

Project to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Ecuador

Since June of 2004, the American Bar Association's Latin America and Caribbean Law Initiative Council (ABA/LALIC) has led a Project to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Ecuador with funds from the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons office. The Project is also supported by the American Bar Foundation. Ecuador, a fragile democracy, has been under severe strain in the past decade because of its deteriorating economic situation. Poverty has been on the rise and, by some measures, has doubled in the past ten years. A disturbing consequence of this increase in misery levels has been a rising problem with trafficking in persons. The country has received the lowest ranking (Tier Three) in the State Department's Annual Trafficking in Persons report. For the past year, LALIC has been working with Ecuador's government and NGO community to create a system of response to the problem.

The Project has completed a number of groundbreaking tasks that will now prepare Ecuador to take on the problem in the implementation phase of the project. Among the Project's accomplishments already are:

- 1) ***Assessments of Trafficking in Ecuador.*** In the Winter of 2004-2005, the Project completed the first in-depth assessment of trafficking in persons in Ecuador that looked at all sections of the country. The assessment -- which had a qualitative, rather than quantitative aim -- was done by a team of recognized experts on human trafficking. In 2006, the ABA has begun its second assessment, this time focusing on social services capacities, in order to continue advancing in the protection and prevention arena.
- 2) ***Legislative Reform.*** The Congress of Ecuador approved legislative reforms that create a more appropriate legal framework to combat trafficking in persons, and the President signed them into law. The Project was also asked to help draft an accompanying piece of legislation regarding the protection and prevention of victims of trafficking.
- 3) ***Creation of an Advisory Committee.*** The Project has a stakeholder group in the form of an Advisory Committee, whose diverse academic and geographic backgrounds help the Project better reflect the needs and realities of Ecuador.
- 4) ***Creation of an Anti-Trafficking Toolkit.*** The Project created an anti-trafficking toolkit of materials in Spanish, available at no cost on the Web that both local officials and members of civil society-at-large can use to educate people about the problem of trafficking in persons. The Project also printed 500 sets of copies of the tool kit and its annexes for distribution in areas where there is no access to the internet. The Tool-Kit to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Ecuador is available through our website: <http://www.abanet.org/lalic/toolkit/spanish.html>
- 5) ***Training Program for Ecuadorian Officials (Law Enforcement and Human Rights).*** A training schedule for various authorities has begun implementation. In August, a team of attorneys from the Human Rights Unit of the Ecuadorian Foreign

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- Ministry attended training in Chicago, IL, on using the anti-trafficking tool kit. They will in turn carry out training with NGOs in all 22 provinces of Ecuador under the national Human Rights Plan. The Project also held a hands-on training for Ecuadorian prosecutors and police officers on anti-trafficking investigative and prosecution techniques, with the help of judge Hiram Puig-Lugo of the Superior Court of D.C. Training for Judges, Law enforcement officers and prosecutors has been scheduled for mid-November in Cuenca, Ecuador.
- 6) ***Prevention Campaign.*** The Project has begun the design of an anti-trafficking campaign in combination with the Government of Ecuador. The campaign will have billboards and posters (with a life of approximately 2-3 years) at all mayor airports, bus stations and highways, warning people that trafficking is a serious offenses, punishable with up to 35 years of jail time. Because Ecuador is a destination and a source for trafficked people, a second stage of the campaign will incorporate Ecuadorian consulates and Embassies abroad.
 - 7) ***Education Module.*** A big part of the Project's prevention strategy is to support institutional efforts and to develop materials that are available to children. To this end, the Project is developing an educational module to be included in the national curricula of Ecuador, which will allow teachers and students to discuss the dangers of trafficking and their options when encountering these phenomena.
 - 8) ***Regional and International Conferences.*** The Project's Advisory Board and staff participated in the International Conference against Sexual Tourism in Cartagena, Colombia, where we had featured speakers in two sessions. The Project also co-sponsored and actively participated in a Regional Conference on Trafficking with the Organization of American States in Quito, Ecuador. In these events we had interaction with government officials, universities and NGOs from Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, Sweden and Thailand.

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