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

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Monthly Report

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1. Country Situation Update

International Relations:

- ***The EU maintains “Common Position” towards Cuba.*** Spain, which now presides over the European Parliament, pushed forward a motion to terminate the European Union’s “Common Position,” which has defined the EU’s policy towards Cuba since 1996. Spain urged Cuba to respect human rights as a step toward improving relations with the European Union. The EU maintains that its support of Cuba’s economic development depends mainly on Cuba’s progress toward democratic reforms. After strong opposition from Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland, Spain eventually withdrew its initiative.
- ***US-Cuba immigration talks held in Havana.*** After the recent war of words between the United States and Cuba, diplomats from both countries met in Havana on February 19 to discuss immigration. The U.S. delegation was headed by _____, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Bureau, the highest-ranking American official to visit Cuba in years. Although not much was said of the results of the talks, an issue discussed was the detention of the American contractor _____. The U.S. delegation called for his immediate release. Ricardo Alarcon, head of the Cuban Parliament, refused to answer questions about Gross but said that Cuban authorities will use the immigration talks to bring up the fate of the five Cuban agents imprisoned in Miami since the 1990s after being convicted of spying. Although there were high expectations about these US-Cuba meetings, the meeting ended on a sour note when the Cuban Foreign Ministry blasted the U.S. delegation for meeting with a group of dissidents, claiming it was evidence of Washington’s continued policy of fostering regime change. It is not clear if any additional meetings will take place in the near future.
- ***Congressional retirements pose shifts in Cuba policy.*** Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.) became the latest representative to announce that he would not seek re-election for his Miami area seat. Less than 24 hours earlier, Rep. Vernon J. Ehlers (R-Mich.) had decided not to run again, and, late last month, Rep. Steve Buyer (Ind.) also called it quits. Diaz-Balart, who is serving his 9th term in Congress, has been a strong, vehement defender of the embargo and stricter measures towards Cuba. His brother Mario Diaz-Balart announced he will run for that seat but Cuba policy analysts recognize that Rep. Lincoln’s departure will significantly affect the debate over the embargo.
- ***Cuba and Venezuela: more interrelated than ever.*** Cuba and Venezuela have become increasingly dependent on each other. Cuba relies on subsidized Venezuelan oil, while Chavez taps into Cuba’s institutional knowledge for greater control over his country in order to remain in power. Indicative of such, were measures taken by President Chavez to repress the media, which caused protests among many students and young people in Venezuela. Moreover, suspicion arose with a visit by Ramiro Valdez, former Minister of the Interior and a powerful key figure in Cuba in matters of intelligence and repression. Despite the government’s claim that he was sent to serve as an “advisor” to help solve the energy crisis in Venezuela, many were skeptical given his lack of knowledge on energy and Cuba’s own inability to solve its energy crisis and experience implementing in Cuba.

Local News:

- ***Cuban prisoner Orlando Zapata Tamayo dies at 42.*** Political prisoner Orlando Zapata Tamayo died after 85 days on hunger strike. Amnesty International declared him a prisoner of conscience after his arrest in March 2003 in a crackdown on opposition groups, where 75 dissidents were jailed by authorities. Zapata, a black plumber, imprisoned on charges of disrespect and public disorder was serving a 25 year sentence. The last political prisoner to die on hunger strike in Cuba was Pedro Luis Boitel, a poet and student leader, in 1972. Detentions and increased vigilance by the state security apparatus were put in place prior to his burial to deter any protests from opposition groups. Raul Castro lamented the death and stated that the U.S. was responsible because it continues to meddle in Cuban affairs. While the U.S. and Europe have condemned the circumstances surrounding Zapata's death, Latin American countries have remained conspicuously silent.
- ***Cuba launches radical five-year agriculture plan.*** The government of Cuba announced it launched an ambitious project to surround urban areas with thousands of small farms in an effort to reverse the country's long agricultural decline and ease its chronic economic woes. The five-year plan, which will be piloted in Camaguey, calls for growing fruits and vegetables and raising livestock in four-mile-wide rings of unused land around 150 of Cuba's cities and towns, with the exception of Havana. Authorities hope such suburban farming will make food cheaper and more abundant, cut transportation costs, reduce reliance on machinery and encourage urban dwellers to leave bureaucratic jobs for more productive labor. But the government will continue to control most aspects of food production, distribution, including most of the land. The agricultural reforms passed by Raul Castro to increase production have yielded few results due to the lack of incentives for independent farmers and inability to make a profit.
- ***The UJC (Union of Young Communists) leadership complains of the lack of passion and increasing apathy amongst the ranks.*** The leaders of the UJC publicly recognized the apathy and lack of interest among youth. An article published in *Juventud Rebelde*, an official journal, quoted one of the directors of the UJC stating adolescents are no longer interested in joining the ranks and much less willing to assume the responsibility it entails. They also stated that this lack of identification with the party and apathy are dangerous factors for the historic continuity of the Revolution. A general call for "motivation to take action" was issued by the leadership.

