

**SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE  
(AMENDMENT)  
USAID COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT EDG-A-00-02-00030-00  
QUARTERLY REPORT COVERING THE PERIOD  
OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2005**

**1. General Framework**

During the reporting period (October-December 2005), the project put in place some of the main technical, technological and human resources needed to carry out the activities proposed in the 2006 work plan and, possibly, the plan for 2007.

The main actions concern the dissemination of information about the project and the identification of specialized documents that will be used for the training activities proposed for 2006, and the contracting of the professional technical and technological services required to implement the project's most important activities.

**2. Annual goals**

**2.1.** To promote psychological support actions and the coordination of psychological contributions with the legal strategy of cases involving torture victims in the Inter-American System

**2.2.** To implement institution-building actions and promote national networks for providing comprehensive support to torture victims

**2.3.** To implement actions to sensitize society in general and civil society and state sectors involved with torture victims, in order to prevent a repetition of acts of torture and raise awareness of the plight of survivors

**3. Implementation of the project**

**3.1. Application of the legal-psychological methodology for providing support to victims and presenting expert evidence**

**3.1.1. Description**

The staff began to collect data for inclusion in a database of experts who could present evidence to the Inter-American System.

This database will be available to members of the public once they are given access to the specialized section.

### **3.1.2. Method**

The staff decided to begin by incorporating into the database information about experts who have already given evidence before the Inter-American Court. They studied the Court's sentences and drew up a list of the experts mentioned, which was then sent to the Court requesting copies of their curricula vitae. The Court provided this information and the staff also included the experts that have worked for the project "Psychological support for victims of torture in the Inter-American System."

### **3.1.3. Background / rationale**

During the first phase of the project, it became evident that torture victims who have recourse to the Inter-American System need to have a psychology professional to whom they can turn for emotional support. It also became clear that it was important that the psychologists help prepare the cross-examinations and collaborate with the legal strategy, implementing a legal-psychological methodology for handling the cases and the victims.

The importance of interdisciplinary work was one of the lessons learned in implementing the project, which got under way in 2002.

### **3.1.4. Institution(s) responsible and coordination**

The IIHR collects the data for inclusion in the database.

### **3.1.5. Intermediate steps**

- Collect data on professionals who meet the criteria for inclusion in the database

### **3.1.6. Results or outputs**

- The database will be available in the specialized section of the website

### **3.1.7. Impact indicators**

***"More knowledge about how to enhance the quality of the comprehensive psychological support provided to torture victims whose cases are being considered by the protection bodies of the Inter-American System"***

***"Legal NGOs are more knowledgeable about how to deal with torture victims"***

***"The legal and psychological interdisciplinary work involved in handling torture cases that are being considered by the protection bodies of the Inter-American System is better integrated"***

These indicators do not apply to the actions proposed for the quarter under review (October-December 2005). It will only be possible to gauge whether they have been achieved once the psycho-legal methodology for providing support to victims is implemented, from 2007 onward. Having a database of experts will make it possible to draw on a wide variety of professionals for the psycho-legal interdisciplinary work involved in torture cases.

**Means of verification:**

- Curriculum vitae of experts

**3.2. Emotional support for victims****3.2.1. Description**

The project contacted the School of Psychology of the University of Costa Rica (UCR) to inform the staff about this initiative and, in particular, the component under which torture victims who participate in the hearings of the Inter-American Court will receive emotional support. A group of 20 psychology professionals will be set up and trained to offer this support.

On 20 October, project staff met with the Director of the School of Psychology, Manuel Martínez. They discussed the different ways in which professors of the School of Psychology and senior students could be involved in training the group of professionals that will provide support to torture victims.

In addition to the training of the support group, the project subsequently submitted a proposal to the School of Psychology asking it to allow final-year students to write their dissertations under the aegis of this project. This would be an important contribution to the research and systematization work that the project requires to disseminate specialized information in the training processes and through the specialized section. The project would also save resources, and university entities would have the opportunity to become more heavily involved in the IIHR's work and the operation of the Inter-American Human Rights Protection System.

**3.2.2. Method**

The staff had several phone conversations with the School of Psychology about the possibility of their final-year students participating in project activities by means of internships. A written proposal was then sent to the School.

The project also submitted a preliminary version of the training program for the support group, which will be used to prepare the final proposal in the first quarter of 2006.

The staff also drafted a preliminary version of a framework document for the collaboration with the School of Psychology. It includes the background to, and a description of, the project, the participation of the School's professors in the training process, a description of the support group, the requirements for forming part of the group and the main responsibilities involved.

**3.2.3. Background / rationale**

During the first phase of the project, the staff confirmed that torture victims and their relatives need to receive psychological support during the public hearings held by the bodies of the Inter-American System. This support will help them cope with the emotional turmoil they experience and be better prepared to give their evidence before the Inter-American Court.

