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MICROENTERPRISE LTBA
VEGA
Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance

VEGA Microenterprise Development Long Term Business Advisors

Quarterly Report (October 1 – December 31, 2006)

**LEADER WITH ASSOCIATE AGREEMENT (LWA)
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Implementing Organizations:

INSTITUTE OF
INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION

Summary:

This is a report on the six 2005-2006 Advisers who have recently concluded or are about to conclude their assignments as well as the two 2006-2007 Advisers beginning their assignments.

Tasks completed this quarter:

- Meghan Novak completed her ten-month assignment successfully.
- Fielded a new Adviser, Nina Kolbe, to Antananarivo, Madagascar, who participated in a pre-departure orientation in Washington, DC from November 13-16, 2006.
- Received and evaluated reports submitted to IIE.
- Monitored Case Study development progress.
- Disbursed funds to Advisers.
- The six Advisers who will have completed their assignments by March 2007 have been invited to attend a de-briefing set for March 8-9, 2007 in Washington, DC. USAID/Washington has extended an invitation to the Advisers to make presentations at a brown bag lunch about the impacts of their work.

Follow up on microLINKS *Notes from the Field*: Based on initial feedback and editorial guidelines received by EMDAP staff from the *Notes from the Field* editor, Advisers were contacted and asked to revise their submissions to meet publication standards.

Site visits completed:

Ecuador: April 25 – 28, 2006
Pakistan: July 1-6, 2006
Philippines: June 26-30, 2006
Zambia: August 14-16, 2006
Sierra Leone: November 20-23, 2006
Guyana: November 26-30, 2006

Volunteers and Assignments:

1. Dianna Darsney, Income Generation Specialist, Conservation International (CI), Lethem, Guyana

Contact e-mail: dianna.darsney@gmail.com

Assignment Period: 12 months: February 13, 2006-February 12, 2007

Training: "Making Markets Work for Business and Income Growth," The Springfield Centre, Glasgow, Scotland. July 23-August 4, 2006

EMDAP Senior Program Officer Usha Balakrishnan recently visited Dianna Darsney at her worksite. In addition to reviewing Dianna's action plan, she discussed the sustainability steps that are being put in place at CI to ensure that



Dianna's work lives on after she leaves. Dianna is working to transfer responsibilities to a newly recruited staff member. She has taken her successor on field trips and trained this individual in business plan development for local communities (Wai Wai and Amerindians) to assist them in fundraising and finding marketing outlets for their products.

Usha Balakrishnan also visited the CI headquarters in Georgetown and called on USAID Economic Growth staff. Several Mission staff had never visited Lethem and were fascinated to hear that USAID is making an impact in a remote location through the work of an EMDAP Adviser.

In October 2006, Dianna contributed to a Progress Note to SEEP on "Value Chain Development and the Poor" based on lessons gleaned from the Value Chain Working Group on-line discussion organized by SEEP from February through June 2006. A copy of the paper is available at: http://www.seepnetwork.org/files/4695_file_Progress_Note_16_VC_Development_and_the_Poor.pdf.

Dianna's work has been recognized as seminal to the development of Lethem, and she has been offered a project with CI in Guyana to continue her work.

2. Meghan Novack, Institutional Development and Marketing Advisor, WOCCU, Quito, Ecuador

Contact e-mail: mnovack.woccu@andinanet.net

Assignment Period: 10 months: February 13, 2006- December 12, 2006

Training: Boulder Microfinance Training Program at ILO, Turin, Italy, July 17- August 4, 2006

In her final report, Meghan lists some impressive tangible indicators for assessing the impact of her work, including the increasing interest in the Redcoop network (now COONECTA) seen through the increase in remittances. Meghan explains: "The first trimester of my assignment showed \$1.68 million USD sent in remittances and my last trimester showed \$2.59 million USD sent.

"The improvements that have been made to the structure and contractual agreements are also tangible. FINANCOOP, the second tiered, corporate credit union, is no longer the compensator for reasons of politics and paralysis in advancing the Redcoop network...All the credit unions that were in Redcoop have purchased shares in the new company, COONECTA."

It is notable that the launching of COONECTA, the creation of a communal marketing plan, the development of improvement programs such as employee incentive programs, and the opening of the tele-centers are all accomplishments beyond Meghan's original scope of work.



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3. Gianni Brusati, Technical Advisor, Finance Salone, ARC/International, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Contact e-mail: giannibrusati@yahoo.co.uk

Assignment Period: 12 months: February 15, 2006-February 14, 2007; early completion date of January 5, 2007

Training: Boulder Microfinance Training Program at ILO, Turin, Italy, July 17- August 4, 2006

In his final report, Gianni reflects on the lasting effect of his contribution to Finance Salone: “Systems have been put in place and products have been developed that will now allow Finance Salone to grow exponentially, fend off its competitors, reward its staff more, and provide more client-focused products and services. The organization is now leaner and more efficient, and the staff are more motivated and generally work harder.

