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FADCANIC Capacity Building Activity
Quarterly Report
April 1- June 30, 2013



Submitted by:

American Institutes for Research (AIR)

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Title of Project: FADCANIC Capacity-Building Activity under the EQUIP1 Project “Expansion of Centers of Excellence in Nicaragua with Emphasis on the APA Methodology (EXCELENCIA)”

Main Contractor: American Institutes for Research (AIR)

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End Date: Nov 30, 2014 (of the current contract under EQUIP1)
Sep 30, 2013 (end date of currently approved activities)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The FADCANIC Capacity Building Activity is funded by USAID/Nicaragua under the EQUIP1/EXCELENCIA Project, implemented by the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

The Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast (FADCANIC) is a civil society, non-governmental organization located in the multi-ethnic region of Caribbean Nicaragua. The organization is a major implementer of development projects in this region of Nicaragua, with a particular focus on environmental, agricultural, education, and youth development programs, and funding from diverse organizations and funders.

AIR provides FADCANIC with technical assistance in institutional and programmatic areas to manage USAID funds according to USAID standards. The objective of the activity is to strengthen FADCANIC's capacity to manage USAID funds, and to know, master, and comply with USAID's complex requirements for adequate program implementation, including reporting and achieving results.

AIR assists FADCANIC in developing management practices in the areas of administration and finance, personnel management, monitoring and evaluation, and strategic planning. AIR also provides technical programmatic assistance in approaches in working with youth to develop activities that will introduce life skills and better employment opportunities.

The agreement modification initiating the activity was signed in July, 2011; implementation and technical assistance were then scheduled to be completed by the end of calendar year 2012. In June 2012, AIR submitted to USAID a request for a no-cost extension to enhance impact and allow time for close-out. A work plan and a revised budget for the no-cost extension that would see the project close in Sep 2013 (with major activities ending in June 2013) was submitted last quarter and subsequently approved on January 15, 2013.

Activities under each result during the April-June 2013 period are described below.

RESULT 1: FADCANIC's ORGANIZATIONAL, MANAGEMENT, MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEMS IMPROVED

3.1 Administration and Finance

1. Tracking the progress of changes made to the FADCANIC Administrative Procedures and Financial Control Manual based on recommendations by AIR. Working Sessions with Thalia Coe and Rainier Romero, the FADCANIC consultant who prepared the manuals.

This activity was conducted during the months of May and June 2013 for which a team was formed consisting of Mrs. Thalia Coe, Rainier Romero, consultant who developed the original manuals and AIR consultant Jose Antonio Cordoba. The work was to review, discuss and implement the recommendations made by AIR after a review and evaluation of the existing manuals and staff knowledge about procedures in the field.

2. Actualization and Approval of the New Version of the Financial-Administrative Procedures Manual including insertions and modifications proposed by AIR according to the efficiency and sufficiency assessments made to the content of the manuals produced by Rainier Romero.

As a result of the work sessions described in the previous section a new version was produced that contains in an integrated fashion the fundamental aspects of the three different manuals: Policies and Standards, Procedures, and Internal Control. Moreover, other aspects that have to do with procedures established by USAID were included or streamlined. The recommendations for changes, amendments and insertions of rules and procedures as well as proposed formats for internal control procedures were accepted to a high degree (approximately 90%). FADCANIC approved the new version on June 20, 2013 and introduced it to the staff involved in the Finance/Admin area.

3. Presentation and Training of the New Version of the Financial-Administrative Procedures Manual.

As the final stage of programmed activities in this area, we proceeded with the presentation of the new version of the integrated Manual to staff and provided training through two presentations that included: a) Complete review of the content of the new version. b) Explanation of the processes that each Finance-Admin staff member will encounter in his/her work, and c) Unification, use and management of internal control formats.

This training was done in two sessions involving all staff from FADCANIC's Finance-Admin area:

- Friday, June 21, 2013 in FADCANIC Managua: Participants of the Managua Office, Puerto Cabezas, Rosita and Siuna, for a total of 7 participants.

