



USAID | DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

AT RISK YOUTH INITIATIVE
Annual Report
FY 2018 – October 1 to September 30, 2018

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Cooperative Agreement Number: AID-517-A-12-00002
Activity Start Date and End Date: July 05, 2012 to July 04, 2019
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I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW/SUMMARY

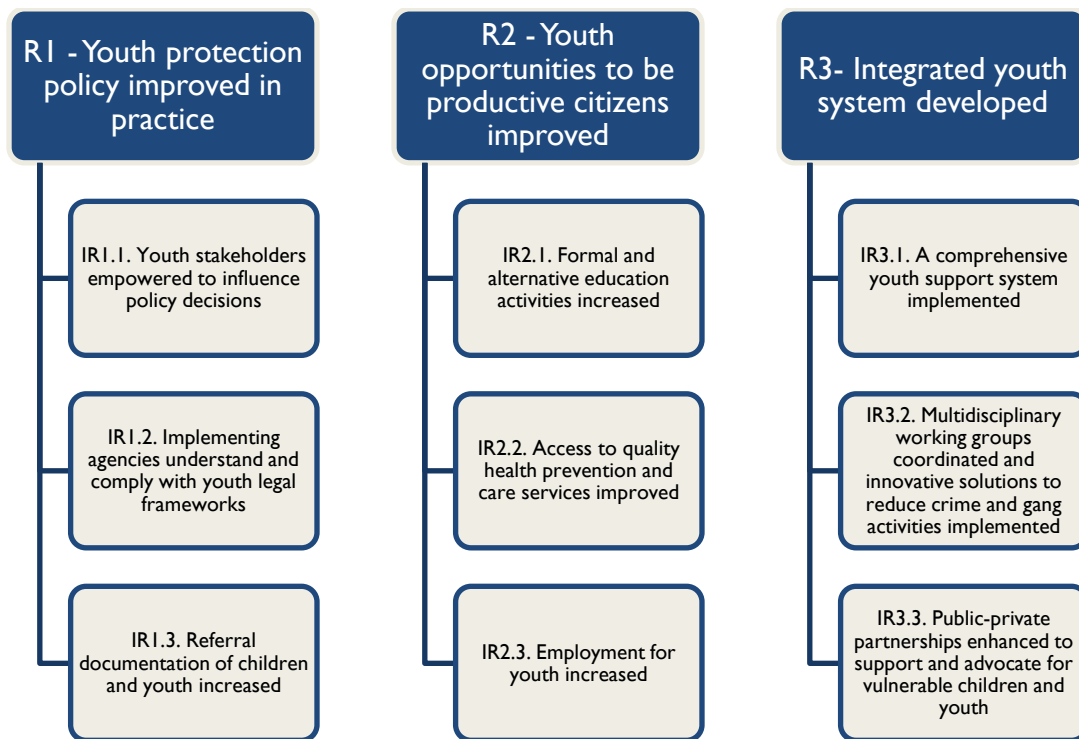
Activity Name:	AT RISK YOUTH INITIATIVE
Activity Start Date and End Date:	July 05, 2012 to July 04, 2019
Name of Prime Implementing Partner:	ENTRENA S.R.L.
Cooperative Agreement Number:	AID-517-A-12-00002
Name of Subcontractors/Sub-awardees:	Fundación Pediátrica por un Mañana, Inc. (FPUM) Dream Project Children International Fundación Sur Futuro, Inc. Centro de Innovación y Capacitación Profesional (CAPEX) Acción Comunitaria por el Progreso, Inc. (ACOPRO) Universidad Católica Nordestana (UCNE) Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral (IDDI)
Major Counterpart Organizations:	N/A
Geographic Coverage (cities and or countries):	Neighborhoods in the Distrito Nacional; Sabana Perdida, Santo Domingo Norte; Eastern Santo Domingo; Boca Chica; Haina, San Cristobal; Padre Las Casas, Azua; Santiago; North coast including Sosua, Cabarete and Las Terrenas; San Francisco de Macorís; Dajabón; and Pedernales.
Reporting Period:	October 1 to September 30, 2018

1.1 Program Description/Introduction

The goal of the USAID/DR At-Risk Youth Initiative (DRARYI) is to create a sustainable, multidisciplinary safety net for at-risk youth (ARY) implemented to reduce youth involvement in criminal activities. The technical approach develops a sustainable framework as a quality product that can positively continue to transform the lives of ARY in the Dominican Republic, standing by itself financially and technically, continuing its implementation after USAID support is phased out. Multi-disciplinary means that services are integrated and that one isolated intervention rarely will be effective by itself. Crime is prevented because conditions of risk are significantly ameliorated when youth have viable and accessible alternatives to improve their educational, employability, health, and legal status.

The ARY initiative supports the best evidence-based practices, and produces a state-of-the-art information system that tracks participants/services. It also acts as a clearinghouse for all stakeholders, and develops networks to foster empowerment and to discuss and review policy. The target population is at-risk youth ages 11- 24. The geographic focus is the Duarte corridor between Santo Domingo and Puerto Plata, Azua, Las Terrenas in Samaná, and locations on the Haitian border.

Major results are presented in the chart below:



2. ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

2.1 Progress Narrative

This section is a narrative of achievements by indicator results and targets for FY 2018. The first part of the section describes standard indicators defined by USAID/CBSI, while the second part describes custom indicators tailored to the need of the activity proposed by ENTRENA and approved by USAID.

