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**HEALTH POLICY
INITIATIVE**

**Semi-Annual Report: PASCA
Futures Group**

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) USAID PASCA Reproductive Health Policy Initiative (as of 3/17/10)
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 in Central American countries. The task order will improve the policy environment for a more effective response to HIV. The RH component of the project also aims to improve the policy environment and systems to support expanded access to FP/RH and maternal and child health care.
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
9. Date of Award	October 1, 2008
10. Projected End Date	September 30, 2013
11. Ceiling Price	\$14,399,070 (with MOD 5 funding)
12. Obligations to Date	\$ 4,241,146 (with MOD5 funding)
13. Cumulative Expenditures	\$ 2,181,007
14. Balance (pipeline based on obligations to date)	\$ 2,060,139
15. Subcontractors	Futures Institute
16. Final Invoice Submission	N/A

Period of performance for SAR: October 1, 2009–March 31, 2010

Background: Under the USAID | Health Policy Initiative, PASCA aims to improve the policy environment for strengthening the Central American response to HIV. PASCA provides TA and training to help implement HIV policies effectively. In particular, the program supports the following results: (1) proposing, implementing, monitoring, and supporting regional and national strategic HIV/AIDS plans; (2) implementing regional and national advocacy agendas; and (3) engaging the business sector in the HIV response. A previous objective (implementing policies and activities that mitigate HIV/TB co-infection) is still supported, but as a secondary priority. In addition, several cross-cutting issues are addressed by the

project team in its activities: human rights, stigma and discrimination, and the impact of gender roles in the epidemic.

The TA and training plan encompass (1) strategic planning; (2) monitoring and evaluation (M&E); and (3) formulation and implementation of projects financed by the Global Fund. The program's focus is Central America, and activities took place in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panamá.

The activities were focused on three results:

1) *Monitoring, implementing, and evaluating HIV national strategic plans.* PASCA is supporting policy development and monitoring, which include ensuring that clear guidelines and resources are in place to implement national strategic and M&E plans. The program's approach is to influence and improve internal processes that are relevant to institutional policy formation.

2) *Implementing HIV advocacy agendas.* PASCA is endorsing and contributing to the development of national and regional advocacy agendas to help create a favorable political environment for achieving actions outlined in national HIV/AIDS strategic and M&E operational plans. The strategy seeks to influence and improve the external aspects of the public policy process; to reposition the HIV epidemic on the national agenda as a political and public interest issue; and to ensure that key participants support and endorse the implementation of the plans as the logical next step in the national response.

3) *Engaging the business sector in the HIV response.* PASCA is strengthening, expanding, and increasing the visibility of the national business sector mechanism with regard to HIV issues. Specifically, it is assisting member companies in developing, adopting, implementing, and evaluating operational plans for their workplace HIV policies.

Note: On March 17, 2010, PASCA received a contract modification that included a one-year bilateral reproductive health policy initiative in Guatemala and the transfer of HPI-TOI's HIV work in Guatemala to PASCA. Since the contract modification is so recent, related activities are not included in this semi-annual report.

Summary of Major HIV Activities:

In *Belize*, a national HIV advocacy committee supported by PASCA established its 2010 workplan, which is focused on using citizen vigilance to ensure operationalization of HIV policies. Judging by their plans, the committee can streamline the country's responses to key issues. The first AIDS Policy Index (API) study was also completed. During the first quarter of 2010, country efforts focused on developing the National AIDS Spending Assessment (NASA) 2008–2009 report and the UNGASS 2010 report. PASCA supported the efforts by sponsoring consultants to gather data, while applying UNAIDS-defined methodologies and overseeing the development of national reports. To support the business sector, information regarding the implementation of HIV policies in the workplace and relevant public policies from the business sector's perspective was also gathered.

In *Costa Rica*, PASCA continued to function as a technical secretariat to a multisectoral group that is updating the National HIV Strategic Plan (NSP), which is currently in the draft stage. The following studies were produced or published to assist Costa Rica's research on the epidemic: seroprevalence in men who have sex with men (MSM); AIDS Policy Index (API); National AIDS Spending Assessment; diagnosis on HIV status and response; and progress on the declaration of El Salvador. Additionally, consultancies gathered and analyzed data and produced corresponding reports for the NASA 2008–2009 and UNGASS 2010 reports. Advocacy activities were also promoted, including the Presidential

Candidate Forum in which civil society demanded answers to the problems faced by PLHIV, most-at-risk populations, and the general population. In the business sector, efforts are under way to collect pertinent information that will help businesses document their composition and structure, but also assemble a political and legal framework that favors HIV policies in the workplace.

