

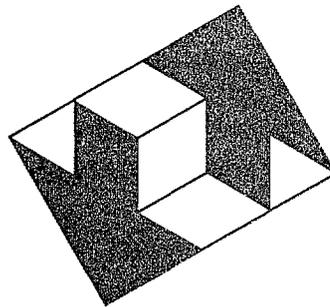
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**Grassroots Community Building Project
OAA/POA**

Progress Report January 1- March 31, 2001

PROJECT: Grassroots Community Building

PARTNERS
OF THE AMERICAS



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Training Coordinator
And Project Director POA

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Grassroots Community Building Project / OAA-POA
QUARTER: January 1- March 31, 2001

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Overall this quarter's activities focused on testing the most suitable tools and methodologies for community mobilization and participatory planning to strengthen the capacities of participating NGOs in institutional management, administration, project design, proposal writing and to train NGO leaders in community planning skills. Partners of the Americas has taken a more proactive role in both financial and program management upon the request of OAA Washington.

I. Objectives of the Quarter

Project Administration

- (1). To complete establishment of internet communication systems in the field office.
- (2). In Washington, to complete the setting up of the financial accounting system and to streamline the financial management of the OAA.
- (3). To contract local NGOs to conduct the community planning workshops in the targeted communities and contract for technical assistance as follow up to these workshops.

Community Activities

- (1). To organize and conduct the training of facilitators and promoters for the community planning phase.
- (2). To implement the community planning phase.
- (3). To define the community and institutional training plan for the rest of the project.
- (4). To conduct an information/ communications training - Honduras-Guatemala.
- (5). To conduct training to develop Afro-leadership trainers for the participating communities and organizations - Honduras-Guatemala.
- (6). To conduct a training of trainers (Hon-Gua) in project design and planning for participating NGOs and community patronatos.
- (7). To conduct institutional strengthening workshops to strengthen the AA21 process nationally, and for individual NGOs participating in the project.

II. Achievements

Administration

- (1). The internet communications system was installed in the field office. The purchased computer was finally delivered to Honduras a month later than planned.. USAID Honduras helped to eliminate duties which delayed the transfer of equipment to the field office. Cable internet service was installed which provides

24 hour service at a fixed price. This has helped to improve communications with the OAA and especially with POA.

(2). The project administrator hired by OAA in Washington in November was dismissed two months later and a new search resulted in hiring an administrator and an accounting assistant in January. This further delayed the setup of the accounting system and transfer of funds to Honduras..

(3). The agreements with participating NGOs and individual advisors to work with specific communities were finalized in mid March. In Livingston, the Coordinadora Garifuna Guatemalteca provided two advisors to work in three barrios on a pro bono basis. In Cortes and Tela, CEDECO provided one advisor to work with three communities, and an officer from Enlace de Mujeres Negras is working in two of the communities in Tela on a personal consulting contract. In the Bay Islands, NABIPLA provided three advisors for the three communities in that region. Agreements were also signed with the patronatos of Tela, Cortes and the Bay Islands.

Program Activities

Activities projected to begin at the beginning of the quarter took place at the end of February and in March. Highlights of those events are as follows:

(1). Training of Guatemalan and Honduran facilitators and promoters in community planning.

Because of the difficulty in identifying suitable trainers ,from amongst members of AA21, with a matching ethno-cultural background who could also meet our the schedule, the training was delayed one month. Honduran trainers were sought, and CIPE Consultants were selected. CIPE agreed to develop the tools using a methodology for community mobilization, training leaders to become self-reliant in fundraising and community project planning. CIPE is preparing all the educational materias for the training modules. The course lasted a week, from February 25th to March 4th, 2001 in the community of Travesia, Cortes.

Thirty-six people attended the training full time as promoters and facilitators. 23 women and seven men. Of the facilitators three were male and three were female.

The POA Washington project officer also attended. In addition to providing logistical support, she worked with the training coordinator in defining possible indicators for evaluation of different aspects of the project and reviewed the field office budget and expense reports.

