

**Testimony of Elizabeth Hogan**  
**Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean**  
**U.S. Agency for International Development**  
**House Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
**November 18, 2014, 2PM “ How USAID is Responding to the Challenge of**  
**Unaccompanied Minor Migration from Central America”**

Chairman Salmon, Ranking Member Sires, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to share how the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is responding to the challenge of unaccompanied minors migrating from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to the U.S. border. Our response to this challenge is consistent with the U.S. policy to address underlying causes of this problem and our mission to partner to end extreme poverty and promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing our security and prosperity.

Through family connections, remittance flows, economic ties and gang activity, the countries of Central America are increasingly linked to communities in the United States, some of which are located just a few miles from this hearing room. For the past five years, USAID has worked alongside the State Department and other U.S. agencies to prioritize assistance in the areas of security, governance and economic development in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. In recognition of the gravity of the development challenges in Central America and the impact those challenges could have on the United States, USAID has maintained funding levels to Central America even in a constrained budget environment. In fact, we have shifted approximately \$100 million over the last five years from USAID programs in South America to Central America.

Although we have shifted resources and maintained the budget, clearly more needs to be done. This is why the Administration requested additional resources in the FY 2014

supplemental budget request and why we look forward to working with Congress to ramp up our programming as additional resources become available. We believe these additional resources will result in security and development gains that exceed their costs – even in the short run, and most certainly in the medium to longer term. Our confidence in the effectiveness of our approach at the scale we have been able to enact is based on a recent independent impact evaluation in high crime communities in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama that provide statistically significant evidence that crime rates are lower and public perception of security higher in the areas in which we work as a direct result of our crime prevention efforts. Getting wider results on the ground that will impact the lives of millions of citizens, however, needs resources to scale up and nationalize these very positive efforts.

Mr. Chairman, we have learned that the reasons for migrations are varied and complex. For example, the child migrants from Guatemala are predominantly from indigenous communities and rural areas while those from Honduras are largely from urban areas. We know that the underlying factors of lack of economic opportunity, threats to personal security, and the wish to reunite with families coupled with misperceptions about U.S. immigration laws are driving migration, yet some of these factors weigh more heavily for some communities than others. Most of the young people arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border are between the ages of 14 and 17. Many of them are aware that the journey is dangerous. Nevertheless, they and their parents choose to take this risk, and many of them do so more than once.

The surge in unaccompanied minors migrating out of Central America makes the adoption, ownership and expansion of proven crime and violence prevention approaches by Central American governments more important than ever. Our greatest impact, over time, will be that programs which have demonstrated success become the policy of the host nation-

supported by their taxpayers. We are heartened that these governments are increasingly dedicating additional financial and intellectual resources to address the root causes of violence and criminality in their countries. However, even greater investment by Central American governments is needed to deepen the impact of our joint efforts. Host nations are working hard to help their most vulnerable populations who live on the margins of the formal economy, but we can and should urge them to do more to enact needed reforms. As the Vice President told Central American leaders on November 14 at the Inter-American Development Bank conference on addressing the constraints to growth in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, “Urgent challenges demand urgent action—backed by courage and political will. It’s hard, but it can be done.”

In terms of a direct response to this year’s migration flow, USAID has moved quickly to strengthen the reception capacity of the three main countries of origin. Through a \$7.6M grant to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), we are working to ensure that countries can receive and process increased numbers of returnees of all ages. In addition, we are working to make sure that the governments in the region can provide any immediate care and onward assistance for returning families and children so that they are received home in a safe, dignified, and orderly manner.

Pending final Congressional approval, USAID expects to implement up to \$160 million in FY 2014 funds to tackle the root causes of the crime, violence and economic insecurity driving the child migration phenomenon. Through the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), we are supporting crime and violence prevention programs that expand opportunities for youth living in insecure neighborhoods and strengthen the institutions charged with administering justice and keeping people safe.

USAID's prevention strategy revolves around smart targeting – geographic, demographic, and according to a specific set of risk factors for violence. In simple terms, our work seeks to concentrate prevention efforts on high-risk youth in high-risk communities. For example, by partnering with the Los Angeles Mayor's Office and the University of Southern California, we are using tried and tested methodology to identify a set of specific risk factors most associated with youths joining gangs.

We have evidence that these kinds of programs are working, and evidence is crucial so we can build on what really works. The final results from a four-year, third-party impact evaluation carried out by Vanderbilt University in high crime communities in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama show that – as a direct result of USAID's programs – reported crime is lower and public perception of security higher. Our community-based crime prevention approach is a package of activities that include programs for at-risk youth, such as outreach centers that provide safe spaces and workforce preparedness training; security-related planning by municipal crime prevention committees; activities that address environmental issues like street lighting and graffiti; and community policing.

The Vanderbilt evaluation found that, compared to what would have occurred without USAID intervention, 57% fewer residents in targeted communities in Honduras reported being aware of extortion in their neighborhoods; in Guatemala, 60% fewer residents reported being aware of homicides in their neighborhoods; and in El Salvador, 36% fewer residents reported being aware of illegal drug sales in their neighborhoods. People believe and see their communities are getting better.

