FORMATIVE EVALUATION REPORT No. 3
(8.16 - 11.06)

Submitted to: Dr. Humberto Álvarez, Investigador Principal del Proyecto TIC (UTP)

RE: PROJECT ENTITLED: "Usando Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación (TIC) para mejorar la productividad y el ingreso en el sector informal urbano de la economía: un estudio de caso y proyecto piloto en la Ciudad de Panamá"- No. 104121

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The project has consistently made good progress, and while the research and outreach activities seem to be complete on time, there has not been a sufficient period of time to consider results and transform data into information for final reporting purposes. For this reason, I reiterate my recommendation from the previous evaluation to request to extend the due date for the final report (which has now been recently submitted to the donor); it is common practice to allow for at least 30 and up to 90 days with externally funded projects.
- Documentation of the unique and transformative methodologies (bottom-up & area-emergent approaches) should be included as a significant project result – this also comprises an element of the "process-model" that permits this project to be replicated in a tailored way for other places, within Panama City and elsewhere in Latin America.
- It has been noted that the volume of data and intensity of information compilation goes well beyond what was expected in the proposal stages, and sets the stage well for future phases of an effort on the informal economy. My recommendation is for a minimal amount of transition time from this project to proposed follow-on work in order to maintain fresh data and to keep active the now trained project team, whose human resource capacity has been built up in this first phase.
- PIs have balanced the need to capture the enthusiasm of the community for the project and maintain neutrality and control of the research activity.
- One significant key to success has been the incorporation of a team member from the area itself with experience as an informal worker and connections to the community. During this final evaluating/reporting process, feedback from the community on drafts should be incorporated into final versions to be sure this perspective and outcomes are fully captured.

RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

- Se encuentra el proyecto progresando pero debido a corto plazo planificado para analizar resultados y transformar datos hacia información, recomiendo nuevamente que se extiende la fecha limitada para la entrega de los informes/documentos finales, cual es una practica muy común (desde 30 hasta 90 días).
- Se debe documentar como resultado en si el enfoque de "abajo hacia arriba" y el enfoque innovador denominado "emergente de área" – cual forma parte del "modelo-proceso" permitiendo que el proyecto pudiera ser replicado en otros lugares, tanto dentro de la ciudad de Panamá como otros lugares en América Latina.
- Se excedió las expectativas con respecto a la cantidad de datos; cual forma buena fundación para fases de actividad nueva en el futuro para proponer. Recomiendo que se minimiza el tiempo de la transición desde este proyecto a un nuevo para mantener información actualizada y mantener el equipo activo, cual capacidad se había desarrollado durante este proyecto.
- Los IP han podido establecer un equilibrio entre la captación de interés de la comunidad / los colaboradores y el requisito a mantener la credibilidad / la neutralidad y el control de las actividades de investigación científica.
- Un clave para los éxitos fue la estrategia de incorporar personal del área mismo con experiencia como trabajador informal. Durante el desarrollo de los informes del proyecto, se debe buscar la perspectiva de la comunidad también para incluir los resultados en los documentos finales.

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Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá

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Introduction/Purpose

The intent of this formative evaluation report is to comment upon progress ongoing from the end of the previous reporting period (August 16, 2008) through November 06, 2008. It thus covers activity scheduled in the proposal for the numbered months 9 through 12, with approximately 2 weeks remaining until the formal end of project activity. (For evaluative commentary on prior activities during months 1 through 8, please refer to Evaluation Report No. 1 and No. 2).

It bears repeating that *formative* evaluations focus on how the project has proceeded and offer suggestions for how it may continue or improve its actions during the actual course of its implementation. This kind of intervention does not repeat or replace project reports, but adds to them from an external point of view. The evaluative observations and recommendations in this report are based not only upon the initial technical draft report of the project (provided on 8/15/08) but also upon inspection of products, processes, participation, and conversations and team meetings with staff[*].

Four formative purposes are thus addressed here, in this order:
  1) to review and assess progress noted in the project, especially timing and quality with respect to the proposal and timeline approved;
  2) to review how the team has responded to previous recommendations for improvements to the project;
  3) to comment on results reported and recognized in order to highlight potential opportunities or strategic actions that may be enhanced or subsequently taken into effect toward optimizing project results; and
  4) to provide recommendations and highlight priorities for anticipated immediate next steps to ensure focus on project outcomes, delivery of products in a timely fashion, and optimizing project impact (even though it may already be understood or in planning by the PIs).

