

USAID | OTI | CREA | CCSSP

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

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

Monthly Report

November 2009

Submitted November 30, 2009

1. Country Situation Update

International:

- ***Human rights situation in Cuba remains dismal despite new leadership.*** A new Human Rights Watch (HRW) Report states that Raul Castro's government has harassed and imprisoned dissidents using a provision in the Cuban Criminal Code that punishes "dangerousness." Any individual whom the authorities consider might commit a crime or engage in "antisocial" behavior can be imprisoned under this law. The activities the government has deemed "dangerous" include handing out copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, failing to attend pro-government rallies, or simply being unemployed. In its report, HRW documented more than 40 cases of dissidents who have been sentenced for "dangerousness." The report revealed that once individuals are imprisoned, abuse is rampant. HRW and other analysts state a multilateral approach is needed to improve the human-rights situation of the island, particularly where Latin America plays a constructive role.
- ***President Obama responds to Yoani Sanchez's questions.*** In her blog, Yoani Sanchez, an independent Cuban blogger, asked seven questions to President Obama related to the complex relationship between the US and Cuba. In his response, President Obama stated that he is not interested in "talking [to the Cuban government] for the sake of talking" and that the Cuban government is not the only voice that matters in deciding the future of the island.
- ***75% of Cubans would support a political change in the Island.*** The results of a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute, (IRI) and released on November 17 revealed that 75% of Cubans would support a political change and that 82% of Cuban citizens do not believe things are going well. If given the opportunity, 86% of those interviewed would be in favor of an economic change. The data revealed Cubans' dissatisfaction with the current system yet very little on what vision for the future they might have. The survey shows clearly that economic issues are Cubans' greatest concern and that 66% do not believe their government can solve the problem.

Local News:

- ***Cuban bloggers attacked on their way to a peace march.*** Yoani Sanchez and 2 other bloggers were on their way to a peace march on November 6, when they were ordered into an unmarked car where plain-clothed agents pulled Yoani's hair and kicked her resulting in multiple injuries. The attack has come in the wake of a more assertive and confrontational Cuban blogosphere and many see the assault as a warning to cease and desist of their actions. The attack made international news through the different blogs. The US State Department condemned the act and called "on the Cuban Government to ensure the full respect of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens."
- ***Food ration booklet becoming extinct.*** Cuba has cut two staple foods from the monthly ration books that most Cubans depend on, edging closer to a risky, full elimination of the decades-old subsidies. Potatoes and peas were dropped from the list of rationed foods. As such, Cubans can buy as much as they want — as long as they are willing to pay close to 20 times more than they used to. The move comes amid President Raúl Castro's efforts to scale back Cuba's deficient economy. In October, Granma published a full-page editorial saying the time had come to do away with the ration books altogether. Authorities say their goal is to encourage more productivity and free the state from a crushing economic burden. Critics say the move breaks with what had been a sacred covenant of the revolution: that socialism would not make people rich, but would provide all Cubans with at least the basics.

2. Programmatic Highlights and Major Activities

Key Programmatic Accomplishments

- **Strategic Planning Session**

- OTI and Creative held a strategic planning meeting in San Jose October 21-22nd. Teams from both OTI's and Creative's Washington, DC offices traveled to Costa Rica to participate in the two-day event. The main goals of the event were to discuss the program's accomplishments, strategy, and the use of M&E strategic communications to show program impact. A more casual format allowed for open discussions and a highly productive session. OTI CR, has documented the main topics and issues reviewed during the session. Additionally, the visit provided the opportunity for the new OTI Program Manager, [REDACTED], to meet Crea staff, learn more about the program and attend meetings following the planning session.
- Also a program management review was conducted prior to the session by the OTI Team Leader, [REDACTED]. She met with key staff members, discussed the activity cycle and sought their input on program processes.

- **Grant Cluster 1.1**

- SJO018, SJO025: Material assistance was procured and delivered. Field implementation by the local team is underway and preliminary reports are showing success. Field work is expected to be completed by the end of January.
- SJO024, SJO042: Grant staff traveled to the island to coordinate activities with key actors and a debriefing was held in Costa Rica to discuss achievements. As a result a second grant was approved (SJO042) to deepen contacts and establish key linkages for independent groups. Consultant is currently on site and will travel to Costa Rica for a debriefing prior to returning to the island early December.
- SJO029: Grantee staff traveled to the island to commence field implementation. Upon the traveler's return to their home country, activities were put on hold to allow for adjustments and revisions to the security protocol for this initiative.
- SJO039: Staff met with the grantee and discussed a strategy for implementing this activity. The project has an educational component for which the grantee is currently outlining logistics. Grantee staff is scheduled to travel in early January to meet with local beneficiaries in a third country to begin coordination activities and implementation.