2. Programmatic Highlights and Major Activities**Key Programmatic Accomplishments**

- Our accomplishment of activities has been severely affected by the current travel review. Program staff has worked to maintain grantees and local beneficiaries engaged. Until travel resumes, grantees and program staff will continue to seek innovative ways to provide necessary technical assistance and resources to beneficiaries.
- ***Grant Cluster 1.1*** *The ten grants within this cluster have empowered leaders identified through our program to learn technical skills and create high quality products that are showcased in large events. Furthermore, with the experience gained from the first grants in this cluster the CCSSP is working on focusing technical assistance, replicating success with other groups and improving current projects. This cluster has also resulted in an independent network developed by local beneficiaries.*
 - [SJO025]: The field work for this activity was completed. The final products will be showcased by local beneficiaries in March. The grantee will also begin working on defining the second phase for this initiative.
 - [SJO029]: Travel review continues to delay implementation of this grant. Local beneficiaries are encouraged to work independently as much as possible.

- [SJO039]: Staff continues coordination with the grantee and local beneficiaries, however communication to and from the island has deteriorated as of late. Two additional grantee staff will travel to the island as soon as allowed to consolidate the coordination team.
- [SJO046]: Activities will resume upon completion of the travel review. CCSSP and grantee staffs are devising other options to provide assistance.
- [SJO049]: Preparatory activities for the implementation of this training began immediately. The training scheduled for the end of March will encompass technical training, program design and management, and a training of trainer's component.
- **Grant Cluster 1.2** *The different population sectors encompassed in this cluster have advanced along the 1-9 methodology at different rates. While some sectors are still engaging actors others have already began implementing small victories with great success. Additionally, some activities have reported an increase in their number of beneficiaries or replication of training to new groups.*
 - [SJO028]: The grantee is currently organizing and undergoing logistical preparations for an off-shore training and strategic planning session with beneficiaries. Training materials are currently under development.
 - [SJO034]: The grant was amended to extend the end date and to include a training component. Field activities have continued successfully, though it has not been possible to deliver materials assistance to the beneficiaries due to current travel situation. Logistical arrangements, content determination and planning are underway to carry out the training in a third country.
 - [SJO032 and SJO033]: A meeting with grantee representatives and local beneficiaries was held in February where an agreement was reached on the next steps for phase II of this initiative. The parties involved, after determining common objectives agreed to have one of the grantees assume administrative duties, outlined a series of activities and established a timeline for implementation. After travel to the island resumes, the grantee will complete activities under SJO032 & SJO033, deliver remaining material assistance and draft a new grant for future activities.
 - [SJO047]: Activities continued with the update of the Website and a new plan is being worked on to evaluate viable activities in light of the continued travel review.
- **Grant Cluster 2.1** *Through the four grants under this cluster, the CCSSP has identified the needs and developed targeted methodologies for this particular population group.*
 - [SJO022]: A meeting with the grantee is set for March to discuss next steps and determine adjustments in implementation due to the travel situation. Training materials and other informational documents are being developed.
- **Grant Cluster 2.2** *The greatest accomplishments for this cluster are the new population sectors the CCSSP has been able to target through the different initiatives. A total of 15 grants have allowed the CCSSP to reach out to previously untouched population sectors and engage them in common projects successfully. Additionally, new partners were trained and equipped to more swiftly implement projects in unique strategic areas.*
 - [SJO038]: An initial survey was conducted with 20 recently emigrated Cubans. The staff is currently processing the data gathered and will be issuing a report in March. Also the grantee staff traveled to a third country to train surveyors during a two-day workshop. After a successful session the surveyors will be developing an action plan based on the results of the workshop and they will commence surveying locally after travel to the island resumes.
 - [SJO044 and SJO045]: A coordination meeting with grantee staff from grant SJO044 and SJO045 was carried out with great success. Staff was able to share their unique abilities, techniques and approaches for the targeted demographic groups. A financial and administrative training will be held

