

**Ecuador: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)/Geneva Global Initiative:
“The Time is Now, Strategically Mobilizing Anti-Trafficking Organizations in Ecuador”**

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- USAID and Geneva Global (contractor) recognized that in order to invigorate anti-trafficking efforts by local civil society in Ecuador, the local organizations had to create their own goals and objectives.
- To assess its projects, including the development of anti-trafficking programs, Geneva Global requires non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the recipient countries to use a simplified results-based framework -- “Need-Program-Results” (NPR), to ensure that the project managers have identified the local needs appropriately, defined expected results, and designed clear means for measuring effective progress.
- Good project management using this results approach played a vital role in enabling the anti-trafficking program implementers to achieve higher-than-expected results in Ecuador.

Introduction:

Trafficking in persons is a criminal activity that occurs throughout the world. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has found that more than 130 countries are sources or recipients of trafficked persons. Trafficking in persons has been a particular problem in Ecuador: the country serves as a transit point for international trafficking rings and a source of internationally and domestically trafficked victims. In 2003, the ILO estimated that 5,000 children in Ecuador were forced into prostitution. However, as trafficking is a criminal activity, its scope is difficult to assess. Measuring the trafficking problem in Ecuador was especially complicated for several reasons. First, there was no common terminology to describe the issue. Additionally, in rural and indigenous areas, traffickers exploited the cultural practice of placing children with distant relatives to learn skills or gain access

to paid work by preying on these children away from the watchful eyes of their parents. Finally, while Ecuador was one of the first countries to subscribe to an international agreement addressing the fight against human trafficking, “The Protocol to Prevent, to Repress and to Punish Human Trafficking, Particularly of Women and Children” (known as the Protocol of Palermo), the country did not have an appropriate domestic legal framework to criminalize and prosecute trafficking in persons. As a result, in 2005, Ecuador was classified as a Tier 3 country defined as “not fully complying with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and not making significant efforts to do so.”

In 2005, Geneva Global Inc. and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) entered into a joint venture to address the issue of trafficking in persons across Ecuador. Geneva Global is a professional services firm that provides independent research, advice and grant management services to private and technical donors investing in the world’s developing nations. To assess all projects it researches, Geneva Global requires nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to use a simplified Managing for Development Results (MfDR) framework to ensure that projects have appropriately identified local needs, defined expected results and designed means for measuring progress. Geneva Global calls this approach “Need – Program – Results” (NPR). Simply, an NGO must outline the underlying needs in a community, articulate a program that clearly is targeted to meet those needs, and define the measurable results expected to address the need and its root causes. Geneva Global applied the NPR framework to the joint anti-trafficking initiative in Ecuador.

Application:

Geneva Global and USAID recognized that in order to invigorate anti-trafficking efforts by local civil society in Ecuador, the local civil society organizations had to create their own goals and objectives. Therefore, these two organizations convened a series of

meetings and conferences for interested private organizations and government institutions. Nearly 30 NGOs operating in Ecuador and dealing with various aspects of child labor, child and family issues, education and trafficking attended the meetings.

During these meetings and conferences, local NGOs were trained on NPR framework basics. The forums also strived to form a general consensus on the scope and definition of trafficking in Ecuador. This process helped ensure agreement among NGOs on program priorities and demonstrate the relation among various proposed projects within the anti-trafficking initiative. Based on these meetings, individual NGOs were able to decide whether they were interested in participating in the initiative and, if so, learn how to propose a project. A diverse portfolio of 11 projects from 11 implementers was developed and selected for funding by USAID and Geneva Global. The projects covered a broad geographical base with interventions divided into three focus areas: prevention, rescue and rehabilitation, and legislation and legal sponsorship. The main focus was on prevention, especially education about trafficking. This priority was established because the local organizations agreed that the Ecuadorian society had little knowledge of trafficking. Long-term success required helping society understand the problem of trafficking, its scope in Ecuador, and the price that society as a whole was paying because of rampant trafficking in persons, especially minors.

Below are the agreed upon objectives (in aggregate for all 11 projects) across the three focus areas:

Prevention

Human trafficking prevention efforts target people who are in danger of falling victim to traffickers, as well as people who are in the best position to help potential trafficking victims. Interventions include prevention workshops, training seminars and collaborative work between organizations. The following benchmarks were

agreed upon to gauge the progress of human trafficking prevention projects:

Objective:

- 40,000 to 60,000 potential victims will be educated directly via schools, communities and workshops and indirectly through media campaigns about the risk of falling prey to trafficking. This dissemination of information on how to identify and avoid deception will significantly reduce the number of potential victims being lured into dangerous situations.

