

USAID | OTI | CREA | CCSSP

**Cuban Civil Society Support Program  
(CCSSP)**

Contract Number DOT-I-00-03-00009-00  
Task Order No. 4

**Monthly Report**

**December 2009**

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## 1. Country Situation Update

### *US-Cuba Relations:*

- ***US-Cuba relations beginning to slow.*** A delay in Cuban migration talks, increased antagonistic rhetoric from Cuban counterparts, and recent detention of US contractor are clear signs Cuba is putting the brakes on open relations with the US. The migration talks, suspended by the Bush Administration in 2004, were aimed at preventing an exodus of Cuban refugees to the United States. Although the meetings scheduled for December were suspended until February, Obama has expressed an interest in improving ties with Cuba. He eased travel restrictions to the island in April and said last month the United States had no intention of invading. On December 5, an American citizen was arrested in Cuba and the US Interest Section was unable to meet with him until the last week in December. The DAI contractor was allegedly distributing electronic equipment to local groups. In a rare occurrence and harshly worded speech, Raul Castro publicly acknowledged the arrest of the American contractor at the General Assembly. Castro said the case shows "the United States won't quit trying to destroy the Revolution and bring a change to our economic and social regime." Although stating they are still open to discussion, the statement was a strong signal that the Cuban government is not ready to make changes. Recently, Cuba's foreign minister called President Barack Obama an "imperial and arrogant" liar for his conduct at the U.N. climate conference, a reflection of the communist island's increasingly fiery verbal attacks on the U.S. Government.

### *Local News:*

- ***Evidence of political repression in Cuba on the rise.*** Spanish government reports the existence of "numerous repressive actions for political reasons" by the Cuban government. Recent marches by Cuban dissidents to commemorate Human Rights Day and the "Ladies in White," were confronted by pro-government supporters shouting slogans and insults to the groups. The Cuban government states that these pro-government supporters are concerned citizens defending the revolution, while others state they are organized mobs aimed at intimidating any opposition.
- ***Students of the Instituto Superior del Arte (ISA) denounce poor food quality.*** A recent video circulated in the internet shows a protest by ISA students demanding an explanation and solution to the deplorable quality and quantity of meals provided to students. The videos show a rise in activism by youth populations demanding solutions to specific concerns such as food and freedom of expression.
- ***No major economic changes despite the crisis.*** The Cuban economy was said to have grown 1.4 percent in 2009, significantly below the original 6 percent estimate. Productivity decreased 1.1 percent and Cuba continues to face a liquidity crisis. The government's response will be a further reduction of social expenditures and a focus on investment in income generating areas such as: nickel, biotech, tourism, tobacco and rum. However, despite the recognition of an economic crisis, Castro warned that they were not going to be moving hastily to make economic policy changes.

## 2. Programmatic Highlights and Major Activities

### *Key Programmatic Accomplishments*

- Due to the detention of an American citizen contractor in early December, travel to the island has been put on hold. Staff is determining next steps for each of the ongoing initiatives and adjusting security protocols.

- **Grant Cluster 1.1**

- SJO018, SJO025: Field implementation by the local team is underway and preliminary reports are showing success. Assistance was not delivered as planned due to travel freeze and field work is expected to be delayed.
- SJO024, SJO042: Consultant returned from the island and was debriefed by PDO in a third country. Strategic planning and an analysis of next steps are underway.
- SJO029: Activities were put on hold to allow for adjustments and revisions to the security protocol for this initiative. A strategy planning meeting of consultants will be held in January in a third country to determine future actions.
- SJO039: Staff continues ongoing coordination with the grantee to fine tune logistics. Grantee staff travel scheduled for early January has been delayed.
- SJO046: During the field officer trips for SJO014, contacts were established with local beneficiaries from the targeted social groups. A new partner NGO has been trained to engage the local beneficiary groups, help them strengthen their organizational capacity, and transfer lessons learned in other Latin American settings. Travel will commence upon lifting of the travel freeze.