in March for administrative staff from both grantees to improve their grant management capacity. Additionally, a new grant is expected for grantees of SJO045 to: 1) conduct in-depth research on the targeted population; 2) outreach to new, potential Latin American partners; and 3) serve as a coordinator for new initiatives for this population sector. Travel continues to be delayed due to ongoing travel review.

- [SJO050]: This grant was approved to allow for the design of next steps to develop a community engagement initiative. The grantee has successfully commenced implementation of an assessment of previous projects and is developing the groundwork for new activities.
- **Grant Cluster 3.1** *A team was formed and a first product was created. The CCSSP will evaluate the second product and seek to replicate the civic intervention with other groups.*
 - [SJO007]: After completion of all activities we anticipate submitting a follow-up e-grant for this initiative in March to continue production and distribution of a second installment. Additional considerations of the final product and its original objective are under review to better design next steps for this initiative.
- **Grant Cluster 3.2** *The most innovative intervention in the CCSSP, activities have exceeded expectations. Currently, the team continues to seek ways to make the most of this wide ranging tool.*
 - [SJO040]: Implementation activities for SJO040 continue successfully. First products were delivered as planned in February for the initial test. Feedback is being processed and results are expected by mid March.
- **Grant Cluster 4.2** *This incipient cluster seeks to fill the need for greater field information to better hone the CCSSP interventions and strategies but has been delayed due to the current travel review.*
 - [SJO043]: To maximize the use of products resulting from this grant, it was reassigned internally and now will be managed by the PSM who will ensure that its results impact the overall program. Implementation will resume once the travel review is completed.
- **Field Officer Grants**
 - SJO037: Grantee staff is designing a methodology to train civil society groups to conduct planning and team-building sessions. They are currently developing the methodology and defining the content of the sessions. Field activities will resume once the travel review is completed.
- **M&E Grant**
 - [SJO048]: After successfully negotiating the agreement with the grantee, travel of the M&E Consultant to Costa Rica was scheduled for March to contextualize the expert on the country and program context, review the current M&E plan, suggest new tools and develop a methodology for an M&E trip that will be scheduled once the travel review is completed.

Program Operations

- **COP travels to Washington, DC to update stakeholders.** The CCSSP COP traveled to Washington, DC February 15-18 to conduct a round of informational meetings with USG stakeholders. Meetings were held at the NSC, the U.S. Department of State, and OTI.
- Grants cleared to date: **50** (19 in process, 15 completed, 10 closed, 1 cancelled, 5 rejected)

Status Count				
Pending	Cleared	Completed	Closed	Cancelled / Rejected
3	20	15	10	1 / 8* *5 had been cleared

CLEARED		
1	SJO022	\$ 93,180
2	SJO025	\$ 91,620
3	SJO028	\$ 85,092
4	SJO029	\$ 96,257
5	SJO032	\$ 111,579
6	SJO033	\$ 63,964
7	SJO034	\$ 105,047
8	SJO037	\$ 53,918
9	SJO038	\$ 134,666
10	SJO039	\$ 65,797
11	SJO040	\$ 96,137
12	SJO043	\$ 85,503
13	SJO044	\$ 34,578
14	SJO045	\$ 69,156
15	SJO046	\$ 42,527
16	SJO047	\$ 43,948
17	SJO048	\$ 25,985
18	SJO049	\$ 86,811
19	SJO050	\$ 128,906
Subtotal:		\$ 1,514,671