- Friday, June 28, 2013 in FADCANIC Bluefields office: Participants FADCANIC Branch offices in Pearl Lagoon and Wawashang for a total of 10 participants.

Achievements:

After a year and a half of activity we achieved the intended result of supporting FADCANIC in strengthening its Finance-Admin processes, policies and standards in such a way that it can be considered an organization with sufficient strengths in this area to meet USAID criteria for financial management procedures and to be able to manage major projects and activities from a financial/administrative aspect. The proposed work plan for this area has now been completed successfully.

Next Steps

- Updating the OCA tool/ Final evaluation.

3.2 Personnel Management

In coordination with FADCANIC, a visit whose by strategic planning specialist Pedro Aviles was planned and conducted in late June and early July to identify and address issues related to the approval and subsequent roll out of the strategic plan. The second goal of this visit was to identify and help with any pending human resources-related activities.

Several meetings, emails and telephone exchanges took place with the HR director to identify and help with any remaining HR needs. At FADCANIC's request, Pedro Aviles helped to adapt and translate two performance evaluation forms which had been designed by AIR's HR specialist prior to her departure. These forms, once revised and approved, will become the primary tools for conducting probationary and annual performance evaluations for all employees and will be incorporated in the personnel manual, which is being revised and updated to reflect new policies and procedures resulting from AIR's technical assistance in this management area.

Achievements

During his work with the HR area AIR consultant Pedro Aviles could observe that FADCANIC had successfully launched and is managing a new HR data base system developed to better manage its growing staff, which is presently 212 employees.

Next steps

- A Spanish-speaking AIR HR specialist has been identified to accompany Pedro Aviles on his planned trip to Bluefields in early September. She will deliver one or two training sessions aimed at introducing managers and supervisor to FADCANIC's performance evaluation policies and procedures based on AIR models.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

In April M&E consultant Jairo Luna who provides limited M&E assistance to other FADCANIC programs, analyzed the results of the baseline report comparing 2009 to 2011 data of the project “Innovación de Modelo de Desarrollo Local Sostenible con Equidad Basado en los Trópicos Húmedos de Nicaragua, as well as key findings from an external evaluation conducted in February of this year.

Under the coordination of Maynor Robles, who is responsible for Monitoring and Evaluation of the aforementioned program a process of cleaning the survey data of 2009 and 2011 was conducted for Bluefields, El Rama, and Kukra Hill, resulting in a recommending that in addition to the review of surveys on paper, an additional follow-up should be conducted in a random sample of beneficiaries to validate the data.

Moreover, Jairo Luna assisted in the updating of the database of the project “Mejoramiento de las condiciones para la producción, procesamiento y comercialización de familias campesinas en los municipios de Bonanza y Rosita en la Costa Caribe Nicaraguense”.

The database for the year 2012 as updated under the coordination of a FADACNIC technical staff member. Procedures on how to perform the process, from review of the surveys before they are entered into the database, data entry, data purification and quality control were established.

In May Jairo Luna provided support in qualitative analysis to the Project “Profesionalización de docentes” in the municipalities of Rosita and Bonanza.

Last year FADCANIC coordinator in Rosita, Xiomara Manzanares started collecting qualitative information of the project for 180 teachers involved in the process of improving their capacity through 6 open questions. The information was collected in Word and the data analysis did not go forward for a long time due to the need for training on the processing of qualitative data. A “coding tree” for each question in the questionnaire was developed and a training on how to process qualitative information in the program MaxQDA was conducted.

Also in May, Jairo Luna provided continuous technical support to the responsible staff for monitoring and evaluation of the Innovation program, in cleaning data for the 2009 and 2011 surveys. Recommendations for improving the data collection tool for tge surveys were provided (suggesting the use of Microsoft Access).

