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CENTRAL AMERICAN SERVICE CORPS - NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE INITIATIVE

Project Dates: February 2024 - February 2029

Budget: \$50 million

The Central American Service Corps - National Youth Service Initiative (CASC-NYSI) is a youth volunteer service initiative that is implemented by Fundación Crisálida (Glasswing International) with a wide range of local, national, and international stakeholders who promote youth's positive development and enhance their sense of belonging, resilience, and ability to make meaningful contributions to their communities. Participants will embark on a year-long comprehensive journey, starting with academic, technical, and soft skills training. Following this, they will engage in a 6-month community service internship. Their experience concludes with robust transitional support aimed at facilitating their continued education, connection to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, and sustained civic engagement. To ensure accessibility, participants will receive stipends and other economic support to alleviate barriers to entry and offset opportunity costs associated with program participation.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC APPROACH

This initiative will target a specific demographic: youth aged 15 to 29, whether currently enrolled in school or not, who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances and are at heightened risk of irregular migration due to various factors:

1. Limited economic opportunities;
2. Insufficient access to quality education, exacerbated by inequalities;
3. Social violence, including gender-based violence and gang-related violence;
4. Previous migration experiences, either personally or within their household.

The Central American Service Corps (CASC-NYSI) aims to engage 25,000 participants over a five-year period, ensuring inclusivity by reaching out to young women, men, indigenous populations, LGBTQI+ individuals, and those with disabilities.

In years one and two, CASC-NYSI will operate in the departments of Guatemala, Quetzaltenango, and Huehuetenango. The plan is to scale CASC-NYSI nationally, operating across urban, peri-urban, and rural areas. Initially, Glasswing will focus on regions where it already has a presence and established partnerships with local public and private entities capable of championing the initiative's initial phases and advocating for its adoption at the national policy level.

Priority regions will be selected based on key development indicators, migration patterns, youth needs, and rapid feasibility assessments. These assessments will encompass a range of topics, including relevant public policies, governmental institutional capacity at both central and local levels, and the availability of supportive organizations offering services such as training, community engagement, and connections to education and employment opportunities. Ongoing assessments will inform decisions regarding the expansion of program operations in years three to five.

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Poverty affects approximately 55.2% of Guatemala's population, with nearly half living below the poverty line. However, for indigenous communities, comprising over 40% of the nation's populace, this figure escalates to nearly 80%. The pervasive context of poverty and violence significantly hampers educational and employment prospects for youth and serves as a fundamental driver of irregular migration.

A significant portion of Guatemalan youth fails to complete high school, with 41% of teenagers out of school. In the Western Highlands, where indigenous communities predominate, this figure rises to 61%, emphasizing the critical need to deepen educational engagement, facilitate access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth, and foster a sense of hope and belonging within their communities.

APPROACH AND RESULTS

The vision of the CASC-NYSI initiative is to create a legacy of social impact for and with youth through a collaborative approach. CASC-NYSI provides a platform to actively invest in youth, enabling them to engage meaningfully in community service and pursue personal and professional growth opportunities in education, employment, and civic participation. This initiative aims to provide clear pathways for youth development, offering tangible exits from vulnerable situations.

The CASC-NYSI activity has four key results:

1. Youths' lives improved in Guatemala through participation in the service corps.
2. A Business Model and Implementation Plan enhanced through a robust learning agenda.
3. Sustainability structures and processes, including governance, management, and financing, established for local and /or national ownership.
4. Community capacity increased to support the service corps and further strengthen it.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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¹ In Guatemala, CASC is locally known as Jóvenes Con Propósito: jovenesconproposito@glasswing.org