



Fact Sheet

Socio-Economic Components of Mérida

“Drugs are a problem that concerns us all, every one of us, not just because drug trafficking generates violence in our communities, but because with every consumer we lose a child and his or her contribution towards creating a better world.”

*Margarita Zavala
First Lady of Mexico*

“The fight we were beginning to wage against the Mafia did not involve two massed armies, but rather house-to-house fighting in which we tried to recapture our civic lives neighborhood by neighborhood. . .No less than other tyrannies, the Mafia destroys liberty, mortifies democracy, makes economic development impossible, and kills the very concept of citizenship. Yet as we here in Palermo know, when such tyrannies are finally broken, the human spirit blossoms.”

*Leoluco Orlando
Former Mayor
Palermo, Italy*

The socio-economic components of the Mérida Initiative complement the actions taken in matters of security, rule of law and a more modern border. Known as “Pillar IV,” these policies address both the causes and effects of violence and crime in a way that strengthens communities to withstand outside pressures, whether they are economic downturns or violent criminals. Pillar IV promotes citizen participation, increases economic and productive opportunities, fosters cooperation between the society and government, and expands effective community services – health, education, culture, sports, and drug demand reduction. Pillar IV activities are designed to unite people and institutions on both sides of the border and focus on priority zones where violence and insecurity are acute, especially Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua and Tijuana, Baja California. A pilot initiative is underway in Ciudad Juarez.

Achievements:

Culture of Lawfulness (CoL):

- CoL education is now part of school curricula in 23 states. The 2009-2010 school year, brought CoL courses to 22 states and nearly 1 million students; Mexico’s future generation of leaders.
- The Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) has committed to implementing CoL to all 32,000 members of its force. A 40-hour course has already been taught to 3,550 new officers.
- Mexico’s Secretariat of Public Oversight (SFP), the ministry responsible for monitoring government agencies, declared CoL promotion a priority. The SFP signed an agreement to implement CoL education for civil servants and workforce mentoring.
- In April 2010, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Institute for Social Development (INDESOL) launched a grant proposal to target Civil Society Organizations in Ciudad Juarez. The grant program will strengthen these organizations working in Human Rights, Victims Services, Community Cohesion, and Security and Justice. Each Mérida grant ranges from \$20,000 to \$100,000USD.
- USAID supported a Conflict Transformation Training during the Chihuahua Conference on Gender and Equity in November 2009. Indigenous women learned of Trafficking in Persons, Gender Violence, Family Violence, and women’s rights for violent free lives as a means to raise awareness.
- In 2009 officials from Chihuahua and the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juarez were trained in trauma assistance to better attend to and protect victims of violent crimes. The Victim Attention Center also received expert technical assistance.
- In December 2009, USAID sent 40 representatives from NGOs and the justice sector to Colombia to study justice reforms, victim services, best practices, and strategies for addressing organized crime and creating state-NGO networks to fight organized crime.
- In April 2009, employees from the Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua Attorneys General office and directors and staff of NGOs attended a “Sex Trafficking of America’s Youth” workshop. The two-day conference was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico and included presentations by New Mexico’s Attorney General’s office, the FBI, the Dallas Police Department High Risk Victims and Trafficking Unit, the Department of Justice, and various NGOs that provide victim services.

Demand Reduction:

- With \$1.2 million in Mérida Initiative support, a drug treatment and certification training program is being developed to establish Mexico’s first national training and certification program for counselors and treatment providers. Profiles and curricula are being developed to improve the nation’s quality of care. This will be complemented by a Mérida-supported clinical trial node to independently verify effective, science-based treatment protocols.
- A \$6.5 million bilateral project, part of the Health Ministry’s National Network for Technological Transfer in Addictions (RENADIC), will extend web-based interconnectivity to more than 300 “Nueva Vida” treatment centers, local governments and NGOs. The project will establish a nationwide case management and distance learning platform to facilitate training and technical assistance on drug prevention and treatment.

- In December 2009, 24 professionals across six Mexican states kicked off a project for the training and certification of drug treatment providers in Mexico. This \$2.4 million project aims to improve the skills and certify front-line drug treatment counselors across Mexico, with an end-goal of training over 600 counselors.

Future Directions

Culture of Lawfulness:

- Mexico's CoL education efforts will soon be extended to police forces in more border area states and other regions throughout 2010. CoL education programs will also be given to religious and community leaders and Mexico's largest public-sector firms for public dissemination, as well as media professionals to explore opportunities to introduce CoL themes into popular culture through soap operas and news stories.
- A Mexican Institute for Trial Advocacy is being established through the cooperative efforts of Emory University, Panamericana University, and USAID to develop and institutionalize adversarial trial and advocacy curricula to train Mexican lawyers and law students, critical for Mexico's legal professionals as they adjust to Mexico's new judicial system. A partnership between the University of San Diego, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, and USAID will soon provide curriculum, materials to enhance legal education, training, and support for Mexican law professors for proper instruction on the accusatory criminal procedure.
- Judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and human rights NGOs are receiving training and technical support on the use of pre-trial case resolution alternatives, such as plea bargaining, mediation and restorative justice.
- USAID sponsors professional peer exchanges between Mexican federal and state judges and judges from the US and other countries that practice oral, adversarial trials to study best practices and develop experience.

Demand Reduction:

- Counselor certifications will be extended from 600 in the first stage, to approximately 2,000 in the second phase in 2010. Mexico's first-ever census of treatment facilities will be conducted as part of this initiative.
- The Drug Prevention and Treatment Center Network (RENADIC) will be extended to link each of Mexico's 320 centers in 2010, intensifying demand reduction efforts. The certification initiative will be linked to RENADIC to improve training and ensure professionalization of care.

Increased Economic and Productive Opportunities:

- USAID will work through the *Youth: Work Mexico* project to increase community involvement, in providing at-risk youth in northern border states, especially in the cities of Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana access to the job market, while equipping them with the education and life skills necessary to become positive role models within the workforce, their families, and their communities.
- A financing vehicle is being developed by USAID and Evensen Dodge International, Inc. for state and municipal governments along the U.S.-Mexico border, potentially resulting in the mobilization of \$200 million in public finance for infrastructure and other productive investments.
- USAID is working to improve the policy environment for small and medium sized enterprises to increase competitiveness.

Strengthen Social Networks and Community Cohesion:

- 1,500 teenagers are part of a program in Ciudad Juárez that will focus their interests on math, reading, chess, sports (soccer and basketball). The program will feature the use of Apple i-touch technology.
- USAID is working with Mexico's Legislature, the Attorney General's office, the National Human Rights Commission, Violence Against Women Prevention (FEVIMTRA), and various state governments, NGOs, faith based organizations, and victims assistance centers to combat trafficking in persons by advising on the legal framework necessary to prosecute and prevent human trafficking.

Community and Government Cooperation to Reduce Crime and Violence:

- Texas Tech University and Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez will work with USAID to train staff in state-run hospitals in Ciudad Juárez on new methodologies to improve trauma care based on recommendations and needs as identified by the Ministry of Health and Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez.
- Bi-national Attorneys General exchanges will provide participants the opportunity to exchange information and develop collaborative partnerships to address common concerns such as money laundering and drug, weapons, and human trafficking.
- The Violence and Injury Prevention Support in Mexico will develop a mental health program in Ciudad Juárez, enhance the information systems at key agencies working with the Juárez Violent Prevention Observatory, and create a technical advisory group of experts from academic institutions, the Pan American Health Organization, community leaders and government representatives.