During June 17-19 the long planned training workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation as well as on tools for processing quantitative and qualitative data was held with FADCANIC personnel in the RAAN together with Sadya Jimenez. The workshop involved a total of 15 people (RAAN regional coordinator, project coordinators and technical; 8 males and 7 females).

In this workshop the methodological tools for monitoring and evaluation were covered in addition to familiarizing participants with methodological tools to process quantitative and qualitative information, including the MaxQDA program using specific examples of the “Profesionalización de docentes” project that FADCANIC runs in Rosita and Bonanza.

Most M&E activities are considered cross-cutting activity with Result 2 supporting youth programming in the EduExitto project. Please refer to the Youth Development section under Result 2 for further details.

3.4 Strategic Planning

During the first two months of this quarter the main activities consisted in phone calls and emails to FADCANIC to check on the status of the approval and roll out of the strategic plan. Although we had suggested to FADCANIC to hold monthly telephone conferences to address issues related to the implementation of the strategic plan, these never took place for a variety of reasons, including other pressing programmatic demands on FADCANIC and an apparent absence of urgency to make the final additions and corrections to the draft of the plan that was forwarded to FADCANIC in early January 2013.

In coordination with FADCANIC we agreed that addressing the remaining strategic plan issues was best served by a visit which was conducted in late June and early July. The main aim of the trips was to identify and address issues related to the approval and subsequent roll out of the strategic plan.

Pedro Aviles attended a meeting of the board on June 24, 2013 where the board of directors approved the strategic plan as revised and corrected on that day. He provided attendees with an update and context on the strategic planning process and to answer clarifying questions. On the days following the board meeting, he conducted eleven interviews with leaders of the organization including regional directors, RAAN staff, and other key players who formally or informally lead important and/or major program areas in the organization. The purpose of these meetings/interviews was to ascertain the level of readiness for rolling out and implementing the plan from the perspective of the interviewees. These interviews yielded important data which helped us to assess the progress and capacity to lead the developmental change process inherent in the implementation of an organization-wide strategic plan. The one-on-one interviews data confirmed that several of the strategic steps contained in the plan have been completed or are in the process of being completed, in spite of the absence of a formal adoption of the plan by the board at the end of June.

Achievements

Strategic plan now formally approved by FADCANIC board of directors. Plan implementation is already underway. In Pedro Aviles' evaluation, FADCANIC has the capacity to lead and implement the developmental changes contained in the strategic plan.

Next steps

- Following a FADCANIC request, a final visit by Pedro Aviles is planned for early September 2013 to design and facilitate an all-staff meeting to present and roll-out the five-year strategic plan. The purpose of this meeting is to frame the change effort, provide further opportunity for staff to react and comment on the plan; and to identify actions requiring immediate action.
- Updating the OCA tool/ Final evaluation.

RESULT 2: FADCANIC'S CAPABILITY TO IMPLEMENT YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IMPROVED

I. Considerations on context, achievements and challenges in this period

The lead youth consultant for the project Ivette Fonseca jointly with FADCANIC's technical team and the AIR Project Manager continued to oversee and organize capacity strengthening activities in the priority areas of Youth programming and M&E providing follow-up to outcomes and deliverables in those areas.

Given that the last quarter of AIR's technical accompaniment is coming closer, the Lead Consultant focused her work during this quarter to set up conditions (workshops, meetings, etc.) and definitions (feedback to proposals, approvals) aiming at fulfilling the outcomes in this area jointly outlined on January 2013 between FADCANIC, USAID and AIR.

The main challenges faced during this period were the accumulation of various delays of decision-making on instruments, tool formats, proposals, among others, due different reasons caused by the three organizations collaborating on EduExito. FADCANIC just at the end of March finalized the selection of the final cohort of target group and only in 4 municipalities, and in Bluefields until April; it took 7 months to conclude a final version of the indicators matrix (M&E); 4 months to have the final survey format of the Base Line and its application took another 4 months until April 2013 (when it was planned for August 2012). The implementation of the KAPP also was affected with delayed approval on the survey format version, and just was ready to be applied only in early July.