Standard Indicators

ES I-3 CBSI 3.1-3 Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance – Goal 2018: 1,200 participants, ages 11-14

The activities that feed this indicator are the Espacios para Crecer (EpC) and Estrellas Jóvenes school retention and reinsertion programs for vulnerable ARY. Students were enrolled during Q1 and Q2, and concluded these programs during Q3. No enrollments were registered during Q4, since these programs operate together with the school calendar and this period marks the conclusion of the school year. Of the total 1,366 enrolled by the end of Q2, we verified that 1,214 completed the program with 101.2% of the goal reached for FY18, out of these 43.2% were female. A total of 152 participants deserted or did not complete the required 70% attendance to the program. This is equivalent to a desertion rate of 11.1%, which is lower than the previous year (12.8%). Although EpCs are strategically placed, there are issues of distance and safety making it difficult for vulnerable children to attend on a regular basis; thus deserting the educational program.

ES I-4 Number of learners in secondary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance – Goal 2018: 188 participants, ages 15-24

The school retention program Quantum Accelerated Learning for Students (QLS) targets this population. It was implemented through eight educational centers of the Dominican Ministry of Education (MINERD) and PREPARA network, by four partner organizations: IDDI, Children International, Dream Project and Sur Futuro. PREPARA GODR education program designed to accommodate youth who have previously dropped out of school, and now wish to complete their high school degree.

By the end of Q4, a total of 188 youth ages 15-24 completed a school retention program, accounting for 100% of the fiscal year (FY) 2018 goal. According to the results of international standardized tests TERCE 2013 and PISA 2015, in the Dominican Republic, overage is negatively related to school performance. Therefore initiatives like the QLS program aimed at boosting school retention, contribute to improve learning achievements and to increase the possibility of school completion of this age group, leading to better employment opportunities.

EG.6-1 Number of individuals with new or better employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs – Goal for 2018: 576 participants, ages 18-24

During Q4, a total of 136 beneficiaries ages 18 to 24 obtained a new or better employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs. By the end of FY18, the accumulated number was 615, equivalent to 106.8% of the target for this year. Out of these, 491 obtained a new job, 83 migrated to a better job and 41 began or improved their entrepreneurial activities. Out of the total, 54% indicated they entered the job market with a full-time formal employment, which includes not only a regular salary but also fringe benefits and social protection, and 13% reported having higher salaries or working conditions. Most of new job insertion during FY18 was concentrated in four sectors: 45% in industry, primarily in free trade zones, 30% in customer service, 15% in hospitality and 6% in commerce.

EG.6-3 Number of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs – Goal for 2018: 2,404 participants, ages 15-24

During FY18 2,261 beneficiaries ages 15-24 completed USG- assisted workforce development programs which represents 94.1% of the goal. A total of 490 youth completed technical vocational training courses (TVC) during Q4. Two of the partner organizations experienced difficulties in recruiting participants because youth interested in TVC in their areas were former beneficiaries of the initiative, hence participants recruitment was extended to new neighborhoods within the same municipalities intervened. Training provided during this period included the following areas: quality control supervision, coding, accounting, entrepreneurship, medical devices manufacturing, jewelry manufacturing, bar & restaurant services, bank services, front desk attendants, specialized English for hotels, and customer service. These programs align with employers' demand and relate to the three aforementioned sectors where employment is currently being generated.

ES 4-1 Number of vulnerable persons benefitting from USG-supported social services - Goal for 2018: 4,180 participants, ages 11-24

This indicator presents the total amount of school reinsertion and retention programs (EpC, Estrellas Jóvenes and QLS), as well as vocational training beneficiaries. During FY18, the target was not met due to a non-standard definition for the indicator. During Q1 and Q2, a unique definition for vulnerable populations was used, which comprised youth ages 11 to 24. During Q3, USAID-DR standardized the definition for “vulnerable populations” across activities, changing the indicator to cover populations ages 11 to 17. Thus, only a total of 1,818 youth completed at least one of these programs, representing 43.5% of the goal. Out of these, 48.1% are female.

Custom Indicators

Number of identified undocumented children and youth referred to an external documentation program – Goal 2018: 117 participants, ages 11-24

A total of 17 youth were identified and referred for documentation during Q4, all of them of Dominican descent. Through September 2018, the accumulated number of youth referred was 106, representing 90.6% of the FY18 goal. Of this total, 98 were classified as Dominican descent, 7 as Haitian descent and 1 as unknown descent. The activity is currently working with implementers to recruit more undocumented participants to ensure that services and referrals are provided.

Number of Vulnerable Youth and /or Children (VYC) reinserted into formal schooling – Goal 2018: 388 participants, ages 11-24

Reinsertion typically occurs between August and October, which are the first three months of the Dominican school year. Partner organizations held meetings with community institutions (churches, schools, and neighborhood associations) and mapped the intervention area to identify youth requiring school reinsertion. Later, they perform visits to these potential beneficiaries, motivate them and provide the necessary support for the reinsertion process to take place. After presenting no cases of reinsertion during Q3, the number of reported cases during Q4 increased to 119. This resulted in an accumulated number of 428 cases of youth reinserted into formal schooling, accounting for 110.3% of the FY18 goal.

Number of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) created through USG assistance – Goal 2018: 15

During Q4 two new public-private partnerships were signed, for a total of five alliances created through USG assistance, which represent 40.0% of the goal for FY18. Partnerships were signed with: Kentucky Food Group, EDESUR, Fundación OMG, Serigrafía Moderna and Laboratorio Cruz Ayala. Through these partnerships, trainings programs and internships were delivered, and new jobs offered to activity participants.

2.2 Implementation Status

This section includes a narrative of achievements and status of planned activities for FY18, according to the Annual Work Plan. Additionally, activities still operating or postponed to FY19 are mentioned.

