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**CARSI-Merida Youth at Risk project**  
**Quarterly Report**  
April 1, 2010 – June 30, 2010



Submitted by:

American Institutes for Research (AIR)

With local associate:

Foundation for the Autonomy and  
Development of the Nicaraguan Atlantic  
Coast (FADCANIC)

## SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Title of Project: CARS/Merida Youth At-Risk project under the Project  
“Expansion of Centers of Excellence in Nicaragua with  
Emphasis on the APA Methodology (EXCELENCIA)”

Main Contractor: American Institutes for Research (AIR)

Local Associate: Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the  
Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast (FADCANIC)

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Below is a short summary of some of the activities that happened in the second quarter of 2010 in the three municipalities where EXCELENCIA – CARSI/MERIDA program is working:

- A short Vocational course of 3 months duration in Carpentry and Cabinet making is being given to 5 young people in Wawashang, Pearl Lagoon.
- Coordination was carried out with the authorities of the Ministry of Education, Members of the Educational commissions of the municipalities as well as other stakeholder willing to work on education issues and help to youth at risk.
- 33 out-of-school youth were enrolled in the Leveling Course in Pearl Lagoon.
- Principals and teachers for remedial courses were chosen according to the selection criteria of our program.
- Continuous tracking and monitoring in the schools of Bluefield, Kukra Hill and Pearl Lagoon with promoters to verify the effective development of the activities.
- Development of 3 after school skills courses, based on the content “Principles and Moral values of the Family” were carried out with students and mothers of students participating in our program with the objective of helping these participants to acquire a better understanding of the important role of women in a sound family and community life.
  - The Youth Advisory Committees are now well established and functioning very effectively. They play a key support role in all project related activities.
  - The official project launch was celebrated in three different implementation sites - Wawashang, Pearl Lagoon and Bluefields - in the presence of the US Ambassador to Nicaragua, Robert J. Callahan.

## **PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

### **Coordination with local authorities and Community at Risk Youth Advisory Committees**

The *Community At-Risk Youth Advisory Committees (CAYACs)* of Bluefields and Pearl Lagoon were constituted in the first weeks of April. They include representatives of Education and Health authorities, as well as communal, municipal and religious leaders who are concerned about the welfare of the community.

Talks with representatives of Peace Corps continued with the objective of determining the feasibility of collaborating with development programs in the areas of English as a Second Language, Small Business, Community Health and Environment. These talks have been very fruitful and it is now planned to receive the first Peace Corps Volunteer, working in the municipality of Pearl Lagoon in August 2010. It is planned that the volunteer will provide assistance with life skills issues among other support.

In a June project visit, AIR and FADCANIC evaluated achievements thus far, needs for the remainder of the 2010 school year, as well as preparatory efforts for the 2011 school year.

### **Enrollment and provision of services to beneficiaries**

The project is working in all three municipalities that are targeted by the project: Bluefields, Kukra Hill, and Pearl Lagoon (including Haulover, Raitipura and Pearl Lagoon). A total of 115 students have been enrolled in the CARS project since its inception. The 115 beneficiaries include 90 recipients of primary school scholarships, 15 beneficiaries attending first and second grade secondary school, 5 beneficiaries enrolled in the first short-term vocation training program in residential plumbing, as well as 5 beneficiaries enrolled in a short-term vocational course in Cabinet Making.

Promoters in the three municipalities are conducting regular monitoring and follow-up visits to the schools where scholarship recipients are attending, as well as conducting home visits to work with parents to ensure attendance, participation and good disposition to work with the program.

Tutoring and educational assistance visits are made during after-school hours with the support of the teachers. Promoters offer study techniques and strategies and also involve parents in the activities. The visits have helped to change their attitude regarding the learning process as a direct result of the tutorials. Positive change is noticeable in beneficiaries and teachers, but also in other students not direct beneficiaries of the program.

### **Elementary and Secondary school scholarship**

#### Kukra Hill

- Students are doing well in their studies and comply with their class assignments. So far we have had 100% compliance with task assigned, most students perceive education as an important instrument to achieve desired goals and they want to excel.

- In elementary school tutoring is provided by the promoter in the school where the students are studying. This reduces work load of teachers. During this quarter tutoring was provided to 29 students.

Kukra Hill maintains a total of 30 youth attending classes at the Elementary public school Padre Hugo Heinzen in the regular and night school program and in the Communal school Bethel. Both schools are located in the community of Kukra Hill.

