



USAID | DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

AT RISK YOUTH INITIATIVE

Quarterly Report

FY 2019– October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019

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Cooperative Agreement Number: AID-517-A-12-00002

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I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW/SUMMARY

Activity Name:	AT RISK YOUTH INITIATIVE
Activity Start Date and End Date:	July 05, 2012 to September 30, 2020
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. 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; Western Santo Domingo; Santiago; North coast including Sosua, and Cabarete; and San Francisco de Macorís.
Reporting Period:	October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019

I.1 Program Description/Introduction

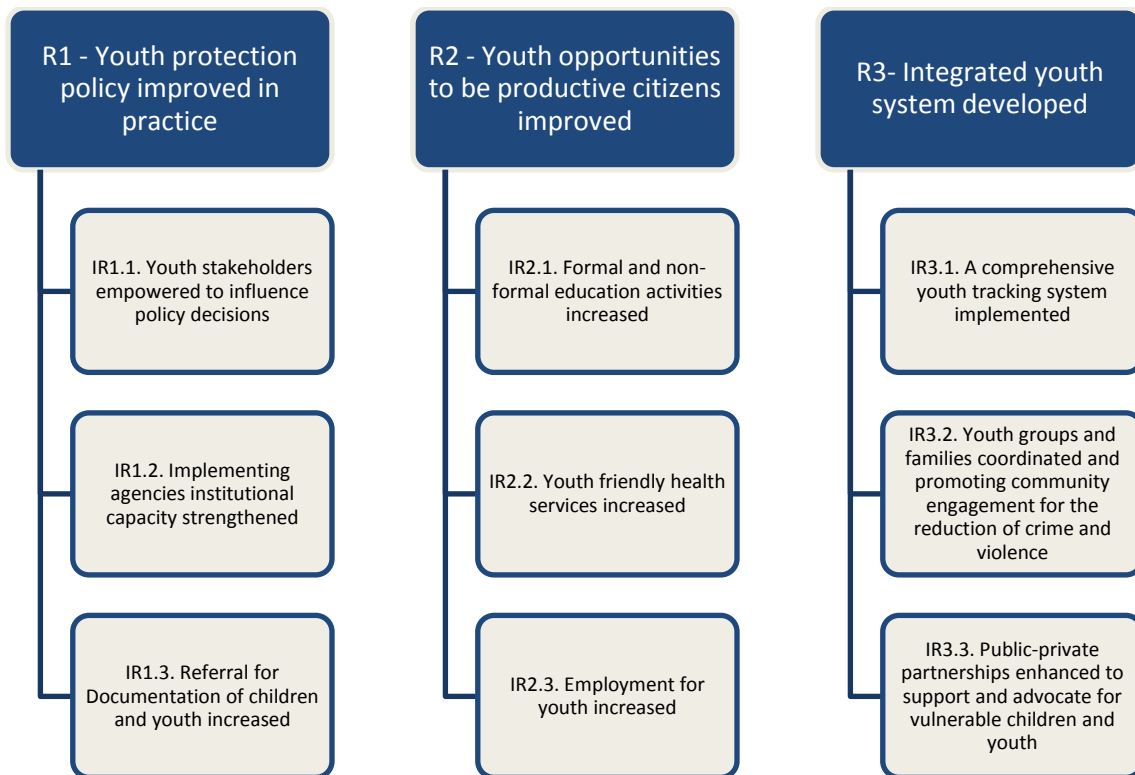
The goal of the Dominican Republic At-Risk Youth Initiative (DRARYI) is to create a sustainable, multidisciplinary safety net for at-risk youth (ARY), implemented to prevent crime. The technical approach develops a sustainable framework as a quality product that can positively continue to transform the 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 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. Until 2019, the geographic focus was the Duarte corridor between Santo Domingo and Puerto Plata, Azua, Las Terrenas in Samaná, and locations on the Haitian border.

In January 2019, an extension of the initiative was signed, covering the period from February 2019 to September 2020. During this phase, the ARY initiative will be deployed with the collaboration of six sub-awardees: Fundación Pediátrica por un Mañana (FPUM), IDDI, Sur Futuro, Children International, Universidad Católica Nordestana (UCNE) and Dream Project. The geographical focus was narrowed down to achieve greater converge with other USAID efforts, concentrating on the following areas: Distrito Nacional, Western Santo Domingo, Santiago, San Francisco de Macorís and Puerto Plata.

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 from October 1 to September 30, 2019. The first part of the section describes standard indicators

defined by USAID/CBSI, while the second part describes custom indicators tailored to the needs of the project, proposed by ENTRENA and approved by USAID.

Standard Indicators

ES 1-3 CBSI 3.1-3 Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance – Goal 2019: 595 participants, ages 11-14

The activity that feeds this indicator is the Espacios para Crecer (EpC) school retention and reinsertion program for vulnerable ARY. During FY19, 22 EpCs operated under Sur Futuro, UCNE, Dream Project and IDDI sub-awardees, benefiting a total of 647 participants. Out of these, 610 successfully completed the program, of which 365 were males and 245 females. This represents 102.5 percent of the goal achieved.

ES 1-4 Number of learners in secondary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance – Goal 2019: 193 participants, ages 15-24

The school retention program Quantum Learning for Students (QLS) targets this population. It is implemented at the secondary level through educational centers of the Dominican Ministry of Education (MINERD). Centers from the PREPARA network are prioritized. PREPARA is a program designed to accommodate youth who have previously dropped out of school, and now wish to complete their high school degree through a flexible attendance scheme. QLS was implemented by three partner organizations: Dream Project, UCNE and Sur Futuro. During FY19, 213 youth from these sub-awardees concluded the QLS program, accounting for 110.4 percent of the goal achieved.

This year, lessons learned from the QLS FY2018 implementation were put in place. The format in which the activity was delivered changed, tailoring the 24 hour program to a schedule that fit the needs of beneficiaries. In addition, the intervention was decentralized, training the staff of partner organizations to teach the program, which allowed for the opening of new sessions in the requested schedules. These measures led to an increase in the expected program completion rate, contributing to the above target results.

ES 4-1 Number of vulnerable persons benefitting from USG-supported social services – Goal for 2019: 776 participants, ages 11-17

This indicator presents the total amount of school reinsertion and retention programs (EpC and QLS), as well as vocational training beneficiaries ages 11-17. During Q4, 293 youth completed one of these programs, resulting in a total of 1,255 participants over the course of the fiscal year and representing 161.7 percent of the target. Out of these, 52 percent were females.

EG.6-4 Number of individuals with new employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs – Goal for 2019: 208 participants, ages 18-24

During Q4, 18 participants obtained new employment. As a result, the accumulated number of participants with new employment for FY2019 was 349, representing 167.8 percent of the target. Out of the 349 new jobs, 222 were permanent positions, 87 internships, 40 temporary positions and 9 new microenterprises. Employment obtained by youth occurred in the following positions: 39.5 percent in customer service; 24.9 percent as industry operators; 14.6 percent in sales, 6.3 percent as waiter/waitress and the remaining 14.7 percent in various positions including teachers, security, administration, and personal care services.

According to the Dominican Republic's Central Bank, during 2018 the country experienced the highest economic growth in the region, generating more than 29,000 jobs (24 percent above 2017). This improved economic performance, combined with additional job placement efforts, including a growing number of alliances with the private sector, allowed more youth to secure employment than originally planned.