Achievements

A series of capacity building measures have taken place this reporting period with FADCANIC project's staff at regional and municipal levels. Moreover, systems and procedures in M&E and Life Skills have been jointly developed and relevant documents have been produced.

II. Main activities and results achieved jointly with EduExito and AIR:

- i) To provide and organize technical support to the areas of M&E system, the application of a Base Line survey, its PMP, data base and staff training in management know-how of M&E system.
 - *Life Success Stories (Historias de Vida)*. This product has been finalized and published with an edition of 1000 copies and delivered to FADCANIC for its distribution. It is expected that it will be used for advocacy actions and to inform youth, communities and stakeholders about the project.
 - A final version of *M&E indicators* was submitted and approved by FADCANIC and USAID. We had initially developed a short list of 13 indicators, but finally a version of 27 indicators was approved.
 - *The Baseline survey* was applied successfully to a sample of beneficiaries and a control group of youth not served by the project. Inputs from the first round of data processing have been used during workshops on Life Skill and to develop a quarterly electronic bulletin; a final version of the report will be finished in the next reporting period.

The Database was designed and 20 FADCANIC staff members were successfully trained on how to collect the data, to register and process it.

- The design integrates the USAID indicators and includes the generation of automatic reports to follow-up e.g. on academic achievement, class attendance and counseling support of beneficiaries.
- It also includes the 3 formats for self-assessment in the field of Life Skills to be completed by beneficiaries twice a year. These 3 formats were developed by the team of AIR consultants on M&E, Life Skills and the Lead Consultant for beneficiaries of the following age groups: 10-14 years, 15-19years, 20-24 years.
- A first version of an *Operational and Management Database Manual* was delivered and is being revised by the FADCANIC M&E Specialist jointly with AIR consultants. The Database is a tool designed to provide information at school, community, municipal and regional level and is a web-based.
- For very remote places without reliable internet connection such as Tasbapaunie, Kara, Walpa, the submission of the data can be done via SMS, and through reports from Mentors and Instructors using their own cell phones.
- Data Codes have been defined to report the information from communities to municipal levels to report beneficiaries attending school, interest groups and other activities.

A first draft of a *Sustainability Matrix* has been developed and is currently being reviewed. The matrix proposes 4 hypothesis, (i) the Project will strengthen and raising new funding sources at different levels (community, private sector, locals living abroad);

(ii) regional and municipal authorities are demonstrating ownership of the sustainability of the outcomes' projects; (iii) communities and leaders are supporting the project; (iv) FADCANIC has the capacity to sustain some of the project activities without the current funding.

Issues and challenges

- Although the coordination with FADCANIC's project's management is closer now, it has been difficult to receive timely feedback on some intermediary products or proposed plans.
- An issue of major concern which represent in our view a potential threat for accomplishing the operation of the M&E system has to do with decision about hiring staff t to management/data entry for the M&E system at the municipal level. Given that the focus of the EduExito project is at the individual level **it is of utmost importance to collect timely, individual level, beneficiary information, not only for reporting purposes but also for project management decisions and so that remedial actions can be taken in a timely manner. Such a system requires the necessary staff commitment to be effective.**
- It is not yet clear if FADCANIC will assign cell phone minutes for Mentors and Instructors to send data by SMS.
- The purchase of a Web Hosting for the database, a scanner and external drive to each municipality and at regional level is still in process. The scanner will be used to facilitate the submission of individual beneficiaries' follow-up such as the admission letter, the agreement on the scholarship, among others. Each document will be registered digitally and a photocopy will be uploaded as part of the beneficiary file. The external hard drive will provide the data base backup in each municipality and at the regional level.
- We are still awaiting the final review of the full *report on main achievements* from 2010-2012 submitted to FADCANIC earlier this year.

