



PRESS RELEASE

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“FOUR ALTERNATIVE CRIMINAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTERS INAUGURATED”

SAN SALVADOR- This afternoon El Salvador’s Attorney General, Felix Garrid Safie; Public Defender, Marcos Gregorio Sanchez Trejo; and Minister of Public Security and Justice, Rene Figueroa; and the U.S. Embassy Charge D’affaires, Robert Blau, announced the inauguration of four Dispute Resolution Centers, an initiative that since its beginning has been supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The new centers are located at the Attorney General’s branch offices in Apopa, Mejicanos, Soyapango and Santa Ana, where from now misdemeanor conflicts can be resolved on the first stages of the criminal process, with the purpose of saving courts for the most significant conflicts.

With the support of USAID Mediation Program, and an estimated investment of \$ 48,000 the Criminal Mediation Pilot Project started on November 2007 as a joint effort with the Attorney General (FGR) and the Public Defender (PGR). The purpose of the pilot project was to duplicate the results that the PGR has obtained after 8 years using mediation as an alternative disputes resolution mechanism, and also to reduce the number of cases accumulates at the FGR that can be resolved trough mediation. Among these: negligence causing personal injuries, injuries, simple threats, simple fraud, embezzlement, usurpation and material damages.

“Today we celebrate a new milestone in this important process. With great satisfaction, we have been able to verify that in a period of approximately eight months, the criminal mediation pilot project could save the justice system an estimated amount of \$1,600,000. Therefore, mediation and conciliation have been used as tools to solve minor criminal conflicts”, said Mr. Blau during the inauguration ceremony held in the FGR headquarters.

It is expected that the FGR will duplicate the model used in the Criminal Mediation Pilot Project and that the PGR will provide public defenders to perform this type of mediations.

With a total investment of around \$1,000,000, USAID Mediation Program supports El Salvador’s efforts to strengthen the rule of law in general. Thus, USAID seeks to improve the existing 28 mediation centers network, where family, labor, civil, community, school and criminal conflicts are resolved.

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