The training was conducted in one of the beneficiary communities, Travesia. This proved to be a very positive experience. The Patronato of Travesia and the CAMAFROH local affiliate organized the meals, accommodation, daily transportation and security. Participants stayed in a local hotel in Bajamar, a few community houses in Travesia, a hotel in the outskirts of Travesia, and the trainers were accommodated in a hotel in Puerto Cortes. The two communities were grateful that the project spent its funds locally and this was seen as demonstrable proof of the project's capacity to bring direct benefits to the community.

The training methodology was a mixture of theory and practice. The methodology for community mobilization involved designing a community census. The questionnaire was tested in a barrio of Travesia. The tabulation and analysis of results were done by the promoters themselves. To report results, prioritize needs and define action steps, a community meeting was held on the last day of the training.

The promoters and facilitators next prepared a preliminary workplan for implementation of this methodology in their respective neighborhoods (barrios).

In the evaluations of this training, all participants indicated satisfaction with the content, the methodology used and with the trainers. They also gave a high rating to the food and service provided by the community. Accommodation was satisfactory and providing daily transportation enabled session to begin on time.(8:00 am).

(2). Local On-site assistance: Community Planning

Every community has a promoter who attended the sessions in February. Each promoter is assigned to one barrio, with the exception of Bajamar which gained five additional barrios. This occurred because of new housing developments constructed after Hurricane Mitch. Most promoters in Bajamar are therefore responsible for two barrios each. The Bay Islands involves three communities with the equivalent of one barrio each. Tela also has three communities with a total of 13 barrios. Cortes has two communities with 17 barrios, and Livingston has three barrios. This makes for a total of nine communities with 36 barrios employing 32 promoters* and seven facilitators/advisors.

By the end of March the promoters were expected to have completed the census questionnaire in their barrio. This was achieved with few exceptions. There were however unplanned delays. In some communities it was necessary for CIPE to assist with redesigning the forms. Delivery of materials was also difficult. In the case of Livingston, Guatemala, there are no courier services or direct parcel services from San Pedro Sula, so the advisors have to go to the border to collect

* There were three participants who attended the training only part-time.

mail from Honduras and Guatemala. Similarly communications is irregular to the Bay Islands.

The final step is to present results and define priority areas and action steps. Community meetings begin in April. Final project outputs are still within the planned November 30 deadline allowing time for evaluations in December.

(3). Define the training plan for the life of the project.

This activity has been delayed to the next quarter, since it is dependent on the results of the community planning meetings.

(4) Conduct Honduran-Guatemalan information/ communication training aimed at establishing a network of community information officers to gather and transmit information from and to their communities.

This component was sub-contracted and implemented by La Voz Garifuna, directed by Humberto Castillo. It involved on-site community advisory visits to patronatos to identify their training needs regarding the use of mass media to further the objectives of their communities, and to talk to the local communicators to identify training needs and project needs to develop a network of communicators that could keep information, and news flowing between communities and with the external world.

The training workshop was held in La Ceiba from the 22-24 of February. There were 31 participants, 28 men and three women. The training was conducted by an ethnically diverse group of local professionals in the mass media (newspapers, television and radio). There were eight trainers, seven men and one woman. Participants were drawn from 26 communities and it is one project activity that will benefit all local Black communities. The very nature of the sector is to establish communication links between all communities.

The outcome of the on site visits conducted as part of the training is a profile of the communications sector in the different communities. Needs differ depending on the degree of isolation in which they live. For example, communities in the Mosquitia feel their priority is to establish radio communication links in order to channel information in the most basic everyday terms. Communities in the Tela want to develop their community radio station to improve their program content, the range of transmission, and to formalize licensing of programs. All communities felt it was important to develop a central information exchange that could receive information and disseminate to the appropriate places after editing. Another positive outcome is that the individuals involved in information management in the different communities now have met each other and established a personal relationship.

La Voz Garifuna worked with the Afroleadership advisor of the OAA/POA project to analyse the results of the workshop, and a project proposal is being developed to respond to the needs identified in the workshop.

(5). Conduct training of trainers workshop (Honduras-Guatemala) to develop Afro-leadership trainers for the participating communities and organizations.

This activity has been postponed until September 2001. After careful consideration it was decided by the project training coordinator and the Afroleadership advisor that it is advisable to wait until the community planning phase is completed, and then hold an internal evaluation with the promoters to see how the Afroleadership content has so far helped in their work, what modifications may be required and how best to incorporate it to the overall methodology. The trainers will then be identified from among the community groups that are most involved and interested.