CLOSED		
1	SJO001	\$ 95,420
2	SJO003	\$ 17,157
3	SJO006	\$ 81,421
4	SJO009	\$ 24,256
5	SJO010	\$ 30,434
6	SJO011	\$ 19,551
7	SJO012	\$ 14,204
8	SJO017	\$ 2,345
9	SJO018	\$ 12,729
10	SJO020	\$ 11,430
Subtotal:		\$ 308,947

COMPLETED		
1	SJO007	\$ 123,098
2	SJO008	\$ 53,292
3	SJO014	\$ 87,236
4	SJO015	\$ 10,210
5	SJO016	\$ 83,962
6	SJO019	\$ 97,968
7	SJO024	\$ 18,220
8	SJO026	\$ 5,922
9	SJO027	\$ 6,404
10	SJO030	\$ 24,316
11	SJO031	\$ 7,295
12	SJO035	\$ 19,172

COMPLETED		
13	SJO036	\$ 15,349
14	SJO041	\$ 5,778
15	SJO042	\$ 23,335
Subtotal:		\$ 581,557

PENDING		
1	imISJO001	\$ 99,579
2	SJO051	\$ 86,274
3	SJO052	\$ 23,015
Subtotal:		\$ 208,868

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):** Upgrades to the Activity Database continue as well as the development of new reporting functions. The Database Manager continues to participate via Skype in an OTI effort to develop a Web-based Activity Database.
- **Finance:** The finance and programs departments are in discussions to improve grantee's reporting functions and ironing out Costa Rican accounting requirements.
- **Procurement:** Equipment procurement has continued successfully for approved and new grants. Most equipment deliveries were put on hold and will resume once the travel review is completed.
- **Human Resources:** One of the Program Assistants resigned in February to pursue other opportunities. The search for two Program Assistants and recruitment for an additional Program Development Officer and Finance Assistant continues. Final hiring is expected in March.

Security

- A draft security manual for traveler orientation is under development and being reviewed by PDOs.
- New security system cameras were installed with remote 24-hour access and other security improvements were carried out to reinforce office entry points.

3. Budget Information

CLIN	Description	Total	Obligated 2008	Disbursed January 2010	Cumulative Amount Disbursed
001	Operations	\$ 4,877,599		\$ 96,594.39	\$ 2,302,670.07
002	Fixed Fee Operations	\$ 244,380		\$ 4,829.72	\$ 115,133.51
003	Grants	\$ 10,200,000		\$ 60,562.67	\$ 1,050,706.45
004	Fixed Fee on Grants	\$ 204,000		\$ 1,211.25	\$ 21,014.12
	TOTAL	\$ 15,535,979	\$ 7,170,671	\$ 163,198.03	\$ 3,489,524.15

4. Problems Encountered: Issues and Proposed Actions

- An on-going travel review to the island has delayed the implementation of 15 out the 19 grants in process. The CCSSP continues to make adjustments to scopes of work to continue implementation. However, this implies longer implementation timelines and decreased assistance. As the review remains in effect, local beneficiary/grantee engagement becomes increasingly difficult, resulting in weaker “trust relations” and endangering progress to date. CCSSP staff continues to minimize exposure to risk but many grantees have safety concerns once travel is resumed.

5. Upcoming Activities

- CREA/Costa Rica has the following activities planned for March 2010:
 - Continue, as much as possible, implementation of grants currently in the pipeline and amend end dates in anticipation of the resumption of travel.
 - Continue to identify NGOs for grant ideas that are in the works.
 - Hold strategic planning sessions in Costa Rica for activities: SJO022; SJO048.
 - Meeting of consultants in a third country for SJO049.
 - CCSSP administrative procedures training for grantee administrators of SJO044 and SJO045 in Costa Rica.
 - Finalize close out process for completed grants.