



Brussels, 3.5.2005

INTERIM REPORT – URB-AL JOINT PROJECT R5-B5-03: “Centro Regional Potenciador para Mujeres Emprendedoras y Trabajadoras.”

SUMMARY

First year of operation.

In all, the planned activities are proceeding according to plan, although we have encountered minor delays, which are not affecting the overall execution of the project. The Regional Centre was installed in September 2004, the first training of trainers was undertaken successfully in January 2005 and they in turn have to date educated about 150 women in establishing their own business. A slight delay has occurred in Ecuador due to changes in the political area, and in El Salvador due to delays in transfers beyond our control, but this will be recuperated in May, 2005, so that the total of women educated is expected to reach some 170 during the first period of training, against a planned 120 women entrepreneurs educated.

The project can so far be deemed to be success, in spite of some difficulties along the road in the execution of the project, since we had to change the external partner in September 2004.

Reports from our meetings in Costa Rica from 14-17.06.2004 and in El Salvador from 8-12.11.2004 have been delivered to the Commission services in CD-Rom format.

Strategic plans for the development of the Regional Centre are developed and will be further developed and executed during the second stage of the project to ensure the sustainability of the Regional Centre.

The pilot centre in Acosta, Costa Rica, has had a remarkable development, and it is now planned to start a production of goats cheese in the second year of operation, a project managed exclusively by the women involved in this project. A feasibility study to this effect is presently being executed.

Development of appropriate teaching material has been undertaken, and in the case of training of trainers, this has already been used in practice during the training in January 2005.

The only areas, where we have had slight delays in relation to the initial timeplan for the project are in the education of employment consultants and in the development of an interactive homepage for the project. Both of these are presently given full attention, and will be implemented during the first part of the second year of the project.

As to the visibility of the project this has been ensured at all levels. The start of the project was mentioned in the local newspapers and television, the Minister for Inamu participated in the opening seminar, leaflets



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describing the project have been made, letterhead developed specifically for the project. At the inauguration of the Regional Centre in Escazú some 100 persons participated. At the opening of the Pilot Centre in Acosta, the vice-minister of Public Works participated together with about 70 persons. Several of our partners have ensured relevant mention of the project in their local news. The local representation of the European Commission has been present in all activities.

The utilization of funds is also following the budget, and stands at 93% of the Commission funding as per the 1.5.2005. Separate comments will be made to the budget.

All contractual obligations have been following the procedures of the European Commission for External contracts, and at least three offers have been obtained for equipment and services, and detailed descriptions have been made for the services contracted. Proper advertisements for positions have been made. In Costa Rica, being the place of the major part of the action, we established a National Committee with the participation of the local partners to ensure the complete transparency in all actions. This Committee meets regularly and follows the project closely. The project manager assists in the meetings whenever possible.

A detailed workplan for the first year with objectives and results obtained is enclosed as Annex 1.

Second year of operation

A detailed plan has been made for the activities in the second year. This is enclosed with this report as annex 2.

The project will continue to develop the activities as planned, and we expect that we shall be able to present a successful project at the end of the contract.

Principal areas of work during the second year will be:

- Further development of strategy for the Regional Centre in Escazú, Costa Rica
- Development of a cheese production by the Association in Acosta, Costa Rica
- Development of a strategy for the tourist development of Acosta, Costa Rica
- Execution of a meeting between women entrepreneurs
- Development and analysis of local policies in relation to women entrepreneurs and equal opportunities
- Training of 11 women as job consultants in Spain and Denmark
- Training of 10 women as trainers for women who wish to establish their own business
- Training of at least 150 women entrepreneurs in El Salvador, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Perú.
- Development and start of interactive web-page for the project.
- Follow up meeting in Ecuador in June 2005
- Final meeting in Costa Rica in April 2006.



Specific report on activities.

Objectives.

We are well on our way to reach the established objectives of the project:

1. The Regional Centre has been established in Escazú, Costa Rica and equipped with 12 computers with Internet access for the development of individual and collective capacities of women in the areas of generating income and obtain employment.
 - 146 women have received education from the 11 women we instructed in January 2005 in the centre
 - it is too early to say how many women have started their own business or have obtained work, but reports shall be forthcoming to this effect. The courses finished for the most part at the middle of April 2005.
 - Course material has been developed and shall be further developed and refined during the second training session, foreseen in November 2005, after which the material will be printed and made public.
 - Strategies for the sustainability of the Regional Centre have been developed and will be refined and executed during the second year of the project.
2. The first meeting of interchange of experiences was undertaken in June, 2005. Due to the change of the external member, this activity has been somewhat modified, but basically we are maintaining the emphasis on public policies in relation to gender equality and human rights. We have strengthened this item through the suggested interchange of women entrepreneurs, which will be undertaken in the second year of the project.
3. The design, development and systematization of a model for a centre in Acosta has been modified somewhat to reflect the actual situation and to make concrete actions which will be translated into creation of jobs and income for the women in Acosta to improve their conditions. It has thus been decided to start a project for the production of goat cheese. Furthermore, a part of the Municipality of Acosta has been remodeled to accommodate office and meeting facilities for the project.
4. The installation of the Network for the Centre has unfortunately been somewhat delayed due to late deliveries from our supplier of equipment. But all partners are in contact through e-mails, although this is not what we had foreseen. All efforts are now put into creating an interactive web-page, which will be presented at our meeting in Ecuador in June, 2005. We expect that this will be fully operational by September, 2005.





FIRST YEAR:

INITIAL MEETING AND FOLLOW UP MEETINGS:

The initial meeting of the partners was held in San José, Costa Rica from the 14 to the 17th of June, 2004. The 18th of June a seminar was held regarding good practices in favor of equality with the participation and intervention of all the project members. The opening session was presided by Ing. Esmeralda Britton, Minister for National Institute for Women. The head of the Commission Delegation, Mr. Tomas Abadía, also participated.

The second meeting of the project members was held in Santa Tecla, El Salvador from the 8th till the 11th of November, 2004. In the meantime, we had a change of external partner, and in this meeting the new external member, Escuela Mayor para Gestión Municipal, Lima, Perú, participated for the first time. With the change in the external partner, the project has been improved, since we now also cover Perú, in this way amplifying the results of the project. The Escuela Mayor has been included in all the training plans, investments in computers and local training.

Separate reports from these meetings have been sent to the Commission services in the form of CD-Rom with all the documentation included, inclusive of reports, work plans, budgets and lists of participants. Pictures taken during the meetings are also included in the CD-Rom.

REGIONAL CENTRE

A contract for the rental of suitable premises was entered into, and as per the 1st of September, 2004, the project has installed the Regional Centre in Escazú, Costa Rica. The centre is located in a new building, less than 100 metres from the Municipality, where the Municipality of Escazú has rented the rest of the building. The Municipal Office for Women is installed here, thus ensuring the integration of the Centre into the Municipal services. The rental corresponds to the budget.

The Regional Centre is run on a daily basis by a Manager, provided by the Municipality of Escazú, who are also ensuring the security and maintenance of the computers. The centre comprises one large training room with computers, a smaller training room, two offices and a kitchen as well as reception. The reception and administration is shared with the Office for Women in Escazú.

The Center was inaugurated simultaneously with the termination of the first course for training of trainers on the 21st of January, 2005. Some 100 persons attended, including a representative from the Commission Delegation, the Vice-Mayor of San José and a number of other dignitaries. Copies of newspaper articles are enclosed as annex 3.





Furniture and 12 computers were purchased during the months of October-December for the Centre to be operational by the 1st of January, 2005. Further computers will be installed during 2005 to reach 15 in total. Annex 8 lists the inventory of assets.

Organization.

A strategy is being developed, and a network has been established with local participants from relevant Ministries and Municipalities. Especially should be mentioned an agreement with the Municipality of San José for the collaboration in the Centre.

Computers.

The network portal is presently being designed. Investigations as to the most suitable platforms for distance learning have been undertaken, and this will be implemented in line with the development of the network portal. Further discussions on the subject will be undertaken in Ecuador in June 2005.

All partners have been equipped with computers through the acquisition of computers for the trainers during the months of February to April, 2005. Lists of equipment are included as annexes 4 through 8.

Center

A very complete documentation for Costa Rica has been elaborated. This includes all relevant information for the women entrepreneurs as to support from Ministries and public authorities, including possible financing sources etc. Documentation is available, if required. To give an impression of the scope, the list of contents is enclosed as annex 9.

TRAINING OF TRAINERS

Training material.

Training material has been developed jointly between Mancomunidad TajoSalor and VUC, Odense, Denmark. The material served as basis for the first training in Costa Rica from January 10 to 21, 2005, when 12 women were trained by one trainer from Spain and one from Denmark. This material will be refined and used again for the training in November 2005, after which it will be finally adjusted and printed in the final form. Due to its bulky nature, this is not enclosed, but shall be made available, once printed in its final form.

A newspaper article about the project, which appeared in Cáceres, Spain, on the 27.6.2004, is enclosed as annex 11.