Objective:

- 10,000 to 14,000 community members, teachers and leaders will be educated about the danger of trafficking. All of these individuals will then be mobilized to educate others and prevent girls and young women from falling prey to traffickers.

Objective:

- 1,500 to 2,000 victims of trafficking, at-risk individuals and providers for these individuals will receive job and skills training and economic aid to supply them with options for earning money legitimately so that they are less vulnerable to trafficking.

Rescue and Rehabilitation

Victims of human trafficking require significant psychological, medical and legal assistance to overcome trauma. Additionally, cultural stigma can hinder their reintegration into society. One of the priorities of the USAID and Geneva Global initiative is to ensure that victims are carefully nurtured and provided with consistent psychological care.

Objective:

- 1,000 to 1,500 victimized children and young women will receive personalized psychological and medical care to recover from sustained abuse. These services, in addition to critical skills training, will enable these children and women to re-enter society.

Legislation and Legal Sponsorship

When this initiative was launched, Ecuador did not have the infrastructure to control and stifle the trafficking industry. Ecuadorian NGOs funded through the program independently decided that a key objective of the initiative would be to advocate for acceptance of anti-trafficking legislation by the Ecuadorian legislature. Additionally, they planned ways to work alongside police officials and lawyers so anti-trafficking laws could be fully implemented and enforced.

Legislation Objective:

- 150 to 200 officials and lawyers will receive training in effectively combating trafficking through legislation. In the long run, these interventions will lead to legal, political and cultural improvements in Ecuador's approach to trafficking.
- There will be advocacy efforts to adopt laws within the Ecuadorian legislature to enforce international anti-trafficking conventions that Ecuador already supports on a global level.

Legal Sponsorship Objective:

- 250 to 300 female victims of human trafficking will receive direct legal assistance that will lead to the mobilization of the justice system and increased prosecutions.

Problem Solving:

Trafficking is a criminal activity and there is limited knowledge of the scope of the overall problem; therefore, one of the major difficulties in developing anti-trafficking initiatives was identifying

useable benchmarks and measurable outcomes. As a result of the general lack of understanding about the issue as well as schemes to traffic children without the knowledge of their parents, education became a priority for many of the local NGOs. Educating the general public about the nature and structure of trafficking in Ecuador was not only an effective strategy to address the problem; the results of education efforts became central to generating future surveys and measurements that could provide reliable data on the success of the initiatives. In order to capture this data, most projects focused measurements on outputs that could be reasonably expected. For example, rather than trying to measure the direct impact of education on trafficking, initiatives focused on the quality of the education individuals received. One measurement was a test given to all education seminar attendees after the sessions to assess their knowledge and understanding of the issue. These types of measurements were designed to give the evaluators a true sense of attendee learning and understanding, as opposed to providing meaningless data, such as numbers of individuals attending workshops or classroom sessions.

Results:

Prevention

Results:

- 71,966 people were educated about the risks of human trafficking through various mass media campaigns. The original goal was exceeded by 120%.
- 251,961 community members, including teachers and leaders, learned about the dangers of human trafficking and how to prevent it in their communities. This goal was exceeded by 1,799%.
- 1,632 trafficking victims and their providers received skills training and orientation in order to earn money legitimately. This goal was exceeded by 82%.

- An unexpected outcome of this initiative was the media coverage it received. While trafficking has not been commonly discussed in Ecuador, the issue is slowly gaining general attention.

Rescue

Results:

- 2,521 victimized children and young women received personalized psychological and medical care to recover from sustained abuse. They also received orientation and support to develop skills in order to become less vulnerable to human trafficking. This goal was exceeded by 168%.

Legislation and Legal Sponsorship

Results:

- In May 2005, thanks to the work of civil society groups, including some of the organizations implementing this initiative, the Congress of Ecuador approved the “Ley Reformativa al Código Penal” for sexual exploitation crimes against minors. This law created criminal proceedings and sentencing guidelines for different types of human trafficking offenses (prostitution of minors, sexual exploitation, child pornography, sexual tourism etc.), and was signed by the President and published in the Official Registration in June 2005. This is landmark legislation in the battle against trafficking in persons.
- 2,245 social leaders received training on the “Ley Reformativa al Código Penal” and the “Código de la Niñez y Adolescencia.” They also received training on the protocol for reporting trafficking incidents.
- 131 victims of human trafficking, primarily women and children, received legal support from the lawyers of participating organizations.