In *El Salvador*, evaluation of the current strategic plan has begun, which will form the basis for the new plan. CONASIDA approved its annual workplan, which is the operative guide for the country's response to the epidemic. The M&E Subcommittee of CONASIDA was inactive for several weeks during this reporting period, due to turnover in government staff. This group is key in analyzing, validating, and publishing the results of M&E indicators on the country's epidemic. In addition, support continued for the completion of the NASA 2008–2009 and UNGASS 2010 reports, and facilitation was provided to develop a national composite policy index in cooperation with civil society. An HIV Social Auditing Group was formed with civil society groups; this mechanism was used by PASCA to promote policy analyses. Information from the API will help define objectives that will focus the national advocacy agenda. Additionally, PASCA engaged the Ministry of Labor and the Salvadorian Social Security Institute on HIV issues, but from the perspective of working with the business sector. Efforts to gather information to define structure, and the legal and policy framework for HIV issues in the workplace also started.

In *Guatemala*, the NSP evaluation was completed and efforts were taken to make a new NSP that complies with measurable objectives and goals that are congruent with the epidemic in the country. Other activities were carried out to facilitate the information flow from the SIGSA system and the policy-monitoring information system being developed by SEGEPLAN. Support is being provided to print the NASA 2006–2007 report and to prepare the NASA 2008–2009 report. Facilitation is being provided to develop the national composite policy index, in cooperation with civil society as an input for the UNGASS 2010 report. The PASCA team provided TA to complete the Phase III of the Global Fund project proposal, which was submitted to the Global Fund for approval. PASCA provided legal counsel to Global Fund projects on the procedures to appoint new main project recipients and to execute sub-donations for the country. Assistance was provided, in coordination with civil society organizations to develop legal guidelines that will ensure supply of antiretrovirals (ARVs) and viral-load tests for PLHIV. In addition, a workshop on developing CONCASIDA summaries was held in March 2010.

In *Nicaragua*, PASCA submitted an annual country plan proposal to USAID. The implementation began in earnest when the project was presented to various organizations, and when advocacy actions began with various actors in the national sphere to start monitoring the rollout of an HIV public policy. PASCA also began the process of contracting consultants for the API study and applying the monitoring tool for implementation of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan.

In *Panama*, PASCA facilitated the participation of civil society organizations in the development of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan, which was made official in October 2010. Support was also provided to develop the operational plan for the National HIV/AIDS Program, which is the implementing agency for CONAVIH. PASCA supported consultancies to prepare the NASA 2008–2009 and UNGASS 2010 reports. In cooperation with the private business sector, PASCA provided TA to establish a public dialogue, through which CoNEP launched a program aimed at raising the awareness of business leaders on HIV issues. Information was gathered on the structure of the private sector; on the policies that encourage addressing HIV issues in the workplace; and on documents to develop an HIV social-responsibility standard within the private sector.

Regional Activities. PASCA provided support for the development and printing of the regional HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan. In addition, it provided TA to design the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, which was submitted to the Central American Council of Ministries of Health within the framework of

CONCASIDA 2010. Following up on regional HIV policies, PASCA facilitated multisectoral meetings in various countries. At these meetings, it was possible to evaluate the level of progress achieved in compliance with the San Salvador Declaration of Commitments—a document signed by the Central American presidents in 2005. In 2007, a similar evaluation was supported. In the past semester, PASCA facilitated seven virtual meetings with representatives from the Central American National AIDS Programs. Agendas focused on sharing experiences and progress in preparing the NASA and UNGASS reports. To optimize these and other regional initiatives, PASCA coordinated efforts with the World Bank, UNAIDS, and other regional actors.

CONCASIDA 2010 was held in Costa Rica during the first week of March 2010. The regional Congress came about as a result of the PASCA's TA in: sharing experiences and coordinating with the Local Organizing Committee; mediating between the government and civil society in their joint endeavors; developing the CONCASIDA 2010 project; developing the webpage and promotional materials for the Congress; selecting the firm that would manage funds; selecting the firm that would manage logistics; developing the scientific program; proposing and seeking speakers for planned meetings; and developing the strategy for fundraising and for scholarship-recipient participation. In the framework of this Congress, PASCA facilitated three satellite meetings: (1) M&E for HIV Specialists; (2) Policy and Advocacy Environment; and (3) Social/Business Responsibility and HIV. Furthermore, two other meetings were held designed to strengthen countries' capabilities in the use of (1) a virtual-communications tool and (2) tools to develop HIV policies in private businesses. USAID partners and counterpart organizations participated in project implementation.

During CONCASIDA 2010, PASCA re-launched its webpage: www.pasca.org. This website was re-structured to streamline document searches. During this reporting period, 13 informative pieces on PASCA were developed, as well as a CD containing the HIV/AIDS policy and legal framework for Central American countries. These publications are available on the webpage.

In October 2009, representatives from Central American business sector organizations met for first time in Guatemala, where a regional forum was held to discuss HIV labor policies for the workplace. The forum resulted from an alliance between PASCA and various organizations, including the Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations of Guatemala (CACIF), the Industrial Chamber of Guatemala, and the Fernando Iturbide Foundation. The Central American media amply covered the opinions expressed in the forum. To follow-up, a satellite meeting for the Central American business sector was held within the framework of CONCASIDA 2010. PASCA was able to secure agreements and commitments from the private sector at the regional level, thereby ensuring it collectively becomes a stakeholder in promoting HIV policies in the workplace.