R I. Youth protection policy improved in practice

IR 1.1 Youth stakeholders empowered to influence policy decisions

In an effort to advocate for the inclusion of vulnerable youth, during Q1 Alerta Joven approached the Ministry of Youth to form part of their Advisory Board. Since this committee was not formally called to meet during the year, to move forward with the initiative, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was elaborated between USAID, the

Ministry of Youth and Entrena. This document states two main objectives: to strengthen youth participation in the democratic and development process, and to partner in support of the Dominican Youth Law and USAID Agency development objectives. This MOU draft is still under revision by USAID and the Ministry of Youth. In the meantime, the activity has been working alongside the Ministry in several activities. During Q3, the Ministry was part of the Mothers' Day celebration activity held at Fundación Pediátrica por un Mañana, where they announced that 300 beneficiaries of this implementing organization will receive scholarships to enroll in undergraduate and technical programs.

IR 1.2 Implementing agencies understand and comply with youth legal networks

During a process aimed at strengthening youth networks, coordinators and program specialists from sub-awardees ACOPRO, Children International, Sur Futuro and IDDI also benefited with trainings regarding the Dominican youth legal framework. Further details of this process are described under IR3.2.

IR 1.3 Documented children and youth increased

In order to achieve this goal, identified cases of non-documented youth were managed by sub-awardees with their own resources. Only those cases that could not be handled by any of the organizations were referred to DIGEPEP or Christian Aid.

R 2. Youth opportunities to be productive citizens improved

IR 2.1 Formal and alternative education opportunities increased

36 EpC implemented

A total of 36 Espacios para Crecer (EpC) were implemented benefiting children ages 11 to 14. The program was developed in 15 schools and 10 community centers or foundations during the school calendar, covering 12 barrios (marginalized neighborhoods). Six graduations were celebrated during May and June, with 1,214 adolescents having completed the program. As a means to guarantee quality, program strategy included activities with parents, where they attended sessions to assimilate the EpC experience. Also, activities with teachers and facilitators who received training in the QLS methodology and periodic coaching. Additionally, 10 coaching and follow up visits were carried out to the 36 EpC. A total of 259 directors, psychologists, teachers and personnel from public schools, where EpCs are implemented, received training in accelerated learning methodology.

To estimate the results of this program, diagnostic evaluations were applied to the universe of participants at the beginning (October 2017) and conclusion of the program (May 2018). The content of these evaluations was designed based on the three EpC modules, which are structured in line with the curriculum approved by the MINERD, and they provide a snapshot on the participant's levels in literacy and basic language, mathematics, and life skills.

When comparing beneficiaries' pre and post-tests results, a growth in performance was observed. The participants average grew from 33.0/100 points in the pre-test, to 58.6/100 points in the post-test, for a 78% growth. Important changes were registered in the knowledge of the subject areas evaluated. At the moment of the pre-test, in the area of literacy and basic language, 65.3% of EpC participants did not correctly identify grammatical signs, possessed textual competence, or had minimum knowledge of general culture. By the end of the program, this number went down by half (33.5%). In the area of mathematics, 63.1% did not have the skills to perform basic arithmetical operations. This number went down to only 11.1% of participants, representing the area with highest growth. In terms of life skills, 80.6% of participants had not developed reflective thinking, critical and communication skills at the beginning of the program, in comparison to 32.4% of participants by the end of the program.

The EpC program teaches students to effectively communicate, handle their emotions, deal with conflict appropriately, recognize the value of their families and communities and understand the role they play within these settings. All of these learnings contribute to discourage their engagement in violent activities and impact on the reduction of criminality.

Round table to exchange experiences and strengthen school reinsertion program.

With the objective of achieving greater standardization of the school reinsertion program, we carried out a meeting in October where our eight partner organizations exchanged their experiences and best practices. A key factor in facilitating the school reinsertion process is the alliances already established by the organizations with the school districts, educational centers, neighborhood associations, youth organizations, churches, and CENAPEC. Also, the involvement of youth networks in the initiative was strongly supported, such as the case of those from ACOPRO and Sur Futuro, with roles in the identification, motivation, and support of children and young people outside of school.

Agreement with INICIA Foundation to replicate EpC/QL model in 7th and 8th grade.

A technical and financial proposal to expand the EpC/QL program was submitted in July 2018 at the request of the INICIA Education Foundation, which is part of Grupo INICIA. After a first session of Q&As, ENTRENA resubmitted a revised proposal which is currently under revision by INICIA. We are hoping for approval of this proposal during the first quarter of FY19.

IR2.2. Access to quality health prevention and care services improved

Through the work with partner organization Fundación Pediátrica por un Mañana (FPUM), several activities were carried out during FY18 addressed to teenage pregnant youth.

- *Services provided* – A total of 339 pregnant youth completed technical vocational training, of which 15 reported having obtained employment. Also, 118 were reinserted to formal schooling, and 457 received psycho-social counseling or health support.

- *Celebration of Mother's Day* – On May 24, an event to celebrate Dominican Mother's Day was held. During this activity, the role of women, and their contributions, efforts, and dedication to the development of their families and communities was highlighted. This event was attended by USAID staff, the Dominican Youth Minister, young mothers and pregnant women from FPUM, and special guests.
- *Health orientation visits* – During December and March, 430 young mothers and pregnant women received health orientation.

IR 2.3 Employment for youth increased

Youth trained in technical courses through 8 sub-awardees – See Section 2.1 Indicator EG 6-3 – During Q4, 490 youth were trained under the TVC modality, for a total of 2,261, equivalent to 94.1% of the FY18 goal. A total of 115 trainings were completed, through 8 sub-awardees. Of the 2,261 youth reported under indicator EG 6-3, 346 correspond to entrepreneurship programs, equivalent to 15.3% of the FY18 goal. This TVC was taught through 5 sub-awardees: Dream Project, IDDI, FPUM, Children International and Sur Futuro. Other courses with significant numbers of beneficiaries were: programming (13.1%), medical devices manufacturing (8.5%), agroindustry (6.6%), bar & restaurant services (6.4%), jewelry manufacturing (5.0%), and English and customer service (4.1%).