EG.6-5 Number of individuals with increased earnings following completion of USG- assisted workforce development programs – Goal for 2019: 261 participants, ages 18-24

During Q4, 32 participants reported having increased earnings. This leads to a total number of youth with increased earnings of 419, accounting for 160.5 percent of the target set. Out of these, 340 obtained a new job, 9 created a new business, 7 improved their existing business, 60 migrated to jobs with better salary and 3 obtained additional benefits, such as medical insurance.

EG.6-3 Number of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs – Goal for 2019: 1,402 participants, ages 15-24

During Q4, 376 youth completed technical vocational trainings, for a total of 1,158 participants during FY19, representing 111.1 percent of the target. Training provided during this period included the following areas: customer service, accounting, entrepreneurship, pharmaceutical assistance, waitressing, customs, programming, installation of phone networks, baking, clerk, administrative assistance, basic computers, and sales. Due to uncertainties with fund allocation, targets were projected on the conservative side. As the activity secured funds by the second quarter of FY19 and continued to work and plan side by side with National Vocational Training School of the GODR, who were able to provide additional facilitators to open new technical trainings, more youth were able to enroll and complete courses.

EG. 5-3 Number of microenterprises supported by USG-assistance

This indicator is one of new standard indicators being reported in this extension period. During FY19, 16 microbusiness received assistance by the US government, which represents 47.1 percent of the target. Being a new indicator to report, projections of the

target were based on the numbers of youth participants in the National ARY Entrepreneurship Fair. However, most of these youth coupled to present joint business ideas, resulting in a lesser number of microbusinesses to report. This year's indicator performance will be taken into account for the definition of FY2020 targets.

Cross-Cutting Indicators

GNDR-6 Number of people reached by a USG funded intervention providing GBV services (e.g., health, legal, psycho-social counseling, shelters, hotlines, other) – Goal 2019: 100 participants, ages 11-24

With the beginning of the initiative's new extension, services provided for gender based violence victims were only registered by the FPUM sub-awardee. Thanks to the development of a referral protocol for cases of gender based violence, from the second quarter of FY19 onward all sub-awardees were able to report this referral. The protocol, in which sub-awardees were trained, provides an action route to address identified GBV cases.

To identify gender-based violence cases, a new section for data collection was included in the Participant Entry Survey. The results from this section helped sub-awardees track victims of GBV and refer them for appropriate care, including legal advisory, medical assistance and psychological support. The referral was documented through the completion of a form designed for this purpose. In addition, identified victims were referred to technical vocational trainings as a mechanism to reduce their vulnerability and dependence.

During FY19, 104 GBV victims were referred to one of the aforementioned services or to technical vocational trainings. This number accounts for 104 percent of the goal achieved. Most of the identified victims were females, representing 81.7 percent of all cases.

GNDR-2 Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income or employment) – Goal 2019: 50 percent, female ages 11-24

This indicator reflects the number of female youth involved in workforce development programs. During FY19, out of 419 youth that increased their earnings after concluding a technical vocational training, 233 were females, representing 55.6 percent female participation. This is equivalent to 111.2 percent of the target set for the fiscal year.

YOUTH-1 Number of youth at risk of violence trained in social or leadership skills through USG assisted programs – Goal 2019: 1,830 participants, ages 11-24

This indicator presents the number of participants trained in social or leadership skills through the EpC program, the QLS program and technical vocational trainings. These programs transfer this knowledge through the Life Skills Module, in the case of QLS and technical vocational trainings, and through the Personal Growth component, in the case

of the EpC. During Q4, 619 youth concluded one of these programs, for a total of 2,222 participants during FY19, accounting for 121.4 percent of the goal.

The target for this indicator was set based on the expected results of the education component. However, during FY2020 the creation and strengthening process of youth multiplier networks included the provision of soft skills and leadership training, impacting this indicator and leading to a performance above target.

Custom Indicators

Number of identified undocumented children and youth referred to an external documentation program – Goal 2019: 60 participants, ages 11-24

During Q4, 2 youth were identified and referred for documentation, for a total of 19 youth during the fiscal year. Out of this, 14 of them were of Dominican descent. This number represents 31.7 percent of the FY19 goal. Sub-awardees provided follow up to these cases internally and referred those that required further attention to specialized government entities in the matter, such as DIGEPEP and the Electoral Board. This year's results achieved were below target, mainly due to important efforts carried out by the GODR, through DIGEPEP, in reducing the number of undocumented people. The number of undocumented children and youth is expected to continue decreasing in the following years, as it is less probable to find and refer participants to obtain their documentation.

Number of Vulnerable Youth and /or Children (VYC) reinserted into formal schooling – Goal 2019: 243 participants, ages 11-24

During Q4, 89 cases of school reinsertion were reported, for a total of 194 youth reinserted during FY19, accounting for 79.8 percent of the goal. Of these, 50.0 percent were females and 33.5 percent were youth ages 18-24, when reinsertion is less probable to occur, given the increased responsibilities faced by this age group. This year, CENAPEC, one of the education centers through which an important number of participants are reinserted, experienced changes in some of their administrative processes. This resulted in delays to process and obtain the reinsertion confirmation by MINERD, and thus in an achievement below the set target. For FY2020, these changes will be taken into consideration to ensure timely registration of reinsertion cases.

Number of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) created through USG assistance – Goal 2019: 10

During FY2019, 10 new public-private partnerships were signed, achieving 100 percent of the target set. Out of these, one partnership was signed with a public partner (the National Dominican Police) and the remaining 9 with private sector allies. From Q2 onward, as part of USAID efforts to strengthen bonds with the GODR, partnerships with the public sector were pursued directly by the agency. Therefore, efforts were concentrated in promoting partnerships with the private sector and assisting USAID in the process of closing partnerships with the public sector.

The 9 partnerships signed with private partners include the following: 1) Tonos y Colores, construction materials seller; 2) Guest Services SRL, corporative cleaning services provider; 3) ENORDEN, cleaning and gardening services provider; 4) Exportadora Agrícola, an agroindustry company; 5) Pica Express, dedicated to the manufacture and distribution of snacks; 6) Editora MB, an education materials publishing company; 7) INICA, electromechanical services provider; 8) RIE, continued education institutions; and 9) Atomic Garden, an arts and graphic design school. These partnerships will provide training opportunities, new jobs and internships to youth beneficiaries.

2.2 Implementation Status

This section includes a narrative of achievements and status of planned activities according to the Annual Work Plan 2018-2019 during FY19. Additionally, activities still operating or postponed are mentioned.

R 1. Youth protection policy improved in practice

IR 1.1 Youth stakeholders empowered to influence policy decisions

Engaging sub-awards in the path towards sustainability

This year, a new approach towards the sustainability of the activity was adopted. The ARYI invited directors of partner organizations to join in the definition of a strategy to ensure the continuity of work for the reduction of crime and violence. Two work meetings were carried out. On April 10, the ARYI leadership presented the systematized programs, existing public-private partnerships, USAID road to self-reliance, and topics on positive youth development. In addition, directors of partner organizations carried out a brainstorming session about ideas for the sustainability of the initiative.



This discussion continued in a second meeting on May 30, in which partner organizations defined the conformation of a network of organizations working for positive youth development in preparation for the end of the activity. Working sessions were facilitated by a consulting firm that specializes in management leadership. As a result, sub-awards were able to define an action plan, which includes the design of a communication and incidence strategy, and the definition of an annual plan with outcomes for 2020.