- Through this alliance, an effective legal sponsorship has been established that positions participating implementers as pioneers in sponsoring cases for victims of human trafficking, particularly sexual exploitation cases, in the Ecuadorian courts. To date, seven cases have been successfully prosecuted by the courts and have become precedents within Ecuadorian jurisprudence.

Conclusion:

Strategic Alliances

USAID and Geneva Global encouraged and nurtured strategic alliances among implementers and other institutions involved in anti-trafficking endeavors. One of the major focuses of the Geneva Global field staff has been to encourage and facilitate opportunities for information and resource sharing. In addition, implementers have shown creativity in finding new and effective ways to work together both with other partners in this initiative and various organizations involved in trafficking prevention efforts outside the scope of this program. The implementers adopted a variety of methods, including the training of journalists and other members of the media, to maximize exposure and raise awareness of the issues involved in human trafficking.

Relationships

Relationships built between implementers and local institutions enabled the development of better practices and improved intervention performance. A strong local network has been created and developed through this initiative, however a national network does not currently exist. While there are differences in conceptual and methodological focuses within the current network, the importance of increasing the scope and influence of this network is crucial for a wider impact. Establishing strategic alliances is a model that should be replicated, and pooling resources and sharing information are strategies needed to achieve success in areas where

projects have been started and to bring this model to more parts of Ecuador and other countries.

Legislation and Legal Challenges

The prosecution process has not been easy in spite of the approval of the new law. Cases of human trafficking are not isolated individual cases, but are strongly linked to criminal organizations, and victims, their families, and civil society organizations are fearful to face these organized crime rings in court. In addition, citizens and many law enforcement officials still do not have appropriate knowledge of the law and its application. The lack of clarification has left a number of loopholes that can be exploited and allows those convicted to be released without punishment. Other challenges within the judicial system remain and additional steps will need to be taken before those responsible for trafficking will experience the full authority of the law.

Combating human trafficking is clearly linked to the political and operative levels of government. The participation of local governments, as supporters or leaders in the development of several initiatives, has and will continue to enable a focus on human trafficking. Although it is not yet possible to speak about a clear and defined political will, it is evident that certain municipal administrations have shown a basic knowledge of the issue when they have participated in projects to fight human trafficking. It is important that local governments develop public policies addressed to vulnerable groups, coordinate the work of local institutions and develop clearer definitions of specific laws and regulations.

Changing Attitudes

The issue of human trafficking has been considered a cultural norm not publicized in the media and largely ignored by Ecuadorian society. It is clear from the results of the projects in this initiative that the alliance of implementers has had an impact on the prevailing societal attitudes, causing many to re-evaluate what is permissible within the culture. However, the fear of reprisals has

also hindered the ability to talk openly and discuss trafficking issues. The strength and influence of the trafficking network is far-reaching, which has meant that overcoming these often unspoken cultural norms has proved to be a great challenge for the implementers. This is long-term work that needs continued investment to maintain the momentum that has been established. Implementation of new laws and discussions in the national media about trafficking issues are steps in the right direction. Considerable time will be needed before the full impact of changes in cultural perspectives can be felt.

Best Practices

There is a need for specialized centers to assist victims as well as a need for a common methodology for appropriate interventions. The gaps in cultural understanding of the true nature of trafficking, coupled with a lack of commonly accepted best practices, has meant that cases are often taken out of context and interventions are not as effective as they could be. However, different implementers have pioneered a number of resources that will be useful for future initiatives. Implementers also have learned to improve their program management and results reporting procedures.

Planning for the Future

Taking into account the current conditions in Ecuador and the knowledge gained from this first-time initiative, the time is ripe for a more strategic, nationally coordinated program. It is clear from the results of this project that a large number of these implementers have made huge steps with relatively small resources. Strategic, nationwide investment by the national government, as well as other funding organizations, is needed for implementers to continue to move forward with this work.

Conclusion

The actual number of lives impacted by this initiative greatly exceeds the expected number. The individual project reports show

the ability of the implementers to respond to the demand within the communities in which they work. Good project management has played a vital role in enabling implementers to achieve higher-than-expected results. The long-term impact of the projects is difficult to measure as it is hard to evaluate downstream impacts. We do know that many professionals, community leaders and families have come to a better understanding of human trafficking and its impact in their communities.