(6). Conduct training of trainers workshops (Honduras-Guatemala) in project design and planning for participating NGOs and community patronatos.

This activity was also delayed. It is a logical outcome of the community planning process. It is now scheduled for May and June.

(7). Conduct institutional strengthening workshops to strengthen the AA21 process nationally (in Honduras), and for individual NGOs participating in the project.

The institutional strengthening component has been the most challenging aspect of the past quarter's activities. This is explained further in the Challenges section. One activity was held. NGOs participating in Afroamerica XXI held a one day meeting on January 6th in San Pedro Sula, to define their workplan for the year and their training needs. They reviewed the work of the past year, and the issues that emerged in AA21 after meetings in Chile during the month of December. For the first time in more than a year, all the organizations with the exception of OFRANEH attended the meeting.

III. Other Activities:

Both the Afroleadership advisor and the Education Communications advisor, Contract/consulting positions, have made presentations at both the communications and promoter training courses and prepared drafts of memoria for the international workshops conducted in the last quarter, respectively. A website for the OAA has been improved and updated.

Promotional materials, such as T shirts and hats for the community promoters have been issued and designs for billboards will be painted and erected by local artists in the nine communities.

La Voz Garifuna will work closely with the Afroleadership advisor to analyze the results of the communications workshop and to assist with improving the radio program content transmissions.

In addition to her responsibilities as the training coordinator, Margarita Sanchez provides on site assistance visiting all the communities and following up on their workplans. She also negotiated agreements with Patronatos/village councils in Tela and Cortes.

Manuals for designing and implementing a community needs assessment/census questionnaire and another for holding focus groups for youth, adults and seniors were reproduced, bound and distributed to each community and to advisors.

POA deputy project director, Barbara Bloch, visited Honduras in February for the first training in community development. (covered under Achievements. Trip Report with suggested recommendations is attached)

IV. Challenges

There are three main challenges related to the successful implementation of this Agreement with USAID:

- (1). Entering a community based phase dependent on the actions of the project promoters requires a leap of faith in the abilities and skills of the individuals hired, and on the capacity of the advisors to oversee the achievement of results in a uniform manner. To date, things are working well, in spite of the limits of telephone and mail facilities and the absence of internet in many areas of Honduras. Telephone calls with the advisors/facilitators in every region keeps the training coordinator informed. Calls have also been received directly from the promoters when they have new ideas that may not match those of the advisors. Visits by the training coordinator to the communities, particularly after promoter calls, helps to keep the activities on track.
- (2) Events outside of the project sphere are having an impact on the NGOs who have assigned staff to be advisors/facilitators in the project. More crucial is the interpersonal relationship between two key players.

A basic unstated assumption was that AA21 supporters from Afro Latino communities in Latin America would act as trainers, advisors, and/or facilitators as needed. Upon completion of the project the materials developed would be replicated in other member countries. Given the situation within AA21 and, in particular among the various Honduran members most closely allied to the grassroots community building, their continued involvement is questioned.

If the AA21 splits into two camps, this may preclude continued involvement of some key organizations in the project.

The sense of frustration among the participating organizations has caused delays in technical assistance that the facilitators provide on a pro bono basis.

The training coordinator is working overtime to ensure that the internal conflicts do not affect the participation of all of the facilitators and that the community promoters continue to follow their workplans. The downside is the time that has to be spent on conflict resolution and monitoring the situation. This clearly takes away from the project and is an underlying reason for some of the delays that occurred in the quarter.

- (3) Hiring staff for the OAA Washington office has also postponed the completion of the financial and accounting system and the transfer of funds from POA to OAA Washington to the Honduras field office. POA staff has taken a more proactive stance increasing its involvement in OAA operations and in training of the new staff at OAA. POA staff also spends some time each week in the OAA office to complete filing and accounting records and to effect more efficient transfers of funds. The outcome of this is to conduct a program and financial audit by September 2001.

Conclusion:

It is evident that as long as the development work does not involve the substantial input of financial resources the relations between organizations and their leaders could remain peaceful. Ironically, the arrival of project funds has served to increase tensions, and the feelings of jealousy. There is a perception that some receive benefits and others do not.