**3.2.4. Institution(s) responsible and coordination**

The IIHR has been coordinating with UCR School of Psychology.

### **3.2.5. Intermediate steps**

- Establish contact with the School of Psychology
- Prepare preliminary training program
- Prepare preliminary version of a document establishing the frame of reference for the coordination between the School of Psychology and the IIHR

### **3.2.6. Results or outputs**

- Progress in establishing how to go about setting up and training a group to provide support to torture victims in hearings of the Inter-American Court

### **3.2.7. Impact indicators**

***“More psychological support for torture victims and their relatives who appear before the Inter-American Court”***

***“Enhanced professional capabilities for providing psychological support to torture victims during legal proceedings”***

The first steps were taken to establish and train a support group for victims. This will increase the psychological support available to torture victims and their relatives who appear before the Inter-American Court. Progress is also being made toward the goal of enhancing the expertise of professionals so they can offer first-rate psychological support.

#### **Means of verification:**

- Preliminary version of framework document for collaboration with School of Psychology
- Preliminary version of training program
- Letter sent to School of Psychology

## **3.3. Training of national networks in the integrated management of cases involving torture victims**

### **3.3.1. Description**

During the quarter under review, possible candidates were identified, particularly in Guatemala, for the subregional training of networks in Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador programmed for October 2006.

Project coordinator Gilda Pacheco carried out an institutional mission to Guatemala from October 4 to 6. She took advantage of the opportunity to disseminate information about the effort, and, in particular, the training of networks, among private and state-run organizations and institutions involved in mental health. She also garnered information from them.

The consultants who will be preparing the specialized documents that will be used to train networks were also identified. The respective contracts were signed, including one for the development of an online self-teaching course on the national and international mechanisms available for preventing torture and protecting victims, and the study of defenses in cases and successful experiences at the national and international levels.

### **3.3.2. Method**

To disseminate information about the project and identify existing networks in Guatemala, Gilda Pacheco met with representatives of the network called “Program to restore the dignity of victims of the armed conflict and offer them psychosocial assistance” (DIGAP).

The DIGAP program is being carried out by the UNDP, with funds from USAID and the Netherlands. Currently it involves eight civil society organizations that specialize in providing psychosocial assistance to victims. It also includes specific activities with the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare (MSPAS), to expand and improve the care provided under the National Mental Health Program to victims of violence, including victims of the armed conflict and of political violence. Furthermore, this program supports several organizations that offer legal aid to the communities where forensic investigations are carried out.

Given the profile of this program and the civil organizations and public institutions involved in it, we believe it is the right counterpart for the project in Guatemala for the training proposed in the 2006 work plan.

### **3.3.3. Background / rationale**

The project identified the need to train national networks to help them do a better job of combating torture and supporting victims, and thus prevent acts of this kind in the future. The project also identified the need to work with intersectoral and interdisciplinary networks. Strengthening the link between public institutions and CSOs will make it possible to meet victims' needs properly.

### **3.3.4. Institution(s) responsible and coordination**

The IIHR identifies the possible members of the networks and disseminates information about the project among them.

### **3.3.5. Intermediate steps**

- Identify possible members of the network in Guatemala (public institutions and CSOs)
- Identify and hire consultants to prepare working documents

### **3.3.6. Results or outputs**

- Possible members of the network in Guatemala identified
- Initiative disseminated and promoted among representatives of the DIGAP network in Guatemala

### **3.3.7. Impact indicators**

***“Institutions better equipped to meet the needs of torture victims”***

***“More coordinated interdisciplinary and intersectoral capabilities for preventing torture and assisting victims”***

Identifying possible members of the network and disseminating information about the training that the project will offer are the first steps in the training process. Only when it has been completed will it be possible to evaluate the indicators.

#### **Means of verification:**

- Agenda of meeting with representatives of the DIGAP network and the reference material they contributed
- Contracts of consultants hired to prepare specialized documents

### **3.4. National workshops to train NGOs**

#### **3.4.1. Description**

To lay the groundwork for the implementation of the national workshops in 2006 and 2007, between October and December the project searched for and identified organizations in the 10 countries concerned.

Project coordinator Gilda Pacheco carried out institutional missions to Paraguay and Uruguay to take part in the presentation of the book *Verdad, justicia y reparaciones. Desafíos para la democracia y la convivencia social*, from 14-26 November. She took advantage of these visits to disseminate information about the project in general, and the proposed national workshops in particular, and to establish contact with key organizations in the two countries.

Between 16 and 19 November, project team members Carolina Baltodano, Gina Donoso and Maylin Cordero participated in the *Seventh International Congress on Liberation Social Psychology*, held in Guanacaste, Costa Rica. Hundreds of Latin American mental health professionals took part.

