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ISN 83268



CONSORTIUM FOR LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENT
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ACTIVITY REPORT

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
FOR
THE CONGRESS OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

**Provided by
The School of Public Affairs and Services
Florida International University
a member of
The Consortium for Legislative Development**

August 10, 1992 - August 12, 1992

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BACKGROUND

On May 11, 1992 through May 16, 1992, Mr. Gerald Reed made an initial technical assistance trip on behalf of the Consortium for Legislative Development to assist the Congress of the Dominican Republic develop a modernization plan (please see "Activity Report, Technical Assistance for the Congress of the Dominican Republic, May 11 - May 16, 1992 for a complete discussion of this technical assistance trip). A second technical assistance trip was made between July 7 and July 10 to continue the work that had begun in May (please see "Activity Report, Technical Assistance for the Congress of the Dominican Republic, July 7 - July 10"). As a result of the second T.A. trip in July, USAID/DR and the Congress requested that a third trip be scheduled for August. The purpose of the August trip was to: (1) review the text of the second draft of the modernization plan; (2) review and finalize the budget for the plan; (3) accompany the special committee to meetings with the two chamber presidents in order to discuss the draft and receive their input; and (4) to work with the special committee on any final revisions that might be required. It was considered very important that this T.A. trip occur before the pending elections for the Congressional leadership so that the two presidents that had initiated the project would be involved in the final discussions on the plan.

August 10 - August 12 Technical Assistance Trip

The trip started with a briefing by Mr. Manuel Ortega on the current political situation at the Congress and his perspective of the status of the modernization plan effort. Mr. Ortega also gave his reactions (which were positive) to the initial draft of the modernization plan that had been forwarded to the Mission for their review.

Next, separate meetings were held with the chamber presidents to discuss their reactions to the draft they had reviewed. In these meetings, both Chamber President Botello and Senate President Lejer indicated they felt the special committee had done an excellent job and that they supported the plan. During these meetings, the importance of appointing a legislative development committee (called for in the plan) as well as other aspects of implementation of the plan were discussed.

Having received the support of both chamber presidents for the plan's second draft, the special committee then held a series of editorial meetings with Mr. Reed to review the second draft in detail and discuss the final changes (mostly stylistic and grammatical) the committee contemplated. The plan's draft budget was also reviewed during these meetings.

A meeting was also held between the Director of USAID/DR, the Deputy Director of USAID/DR, Mr. Manuel Ortega of USAID/DR and Mr. Reed. During this meeting Mr. Reed briefed the AID officials on the status of the modernization plan effort and discussed the pending meeting with the two chamber presidents and the special committee (please see following paragraph). Among other topics discussed, Mr. Reed noted that he had tried to set the stage for the upcoming meeting by reiterating to the two chamber presidents and the special committee the importance of implementing as much of the plan as they could with their own, internal resources because the competition for international donor funds (USAID or otherwise) was very competitive. Mr. Reed also noted to the USAID officials that the two chamber presidents had indicated their support for the effort, that the political will to continue the effort seemed quite good at this moment, and that the Congress seemed to be seeking counsel as to what they needed to do internally to continue receiving USAID support.

In order to show their support and further the legislative development process that had been initiated, a meeting was scheduled between the Director of USAID/DR, the two chamber presidents, the special committee and the Consortium's representative. At this meeting, the Director indicated the Mission's continuing interest in the efforts of the Congress in this area. For their part, the two chamber presidents noted their satisfaction with the plan that had been prepared, the hard work of the special committee, and thanked the Mission and the Consortium

for their support in facilitating the process. Although no agreements for follow-on were reached at this time, all the parties agreed to stay in close contact, to continue the dialogue, and to seek further ways of cooperation and collaboration.

Prior to departure, a final meeting was held between Mr. Reed and the special committee. At this meeting, the logistics of the production of the document were finalized and several ideas for the follow-on steps desired by the committee were discussed. The special committee determined that, upon receiving the copies of the plan, they would endeavor to organize a meeting in both chambers to present the plan to the legislators and key staff. They also would reiterate the importance of appointing the special committee to the two chamber presidents.

Upon returning to Miami, Mr. Reed coordinated the final editing, photocopying and binding process for the plan. The final bound copies were then sent to the special committee for distribution to all legislators and key staff within the Congress.

Status of Other Regional Project Support Possibilities

During the prior T.A. visits, Mr. Reed had told USAID/DR, the chamber presidents, and the special committee about two other possibilities for regional project support. The first was the graduate level scholarships being offered by Consortium partners the Center for Legislative Development, University at Albany. In this regard, during this visit the special committee arranged a meeting between Mr. Reed and the candidate that had been identified by the Congress. At this meeting, Mr. Reed answered some questions the candidate had regarding the application materials that had been previously forwarded by the University at Albany.

The second area of potential support was the participation of a delegation of the professional staff of the Congress in ATELCA. In order to facilitate this possibility, Mr. Reed told the various parties that a letter had been written to the Secretary General of ATELCA suggesting that an invitation be extended for a delegation from the Congress to be invited to the next General Meeting in the Fall. The special committee indicated their strong interest in having a delegation from the Congress participate if ATELCA desired to extend its collaboration beyond Central America. The special committee also indicated that they felt the Congress would be able to cover the cost of their delegation's participation.

Concluding Observations

The technical assistance provided during this visit helped to:

- (1) finalize both the substantive content and style of the modernization plan;
- (2) support the special committee in their presentation and discussion of the plan with the two chamber

presidents; (3) support the on-going collaboration between the Congress and USAID/DR; (4) provide continued encouragement and support to the two chamber presidents and the special committee as they continue to work toward their modernization goals; and (5) facilitate the possibility of the regional project providing additional support to the Congress in the form of participation in ATELCA and the submission of an application for graduate studies to the University at Albany by a Congressional staff member.