Table 1: Kukra Hill beneficiaries

SCHOOLS	INITIAL ENROLLMENT			ACTUAL ENROLLMENT			RETENTION AVERAGE		
	B	G	BG	B	G	BG	B	G	BG
Padre Hugo Heinzen	10	18	28	10	18	28	100	100	100
Bethel	2	-	2	2	-	2	100	-	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### Bluefields

The tutoring was carried out by the teachers of each classroom and in exchange the program provided them with educational support material (brochures, educational CD,), and the results have been very positive. Boys and girls who demonstrated deficiency in academic performance have improved considerably. Participating teachers comment that the tutorial is a very good initiative that greatly aids youth, since in their homes they often receive very little support from parents because of little schooling the parents themselves have.

Four students had attendance problems during the month of April and 2 weeks in May. After visiting the homes of these students by the promoter and director of the schools, they were able to bring back three of the students into the program. The fourth student dropped out and was replaced with another student who was ranked next on the original list of candidates to be enrolled in the program.

Table 2: Bluefields Scholarships.

SCHOOLS	INITIAL ENROLLMENT			ACTUAL ENROLLMENT			RETENTION AVERAGE		
	B	G	BG	B	G	BG	B	G	BG
El Hogar	3	7	10	2	5	7	67	71	70
Salvador Schlaefer	6	4	10	6	4	10	100	100	100
Ruben Dario	4	1	5	4	3	7	100	300	140
Dinamarca	3	2	5	3	2	5	100	100	100
Nstra Sra. Del Rosario	0	0	0	1	0	1	100	100	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### Pearl Lagoon

- Teachers that are responsible for the tutoring see a very positive impact from providing extra-curricular hours of support to students. This helps all the students in the class not only the CARSI beneficiaries and thus avoids creating a rift between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in the community.
- Almost all students' beneficiaries of CARSI/MERIDA have improved their attendance, discipline, learning skills and abilities, according to an internal evaluations by project staff. They are demonstrating more interest in schools matters both curricular and extracurricular.
- The CAYAC is also counseling youth regarding the importance of education and make them understand the unique opportunity that has been provided to them. Some members of the CAYAC are communal leaders who perceived this program as adequate models for youth in their community.

Pearl Lagoon municipality has a total of 30 youth from the communities of Haulover, Raitipura and Pearl Lagoon attending the primary levels and 13 attending 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

The following chart presents scenery of the distribution of the same:

Table 3: Bluefields Scholarships Elementary schools

SCHOOLS	INITIAL ENROLLMENT			ACTUAL ENROLLMENT			RETENTION AVERAGE		
	B	G	BG	B	G	BG	B	G	BG
Beulah Lightburn	3	7	10	8	7	15	267	100	150
Andres Castro	6	4	10	3	4	7	50	100	70
Ruben Darío	4	1	5	2	1	3	50	100	60
PLACE	3	2	5	5	1	6	167	50	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>103</b>

Table 4: Bluefields Scholarships Secondary school

SCHOOLS	INITIAL ENROLLMENT			ACTUAL ENROLLMENT			RETENTION AVERAGE		
	B	G	BG	B	G	BG	B	G	BG
PLACE	8	7	15	8	5	13	100	71	87

#### Summary – Elementary and Secondary school scholarship beneficiaries

The tables below provide an overview of the distribution of the scholarship recipients, by scholarship type, location, gender and age.

**Table 5 : No. of learners enrolled in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings.**

MUNICIPALITY	INITIAL ENROLLMENT			ACTUAL ENROLLMENT		
	B	G	BG	B	G	BG
Bluefields	16	14	30	16	14	30
Kukra Hill	12	18	30	12	18	30
Pearl Lagoon	16	14	30	18	13	31
Total	44	46	90	46	45	91
% RETENTION	101%					

**Table 6: No. of learner No. of learners in enrolled in secondary schools or equivalent non-school based settings**

MUNICIPALITY	INITIAL ENROLLMENT			ACTUAL ENROLLMENT		
	B	G	BG	B	G	BG
Pearl Lagoon	8	7	15	8	5	13
% Retention	87%					

### Short-term vocational training

In the month of May 2010 a short term vocational course for “Carpentry and Cabinet making” was launched. The course started with 5 boys. The schedule is; 5 days per week (Monday through Friday), 8 hours of class daily. Attendance, participation, retention and achievements are at a 100% and the youth who are participating in the course have demonstrated interest and commitment at all times.

