

Interim Progress Report

General Information

Organization name: The Dominican Republic Education and Mentoring (DREAM) Project, Inc.

Project title: Implementation of the Única Girls Empowerment Mobile Application (Única App Implementation)

Grant amount: \$31,614.86

Contact person: Catherine DeLaura

Address: 13 Winter Lane, Milton, VT 05468

Summary of Outcomes Project Was Designed to Achieve

The Única program works directly with girls ages 12 to 18 in communities across the Dominican Republic to dismantle traditional gender norms, combat significant gaps in access to sexual education and knowledge about sexual/reproductive rights and confront social/political circumstances that create gender inequities in the country to develop girls and women's skills in leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and communication. As the COVID-19 pandemic prevented DREAM from running its traditional programming, we have turned to a new and innovative way to transform the Única curriculum into dynamic, digital content that can be accessed from home through the Única Girls Empowerment Mobile Application (Única App).

DREAM staff and Única trainers conduct a social and print media marketing campaign and community outreach in 10 communities on the North Coast to gain at least 2,610 girls and women as users of the App during this yearlong project. As a result of using the App and completing its modules, girls and women will show consistent improvement in their knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, skills to make healthy decisions and gender-equitable attitudes. Furthermore, future Única facilitators who can continue to conduct and expand community outreach and education will be identified for sustainability beyond the first year.

Changes in Funding

There have been no changes in the project's funding.

Changes in Organization and Project Situation

DREAM's Board of Directors engaged in a strategic planning process during the summer and fall of 2021 that included a slight update to the organization's mission and vision. DREAM's new mission is: Providing high-quality educational opportunities to children, youth and families in the Dominican Republic. DREAM's new vision is: Our transformative education programs respond to gaps in the national education system and empower at-risk children and youth to create a better future for themselves and their families. Through innovative approaches to literacy, early childhood education, youth leadership, music instruction and community support, DREAM promotes critical thinking and independence to enrich lives and strengthen sustainable communities.

There have been significant changes in project staff due to transitions out of the organization of previous project leaders, promotions of DREAM team members and new hires.

- Nirelis Puello Ventura, previous Deportes para la Vida (DPV)/Única Coordinator, has been replaced by:
 - **Miguel Ángel Smera Mercedes**, DPV/Luchadores por el Cambio (LPC) Coordinator
 - **Reynalhy Batista Javier**, Única Coordinator and DPV Sub-coordinator
- Gina Morales-Taveras, previous Marketing Manager, has been replaced by:
 - **Belisa Howard**, Marketing Manager
 - **Hailen García Silverio**, Community and Content Manager

Changes in Number of Beneficiaries

There has not been a change in the number of beneficiaries. Our goal continues to be 2,610 girls and women (beneficiaries) directly impacted and 8,351 people indirectly impacted after one year of implementation of the Única App.

Challenges Faced & Solutions Implemented

The Única App is innovative and distinctive in the country, which has drawn the attention of many young people and institutions primarily on the North Coast of the Dominican Republic. Nevertheless, there have been some obstacles related to technical difficulties in the App itself and long-term engagement of users.

- The App has had to undergo two updates as the number of participants has grown. The technicians and developers of the App have had to troubleshoot small problems, such as:
 - The App slowed down on phones with lower storage and processing capacity.
 - Emojis/emoticons could not be used to answer questions, because they were not validated characters, and, therefore, those answers were not being recorded.
 - If the internet or Wi-Fi connection was unstable, the App did not allow users to move forward.
- The acquisition of users was slow at first.
- Many girls and young women started the App but did not complete the modules.

The solutions that have been implemented to address and almost completely eliminate the challenges include:

- Being in a process of constant evaluation of the App and the user interaction/experience. Specific procedures have been defined with the App technicians and developers to detect problems and have a short-term action plan to solve them.
- Mobile internet is provided to the App users during their participation in advisory groups/classes with facilitators so that poor connection is not an impediment to completing the application.
- App facilitators keep in contact with the participants to give them follow-up and advice. Virtual and in-person reinforcement sessions in areas in which facilitators

previously presented about and introduced the App have been held during which facilitators share a practical user guide full of questions and activities that motivate users and help them move through the App and stay engaged.

Changes in Objectives

There have been no changes in the project's objectives.

Progress Toward Achieving Objectives

Phase I: Launch, media campaign & pilot

Youth-led social and print media marketing

- Seven images and gifs of the App were designed and published with the aim of increasing the App's visibility, specifically with regard to how the App works and what can be done on it.
- Four videos of actual girls and young women who have used the App speaking about their experience and personal development to inspire other young people to use the App were produced.

Develop and publish online instructional videos

- Two video tutorials of the App were distributed to facilitate its use and answer questions about it.

