



## COUNTRY PROFILE



Photo Credit: USAID/Sustainable Community Forestry

*Community members receive training in forest inventories and commercial census to prepare sustainable forest management plans. These plans will benefit the forests of the Embera-Wounaan indigenous reserve, located in the Panama portion of the Choco-Darien ecoregion.*

### PANAMA SNAPSHOT

Date of Independence: 1821  
Separation from Colombia: 1903  
Population: 3.4 million (2010)  
Area: 75,517 km<sup>2</sup> or 29,157 mi<sup>2</sup>  
Government: Democratic, Constitutional Republic

Source: Office of the Controller General, Directorate of Statistics and Census.

### USAID IN PANAMA

<http://www.usaid.gov/pa/>

### OVERVIEW

An expanding skyline and the endless queue into the Panama Canal provide an impression of a steady, prosperous and stable Panama. Below the shiny issues. With a tale of two economies, Panama's democratic institutions and political stability are threatened as a result primarily to an increase in narcotics trafficking and gang proliferation, as well as weaknesses in the justice system. Panama also faces environmental challenges such as degradation



and deforestation in critical areas of the Darien, a strategic and under resourced region on the Colombian border. Thus, programs focused on forest management, biodiversity conservation, opportunities for youth, government capacity building, strengthening of a sustainable civil society, and micro-enterprise development are crucial.

### PROGRAMS

#### Democracy

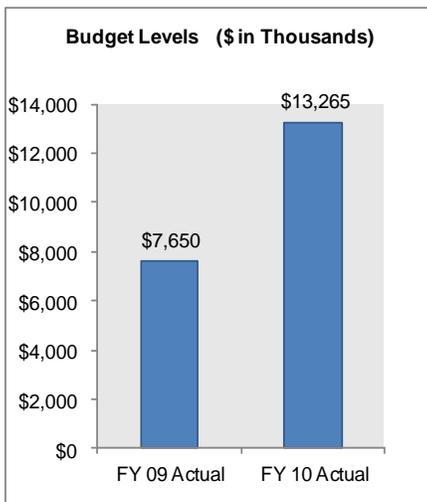
Narcotics trafficking, the increase of gangs and gang-related violence are significant concerns of Panamanian citizens. To mitigate these security concerns, USAID is strengthening Panamanian governmental institutions at the national and local levels and cultivating opportunities for youth through a complementary multi-sectoral effort in the Darien. Under the Central America Regional Security Initiative, USAID supports the coordinated efforts of the Government of Panama, private sector, and civil society to address security threats in urban areas and to create opportunities for youth in vulnerable communities. Activities emphasize strengthening community leadership and local governance, promoting community-based responses, and facilitating dialogue.

In order to build resilient communities where citizens can thrive, Panama needs capable and legitimate institutions, a vibrant civil society, transparency and accountability in government, and support for human rights and social justice through strong rule of law. To address these multi-layered issues, USAID supports civil society organizations to advocate for more transparent, efficient and fair judicial processes.



## COUNTRY PROFILE CONTINUED

### USAID ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRY



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#### Economic Growth

The lack of economic growth represents an important challenge in the Darien. USAID assistance will help mitigate this situation through income generation opportunities for select impoverished populations. Activities will focus on improving food security and youth employment opportunities, and strengthening national and international economy. USAID will also promote small agricultural enterprises as alternative production centers not only to meet the basic needs of the poor in rural areas, but also for the necessary generation of income to help develop a more structured economy.

#### Environment

Panama is rich in natural resources, which are immensely important to the people of Panama and to the region. The Darien is a biodiversity hotspot and biological corridor for South American and North American species. USAID's program facilitates sustainable community forestry management and environmental governance, while expanding eco-friendly economic opportunities, and works in two indigenous reserves or comarcas in the Darien: the Kuna Wargandi and the Embera-Wounaan.

#### Health

Consistent with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Central American Partnership Framework seeks to reduce HIV/AIDS incidence and prevalence in Central America, by joining resources and coordinating initiatives that enable a more effective response to the epidemic. Assistance focuses on strengthening health systems and personnel to sustainably deliver prevention, care and support services to most-at-risk populations.