

A Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children

Ecuador



Population: 14,790,608 (July 2010 est.)
Population Growth Rate: 1.466% (2010 est.)
Birth Rate: 20.32 births/1,000 population (2010 est.)
Life Expectancy: total population: 75.52 years
male: 72.58 years
female: 78.6 years (2010 est.)
Literacy Rate: total population: 91% male: 92.3%; female: 89.7% (2001 census)
Net Migration Rate: -0.66 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2010 est.)
Unemployment Rate: 7.9% (2009 est.)
Gross Domestic Product per Capita: \$7,400 (2009 est.)
Religions: Roman Catholic 95%, other 5%
Languages: Spanish (official), Amerindian languages (especially Quechua)
Ethnic Groups: mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) 65%, Amerindian 25%, Spanish and others 7%, black 3%
Capital: Quito¹

Trafficking Routes

Ecuador is a source, transit, and destination country for persons trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labor and begging.

Ecuadorian children are trafficked from rural to urban areas such as Quito and Guayaquil.² Women and children are trafficked from Colombia to Ecuador.³ Victims are also brought from China to Ecuador, which is used by traffickers as a point of rest before traveling onward to Panama, Colombia, Peru, then Mexico, and ultimately to the United States.⁴

¹ CIA, THE WORLD FACTBOOK (2010), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ec.html>.

² Dominique Soguel, *Ecuador Sex Workers Target HIV-AIDS Prevention*, WOMEN'S ENEWS, Apr. 10, 2009, available at: <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=3976>.

³ *Id.* at 2.

⁴ *Ecuador: Back door to America*, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY NETWORK, Jan. 29, 2009, available at: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?lng=en&id=95896>.

Factors That Contribute to the Trafficking Infrastructure

Trafficking occurs in Ecuador as a result of poverty, corruption, shortage of jobs, lack of respect for women and children, and poor education.⁵

Trafficking in persons has risen due to an increased demand for sex tourism, pornography, and cheap labor. The difficulty of investigating and prosecuting organized crime has also caused an increase in the number of persons trafficked throughout Ecuador.⁶

The conflict in Colombia has brought an influx of illegal immigrants to Ecuador.⁷ Many Colombians are drawn to Ecuador because the country uses the U.S. dollar as its official currency.⁸

On June 20, 2008, Ecuador revoked its requirement for entry visas. This permits citizens from 130 countries to travel to Ecuador and automatically receive a 90-day tourist visa. As a result of the absence of entry visas, the country saw a 500 percent increase in “Chinese tourism”—in reality, smuggled Chinese nationals—between 2007 and 2008.⁹

Forms of Trafficking

Persons are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labor, and begging.¹⁰ Human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is the most common form of trafficking in Ecuador.¹¹ Accounts indicate that traffickers lure young victims with promises of legitimate employment or romantic relationships and then force them into prostitution through false debts.¹² Ecuadorian children are trafficked from rural regions to cities for the purpose of prostitution.¹³

Government Responses

In 1998, Ecuador amended its constitution to include “protection against the smuggling of minors, pornography, prostitution, and sexual exploitation.”¹⁴ In 2003, the

⁵ Peace and Hope Partnership International, *Human Trafficking in Ecuador* (2009), available at: http://www.peaceandhopeinternational.org/Human_Trafficking_in_Ecuador.html.

⁶ USAID Ecuador, *Combating Trafficking in Persons*, available at: <http://ecuador.usaid.gov/portal/content/view/206/175/> (last visited June 30, 2010).

⁷ ABIGAIL POE AND ADAM ISACSON, CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY ECUADOR’S HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY: THE SPILLOVER OF COLOMBIA’S CONFLICT (2009), available at: http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/Ecuador_0409_color.pdf.

⁸ Soguel *supra* at 2.

⁹ INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY NETWORK *supra* at 4.

¹⁰ USAID Ecuador *supra* at 6.

¹¹ Peace and Hope Partnership International *supra* at 5.

¹² Soguel *supra* at 2.

¹³ Soguel *supra* at 2.

¹⁴ Constitution of Ecuador (amended 1998), Article 50.

