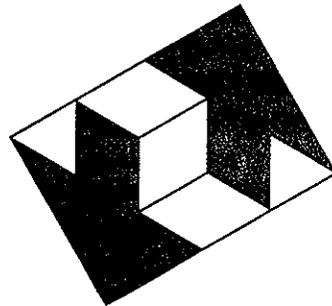


Grassroots Community Building Project  
OAA/POA

Progress Report April 1 – June 30, 2001

**PARTNERS**  
OF THE AMERICAS



Award No: LAG-A-00-00014-00

July 31, 2001

**GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY BUILDING PROJECT**  
**OAA/POA**  
**April 1 - June 30, 2001**

**Summary of the Quarter**

From April until mid-June the focus was on providing hands-on technical assistance to each of the nine communities to assist the promoters, who were trained in March, in the completion of their community needs assessments, step one in project planning. Partners of the Americas financial and administrative staff trained the OAA Washington-based project assistant and bookkeeper in the use of accounting software and grant/budget management. A financial reporting system was tested and operating successfully by the end of the quarter. In mid-June, however, the termination of the contracts with key field personnel - the training coordinator and on-site advisor, the Education Communications Support and Afro Leadership Development advisors - affected the completion of training of village councils and community leaders (promoters) in budgeting and proposal writing. The OAA Project Director traveled to Honduras to evaluate the project and review the work plan for the remaining six months of the cooperative agreement. (Attachment)

**I. Objectives of the Quarter**

Program Activities

- (1) To complete the community planning process
- (2) To begin project planning and proposal writing in each community
- (3) To assist with preparation of submissions to the Small Project Fund

Administrative Activities

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

**II Accomplishments**

- Each community is working at its own pace with only one completing the needs assessment by the May deadline. Community conflicts and the promoter's own personal problems in Livingston, Guatemala delayed completion of their needs assessment. More intensive hands on training is necessary for them to continue with the process before advancing to the proposal-writing phase.
- Advisors visiting the various communities and meeting with the promoters noted changes in their self-confidence and greater commitment to the project. Nevertheless in some villages, promoters stated that they were still confused about the community development process (read how to organize the people in

their neighborhoods (barrios) more effectively) and the role of the village council in that process. Because many of the participants in the training (promoters) are young and lack experience, and community participation in focus groups and town meetings is often minimal, the pace of the project is slower than anticipated in four of the targeted communities. The highest levels of participation were in Tornabe and Triunfo de la Cruz.

- An important accomplishment of this project is that results of the assessments<sup>1</sup> are disseminated in town meetings and focus groups in each of the targeted communities. Even though promoters in Travesia and El Triunfo reported that their communities did not agree with the findings, generally when individuals were asked about the process, they expressed satisfaction with the sharing of information. (Editor's note: it is common for surveys to be conducted, but less so for there to be feedback.)
- The training of a financial team in the OAA Washington office was completed and a new accounting system was put in place. This allows for more efficient reporting and timely payment to vendors. An audit of the office is planned for September 2001. (Attachment II)

### III. Challenges

Several factors<sup>2</sup> have contributed to the postponement of other planned quarterly activities, such as (1) training of the village councils in budgeting and (2) training the promoters in proposal writing. These steps are ultimately designed to solicit requests for proposals from the community.

The factor that has had the most impact on the project, however, is the termination of the contracts of key personnel in Honduras, especially of the OAA field training coordinator. Over the past month, a series of misunderstandings, differences of opinion and miscommunications have developed between the various NGOs contracted as technical advisors, OAA field and Washington staff, the village councils and the promoters. In order to clarify the situation and (re)institute a more formal communications system and organizational framework, Michael Franklin, the project director, traveled to Honduras. Upon his return, a meeting held in the POA office determined that the OAA Washington Office, rather than the Honduras field office, should assume the administrative and financial tasks. Franklin again returned to Honduras to hire a new training coordinator, preferably one who has been involved in the prior training. Franklin planned to meet with all the parties to clarify the process and to get their input on the remaining six months activities.

Mr. Franklin also hired an independent consultant to evaluate the project and to make recommendations to POA and OAA on how best to complete the project and to

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<sup>1</sup> Needs assessments are conducted house to house to involve as many people as possible in collecting information.

<sup>2</sup> Factors, such as, inexperience, apathy and lack of participation by residents in the targeted communities, miscommunications between members of the village councils and the promoters.

safeguard the interest at the community level. Though the communities (promoters and village councils) remained independent of the struggles between the NGOs and staff (reported in the March quarterly), they ultimately were affected and project activities were temporarily stopped. There is now confusion about the development process fostered by AA21 (of which OAA is a member) further reinforcing the importance of a more structured communications system and greater clarification of the roles and tasks for each of the players.