They took advantage of the opportunity to disseminate information about the project and establish contact with representatives of organizations based in countries such as El Salvador, Colombia and Peru that are candidates for the workshops to be carried out.

Project coordinator Gilda Pacheco also participated in the *International Seminar on the Integration of Psychosocial Approaches and Actions into Legal Assistance for Victims*, held in Bogotá, Colombia, from 1-3 December. She disseminated details of the project among various Colombian organizations that provide psychosocial support and legal assistance to torture victims. She also met with Graciela Guilis, Director of the Mental Health Team of the Legal and Social Studies Center (CELS) of Argentina, who is a possible counterpart for the national workshop due to be held in that country.

In addition, project staff identified and contacted the consultants who will be preparing the specialized documents that will be used in the national workshops. The respective contracts

were drawn up and signed. Some of these documents will deal with new human rights violations in democratic contexts, the incorporation of the gender perspective into testimony offered in the litigation of national and international cases involving serious human rights violations, and the inclusion of aspects of ethnic diversity in legal actions of this kind.

### **3.4.2. Method**

In Uruguay, Gilda Pacheco met with representatives of the Social Rehabilitation Service (SERSOC), an organization that provides psychosocial care to torture victims and develops proposals for restoring the health of victims of political violence. SERSOC is a possible counterpart for the implementation of the national workshop in Uruguay in 2007.

In Paraguay, Ms. Pacheco took part as a speaker in the International Seminar on Historical Memory and the Culture of Peace, held 21-23 November, in Asuncion. The theme of the activity was "*he who forgets repeats his actions, he who remembers builds.*" She also met with members of the Center for Mental Health Alternatives (ATYHA), an organization that provides medical and psychological care to torture victims. One of its members, Carlos Portillo, is a member of the country's Truth and Justice Commission.

Project staff wrote and presented two papers at the *Seventh International Congress on Liberation Social Psychology* (16-19/11/05). The papers were entitled "Thoughts about the role of psychology in the human rights field, based on institutional experience" and "Expert psychological evidence as a tool for supporting the victims of human rights violations in the litigation of cases before the Inter-American System." These reflected the experience acquired through the project "Psychological support for victims of torture in the Inter-American System" and the new lines of work that will be implemented under the present project.

A paper was also prepared for the *International Seminar on the Integration of Psychosocial Approaches and Actions into Legal Assistance for Victims* (1-3/12/05), entitled "Psychological support in torture cases brought before the Inter-American System. The advantages offered by a comprehensive approach." It contained an assessment of the impact of the project "Psychological support for victims of torture in the Inter-American System" and explained what the main areas of work would be under this amendment, continuing and building on the first phase of the project in specific countries.

### **3.4.3. Background / rationale**

The training needs of NGOs that work with torture victims were identified during the execution of the project "Psychological support for victims of torture in the Inter-American System."

The training will provide a platform whereby the IIHR will help enhance the organizations' work in the area of support for torture victims.

### **3.4.4. Institution(s) responsible and coordination**

The IIHR identified and contacted organizations, with the assistance of the counterparts with which it is already working.

### **3.4.5. Intermediate steps**

- Identify the organizations that exist in each country selected

- Establish contacts with some of the NGOs identified
- Identify consultants to prepare specialized documents

#### **3.4.6. Results or outputs**

- The project has a provisional list of the organizations that will receive training
- The consultants were selected who will prepare specialized documents

#### **3.4.7. Impact indicators**

***“Organizations better equipped to provide comprehensive support to torture victims, from an interdisciplinary perspective”***

***“Organizations have increased capabilities and knowledge for monitoring the State’s actions with regard to human rights and reparations for victims”***

The staff identified organizations and counterparts, disseminated information about the project and hired consultants to prepare specialized documents. These were the first steps towards the implementation of the national workshops, via which the indicators will be achieved.

#### **Means of verification:**

- List of organizations that offer psychosocial support and legal services in the 10 countries selected, and possible counterparts who could handle the logistical arrangements
- Contracts of consultants who will prepare specialized documents
- Papers presented at international congresses and seminars
- Agenda of meetings with representatives of NGOs

### **3.5. Dissemination of the project and specialized information via institutional mechanisms**

#### **3.5.1. Description**

During the period under review, the staff identified the emblematic IIHR courses that will incorporate panel discussions and specific activities related to the subject matter of the project. These courses are:

- The Twenty-fourth Interdisciplinary Course in Human Rights, the theme of which will be Human Rights Education. The event will take place 28 August - 8 September 2006, in San Jose, Costa Rica.
- The Fifth Inter-American Course on Civil Society and Human Rights, due to take place 13-17 November 2006, in San Jose, Costa Rica.

A consultant was identified and hired to conduct a study on the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court dealing with reparations in cases involving torture. This document will be used as the basis for producing a user-friendly version of a publication on the jurisprudence of the Inter-American System regarding torture cases. Intended for the general public, it will be published in 2006.

