

News 2011

USG Supports Soccer League Inauguration

Panama City, Panama, June 25, 2011: Around 1,000 youth participated in the inauguration of the soccer league in El Chorrillo, a populous neighborhood, known for its gang activity and violence. The sports event was co-sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Panama, the National Police and the local NGO, *Movimiento Nueva Generación*. At the inauguration, U.S. Ambassador Phyllis Powers reaffirmed USG commitment and highlighted joint efforts underway in support of opportunities for Panamanian youth.



Official Sports Activities Launched in the Darien Region

Darien, Panama, June 2011: USAID and the public sector's PanDeportes coordinated the Tuirá Initiative Soccer Tournament. USAID assistance included equipment, uniforms, and organizing the participation of 13 teams from communities on the banks of the Tuirá River such as Vista Alegre, Puente, Yape, Aruza, Union Choco and Capeti. PanDeportes provided referees and training on the organization of a soccer tournament.



U.S. Ambassador Admires Indigenous Stand at National Artisans Fair

Panama City, Panama, June 15, 2011: Ambassador Phyllis Powers stopped by the stand of 22 indigenous artisans from the *Embera-Wounann Comarca* and communities in El Salto, Punta Grande, Yaviza, Lajas Blancas, Union Choco, Puerto Indio, Dosake Puru, Meteti and Pueblo Nuevo in the Darien region, whose participation was facilitated by USAID and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. As a result, these artisans sold many of their exquisite handicrafts, earning \$12,500, which is a lot of money for communities with a high incidence of poverty. The Ambassador's presence underscored the U.S. Government's interest in expanding economic opportunity to the indigenous population.



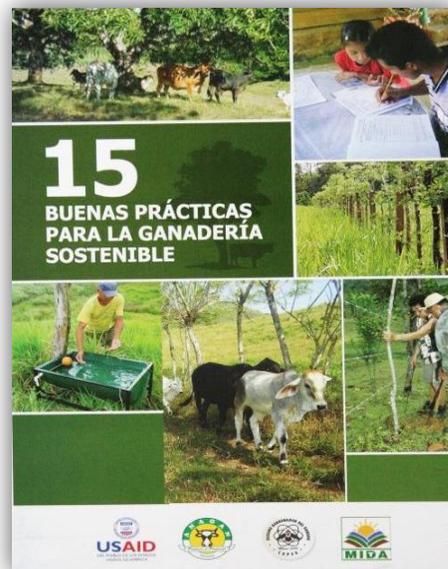
USAID/Washington Visited Forest Operations

Darien, Panama, June 2011: USAID staff from Washington visited the Rio Chico area and Marraganti community in the *Embera-Wounaan Comarca*. In the Rio Chico area, meetings were held with the board of directors of recently created forest enterprises, and traditional authorities. The team visited one of the plots of the forest management plan where a forest census was taking place for future harvesting. USAID also provides technical assistance to continue sustainable forest management efforts initiated by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in one of the communities. A USAID grant will help the community improve income by processing timber into tables with the purchase of a portable sawmill.



Best Practices for Sustainable Livestock

Panama City, Panama, June 3, 2011: The Manual of Best Practices for Sustainable Livestock based on concepts of environmental sustainability is an example of U.S. Embassy efforts to promote sustainable environmental management and conservation of natural resources in Panama. The Manual was launched within the framework of an international expo of green products and services. The Ministry of Agricultural Development (MIDA), the Commission for the Eradication and Prevention of Screwworms (COPEG), and the National Association of Ranchers (ANAGAN) participated in the launching in partnership with USAID.



Business Institute of the Americas Trained Local NGOs

Panama City, Panama, May 31, 2011: Over 77 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other sector leaders attended the USAID-funded training by top professionals from the Business Institute of the Americas. Topics included effective fundraising, grant writing, connecting to corporate social responsibility, models of effective and sustainable NGOs, project management, marketing, promoting volunteers, and drafting legislative bill to promote volunteering.



Feasibility of Honey Bee Production in the Rio Chico Area

Darien, Panama, May 2011: Field evaluation in the *Rio Chico* communities helped determine the possibility of involving residents in the production of honey as an alternative eco-friendly business activity. Assessment of local conditions validated the feasibility. Honey production is a promising alternative economic opportunity. There is an abundance of species supportive of honey production, plenty of good quality water, sunny mornings and rainy afternoons, and community interest. Bees play an important role in the pollination of several agricultural crops and forest species. USAID will set up production modules and proactively seek a private sector partner for market linkages and sustainability.