Crime and violence assessment in intervention areas

During FY19, by request of the YES Office, Panagora Group started conducting an analysis on the current crime and violence situation in the ARYI intervention zone, through a quantitative-qualitative study.

The ARYI team provided support to Mr. Luis Dominguez, lead researcher of the qualitative component of this project, in the coordination of 5 focus groups in the different intervention zones. The first group, carried out on April 6 with 11 youth from the National District, served as a pilot to test the instrument and validate the research process. Later on, four additional focus groups coordinated by the ARYI staff were carried out by Luis Dominguez, as follows: May 4 with Sur Futuro, May 11 with UCNE, May 25 with IDDI, and May 31 with Children International. The results of these discussions will nurture the quantitative research currently carried out by Panagora, with both studies expected to be shared during early FY2020.

National Youth Day Celebration

During Q2, a meeting to celebrate National Youth Day, was held with beneficiaries from the following communities of the Distrito Nacional and Santo Domingo area: La Ciénaga, Haina, Sabana Perdida, and Gualey, where the activity took place. In this event, youth socialized the main challenges that their neighborhoods face in terms of crime and violence, highlighting among the main issues the increase in micro-trafficking, interfamily violence, drug consumption at an early age, adolescent pregnancy and the lack of safe spaces within the community. Participants also prepared presentations to highlight what positively identifies each one of their communities, with the objective to identify their strengths and learn how to promote them, in order to change the negative perceptions people outside their communities may have about their community.

IRI.2. Implementing agencies institutional capacity strengthened

This year, the ARYI performed several activities to enhance the capacity of sub-awardees. These meetings included discussions of administrative procedures, tactics for program implementation and knowledge of program curriculums. Below is a detailed description of each activity.

Learning meeting with sub-awardees staff

On September 3, 2019 a meeting with coordinators and technical staff of sub-awardees took place. The purpose of this meeting was to present and review results to date, share strategies and best practices to achieve targets defined. A total of 25 participants attended and presented a detailed analysis of results achieved and tactics applied to ensure goal



compliance. The Youth Networks component was highlighted as a key component for sustainability at the community level once USAID funds end. Also, an emphasis was placed on the adequate elaboration of success stories as a tool to effectively communicate the impact of the initiative. In addition, main deliverables and deadlines were shared with partner organizations to guarantee timely implementation of activities.

Trainings to sub-awardees on At-Risk Youth programs

As part of the learning and support process to partner organizations, during FY19 two trainings for their staff took place. On March 13, 15 coordinators from sub-awards FPUM, IDDI, UCNE, and Dream Project were trained in programmatic and administrative aspects. These sessions included a review of the ARYI Results Framework and theory of change, as well as youth networks, job insertion and education programs. In addition, USAID communication guidelines were presented to instruct staff on how to adequately use branding and write success stories. The M&E department provided a refresher training on how to perform quarterly submissions, and instructions on how to properly complete and report the new sessions in the Labor and Participant Entry surveys on pregnancy, gender violence, positive masculinity, and disability.

From April 24 to 26, sub-awardees received a three-day workshop in which they were instructed in the content and methodologies of the initiative's standardized programs. This included training in Psychological and Social Protocol, Life Skills, Employability, and Entrepreneurship. Participants from sub-awardees UCNE, IDDI, Sur Futuro, FPUM, and Dream Project attended these sessions. During the training, coordinators and technical personnel from sub-awardees reviewed the conceptual framework and process for the referral of identified cases of: gender based violence, interfamily violence, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, sexual diseases, sexual orientation, adolescents living on the street, adolescents at risk of abandoning school, bullying, gang involvement, drug or alcohol abuse, and depression. Also, they received training on the Life Skills and Employability programs, including its objectives, contents and practical knowledge on how to replicate the program.

Workshop on cost share and counterpart funding

As a result of training sessions to sub-awardees implemented in March, a refresher course on cost share reporting was requested by coordinators of these institutions. On May 17, 2019 a four hour workshop on cost share management was carried out. The session was led by the Sub-Awards Specialist for a total of 16 participants, which included the coordinators and accountants from the sub-awards Sur Futuro, UCNE, FPUM, DREAM, and Children International. The main objectives were to help the staff of sub-awardees understand the cost share concept and to identify which expenses are valid to report. The workshop was structured and developed in a dynamic and participatory way, in which concepts were explained and exercises performed to put acquired knowledge into practice.

IRI.3. Referral for documentation of children and youth increased

The identification of non-documented youth has continued to be performed through sub-awards, managing the cases internally, either through their legal departments, special

programs, such as the case of DREAM Project, or through the support of external legal consultants. Those cases that cannot be handled by the organization are referred to DIGEPEP or to the Electoral Board.

R 2. Youth opportunities to be productive citizens improved

IR 2.1 Formal and non-formal education activities increased

EpC school retention and reinsertion programs implemented

During FY19, 22 Espacios para Crecer (EPCs) concluded operations. These EpCs were implemented through sub-awardees IDDI, Dream Project, Sur Futuro, and UCNE, benefiting a total of 610 children ages 11-14. The program was carried out in 13 schools and 7 community centers, covering 11 *barrios* (marginalized neighborhoods). To ensure quality implementation across all EpCs, two coaching visits were performed during the year, in which QL accelerated learning methodology was revisited and important concepts reviewed with 10 facilitators of the UCNE and Dream Project EpCs. In addition, four site visits (one per sub-award) took place to observe the implementation of the routine and methodology.

Given that UCNE and Sur Futuro initiated the operation of their 10 EpCs in March due to negotiations of their extensions, the program content had to be adapted and the implementation extended for two weeks after the school period concluded. At the end of the program, post-tests on literacy and mathematics skills were applied to all EpC beneficiaries. These evaluations were digitized and are in the process of being analyzed to identify potential variances in participants' performance.

EpC Inaugural Ceremony at Duarte Province

On February 22, 2019 the EpC opening ceremony was celebrated at Escuela Salvador in the Duarte Province. At this event, Dayrodis Barrera, a beneficiary from the 2016 EpC at Escuela Primaria Jboobán in the community Villa Riva, shared his experience. He explained how his family was undergoing difficult economic situations, when he was chosen by his teacher to participate in the EpC. He learned to read and write in a fun way, and lost the fear of integrating with other students. Also, Mrs. Mariel Santos, Regional Director of the Ministry of Education and former beneficiary of the initiative, highlighted the positive impact of the program, stating that it has contributed to strengthen the relationship between the school, the family and the community; and to the development of new teaching techniques in school teachers.



Agreement with DIGEPEP to replicate EpC/QL model signed

The formal agreement to replicate 3 Espacios para Crecer and 3 QL programs for students in Santo Domingo Norte was signed on January 7. This represents counterpart funding from the GODR of over RD\$3.5M. In February, a new Education Minister was

named, thereby requiring a resubmission of the project for approval. As a result, the EpC was revalidated by the new Minister. Territories for implementation were defined with the selection of two educational districts in regionals 10-01 (Sabana Perdida) and 10-02 (Villa Mella). Due to delays in receiving the formal approval by the MINERD, program implementation did not start in Q4 as planned. It is expected that by Q1 FY2020, DIGEPEP will obtain the necessary confirmation to proceed and conclude all logistics to start implementation in Q2 FY2020.

IR2.2. Youth friendly health services increased

Teenage pregnancy care and education services

These services continue to be provided through sub-award Fundación Pediátrica por un Mañana (FPUM). This organization offers services targeted for teenage pregnant youth and young mothers, including technical training. Day care services are provided, facilitating beneficiary participation in these programs. The original FPUM sub-award concluded in September 2018. The delivery of services under the new sub-award was restored in February 2019, resulting in 185 women concluding technical vocational trainings during FY19.