1. Progress Review and Quality/Timeframe Assessment

With reference to the original monthly timeframe of activities of the project (reproduced below), significant advances have been made and represent a general level of progress well in line with the plan for the final four-month period, with two weeks left at the date of this writing. Activities 1 through 3 were

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[*] ISO/IEC 19796-1:2005 Information Technology -- Learning, Education and Training and the IDRC donor guidelines at http://www.idrc.ca/es/ev-57097-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html serve as assessment framework for this report.

noted as completed on schedule during the first period. Activities 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9 had been mostly completed during the second period, with the exception that studies that include greater depth of analysis beyond descriptive results would be forthcoming (to the extent that these relate to and overlap with activity 11). Activities 7, 10, 11, and 12 have been underway during this period, and clearly significant progress has been made, but as noted, the sheer volume of data and intensity of information compilation goes well beyond what was expected in the proposal stages, and it would be a lost opportunity to not take a limited amount of additional time and attention into transforming this data into information and knowledge, in order to gain the most impact from the project investment. Taking this time and attention to careful consideration of these results also would serve to better set the stage for a proposal for future phases of a project. It has become evident that the PIs indeed plan to propose additional work, particularly given that the original proposal was for a two-year, two-phase project for which only the first phase was approved under this grant.   In my evaluation, these plans should proceed as soon as possible, in order to minimize the amount of transition time from this project to proposed follow-on work in order to maintain fresh data and to keep active the now trained project team, whose human resource capacity has been built up in this first phase.

Not all of the deliverables for this project period (which ends in two weeks) has been complete, but a realistic plan for completion has been set at a staff team meeting, with responsibilities clearly assigned for how and when those that are related to the *project implementation* (namely activities 7 and 10) will finish prior to the original project end date of November 21st. In my estimation this plan is reasonable and doable.

The PIs have indeed formulated a formal request for extension to complete activity 11 (internal evaluation-analysis) during the month of December 2008 and activity 12 (dissemination)] in the month of January 2009. With the national and religious holidays that consume a good deal of the months of November thru early January, this extension of time is in my view completely justified, not to mention that in my prior evaluation, I recommended, due to recognizing that it is common practice with externally funded projects to allow a period of between 30 to 90 days for final reporting after the actual end date of the project, an extension of at least until December 31, 2008. These final activities do indeed relate to reporting kinds of activity and not implementation, and should be considered as reasonable. Should the extension not be granted, it would seem that the project at least complied with the minimum by November 21st, but that the opportunity for adequately capturing and analyzing results for future activity would be missed. To date, the quality of work has met or exceeded standards, but without an extension, the quality of the important summative results may not reach this prior achieved level.

Timeline for Evaluation Period

#	Month ==>	9	10	11	12
7		■			
10		■	■	■	
11		■	■	■	■
12					■

[Reproduced from proposal – Activities planned this period 7-10-11-12]

#	Descripción de Actividades	Productos Entregables
7	Taller de presentación de resultados preliminares ante grupo de participantes y asociaciones interesadas con el objetivo de obtener consideraciones y poder definir los lineamientos para la estrategia de intervención de forma coordinada. (Que será ejecutada bajo la responsabilidad del equipo investigador) en atención a criterios específicos de desarrollo potencial de las TIC en la actividad informal.	**Proceso modelo** para el uso de TIC y mejorar las actividades en la Economía informal en LAC Lineamientos definidos de forma coordinada para la estrategia de intervención Beneficiarios clave identificados para participar del desarrollo y fortalecimiento de capacidades Taller ejecutado con la participación de los actores claves de las instituciones
10	Puesta en marcha del plan de implementación/proyecto piloto	Ejecución de 4 Talleres de Capacitación
11	Medición de resultados obtenidos con la implementación a través de análisis y encuestas posteriores indagando nuevamente sobre el acceso, utilización, ingreso, medidas de productividad y otros indicadores económicos de las muestras de beneficiarios	Informe con la Evaluación de resultados de la implementación
12	Actividades de divulgación regional a través de la realización de un evento (workshop) para intercambio de experiencias y Divulgación de los resultados en revista técnica especializada. Además de presentar y debatir las lecciones aprendidas generales, la documentación apoyará el diseño de una agenda de investigación para una fase futura, creada sobre una base sólida para el desarrollo de nuevas investigaciones y otras actividades adicionales.	Publicación de Informe Participación en un (1) evento regional para intercambio de experiencias y de lecciones aprendidas Agenda de investigación

Explicitly, IDRC questions can be answered as follows:

- *¿Está el proyecto encaminado para alcanzar sus objetivos?*

Yes, it is my estimation that the project is meeting its objectives, and at a notably more intense level than approved for the project. This may be due to the fact that the original proposal was for a two-year project, was cut-back for this approved effort.

