

USAID Report to Congress on the Central America Youth Empowerment Program
Report #8
June 2024

The Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act (SFOAA), 2022 (Div. K, P.L. 117-103) directed that \$50 million be made available for a program in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, referred to as the Central America Youth Empowerment Program (CAYEP). The goal of CAYEP is to create measurable reductions in migration from targeted communities in such countries by recruiting young people to engage in community projects, while having secondary impacts by channeling additional income into local economies and providing needed skills training for future employment in local businesses. Funds made available to support CAYEP should be matched with contributions from private donors and local governments.

Since Vice President Harris announced the Central American Service Corps (CASC) at the Summit of the Americas in June 2022, USAID has continued to make significant progress on the design and implementation of the overall initiative.¹ Programming under this initiative offers youth in areas of high out-migration in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras opportunities to work in their own communities on local priorities such as educational support and tutoring, food security, green jobs, health education and services, violence prevention, climate impact strategies, and other civic-engagement activities.

CASC/CAYEP programming is helping to address the drivers of irregular migration among those populations most likely to migrate by engaging youth in civic service opportunities, mentorships and internships, modest stipends, work and life skills acquisition, and enhancing young people's sense of commitment to their communities.

Advances on CASC/CAYEP Program Design and Implementation

As of May 2024, USAID has procured eight of ten planned CASC/CAYEP awards. Activities to be managed by the El Salvador and Central America & Mexico Regional Mission (ES-CAM) are being negotiated and remain procurement sensitive. The award for the Regional Learning Platform is expected to be finalized by next quarter. The second ES-CAM regional activity is in design and expected to be awarded within six months to a year.

Implementation is underway for all bilateral activities. The updated chart below provides details on the obligated fiscal year (FY) 2022 amounts, the estimated number of beneficiaries through USAID-funded programs as part of this initiative, the number of awards, and the implementing partners. Activities range from, among others, helping high school students transition more smoothly to college or the workforce, technical and vocational training opportunities, to social entrepreneurship stipends. Program participants range in age from 15 to 29 years.

¹ As outlined in prior quarterly reports, this report differentiates between the CASC initiative (programs) and the CAYEP funding directive.

USAID CASC / CAYEP Programming in Central America as of April 2024

	FY 2022 USAID budget allocation	Estimated number of youth participants*	Number of USAID Awards	Implementing Partner(s)
USAID/ Guatemala	\$14 million	25,000	1	Glasswing
USAID/ Honduras	\$14 million	19,130	5	DAI, RTI, U.S. Forest Service, ACDI/VOCA
USAID/ El Salvador Bilateral	\$14 million	15,600	2	Glasswing DAI
USAID/ Central America & Mexico (CAM) Regional**	\$8 million	500	2	<i>TBD</i> (Regional Learning Platform) <i>TBD</i> (Youth Conservation Corps)
TOTAL	\$50 million	60,230	10	6

* Revised estimates of youth participants (life of project) remain illustrative until work plans are finalized

** CAM regional budget includes Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation platform.

Interagency collaboration

Planning and implementation continues to benefit from the support of key U.S. government entities with experience and partnerships in the region, including the U.S. Peace Corps and the Inter-American Foundation, as well as the U.S. Forest Service. Peace Corps is currently seeking a Peace Corps Response Volunteer to be placed with Glasswing in Guatemala, and the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) has shared information with USAID about 110 grassroots IAF grantees that could be connected with CASC/CAYEP activities, both directly and indirectly.

Private sector collaboration

USAID continues to hold regular meetings with the Partnership for Central America (PCA) to enhance engagement with the private sector in Central America. USAID met with PCA twice this

past quarter to coordinate with private sector partners, including several vetted firms affiliated with the PCA that continue to demonstrate interest in supporting activities directly.

Next steps

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning platform for the CASC/CAYEP initiative is being finalized in the USAID/ES-CAM Mission in El Salvador and will launch within the next 60 days. The relevant bilateral evaluations of CASC activities are also underway. An El Salvador-based Youth Coordinator for USAID/ES-CAM, who will cover CASC/CAYEP coordination for the region, started work in April 2024.

At the programmatic level, beneficiary targeting and recruitment, stipend calibration, and networking of service providers and youth is under way in each country and in close coordination with the local public and private sectors, implementing partners, and the respective U.S. embassies.

Public launches and communications

The Guatemala CASC activity, Jóvenes con Propósito, was publicly launched in May 2024 by the First Lady of Guatemala Dr. Lucrecia Penado and USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Mileydi Guilarte. A public launch is also planned for the El Salvador CASC activity, Raíces Centroamericanas, in the upcoming quarter. Additionally, a working group was convened to determine an appropriate Spanish translation/interpretation of CASC/CAYEP to be used as an umbrella name for activities falling under this initiative. The name, *Cuerpo de Servicio Centroamericano*, was chosen. USAID has also launched a public-facing online platform housed under the ES-CAM Regional website. Future plans include highlighted success stories, reports for partners and beneficiaries, and eventually an interactive map of the initiative's programs.

ANNEX 1: Updated CASC/CAYEP FACT Sheet



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



CENTRAL AMERICA SERVICE CORPS (CASC) FUNDED BY THE CENTRAL AMERICA YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (CAYEP)

OVERVIEW

In March 2022, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 directed that \$50 million should be made available “for a program in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras which shall be referred to as the Central America Youth Empowerment Program (CAYEP)” to reduce youth migration from targeted communities.

On June 7, 2022, Vice President Kamala Harris announced the Central American Service Corps (CASC), an interagency initiative funded in part through CAYEP. Developed by public, private, and philanthropic partners, the CASC initiative is in response to the Vice President’s Call to Action for northern Central America.