**Table 7: Number of persons participating in USG-funded workforce development programs**

MUNICIPALITY of Pearl Lagoon	INITIAL ENROLLMENT			AGES									
	B	G	BG	14		15		17		18		19	
				V	N	V	N	V	N	V	N	V	N
Wawashang	5	0	5	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-
% per ages				20	20		20		20		20		
Ethnic Identity				Kriol	Garifuna		Mestizo		Mestizo		Mestizo		

### LEVELING COURSES

Leveling courses in Pearl Lagoon continued, with a total of 30 students (17 boys and 13 girls). The first two months were used to strengthen students’ language proficiency, the English courses where done in two months. Mathematics began on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

Table 8: Leveling course participants

LEVELING COURSE	INITIAL ENROLLMENT			ACTUAL ENROLLMENT			AVERAGE OF RETENTION		
	B	G	BG	B	G	BG	B	G	BG
<b>SECTION A</b>	9	9	18	9	9	18	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>
<b>SECTION B</b>	10	8	18	8	7	15	80%	87%	<b>84%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>92%</b>

English classes are finished and the evaluation of the same will be programmed to be done in alliance with the Ministry of education department in charge of Adults education at the end of the leveling course.

Similar to the English classes, the teachers made a diagnostic evaluation of the mathematical capacity of each student and came to the conclusion that they are faced with reasoning and mental calculation difficulties specifically with multiplications and divisions. From this evaluation a program was develop in order to meet the needs of these youth. The feasibility of developing educational materials for the teaching of Mathematics for youth at risk in the RAAS is being studied.

During the last week of June Leveling course classes were irregular due to rain fall and a flu outbreak. Make-up classes for those affected are under consideration.

### **Life skills training activities**

26 students in Bluefields received training on “Self esteem” and are now sharing with classmates and friends in their surroundings about the importance of self esteem in ones life.

30 students of Kukra Hill worked on “Principles and Moral values of the Family” with the purpose of empowering not only students but also parents, with the aim of establishing closer links and firmer bonds among the family members in the homes of these youth at risk, in order to establish an environment of comprehension, communication, good human relations, and above all, the love and understanding that must prevail in all homes. Their motto: United we can keep all risk away from our homes.

Young Journalist’s Luncheon Sessions were held as an attempt to discover writing and artistic talent among the staff of The Virus, School and Community Magazine. 16 student beneficiaries of CARSI participated in five sessions held April through June 2010 at PLACE.

Some of the outstanding contents developed in each session were as follows.

#### Session 1:

- What is news?
- How are newspapers different from books?
- The role of journalism in the life of a community.

Session 2:

- What is a journalist?
- The attitudes and skills of good reporters.
- A newspaper staff. Who does what?

Session 3:

- Seven steps to creating a newspaper.
- Decide what's newsworthy.
- Gather the facts and research the story.

Session 4:

- Three types of Newspaper Stories: news stories, feature stories, editorials
- Ideas for Special Sections

Session 5:

- Writing a news story
- Journalistic style: lead, body, conclusion
  
- In each session, a reporting and writing task was assigned to the students leading to the production of two articles to be published in The Virus. The first is an interview on occasion of the inauguration of the Communal House of Pearl Lagoon, and the second a report on the efforts underway to improve the infrastructure of Beulah Lightburn Primary School. In both cases, the students involved in the production of these articles received additional weekend coaching on conducting interviews, gathering additional information, writing style and typing.
  
- Through the reporting process, the students developed and applied oral and written language skills; through the process of photographing and designing they learned the basics of visual arts. Through the process of seeing the paper produced from planning to distribution, they developed organizational skills.

In Kukra hill the following courses were offered:

- Principles and ecological values (Rights of children and teens, love and care for the environment, promoting and defending the rights of teachers). Sixth graders made an ecological bulletin board that was widely read by other students of the school.
  
- Very good results were achieved from dialogues that were held about Children's Rights, students attitude changed, some were surprised to discover that they as children had these Rights. Youth begin to value themselves and building up their self esteem. *"It is time that we begin to defend our Rights and comply with our Duties"* was the motto and expressions of this sort were obtained from the youth in the different municipalities.
  
- Moreover, courses on "Principles and values of families" and "Principles and moral values focused on the role of women." Were given and positively received.

## **Gender and ethnicity**

The program aims to provide equitable access to youth of all ethnic groups. In this first year, the project has beneficiaries from the following ethnic groups: Creole, Mestizo, Miskitu and Garifuna.

