

Implementation of a Civil Society Outreach Program on the FTAA with the Paraguayan Ministry of Foreign Relations

May – December 2004

11. Paraguay

11.1. Implementation of a Civil Society Outreach Program on the FTAA with the Paraguayan Ministry of Foreign Relations

Overview

From May to December 2004, CARANA supported a Civil Society Outreach Program (CSOP) in Paraguay with the Ministry of Foreign Relations. An initial visit to Asunción took place in March 2004 to meet with key members of civil society, USAID/Paraguay, U.S. Embassy/Paraguay and the Paraguayan Ministry of Foreign Relations. The program was designed to effectively increase support among the Paraguayan population for the FTAA and free trade in general. The primary activities under this program were to support the Paraguayan Ministry of Foreign Relations in the implementation of their outreach strategy. CARANA assisted the Ministry of Foreign Relations with a series of seminars and high-profile conferences throughout the interior of the country to promote awareness of the FTAA, the negotiation process, and the benefits and challenges of negotiating a free trade agreement.

Counterparts

The primary counterpart for this activity was the Paraguayan Ministry of Foreign Relations. CARANA developed solid relationships with private sector organizations in Paraguay throughout this activity, including:

Asociación Paraguaya de Profesionales Graduados en los Estados Unidos (APPG)	Ministry of Foreign Relations
Association of prosecutors	Universidad Católica
Cámara de Comercio Paraguayo-Americano (AMCHAM)	USAID/Asunción
Cámara de Exportadores (CAPEX)	Various print and televised media
Cámara Nacional de Comercio y Servicios (CNCS)	

Timeframe

This activity was carried out from May to December 2004.

Activities

The primary activities in this program included:

- Financial and technical support to the Ministry of Foreign Relations in a series of conferences and workshops on the FTAA negotiation process. The majority of these events were held outside of Asunción, and focused on informing the population of the negotiation process. CARANA urged the Ministry of Foreign Relations to consider expanding these conferences and workshops to include a more substantive discussion of the opportunities and challenges of Free Trade Agreements, rather than a descriptive session on trade negotiation timelines and frameworks. A significant challenge for CARANA in supporting these activities was consistent pressure from the Ministry to pay salaries to government officials and per diems.

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The primary cities in which outreach events were held include:

Caaguazú	Ciudad Pdte. Franco
Coronel Oviedo	Col. Nac.
Areguá	Caacupé
San Bernardino	Pilar
Filadelfia	San Juan Bautista
Villa Hayes	San Estanislao
Asunción	Coll. Curupayty
Salto del Guairá	Santa Rosa del Monday
Minga Guazú	Naranjal
Tavaí	Hernandarias
Capiata	Itá
Nemby	Villeta
Itauguá	Arroyo Porá
Cambyretá	Capitán Miranda
Trinidad	Carmen del Paraná
Yaguarón	Roque González
J. Augusto Saldivar	Escobar
Costa Irala Quindy	La Colmena
Ybycuí	Bella vista
Hohenau	Santísima Trinidad
Misiones, Santa Rosa	Misiones, San Ignacio
Pedor Juan Caballero	Ciudad del Este
San Lorenzo	Itapúa
Encarnación	

- Strengthening of the “Foro Consultivo,” the primary public-private dialogue mechanism of the Government of Paraguay for discussion of issues related to free trade, and specifically related to the FTAA. CARANA brought Costa Rican expert Francisco Chacón to Asunción to meet with MRE officials in closed-door sessions to share key lessons learned from Costa Rica on how to structure and manage an open dialogue with civil society on the most pressing issues related to negotiating a free trade agreement. This effort culminated in a large one-day conference on Free Trade sponsored by the Foro Consultivo, attracting over 250 prominent Paraguayans in Asunción.
- Visit by Francisco Chacón
Following a request for assistance from the Government of Paraguay, CARANA sent Francisco Chacón to Asunción to meet with ministry officials in charge of reactivating the Consultative Group for the FTAA. CARANA also took advantage of Mr. Chacón’s visit to hold two conferences highlighting Costa Rica’s strategy and experience with trade liberalization.
- Visit by Dr. Ricardo Monge
In November, CARANA sent Costa Rican Agricultural Expert Ricardo Monge to Paraguay for a series of meetings with key stakeholders in Asunción. The week’s activities culminated in a high-profile event in which National and International speakers

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spoke on trade integration and opportunities for Paraguay. Over 250 participants attended the event, the largest and most successful event of its kind in Paraguay last year according to many participants.

Results

This Civil Society Outreach Program successfully supported the Paraguayan Ministry of Foreign Relations efforts and the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between USAID and the Ministry. In fact, with CARANA support, the Ministry far exceeded its initial expectations of holding 30 seminars and 14 larger events throughout the country, tripling its outreach achievements with 91 seminars and holding an additional 16 large events across Paraguay. With CARANA assistance in programming these activities, the Ministry of Foreign Relations reached over 5,000 key stakeholders throughout the interior of the country. These 2-3 hour seminars covered the status of the FTAA negotiations and the general opportunities and challenges of FTAs. Overall, this was an unprecedented effort at public outreach.

Lessons Learned

However, CARANA also expressed significant concerns to both the Ministry of Foreign Relations and USAID/Paraguay throughout this civil society outreach program. The Ministry managed the content of the program, and on several occasions CARANA suggested that these static presentations could be improved and tailored to the various audiences in order to facilitate the dialogue. CARANA offered to produce or pay for printing of ‘popular’ written materials as a leave behind; however the Ministry staff insisted that they receive additional compensation for their time in preparing these presentations and documents. Ultimately, CARANA learned that Ministry employees were “double-counting” their travel and asking the UNDP for reimbursement as well as from CARANA for the same travel days. As soon as CARANA learned of this, we notified the UNDP who subsequently cancelled their technical assistance program with the Ministry.

Relevant Documents

- [C.11.11.1-1 Paraguay CSOP MOU English.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-2 Paraguay CSOP MOU Spanish.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-3 Paraguay CSOP Trip Report 03-2004.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-4 Paraguay CSOP Trip Interviews 03-2004.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-5 Paraguay CSOP Memo to MRE 04-2004.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-6 Paraguay CSOP Trip Report 07-2004.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-7 Paraguay CSOP Presentation Chacon.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-8 Paraguay CSOP Presentation Monge.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-9 Paraguay CSOP MRE Final Report 1.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1-10 Paraguay CSOP MRE Final Report 2.pdf](#)
- [C.11.11.1.11 Paraguay CSOP Communications Final Report.pdf](#)