- **Grant Cluster 1.2**

- SJO010, SJO028: A debriefing was held early December and a very complete report was presented. A follow up meeting is scheduled for January to determine adjustments to the implementation strategy and security protocols.
- SJO011, SJO047: A second phase grant was approved that seeks to expand and strengthen the group established under SJO011. This new grant is expected to commence implementation in January.
- SJO016, SJO032, and SJO033: The second trip for the delivery of material assistance was canceled due to the travel freeze. An assessment is underway to determine how best to engage phase II of this initiative and expand current activities.
- SJO020, SJO034: Field activities are scheduled for implementation in January and local beneficiaries are working on logistic preparations. Material assistance was delivered successfully.
- SJO009, SJO036: Grantee staff returned from developing project plans with local beneficiaries. A debriefing in Costa Rica was held and a plan for next steps was established.
- SJO041: Grantee staff traveled to Costa Rica for a strategic planning session and a plan for future engagement of the grantee in the Cuban environment was established. Next steps are underway.

- **Grant Cluster 2.1**

- SJO015, SJO017, and SJO022: A full report of the workshop held in a third country was received. Survey activities for SJO022 are underway. A meeting with the grantee is scheduled for January to discuss next steps and determine adjustments in implementation.
- SJO035: Strategic meetings were held and a full report has been received and is being evaluated for future action.

- **Grant Cluster 2.2**

- SJO001, SJO044: A group of consultants from a Latin American country traveled as field officers to develop contacts in the targeted sector. As a result and after much coordination, a second grant has been approved to engage the targeted sector in strengthening their organizational capacity.

- SJO026, SJO030, SJO045: The consultants were able to identify several groups of interest in the target population. As a result, SJO045 was approved for implementation of activities with these groups. Travel scheduled for January has been delayed due to the travel freeze.
- SJO027, SJO038: Grantee staff traveled to the US for a coordination meeting and solidified their methodology for the Cuban context through alliances with academic institutions with expertise in the subject matter. Implementation preparation will commence in January with the determination of a clear strategy and briefing, in order to commence surveying shortly thereafter.
- SJO031: Grantee staff traveled to San Jose for a strategic planning session. A new grant is in development to determine next steps needed for developing a community engagement initiative. Travel scheduled for January has been delayed.
- **Grant Cluster 3.1**
  - SJO003, SJO007: This activity is completed and final evaluation by the PDO is underway. We anticipate submitting a follow-up e-grant for approval in January to continue production and distribution of a second installment.
- **Grant Cluster 3.2**
  - SJO008: Phase-out has begun and staff is evaluating next steps. Grantee staff will travel to Costa Rica in January to discuss future strategies which may include the transfer of this initiative to a USAID/LAC/Cuba grantee.
  - SJO019, SJO040: SJO019 was completed and final evaluation is in process for closure. Implementation activities for SJO040 have begun and will be in full effect in January.
- **Grant Cluster 4.2**
  - SJO043: We are working with the grantee to determine the organizational mechanism most appropriate to achieve the objectives of this grant.
- **Field Officer Grants**
  - SJO037: Grantee staff returned from identifying contacts and establishing working relations with emerging community leaders. A debriefing and planning session is scheduled for January to determine next steps.

**Program Operations**

- The Costa Rica Office will be closed for the holidays and will re-open January 4, 2010.
- Outreach to regional NGOs continues. Program staff is considering potential grantees from Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Panama.
- Grants cleared to date: 47 (23 in process, 7 closed, 11 completed, 5 rejected, 1 cancelled)

Status Count				
Pending	Cleared	Completed	Closed	Cancelled / Rejected
1	23	11	7	1 / 8* *5 had been cleared

CLEARED		
1	SJO007	\$ 123,098
2	SJO008	\$ 53,292
3	SJO015	\$ 10,210
4	SJO022	\$ 93,180
5	SJO025	\$ 91,620
6	SJO028	\$ 95,626
7	SJO029	\$ 94,794
8	SJO032	\$ 111,579
9	SJO033	\$ 63,964
10	SJO034	\$ 135,072
11	SJO035	\$ 19,172
12	SJO036	\$ 15,349
13	SJO037	\$ 53,918
14	SJO038	\$ 134,666
15	SJO039	\$ 65,797
16	SJO040	\$ 96,137
17	SJO041	\$ 5,778
18	SJO042	\$ 23,335
19	SJO043	\$ 85,503
20	SJO044	\$ 34,578
21	SJO045	\$ 69,156
22	SJO046	\$ 42,527