- *¿ Ha cambiado su campo de aplicación?*

No. Changes in the project itself, implementation, or activities has not changed, but the timeframe needed to properly analyze results will not be sufficient to produce more meaningful outcomes beyond project reporting.

¿Qué actividades fueron apoyadas por el proyecto durante el período del informe?

Please see the technical report for these details, and refer to the above activity set for a summary.

- *¿Eran todas ellas parte del plan original del proyecto?*

All of the work completed form part of the original project plan. Activities have been intensive and focused upon data collection, organization, and management, amassing a wealth of detail that will serve the project well in the remaining months and beyond. The initial and positive response from the Panamanian community toward the project has been managed effectively, but the PIs should

continue to be alert toward managing expectations of collaborators as the currently funded phase of the project draws to a close in the next few months. Again, this can be done in part by emphasizing that this is a long-term research process that seeks sustainable improvements and a basis for further action, rather than *only* immediate results.

- *¿Ha cambiado el enfoque o la metodología?*

The focus (bottom-up approach) and methodology (area-emergent) have not changed and have been appropriately implemented in a recursive way, one that allows results generated to inform continued progress. The technical report for this period as well as earlier periods includes tangible examples of how what is being learned in the research aspects is being applied in the programmatic and training areas of the project. The training was extremely well received, and it seems to be due to the careful methodology of involving the community in the design/development activities.

- *¿El proyecto concluirá antes o a tiempo de la fecha de vencimiento (lo que supone la preparación de los informes finales)?*

I repeat here my recommendation to request a time extension for completing and submitting the final report/research agenda, for reasons already elaborated. I am in agreement with the PIs plans to finalize by the end of January 2009.

2. Team Response to Prior Recommendations for Improvement

The second formative evaluation report submitted identified a few items that warranted the project team's attention in terms of project content, mainly shifting from data to analysis. They have responded well to these recommendations, particularly sticking to the bottom-up & area emergent methodologies leading to an organically derived system of classification of informal economic activity, and the means and content for the training activities. The visualization has progressed but still has not been fully exploited for future research agenda. It is hoped that time for the final analysis will allow for more of this. The website is up to date and improved, but would benefit when the compilation of results and outcomes are completed.

3. Commentary on Current Results and Impact Optimization

Again, results of the project at this stage still relate mainly to data and implementation. Deeper information and knowledge production has only just begun, and so results beyond descriptive ones have not yet been released.

The following IDRC questions can thus be answered as follows:

- *¿Ha producido el proyecto importantes hallazgos y resultados de investigación? ¿ Cuáles son y qué se hará con ellos?*

While the project has indeed produced important successes and progress benchmarks as noted above and in more detail in the technical report, actual research results have not yet been generated. This will be the subject of the final summative evaluation report that I will submit, as well as staff assessment in the last phases of documentation.

- *¿Está el proyecto colaborando a desarrollar la capacidad de investigación de su institución o de los individuos participantes?*

The project indeed has shown an extensive capacity for collaboration as noted in previous reports. The plans for developing a follow-on proposal should take greater advantage of these relationships, especially now that the background research is laid.

4. Formative Recommendations and Next Priorities

This section will answer the IDRC questions regarding:
- *¿Qué ajustes se necesitan para perfeccionar el desempeño futuro?*
- *¿Cuáles son las actividades programadas para el próximo período y hasta la conclusión del proyecto? ¿Podrá terminar el proyecto conforme al presupuesto?*

The next phase of work will focus on finishing activities 11 and 12, which are already in progress but would be rushed to complete within two weeks. If an extension is granted as requested, no other major adjustments would be needed for the project to submit quality and meaningful deliverables as proposed.

Should the extension be granted, the team should seek the feedback from the informal economy community – particularly the participants in the trainings. One significant key to success has been the incorporation of a team member from the area itself with experience as an informal worker and connections to the community. Taking this lesson to heart in the documentation, results that will be presented in final reports should incorporate input using this give-and-take relationship among researchers and participants to be sure this perspective and all outcomes are fully captured.

In addition, while the final documentation is being completed, it should be noted that because the limited nature of the project will not be able to address all of the ideas and emergent questions or opportunities, these activities should *explicitly* incorporate a process to capture needs for future projects, funding proposals, or collaboration agendas *within* this final documentation. Not only would this make for better documentation on the current effort, but it would also improve a future planned proposal, and furthermore help the team continue to effectively manage the expectations of team members, collaborators, participants, and donors as this project ends.

Firmado:

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Dra. Patricia Bennett de Solís, Evaluadora Externa
Entregado el 6 de Noviembre de 2008