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Selection of course participants.

Profiles were worked out and agreed between the project members, and 12 participants were selected, including an extra member from Santa Tecla, El Salvador. During our meeting in Santa Tecla in November 2004, an ONG, Las Dignas, participated in that meeting at the request of our partner, and Las Dignas requested permission to participate in the training in January and sent a person entirely at their costs to our training seminar. One of the project consultants, Mrs. Marianela Vargas, also participated in the course and in fact acted as intermediary, rapporteur and ensured the smooth execution of the course.

Execution of the first course.

The course was given in the centre to the following participants:

- 2 women from Acosta, Costa Rica
- 2 women from Escazú, Costa Rica
- 1 female project consultant (gender) from Costa Rica
- 2 women from Santa Tecla, El Salvador
- 1 woman from Las Dignas, Santa Tecla, El Salvador
- 2 women from Cuenca, Ecuador
- 2 women from Escuela Mayor, Lima, Perú

In total 12 women trained to become trainers, against 8 as originally planned. Agreements were made with 11 of the women to undertake training of at least 15 women entrepreneurs each. The project consultant from Costa Rica participated as rapporteur and is thus not required to train further women. Lists of participants are enclosed as annex 10.

The course was given by Mrs. Ana Prieto of Mancomunidad TajoSalor, Spain and Mrs. Hanne Raunsmed, VUC, Odense, Denmark. Simultaneous interpretation was undertaken from English to Spanish, and it was a success.

Instruments with entrance and exit profiles were made and are available.

Recycling centre, Escazú, Costa Rica.

Since this idea was originally introduced to accommodate a possible Mexican participant in the project, and since no specific interest has been expressed so far by the other project members, this activity has not been undertaken. We shall, however, be reviewing this in Ecuador in June, 2005.



TRAINING OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Criteria for the participation in the courses for training of women entrepreneurs have been worked out and adjusted to the reality of the situation in the country of each project member.

One of the preoccupations that was expressed in the project, i.e. the level of education and ability to read and write, has proven not to be an obstacle in the realization of the training.

The first batch of training courses were begun in March 2005, and for the major part they were finished by mid-April, 2005. Cuenca, Ecuador, have had problems in as much as they changed the City Government in January 2005, and in spite of a visit by the project manager in February, 2005 to ensure the continuation, delays were incurred. These are now being recuperated, and it is expected that the training in Cuenca will be finished by the end of May, 2005.

In Santa Tecla, the start of the courses has also encountered a minor delay, mainly due to very large transfer times for the money at the receiving end. The first course was only started on the 11th of April, 2005.

The following trainings have taken place:

Costa Rica:	Acosta	30 women	2 courses
	Escazú	32 women	2 courses
	Ecuador		
	El Salvador	15 women	1 course
	Perú	40 women	2 courses
	<u>Totally</u>	<u>117 women</u>	<u>7 courses</u>

Once the courses in Cuenca and Santa Tecla are finished, we may count on having educated a total of some 160 women in 10 courses. In addition, Las Dignas in El Salvador shall be undertaking a number of training courses, which they will report on when finished. It is yet too early to give indications of new enterprises established.

Some of the results of the actions should be mentioned:

All Latin American partners are now equipped with at least one computer, ref. annexes 4 through 8.

The Escuela Mayor, Lima, Perú, have now developed a new department, Desarrollo Económico Local y Empresarial, taking especially care of the Entrepreneurial women as well as extended their coverage to a number of municipalities. They have also formed alliances with Fondo Nacional de Compensación Y Desarrollo Social for the financing of micro projects as well as established contact to companies. Alliances have been established to Municipalities of Comas, Los Olivos, Puente Piedra, San Borja, Villa El Salvador y Villa María del Triunfo; as well as with the Universidad Católica Sedes Sapientia.



Santa Tecla, El Salvador has used part of the funding for the courses to equip a teaching room in the Municipality for the training. They have established important links with two NGO's, Las Dignas and PROCOMES, both giving micro-credits to women entrepreneurs. An important contact has also been established to Las Melidas. Santa Tecla have established 65 profiles of women entrepreneurs, of which 40% fulfill the criteria for selection.

As an example you will find a copy of the report from the course held in Perú, annex 12.

Further reports on these activities will be forthcoming, once the courses have been finished.

TRAINING OF EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANTS

Training material is presently being developed by Spain and Denmark. It is the intention that the training course shall take place in Europe in the second and third week of September, 2005.

Criteria for the selection of participants have been made and are under evaluation. This will be discussed further in Ecuador in June, 2005.

