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**HEALTH POLICY  
INITIATIVE**

**Semi-Annual Report: PASCA  
Futures Group International, LLC, Prime Contractor**

1. TO Number	GPO-I-04-05-00040-00
2. Location	Guatemala City, Guatemala
3. Title	USAID Program for Strengthening the Central American Response to HIV/AIDS (PASCA)
4. Activity Description	Provide technical support and ensure achievement of the Central American Regional HIV/AIDS Program's objectives to expand and strengthen the response to HIV/AIDS in Central American countries. The task order will improve the policy environment for a more effective response to HIV/AIDS.
5. Achievements	See below.
6. Name of USAID COTR	Lucrecia (Lucky) Castillo
7. Name of USAID CO	David Brown
8. Name of COP	Lucia Merino, COP Modesto Mendizabal, Deputy COP
9. Date of Award	October 1, 2008
10. Projected End Date	September 30, 2013
11. Ceiling Price	\$9,999,819
12. Obligations to Date	\$3,741,146
13. Cumulative Expenditures	\$1,777,599
14. Balance (pipeline based on obligations to date)	\$2,563,547
15. Subcontractors	Futures Institute
16. Final Invoice Submission	N/A

**Period of performance for SAR:** April 1, 2009–September 30, 2009

**Background:** Under the USAID | Health Policy Initiative, PASCA aims to improve the policy environment for strengthening the Central American response to HIV. PASCA provides technical assistance and training so that HIV policies can be implemented effectively. In particular, the program supports the achievement of the following results: (1) regional and national strategic plans on HIV/AIDS are proposed, implemented, monitored and supported; (2) effective national and regional advocacy agendas are implemented; and (3) policies and activities that mitigate HIV/TB co-infection are implemented. PASCA's cross-cutting issues include human rights, stigma and discrimination, and the impact of gender roles in the epidemic.

The plan for technical assistance and training is organized around three programmatic issues: (1) strategic planning; (2) monitoring and evaluation (M&E); and (3) formulation and implementation of projects

financed by the Global Fund. The program has a regional focus in Central America, with specific activities in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Panama. Regional activities will also take place in Honduras and Nicaragua.

### **Main Activities:**

***HIV national strategic plans monitored, implemented, and evaluated.*** PASCA is supporting the development and monitoring of policies, including ensuring that clear guidelines and resources are in place to effectively implement strategic national and M&E plans. The program's approach is to influence and improve the internal processes relevant to institutional policy formation.

In *Belize*, government and NGO counterparts completed the development of a proposal for Round 9 of the Global Fund (GF). PASCA facilitated the process to reach consensus on the cost estimates and the technical proposal, which were validated by affiliated organizations. Additionally, during this period, the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for HIV Response was adopted as a national guide incorporating the main indicators defined for the country and harmonizing them with the indicators established by the Global Fund.

In *Costa Rica*, PASCA continued to support the newly created committee to update the country's National Strategic Plan (NSP), which will make the country eligible for financing by the Global Fund. As part of the process, PASCA assessed the status of HIV public policy implementation, applying the policy implementation tool to monitor the current HIV strategic plan. The project also provided financial and technical support to complete a study on sero-prevalence among populations of men who have sex with men in the metropolitan area. The MOH accepted and published the study results. The project also supported the dissemination of information from the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) country study on viral loads; launched work on an HIV situation and response analysis study; provided technical assistance and funding for an exercise to estimate prevalence; and helped to implement the HIV Expenditure Exercise (MEGAS) 2008 and prepare the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) report.

In *El Salvador*, the project assisted with the development of a 2009 Operational Plan, as a tool to implement the NSP, and worked with the M&E Commission to strengthen the information system to facilitate data collection and information dissemination on the HIV epidemic and response. In regard to Global Fund projects, PASCA supported a joint monitoring and evaluation plan for the main country recipients; strengthened the planning and technical capacity of Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) of El Salvador members; and assisted NGOs with preparing proposals for GF funding.

In *Guatemala*, PASCA helped to evaluate the NSP in support of creating a new plan, taking into account priorities and the consensus achieved with the various sectors participating in the national response. In the area of strengthening information systems, the project helped foster agreements among the Guatemalan Institute of Social Security, National AIDS Program, and CCM, aimed at updating the database to streamline and harmonize information flows. Addressing information and M&E needs, PASCA facilitated a strategic alliance with the Secretary of Planning (SEGEPLAN) to design and implement a government platform for high-level follow-up of selected HIV indicators that will allow the Secretariat to report to the Office of the President of the Republic on implementation of HIV public policy. PASCA provided technical and financial support to draft the universal access report, the estimation exercise, and the MEGAS 2005-06 publication. The team also assisted with gathering information for the MEGAS 2008 estimates, as well as developing the UNGASS indicators.

In *Panama*, PASCA assessed the status of HIV public policy implementation by using the policy implementation tool to monitor implementation of the National HIV Strategic Plan. The results will inform the new NSP. In addition, PASCA assisted the M&E Committee with disseminating and analyzing

implementation of the UNAIDS 12-Step framework for a National M&E System. The team also helped to draft the MEGAS 2008. Further, at the request of the CCM, PASCA assisted with the preparation of an HIV proposal submitted to Round 9 of the Global Fund.