Agustin, a former gang member from Guatemala, participated in a USAID funded prevention program several years ago. He turned his life around, became a family man,

and now gives "prevention talks" to schools in his community. As an activist with the Youth Movement Against Violence, Agustin has starred in his own Tedx Talk series offering solutions for at risk youth.

USAID is already starting to expand the most successful prevention approaches beyond the initial test communities, working with municipal and national Central American leaders. For instance, over the past six years, we have increased our network of youth outreach centers -- which offer youth services and refuge from gang violence -- from 25 in Guatemala to 139 across Central America, and worked with mayors to root these programs in the community. And we are preparing to open an additional 77 centers in high-crime neighborhoods in El Salvador. In Honduras alone, tens of thousands of youth have received assistance through more than 40 such centers based in that country's most violent cities. President Hernandez of Honduras has seen this in action and has publicly committed to allocating 30 percent of the funds collected through the country's Security Tax to support prevention programs.

In Guatemala, the government has expanded USAID's successful 24-hour court model to additional communities, demonstrating its commitment to an independent and accessible judicial system, and the Government of El Salvador launched its ambitious new National Strategy for Violence Prevention in February to empower municipalities to lead on prevention efforts.

Going forward, USAID will continue to better target our assistance to those communities where crime, violence and child migration rates remain high, working alongside the State Department, Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and other international donors. Through the *Safer City* model, which we are currently developing, we will align our resources and efforts with those of host governments, donors, private sector, and multi-laterals to ensure economies of scale. The most effective way to reduce homicide and violence is through such an

integrated approach, which must ultimately be scaled up by the governments in the region.

While insecurity related to crime and violence is cited as a primary driver for the migration of minors from the region, the lack of jobs and economic opportunities at home for youth and their families is also a crucial factor. USAID's development programs -- to create jobs, spur agricultural development, strengthen food security and improve literacy and youth workforce development -- seek to improve the educational opportunities and livelihoods for the poor in more rural areas. These programs remain particularly relevant because they complement and amplify our youth and urban-oriented CARSI programming and will be coordinated with our outreach efforts with the private sector. As Secretary of Commerce Pritzker told the presidents of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala on November 14, "to further advance your countries' success, we want to see your best and brightest young people stay home, start businesses, and help grow your economies."

In Guatemala, for instance, USAID is investing nearly \$25 million over five years in a new program to improve educational access and quality for under-served populations, including rural indigenous girls and boys in 900 rural schools, and educational and vocational training opportunities for 2,000 out-of-school youth in the country's Western Highland region.

In El Salvador, where small and medium-enterprises (SMEs) account for half of all economic activity in a nation of 6 million people, a USAID partnership with Banco Davivienda unlocked \$25 million for SMEs to help spur job creation.

As part of our Feed the Future investments in Honduras, USAID contributed \$24.5 million to the new Dry Corridor Initiative to promote sustainable agricultural development in the country's drought-plagued southwest border region and improve the livelihoods of some 50,000 families.

And we are supporting a robust program across the region to limit the devastation of the Coffee Rust epidemic on Central America's lucrative coffee sector. Our investments are helping small-scale coffee growers and workers all along the coffee value chain replant, refinance and improve management of coffee farms.

These kinds of economic development programs align with our crime prevention programs to build a foundation for prosperous economies that offer economic and other opportunities for youth and their families, and in so doing relieve the pressure to migrate north. The integrated nature of our assistance in Central America is precisely why we are not looking to cut programs in rural agriculture or climate change or health and redirect those resources exclusively to crime prevention programs. We caution against narrowing our portfolio in those countries any further.

The U.S. government continues to successfully utilize partnerships with the private sector to supplement and sustain our investments in Central America and encourage corporate social responsibility. Over the past few years, USAID has leveraged approximately \$40 million in private sector resources to support at-risk youth. For example, through a USAID and Microsoft collaboration in El Salvador, approximately 25,000 youth in 13 high-crime municipalities will have access to competitive computer and technology training and a path to certification. These partnerships are part of an effort to help build a Central American economy that provides viable opportunities for current and future generations to thrive.

Such partnerships are also integral to the effectiveness of our economic development programs. In Honduras alone, USAID has developed 41 partnerships with companies, including Syngenta and Walmart, to strengthen key agricultural value chains and increase incomes of farmers and agricultural workers (more than 24,000 to date). We're also partnering with coffee

industry leaders, Keurig Green Mountain, Starbucks and Smuckers, to help coffee farming areas recover from the coffee rust outbreak.

The U.S. strategy in Central America recognizes the inextricable requirements of progress in areas of prosperity, security and governance. We remain convinced that only by working to keep children safe and in school, train out-of-school youth for higher education or work and help business create jobs, while encouraging more government transparency, effectiveness and a stronger rule of law, will Central America become the peaceful and prosperous region we all desire.

Thank you and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

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