

Conference addresses youth crime prevention in Central America



June 28th, 2011 Conference on Youth Violence in the Americas: SIF Executive Director Mauricio Vivero looks over the agenda as the summit begins in the Hall of the Americas at the OAS.

On Tuesday, June 28, Seattle International Foundation was proud to cosponsor a major [conference](#) on citizen security in the Americas organized by USAID, Department of State, and the OAS entitled “Successful Models and Approaches on Youth Development and Crime Prevention.” The conference reinforced the need for collaboration among governments, citizens, and businesses to strengthen communities and combat crime in Central America.

“We are very pleased to work with USAID and other organizations to learn about the best strategies to combat youth violence in Central America,” said Mauricio Vivero, Executive Director of SIF. “Poverty and lack of educational and job opportunities leave millions of youth in Latin America with few options, we must design and support programs that both deal with short term security issues, as well as tackle the core issue of extreme poverty.”

The conference was held at OAS headquarters in Washington DC, with opening remarks by Jose Miguel Insulza, OAS Secretary General; Arturo Valenzuela, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs; and Mark Feierstein, USAID Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean. Other speakers included: Arturo Sagera, Director General of Programa Empresarial Superate; and Helen Mack, Presidential Commission for Police Reform in Guatemala and President of the Fundación Myrna Mack. Participants analyzed and discussed community policing projects and innovative public-private partnerships for youth development. You can view the complete agenda and list of panelists on the USAID website [here](#).

Press meetings and other related events took place around the date of the conference, including a private dinner at the Salvadoran Embassy with leading experts and foundations working in Central America, as well as gatherings at the offices of the [Center for Global Development](#) and [Inter-American Dialogue](#). SIF sponsored a delegation of grassroots NGO leaders from Central America to attend these events and address these issues from a grassroots perspective:

“Young people are threatened, and this is due to their migration to the city as much as their return to their communities, adhering to new cultures. This implies the creation of gangs in communities and these same gangs return to become extortionists in their own communities,” stated Enma Cantu of



June 27th Special Dinner hosted by the Embassy of El Salvador: Ambassador Francisco Altschul (Embassy of El Salvador to the US), Kevin Casas-Zamora (Former VP of Costa Rica and current Fellow at The Brookings Institution) and Arturo Condo (Dean of INCAE).

MOJOMAYAS, an organization in Guatemala working with youth in indigenous communities.

The conference followed the OAS General Assembly on Citizen Security in El Salvador and the Central American Integration System (SICA) Donor Conference in Guatemala last week, which brought together government officials, bilateral donors, and the international community to pledge over [\\$1.5 billion](#) in support for a regional security strategy and national security programs in Central America.

You can find an article written by Ana Cubias at El Tiempo Latino about the June 28th conference and the issue of violence in Central America [here](#). Visit the OAS website [here](#) to view videos from each session of the conference. Check out SIF's [FLICKR](#) page for more photos of the summit and related meetings.