11 women will participate in the course, i.e. 5 from Costa Rica, 2 from El Salvador, 2 from Ecuador and 2 from Perú.

This activity was foreseen for implementation in the first year, but due to the heavy concentration of activities in the first months of this calendar year, we deemed it appropriate to postpone the course. We also deemed it in the best interest of the project to have undertaken the first training of entrepreneurs, before embarking on training of job consultants. The reasoning behind this being that we expect to find applicants for the job consultants among the trainers, and the development is thus following a more natural evolution.

PILOT PROJECT, ACOSTA

A considerable effort has been made in this part of the project to ensure the success of the activity. From the start, the local women wished to have their proper locality in Acosta to sell their products, but after many meetings and discussions, and having realized an initial study of the region, its potential and possibilities, the idea of a center was abandoned in lieu of creating an economic activity that can eventually benefit a larger number of women.

In the process, the two gender consultants together with the two consultants employed for the project in Acosta, have undertaken a large amount of education, studies and trips locally to study the total of the possibilities. The Municipality of Acosta has been totally involved in all the decisions and activities, and they are giving the women exemplary support.

Reports from the total process are available, and we shall be pleased to provide copies, should this be required. We intend to include this very important part of the project in our final documentation, since it can serve as a guide for other Municipalities of how to develop activities.

Once a study of the region was finished, a study worked out by the principal consultant in Acosta, we had a number of possibilities, which we discussed with the women entrepreneurs. An initial overview demonstrated 11 possible project, which through further analysis and discussion was reduced to three:

- micropropagation of plants
- tourist project
- production of goats milk and cheese

After careful analysis and discussion, it was agreed to go ahead with further analysis of the last mentioned project, goats milk and cheese. A market study has been contracted and we expect the results at the end of July, 2005.

In the discussions, the form of organization was also discussed, and presentations were made by experts of the various forms of organization, among others cooperatives and associations, limited companies etc. After consultation and consideration, the group of women decided to establish an association, which is now registered under the name of ASODEMA. A board of directors has been elected, and the association is taking form. In the daily contact with the association, we have contact to the management of ASODEMA, and regular meetings and training are held with all the associates.

It was also agreed to undertake a study of the touristic possibilities in the region of Acosta. This will be contracted during the second year of operation.

Long discussions were undertaken in relation to the rental of a centre in Acosta, and after due consideration, it was finally decided to remodel part of the Municipality to accommodate the project. Work was begun in December 2004 and the remodeled premises were ready in January, 2005 The inauguration took place with the participation of local authorities and the Vice-minister for Labour, Mr. Carlos Monge on the 25th of February, 2005.

MEETINGS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND LOCAL POLITICS.

Consultative seminar.

A consultative seminar on the subject of interchange of experiences and good practices in the field of gender equality and creation of employment and income for women at local level was held on the 18th of



June, 2004 in connection with the initial meeting of the project. All partners contributed with interventions with descriptions of the situation in their respective Municipalities or areas.

Experts

Two experts in gender issues have been contracted under the project to support the transversality of gender equality in all actions of the project and to support in the execution of the project in general. A further two experts, one of which is specialized in agricultural economy, were contracted to support the activities in Acosta, given that the Municipality does not have the relevant capacity, but they have been giving us their entire support in the activities.

With the exit of Inamu from the project, we have modified their part somewhat, but we have ensured that the activities of investigating the women's role in local policies for generating income is ensured through the continued assistance of the two experts. They also ensure that the gender issue is included in all activities of the project. A detailed description of their work in this area is included in the work plan, ref. annexes 1 and 2.

Moreover, the experts are supporting the activities in Acosta, where they are strengthening the identity of the women through a number of courses during the project. This has proven to be an invaluable asset in the development of the project there, since the women have thus overcome fears of appropriating themselves of the project, and to a large extent the developments there have taken place because of this support.

They are also supporting the activities in the Centre in Escazú, in as much as they are giving valuable assistance in the development of the strategies, follow up on these as well as in the design and implementation of the web-page.

A meeting of women entrepreneurs from the partner countries is planned to take place in Costa Rica in Escazú and Acosta to interchange experiences. This will be organized by the experts.

INTERNAL EVALUATION

Work plans have been made from the start of the project, and these are closely followed to ensure that we are on track, refer annex 1.

A model for an internal evaluation will be presented to the partners in Ecuador in June, 2005.

Accounts have been made on a monthly basis, and consolidated accounts are kept so that we at all times have been and are able to follow the developments closely.



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