Launching of Environmental Awareness Campaigns

Bocas del Toro, Panama, May 26, 2011: In close coordination with the Government of Panama, local organizations and communities in Bocas del Toro, the launching of two campaigns took place: “Code of Conduct for Tourism through Boats in the Archipelago” and “Visit to Nesting Beaches of Sea Turtles.” Both of these campaigns address urgent issues for the healthy development of fisheries and sustainable tourism in the area. These campaigns aim to inform, educate and create awareness of the public’s responsibility regarding the conservation of some species. USAID’s Regional Program for Management of Aquatic Resources and Economic Alternatives (MAREA) will support these campaigns.



Technical Vocational Education Advanced

Darien, Panama, March thru June, 2011: USAID’s Darien Initiative in partnership with the National Institute of Professional Training for Human Development (INADEH) and the Ministry of Labor’s “My First Job” Program organized four mobile technical vocational trainings in three different communities in the Comarca Embera-Wounaan for a total of 162 persons. These technical vocational training programs target youth who were not in the formal education system.

In the Dozaque Puru community, courses on chicken and pig husbandry and vegetable growing were provided to Emberá. Another workshop on the planting and cultivation of plantain benefitted 37 participants. In the Nuevo Vigía community, the Local Congress, USAID and INADEH organized a graduation ceremony for the 50 farmers who received the training on plantain planting and production. In the community of Corozal, 32 indigenous women attended a course in basic dressmaking. The course was developed by INADEH and lasted three months. The course consisted of workshops in designing and making pajamas, women’s pants, blouses with collars, low-cut tops, skirts, pants, and maternity dresses, among others. At the end of the course, the women held a fashion show to display the dresses they



made. To facilitate the participation of the women in the course, daycare was provided to take care of the children.

Training of Trainers of Community Health Promoters

Darien, Panama, May 16-18, 2011: USAID's Darien Initiative, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health's (MINSa) National Promotion Directorate, held a workshop for sex education facilitators "For the prevention of HIV – AIDS" in the Comarca communities. Forty youth participated as part of USAID scholarships received. They will become trainers in their respective communities, which is part of their community social internship. The students were trained over four days on the following topics: life skills (self-esteem, assertive communications, and interpersonal relations), human sexuality, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV – AIDS.



Scholarships Awarded Provide Opportunities for Youth

Darien, Panama, April thru May, 2011: USAID and the General Congress of the Comarca selected a total of 40 youth, 30 from the Emberá-Wounaan Comarca and 10 from the community of Yaviza. These students plan to either start or continue their university studies. During the socialization tour, scholarship regulations were presented, as well as a 300-hour community internship program that the beneficiary students will complete. Contracts were signed by each of the beneficiaries. ISAE University (where 90% of the scholarship students study) gave a 20% discount on tuition for all students, as a way of supporting the higher education program in the Darien region.



Fighting Illegal Logging

Darien, Panama, May 2011: With USAID technical support, the Government of Panama's Environmental Authority (ANAM) commissioned inspections of different sites where wood is gathered for local use or export. The group investigated illegal rosewood logger, seller methods, and collaborated on a combative response. ANAM in partnership with USAID provided inspection training. Subsequently, custom officials prevented the shipment of two teak containers en route to China, which were filled with illegally harvested rosewood.



U.S. Ambassador Accompanies Graduates in Technical Vocational Skills

Darien, Panama, May 12, 2011: Ambassador Phyllis Powers attended the graduation ceremony of 56 young men from 13 communities in the *Embera-Wounaan Comarca* and Yaviza in the Darien. The graduates completed a six-week construction, welding, and electrical training course, which was coordinated with the National Institute of Professional Training for Human Development (INADEH) and the Ministry of Employment and Labor Development. The Government of Panama plans to facilitate employment for these graduates in hospital and road infrastructure projects.



Efforts to Improve Forest Management Controls

Darien, Panama, May 2011: USAID, in collaboration with the Panamanian National Environmental Authority (ANAM), supports activities to reduce illegal harvesting of forest products. ANAM already passed two resolutions focused on sustainable forest management and is reviewing the subsistence harvesting permit process. It is also working to establish a Forest Department Control Unit in Darien. Technological advances such as GPS regulatory controls are being encouraged, and the preparation of GPS manuals is in process.