This initiative was begun with the understanding that young people in Central America are looking for meaningful opportunities to invest in their communities, to build their futures, and grow a sense of rootedness, aimed at addressing the range of challenges youth face in the region. CASC/CAYEP provides young people in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras paid community service opportunities, mentorship, and a paths to future employment.

GOALS

The goal of the CASC/CAYEP initiative is to recruit young people to participate in different forms of community service, while building their life and job skills, offering hope, and increasing their confidence and sense of belonging. CASC/CAYEP generates leadership potential and helps foster optimism among youth in Central America that a better future is possible for themselves and for their communities. It will also have secondary impacts in the targeted Central American communities by channeling additional income into local economies and providing needed skills training for future employment in their communities and countries. The initiative encourages and seeks out matching funds from multiple partners and stakeholders in order to reach more youth and create a long-term, sustainable program in each country.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW & SHARED APPROACH

USAID and partners are working together to create CASC/CAYEP activities in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Each USAID Mission will work with vulnerable youth and offer them alternatives to irregular migration through community service projects and technical assistance to match youth to potential jobs, training and mentoring, facilitating financial inclusion efforts, and direct financial support. This shared approach benefits from technical and financial support provided by a wide range of stakeholders in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors. A regional community of practice, made up of the program implementer and supporters, helps to ensure that best practices are shared across borders to help create more impactful programming.

To this end, USG inter-agency working groups (both regionally and locally) are coordinating activities in target communities engaged in CASC/CAYEP. Inter-agency coordination includes headquarters and country staff from USAID, the Peace Corps, Inter-American Foundation, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Labor, and the U.S. Institute for Peace.

USAID/EL SALVADOR

In El Salvador, USAID is supporting in- and out-of school youth who face multiple risk factors for irregular migration by strengthening their social and emotional skills, providing a monthly stipend to improve their financial stability, and increasing their sense of community rootedness by providing opportunities for volunteerism, community service, and workforce training where they live. To promote continuity of service, USAID is working with local service providers to adapt to local needs and to provide alternatives to migration for over 3600 youth through volunteering opportunities and by deepening connections with their community across eight cohorts of volunteers. An estimated additional 1600 school-aged youth will benefit from academic support provided by volunteers using the Teaching at the Right Level methodology. USAID is also equipping over 12,000 Salvadoran youth with technical skills needed for employment. Matching workforce skill needs with formal technical and vocational training opportunities, in collaboration with El Salvador's private sector and civil society, USAID seeks to enable youth to be better prepared for new and/or better employment opportunities. USAID is also developing the practical and social-emotional skills of youth through service-learning programming and coaching. USAID is engaging youth in a peer network for continued learning, connection, and community service. Private sector alliances are being leveraged to match USAID funding to implement and advance CASC/CAYEP objectives.

USAID/HONDURAS

In Honduras, the CASC/CAYEP approach is grounded in decades of experience working with Honduran youth and local communities to ensure a positive transition to adulthood. Our approach emphasizes youth-led community service initiatives that produce positive labor market outcomes for young people. USAID will provide three to eight-month professional and community development opportunities for over 17,000 youth. These youth will participate in environmental, education, and economic development service projects. 1,900 youth will receive training and experience for jobs in forest management, conservation, and climate adaptation. 2,500 youth will be engaged in activities to prevent school-based violence and promote learning while developing skills for their future careers. 13,000 young individuals, including 5,000 recent high school graduates, will receive training and mentorship to develop community service projects and secure job placements or create social enterprises. The CASC initiative endeavors to provide essential support to the youth of Honduras, by equipping them with life and job skills, strengthening communities, offering hope, and fostering a sense of belonging and confidence. Through these efforts, we aim to contribute towards building a more prosperous, democratic, and secure Honduras, where citizens are encouraged to stay and invest in their future.

USAID/GUATEMALA

In Guatemala, the Gen Now Youth Impact Leaders program laid the foundation for CASC/CAYEP by engaging youth, private sector, academia, think tanks, civil society organizations, and local and national public administration institutions in the co-creation of the National Youth Service model. In addition to diverse stakeholder engagement, a robust learning agenda that generated evidence-based information on youth initiatives informed the design of a business model and standard operating procedures to implement CASC/CAYEP. More than 1,300 individuals and over 100 organizations provided inputs and feedback for the model prototype, while nearly 300 youth interviewed 1,400 of their peers to inform CASC/CAYEP implementation. The activity also partnered with local organizations to engage over 2,000 individuals in pop-up service experiences and piloted a successful community service program, training more than 60 youth tutors in the Teaching at the Right Level methodology who then provided math and reading support to nearly 1,800 third grade students. Based on lessons learned from this and other youth-focused activities, USAID/Guatemala will scale its CASC/CAYEP implementation to reach 25,000 youth over five years, providing them with academic, technical, and soft skills training; engaging them in meaningful community service and social impact experiences; and linking youth to continued educational opportunities, civic engagement, and employment. The activity seeks to not only focus on youth, but also involve their families, communities, local governments, and the private sector in a “whole of society” approach to empower youth as agents of social change, while catalyzing collective action and local investment to build stronger and more resilient communities.

USAID/CENTRAL AMERICA

The Central America Regional Mission (based in El Salvador) has developed a multi-country youth development and environmental service program that provides eight-month professional development and community service opportunities for youth from communities across the Trifinio area of Central America. Modeled after the Youth Conservation Corps of the US Forest Service, participants will develop technical competencies in forest management, nature conservation, watershed protection, and climate change adaptation, combined with cross-cutting capacities in leadership, communication, and entrepreneurship, to prepare them to continue their education, secure job placements, or create their own business and/or social entrepreneurship opportunities. They will also develop practical and social-emotional skills through service-learning activities, mentoring, and engagement in a peer network for continued learning, connection, and community service.