- **Grant Cluster 1.2**

- SJO010, SJO028: Grantee staff members met with beneficiaries to define next steps for the project, type of assistance and future plans for expansion of the activities. As a result of initial assistance, the group as a result of initial assistance now meets regularly to discuss current events. The traveler is scheduled to return late November and a debriefing will be held in December.
- SJO011: A second phase grant is in development and will seek to expand and strengthen the group established under SJO011 by undertaking a joint community project. This new grant will provide support to the website created and outline the design and budget for the community project.
- SJO016, SJO032, and SJO033: The leadership module created under this grant has begun implementation. The module was so well received that an additional community, not initially identified as a beneficiary, is now implementing it as well. Material assistance has been delivered as scheduled and plans for a second trip are underway. Phase II of this initiative (SJO032) has begun and coordination for future engagement and expansion of current activities is underway.

- SJO020, SJO034: The planning stage for this initiative was successfully completed (SJO020) and grantee staff is currently on site working on an activity timeline and delivering material assistance. Community activities (SJO034) are expected to begin next month with the arrival of additional material assistance.
- SJO036: Grantee staff was on site to develop project plans with local beneficiaries and returned at the end of November. A debriefing in Costa Rica is planned for early December to determine next steps.
- SJO041: Grantee staff is scheduled to travel to Costa Rica for a strategic planning session in early December. The expected result will be a plan for future engagement of the grantee and contextualization of their methodology to the Cuban environment.
- **Grant Cluster 2.1**
 - SJO015, SJO017, and SJO022: A workshop was held in the latter part of September in a third country to discuss the targeted population. Representatives from the target population attended the workshop and a full report reveals that participants were pleased with the opportunity to exchange experiences, information and training received. Training material is being reviewed by staff for comments and review. Survey activities for SJO022 are under implementation despite a slight delay due to a minor health issue.
 - SJO035: Strategic meetings were held in a third country to reach out to new Latin American NGOs that are interested in working with targeted communities. A full report has been received and is being evaluated for next steps.
- **Grant Cluster 2.2**
 - SJO026, SJO030: A strategic meeting with two consultants was held in San Jose the first week of September to develop a project plan for grant implementation. The meeting was a success and an activity to engage the targeted population was approved (SJO030) as a result. Having completed all activities, SJO026 is in the process of closing. Grantee staff traveled to the island and held a debriefing session in mid-November. The consultants were able to identify several groups of interest in the target population and are in the process developing a strategy for next steps.
 - SJO027, SJO038: Grantee staff traveled to Costa Rica and a plan was developed to design civic education tools and determine how to use their methodology to strengthen civic leaders in Cuba. The grantee will travel to the US for a coordination meeting and is expected to begin developing a methodology to commence surveying in mid-January.
 - SJO031: Grantee staff traveled to San Jose for a strategic planning session. A new grant that will analyze programmatic past performance of the group on the island is expected to be signed. The analysis will determine the next steps needed for developing a community engagement initiative.
- **Grant Cluster 3.1**
 - SJO007: This activity is completed and final paperwork is being obtained for official closure. The first episode of the program was released the first week of October. Distribution was carried out in the weeks that followed. Phase II of this initiative has been put on hold to allow for revisions and adjustments to the security protocol. We anticipate submitting a follow-up e-grant for approval in December to continue production and distribution of a second episode.
- **Grant Cluster 3.2**
 - SJO008: Phase out of this grant has begun and final content through December has been submitted. Staff is currently evaluating next steps for this activity, which may include the transfer of this initiative to a USAID/LAC/Cuba grantee.

- SJO019, SJO040: Grant activities were implemented successfully. The technology used has proven effective and target numbers have been exceeded. A full report and planning session was held in October and next steps resulted in the approval of a continuation grant (SJO040), which is about to be launched.
- **Field Officer Grants**
 - SJO037: Grantee staff is currently on site identifying contacts and establishing working relations with emerging community leaders in a number of social sectors. Their return is scheduled for December.