Única trainers conduct community outreach to public schools, clubs, churches, NGOs and other community groups to introduce and facilitate use of App

- Visits have been made to more than 30 educational centers, youth associations and other sites serving the target population with the aim of creating a network for the dissemination of information that can highlight the advantages/benefits of the App and attract young people to sign up as a part of the advisory groups/classes led by Única facilitators (vs. signing up as an independent user).
- Thus far, there are seven advisory groups/classes for Única App users, managed by Única facilitators, impacting seven communities: Cabarete, Sosúa, Montellano, San Felipe de Puerto Plata, Imbert, Sabana Grande de Boyá and San Francisco de Macorís. These communities are located within three provinces: Puerto Plata, Monte Plata and Duarte.

Phase II: Review & revise

- The Única team has implemented robust data collection tools used by the Única facilitators in their App advisory groups/classes, such as participant satisfaction surveys, ongoing counseling for the first two weeks to one month, weekly follow-up calls and brief reports by facilitators at the close of advisory groups/classes. As such, we are able to measure users' satisfaction and the usefulness of the App and its impact on learning to be able to make future pertinent modifications to improve the App's efficacy and the user experience.

Outcome objective I: Once the App is developed, DREAM staff and 20 Única youth trainers will conduct community outreach to begin the pilot phase of the program in 10 communities, as measured by the number of users gained after outreach sessions and user location and other demographic information.

- Currently, there are four Única trainers and six community leaders impacting seven communities in the country.

Outcome objective II: In the first year of the project, DREAM will gain at least 2,610 users, as measured by number of unique users and how often users engage with the App.

- Through March 2022, there are 276 girls registered on the Única App as individuals and 399 girls registered as a part of an advisory group/class with an assigned facilitator for a total of 675 girls registered in the App. Of those 675, 271 users have completed all of the modules.

Outcome objective III: Users of the App will show consistent improvement in knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to Única's program goal, as measured by performance on pre- and post-tests (average score of 85% or higher on post-test and an improvement of at least 15% between pre- and post-tests) and feedback from the Única trainers providing scaffolded support and facilitating reflective conversations through WhatsApp and Messenger.

- Users' test scores thus far are: pre-test average of 77.52% and post-test average of 87.49% with an average improvement of 10% between pre- and post-tests.

Outcome objective IV: In the first year, identify at least two App users per pilot community to be future Única facilitators conducting community outreach and education related to the Única App, as measured by interest expressed to current Única trainers and outreach sessions subsequently run by new facilitators.

- From the first six advisory groups/classes, two girls have already been integrated into the Única program to become Única trainers and two additional girls to become facilitators of the Única App and have their own advisory groups/classes of girls to follow and provide support to until their completion of the App's modules.

Difficulties Anticipated in Completing Project in Timeframe Outlined

The beneficiaries' lack of motivation to sign up for the App once hearing about it and the high rate of incompleteness of the modules could be future obstacles to reaching the goal set forth in the proposal. We seek to better understand the root causes of their lack of engagement in order to increase stickiness amongst users.

Appendix: Supporting Materials

Impact of the RISE Grant on Única, DREAM and the Community

In the words of Única App facilitator Nachely Nohemi Lopez Martinez:

"Being a facilitator of the Única App was a very rewarding experience. I had the opportunity to learn about the reality faced by a diversity of wonderful girls from my province and beyond. They showed great leadership and interest in the topics discussed.

We genuinely thank Together Women Rise for its support, as the Única App, without a doubt, has the power to simultaneously connect and empower young Dominican women in times as difficult as the ones we are experiencing."

Única Coordinator Reynalhy Batista Javier adds:

"The Única App project represents an opportunity for positive growth and development in the Dominican Republic. I feel extremely grateful that there are organizations like yours that can channel the support and help of hundreds of people who believe that change is possible in these vulnerable communities lacking conditions and opportunities.

The project continues to grow more and more, and I know that, with this incredible opportunity for expansion and multiplication, it will touch the lives of thousands of girls who will be able to possess new knowledge that will increase female empowerment and healthy decision-making, not only in them but in each life that those girls have contact with."

Photos and Videos of the Única App Implementation in Action

Please enjoy [photos and videos of the Única App Implementation](#) project in action!

Expense Reporting



The DREAM Project

Budget vs. Actual for the Implementation of Única Girls Empowerment Mobile Application Project (funds spent through March 31, 2022)

Please note the expenses are reported in US dollars. 57 DOP : 1 USD used as the exchange rate.

All payments will be made in the Dominican Republic.

	Budget	Actual
	\$ 31,614.86	\$ 18,575.09
Funds requested from RISE		
Personnel Costs		
Coordinator, Única	5,017.54	3,087.72
Sub-coordinator, DPV	1,596.49	982.46
DR payroll taxes	1,024.51	630.47
Stipend for trainers	10,526.32	5,263.16
Graphic designer/videographer	2,600.00	2,200.00
Total Personnel Costs	20,764.86	12,163.80
Non-personnel Costs		
Transport for coordinators	3,000.00	1,750.00
Printing	126.32	187.00
Telephone/internet service for trainers	1,200.00	820.88
Transport for trainers	2,400.00	1,230.57
Total Non-personnel Costs	6,726.32	3,988.45
Program Administration 15%	4,123.68	2,422.84
Total Funds Requested for Única App Implementation	\$ 31,614.86	\$ 18,575.09

Funds remaining to be spent

\$ 13,039.77