Ecuadorian Childhood and Adolescence Code specified implementations of policies to protect children based on the amendments to the constitution.¹⁵

Ecuador made reforms to its criminal code in 2005 to include the classification of sexual crimes, the use of children in pornography, and exploitation of children in tourism. The reform of the labor code in 2005 ensures the protection of children and adolescents from illegal labor activities.¹⁶

Ecuador has implemented several national plans to fight trafficking in persons, including the National Plan for the Integrated Protection of Children and Adolescents in 2003; the Plan for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labor in 2005; and a National Plan to Combat the Trafficking in Persons, the Illegal Smuggling of Migrants, Labour Sexual Exploitation and Other Forms of Exploitation and the Prostitution of Women and Children, Child Pornography and the Corruption of Minors in 2006.¹⁷

In May 2009 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Ecuador's Trafficking in Persons Programme presented its two main countertrafficking plans within the National Plan Against Trafficking in Persons: the Protocol on Consular Assistance for Ecuadorian Victims of Trafficking and a Web site for the plan.¹⁸

Nongovernmental and International Organizations Responses

In January 2009, Paz y Esparanza (Peace and Hope), opened an office in Guayaquil to assist and provide legal, pastoral, and psychological services to victims of trafficking.¹⁹ Paz y Esparanza is working with the International Justice Mission, a human rights agency that also recently expanded its work into Ecuador.

A Seattle-based coffee company donated its entire sales during the month of May 2009 to the International Justice Mission to rescue victims of slavery and sexual exploitation in Ecuador.²⁰

The International Mission Board (IMB) offers an alternative to women working in the sex industry. Through direct ministry on the streets of Ecuador, prayer, testimonies,

¹⁵ Childhood Code of 2003 (Ecuador), Articles 52, 69, 70.

¹⁶ UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW-HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, UNICEF INPUT-ECUADOR (2008), *available at*: http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session1/EC/UNICEF_ECU_UPR_S1_2008_UnitedNationsChildrensFunds_uprsubmission.pdf.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 16.

¹⁸ Press Release, IOM, Presentation of the Protocol on Consular Assistance for Ecuadorian Victims of Trafficking and Launch of Website for National Plan Against Trafficking in Persons, May 7, 2009, *available at*: <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/events/eventAM/cache/offonce?entryId=24214>.

¹⁹ Ecuador, Peace and Hope International Partnership, Paz y Esparanza, http://www.peaceandhopeinternational.org/Paz_y_Esperanza_-_Project_Ecuador.html (last visited June 30, 2010).

²⁰ *Coffee Company Combats Human Trafficking One Cup at a Time*, STORYVILLE COFFEE COMPANY, *available at*: http://news.prnewswire.com/DisplayReleaseContent.aspx?ACCT=ind_focus.story&STORY=/www/story/07-03-2009/0005054562&EDATE=.

and invitations to church and a getaway retreat, IMB helps women gain the hope and courage to leave their brothels and devote their lives to Jesus Christ.²¹

Multilateral Initiatives

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has supported efforts to combat human trafficking in Ecuador through various initiatives. USAID coordinated a group of 32 civil society organizations in Cuenca to develop an action plan to combat sexual commercial exploitation of minors and increase assistance to trafficking victims. The agency created a specialized investigative police unit for sex crimes, and several workshops were held in Machala to raise awareness, organize, and establish policies to fight trafficking in persons. USAID supplied grants to the Adoratrices Sisters, a religious organization for the liberation of women oppressed by prostitution, for their two women's shelters in Guayaquil and Quito. USAID also provided assistance to the Ministry of Government to implement the National Plan Against Trafficking in Persons.²² The expected results for 2009 are to expand services and support of victims and to develop a database of trafficking in persons cases.²³ USAID also works with IOM to assist the government of Ecuador in providing shelter services, strengthening policies, reintegrating victims into society, and promoting inter institutional mechanisms to protect children.

On May 13, 2009, the minister for Human Rights and Justice for Ecuador, Nestor Arbito Chica, spoke at a press conference on human trafficking held by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, encouraging states to coordinate and adapt to the evolving dynamics of trafficking in persons.²⁴

²¹ *Christ the Only Way to End Trafficking*, MISSION NETWORK NEWS, Mar. 23, 2009, available at: <http://mnnonline.org/article/12453>.

²² USAID ECUADOR, RESULT REPORT (2007), available at: <http://ecuador.usaid.gov/portal/images/stories/File/Results%20Report%202007%20Final%20-%20English.pdf>.

²³ USAID Ecuador *supra* at 6.

²⁴ Press Release, UN Department of Public Information, Press Conference on Human Trafficking by Executive Director of the UNODC, May 13, 2009, available at: http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2009/090513_UNODC.doc.htm.