Program Operations

- Outreach to regional NGOs and INGOs continues. Program staff is considering potential grantees from Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Dominican Republic, and Panama.
- First Annual report was submitted successfully by October 31, 2009.
- Grants cleared to date: **45** (23 in process, 6 closed, 9 completed, 5 rejected, 1 cancelled)

Status Count				
Pending	Cleared	Completed	Closed	Cancelled / Rejected
1	23	10	6	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	\$ 85,945
6	SJO028	\$ 95,626
7	SJO029	\$ 94,794
8	SJO030	\$ 24,316
9	SJO031	\$ 7,295
10	SJO032	\$ 111,579
11	SJO033	\$ 63,964
12	SJO034	\$ 135,072
13	SJO035	\$ 19,172
14	SJO036	\$ 15,349
15	SJO037	\$ 53,918
16	SJO038	\$ 134,666
17	SJO039	\$ 65,797
18	SJO040	\$ 96,137
19	SJO041	\$ 5,778
20	SJO042	\$ 23,335
21	SJO043	\$ 85,503
22	SJO044	\$ 34,578

CLEARED		
23	SJO045	\$ 69,156
Subtotal:		\$ 1,501,760

CLOSED		
1	SJO003	\$ 17,157
2	SJO006	\$ 81,421
3	SJO010	\$ 30,434
4	SJO011	\$ 19,551
5	SJO012	\$ 14,204
6	SJO017	\$ 2,345
Subtotal:		\$ 165,112

COMPLETED		
1	SJO001	\$ 114,724
2	SJO009	\$ 21,998
3	SJO014	\$ 87,236
4	SJO016	\$ 83,962
5	SJO018	\$ 13,572
6	SJO019	\$ 97,968
7	SJO020	\$ 13,553
8	SJO024	\$ 18,220
9	SJO026	\$ 5,922

COMPLETED		
10	SJO027	\$ 6,404
Subtotal:		\$ 463,559

PENDING		
1	imSJO001	\$ 99,579
2		
Subtotal:		\$ 99,579

CANCELLED		
1	SJO013	\$ 9,827

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

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:** A new accounting system has been tested and launched, and staff has been fully trained to manage it. Monthly financial closure was successfully completed for October and November using the new accounting system.
- **Procurement:** Equipment procurement and delivery to the island continues successfully and on time. OTI's and Creative's Washington offices have approved a local inventory of commonly requested equipment, which will result in an expedited procurement process and a significant cost reduction.
- **Human Resources:** The Program Security Manager resigned effective December 7th upon accepting another job, and the search to fill the position has commenced. PDOs are currently responsible for security monitoring and management. The scope of work for the PSM is being reviewed to ensure the position best fits the needs of the program.

Information and Communication Technologies

- Technical support for staff and office equipment continues. Grantees continue to receive instructions and user-ready equipment without delays.

Security

- The Program Security Manager held trainings for staff members on critical actors on the Island and recent changes in the structures of the Cuban government.

3. Budget Information

CLIN	Description	Total	Obligated 2008	Disbursed October 2009	Cumulative Amount Disbursed
001	Operations	\$ 4,877,599		\$ 130,770.25	\$ 1,931,710.53
002	Fixed Fee Operations	\$ 244,380		\$ 6,538.51	\$ 96,585.54
003	Grants	\$ 10,200,000		\$ 166,933.24	\$ 781,529.66
004	Fixed Fee on Grants	\$ 204,000		\$ 3,338.66	\$ 15,630.59
	TOTAL	\$ 15,535,979	\$ 7,170,671	\$ 307,580.66	\$ 2,825,456.29

4. Problems Encountered: Issues and Proposed Actions

- As activities pick up and the number of NGOs and consultants traveling under our Program increase, our staff has received notices of increased state security monitoring of consultants and local beneficiaries on site. During this month we received news of three security incidents, which were properly notified to OTI and for which contingency plans were launched. 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 December 2009:
 - Continue implementation of grants currently in the pipeline.
 - Continue to identify NGOs for grant ideas that are in the works.
 - Travel to the island is scheduled for grantee staff of SJO032, 033, 034, 042.
 - Hold debriefings for travelers for activity numbers: SJO28, 036, 042.
 - Hold strategic planning sessions in Costa Rica for activities: SJO039.
 - Finalize close out process for completed grants.