Psychosocial approach and reference protocol

Among the efforts of standardizing the programs implemented through the ARYI, a protocol was developed for the reference of GBV and other cases requiring psychological care such as substance abuse, bullying, and depression. On April 24 a training session was arranged for 26 coordinators and technical personnel from sub-awardees Sur Futuro, IDDI, UCNE, DREAM Project, and FPUM. This process was carried out in a 6 hour workshop in which participants were able to understand the correct protocol in case one of the above issues is presented while working with youth. As a result of the implementation of this protocol, 104 youth were referred to legal, psychological, and medical services, as well as to technical vocational trainings.



IR 2.3 Employment for youth increased

Linking youth with employment

During FY19, 1,158 youth completed technical vocational trainings, provided through the ACOPRO, Children International, UCNE, CAPEX, Dream Project and IDDI sub-awards. This represented 111.1 percent of the goal set for the fiscal year. TVTs offered were selected based on employer's demands in each intervention zone, and beneficiaries were concentrated in the following areas: customer service (31.4 percent), accounting (15.6 percent), entrepreneurship (11.1 percent), waitressing (5.9 percent), programming (4.6 percent), phone network installation (4.1 percent), pharmaceutical assistant (4.0 percent), customs (3.9 percent), and Microsoft Office (3.5 percent).

Supporting young entrepreneurs

This year the activity carried out different efforts to promote and support the work of young entrepreneurs, as a means to improve their economic livelihoods.

Social Entrepreneurship Week – in the framework of the Global Entrepreneurship Week, and in partnership with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MICM), the activity carried out an event to promote the creation of businesses designed to promote community solutions. 100 beneficiaries participated in the event, including members of youth networks and selected entrepreneurs from the 5th National Entrepreneurship Fair. Representatives from the private sector also attended the event, including Banco Popular Dominicano and the OMG Foundation. During the event, ARY entrepreneurs Yokasta Valenzuela, Inoel Luna and Alexis Martinez shared their experiences and challenges faced when leading a business, and participated in a Q&A sessions. Carlos Jiménez, Head of Social Entrepreneurship at the MICM, held a discussion on social entrepreneurship, motivating youth to identify problems in their communities and address them with sustainable solutions, through a practical exercise.

Entrepreneurship Fair – On May 1st, the ARYI celebrated the 5th National Entrepreneurship Fair, in collaboration with the MICM and Banco Popular Dominicano. Youth beneficiaries had the opportunity to showcase their businesses and those with the best ideas were awarded with seed funding to promote their development. A total of 24 business models were presented by participants of the following areas: Boca Chica, Haina, Santo Domingo,



Puerto Plata, and San Francisco de Macoris. A panel of 7 judges from partner institutions and USAID evaluated the plans and selected a group of 10 based on their score on specific business criteria. The event closed with an award ceremony in which the 10 winners were awarded a total of RD\$400,000 of seed capital, provided by Banco Popular Dominicano. The three first places were won by Frankely Roman, owner of *Roman*

Bakery in Puerto Plata; Katherine Garcia and Woudline Bertrand, creators of *Happy Baby Daycare* also in Puerto Plata; and Veronica Derville, founder of *Oils and Products Derville* from Haina in San Cristobal. In addition, as part of the República Digital initiative, the MICM awarded a computer to each business model to use in organizing business operations.

Finance workshop with youth entrepreneurs – On May 2, and as follow up to the Entrepreneurship Fair, youth entrepreneurs were invited to attend a finance and management workshop sponsored by Banco Popular and delivered by consultant Pamela Pichardo. In this activity they were taught basic financial concepts to help them in managing and making educated investment decisions for their businesses.

Mentoring microbusinesses

During FY19, 4 microbusiness of ARYI beneficiaries were coached through the OMG Foundation mentoring program, as part of their partnership with the initiative. The 4 microbusiness participating in the program are Alexis Martínez, creator of *Escuela de las Fiestas Solemnes*; Yokasta Valenzuela, founder of *Jazme Jow Artistic Formation Centre*; Inoel Luna, manager of *Luna Herrera Travel*; and Enmanuel Taveras, owner of *TDE Internet Centre*. These entrepreneurs were tasked with developing their strategic business plans, budgets, and organization structures. After these deliverables are concluded, a final meeting will be held with entrepreneurs in FY20 to revise the documentation and give formal closure to the mentorship program. In addition, a second edition of this program will be evaluated.

R 3. Integrated youth system developed

IR3.1. A comprehensive youth support system implemented

In FY2019, indicators on employment and workforce development trainings were revised. In Q2 the indicator *EG.6-1 Number of individuals with new or better employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs* was replaced with two indicators to present the disaggregated data. The two indicators replacing this one were: *EG.6-4 Number of individuals with new employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs* and *EG.6-5 Number of individuals with increased earnings following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs*. Labor Insertion Survey for Participants was revised to gather this information, and the web platform and results reports updated to reflect these indicators.



IR3.2. Youth groups and families coordinated and promoting community engagement for the reduction of crime and violence

Youth network formation

During FY19, the ARYI carried out a process of creation and strengthening of youth networks. These process was divided into three parts: 1) training session on introductory aspects of youth networks; 2) training on practical life skills and conflict mediation abilities, a 3) creation of youth groups.

Introduction to youth networks concepts – The first training session was conducted on March 23, 29 and 30, with 94 beneficiaries and 12 staff from sub-awardees Sur Futuro, IDDI, UCNE, and DREAM Project trained in the formation of youth networks. Trainings consisted in 8 hour working sessions, structured in two parts. The first part of the training provided an introduction to youth networks, explaining the concept, design, structure, and operation. Youth were trained in leadership, volunteering, and the national legal youth framework, in order to empower them for community development and civic engagement.

During the second part of the training, the ARYI staff presented the steps for the creation of a Local Plan for Crime and Violence Prevention (PCVP). Participants were divided into working groups to conduct community mapping, where they identified the most dangerous and safe zones in their communities, as well as the three main problems and possible solutions. Simultaneously, they identified the key actors and resources to implement their PCVP.



External stakeholders working for the reduction of crime and violence provided complementary trainings to participants during these sessions. The Prevention Directorate from the Attorney General of the Dominican Republic presented their pilot campaign to reduce risk for youth using slot machines in marginalized neighborhoods. The United Nations Development Program stressed the importance of identifying vulnerable

populations, including people with disabilities and youth from the LGBT community, and inviting them to participate in youth networks to contribute to the enforcement of their rights.

Training on soft skills and youth networks creation – On April 6, 12 and 13, 194 participants received the second part of the training for the formation of youth networks, in which youth received Life Skills and Conflict Mediation workshops in an 8-hour session. Participants worked individually and in groups, supported by a team member to ensure the knowledge and skills were transmitted effectively.



Between May and August, meetings for the creation of youth networks directives were held. Participants chose the members of their directives through a democratic process, forming 4 youth networks in the following areas: Manoguayabo and Buenos Aires-Herrera in Santo Domingo Oeste (20 members each), San Francisco de Macorís (37 members), Distrito Nacional (40 members), Cabarete (37 members), and Santiago (40 members).