Next steps

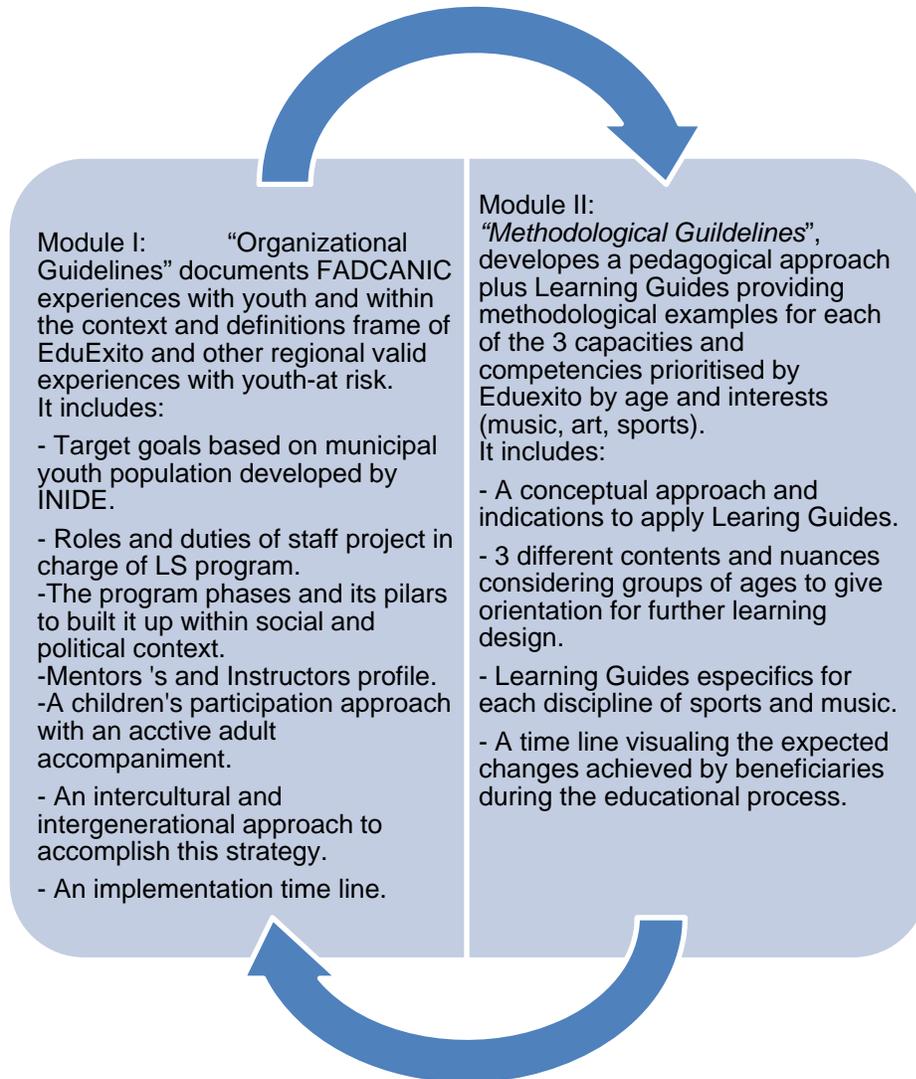
- The draft Baseline survey report will be ready in August for review
- A final version of M&E System Manual will be submitted for its final approval. A flow-chart with routes, procedures, formats, levels of decisions of the M&E system will be included in the Manual.
- The database will be run by FADCANIC project's staff directly. A possible extension of the M&E consultancy of Joel Zamora will provide FADCANIC with continued support to assure data quality during the first month(s) of operation.
- A proposal for planning ahead for the eventual closing-out phase and a sustainability matrix will be reviewed jointly with key Project personnel and AIR consultants.

ii) To provide technical accompaniment to develop strategies implementation of Life Skills as a program and as cross-cut axe in coordination with music, sports and children's participation areas of EduExito.

