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FADCANIC Capacity Building Activity
Quarterly Report
January 1- March 31, 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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Start Date: July 15, 2011

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 January-March 2013 period are described below.

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

3.1 Administration and Finance

A draft report assessing the content of the FADCANIC manuals in the area of financial administrative procedures was finalized by local consultant Jose Antonio Cordoba.

Before finalizing the report an additional assessment was conducted of the progress made by FADCANIC in the areas which were mentioned in the USAID review of financial and HR control procedures. FADCANIC has been making strides to address the findings, especially in the HR area.

After quality control and the inclusion of a few additions based on AIR's experience with Field Manuals for USAID projects suggested by AIR Senior Field Accountant Specialist Carlos Penagos, the report was finalized between March and April of 2013. (It was sent to FADCANIC for review and further discussion in April).

This final report contains in one document all proposals and recommendations for any modification, improvement or additions to FADCANIC manuals for the finance administrative area.

Next Steps

- Meetings with FADCANIC to discuss AIR's recommendation regarding modifications, improvements or additions to be included in the final version of FADCANIC manuals.
- Final decisions on changes; FADCANIC prepares final manuals
- Preparation of training materials on administrative and financial procedures contained in the new revised manuals, with an emphasis on the additions and modifications made to the manuals in their final version.
- Final assessment of the understanding of revised manuals by FADCANIC employees.
- Additional training session on USAID rules and regulations to FADCANIC Financial Staff.

3.2 Personnel Management

Major activities in this area have concluded.

As noted in the last quarterly report, creating a workforce planning and staffing plan will be easier once the 5 year strategy for the organization is officially approved and implemented, with a clear sense of business development, workforce planning and succession planning. This has not happened yet.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Most M&E activities fell under the cross-cutting activity “Baseline data collection for the new youth project”. Please refer to the Youth Development section following under Result 2 for details.

3.4 Strategic Planning

On January 28, 2013 a copy of the final draft of the different sections of the strategic plan were submitted to FADCANIC for review and approval by the board of directors.

Subsequently, we send FADCANIC suggestions regarding forms that could be used to aid FADCANIC in the costing out of different activities mentioned in the strategic plan.

Next steps/challenges:

It is currently not clear when FADCANIC will officially approve the strategic plan through its Board. Moreover, a busy schedule of activities by FADCANIC coinciding with the start of the school year and limitations due to Easter vacations have made a follow-up difficult regarding issues of roll-out of the strategic plan, plans for its implementation and monitoring considerations.

It is planned that the Strategic Planning consultant will travel to Nicaragua for a week-long follow-up meeting with FADCANIC on the strategic plan. The overall objective will be to assess the current status of plans for the implementation of the strategic plan and facilitate the discussion on any changes or corrections that may be necessary. As a final step in AIR’s support to the strategic planning process a group evaluation of the strategic planning processes will be conducted. We will also attempt to schedule a final telephone follow-up meeting in June with FADCANIC.

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

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.

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

The Lead Consultant and the AIR Project Manager met with FADCANIC and USAID representatives in January to define and plan the capacity building priorities and activities for the final half year of AIR's technical accompaniment. At the joint meeting of USAID, FADCANIC and AIR in January that took place in Managua the project's progress and achievements were reviewed and plans for the following areas were discussed in detail:

- the baseline collection efforts,
- the M&E system,
- the FADCANIC Life Skills strategy,
- the KAPP survey, and
- proposals on how to construct a Code of Conduct for FADCANIC employees working with youth.

A detailed work plan has been developed and the Lead Consultant has worked closely with the EduExitto Project's management and staff to adjust the technical proposals and to coordinate action plans of the group of consultants in order to be as efficient and effective as possible given the short period of remaining in the project and FADCANIC's many other time constraints.

Also, during the finalization of the work plan for 2013 USAID had expressed an interest to document the capacity building process itself through a systematization. A technical dialogue regarding the conceptualization for this task has started during this quarter.

One of the main challenges faced by FADCANIC – and for AIR's technical support in M&E for the Baseline data collection - was the completion of the annual cohort of the target group which was expected to be selected at the end of December, but was only completed at the end of March in four municipalities and with Bluefields still not finalized then.

Also to reach youth-at risk that are out of school between 18 and 24 years of age required from FADCANIC methodological and organizational adjustments. Understanding that this is one of the Project's new directions, AIR will emphasize technical support in this area, especially in Life Skills programming.

This was a period affected by three weeks of holydays, two in January when staff gradually returned to work and the fourth week of March (Easter Week).

II. Main activities and results achieved jointly between EduExitto and AIR:

- i) To coordinate and provide technical support to establishing an M&E system, the application of a baseline survey, PMP indicators, data base construction and staff training in management and know-how of the M&E system.

- *A report on the main achievements* of the EduExitto project from 2010-2012 was developed and submitted to FADCANIC together with a summary version which will be included in the Life Stories publication, documenting the life situation of project beneficiaries and how they have been impacted by the project. FADCANIC and USAID provided feedback to the summary version which is finalized and already incorporated in the Life Stories document.
- The Life Stories publication has been finalized with an update of the layout from a Spanish only version to a bilingual Spanish-English version and incorporating comments from a USAID review of the draft document. A final review of the English translation is under way with submission of the final document to USAID expected in early May.
- *A first version of M&E indicators* was submitted by FADCANIC to USAID for its approval. AIR provided technical assistance to the FADCANIC M&E specialist and participated in a dialogue with USAID Nicaragua's M&E specialist as well. A review of the final version by USAID is still in process. AIR and FADCANIC continue to review the indicators and FADCANIC will test some of them during the development of its second quarterly report in April. A final proposal of M&E indicators will be presented in May.
- *Selection criteria, formats, and guidelines* were developed to reach the first 2013 cohort. Volunteers and staff were able to assess the prioritized risk profile and life skills of each candidate according to those criteria using the formats and guidelines that have been jointly developed. A training activity with 30 staff and CAYAC's members preceded the process. FADCANIC collected individual beneficiary information that will be processed by each municipality as part of the project's database.
- *The baseline survey was designed and finalized* to be applied once the cohort selection was finalized which only then made it possible to select the sample of beneficiaries that would take part in the baseline survey. The survey was in progress and is expected to be successfully concluded in the 2nd week of April. The results will be available in the next quarterly report.