It is also evident that communities wish to be independent of the struggles between the participating organizations and that they do not feel that any organization automatically represents their community. They also feel that organizations have their uses, but more often than not it is the NGOs that use the communities. The patronatos elected by the communities wish to be treated as equals with the NGOs, and to have control of their own destiny, and of what comes to the community and how it should be spent.

This incident has been a concern of project managers, and it has been very costly in terms of the time spent by the Training Coordinator in mediating with the concerned parties (December and January), in public relations with communities and NGOs, and finally in safeguarding the interests of the project.

Nevertheless, in some respects, it has been a positive experience. Patronatos feel even more sure of themselves as a result of negotiating on their own and obtaining

the degree of information they have never before received from any other project. There is more and more evidence that these communities feel empowered and are maturing in the development process and in decision making.

V. Next Quarter Objectives

Program Activities

- (1). To complete the community planning process.
- (2). To begin the community training phase with project planning and project proposal writing.
- (3). To help communities to prepare submissions to the Small Project Fund.

Administration Activities

- (1). Visit to OAA/ POA in Washington to review project accounts and adjust the budget to reallocate resources for the last six months of the project.
- (2). To train patronatos to prepare financial reports on the funds advanced for community training.
- (3). To further streamline project payment procedures.

VI. Finances

As the project enters the halfway mark, financial management will become a top priority. Not only will the number of contract personnel increase to provide training and technical assistance, but also the patronatos will need training in budgeting, and preparing financial reports. The small grant fund is designed to be a teaching tool for the communities and will be funded by passing small grants through the local village councils/patronatos..

The POA mentoring of OAA staff in Washington and Honduras is expected to be completed in budget management and financial accounting. An audit is projected for the third quarter of 2001.

ATTACHMENT
TRIP REPORT

**TRIP REPORT
TRAVESIA, HONDURAS
FEBRUARY 26-MARCH 2, 2001
Submitted by
Barbara Bloch
Deputy Project Director**

OBJECTIVES:

To monitor the training of facilitators and promoters in community participation for the OAA/POA grassroots community development project

To work with OAA Training Coordinator, Margarita Sanchez on evaluation and tracking indicators

To review budget and set up expense accounts

Monday, February 26

Left DC at 6:20 AM arrived in Travesia at 2:30 pm via taxi from San Pedro Sula. Travesia is a village on the Atlantic Coast about 15 minutes from the Puerto Cortes.

Two trainers from CIPE, Tegucigalpa and 38 participants from 6 communities. Targeted communities: Tornabe, Triunfo de la Cruz, Travesia, Bajamar, Roatan (Bay Islands), Livingston (Guatemala).

See attached agenda for training in (1) tools for doing a needs assessment and (2) designing a project with participation of the community and the local govt.

The workshop opened on Monday with two sessions on Afro-Latino History, building self esteem and leadership.

Tuesday, February 27

Sessions ran from 8 AM – 6PM

Margarita and I spent the afternoon reviewing the DIP and the objectives of the project. Using examples of the database and reports from the InterAmerican Democracy Network, whose objectives and indicators are similar for citizen participation and networking, we set up a spreadsheet to track each training event (input). From this we would disaggregate by sex, age, community, type of event (local, national or international event) and program covered in the seminar, the results of each seminar or workshop.

Wednesday, February 28

Sessions from 8AM – 8 PM

Training was pretty intense, the lack of experience of the participants in community development put us behind a half day. Therefore on both Wednesday and Thursday it was decided to work after dinner.

Margarita and I went over the budget in the afternoon for the field office and set up a spreadsheet using Quickbooks which I brought to her. This is the same software that the DC OAA office uses. I made a disk of the ledgers of the field office expenses since inception.

Note: Concern of both POA office and Margarita is getting a handle on the expenditures for both the OAA office and the field office. Since finding an admin asst. with financial background in the DC office has been a problem, training in budget and financial management has been delayed and no system has been implemented for timely reporting and auditing. POA did not disburse funds to OAA until January when the first report was filed. OAA, however, did not advance funds for the training programs in a timely fashion and it was only the day before the training began that money arrived. This meant that funds were provided by other organizations and people to implement project activities.