Two partner organizations faced challenges to accomplish the planned TVC goals. IDDI and CAPEX indicated that it was difficult to recruit participants with the defined risk profile in the neighborhoods intervened. Entrena recognizes the resources and effort required to identify and recruit at-risk youth participants, and met with these partner organizations to work out solutions. In the case of IDDI, the organization intensified meetings with grassroots community organizations and leaders to attract participants. CAPEX expanded the areas of local implementation to include other vulnerable zones, such as Tamboril and Navarrete. Additionally, they hired new staff to work in recruiting more participants. Some TVC trainings initiated during August and September will be computed toward the Q1 FY19 goal, since the trainings conclude after Q4.

10 micro business started by Alerta Joven participants mentored – With the aim of promoting sustainability of the actions carried out through the ARY initiative, a mentoring program to microbusiness created by the beneficiaries was implemented. The objective of this mentoring is to increase practical knowledge, managerial and technical skills in young micro- entrepreneurs and contribute to the development of their microenterprises. OMG Foundation, as part of their partnership with the ARY initiative, was in charge of implementing this mentoring program.

In order to create a baseline to define consulting needs, an analysis of the micro businesses started by Alerta Joven participants during the first 5 years of the activity still operating was carried out in-house. After a preliminary evaluation of the information gathered, a deeper assessment of the the main challenges micro-businesses that have received seed capital through the National Entrepreneurship Fairs face in managing and expanding their

activities, was carried out and shared with OMG Foundation. Based on this assessment, a process for the implementation of the mentoring scheme was designed in-house and revised by the OMG Foundation, containing the following phases: 1) Development of a profile of at-risk youth microbusiness; 2) Presentation of the micro-enterprises to OMG staff and allied companies selected by OMG; 3) Elaboration of individual mentoring plans based on business needs. This plan will include goals, indicator results, required resources, activities with defined responsibilities and specific schedule; 4) Execution of the mentoring plan; 5) Quarterly monitoring and evaluation; 6) Presentation of mentoring results.

During Q4, OMG Foundation started a pilot implementation of this mentoring program with a group of 10 microbusinesses. Carried out as a total cost share, OMG assigned specialists in the legal, marketing and financial area to work with the selected young entrepreneurs as coaches. These efforts will continue during FY19.

25 Alerta Joven youth entrepreneurs are benefited with business coaching and seed funds for micro business – In November 2017, youth business entrepreneurs of the ARY initiative were evaluated to participate in the National Entrepreneurship Fair carried out in November 2017. A total of 25 at-risk youth shared their business ideas after completing a process of coaching in business plan elaboration, provided as cost share by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. The 25 participants received seed capital to start a new business, or to improve their already existing one. These resources were provided by Banco Popular Dominicano, under their partnership with the ARY initiative.

R 3. Integrated youth system developed

IR3.1. A comprehensive youth support system implemented

During Q3, several new queries and changes to better organize and sort the information were implemented on the web based tracking system. Significant upgrades include: the creation of a consultation/sharing forum facilitating the access of partner organizations to quickly view data, the automation of the MARP report feeding process, and a constant updating of the youth labor survey. These changes improved the quality of reported data.

IR3.2. Multidisciplinary working groups coordinated and innovative solutions to reduce crime and gang activities implemented

Youth networks

Funding stipulated for the strengthening of youth multiplier groups through the Ministry of Interior and Police was not able to be secured as of November 2017. During the following quarter, the activity identified alternative funds and restructured the intervention in order to carry out planned activities. These were focused on three priority formative areas: a) National Youth Law – Youth Rights and Duties, b) Conflict and Violence Mediation, and c) Civil and Law Ethics. As a result, a total of 38 youth from the Haina network and 35 from the Sabana Perdida network were trained in Civil and Law Ethics, through counterpart funds, by OMG Foundation, a private sector partner.

Gang assessment

The development of an exploratory study of gangs in the Dominican Republic was initiated with the goal of understanding this phenomenon and how it manifests in youth. A consultant specialized in the theme of gangs was hired during Q4 to perform this study with the following objectives:

- Identify and better understand the tendencies and characteristics of gangs in the Dominican Republic, as well as in the LAC region;
- Identify how many and which gangs are present in the geographical areas intervened by Alerta Joven, and their main characteristics;
- Study the factors that motivate the emergence and permanence of these gangs, such as, micro-trafficking, territorial appropriation and others;
- Identify the mechanisms and/or the recruitment process that these groups use to attract supporters;
- Study the level of penetration and influence these groups exert in their respective zones and in young people.

This research will help in identifying recommendations aimed at preventing the insertion of youth in gangs and related criminal activities. A partnership has been established with the Anti-Gang Unit of the National Police, as a means to secure their technical support and collaboration. Preliminary results will be discussed with experts and USAID technical personnel during Q1, FY19. Final results of this study are expected to be presented in a public event during Q2, FY19.

IR3.3. Public-private partnerships enhanced to support and advocate for vulnerable children and youth

See Section 5 of the report.

2.3 Implementation challenges during the fiscal year

School Retention and Re-insertion Programs

The ARY initiative carries out two school retention programs: Espacios para Crecer (EpC) and Estrellas Jovenes in the primary level, and Quantum Learning for Students (QLS) in the secondary level. At the primary level, the main challenge faced was ensuring and maintaining program quality. We use a methodology of accelerated learning which actively engages students and relates to their auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning styles. This prepares the students on how to learn and helps to unleash their potential and desire to learn. This is critical for our targeted adolescence and youth, most of whom come from unengaging education environments. To assure the quality standard that this methodology requires, the EpC model adheres to an established routine and compliance with guidelines to guarantee its effectiveness. Additionally, school teachers and principals are trained in the methodology to multiply its benefits.