Training for Improved Forest Planning and Use of Forest Resources

Darien, Panama, May 2011: Alternative economic development training benefitted 159 participants with techniques to improve their forest planning and use of forest resources. The seven community trainings included presentations and participatory demonstrations for coffee and plantain production. A team of seven indigenous technicians will follow up with the producers in the communities. These farms will become training labs to show producers agro-forestry practices. Improved agricultural productivity and increased environmental sustainability is anticipated, particularly due to the inclusion of trees in their land-use models.



Capacity Building of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Panama City, Panama, April 6-7, 2011: The International Center for Non-Profit Law (ICNL) conducted a capacity building workshop for 20 civil society leaders on international law and best practices in the defense of freedom of association, national laws governing the sector, coalition-building, sector-specific advocacy campaigns, and developing advocacy materials and strategies. The workshop focused on improving Civil Society Organizations' knowledge of current law, international rights and practices. This short-term support will help jump-start planned activities with civil society under the new USAID Justice Initiative.

Launching of the Americas Barometer Report for Panama 2010

Panama City, Panama, April 7, 2011: Vanderbilt University and the Center of Democracy Initiative (CIDEM), a local NGO that promotes democratic values, launched the USAID-funded 2010 Americas Barometer Report for Panama. This year's report, *Americas Barometer - Political Culture of Democracy in Panama 2010: Consolidating democracy in difficult times for the Americas*, measures democratic values and behaviors in Panama. According to the results, Panamanians currently believe democracy is the best form of government. However, perception of high levels of insecurity and corruption significantly reduces support for democracy.



Forest Inventories and Management Training

Darien, Panama, April 2011: Students and teachers at Darien's Forestry and Agriculture School (IFAD) received training in forest inventories and management. Thirty students and three teachers were trained in theory and practical field work, using IFAD's 700-hectare forest. The forest is in good condition; however, illegal logging of the most valuable timber species occurs on its borders. This illegal activity is due to its remoteness and lack of surveillance. Forest inventory results will facilitate a forest management and business plan that will enable presence and control improvements.



Violence Perception in the Communities

Panama City, Panama, March 31, 2011: The Violence Prevention Committee of the Municipality of Panama and the Ministry of the Presidency presented the results of the Violence Perception Survey. A sample of 2,437 people from 12 vulnerable communities was surveyed. The survey helped identify and evaluate perception of security and insecurity levels among youth and adults from the municipalities of Panama, Colon,



and San Miguelito. It also tested levels of vulnerability in target communities.

Domestic Violence Addressed

Panama City, Panama, March 28, 2011: USAID organized two events for domestic violence expert Shirley Jones, one at the National University for civil society members and the other for the Panamanian National Police. The Embassy's Public Affairs Section sponsored this domestic violence expert who complemented awareness issues, highlighted under the USAID Opportunities for Youth Activity in Panama.



Partnering to Increase Opportunities for Youth

Panama City, Panama, March 30, 2011: USAID signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Red Cross, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the National Journalism Council to develop joint activities that will increase opportunities for youth. The planned activities include media campaigns, ethics trainings for journalists, strengthening of the Media Observatory on violence prevention, and organizing a Press Awards 2011 event focused on violence prevention, security, and youth.

Lessons Learned among Community Groups Promoted

Darien, Panama, March 2011: USAID and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have promoted forest management projects in Darien during the past seven years. There are approximately 115,000 hectares of forest with management plans in different phases of implementation. USAID catalyzed a visit by community members of Rio Chico from the *Embera-Wounaan Comarca* and Morti in the *Kuna Wargandi Comarca* to an older forest management operation in Tupiza, the first community in Panama to have a sustainable forest management plan financed by USAID. The purpose of the visit was to share information between community members, learn from similar operations, and ease doubts about the environmental impact and benefits for the communities involved. The forestry committee from one of the communities visiting Tupiza noted the fine state of the forest harvested and the importance of proper administration.



Agroforestry Farms Evaluated

Darien, Panama, March 2011: An agronomic assessment of the agroforestry farms in Morti included plantain, coffee plantations, and other traditional cropping combinations that local residents practice. The information collected is necessary to develop alternative models for improving the production and productivity of traditional models. The project completed data processing of the individual farms surveyed in one of the communities in Rio Chico, El Común. This information will facilitate discussions with community members regarding land use planning, such as appropriate location of agricultural areas with respect to the river to reduce possibility of damage from flooding.



Community Policing Expertise Shared

Panama City, Panama, February 28, 2011: USAID organized a presentation by Arturo Venegas, a former Chief of the Sacramento Police Department and community policing expert, focused on the municipalities of Panama and San Miguelito. The Major of Panama City was among the 75 participants attending the event. Afterwards, members of civil society organizations met with community members from El Chorrillo and San Felipe and Chief Venegas to discuss collaboration between the communities and police.