Issues and challenges

- As mentioned, the delay in the selection of this year's cohort of beneficiaries delayed activities dependent upon them.
- In our opinion FADCANIC will need more staff to manage the M&E system at the municipality level. Considerations regarding this need were shared in written form with FADCANIC's leadership and USAID.
- It is recommended to thoroughly assess this year's selection process and its results including i) the open invitation to apply as a beneficiary and to procedure of filling out formats, ii) the pre-selection steps done by CAYAC's member, iii) visits to preselected candidates' households to confirm the family situation and iv) the final selection.

Next steps

- The baseline survey will be processed and analyze jointly with EduExito staff.
 - A final version of M&E indicators will be submitted for final approval to finalize the design of the project's M&E system for data collection, beneficiary registrations, data processing and analysis.
 - The project beneficiary database will be developed and validated. There will be an ongoing training process for FADCANIC staff on all issues related to the database operation.
 - The design of the M&E system will be completed. Once final decisions are taken on the M&E system design intensive training activities will be organized. An M&E manual containing the data collection chains, procedures, formats, routines, etc., of the M&E system will be developed.
 - A proposal for a future gradual closing-out phase and a matrix of sustainability will be develop jointly with key EduExito project personnel and AIR consultants.
 - An extension of the current contract with the lead M&E consultant will be considered to assure continued support in the first phase after the hand-over of the M&E system and to reinforce training activities and evaluate jointly with FADCANIC issues concerning the quality of data that are collected and processed.
- ii) To provide technical accompaniment to develop strategies for the implementation of a cross-cutting Life skills program of the EduExito project in coordination with music, sports and children's participation.

- Two consultants - Sonia Duran and Jacqueline Sanchez - have been hired mid-February to develop articulated strategies and main activities between the Life Skills, Music and Sport areas. This was done in close coordination with the EduExito team working in that area and under the overall technical coordination of the Lead Consultant Ivette Fonseca.
- The consultants finished a field visit to assess the capacity building needs in the implementation of a non-formal education approach with newly hired FADCANIC staff.
- Two technical sessions were developed with staff and stakeholders in Bluefields to map out strategies for the program.

Issues and challenges

- The Life Skills program that was designed last year has to be adjusted to the new EduExito expansion phase considering the insufficient experience in non-formal education approaches and strategies among the newly hired staff. There are a lot of needs in this area and it will be impossible to address all of them under the scope and duration of the project.
- Many FADCANIC staff, even those with longer technical experience and involvement with the project, admitted not having read the first document on the Life skills program. It is suggested that FADCANIC convene a systemic studying process for its technical staff to ensure a rich feedback and discussion on strategies and action lines.
- Finalizing the design for the Life Skills program with the full involvement of FADCANIC technical staff will occupy most of FADCANIC technical staff's absorptive

capacity in the near future given work load in regular EduExito project activities. We see it therefore as very challenging to plan for an in-depth training on Social Emotional Learning to FADCANIC staff. The Social Emotional Learning approach has been introduced to FADCANIC staff before and its approach will be taken into consideration when developing the final Life Skills document.

Next steps

- Continued development of a Life Skills proposal with FADCANIC; workshop and field visits to test the implementation of the strategies that have been designed.
- The three prioritized Life Skills areas are already included in the draft M&E indicators; the Life Skills changes will be self-assessed by beneficiaries. These formats will need to be tested.

iii) Strengthening capacities among FADCANIC staff to design and apply a KAPP Survey (Knowledge, Attitudes, Perception and Practices) - design and analysis among youth in five municipalities covered by EduExito.

- Development and application of a *Survey on Knowledge, Attitudes, Perceptions and Practices (KAPP)* along with four training sessions to FADCANIC's staff to strengthen their capacities of applying this type of survey among youth and the general population.
- Francisco Sequeira - hired as researcher and trainer at the end of February – is developing the conceptual and methodological framework to be reviewed jointly by FADCANIC and AIR.

Next steps

- Implementation of the KAPP Survey and the four training workshops with select FADCANIC technical staff.

iv) To provide technical accompaniment to FADCANIC's participatory process to develop their Code of Conduct focused on the protection of children's rights as institutional policies.

- FADCANIC selected and contracted directly with NGO Dos Generaciones to lead the processes for the development of a *Code of Conduct/Institutional Child Protection Policy*. AIR assisted in the refinement of the goals and ToR for this consultancy.

Next steps

- A close follow-up will be provided by the Lead Consultant to contribute to the quality of the achievements.

v) Other areas

- a. FADCANIC requested technical support to develop a ToR for a Labor Market Study focused on Youth-at risk in the five municipalities it covers.

-The Lead Consultant directly supported this request providing inputs to develop the proposal. The ToR has been submitted to USAID for approval.

-A close follow-up will be provided by the Lead Consultant to support the consultancy selection criteria and its progress.

b. USAID requested the development of a documentation/systematization of the project's capacity building efforts.

-A draft outline was developed and will be finalized in discussions with USAID next quarter.

- Consultants would need to be hired by early May to assure a timely finalization of the systematization.

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.