We anticipate revisions of the DIP, possibly scaling down some of the deliverables, such as number of training manuals.

#### **IV. Financials**

The financial report was sent under separate cover. Increased spending in all line items reflects the installation of financial software and the new staff at OAA Washington's enhanced skills in reporting. The report does not account for payables yet to be reviewed by the project director.

**Quarterly Executive Report**  
**USAID Project: LAG-A-00-00014-00**  
**April – June 2001**

An important development this quarter has been the replacement of Margarita Sanchez as training coordinator. Ms Sanchez was dismissed because she failed to meet the terms of her contract with OAA.

Her departure provided an opportunity to review the project in general and evaluate how each community was progressing. These two elements have been the main focus of the project director, Michael Franklin, who has been in Honduras for the last 3 weeks and who will be returning in August. In addition, first phase training in Guatemala ended on July 15.

Partners of the Americas (POA) requested a transition plan for the new training coordinator. The plan was accepted.

**Progress in the Communities**

Each community presents its own challenge and is working at its own pace. Community and family disintegration in Guatemala has required more work in building community identity and resolving conflict.

In Honduras the situation is more complicated because fragmentation has been accompanied by much stronger leadership struggles. OAA has commissioned an evaluation of the project work and is waiting on the results to be more precise in the next stages of training and community work. This study will also be accompanied by Ms. Navarro's training report that also will give some feedback on the management of the project to date, and the impact of training in the communities.

OAA is concerned about Bajamar and Travesia. In Bajamar, the patronato will be replaced. In Travesia, no real Patronato exists. These conditions do not favor providing small project funds to either community. One of the requirements to receiving funds is that patronatos must receive training in order to receive funds. It is likely that subsequent training in July and August will include several people from Bajamar who may be in the new patronato. In Travesia, the situation is much less certain.

**Evaluation and Audit**

Cecilia Sanchez completed the evaluation last week. OAA is awaiting the results. The auditing firm has been unable to locate Margarita Sanchez. When she returns to Honduras, they will be contacting her.

**Aminta Navarro**

OAA has not written a contract for Ms. Navarro yet. Once we obtain the results of the evaluation, Ms. Navarro, Ms. Cecilia Sanchez, the trainers and Michael Franklin will meet in Tegucigalpa to assess this project, identify the remaining obstacles faced by each community, and develop a focused

plan. At that point we will write the contract to undertake specific responsibilities as well as general tasks related to coordination.

### **Transition**

For the most part communities have accepted the changes elaborated in the OAA transition plan. Concerns continue with respect to Travesia. The project director and the new consulting team in Honduras will hold meetings separately with the patronatos and together as a group with the patronato board presidents. Given the increasing work in providing assistance and training directly to the patronatos of this project, Michael Franklin will be spending significantly more time in Honduras over the remainder of the contract period.

### **Project Director**

Michael Franklin will be in Honduras for one month. He will be making frequent visits and participating actively in training as he has done over the last three weeks.

### **Payment of Promoters**

To date, only Tornabe has presented information to support work, and the funds have been transferred. Guatemala presented theirs July 15. All communities are clear on the method and requirements for payment. Promoters in Travesia express serious and private concern that their patronato president will comply. We do not want to usurp his authority. However, if this information is not given within 10 days, OAA will speak directly to the promoters in Travesia to arrange payment directly with them.

### **Manuals**

The next monthly report will provide data on manuals requested by POA. Progress here is fine.

### **OFRANEH**

Conversations with OFRANEH have been extremely cordial but very pointed. They have made it clear that they are very unhappy with the role of Margarita Sanchez and Roy Guevara thus far. The president of OFRANEH, Gregoria Flores, informed Michael Franklin that she put in writing her dissatisfaction with Margarita Sanchez and Roy Guevara in a letter to USAID. She also clearly stated to the evaluator, Cecilia Sanchez, that the project was useful and that it could still be meaningful for the communities if it were implemented as designed.

OFRANEH is primarily concerned about the role of the promoters with respect to the patronatos because the promoters were reporting directly to Margarita Sanchez and Roy Guevara; the effectiveness of the supervisory function of the patronatos was reduced as a result. OFRANEH's concerns here are justified; however, the political influence of OFRANEH rests in the leadership of the patronatos. If OFRANEH's leadership cannot leverage support from the patronatos they will be replaced. At the same time it must be remembered that only one patronato has requested that OFRANEH work with them in this project (Triunfo de la Cruz). This information may be revised in the independent evaluation.