At the secondary level, the main challenges faced were identifying and ensuring the participation of at-risk youth, who have been out of the public school system for several years. This program, incorporating QLS, is targeted to youth aged 15 and above who are registered in PREPARA, which is managed by MINERD. Participants are selected according to the profile of high risk of desertion, therefore, maintaining them motivated to remain in school is a significant challenge. During Q4, additional QLS programs had to be scheduled to ensure the target was reached. Meetings were held with partner organizations to identify possible strategies on how to reduce program desertion and increase youth participation, and two strategies were defined. The first consisted in an increase of class hours and a reduction in the number of sessions, since students were more likely to desert when the same amount of class hours were distributed among several days. The second aimed at increasing youth motivation through phone calls and home visits. Facilitators, partner coordinators and MINERD staff had conversations with youth and their families, reinforcing the importance of education in the reduction of crime and violence.

The process of school re-insertion involves the identification of out of school vulnerable youth and children (VYC) and requires a systematic approach with the community and families, described as follows:

- Identify the VYC that abandons school and the underlying causes;
- Motivate and raise awareness with both the VYC and their parents so that they are stimulated to return to the classroom;
- Locate available spaces for students in schools nearby the neighborhood where the VYC lives;
- Select alternative schooling programs for those VYC who are over aged, many of whom need to attend night sessions.

These points represent unique challenges that Entrena and partner organizations face in order to adequately identify and ensure the permanence of youth in schools.

Generating Public-Private Partnerships

One of the objectives toward guaranteeing sustainability of the ARY initiative, was the creation of a co-financing mechanism with the Dominican Government and the private sector. The major challenge of this proposed model, has been ensuring an alliance with a public sector partner capable of giving continuity to the efforts performed under the initiative once USAID funding concludes. The first issue encountered was the selection of the correct governmental partner, since work is performed with multiple Dominican ministries. After an assessment of the activities performed by the ministries, and having considered funds received by these entities, it was determined that the institution whose mandate covers ARY activities and who receives substantial resources to continue with them was the Direction of Special Programs of the Presidency (DIGEPEP), which directly reports to the Ministry of the Presidency. A formal proposal from Entrena was submitted to DIGEPEP in July 2017 to expand the EpC network, as well as reinsertion activities. This proposal is pending for approval.

Workforce development program

There are two types of challenges identified with workforce development programs; those related with the implementation of technical vocational courses, and those related to placing youth in jobs after concluding their formation process. These challenges are described below:

- The opportunities for employment or internships in companies for the coding program graduates appear to be smaller in relation to other technical training courses.
- The selection process for entrepreneurship courses require a more in depth screening of the profile of potential participants, to focus on young people who already have a business or with an entrepreneurial vocation.
- Creating awareness and motivation for businesses to provide employment opportunities for young people with a risk profile.
- Coordination with INFOTEP became more challenging since its internal procedures underwent changes that require greater bureaucracy.
- Many COS (Centros Operativos del Sistema) continue to require higher education profiles, for certain courses, thereby disqualifying at risk youth.
- The limited amount of COS in certain areas required hiring transportation services for beneficiaries to reach the location where the TVC were implemented.

3. CONTRIBUTIONS TO DO AND IR NARRATIVES

The ARY Initiative contributes to Development Objective I (DOI): *Crime Prevention Strengthened*. The intervention program seeks to reduce the vulnerability of at-risk youth in the poorest, most violent, and most populated urban areas of the country.

IR I.1 Reduction in Youth Participation in Criminal Activities – The ARY Initiative reduces the economic and social vulnerabilities in at risk youth through its interventions.

Mission Objective: Help more than 80,000 young people between the ages of 11-24 to finish school, obtain vocational training, find work, and develop better skills – From July 5, 2012 to September 30, 2018, the ARY Initiative has achieved:

- ✓ 43,034 ARY retained into the school
- ✓ 4,287 ARY returned to school
- ✓ 24,319 ARY completed technical/vocational training
- ✓ 6,441 ARY with a new or better employment/internship or started a business of their own, from those who completed technical training

Mission Objective: Reduce teen pregnancy and gang recruitment in selected neighborhoods – From July 5, 2012 to September 30, 2018 a total of 3,361 teen mothers attended programs to finish school, and received technical training for income generation through

employment or entrepreneurship, contributing to this goal. Out of these, 686 teen mothers were beneficiaries of one of the ARY initiatives through FPUM during FY18.

Mission Objective: Offer counseling to 60,000 at-risk youth on HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health – From 2012 to 2018, a total of 28,529 ARY received HIV prevention programs, including talks on sexual and reproductive health through the peer to peer methodology. Additionally, 2,425 ARY received HIV tests.

4. INTEGRATION OF KEY AND CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

This section includes a description of advancements in integrating crosscutting issues and USAID priorities.

4.1 Youth Development

This activity focuses on providing assistance to youth ages 11 to 24 in impoverished and crime-afflicted communities. Beneficiaries include school drop-outs, low-skilled young people, teen mothers, young commercial sex workers, youth at a greater risk for HIV/AIDS infection, former offenders or felons, and disenfranchised youth without legal documentation, including Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. Since 2012, vulnerable youth in more than 500 neighborhoods in the Duarte Corridor, one of the most densely populated areas in the country, have benefited with this initiative.

To foment positive youth development, a holistic intervention scheme containing the following four programs has been designed: basic education (ages 10-24), vocational education (ages 15-24), teen pregnancy prevention (females ages 10-24), access to legal documentation (ages 10-24) and job insertion (ages 15-24). Under this approach, beneficiaries develop skills and competencies that enable them to access dignified jobs, ensuring their subsistence and, on occasions, their family livelihood as well. In turn, this contributes to the reduction of criminality levels in their communities, generating safer environments in which youth can further develop their skills. Also, through the life skills training and psychosocial support offered through the activity, these vulnerable youth have the opportunity to regain confidence and empower themselves to become agents of change in their lives and in their communities.

