

Caravana Colombia Lawyers Group UK
SIX MONTHLY REPORT
October 2009 – March 2010

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

A co-ordinator, Anna Musgrave was appointed in October 2009. Anna completed six weeks in the post and had to leave for a financially more secure role. A new co-ordinator, Nikki Evans was appointed and began 1st December 2009. There was one day of cross over when Anna provided Nikki with a handover. Nikki Evans worked with PBI in the Barrancabermeja team for 15 months in 2005-2006 and has continued to support PBI giving talks and acting as a member of the Nepal project committee for 12 months. She has a history of project co-ordination roles with NGOS including Christian Aid and Protimos Educational Trust.

The initial tasks undertaken by the co-ordinator were those of setting up internal structures and organising the 2010 Caravana launch event. A lot of work was done to gather all Caravana documentation and resources (photos and other materials) including all the notes and materials from the 2008 trip that were held by many different Caravana members. The archive materials are now held by the co-ordinator in a central location and these are backed up on a monthly basis. A database of contacts was constructed and now acts as a live document with new additions regularly updated.

A launch event for the Caravana 2010 trip in August 2010 was organised and held on 27th January 2010 at the College of Law. The event was very successful and attended by over 80 people. Speakers included Clara Sandoval from Essex University, 2008 delegate Mark Cunningham Q.C. and Caravana chair Sara Chandler. Those attending were invited to support the Caravana as a delegate on the August 2010 trip or the Caravana organisation in the UK. Diana Murcia, an Acadeum lawyer in exile also spoke at the event. The Caravana had worked with PBI to assist Diana's visit to the UK where she was invited to study for three months at York University. During her time in the UK Diana participated in the Caravana Steering Group, attended meetings with authorities and give talks on Colombia.

The Caravana set up a series of monthly briefing sessions to provided delegates and any other members of the legal community with information about Colombia, the law and human rights abuses suffered by lawyers. The first talk held in February was given by Diana Murcia and looked at the Colombian context. In March we began to co-ordinate more closely with the Caravana's international partners, Acadeum, and ASF Canada. Bishop & Sewell offered the use of their conference rooms for the remaining five briefing sessions and Peter Burbidge delivered a well attended briefing about the Colombian legal system.

At the February briefing session Justice For Colombia spoke about the human rights abuses suffered by trade unionists from a legal perspective, highlighting key cases of interest, threats against lawyers investigating killings of trade unionists and reporting on the special prosecutors unit dedicated to trade unionist deaths. A briefing was also given by Sara Chandler on international human rights law, legal mechanisms and legal bodies.

The need to set up new structures was identified; specifically working groups concentrating on Advocacy, Communications and Fundraising. A project development proposal was approved by the Steering Group and an interim team was appointed to help set up these

three working groups. Philippe Tremblay from ASF Canada visited the UK in March and met with several members of the Caravana. This was an important meeting and enabled both organisations to share views on goals and objectives and explain in more detail their history and relationship with Acadeum.

ACHIEVEMENTS & CHALLENGES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Caravana ran a very well attended launch event and has been able to attract over 30 delegates to join the August 2010 and a number of volunteers to support its activities in the UK. • The briefing sessions have been of a high quality and notes of these events will be provided to delegates visiting Colombia in August. • The Caravana has begun constructing good relationships with ASF and Acadeum – sharing needs and expectations. • At an administrative internal level the Caravana has been able to set up good internal procedures and resources and is now officially incorporated (14th April 2010). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been necessary to work hard to re-connect with members of the 2008 Caravana group with whom contact had been lost. • In the current financial climate it has been difficult to recruit new delegates due to the need for delegates to fund their own costs • Lack of funds for internal Caravana costs has held up some areas of work including: the establishment of a Caravana website, logo design and provision of headed paper etc. • Fundraising has been hampered by the lack of charity status • It is difficult to meet the expectation from Colombia that we can recruit European lawyers with the contacts we have.
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FUTURE PLANS

During the next six months the Caravana intends to complete the following activities:

Advocacy work

The advocacy working group will continue to construct an effective advocacy strategy which it will agree with the Acadeum and ASF. As part of this strategy the group will undertake meetings in the UK with authorities identified in the strategy. The first meeting will be held with Gary Scroby from the Foreign Office on 14th June. The group will endeavour to liaise closely with the international partners with a view to setting up an international network that is able to function cohesively.

Fundraising

The Caravana is in the process of applying for charity status which is a key objective of the organisation. Fundraising will be an essential activity during the coming months with members seeking to fundraise for both support for the Caravana organisation and support for members' travel costs. The group will provide assistance to delegates that wish to apply to their firms for support. Acadeum have provided a budget of the costs that are needed in Colombia to run the Caravana delegation visit and applications will be made to the Law Society for assistance with these costs.

Communications

The communications working group will concentrate initially on building relationships with

the UK legal community and raising and consolidating the Caravana's profile. The co-ordinator is in the process of setting up a website. There are far reaching plans for the Caravana website which will become a key tool for the organisation's work although this will depend on the group obtaining sufficient financial support to finance this development.

Preparation for the August trip

The co-ordinator is setting up Spanish classes for delegates wishing to improve their abilities before arriving in Bogota. Two more briefing sessions will be held. The first will look at the work of the IBA, UN and EU missions in Colombia. The second will provide briefings from the FCO and ABColombia on the current situation in Colombia. Although the deadline for receiving applications has now passed, the group will continue to seek more international lawyers particularly those from countries not yet represented. The co-ordinator will continue the fortnightly meetings with the international partners to continue to build relationships and ensure the smooth running of the Caravana delegation.

August 2010 Trip & Follow Up

There is an emphasis this year on the quality of the work undertaken during the week in Colombia and an eagerness to ensure that there is a work plan in place after the visit.

Internal Activities

A bank account is being organised, charity status needs to be obtained and Caravana stationery, most particularly headed paper is required. When these activities have been completed, the co-ordinator will work on setting up and documenting governance and financial procedures with the support of Caravana members with financial backgrounds.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Law Society Charity has provided a grant of £10,560 for the following costs:

Coordinator post (part time for 18 months 12 hours p.w. over 2 days)
(incl tax and insurance): £9360

Contribution to return flight and accommodation for monitoring
visit to Colombia £1200

October 09 – March 2010	Salary
Budgeted	£3,168
Actual	£2,940
Difference	£228

The difference was caused by the change in co-ordinator and the difference will be used to fund the co-ordinator post for a further two weeks.

No Trip expenses have been incurred during the October 09 – March 2010 period