Development of Crime and Violence Prevention Plans

In July, 2019, as part of the youth network component a total of 165 beneficiaries of the USAID At-Risk youth Initiative (ARYI) from Santiago, San Francisco de Macoris, Puerto Plata, and Santo Domingo, worked in the elaboration of a crime and violence prevention plan for their communities. A specialist guided this process, facilitating workshops in which youth identified “hot spots” within their communities, the causes of crime and violence, and possible solutions to address these problems.

The exercise served the Specialist to draft a preliminary plan, which was socialized with youth networks through meetings held from August 1 to 8. These meetings served to test the feasibility of these plans and to define specific activities to address crime and violence in the different communities. The final presentation of these plans has been scheduled for FY2020. After the official launch, the detailed action plans will be presented to the local government in these communities.



Building capacity and sharing experiences with youth networks

Youth networks underwent a coaching processes, which included refreshment sessions on the knowledge acquired during the introductory trainings and discussions on relevant topics for their operation. The activities carried out are described below:

Digital marketing workshop to youth networks

– As part of the strategy to strengthen youth networks, a two day workshop on digital marketing was delivered on August 14 and 15 to hone the communication skills of youth participants to help them become agents of change in their communities through the use of social media. Two workshops were carried out with 45 participants from the Haina and El Café de Herrera, and 4



more are scheduled to benefit 120 youth. The workshops were provided by specialists from the ARYI and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, who shared strategies on how to use social media to positively influence youth. The Communications Department from the ARYI will carry out follow up sessions with youth networks, to define potential strategies to use in their social media content creation.

Youth Network Workshop/San Diego University Exchange visit

– On August 12, as a means of structuring a national network formed by all youth groups created under the ARYI, a workshop was held with the leaders of each network to unify their vision. 50 youth from 9 youth networks participated in the event, including the following: Haina, Quita Sueño, El Café de Herrera, Buenos Aires, Manoguayabo, Puerto Plata, Santiago, Distrito Nacional, and Santo Domingo Norte. Content provided in former trainings was reviewed, including the youth network’s mission, which is to contribute to the prevention of crime and violence. Each network shared the main issues their communities are facing, which will be tackled through the elaboration of their violence and crime prevention plan. 10 graduate students from the University of San Diego participating in a summer exchange program sponsored by Entrena, joined the youth sharing the main issues affecting their community, followed by a Q&A session. Additionally, a common visual identity and name (Red Alerta) proposal for the networks was shared with the youth. Each youth group will discuss the visual identity and a unified version for all defined based on their feedback.



Discussion with El Café de Herrera Youth Network and beneficiaries on the occasion of International Women's Day – On March 8,



2019 the initiative commemorated International Women's Day with a discussion on topics about gender, such as: current gender roles, gender based violence, positive masculinity, women's empowerment, and art as a safe space for the development of women. 35 youth participated in this event celebrated in the neighborhood Café de Herrera in Santo Domingo Oeste. These topics were presented by Mrs. Saschia Seibel DRARYI

COP and Helen Elizabeth Reyes, a 20 years old beneficiary. Helen expressed that after completing a vocational training she was motivated to pursue a career in music and had become a music teacher for a local school, understanding that she can be emotionally and economically independent, and does not have to pursue marriage at a young age, as her mother and grandmother did, and be subject to violent relationships.

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 quarter

A development initiative always faces challenges in implementation due to its constant changing and evolving nature. During FY19, the activity faced the following challenges:

- *Resources.* Due to unavailability of funding, the Initiative had to cut on activities planned for the period between February 2019 and May 2019. This had an impact on planning and achieving targets for the FY.
- *Geographic Locations.* During FY19 the Initiative started programs in two new geographical areas: Santo Domingo Oeste and Nizao. This presented a challenge, since it took longer time than planned to involve community leaders and secure potential sites to implement both the education and technical vocational programs.
- *Human Resources.* During FY19 the Initiative received an extension from USAID (January) and proceeded to negotiate new sub-awards with local implementing partners who had ended previous agreements in December 2018. This new stage brought new personnel to the table but some of the project knowledge was lost between the re-negotiation of the awards which took approximately 4 months. The Initiative had to invest a significant amount of time and resources to train new personnel from partner implementers. This also caused a delay in some activities once sub-awards were effective.

- *Generating Public Private Partnerships.* Even though the project achieved its goal of reaching the 10 partnerships it had planned for, making them operational was challenge for 50 percent of them. Reasons include transportation costs for beneficiaries to potential work/internship locations, lack of interest of youth when offered potential job positions, etc.
- *Research.* The activity was able to complete only one of the two research endeavors planned for the FY. Due to the operational overload the project presented, aiming to undertake this task internally as planned, was challenging.

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, 2019, the ARY Initiative has achieved:

- ✓ 43,857 ARY retained in school
- ✓ 4,481 ARY returned to school
- ✓ 25,474 ARY completed technical/vocational training
- ✓ 6,860 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, 2019 a total of 3,465 teen mothers attended programs to finish school, and received technical training for income generation through employment or entrepreneurship, contributing to this goal.

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

USAID/DR's At-Risk Youth activity aims to improve the life prospects of vulnerable youth in the Dominican Republic (DR) through human capacity building and economic growth. The \$25 million activity, funded through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, benefits a population ages 11 to 24 in high-crime, high-poverty communities. The initiative targets youth who are school drop-outs, low-skilled, teen mothers, commercial sex workers, disenfranchised without legal documentation, including Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitians living in the DR, and at greater risk of HIV/AIDS infection. Since 2012, the activity has reached youth in over 500 neighborhoods. In FY2019, it provided integrated educational, psychological, health, and employability services to 2,222 at-risk youth; re-inserted 194 into the formal school system; and provided workforce development training to 1,158, of whom 349 obtained new or better employment. The activity also referred 19 youth to obtain documentation, allowing them access to education and employment opportunities.

To encourage Positive Youth Development (PYD), the activity utilizes several interventions: School re-insertion and retention, teen pregnancy attention and prevention, access to obtain legal documentation, life-skills training, and socio emotional support, vocational education, job placement and entrepreneurship training mentoring and coaching. The life skills, entrepreneurship and career readiness programs are standardized, including best practices, a unified curriculum, and materials and training adapted with up to date youth friendly design and activities. Under this approach, youth develop skills to access dignified work and improve financial security for themselves and their families, while receiving the same content and messaging no matter their geographical location. These interventions promote a safety network to reduce youth involvement in crime and violence. Also, in FY19 the activity involved youth leaders in the planning, and co-creation of activities that fit the needs of the youth.

In FY 2019, the activity continued to systematically strengthen youth networks, where young leaders supported peers and partnered with communities to promote youth development and refer at risk youth to project services. These networks created an enabling environment for youth's personal and professional growth. This year the 5 new youth networks completed their community crime and violence prevention plans and are ready to implement in FY2020. To prepare for such plans, these groups underwent a series of training activities including community mapping, identification of high crime areas, and identification of top issues that induce crime and violence within the community setting. Each network has a leadership team that includes a president, vice president, secretary, social media outreach, and spokespeople. Participants are involved in sub-committees related to the results established in these plans.

This FY, the activity faced four key challenges: implementing core curriculum under all sub-awards; ensuring decision making was a fair process, given that the majority of decisions were made along with the youth networks and not all were in agreement; keeping youth engaged in crime prevention plan activities; and coordinating with Dominican government and municipal partners. The activity adapted and responded to

these challenges respectively by: ensuring proper training and communication with all sub-awards about core interventions; allowing youth networks to coordinate how decisions would be made and communicating in advance to all; fostering roles and responsibilities in the creation of the crime prevention plans in which each youth was tasked and involved in; and negotiating MOUs with host government partners.