In FY 2018, 3,663 at-risk youth received integrated educational, psychological, health and employability services through the activity. More than 400 at-risk youth were re-inserted into the formal school system, reinforcing the need for this type of programs. Furthermore, 2,264 youth received workforce development interventions and out of these, 615 obtained new or better jobs. 106 youth were referred to partner organizations to obtain documentation to legalize their residency status in the country, increasing their opportunity to become beneficiaries of public services and obtain formal jobs.

To leverage these benefits, the At-Risk Youth initiative has continued providing support for youth stakeholders to gain leadership skills and become active players in their communities. The At-Risk Youth Initiative promotes the creation of youth groups, so that youth beneficiaries act as multipliers of the knowledge acquired through this initiative. In these spaces, youth leaders are able to provide support to other vulnerable youth in their communities, establish links and partner with relevant community stakeholders to promote youth development. These joint efforts contribute to an enabling environment for personal and professional growth of youth, as well as a positive impact in their surroundings. Over 3,200 beneficiaries are currently enrolled in youth networks and work actively to promote peaceful coexistence, economic growth and educational opportunities for youth. These networks provide peer to peer mentorship to identify other at-risk youth needing intervention and support.

4.2 Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

The Dominican Republic (DR) faces several barriers to gender equality, including violence against women and girls. This is cited by The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) as one of the most common reasons for conflict in the country, along with a high teenage pregnancy rate, and cultural norms that discourage participation in the workforce. Women and girls also experience additional gender-based socio-economic challenges, which include crime and violence, low education levels, unstable family structures, poverty, and inequality. To address some of these gender gaps, in FY 2018, At-Risk Youth Initiative worked with 4,092 at-risk youth, of whom 57% were females between the ages of 11 and 24. The activity supported at-risk girls and women through access to education, vocational training, job placement, and life skills training, to increase their financial and social independence.

Although enrollment in primary education for both boys and girls has improved through incentives from the Dominican government, a large disparity in primary school enrollment still exists between children from the lowest-income quintile and wealthier households. In FY 2018, the At-Risk Youth Initiative helped 524 girls from the poorest, most marginalized communities attend primary school. At the secondary level, because girls are more likely than boys to be enrolled, the activity assisted more boys than girls in attending high school, with 101 boys and 87 girls supported.

While Dominican women increasingly have higher levels of education and participate in the workforce at higher rates, they still face obstacles to access formal employment. This limited access to dignified jobs is a major impediment to women becoming productive and financially independent citizens. In FY 2018, the activity provided life-skills training to 1,410 women to support their participation in the formal economy. As a result, 359 women currently have new or better employment.

The DR continues to have one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the Caribbean and Latin America region. Girls in high school who become pregnant usually leave school for the duration of the pregnancy. This abrupt interruption to teen mothers' education

and the lack of suitable alternatives and support to continue their studies, place them at great risk of remaining in a vulnerable state. In FY 2018, the activity provided support to young mothers by reinserting 118 girls into formal schooling, training 339 girls through workforce development programs, and assisting 15 in finding employment. In May, the activity also hosted a women's empowerment event with the Minister of Youth, to showcase the integral work mothers do to improve the DR.

To scale the activity across the country, the ARY initiative established youth networks to identify youth leaders, including young mothers, and promote participation in their communities. These women leaders have been able to share their stories and successes, voice their concerns, and actively participate in leadership roles and decision-making. Consequently, 58% of the leadership roles in youth networks are occupied by women.

4.3 Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

PPPs are key in ensuring activities outcomes in school re-insertion, school retention, job insertion and reduction of crime and violence amongst at-risk youth. In the private sector, partnerships are established with non-profit and for profit business. The Dominican private sector has shown their commitment to invest in the reduction of crime and violence countrywide, as it is one of the biggest deterrents to economic growth. In order to ensure long-term opportunities for at-risk youth, the private sector was engaged at the onset of the Initiative. In FY18, the At-Risk Youth Initiative invested time and resources in following up with the private sector assessment completed in FY17. This included building up the stakeholders' network and securing direct partnerships with key economic sectors. The strategy included the launch of a recognition designed to acknowledge the work of the private sector in providing internships and first job opportunities for at-risk Youth. This recognition, titled Changemakers, was awarded to over 400 private entities in January 2018, marking the first event of its kind. The Changemakers platform also intended to attract other businesses to collaborate with the Initiative. Over 36 potential private sector partners were contacted, 5 new partnerships were signed and 10 others are to be signed in FY19.

During FY18 the activity worked with the private sector to identify and meet their needs, through the employment of at-risk youth. As a result, training was expanded for different sectors including the pharmaceutical industry with high profile employers like Baxter and Fresenius Kabbi; specialty jewelry polishing with Laurelton, a subsidiary of Tiffany & Co.; industrial quality control with Industrial Parks in Santiago and Dajabon. Also the USAID At-Risk Youth Initiative, in partnership with Kentucky Fried Chicken, carried out the "Role Play" internship program, where participants from vocational trainings in hospitality had the opportunity to work for 15 days, for 4 hours a day, in a KFC restaurant and experience the work environment firsthand. As part of the program, KFC committed a monetary transportation subsidy and a meal for participants, according to their scheduled shift. Upon completion of this first round, additional beneficiaries from the Initiative will be able to participate in the Role Play program, which will be extended to the other 20 KFC branches nationwide.

In addition, other youth development activities were performed through public-private partnerships. In November 2017, through the partnership with Banco Popular, the fourth edition of the National Youth Entrepreneurship Fair was celebrated. This entity provided US\$10,000 as seed capital for 25 at-risk youth business ideas, to be used in improving their already existing venture or to implement new ones. The provision of this financial support was preceded by a process of coaching in business plan elaboration, carried out by Banco Popular, along with a public sector partner, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Also, through a partnership signed during FY18 with OMG Foundation, a mentoring and training program for entrepreneurs was designed.

