



Exchange Program for Integral Development (EPID)

Programa de Intercambio para el Desarrollo Integral (PIDI)

Contract Number DOT-I-00-03-00009-00

Monthly Report

November 2008

1. Country Situation Update

Hurricane Paloma: A new humanitarian crisis flares up in Cuba as Category 3 Hurricane Paloma hit Camaguey province with full force on November 8th. Similar to the situation in provinces hit by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the government's relief effort in Camaguey is considerable but insufficient to cope with the devastation. The Cuban government estimates that the three hurricanes have caused damages totaling up to \$9.4 billion.

International affairs: Cuba receives visits by President Hu Jintao of China and Dmitry Medvedev of Russia. Relations between Cuba, Venezuela, China and Russia appear to be taking a more strategic role in the geopolitics of Latin America. China and Russia deepen their economic and geostrategic ties to Cuba.

2. Programmatic Highlights and Major Activities

Programmatic Start Up: Start Up activities continued successfully during the month of November. Start-up is 80% complete. The Start Up Team, which included Team Leader _____ was joined in November by _____, HQ Security Manager, and _____ Operations Manager.

Key Start Up Accomplishments:

- Hiring of local staff and ex-patriates is completed with the exception of two positions;
- Office and residences are leased. Office set up will be completed and office will be open December 3rd;
- Legal certifications, banking requirements are completed and the banking accounts are opened
- Grant making capacity is established;
- Embassy coordination is established and ongoing; and
- Program and Operations documentation is 40% complete.

- **Administration and Operations (_____)**
 - *Permanent Office Space:* Permanent office space in the Sabana district has been selected and leased by CREA, and approved by OTI. The office provides excellent space, location, distance to the US Embassy, and security.
 - *Residential Housing:* Permanent housing has been selected for _____ and _____ residence (apartment) is located in _____, and _____ residence (single family house) is located in _____
 - *Human Resources*
 - **Candidate Selection:** CREA has reevaluated the makeup of our team and has downsized the original field office organizational structure. Our team currently stands at 10 members: COP, Operations Manager, Finance Manager (pending), Information Officer, Senior PDO, Procurement/Contracts Manager, IT Manager (pending), Program Security Manager, Office Manager, and Driver. Additional staff (including Program Development Officers as well as finance and procurement assistants) will be hired as programmatic and administrative needs increase during the next two quarters.
 - The following staff were hired by CREA during this month:
 - Information Officer:
 - Senior Program Development Officer:

- Procurement and Logistics Manager:
 - Security Manager:
 - Office Manger:
 - Finance Manager: (currently interviewing a perspective candidate)
 - Staffing schedule: Orientation for all staff will begin December 3. Staff will participate in the Teambuilding Session December 15 – 18. The CREA office will be closed December 23 – January 4 to accommodate the Christmas vacation period. Staff will report back to the office on January 5.
 - Vetting and background checks are underway for all selected staff.
- **Program Operations (Lead:**
 - Outreach to Costa Rican NGOs has been targeted and selective. CREA has reached out to NGOs so far and we expect collaboration from all of them. We have vetted Costa Rican NGOs that we plan to approach before January 30.
 - Regionally, we plan to reach out to targeted NGOs in the following countries by February 15: Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Guatemala.
 - CREA has begun to map out the Cuban community. While we will not conduct extensive outreach, we plan to reach out to targeted in December-January.
 - Grant Idea Profiles: During November we submitted two Grant Idea Profiles for OTI's consideration:
 - Grant Idea Profile 1: Association-building through micro-loans: We have started the design and negotiation on a partnership with a NGO to promote association-building in Cuba.
 - Grant Idea Profile 2: Promotion of access to information at the grassroots: we will reach out to potential partners in January.
 - CREA is planning a third grant partnership to address grassroots association-building around hurricane recovery efforts. This partnership should be up and running by January 30.
 - Field Officers and STTA:
 - **STTA:** Our first STTA will travel to Cuba in December to perform a field review to inform grant development. Key objectives include the identification of priority community needs after Hurricane Paloma, and key individuals and stakeholders for possible grant-making. *Primary Focus:* Association building
 - **Field Officers:** CREA will send to Cuba two Field Officers between December and January, each of which will remain in Cuba for 60 days. Each Field Officer will focus on provinces only, where they will seek to identify grant opportunities and potential grant recipients, as well as build relations with different community stakeholders. Field Officer briefings are currently underway in San Jose.
 - Activity Database: and t worked with o enter two initial grants into the grant database.
 - Programmatic Documents: CREA drafted a protocol for the disbursement of cash grants, which is currently under OTI review. Final versions of CREA's Grant Cycle Flow Chart and Guide are being completed, based on the draft prepared during the Kick-Off Conference. CREA is also completing the final version of our Field Staffing Plan. A set of basic FAQs for the US Embassy in San Jose has been drafted with OTI.

- **Procurement / Logistics** (Lead:
 - *Shipping:* CREA is awaiting final decision regarding the arrangements for duty-free shipping of personal effects for the COP and Operations Manager.
 - CREA's initial procurement of IT equipment for the office arrived and is currently being installed.

- **Security**
 - *Security Meetings:* On November 6, _____ and _____ met with _____, US Embassy RSO to discuss Cuba program specific security concerns.
 - The CREA/CR Security Manager has been hired and is working with _____ to develop security protocols and systems for the office in Costa Rica.

3. Budget Information

CLIN	Description	Total	Obligated 2008	Disbursed October	Disbursed November
001	Operations Fixed Fee	\$ 4,877,599		\$ 110,541	\$ 60,700
002	Operations	\$ 244,380			
003	Grants	\$ 10,200,000		\$ -	\$ -
004	Fixed Fee on Grants	\$ 204,000			
	TOTAL	\$ 15,535,979	\$ 6,500,000	\$ 110,541	\$ 60,700

4. Summary of Grant Implementation and Appraisal

- Three long-term grant opportunities have been identified and are under development as detailed above. We anticipate requesting a green light for all three in late December, and having all three under implementation by late January.
- We plan to disburse between three and five small grants or activities to recipients on the island prior to February 15, 2009. These will be delivered by Field Officers as well as STTA providers.

5. Problems Encountered: Issues and Proposed Actions

- CREA is awaiting final resolution on the following actions:
 - OFAC License for travel to Cuba: We are awaiting final confirmation from OTI that our consultants will be able to use OTI's OFAC license during upcoming trips in December;
 - Waiver for Payment of TCNs in Dollars; and
 - Waiver to purchase a US-made vehicle from a vendor in Costa Rica.
- OTI and the US Embassy are finalizing details regarding shipping of personal effects for expat staff.

6. Upcoming Activities

During the month of December, CREA/Costa Rica has the following activities planned:

- Partner outreach within Costa Rica;
- Staff orientation to begin December 3 and will be led by _____ and _____

- , Operations Manager, arrives in Costa Rica on December for permanent duty assignment;
- Continued development and preparation of programmatic documents and manuals until December 31st; and
- Deployment of STTA provider and Field Officer to identify and facilitate first grants; and
- Team Building Staff Retreat: USAID/OTI and CREA/Costa Rica will participate in a team building session December 15-18 at in Costa Rica. will facilitate the session. CREA is working to finalize all arrangements.