The specialized section of the IIHR website dealing with the subject matter of the project is due to be opened up to the public in 2006. Between October and December, the staff worked

intensively to plan its new structure and content, so that it reflects the strategic lines of action and new activities that the project will implement.

### **3.5.2. Method**

With regard to the specialized section, the project determined the technological enhancements required to support the restructuring effort and contracted the services needed to make changes to the technological platform.

Work on the documents that will be available in the specialized section also got under way.

### **3.5.3. Background / rationale**

The aim is to raise awareness and sensitize the different sectors that take part in IIHR courses to the importance of implementing actions to prevent torture. These courses will also be used to disseminate other activities financed by the Fund for Victims of Torture in Latin America.

One of the main outputs of the project “Psychological support for victims of torture in the Inter-American System” was the creation of a specialized section within the IIHR website (access to which was restricted to team members) to develop the methodology for providing psychological support to victims and coordinate the work of the network-team. The section’s content will be incorporated into a new section open to all interested parties.

### **3.5.4. Institution(s) responsible and coordination**

The staff worked with the IIHR’s various departments and support units to identify the courses in which the project’s subject matter could be included.

### **3.5.5. Intermediate steps**

- Identify courses
- Identify consultant for user-friendly publication on the jurisprudence of the Inter-American System
- Restructure specialized section
- Contract services to enhance the technological platform needed for the specialized section

### **3.5.6. Results or outputs**

- Institutional mechanisms of the IIHR that could be used to disseminate information about the project identified
- Conditions established for redesigning and updating the specialized section of the website related to the project

### **3.5.7. Impact indicators**

***“More specialized information disseminated about the prevention of torture and support for victims”***

***“More dissemination of the jurisprudence of the Inter-American System dealing with reparations for torture victims”***

The purpose of the activities carried out during this quarter with regard to the restructuring of the specialized section and the improvement of its technological platform was to ensure that, once the public is given access, it will be possible to increase the dissemination of specialized information about the prevention of torture and support for its victims. The document on the jurisprudence of the Inter-American System is now being prepared, paving the way for its dissemination during the course of 2006.

#### **Means of verification**

- Contract for technological services related to the new structure of the specialized section
- Contract for the preparation of the material on the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court dealing with torture

### **3.6. Research and documentation**

#### **3.6.1. Description**

In April 2005, the Fund for Victims of Torture (FVT) offered further assistance to counterpart organizations that received funds from it. It proposed sending its evaluation expert, Paul Bolton, to provide training in the establishment of monitoring and evaluation methods. With a view to establishing a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the project in 2006, during the reporting period the staff contacted the FVT, via USAID, to request technical assistance in this area.

#### **3.6.2. Method**

We are waiting for the FVT's reply to the request for technical assistance, to arrange a meeting to establish the methodology for monitoring and evaluating project activities.

#### **3.6.3. Background / rationale**

The evaluation and monitoring actions will make it possible to evaluate the attainment of objectives, the implementation of activities and the results obtained. The team will incorporate the lessons learned in order to meet the goals set.

Work of this kind is consistent with the vision of the Fund for Victims of Torture, which offered its beneficiaries technical assistance with the monitoring and evaluation of projects.

#### **3.6.4. Institution(s) responsible and coordination**

The IIHR is working with the Fund for Victims of Torture, with a view to receiving technical assistance for the design of the project's monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

### **3.6.5. Intermediate steps**

- Contact and submit request to the Fund for Victims of Torture

### **3.6.6. Results or outputs**

- First contact with the Fund for Victims of Torture, to request technical assistance with the monitoring and evaluation of the project

### **3.6.7. Impact indicators**

#### ***“Improvement in the quality of the work of evaluating and monitoring implementation of the project”***

The request for technical assistance to establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism was a first step towards improving the quality of the implementation of the project.

#### **Means of verification:**

- Letter to USAID requesting technical assistance from the Fund for Victims of Torture for the monitoring and evaluation of the project

## **4. Lessons learned**

During the reporting period, the project carried out missions to various countries where contacts were made and information about the project was disseminated. These missions confirmed that the organizations wish to receive training in a methodology for providing support to victims of torture and of serious human rights violations.

The methodology is related mainly to the coordination of various disciplines for the litigation of cases and the presentation of victims' testimony. Based on the experience acquired through the first project (Psychological support for victims of torture in the Inter-American System), we have called this methodology “Psycho-legal strategy for the litigation of torture cases.”

This training will be carried out in 2006 and 2007, both through national workshops with NGOs and subregional training for intersectoral networks in 10 Latin American countries. We believe these training processes will have a major impact by strengthening organizations' capabilities and knowledge for assisting torture victims and preventing acts of this kind in the future.