The private sector also constitutes an important partner for the execution of the ARY Initiative. During FY18, Entrena partnered with 8 community-based organizations for the execution of the different programs. Throughout this year, several actions were performed to strengthen institutional capacity of these partner organizations. Workshops were carried for EpC, Quantum Learning for teachers, Life Skills, branding and marketing, and monitoring and evaluation, budget execution and USAID regulations. Partner organizations also had the opportunity to share knowledge among themselves and with Entrena to improve the school reinsertion program, by sharing best practices applied to accomplish their goals, as well as to appropriately monitor program status. This joint work is key for capacity building and institutional strengthening of organizations working with youth development.

5. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

This section includes a description of current and ongoing stakeholder participation and involvement in program activities (may include government, regional organizations, NGOs, private sector, academia, and other donors).

IR 3.3 Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) supporting youth

- *The ARY Initiative engaged with the Attorney General of the Dominican Republic as a key stakeholder* – The team carried out working meetings with Sheily Nuñez, the Director for the Crime and Delinquency Prevention Department. Results of the meetings included updates on the status of models developed for management and intervention for youth in conflict with the law, and follow up strategies for potential implementation, especially for the group under alternative sanctions. The initiative is awaiting guidance from USAID, in terms of the mission priorities.
- *15 alliances with the private sector* - The goal was to identify and formalize alliances with the private sector which support at-risk youth. The contract with the specialist responsible ended in March, without reaching the final goal. Since April, these objectives were pursued internally, with 5 out of 15 alliances secured during FY18, and another 3 in the process of negotiation to be signed during Q1 FY19.
- *Sustainability Committee* – Following the Changemakers event in January 2018, a work plan was developed for the remainder of the fiscal year with projections through the

end of the Initiative in 2019. This plan includes follow up meetings, site visits, expansion of the committee, and designing of the Changemakers event for 2019.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE - N/A

7. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Modification of Assistance approved during the reporting period

- MOA #15 – Signed on October 31, 2017 to: a) Increase the obligated amount in US\$589,854.32; b) extend the date for obligated amount; c) designate a new AOR and; d) approve the revised branding and marking plan.
- MOA #16 – Signed on December 21, 2017 to increase the obligated amount in US\$ 107,486.00
- MOA #17 – Issued by USAID June 28, 2018 to increase the obligated amount in US\$ 1,310,145.64 to reach a total of US\$21,979,616, which is the current ceiling for the cooperative agreement.

Submitted documents to the donor and status during the period

The financial audit report was submitted on June 7, 2018. No feedback to the report was provided during the period.

Staff

- Elizabeth Lagrava, who served as Operations Manager for the activity, left on May 31, 2018 as planned. In June, an additional 15 days of consultancy were requested from her to assist in the transition. Prior to her departure, a decision was made by management to reclassify this position as Deputy Director. A recruitment process was held between May 21 and June 19 to find a replacement. Katherine Javier was selected and joined the team on July 1, 2018.
- Esther Frías joined the team as a Public-Private Partnership Specialist, in September 2018, working part-time. Her work is expected to contribute to the achievement of the IR3.3. *Public-private partnerships enhanced to support and advocate for vulnerable children and youth.*

M&E support

The firm GEODATA was hired to organize and analyze pre and post data for the project participants from 2012 to 2017. A report with the initial results were presented in Q4. This report is being analyzed internally to provide feedback to GEODATA for revision and final submission due in Q1 FY19.

FY 2017 Audit

The firm KPMG completed the FY17 financial audit. The draft report was sent to USAID on June 7, 2018, and no findings were highlighted.

8. BUDGET

No significant budget changes nor decisions affecting the program implementation occurred during the year.

BUDGET CATEGORY	Total Award Budget	Accumulated Expenditure	Percentage of Execution
LABOR	2,308,335	2,044,687	89%
FRINGE BENEFITS	1,001,433	782,373	78%
CONSULTANTS	1,334,303	1,139,260	85%
TRAVEL AND PER DIEM	100,331	85,593	85%
OTHER DIRECT COSTS	2,558,326	2,378,187	93%
EQUIPMENT	137,898	135,654	98%
SUB-AWARDS	14,226,774	13,852,764	97%
SUB TOTAL IN USD	21,667,400	20,418,517	94%
INDIRECT COST	312,216	200,217	64%
TOTAL IN USD	21,979,616	20,618,734	94%

9. LESSONS LEARNED

During this FY the ARY Initiative continued to expand programs and involve more local stakeholders to ensure activity sustainability. Lessons learned include:

- Youth Networks are key in ensuring activities are sustainable at the community level. The more we invest in developing leadership skills amongst those in the networks, the better prepared they will be to support the activities carried out under the initiative. The initiative needs to bump up investment and programs for this component, so they can become the local face of it at the community level.
- The Espacios para Crecer program once again showed important results when comparing pre and post-test evaluation results. By working closely with the schools, the activity was able to enroll those at very high risk of abandoning school. The initiative shall continue to replicate this close network of guided decision

making with schools and school districts and involve the MINERD as much as possible.

- Youth obtaining jobs were those trained in growing industries, such as the industrial sector, tourism and customer service. Training programs in coding were not successful in youth obtaining jobs. They had to be matched with other skills such as network programming, diagramming and office package in order for youth to obtain jobs in the technology sector.

10. INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER PROJECTS

This year the project started working closely with other USAID implementers under the same DO Portfolio. The joint effort at this very early stage shows results than can be translated into actions that create a strong foundation for USAID in the targeted geographic focus. Some examples are:

- *REDDOM*. Provided support to ARY's A Ganar program in Las Terrenas through partner DREAM PROJECT by delivering trainings on water use and sanitation.
- *UNIBE LEER*. Reviewed the literacy component for the Espacios para Crecer program, adapting lessons to read with the coding methodology consistent with the LEER activity. Also both initiatives celebrated Mother's Day Event with over 160 teen mothers providing information on the importance of reading at a very young age.
- *Participación Ciudadana*. ARY youth from the coding programs participated in the 2018 Climathon, a process of collaborative construction of technological solutions to address climate related problematics at a community level, organized by Participación Ciudadana in June 2018. They expressed the event was the experience of a lifetime. Other joint activities included participation of ARY youth in the Puerto Plata Citizen Security Fair in July 2018 and the Climate Change Summer Camp in August 2018.

