



Community Leaders Mean Business

This is the story of Angostura, a town in the Dominican Republic whose economy relies on the sale of agricultural products. Because of the lack of public transportation in the community, Angostura's access to the agricultural market is met through intermediaries, which set unfavorable prices for local producers and prevent sustainable economic growth.

Angostura now turns to ecotourism to guarantee alternate sources of revenue and employment for the community while creating conditions for the diversification of activities and encouraging exposure to new business initiatives.

Over the long winding roads of La Vega and up into the lush green mountains of Manabao lies the community of Angostura. In Angostura there are 65 families, of which 27 individuals serve as active participants and strive for the betterment of their community through the Milagrosa Association.

The Milagrosa Association is run primarily by the women of Angostura, whom do not receive adequate financial support from their husbands and are presented little opportunity for advancement in the community. Consequently, these women radiate motivation and their work exemplifies the significant progress that can be made through female leadership.

These women have been working towards community empowerment and development while creating sustainable sources of income and employment for community members for almost 40 years. Previous focus areas include: cattle-raising with Heifer International, compost and recycling, protection of the Arroyo Grande basin, reforestation, and the creation of a hydroelectric power source for Angostura. With year-round waves of international volunteers and visitors passing through, Angostura relies on its service and hospitality as a source of income for community members. After three years of serious dialogue and planning, Milagrosa came together with local NGO Junta Yaque to implement a Sustainable Ecotourism Development Project, which would provide lodging and nature



*Cabin construction is on its way!
95% of construction materials were purchased last quarter.*

attractions for visitors while developing a sustainable source of revenue for the community.

With USAID-DSTA support, Junta Yaque and La Milagrosa Association have been able to organize a group of at least twenty people to take charge of the development of ecotourism services in the community. This has resulted in the rapid implementation of their project vision. Numerous planning meetings have taken place, quotes for purchase of materials have been established, and now Angostura has a tangible product as a result of hard work with the efficient construction and woodwork of three cabins and the outfitting of hiking trails well under way.

The enthusiastic and motivated people of Angostura expect that the presence of tourists and visiting volunteer groups will become a source of direct income for families. Angostura's efforts will benefit the 27 members of La Milagrosa Association responsible for the development of the project's tourism attractions.

The project will simultaneously push the growth and capacity of small-medium enterprises and other business initiatives. This will benefit at least fifty people within the Angostura community and surrounding areas. Of these fifty people, upwards of fifteen women from Angostura and the neighboring communities of La Redonda y Mata de Limón will have access to earnings from sales of their artisan products.