USAID/DR's \$6.4 million Civil Society Action for Accountable Justice and Security activity, funded through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, assisted four civil society organizations engaging in advocacy interventions for youth rights. It strengthened the environment for youth crime and violence prevention by facilitating trainings for youth organizations and creating opportunities for them to obtain buy-ins from communities. Trainings were held through USAID's Civil Society Network for Justice and Security and focused on gender-based violence, conflict resolution, and violence prevention.

4.2 Gender Equality and Female Empowerment

The Dominican Republic (DR) faces several barriers to gender equality, including violence against women and girls, a high teenage pregnancy rate, and cultural norms that foster *machismo* and unequal gender role responsibilities.

To address some of these gender gaps in FY2019, USAID/DR's At-Risk Youth activity supported 2,222 at risk youth, of whom 59 percent were females, through access to education, vocational training, and life skills training, to increase their financial and social independence. The activity also helped 245 girls from the poorest, most marginalized communities attend primary school, and provided job and life-skills training to 810 women to support their participation in the formal economy. As a result, 233 women currently have new or better employment. The activity also trained 117 young mothers through workforce development programs out of which 10 have new or better employment.

Finally, the activity included gender equality as a cross cutting theme in the curriculum for education, vocational training, life skills and parent education programs. This ensures that boys-girls, men-women, teachers and parents are receiving the same message regarding gender roles, equality, positive masculinity, and prevention of gender based violence.

4.3 Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)

PPPs are essential for the sustainability of USAID program that supports at risk youth in the Dominican Republic (DR), as PPPs facilitate better outcomes in school re-insertion, school retention, job insertion, and crime and violence reduction. USAID/DR's At Risk Youth activity emphasizes positive youth development by engaging the private sector in providing young people the support and job training opportunities they need to develop professional skills through on the job training, allowing them to grow into healthy, responsible, and productive adults. The At Risk Youth activity worked closely with the private sector and obtained a cost-share of US\$358,859 approximately 20 percent of the amount invested by USAID/DR during this period. With these funds and USAID resources, the activity expanded its stakeholder network and secured direct partnerships

in key economic sectors, including large industries, food service, textiles, and energy. These partnerships facilitated employment opportunities by connecting youth and businesses through workforce development programs.

To date, good relationships and trust with the private sector have been established and reinforced. In FY 2019, the At Risk Youth activity identified potential private sector partners and signed ten new partnerships that include the following: 1) Tonos y Colores, construction materials seller; 2) Guest Services SRL, corporative cleaning services provider; 3) ENORDEN, cleaning and gardening services provider, 4) Exportadora Agrícola, an agroindustry company; 5) Pica Express, dedicated to the manufacture and distribution of snacks; 6) Editora MB, an education materials publishing company; 7) INICA, electromechanical services provider, 8) RIE, continued education institutions; and 9) Atomic Garden, an arts and graphic design school; and 10) Diesco, a large industrial group with 4 companies and over 3,000 employees currently dedicated to manufacturing. These partnerships are providing training opportunities, new jobs and internships to youth beneficiaries. The activity also expanded existing partnerships with 1) the pharmaceutical industry, with high-profile employers like Baxter and Fresenius Kabi; 2) the jewelry polishing field, with Laurelton, a subsidiary of Tiffany & Co; and 3) industrial quality control, with industrial parks in Haina and Santiago. Through its existing partnership with Banco Popular, the activity organized the fifth National Youth Entrepreneurship Fair. For the fair, Banco Popular contributed US\$10,000 in seed-stage funding for 25 business plans, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce provided training and coaching in business plan development, Republica Digital provided each business plan with a computer, and the Ministry of Youth provided each of the youth participating in the fair a scholarship for online certification programs through the EOI business school in Spain.

The activity continues to engage young business executives and key civil society actors in the project's sustainability committee. Individual and group meetings with committee foster other potential linkages with the private sector plus enables them to be key stakeholders and spokespersons for crime and violence prevention activities.

The At Risk Youth activity received support from the Dominican government for its workforce development programs through the National Institute of Technical and Vocational Training which is covering the cost of teachers and facilitators for the certified trainings. Also this year the activity was able to secure US\$60,000 in funding to expand the Espacios para Crecer education program into a geographic area currently not included in USAID scope. Over 600 university scholarships were secured in coordination with the Ministry of Youth under their Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship program. This sets the stage for sustainable replication of best practices both by the GODR and private sector.

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

- *Partnership with the Attorney General of the Dominican Republic as a key stakeholder* – During this FY19 the initiative was able to receive 9 referrals of youth in conflict with the law to attend the ARYI activities in 3 municipalities. These referrals represent the first cohort of a 50 participants pilot to be continued through FY20.
- *10 alliances with the private sector* – For FY19, the goal was to secure at least 10 partnerships with the public or private sector to support at risk youth with job insertion or training. As stated on section 2 of this report, 10 new public-private partnerships were signed, 9 with private sector allies and one with a public sector partner. These partnerships are collaborating to the reduction of crime and violence
- *Sustainability Committee* – The Sustainability Committee held a total of 8 meetings during FY19 to present intervention results, challenges, incentivize private sector participation and build a sustainability strategy. Individual meetings were also held with committee members to discuss their direct contribution and determine how to bring other private sector partners close to them to the table. The sustainability committee continues to grow strong with a participation of 80 percent of the original members.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE – N/A

7. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Staff

Throughout FY2019, the following changes occurred within the staff:

- Laura Ovalle, who served as M&E Assistant, left on November 23, 2018. Jean Carlos Hernández, who had previously collaborated with Entrena, was selected to occupy the position and joined the team on November 19, 2018, receiving a preliminary training on the functions by Miss Ovalle.
- Jasmin Alejo, who occupied the position of Administrative Assistant, left on November 30, 2018. A recruitment process was held to find a replacement, incorporating Eliana Medina as the new team member on December 3, 2018.
- Eliana Medina assumed the role of Accounting Assistant in May 6, after the resignation of Agusmery Heredia once her maternity leave period ended in April 2019. Keisy Miseses replaced Miss Medina, occupying the role of Administrative Assistant on July 16, 2019.
- Eddy Solis joined the team on May 20 as Youth Networks Specialist. As a former beneficiary of the ARYI and founder of the Alerta Haina Youth Network, the activity

is leveraging his demonstrated capacity on structuring and working with these youth groups.

- Eusebia Ferrer joined the ARYI staff on September 2, 2019. She occupies the position of Grants Specialists, replacing Rafael Mendez whose last month at Entrena was September 2019.
- Ximena Mendez joined the staff as Communications Assistant, replacing Raymarie Guillen who presented her resignation effective on September 30, 2019.

Consultancies



During this period four consultancies were opened, through open bid processes, to systematize best practices of the following programs:

- **Life Skills Program.** During FY19, psychologist Ana Julia Rodríguez resulted the winner of a bidding process to systematize the life skills programs offered by the different sub-awards. This work concluded with youth-friendly illustrated manuals. During Q4, a printed version was delivered to facilitators and students and training provided to sub-awards to start implementation.
- **Occupational guidance for first time employment.** Human resources expert Sarah González and employment specialist Elvira Arnaut were invited to elaborate a booklet for youth with the specific skills and tools required to obtain first time

employment. This concluded in an illustrated and printed version for students and facilitators. The content of this document includes the following skills: interviewing, resume development, use of references, self-presentations, and others.