Private Sector Holds Forum on Security and Governance in Darien

Panama City, Panama, February 24, 2011: USAID and the Panamanian Association of Business Executives sponsored a discussion forum on key issues impacting security and governance in the Darien region. Some 60 persons participated in the event, including high level government officials, traditional Darien indigenous leaders, National Frontier Police, academic, private sector, and civil society representatives.

USAID funded participation by Andrés Dávila Ladrón, former Director of Justice and Security in the Colombian National Bureau of Planning, who shared lessons learned and challenges faced in order to expand and consolidate security and governance in insecure territories. In addition, Dr. Orlando Perez presented findings from the survey of Darien citizen perception of security and governance in the region, conducted as part of the USAID-financed Americas Barometer 2010 survey of Panama.



Community Development Plan for Mortí

Darien, Panama, February 2011: USAID assistance helped the community of Mortí develop and reach consensus on a plan for use of funds generated by community timber harvesting. This plan was essential for national authority approval of the community's forest management plan. According to the plan, the flood-impacted community of Mortí can harvest about 800 hectares of forest annually. This year's harvest is expected to generate over \$100,000 for community use. Funds were prioritized for forestry management and conservation activities, strengthening community enterprises and governance, and improving school infrastructure, with remaining funds distributed to community members. The plan for use of Mortí's timber harvest revenues was approved in a participatory, community general assembly, encouraging transparency and accountability.



Technical Vocational Education for Youth Facilitated

Darien, Panama, February 2011: USAID facilitated coordination with the National Institute for Vocational Training and Human Capacity Training (INADEH) and the Ministry of Employment and Labor Development to carry out training in masonry and soldering for 69 youth from 13 communities of the *Embera-Wounaan Comarca* and Yaviza. The Government of Panama's contribution to this first training totaled \$110,000. Additional vocational training in other labor capacities will take place at INADEH's Darien training facilities and in target indigenous communities. Planned trainings will benefit around 450 youth.



Preparing for the First Sustainable Forest Harvest

Darien, Panama, February 22, 2011: Completion of the Rio Chico commercial forestry census, data analysis, and an annual operational plan helped get communities ready for their first sustainable harvest. This first harvest area covers an estimated 428 hectares of tropical forest. At least 126 labor-days were spent during forestry data collection with strong participation from community groups. The harvest area contains an estimated 4,216.63 cubic meters that could be commercially harvested. This volume can potentially generate \$75,000 in revenues for the community. The operational plan includes detailed maps and tables that define the trees to be either cut, protected, or left as seed trees, according to Panama's National Environmental Authority regulations.



Peasants Open Souvenir Store in Chagres National Park

Chagres National Park, Panama, February 22, 2011: A group of 12 peasant women established a small souvenir store in Chagres National Park. This group recently expanded their initiative to include a plant nursery, which is open to tourists visiting the park. Aurinda Gill, the President of the group, traveled to Mexico to represent Panama in a training course called Connectivity and Biological Corridors. This is an example of continued positive results and sustainability of USAID investment after assistance under the Conservation of Biodiversity in the Panama Canal Watershed Activity ended.



Youth Training Interests Identified

Darien, Panama, February 11, 2011: Consultations with youth from 15 target communities in the Darien region revealed their training preferences. Some 500 youth expressed an interest in vocational training in construction, information technology, animal husbandry, mechanics, artisan crafts, and the service sector. USAID anticipates partnering with the Ministry of Employment and Labor Development (MITRADEL) and the National Institute for Vocational Training and Human Capacity Training (INADEH), to facilitate desired training.



U.S. Ambassador Visits Colon

Colon City, Panama, January 20, 2011: Youth groups working in violence-prone, vulnerable neighborhoods in Colon met with Ambassador Powers who participated in a cultural and sports celebration that included youth and community leaders from Colon's Municipal Violence Prevention Committee. Ambassador Powers visited local non-governmental organizations, which hosted an event focused on engaging these youth through dance. This event highlighted the USG focus on reaching out to youth. It also drew attention to the successes of local organizations in providing positive opportunities for young people in Panama's second largest city. In addition, the Ambassador signed a letter of intent between USAID's Opportunities for Youth Activity and the Municipality of Colon. Community participants described the visit as "historic" because it was the first time that a high-ranking USG official visited their community.