For Info Purposes: OAA Honduras is the only chapter of OAA. OAA is a leading proponent of the AA21 process. Essentially AA 21 advocates for visibility of the Black Spanish speaking communities in international arena. For example, a mechanism for getting Afro Latino issues on the agenda of govt. and for a presence at UN Conference of Racism. OAA is a registered 501(c) 3 and manned by volunteers with Michael Franklin as the founder. Michael wants to move OAA into development and this project was designed to do that. In order to get funds directly in Latin America a field office was opened and registered in Honduras. Michael is the visionary, the big picture person, experienced in public relations, with Margarita contracted as the project coordinator and administrator. They have worked well in this role since they met through the AA21. (Margarita worked for CAMAFROH- chamber of commerce in Honduras supporting microenterprises on the Atlantic Coast. CAMAFROH is a member of AA21)

ACTION (Roz and Pablo): Margarita will copy us on her monthly expense reports as well as OAA.

POA will copy both OAA and OAA field office on monthly expense reports with detail for budgeted line items for each office, including POA.

Margarita will DHL copies of receipts as backup for OAA files and audit. Michael also faxed request for receipts.

Thursday, March 1

8-8:30 pm -after dinner the whole group went to a section of Travesia with each promoter interviewing one house practicing asking questions and inviting villagers to a town meeting which was to be held on Saturday afternoon.

Margarita and I spent a couple of hours in the afternoon working on additional - spreadsheets for evaluating the project: (1) set up a database for the objectives and how each program area (training, manuals, small grants) will meet the objectives. (2) set up a database for each (local training) community tracking results for each training event by community, number of participant by sex, ages, projects implemented, relationship with

local govt. (patronato); relationships with other NGOs; (3) set up a leadership scale for each promoter to track how well they learned the skills at the national and local training events.

For information purposes:

On national (Honduras and Guatemala-participants from all targeted communities) level there have been two meetings – one in November on civil rights and the one in Feb/Mar on training in community participation and development. On the international level to build networks and gain experience in international issues affecting Afro Latino communities there have been a couple of meetings – one in Sept in Washington, DC for AA21 (this included 5 people from Honduras and Guatemala; the rest were sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation) on leadership; the second took place in Chile/ Ecuador to prepare for the UN Conference on Racism. The latter was paid by USAID Honduras and participants were to be facilitators for local training. Just prior to the meeting in community participation a meeting on communications with radio, press, and TV was held in La Ceiba. The result was to form a Network in Honduras to enhance communications and share information on the project.

ACTION: Once we look at the budget vs actual expenses we need to allocate remaining funds on the local level. Intensive technical assistance may be required in some of the communities. Over the next two months each community will present a needs assessment and project priority. The promoters and the facilitators will receive a stipend to dedicate their time to developing a diagnostic of their communities and building an interest in developing a project for funding and implementation. From June – November projects will be designed with training in proposal writing, resource mobilization. By August the hope is to have project proposals for presentation to the Small Grants committee for funding. Funds will be given to the patronatos for disbursement to the communities.

I recommend that we apply funds in building skills appropriate on an as needed basis community by community rather than use funds for further international events. We also are committed to publishing training manuals in Spanish including one on leadership (more of a history, self esteem, leadership characteristics than a how to book) And additional funds may be needed for the trainers to put their materials into a format for the manuals. For example, CIPE who did the training for this community development workshop will be contracted to put together a manual for others to use in their communities.

I also highly recommend CIPE for the POA consultant database. They were excellent and worked very well and patiently with the participants.

Margarita will do some drafts, test the evaluation reports and send them to POA for comment.

Friday, March 2

8 AM – left for San Pedro Sula and flight home; arrived 9:30pm

My only regret on this trip was that I didn't have nor make time to spend a day or two in Tegucigalpa with the local POA chapter. I spoke with both John Chater and Celio Osorio (the chapter president) prior to my trip. My intention was to arrange something once I was in country. However, there was no functioning telephone in Travesia nor at the hotel in Puerto Cortes so I did not follow up.

I made a presentation on Partners to the participants and will inform both Celio and John of the potential of bringing some of these people into their programs. I also will inform Guatemala Partners of the Livingston/Puerto Barrios connections.