At the *regional* level, PASCA helped write “Regional HIV/AIDS Strategic Action Areas (*Lineas Estrategicas*),” which are proposals put forward by the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) and approved by the Commission of Health Ministers of Central America. PASCA is also helping to draft the Regional Strategic Plan that will establish guidelines to implement strategic action areas. In the area of strategic information, PASCA positioned relevant information on issues regarding HIV policy and legal framework within the Central American Parliament, and it will follow up to promote commitments at the highest political level in the region. To strengthen regional information systems, PASCA co-sponsored two workshops in coordination with UNAIDS; the first covered implementation of HIV/AIDS information systems and M&E plans, and the second presented methodologies for updating MEGAS and using information for the policy process. In every PASCA country, the AIDS HIV Policy Environment Index was implemented, and its results will be discussed, published, and used as of the last 2009 quarter.

***HIV advocacy agendas effectively implemented.*** PASCA is endorsing and contributing to the development of national and regional agendas on advocacy to help create a favorable political environment for implementation of the actions outlined in national HIV/AIDS strategic plans and M&E operational plans. This strategy seeks to influence and improve the external aspects of the public policy process; to reposition the HIV epidemic on the national agenda as both a political issue and a public interest issue; and to ensure that implementation of the plans is fully supported and endorsed by key actors as the logical next step in the national response.

In *Belize*, PASCA initiated a series of activities to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to more effectively advocate for the implementation HIV-related public policies. As a first step, PASCA helped establish a National Advocacy Committee comprising the country’s six largest NGOs. Social auditing processes in Belize are incipient at best, and PASCA’s role will be crucial to ensuring their acceptance and use.

In *Costa Rica*, PASCA continued to assist the organizations that participated in the advocacy workshop earlier this year. The project worked with stakeholders to improve the dynamics and communication among groups and strengthen capabilities in the areas of public policies and the Three Ones, as well as supported NGOs to establish a commission for the social auditing of HIV policies. The team also initiated contact with a leading business sector organization—the Union of Private Sector Chambers and Associations, which represents a considerable portion of the business sector—to draft the agreements needed to implement HIV policies in the workplace in its member organizations.

In *El Salvador*, efforts focused on ensuring continuity for HIV political commitments in the midst of a government changeover. PASCA helped to design and implement two advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about HIV among members of the administration of the President of the Republic who took office in June 2009, including officials in charge of implementing the government’s HIV agenda. A high-profile HIV Social Comptrollership Group was established by civil society to follow up on the state’s commitment. Additionally, PASCA helped establish a public-private alliance with the private sector, represented by National Association of the Private Sector (ANEP), National Council on HIV/AIDS (CONASIDA), and CCM, including high-profile public events to promote a more effective business sector response among ANEP member companies.

In *Guatemala*, to further improve advocacy, the project assisted CSOs with designing and implementing an advocacy campaign that favorably resolved a cost-benefit conflict pertaining to purchasing HIV drugs. In addition, PASCA facilitated meetings on the status of the epidemic, which led to establishing a group of HIV policy analysts.

In *Panama*, cognizant of the challenges during the government transition, PASCA supported the Strategic Alliance in strengthening advocacy capacity and implementing actions to position HIV issues on the new government's agenda. In the business sector, PASCA established a strategic alliance with the National Private Sector Council (CONEP), the association representing most of Panama's private business sector. CONEP and PASCA signed a memorandum of understanding to build capacity among Panamanian firms to prepare, adopt, and implement HIV policies in the workplace.

*Regionally*, efforts to promote private enterprise participation in the HIV response resulted in outreach to the Federation of the Panamanian and Central American Private Sector, the Central American Institute of Social Research, the Central American Institute of Business Administration, and the Latin America Center for Sustainable Development—all of which are organizations highly placed in the regional business environment and potential allies to work on HIV issues in the workplace. As planning continues for the CONCASIDA 2009 (regional conference on HIV), PASCA assisted the planning committee with drafting the workplan for submission to cooperation agencies; defining the scientific program; publicly launching the forum; creating the Webpage, and developing and implementing the fundraising strategy for the Congress that will be held in Costa Rica in March 2010.

***Policies implemented to mitigate HIV/TB co-infection.*** PASCA is strengthening policies and the mechanisms for cooperation between the National HIV and TB programs to ensure that issues pertaining to HIV/TB co-infection are included in program development and implementation and in collaborative actions.

In *Belize*, the project assessed the opportunities to strengthen cooperative activities in HIV/TB co-infection in Belize.

In *Costa Rica*, PASCA helped government partners develop a shared agenda for the HIV and TB programs, enabling them to start defining and implementing joint activities.

In *El Salvador*, PASCA facilitated a process with government partners to prepare a shared agenda for HIV and TB, which was instrumental in the development and submission of a TB proposal for Round 9. This proposal was based on a gaps analysis conducted by PASCA of the response to TB-HIV co-infection.

In *Guatemala*, PASCA continued to facilitate communication between the National AIDS Program and the National TB Program, as follow-up to the joint agenda the two partners developed earlier in the year.

In *Panama*, PASCA provided support to the constitution of an inter-sectoral working commission on HIV and TB, which will draft an agenda to update the HIV/TB Co-infection Plan.

No activities on HIV/TB co-infection were carried out at the regional level.