, in the “P. Rafael Palacios” Formation and Orientation Center that already assists 205 vulnerable children, teenagers and youths. The Outreach Center Lourdes will provide training in computer applications, computer maintenance and repair, dressmaking, bakery, jewelry confection, between others. The center will benefit to an average of 300 children and youths.

This Outreach Center is the tenth being opened in the region. There are eight of these in Guatemala and now two in El Salvador. The USAID-SICA Regional Youth Alliance Program has signed agreements with Rotary Clubs from Tegucigalpa to open, at least, six Outreach Centers in the Honduran capital. The first one is about to be inaugurated in the Rivera Hernandez Neighborhood, San Pedro Sula, one of the most violent at city. More Outreach Centers are expected to be opened in San Salvador where youths, due to their vulnerable conditions, were at risk of being victims of youth violence, getting involved with drugs or engaging with gangs.

The inauguration of the Outreach Center Lourdes was presided by Jaime Guatemala, Pastor of the Church of the Way; affiliate Lourdes; the Director of the Democracy and Governance Office, Jennifer Link; the representative of SICA, Cesar Salazar; the Director of the USAID-SICA Regional Youth Alliance Program, Salvador Stadthagen, community leaders and El Salvador Government Officers.

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