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

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

### **Monthly Report**

*April 2011*

*Submitted May 5, 2011*

## 1. Country Situation Update

### President Carter in Cuba

Two weeks prior to the VI Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, and amidst the debate over the proposed economic reforms by President Raul Castro, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter conducted a three-day visit to the island where he met with Raul and Fidel Castro, independent bloggers, dissidents, members of the Cuban Jewish community, leaders of the Catholic Church, and visited imprisoned American contractor . Carter's conversations with Raul Castro yielded high expectations concerning release. Prior to his visit, President Carter confirmed that he was not optimistic about the release of the DAI contractor, but following his trip, he reported that he hopes for a better outcome for following the formal judicial appeal, which was filed on April 17, 2011.

According to Carter, he traveled as a private citizen, and not on behalf of the United States government. He stated that the purpose of his visit was to improve U.S.-Cuba relations. At the end of his visit, President Carter called for an end to the embargo; abolishing all restrictions on travel, trade and finance; the release of and the accused Cuban Five; freedom of expression in Cuba; freedom of assembly and movement for Cubans; removing Cuba from the U.S. list of countries that sponsor terrorism; and the establishment of full relations between the two countries.

### *“Las Razones de Cuba”*

The series of videos *“Las Razones de Cuba”* are creating an environment of even greater distrust among those interested in promoting any type of independent social or cultural activity in Cuba. In these videos Cuban authorities openly demonstrate their concern for the fast growth of social networks, new technologies for communication, blogs, and the penetration of the Internet in Cuba, and state that these independent actors pose a more serious threat to the government than traditional dissidents. After the turmoil experienced in the Middle East and North Africa, the government identifies this media sector as its main foe and has started an intense, negative campaign through official websites and national TV against the communication platforms. By portraying any independent actor for social change as a mercenary financed by the U.S. Government and a traitor, which could signify jail time per the Cuban Constitution, the Cuban government has successfully infused autonomous grassroots circles with increasing fear and distrust. The situation appears to be tense on the island and government representatives at universities, work places, and mass organizations are more suspicious and observant of anyone establishing a professional relationship with foreigners outside of state control.

### VI Congress of the Communist Party

The VI Congress of the Cuban Communist Party was, without a doubt, the most important development in Cuba's political and economic environment in recent history. Expectations for economic and political reforms were high, though the gathering did not result in new developments other than the formalization of the reforms listed in the *“Lineamientos de la Política Económica y Social”* document released in

October 2010. During his speech at the inauguration of the Congress, Raul Castro made certain comments that created confusion for some and satisfaction for others. Those statements were as follows:

- He strongly criticized the inability of the Party to follow up on decisions and plans which stemmed from prior Party Congresses.
- He expressed disappointment regarding the lack of capacity to recruit young talent for a generational change in Party leadership.
- He criticized the practice of assigning leadership positions on the basis of party affiliation and friendship, instead of considering the merits and qualifications of each candidate. Traditionally, Party affiliation was an unwritten requirement to obtain positions of social or political leadership.
- He detailed a proposition for term limits on leadership positions in the Party and government to two terms of five years each.

The purpose of the Congress was to debate and approve the economic reforms proposed by the President in the “*Lineamientos*” document. To the disappointment of many, no serious political reforms or increase in freedoms were announced. In fact, the Congress emphasized the continuation of “historical leaders” as the heads of the government and the Party. Permanence in power by the same group that has led the country for five decades sends a strong message that future political reforms are unlikely. The average member age of the Central Committee of the Party is 67 years old; this illustrates the absence of generational replacements and the lack of participation of youth in the Party.

Raul was able to push his reform agenda through the Congress, but according to many analysts, the changes are not significant enough and are launched too late to salvage the struggling economy. Most analysts are skeptical that the economic reforms announced to date are sufficient to move the country in the right direction toward economic growth. More improvised reforms may be required along the way. Analysts have also suggested that Cuba’s leadership may only be promoting the reforms necessary to secure their own continuity in power.

## 2. Programmatic Highlights and Major Activities

### *Programmatic Activities:*

#### *Key Programmatic Accomplishments:*

- **Sector CP** - *This innovative sector seeks to counter apathy and stimulate civic engagement by supporting media projects that communicate positive, unbiased messages through different aspects of everyday life and humor. In previous activities under this sector, the CCSSP created a variety of media products and was able to shape the social content of the items produced to promote civic analysis and a sense of duty for the targeted audience.*
- [SJO068]: This grant, completed on April 15, 2011, was successful in supporting the first phase in creating a virtual communication platform. The final product of this grant is a fully functional website available publicly on the internet. The design and branding process is complete and a full analysis

will be developed during the first days of May to validate the process. The next step is to launch a user test site.