- **Entrepreneurship.** Consultant Adan Rodríguez and his team were selected to design a standardized entrepreneurship program, after a bidding process took place. They developed two manuals, one for participants and one for facilitators, to expand the implementation of CEFE model was submitted. A final version of the illustrated Participant’s Manual was delivered to sub-awards during Q4.
- **Psychological and social counseling protocol.** A direct invitation was extended to Fior Alcántara based on her experience as a psychologist and interventions with at risk youth. The final product is a roadmap and protocol to refer identified cases of victims of violence among at-risk youth, including gender-based violence intra-family violence. All implementing partner were trained on processes for referring youth depending on the risk situation identified. Also, they were provided with a printed version of this protocol.
- **Amparo family program.** To standardize and foment the participation of family members in the development of youth, the ARYI staff tailored the Amparo program launched in 2008 by the United States Peace Corps. The program was revised and adapted into a six-unit handbook covering theoretical and practical exercises, in order to help mothers, parents and tutors of beneficiaries to better relate and create safe spaces where families can exchange experiences. Some of the skills provided under this program include the following: tools to practice effective discipline, problem solving, and effective communication.

Financial Audits

On March 4, 2019 the firm Campusano & Asociados was selected to carry out the annual financial audit. The auditing process concluded on May 24, and on June 12 the report was sent to USAID for revision. Feedback from USAID on the preliminary report is still in process. Once this review is concluded, the firm will be asked to issue the final version of the report.

8. BUDGET

During FY2019, an extension of the initiative was approved, increasing the budget award to US\$ 24,479,616.

BUDGET CATEGORY	Total Award Budget	Accumulated Expenditure	Percentage of Execution
LABOR	2,829,128	2,435,221	86%
FRINGE BENEFITS	1,288,777	902,224	70%
CONSULTANTS	1,456,033	1,254,469	86%
TRAVEL AND PER DIEM	127,466	100,642	79%

OTHER DIRECT COSTS	2,747,154	2,535,836	92%
EQUIPMENT	154,476	146,828	95%
SUB-AWARDS	15,325,376	14,399,303	94%
SUB TOTAL IN USD	23,928,410	21,774,524	91%
INDIRECT COST	551,206	339,678	62%
TOTAL IN USD	24,479,616	22,114,202	90%

As cost share, during Q4 US\$ 117,332 were invested in cash and kind by Entrena SRL and sub-awardees, for a total of US\$ 357,495 for FY19. This amounts to US\$ 5,581,195 for the life of project, which is equivalent to 25.2% of the budget executed.

9. LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the lessons learned identified during the fiscal year were the following:

- *Youth in the Center of Development* – During this year the initiative focused on engaging youth in the design and programming of activities, through youth networks. Youth networks developed a sense of ownership and belonging in the initiative, proposing innovative ideas and strengthening youth networks structures, which contributes to the sustainability of crime prevention activities at the local level. However, when involving youth in the programming aspects, clear guidance has to be provided in order to facilitate the work performed by youth and that the ideas of different youth groups are aligned with the ultimate goal of the initiative. A challenge was encountered while creating the branding of youth networks, since each organization created their own identity which failed to convey the strength and cohesion the Alerta Joven brand delivers. Additional efforts were required to align different territories' vision and to define an image that represented and identified them all. Therefore, for future reference youth representatives have to be informed about strategic objectives of the activity at hand, and act as a liaison between the staff of the initiative and their network to facilitate and make decision processes more expedite.
- *Integrating the GODR* – This year USAID focused on solidifying their relationship with the GODR, through the establishment of formal agreements with different ministries and institutions. The initiative assisted this process by developing technical annexes in which program activities, tasks, and responsibilities were clearly identifiable on each side. More time than anticipated was invested drafting and agreeing on annexes. However, the process was often facilitated when USAID drafted the first version of the agreement and the legal department of signers were involved. For future agreements, it is advisable legal departments from signing institutions are involved at the onset of the process.
- *Standardizing program implementation* – This year the initiative underwent a process of curriculum standardization for its different programs: life skills, psychological protocol, employability skills, and entrepreneurship programs. This required a

significant amount of time and effort from both Entrena, as well as consultants. The ARYI underestimated the follow up and the level of editing skills required from the consultants. Additional hours from the staff were invested to assure the quality of these products. Any future curricular revision will require the presence of proof reading expert, as a well as designated personnel and time established in the planning process of the consultancies to ensure the successful and timely conclusion of products. In addition, implementing these programs in different organizations required more time and effort than expected. Even though the programs are designed for at risk youth within the same general context, the unique characteristics of each organization and location need to be taken into account to correctly empower and influence program ownership.

- *Engaging leadership of implementing organizations in the sustainability process* – The initiative made an effort to better and consistently engage implementing partner directors in decision making related to sustainability. As a result, a more unified network has been developed and implementing partners feel more accountability for the sustainability process. Entrena, from the start of ARYI, has recognized the important role that implementing organizations play in long term sustainability. These activities reinforce the commitment of the leadership of our partners in the long-term development of at-risk youth interventions.
- *Defining alternative target scenarios* – This year many changes took place that impacted program planning, implementation, and results. The Initiative signed an extension, this resulted in program scope and target adjustments. Delays in funding availability affected implementation, and thus target compliance. In such variant circumstances, a very careful follow up has to be provided to implementing partners and closer communication maintained with the agency. Targets must be attentively defined and different possible scenarios anticipated, to make the agency aware of program results if certain conditions are not met. This could help prioritize and ensure limited funding is channeled to activities that are strategic for the initiative.

10. INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER PROJECTS

This fiscal year the ARYI collaborated with other projects by supporting USAID in the development of local and international activities, and by integrating other initiatives into its working plan.

USAID Citizen Security Fairs – During Q1 and Q2, as part of the USAID activity integration strategy and of the work performed by the agency to improve citizen security in the Dominican Republic, two Citizen Security Fairs were held. These events had the objective of sharing information on the current citizen security work taking place in the targeted municipalities intervened by USAID. It sought opportunities to collaborate with municipal security actors, such as local government, the Police, actors from the Judicial Power, the private sector, and civil society, and enhance the effectiveness of crime and violence prevention through the strengthening of cross-sectoral integration.

The first fair took place on November 20, 2018 in Santo Domingo Oeste, while the second was held in March 12, 2019 in the Distrito Nacional. The USAID Youth, Education & Security (YES) Office, alongside the Communications Department of the ARY Initiative, who assumed an important role in production and logistics aspects, prepared this event. A stand of about Initiative was displayed at the fair, providing information about the services offered. In addition, and to promote the involvement of youth in this activity, beneficiaries from the ARYI participated in the panel "Multi-sectoral look at citizen security in Santo Domingo Oeste" and presented a socio-drama about the challenges faced by at risk youth in the Dominican Republic in the fair celebrated in Distrito Nacional. These beneficiaries had the opportunity to share with the Ambassador of the United States, Robin Bernstein; the Minister of the Interior and Police, José Ramón Fadul; the National District Mayor, David Collado; and the Minister of Youth, Robiamny Balcácer.

Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBSI) technical working group – From June 11 to 13, the Ninth Technical Working Group on Crime Prevention of CBSI was celebrated in Santo Domingo. The ARY Initiative provided support to USAID with event logistics, including the assembly, general development of the activity, and design of support materials. The ARYI also had a stand in which it provided information about the programs carried out in the areas of education, employment and youth policy.