“The development of the bonus scheme was not in [my] scope of work, but it has nonetheless been central to my assignment and impact. Internal controls were also not mentioned in my original scope of work, but their development will allow Finance Salone to carry forth the new products successfully.”

From his recent visit to Gianni’s site visit, IIE EMDAP director Bill Dant further observes: “At the operations level, Gianni has been very productive in helping to set up new branch offices and train the office staff, streamline and tighten up systems in the HR and internal controls, and developing a new bank product, the Single Enterprise Loan, targeted at clients whose microbusinesses have successfully grown through Microfinance and now are moving to the small business level and good risks for larger loans—all good accomplishments which his colleagues recognize.”

Gianni has contributed a Case Study in Best Practices which is now available on the VEGA website. His article “Completing the Transition – Finance Salone” can be found at www.vegaalliance.org/best.asp.

Gianni also submitted an article for *Notes from the Field* which is in the editing stages.

4. Sarah Kasven, MF Advisor, CRS LINKS Project, Manila, Philippines

Contact e-mail : sarahkasven@yahoo.com

Assignment Period: 12 months: February 15, 2006-February 14, 2007

Training: Boulder Microfinance Training Program at ILO, Turin, Italy, July 17- August 4, 2006

Sarah’s assignment continues on track. She has submitted an article for *Notes from the Field* which is currently being reviewed by the editor.



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5. Sadaf Zahid, MF Advisor, Save the Children/Asasah, Lahore, Islamabad

Contact e-mail: zahid_sadaf@hotmail.com

Assignment Period: 12 months: March 15, 2006-January 15, 2007, extended to March 15, 2007

Training: Boulder Microfinance Training Program at ILO, Turin, Italy, July 17- August 4, 2006

Sadaf's assignment continues on track. She was featured in the November 2006 edition of the VEGA newsletter.

6. Gabriela Prudencio, Business Promotion Adviser, PROFIT, Lusaka, Zambia

Contact e-mail: gabriela.prudencio@gmail.com

Assignment Period: 10 months: February 13, 2006 - December 12, 2006, extended to February 12, 2007

Training: "Making Markets Work for Business and Income Growth," The Springfield Centre, Glasgow, Scotland, July 23-August 4, 2006

Gabriela's assignment continues on track. Although there were no formal reporting requirements for Gabriela during this period, Gabriela submitted an amusing vignette illustrating some creative business promotion techniques. Gabriela recounts PROFIT's clever use of well-known gender tensions in the Mkushi district, where men and women compete for dominance, to promote equal participation in PROFIT's Herd Management Plan.

7. Ana Luisa Pinto, Marketing Manager, Alternativa Solidaria (AlSol), Chiapas, Mexico

Contact e-mail: pinto.analuisa@gmail.com

Assignment Period: 10 months: September 11, 2006-July 11, 2007

Training: TBD

Ana Luisa is off to a strong start, noting two significant accomplishments during this period: completion of a market study in a new geographic area and two focus groups with AlSol loan officers from the main office and two branches.

Regarding the market study, Ana Luisa explains: "I learned how to study a new area using simple but effective market research tools from MicroSave consisting of focus groups and interviews with participants. I also learned how to supervise a research team of eight individuals...As AlSol personnel were involved in this process, I am confident we can implement these tools in the future in another area."



As to the focus groups with loan officers: “This was a helpful way for me to gather information and gain perspective on certain issues: what makes AISol unique, identifying competitors, how AISol is currently promoted, suggestions for modifying marketing materials... This information will also help me design the focus groups I will conduct with clients in December and January.”

Ana Luisa also attended AFIRMA’s semi-annual project meeting, which proved to be an excellent introduction to the DAI AFIRMA project, of which AISol is a partner. “There were interesting presentations and discussion on issues affecting the industry: financial institutions/banks downscaling to the poor, issues in becoming a regulated microfinance institution.” This was also a networking opportunity for Ana Luisa that enabled her to “put faces to names and organizations.”

8. Nina Kolbe, Tourism Development Advisor, Conservation International (CI), Antananarivo, Madagascar

Contact e-mail: ninakolbe@gmail.com

Assignment Period: 10 months: November 27, 2006-September 27, 2007

Training: TBD

During the pre-departure orientation in Washington, DC, Nina had the opportunity to meet with key staff from the Office of Microenterprise Development and Conservation International. These meetings proved very helpful in preparing Nina for her assignment.

Nina’s initial work focus has been assisting with the production of three value chain analysis reports. These reports, she explains, “will inform the prioritization of interventions to strengthen MSEs in the tourism industry [and subsequently] serve as training material for other CI tourism programs in other countries.” The results of this analysis, which is expected to be completed by late March 2007, will determine the direction of this new CI project in Madagascar for the next three years as well as Nina’s scope of work for the remainder of her assignment.

Nina also reports that the project is undergoing some staff changes. These changes include hiring a new Ecotourism Manager, to be Nina’s new supervisor, in January 2007.