- [SJO076]: The grantee is in the final stage of creating product deliverables, elaborating product details, and implementing design decisions. The second phase requires additional external content to be sourced in a third country. The grantee is testing a distribution strategy on the island, using internet-based social networks and mobile phone platforms. During May, the first product will be launched and distributed, and the first small victory will be reached.
- [SJO079]: In April, the first product of this grant's second phase was completed. Distribution and dissemination activities are underway through online and social networks. During the month of May, a second product is scheduled for launch and distribution. Beneficiaries' reaction will be measured through indicators demonstrating the effectiveness of the communication strategy. In May, the grantee will put into place a new reporting tool intended to provide quantitative evidence of the delivery of products to the local target audience.
- [SJO083]: The final version of the product was delivered and the grantee coordinated with local organizations to distribute it. In May, beneficiaries will hold a training session in order to promote the product and teach more people distribution and use of materials in their communities.
- [SJO084]: This grant will include the second phase in development of a virtual communication platform created and launched under SJO068. This phase will include the product's public launch, promotion, dissemination and assessment (target audience, efficiency, usefulness and popularity). An additional communication tool will be tested for the first time in May.
- **Sector CP (2)** - *This sector has exponentially exceeded expectations, and has demonstrated a true desire for freedom of expression and a need for increased networking capacity on the island. Therefore, the CCSSP has allocated significant resources toward achieving further success in this sector.*
  - [SJO077]: Following a no cost extension through the end of May, grant activities are on target to deepen platform services. The grantee has been very responsive to requests for additional materials to supplement reporting. Grantee staff continues to define sustainability plans and secure sustainable private funding sources. All reporting activities are up to date.
- **Sector US** - *Through four field research grants the CCSSP found several in-roads for independent action through civic activities in this sector. Partnered with three Latin American NGOs with experience and characteristics similar to the target population, the CCSSP explored the reality of this population group and discovered significant potential for civic initiatives.*
  - [SJO075]: This grant was intended to support the development of a civic network between one city and four other provinces. Due to a delay in receiving official visas the grantee initiated remote management practices for trainings, requiring near constant interaction with the beneficiaries in order to follow up on training impacts and implementation of activities. In April, the grantee developed a virtual communication space, as well as increased email, direct phone and Skype conversations between staff and among beneficiaries. In May, beneficiaries plan to begin organizing network activities in other provinces.

• **Other Activities**

- [SJO071]: All grant activities were concluded successfully, and OTI/CREA staff has reviewed all reports presented by the grantee. Final Evaluation was approved by OTI/CR. Based on the results of this grant, a new follow-on grant (SJO082) was signed with the same grantee, with activities beginning mid-April.
- [SJO073]: The grantee has presented all the required reports, and the OTI/CR has approved a Final Evaluation for this grant. OTI/CREA staff is working to identify and develop new activities for a follow-on grant.
- [SJO074]: The grantee presented a preliminary product with basic features. Based on this sample product, OTI/CREA adjusted the structure to assure higher quality in the final product. Due to risk management reasons, additional content will be sourced from a third country. Necessary administrative adjustments, including cost and time amendments, were approved by OTI to make this possible.
- [SJO078]: A group of beneficiaries successfully traveled to the island from a third country. They began implementing activities with a promising level of success. In May, the grantee will carry out new workshops, for which participants have begun to register. The activities are planned to continue through July according the work plan.
- [SJO080]: Activities are complete, and the grantee is preparing the Final Activity Report. Based on the results of the planning meeting, two new grants are in development with plans to implement the key activities identified.
- [SJO081]: This grant supported strategic meeting sessions in a third country between CREA staff and grantees. Grantees plan to develop virtual communications platforms to promote independent social projects on the island. These sessions resulted in the creation of grant SJO084 to implement the confirmed activities.
- [SJO082]: This new grant will allow OTI/CREA to pursue activities identified in SJO071 with the same grantee. After several delays due to administrative issues, the grantee is ready to travel to the island in the third week of April. They will meet with several community groups to provide them with technical and material assistance so they can lead their own community projects.

**Program Operations**

- Grants cleared to date: 72 (10 in process, 3 completed, 50 closed, 4 cancelled, 5 rejected after clearance)

Status Count				
Pending	Cleared	Completed	Closed	Cancelled / Rejected
1	10	3	50	4 / 10* *5 had been cleared

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CLEARED		
1	SJO065	\$42,789.00
2	SJO074	\$31,292.00
3	SJO075	\$69,655.00
4	SJO076	\$69,435.00
5	SJO077	\$200,180.00
6	SJO078	\$38,160.00
7	SJO079	\$42,560.00
8	SJO080	\$5,766.00
9	SJO081	\$11,540.00
10	SJO082	\$185,409.00
11	SJO083	\$32,390.00
12	SJO084	\$91,254.00
<b>Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$820,430.00</b>