Youth also played a role during the event. Beneficiaries Yokasta Valenzuela and Alexis Martínez shared their experiences as entrepreneurs through TedTalk style talks, along with Raquel García representative of OMG, a private sector ally that coordinates an at-risk youth business mentorship program in which these youth participated. Yokasta and Alexis also performed artistic presentations to showcase the products they offer through their businesses and entertain the audience. Eladio Rodríguez and Rowena Martínez, also beneficiaries of the ARYI, acted as moderators of two plenary sessions at the event.

In addition, members of the youth networks participated in the discussions at working tables alongside national and international delegates. Five youth entrepreneurs from Puerto Plata and San Cristobal displayed and sold their products. The event ended with a site tour provided to international visitors, in which they had the opportunity to engage with youth representatives from La Cienega, a marginalized neighborhood in Santo Domingo.

Youth Network Training – During Q2 and as part of the Youth Network Training Cycle, the Initiative received support from the USAID funded/PNUD implemented “Being Gay in Latin America and the Caribbean” Project. The training was focused on teaching youth the difference between gender and sexuality plus ensuring inclusion of all, no matter their sexual orientation through the networks. Youth valued this session as one of their favorites in the post-training evaluation.

Espacios para Crecer Literacy Training – As part of the facilitator training for the Espacios para Crecer Program that took place on March 7, 2019, UNIBE facilitated a 4 hour workshop on teaching initial literacy skills for youth. This strategy is to ensure that approaches and curriculums for teaching literacy are aligned between both projects.

Revision of a criminality perception study – Through its partner Chemonics International USAID is carrying out a study on the citizen perception on security, criminality, and violence in the five geographic areas where the agency operates. On May 7, a meeting took place with all YES Office implementers to review aspects related to the methodology and approach of this research project. The ARYI provided recommendations on the data collection instrument, as well as tips for an effective deployment of the field work. This discussion led to the consideration of a survey module designed to understand the perception of youth. The results of this study will serve to guide USAID's country strategy for the following four years.

MINERD education meeting – On June 3, USAID initiatives under the YES portfolio related to education met with representatives of the Ministry of Education (MINERD). The purpose of this activity was to inform the Ministry about USAID education initiatives, and to identify mechanisms to improve existing interventions, while adapting them to the needs of the public sector. Regional directors from MINERD and the management and education specialists of all implementing partners attended the event. The ARYI staff gave an overview of the activity, including its programs. This presentation delved into the particularities of EPC and QLS programs, positively drawing the attention of the public sector for these tools to complement the extended school day sessions. Through this meeting a closer collaboration with the Ministry was established, and it is expected that this support serves to facilitate coordination with schools districts for the implementation of EPC.

II. SUCCESS STORIES

ISAURY DEL ROSARIO: Expanding horizons through School Reintegration after Childbirth

Lack of child support and economic resources, are some of the causes that contribute to increase absenteeism and lead to school dropout by teenage mothers in the Dominican Republic. Young mothers that abandon school at the primary level are less likely to return during their adult lives, increasing their risk to vulnerability. The At-Risk Youth Initiative, through its sub-award DREAM Project in Puerto Plata, works systematically in at risk communities to promote educational reintegration of youth, including teen mothers.

Isaury del Rosario, a 16 year old teenage mother from Villa Liberación in Sosúa, shared her story and how she became a mom at an early age. "I struggled with poverty since I was a child. My mother passed away some time ago and my father is in prison, so my sister and I had to grow on our own, without any economical or emotional help. I had to do many things to survive, like living with an older man that brings food to the table, but who is violent and controlling. We have a son together and I want him to be happy and free," she admits.

Motherhood implies sudden changes in responsibilities, pushing her out of school. Through the ARYI, DREAM Project helped Isaury in her school reinsertion process and provided the materials she needed to continue her studies, given her difficult financial

situation. “Being a mother so young, I had to leave school very early. I hoped someday I could continue to study and graduate, but I thought it was not possible anymore now that I have a son and a man that limits my decisions. What a surprise I had when I found out that this dream could actually be accomplished!” she confesses. Isaury continues to narrate her journey: “As soon as I arrived to the USAID program, my sister and I were provided with new materials like a backpack, pencils, notebooks, and other things, that I was so excited to go back to school and complete my formal education. When I think about everything we are learning and how we will use that information, there is a sense of fulfilment and pride in me that is hard to explain.” Her intentions of joining school is to serve as role model to her sister, who also joined school after having dropped out.

Education opens opportunities for youth development, and serves to empower women and reduce their economic dependence. Isaury explains her experience with the school reintegration program and the positive impact it has had on her so far: “My teachers and trainers provide the best advice and really want everybody there to be as prepared as they are. In that classroom I felt listened to and protected, but more importantly, I know that with the right education I can carefully decide my present and my future. I now feel strong enough to demand better treatment from my partner and to have a social life with young people like myself. I got my life back!” Isaury exclaims. Her statement validates the fact that by empowering girls and women to achieve their fullest potential, the community improves and contributes meaningfully to the development of the Dominican Republic.

Isaury concludes by saying the following: “Thanks to this opportunity, I am more independent, and feel safer and less afraid of what might happen to me and my son if I separate from my partner. I found out that, if I study, my dreams are more likely to be achieved.”

RAILIN MIESES: Generating social change through entrepreneurship

Unemployment is one of the key issues affecting youth in the Dominican Republic. Lack of education and employment opportunities for youth contribute to their increased participation in violent activities. Such was the case of Railin Mieses, a 19 year old former gang member and drug dealer from Guachupita, a dangerous neighborhood in Santo Domingo. Thanks to technical vocational training provided through the ARYI, Railin was able to trade a risky lifestyle for an opportunity to become a trained entrepreneur. By doing so, he changed his and his family’s life for the better.

"I was on the wrong path," Mieses opens up. "I committed violent acts and sold illegal substances." The young man shared that some time ago he followed friends’ advice and joined a street gang, to make money easily. “I hadn’t finish school, had no technical education, and needed money for everyday life,” added Mieses, who lives with his mother. “The thought of changing my life came when I understood there was hope for me and my future. Only then I was ready to ask and receive help to change my life.” Fortunately, that was the moment when Railin found out that near his home an entrepreneurship program was offered through the ARY Initiative.

The Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral (IDDI), financed by USAID Youth At Risk Initiative, recruits young people like Railin to benefit from workforce development programs. The programs offer young participants ages 16 to 24 the opportunity to learn and practice technical skills within a discipline, in this case entrepreneurship, so that in the future they are able to become part of the workforce, obtain employment or begin their own projects. For a young person that started his working life as a drug seller, this meant a completely different future, in which imprisonment was left out of the equation. “I was able to understand how freelancers earn money, by understanding how businesses work,” explains Railin, with enthusiasm.

In the Entrepreneurship course, Railin Mises learned about leadership, communication, decision making, finance, and income generation, after analyzing potential business ideas. Additionally, he honed his soft skills and conflict resolution training through a specialized component included in this program, allowing him to develop competences to cope with demanding emotional and cognitive situations. “Now I know there are other ways of making money and solving problems that do not harm me or others.” Railin also learned “how to think, and how to be independent and responsible for [his] development.”

10. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR NEXT YEAR INCLUDING UPCOMING EVENTS

- October 16-18: USA Marines Comfort Mission visit ARYI intervention sites in Santo Domingo.
- November 12, 2019: Sustainability Committee Meeting with potential private sector partners
- January 30, 2020: Youth Networks Crime and Violence Prevention Plan presentation

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