CLEARED		
23	SJO047	\$ 43,948
<b>Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$ 1,562,299</b>

CLOSED		
1	SJO003	\$ 17,157
2	SJO006	\$ 81,421
3	SJO009	\$ 24,256
4	SJO010	\$ 30,434
5	SJO011	\$ 19,551
6	SJO012	\$ 14,204
7	SJO017	\$ 2,345
<b>Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$ 189,368</b>

COMPLETED		
1	SJO001	\$ 114,724
2	SJO014	\$ 87,236
3	SJO016	\$ 83,962
4	SJO018	\$ 13,572
5	SJO019	\$ 97,968
6	SJO020	\$ 13,553
7	SJO024	\$ 18,220
8	SJO026	\$ 5,922

COMPLETED		
9	SJO027	\$ 6,404
10	SJO030	\$ 24,316
11	SJO031	\$ 7,295
<b>Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$ 473,172</b>

PENDING		
1	imISJO001	\$ 99,579
<b>Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$ 99,579</b>

CANCELLED		
1	SJO013	\$ 9,827

REJECTED		
1	iSJO001	
2	iSJO010	
3	iSJO011	
4	<b>SJO002</b>	
5	<b>SJO004</b>	
6	<b>SJO005</b>	
7	<b>SJO021</b>	
8	<b>SJO023</b>	

**Administration and Operations**

- Activity Database (ADa): On-going staff training continues and is focused on improving execution and streamlining of routine tasks. The upgrade to new front-end version 4.3.3 has been successfully completed and staff is working to update the activity local guide to reflect changes. The Database Manager continues to participate via Skype in an OTI effort to develop a web-based Activity Database.
- Finance: New accounting system is in full implementation and staff continues to troubleshoot issues.
- Procurement: Equipment procurement has continued for approved grants, however delivery to the island has been halted until an assessment and revisions are made to security protocols due to recent incidents.
- Human Resources: A new Program Security Manager has been selected and hired. He will start working on January 11. As grant volume increases, the need for an additional Program Assistant and Finance Assistant has become crucial. The process to fill these positions has begun and will continue in January.

**Information and Communication Technologies**

- Technical support for staff and office equipment continues. Grantees continue to receive instructions and user-ready equipment without delays.
- Improvements in the office security system have been completed, in addition to technological improvements for meeting and conference capabilities.

**3. Budget Information**

CLIN	Description	Total	Obligated to Date	Disbursed November 2009	Cumulative Amount Disbursed
001	Operations	\$ 4,877,599		\$ 107,935.57	\$ 2,039,646.10
002	Fixed Fee Operations	\$ 244,380		\$ 5,396.78	\$ 101,982.31
003	Grants	\$ 10,200,000		\$ 84,118.57	\$ 865,648.23
004	Fixed Fee on Grants	\$ 204,000		\$ 1,682.37	\$ 17,312.96
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 15,535,979</b>	<b>\$ 7,170,671</b>	<b>\$ 199,133.29</b>	<b>\$ 3,024,589.57</b>

**4. Problems Encountered: Issues and Proposed Actions**

- Increased state security monitoring on site has been reported and the recent detention of a US contractor has temporarily halted trips to the island. Contingency plans are underway and the CCSSP is making the necessary adjustments to security protocols to minimize exposure to risk by both our partner NGOs and local beneficiaries.

**5. Upcoming Activities**

- CREA/Costa Rica has the following activities planned for January 2010:
  - Continue implementation of grants currently in the pipeline.
  - Continue to identify NGOs for grant ideas that are in development.
  - Evaluate and determine contingency plans as a result of recent incidents.
  - Travel to the island has been placed on hold until further notice. Briefings and planning continue in preparation for travel.
  - Hold debriefings for travelers for SJO008, 022, 036, 037, 042.
  - Hold strategic planning sessions in Costa Rica for SJO028, 033, 040.
  - Meeting of consultants in a third country for SJO029, 044, 045.
  - CCSSP administrative procedures training for grantee administrator of SJO044 in Costa Rica.
  - Preparation for and execution of the first program performance review, scheduled for January 25 - 29.
  - Finalize close out process for completed grants.