COMPLETED		
1	SJO032	\$111,579.00
2	SJO038	\$134,666.00
3	SJO061	\$41,489.00
4	SJO062	\$70,315.00
5	SJO068	\$75,665.00
6	SJO069	\$61,920.00
7	SJO070	\$28,325.00
8	SJO071	\$55,674.00
9	SJO072	\$231,558.00
10	SJO073	\$30,849.00
<b>Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$842,040.00</b>

CLOSED		
1	SJO001	\$95,420.00
2	SJO003	\$17,157.00
3	SJO006	\$81,421.00
4	SJO007	\$123,098.00
5	SJO008	\$34,332.00
6	SJO009	\$24,256.00
7	SJO010	\$30,359.00
8	SJO011	\$19,601.00

CLOSED		
9	SJO012	\$14,204.00
10	SJO014	\$47,453.00
11	SJO015	\$7,328.00
12	SJO016	\$72,709.00
13	SJO017	\$2,345.00
14	SJO018	\$12,759.00
15	SJO019	\$89,059.00
16	SJO020	\$11,430.00
17	SJO022	\$72,098.00
18	SJO024	\$12,784.00
19	SJO025	\$86,994.00
20	SJO026	\$4,655.00
21	SJO027	\$4,743.00
22	SJO028	\$63,655.00
23	SJO029	\$57,625.00
24	SJO030	\$17,830.00
25	SJO031	\$5,876.00
26	SJO033	\$74,390.00
27	SJO034	\$65,522.00
28	SJO035	\$19,429.00
29	SJO036	\$14,525.00
30	SJO037	\$36,210.00
31	SJO039	\$38,510.00
32	SJO040	\$141,427.00
33	SJO041	\$4,947.00
34	SJO042	\$21,551.00
35	SJO044	\$86,900.00
36	SJO046	\$21,940.00
37	SJO047	\$29,152.00
38	SJO048	\$4,542.00
39	SJO049	\$89,900.00
40	SJO050	\$129,050.00
41	SJO052	\$53,161.00
42	SJO053	\$12,248.00
43	SJO054	\$29,317.00
44	SJO055	\$55,503.00
45	SJO056	\$69,980.00

CLOSED		
46	SJO057	\$4,538.00
47	SJO058	\$125,571.00
48	SJO063	\$8,819.00
49	SJO064	\$4,284.00
50	SJO066	\$17,256.00
51	SJO067	\$86,732.00
1	SJO001	\$95,420.00
2	SJO003	\$17,157.00
3	SJO006	\$81,421.00
4	SJO007	\$123,098.00
<b>Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$2,254,595.00</b>

PENDING		
1	ijcSJO050	
<b>Subtotal:</b>		

CANCELLED		
1	SJO013	\$9,825.00
2	SJO043	\$5,687.00
3	SJO045	\$16,707.00
4	SJO059	\$3,325.00
<b>Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$35,544.00</b>

REJECTED		
1	iSJO001	
2	iSJO010	
3	iSJO011	
4	<b>SJO002</b>	Rejected After Clearance
5	<b>SJO004</b>	
6	<b>SJO005</b>	
7	<b>SJO021</b>	
8	<b>SJO023</b>	
9	SJO051	Never Approved
10	SJO060	

## Administration and Operations

- Activity Database (ADa): CREA staff has successfully transitioned to the updated database front end, and will continue to provide information on activities from the field.
- Procurement: CREA staff continues with procurement to provide in-kind support to grantees activities.
- Finance: All financial transactions continue to be managed from Washington, D.C.
- Human Resources: CREA plans to hire a financial consultant for 5 days to assist the program from the field.

*This report was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development, Office of Transition Initiatives. It was prepared by Creative Associates International, Inc. Information contained is sensitive and proprietary.*

**3. Budget Information**

CLIN	Description	Total	Obligated	Disbursed March 2011	Cumulative Amount Disbursed
001	Operations	\$ 4,887,599		\$ 76,028.83	\$ 4,004,704.10
002	Fixed Fee Operations	\$ 244,380		\$ 3,801.44	\$ 200,235.21
003	Grants	\$ 10,200,000		\$ 85,313.92	\$ 3,056,745.79
004	Fixed Fee on Grants	\$ 204,000		\$ 1,706.28	\$ 61,134.91
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 15,535,979</b>	<b>\$ 9,170,671</b>	<b>\$ 166,850.47</b>	<b>\$ 7,322,820.01</b>

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

- There are no issues or problems to report in this period.

**5. Upcoming Activities**

- CREA has the following activities planned for May 2011:
  - The Chief of Party plans to travel to Washington, D.C. in May to participate in strategic planning meetings with OTI and Creative HQ staff to plan for final program implementation, and transition initiatives to outside groups to continue programmatic activities.
  - A new grant based on the follow-on community-oriented activities identified under SJO080 is in development with plans to begin in May.
  - An additional new grant based on training activities identified under SJO080 is being developed to begin in May.
  - A new grant based on the deliverable created under SJO073 is in development to begin mid-May.