OFRANEH is important in Honduras and its views need to be taken into account. It is OAA's recommendation that either AID, or POA respond to their letter and state that their concerns have been communicated to OAA, that OAA has replaced Margarita Sanchez as a training coordinator, and that this project is moving well, now being implemented as designed.

Finally, OFRANEH is not opposed to the OAA in any way, and because of our existing relationship this matter will be resolved.

### **Human Rights Meeting in Belize**

The Organization of American States is holding a Seminar on the Inter American System for the Protection of Human Rights in Belize city, Belize, on July 19 to 20, 2001. The project director, Michael Franklin, is leading 10 Honduran individuals to this meeting. OAA anticipates this to be a good learning experience in Human Rights and will give them an opportunity to meet officials and do some networking.

### **Training in Guatemala**

Training in Guatemala was held the weekend of July 14 and it went exceptionally well. Attendance was high, and male and youth participation was higher than normal. We discussed census execution and results as well as the AAXXI strategy for identity and community development. Participants decided on their own to spend more time discussing conflict resolution issues.

Due to the recent success with the communities of this area, OAA will send an AAXXI volunteer specialist on community development for a month. The community will incur all volunteer expenses excluding salary.



**ORGANIZATION OF AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS**  
ORGANIZACION PRO-AVANACE DE LOS PUEBLOS DE ASCENDENCIA AFRICANA

July 17, 2001

Mr. Pablo Paz y Mino  
Chief Financial Officer  
Partners of the Americas  
1424 K Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005

**Re: Reorganization of Financial System**

Dear Pablo:

The Organization of Africans in the Americas (OAA) has spent the past five months, with the help of Partners of the Americas, reorganizing its financial reporting system. This involved the installation of a computer software program to handle financial data on multiple projects, and the implementation of a new filing system to maximize our efficiency. In addition, we instituted administrative policies and procedures to work in conjunction with these systems. We are happy to report that our new system is now in place and proving very efficient.

#### ***FINANCIAL SYSTEM***

The OAA installed the software program Quickbooks to accommodate its present financial record keeping needs. We cite the following accomplishments due to its inception.

- An accurate Chart of Accounts tailored to our specific needs.
- Entered all financial data for the calendar years 2000 and 2001.
- Balanced accounts for 2001 and in the process of balancing 2000.
- Timely submission of accurate AID expenditures to Partners of the Americas.
- Ability to produce immediate reports upon request.
- Computerized check writing and laser check printing.
- Efficiency of an automated system has decreased the amount of man-hours in work production.

Through the generosity of the Partners of the Americas, the OAA staff was trained in the proper use of this software, basic accounting principals, and US AID reporting requirements.

#### ***FILING SYSTEM***

The threat of a systems failure prompted the OAA to turn its attention to a manual system where data could be easily accessed, and independent of the automated system. We proceeded to re-organize our filing system of financial and non-financial records. Our achievements are as follows.

- Vendor files containing invoices and payment information.
- Bank Statement files containing statements, cancelled checks, all bank-related documents, and monthly financial reports.
- AID monthly and quarterly report files with supporting documentation.
- Individual country files having reports, payment information, and correspondence.
- Employee files with all relevant information including contracts if applicable.
- Payroll file showing up-to-date information on payroll activity.
- Tax files having returns, forms, and correspondence.

Our system contains a host of other files that will prove to be extremely helpful in matters of research. Color-coded files help us to quickly identify, retrieve and replace documents.

### ***POLICIES & PROCEDURES***

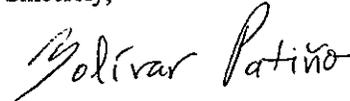
The OAA recognizes that no system works without proper policies and procedures to ensure its continued success. A number of procedures have been established, and we are in the process of developing a procedural manual that includes the following areas:

- International Funds Transfers
- Deadline Management
- Program and Staff Advances
- Program and Staff Reimbursement

The OAA has made great strides in the past few months in upgrading our financial system. In September 2001, an audit of our books for the years 1999 and 2000 will begin with the firm, Gelman, Rosenberg & Freedman, Certified Public Accountants. Our short-term goal is simply to complete the preparation process for this event. Long-term, we will continue to streamline and fine-tune every aspect of our organization as the need arises to compliment the work we do.

We appreciate the assistance and support of you, Roz, and Gladys in strengthening the OAA's financial system.

Sincerely,



Bolivar Patino  
Project Assistant

Cc: Barbara Bloch  
Roz Elahi  
Gladys Camacho