- The AIR consultants Sonia Duran and Jaqueline Sanchez developed an organizational and methodological strategy on Life Skills enriched with sample Learning Guides to articulate Life Skills, Music and Sport areas jointly with the project team.
- Life Skills as a program has been designed considering the 3 year period to attend each cohort of the target group, the need to train Mentors as key volunteer personnel to hold the activities with beneficiaries, along with Instructors and also peer to peer activities during 24 weeks (2013), 40 weeks (2014) and 40 weeks (2015).
- A series of trainings were held for the development of the strategy and two modeling sessions were developed in Bluefields and Kukrahill for implementing the non-formal education approach with all staff and stakeholders collaborating with EduExito.
- An organizational process for the target group by municipality and instructions about the formation of Peers Groups was provided.
- A definition of roles and responsibilities of the municipal and regional staff to manage the program was also developed.
- Life skills scales have been included in the M&E database; changes will be self-assessed by beneficiaries grouped according to their ages in three groups (see above).
- A consultation among youth was held to develop with them a desired profile of a Mentor to be working with groups of interest in a voluntary way. A Mentor should be a youth with certain qualities who will work with his peers and be in charge to register information about scheduled group activities for the M&E system, and to have basic knowledge on organization and management of groups.
- Inputs to design Sports and Arts Instructors training was developed with the staff in charge of these areas from a Life Skills perspective which resulted in a reducing of the traditional competitive approach prevailing in this area.

Issues and challenges

- The regional technical team assigned to Life Skill program has strengths in formal education but not in a non-formal perspective and therefore there is still some uncertainty regarding its implementation.
- A lot of issues rose up during the process related to roles and functions due to the limited access to the project's guiding documents
- Confusion on the roles of municipal promoters and the regional technical team (Lifeskills, Sports and Music) that limits communication and coordination towards the program implementation.



iii) To facilitate strengthening capacities among staff in the application of a KAPP’s Survey (Knowledge, Attitudes, Perception and Practices) and its design and analysis among youth in 5 municipalities covered by EduExito.

FADCANIC approved the specific plans for the *development and application of a Survey on Knowledge, Attitudes, Perceptions and Practices (KAPP)* along with four training sessions to FADCANIC’s staff to strengthening capacities on this type of tools among youth and general population.

- Currently, 2 of 4 training sessions have been held with the participation of 8 staff members on the process of designing and applying a KAPP’s survey.
- The survey format was approved and applied among 733 youth in 5 municipalities. Data is currently being analysed.

Next steps

- Submission of the draft KAPP's survey results
- Conducting the 2 remaining training workshops with select FADCANIC staff.

iv) To provide technical accompaniment to FADCANIC's participatory process to develop their Code of Ethic and Protection of children's rights as institutional policies.

FADCANIC selected and contracted directly NGO Dos Generaciones to lead its processes of *Code of Ethics and Children's Protection Policy* development based on AIR's proposal.

- The process of diagnosis and assessment has finished among staff to review their practices on child protection.

Next steps

- A first version of Norms and procedures for child protection and code of conduct will be reviewed and approved by FADCANIC staff.

v) To articulate outcomes with other AIR staff and consultants managing ongoing technical support processes.

- a. FADCANIC requested technical support to develop ToR for a Labor Market Study focus on Youth-at risk in the 5 municipalities. The Lead Consultant directly supported this request providing inputs to develop the proposal.
- b. FADCANIC requested technical support to develop ToR of Private and Public Strategy. The Lead Consultant supported this request as well and set up some contacts with corporate foundations.
- c. USAID requested the coordination of efforts regarding the documentation on the project's capacity building (systematization). An outline was developed and review by USAID jointly with the Lead Consultant and the Program Manager. Lack of time to develop this process was highlighted and after discussion with USAID a decision was taken to prioritize the finalization of ongoing products over the starting of a new process towards the end of the assistance period.

PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

AIR consultant Jose Antonio Cordoba continued to collect and enter data on trainings into the TRAINET system.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Please refer to achievements described in the individual sections.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR NEXT QUARTER

Please refer to the individual sections.