11. SUCCESS STORIES

ADANELIS MATOS: Overcoming Aggression through Special Attention

"Many Dominican women deal with gender based violence inflicted by partners, ex-husbands and authority figures within the community. Overcoming aggression and psychological trauma is a long road that must be walked with specialized attention and continuous personal and social effort".

May 2018- The ARY Initiative helps vulnerable youth in communities in the Dominican Republic, where many have been affected by gender based violence. It is common that after suffering threats to safety, physical and emotional abuse, many young Dominican mothers show signs of psychological trauma and, as a consequence, replicate the cycle of violence within their families and close circle.

That was the case of Adanelis Matos, a young 23 year old mother from La Puya, an at risk sector in Santo Domingo, the capital city of the country. Matos faced enormous obstacles as a young women, including having no access to quality education, living in poverty, early initiation in sexual life, adolescent pregnancy, and gender-based violence.

As Adanelis recalls, because of her emotional situation, she used to inflict violence on herself, her daughter and partner. “I didn’t want to live. I even tried to commit suicide two times, but could not go forward with it”, she confesses. This created an environment in which physical and psychological violence escalated progressively, negatively impacting her family’s welfare and perpetuating aggression. This cycle of violence threatens to repeat itself from generation to generation.

To reduce and prevent further aggression within families and communities, the At-Risk Youth Initiative works with local institutions that help women like Adanelis overcome negative emotional patterns. She was invited by Fundación Pediátrica Por un Mañana, to attend a training course and receive psychological assistance at the Centro Restaurando Un Mañana. This center works with teenage and young mothers ages 11-24, providing training and assistance through specialized courses, therapy and daycare.

Adanelis was able to overcome her internal conflicts through emotional education and anger management techniques. She also received training to prepare her for future job opportunities. “Thanks to the therapist at Fundación Pediátrica, I developed abilities to manage difficult emotions. I recognize now that my previous attitude was aggressive and dangerous for myself and my family. Now I understand that I am responsible for my behavior and will work to be peaceful from now on”.

SALOMÓN FELIZ GIMÉNEZ: Healing from Emotional Trauma through Growth

Chronic trauma is defined as reoccurring painful situations or experiences. This may be ongoing parental abuse or criticism, childhood neglect, bullying, alcoholism, drug addictions or mental/medical illness in the family. The disguised nature of this type of trauma often makes it more difficult to identify and treat.

May 2018- For many, childhood should be characterized by carefree learning and growth opportunities. However, there are children who frequently encounter hardships and traumatic situations in their daily life. To help them overcome these difficult situations, it is necessary to identify the symptoms and signs of emotional trauma, and provide spaces for psychological and emotional stability.

The case of Salomón Feliz Giménez, a 12 year old student from Los Robles, in the Southern province of Pedernales, Dominican Republic, shows how the right approach from a school and a community, can transform the life of a child that suffered from emotional trauma and social anxiety.

Sharing the home with a father with a disability and an abusive mother, Salomón was verbally and physically abused by his mother. Over time, the aggressions inflicted on the boy caused him to become withdrawn and shy at school and, at the same time, aggressive and unpredictable with classmates and teachers. “We were clearly concerned and didn’t know how to help Salomón with his uncontrollable, yet explainable behavior. Thankfully, one of our teachers proposed a solution for him” said a teacher. School teachers, psychologist and the principal recommended Salomón to the EpC program, coordinated by the ARY Initiative partner IDDI in Pedernales.

With the goal of helping students like Salomón, the EpC program offers a comprehensive support system. The program offers children ages of 11-14 the opportunity to develop emotional and social skills to cope with situations throughout life, stay in school and leverage their cognitive skills. “I felt important and discovered that my life can be better”, expressed Salomón to one of his teachers, who doesn’t cease to be amazed by the remarkable transformation the boy shows after participating in the program. “He is calmer, more articulate when sharing his opinions and doesn’t yell or shuts down like before”, she indicates. “When he started the program, he didn’t allow anyone to touch him, and had no friends”.

The EpC works with community leaders to engage them in the education of vulnerable youth and children. This EpC intervention is also supported with services from the Centro de Terapia Infanto-Juvenil (Center for Young People’s Therapy), specializing in children with behavioral, emotional or educational problems, and their families. Thanks to the efforts of an entire community, Salomón’s life is now on the path to a happier and more positive adolescence.

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10. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT YEAR INCLUDING UPCOMING EVENTS

- November 13, 2018 - Activity to share success stories from social entrepreneurship projects of At-Risk Youth beneficiaries
- November 22-23, 2018 - Bootcamp for At-Risk Youth entrepreneurs
- January 31 2019 - National Youth Week Panel
- March 8, 2019 - Women and Youth Panel

- April 16, 2019 - Workshop on effective communication for At-Risk Youth entrepreneurs
- May 1, 2019 - Entrepreneurship Fair 2019
- July 16, 2019 - At-Risk Youth Convention
- August 12, 2019 - International Youth Day
- September 15, 2019 - Presentation of results: School Desertion Microstudy Dissemination

11. HOW IMPLEMENTING PARTNER HAS ADDRESSED A/COR COMMENTS FROM THE LAST QUARTERLY OR SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

N/A

12. ANNEX A: QUARTERLY DATA REGISTRY

13. ANNEX B: OTHER DELIVERABLES AND STUDIES – N/A