

FINAL IHRP INTERNSHIP REPORT

My experience this summer with the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Latin America and the Caribbean (CATW-LAC) in Mexico City was rewarding both as a building of practical legal research and writing skills and as an eye-opening look into the operations of, and obstacles to, running an NGO. I am very appreciative of the opportunity given to me and I hope I will remain in touch with the management and staff of CATWLAC.

PROJECTS:

The original project that I understood I would be working on with CATW was researching and comparing anti-trafficking and prostitution laws in the Latin American Region. I collaborated with another lawyer in the organization to develop a model law on anti-trafficking, prostitution, sexual tourism, and pornography, which CATWLAC will be able to present to regional governments and organizations such as the Organization of American States. This involved researching the existing laws of the region and analyzing them with a gender perspective to create the best law from what is available. I was able to complete this project faster than anticipated by CATWLAC as I had experience doing this kind of research from the UofT working group I participated in during the school year. Unfortunately, a few of the countries in the region did not have their laws online and did not respond to emails about where this information could be located. As such they could not be included in the comparative gender analysis however I feel that this project completed successfully with the resources available.

Before joining CATWLAC, I was under the impression that I would not be doing translation. I had discussed this point with CATWLAC and translation was removed from the job description in my invitation letter. As such, I was surprised to be asked to do translation upon arriving at CATWLAC. I did not feel that my skills were being used appropriately, but I was determined to work diligently for the organization and succeed. Throughout the summer I was required to translate numerous reports and papers on issues ranging from methodology to specific workshops on trafficking awareness. Translating became an easier task and one which I enjoyed. While it was little related to law there were positive rewards from doing the translations. For example, I translated a testimonial of a victim who had escaped familial violence in the United States and was living in Mexico attempting to get her children back. Without her testimonial in English the women's center in the US could not have proceeded with their legal action against her husband. The legal vocabulary I gained through this process will also help me in the future in pursuing a career in international human rights law in Latin America.

As a result of finishing the research project ahead of schedule, I was given a variety of differing projects over the remainder of the summer.

Other projects I worked on included writing grant proposals. I found these projects very rewarding as they were an insight into the difficulties of running an NGO. It was clear

throughout the internship that many incredible projects designed by management and staff at CATWLAC were unable to be undertaken because of lack of funds. As grants proposals are a direct way to raise money for the organization, I felt that I was helping in a productive and efficient way.

I also researched, downloaded, translated and organized hundreds of documents relating to trafficking and prostitution for the new CATWLAC website. I am pleased with the work done as these documents can now be accessed on the webpage and are available to all of the public which is an important resource for the organization.

Ironically, the project that I enjoyed the most with CATWLAC was one which I did not know I would be working on before starting my internship. This involved researching United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and designing ways in which Mexico as a conflict-free state could better implement Resolution 1325. This involved researching the domestic laws of various non-conflict states in order to assess whether their implementation of Resolution 1325 could be transplanted to Mexico. It also involved reporting on the success of the resolution in conflict zones. This project was incredibly interesting in subject matter and I thoroughly enjoyed putting together the presentation. I intend to build on this project to further my own research during the current school year.

Overall I saw a complete picture of NGO work during my summer at CATWLAC. Often employees worked outside of their areas of expertise in order to complete important jobs. The amount of work varied with funding from external sources, which at times was a strain on the organization. The work done by CATWLAC both in Mexico City and around Latin America is incredibly important and I now know the struggle involved in keeping NGOs in a position to continue valuable projects.

STAFF ENVIRONMENT:

Throughout my internship I continuously felt appreciated by the Regional Director Teresa Ulloa. She gave positive feedback on my work and was quick to discuss updates and developments within the organization which made me feel an integral part of the work she and other staff were doing through CATWLAC. I am very appreciative of her attitude towards me and I hope to remain updated on the interesting projects she is working on through CATWLAC.

The staff was continuously helpful and friendly to me throughout my internship. The staff was patient and understanding and made the work environment pleasant and enjoyable. Overall I found everyone in the office friendly and passionate and I have appreciated very much my three months with CATWLAC.