## **Other developments**

- During the entire month of April arrangements were made to ensure that students benefiting from scholarship would be able to receive their backpacks and uniform packages by May 15th.
- For the launching of the program, 3 students were favored with the symbolic delivery of such supplies by US Ambassador Robert J. Callahan. Also during the launch of the program, the Ambassador Mr. Robert Callahan gave a set of sports equipment for baseball to the beneficiaries of Wawashang, the four schools of Pearl Lagoon, two schools of Kukra Hill and one school in Bluefields.
- In the 3 municipalities in which the project is working, data of the students' academic achievements were collected, recorded and analyze, with the principal, teacher, parents and promoter of the various schools. This was done with the purpose of evaluating the use of the materials given for the tutoring classes, as well as to guarantee that both the teachers and students were making the right use of the same.
- The backpacks are all in the hands of each beneficiary likewise in Pearl Lagoon the 45 students have already received their pair of school shoes. Bluefields and Kukra Hill students' shoes were delivered the first week in June. Parents, students, teachers and principal of the different schools where these youth are studying have expressed the importance and great help that these supplies and materials represent.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

- The project has established a good coordination with MINED RAAS and with Kukra Hill and Pearl Lagoon municipal offices.
- The project has been very well received by the communities, parents are supportive and students have in general shown great discipline in terms of attendance and participation in the development of their classes.
- Establishment of scholarship committees in each municipality served by the project.

- The tutoring and educational assistance visits have helped to change students and teachers attitude regarding the learning process and positive change is already noticeable in young people and teachers.
- Students skills and abilities are enhanced when someone is working closely with them. The sense of someone caring for them is essential for their success. Whenever possible, beneficiaries should have access to a mentor/tutor.
- Teachers appreciate and value the support of the tutoring sessions as an essential tool to achieve better results not only for the youth with scholarship but also for the rest of students in their classroom.
- Students want recognition. They don't want to go unnoticed as in their previous educational settings where often their learning and assimilation rate was very low and they had no role to play in the classroom.
- Extracurricular work with a small group of students is effective and optimum results can be achieved. It is a tool which enhances quality teaching.
- Students understand and see the need of men starting to assume their responsibility in the gender equity issues in order to better the environment and society.
- It is very important and remarkable the tutoring issue likewise the mentoring done to give a follow up to scholarships, it gives way to creating an environment of trust, discipline and confidence. Tutoring, mentoring and selective monitoring helps to create an environment of trust discipline and confidence. In such an environment where parents, teachers and students interact and join efforts. Positive results are achieved in the teaching learning process but, also the intercultural and social aspects.
- The project is on track to meeting its 2010 enrollment targets

### **ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR NEXT QUARTER**

- Visits to schools of the 3 municipalities attended by the project/ promoters, to provide technical assistance to scholarship beneficiaries and teachers.
- Asses principal and teachers' performance during the leveling course.
- Development of topics suggested in the life skills curriculum and in accordance with the Ministry of education curriculum adjustments for the IBEP (Intercultural Bilingual Education Program).
- Coordination visit with school counseling team of MINED in Bluefields.

- Selection of principal and teachers for the short vocational course in Computer Skills according to the program selection criteria. Students will learn Basic Computer skills, Microsoft word and Microsoft Excel.
- Closing activity(ceremony) for the leveling course to be carried out on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010
- Visit of two project staff to the USAID/Brasil Enter Jovem project to learn about experiences and tools used in this youth at risk employability project.
- Experience exchange visit with the ENTERATE project
- Development of the Second phase of residential plumbing short vocational training course

**ANNEX**

**Kukra Hill Promoter tutoring students in the library of the Padre Hugo Heinzen school guaranteeing the homework making.**



**Ambassador Mr. Robert J. Callahan delivering symbolic school package to youth at Risk student Steven Temple, of Beulah Lightburn school in Pearl Lagoon.**

**Youth engaged in Young Journalism are very busy getting ready to report to their tutor, Mrs. Deborah Robb.**



**Principal of PLACE, receiving sport package from the Ambassador during the inauguration ceremony in Pearl Lagoon.**



PLACE student waiting for an interview during the inaugural event of the communal house in Pearl Lagoon.



Dr. Ray Hooker, Mr. Robert J. Callahan  
And Dr. Harold Bacon, Mayor of Bluefields  
In the Launching of EXCELENCIA (CARSI MERIDA)



Student of the Carpentry, Cabinet making with Mr. Robert J. Callahan