WOLA ■ WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA

THEMES AND DEBATES IN PUBLIC SECURITY REFORM

A manual for civil society

Police Training

Rachel Neild

Washington, DC ■ Ciudad de Guatemala ■ San Salvador

Themes and Debates in Public Security Reform
Introduction to the Series

The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) has monitored police abuse and U.S. and international police assistance since our founding in 1974. Peace processes and political transitions set the stage for efforts to reform public security functions, demilitarize internal security, professionalize police forces and increase democratic accountability for security policies. In El Salvador, Haiti and Guatemala, large-scale reform processes have been undertaken and have received significant support from the United States and the international community. More than any other region, Central America and Haiti have been a testing ground for international assistance for post-conflict security reforms.

As WOLA monitored the evolution of police reform in the region, we became convinced that the long-term consolidation of the police as a professional, effective, and apolitical institution depends on developing greater citizen involvement in and support for public security reforms. Reform processes are taking place in the context of dramatic increases in crime and face constant resistance and challenges from authoritarian sectors. Without a strong domestic constituency for police reform, these processes may founder. To support civil society organizations in the region seeking to engage with issues of citizen security, WOLA launched the "Advocacy Training Program for Police and Judicial Reform" in Central America in 1996 with support from PRODECA.

Themes and Debates in Public Security Reform aims to make the issues of public security reform more accessible to civil society organizations. This series examines selected key aspects of police reform, drawing on lessons from Central America, the United States, and the world. Each section frames the debates on the issues, provides examples of how issues have emerged and been resolved in different contexts, and offers examples of civil society advocacy for police reform. *Themes and Debates* also explores how key actors have affected police reform in various countries, including the role of international donors, national decision-making structures, and civil society. The series includes:

1. Police Recruitment
2. **Police Training**
3. Internal Controls and Disciplinary Units
4. External Controls
5. Community Policing
6. Criminal Investigations
7. International Police Assistance

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Training is a central focus of efforts to reform or change institutions, including police forces. To learn new procedures, policies and practices, police must be trained. Training alone, however, will not change behavior unless the values and skills imparted through training are reinforced by other practices that reaffirm those values as institutional priorities through promotions policies, disciplinary codes, assignments and so on. Nonetheless, police training is a very important means to articulate and communicate values as well as technical skills and to mold police cadets from the start of their careers.

There are extensive studies and evaluations of police training and an increasing number of courses offered by civilian academic institutions as well as police academies. One trend in police training is a movement away from the closed police academy training model in which police cadets receive all of their training in the police academy from police instructors. This is, in part, related to the adoption of community policing or problem-solving policing approaches which endow police with increased discretion in their conduct and, therefore, with somewhat different skills than police operating under a more hierarchical command and control model of policing. In the United States and Europe, the trend is toward recruiting police with higher education levels and encouraging or requiring further education during a police officer's career in order to achieve promotions. Universities across the United States offer specialized courses in police management and criminology, and police departments sometimes also collaborate directly with community colleges and universities to create advanced police education programs. These bodies also perform valuable functions in promoting research on and evaluation of police practice and techniques.

Reformers have identified a number of problems with traditional police training methods in addition to the corporatist tendencies encouraged by closed training. Problems include a "lack of community involvement in training design and delivery, the discrepancy between the theory taught to the new recruit and the practice on the street, the failure to integrate human rights and cultural awareness training across all courses, and the lack of external scrutiny." (O'Rawe and Moore 1997: 66)

In Latin America, the closed model of police training prevails. Indeed, some countries have only recently established police academies, previously relying on military academies to train police as well as soldiers. (Police academies were established for the first time in Panama in 1990 and in Haiti in 1994.) The reform of police training and establishment of civilian police academies has been a central task of police reforms in Central America and Haiti. This section will focus primarily on these processes and the issues that have emerged: the establishment and administration of police academies; who conducts the training; the outline of a basic police curriculum; human rights training; leadership and specialized training; the length of training; field training; and the issues of transparency and civil society access to police training.

1. Establishing Police Academies

Police reform processes in Panama and Haiti have entailed the creation of new police academies. In other countries, such as Guatemala and El Salvador, police academies have been reformed and demilitarized through bringing in new curricula and trainers.

Large-scale reform processes place huge pressures on police training programs, requiring them to produce large numbers of police as fast as possible. In El Salvador, the National Public Security Academy (ANSP) exceeded expectations in producing 9,000 police agents and officers in three years. It is regarded as perhaps the best police training in Central America, but this pace has stretched training capabilities to their limit. In Haiti, the police academy trained over 5,000 cadets in 18 months in programs designed and run almost entirely by international donors.

> In **El Salvador**, the ANSP is organizationally separate from the National Civilian Police (PNC), headed by an academic council with nine members. The academy director is a civilian selected by the President from among three candidates proposed by COPAZ (the pluralistic Commission for the Consolidation of Peace). The ANSP has the power to select and train police cadets and officers. This model sought to dilute power over the police by separating training from operational functions, and assure that operationally oriented training would not dilute the emphasis on human rights. The Peace Accords specified oversight mechanisms, including the pluralistic academic council, to allow for more external input into and oversight over police training. There have been tensions between the PNC and the ANSP. In particular, PNC leaders and others outside the police criticize academy training for being too abstract and failing to deal with some institutional needs. (WOLA and HI 1996)

> In **Haiti**, the police training academy is under the Haitian National Police (HNP) and the director is appointed by the HNP Director General with the approval of the National Superior Police Council (CSPN), comprised of the Prime Minister, Ministers of Justice and the Interior, the Director General and Inspector General of the HNP. First formed in 1994, the first academy director was appointed in May 1995. And only now, in 1998, are international trainers handing over responsibility for ongoing training to Haitian police instructors. (WOLA 1996)

2. Police Trainers

In the highly pressured reform environments of Panama, Haiti and El Salvador, police training has been conducted in large measure by international instructors under United Nations auspices or bilateral programs such as the United States' ICITAP (International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program).

> In **Haiti**, training at the police academy was developed by ICITAP, which sought out U.S. police officials with international experience, including in French-speaking Africa. ICITAP also brought Salvadoran and Panamanian police academy officials to help develop the curriculum and training program. During the four-month-long basic training, Haitian lawyers taught legal and constitutional issues during the first two months,

> followed by two months of instruction from ICITAP trainers, assisted by Canadian and French police trainers, in general and practical aspects of policing. (WOLA 1996)

International supporters of police training programs generally seek a gradual hand-over to national trainers through "train-the-trainers" programs. While sustainability of quality police training is a high priority in theory, in practice identifying and training police personnel to become trainers competes with other priorities:

> In **El Salvador**, the police academy delayed development of a permanent, experienced national teaching faculty, in part because the PNC could not spare many of its trained officers to become academy instructors. The result was extended reliance on international instructors. During the academy's third year, a corps of instructors was trained and a transition began from international to Salvadoran instructors. This coincided with efforts to accelerate the output of the academy, putting considerable strain on the capacity of the instructional staff. (WOLA and HI 1996)

> In **Haiti**, the pressure to train 5,000 police by 1996 delayed plans to train Haitian trainers to take over academy instruction from foreign trainers. Indeed, the effort to train the first 5,000 HNP went far beyond academy capabilities, leading the United States to conduct the two months of practical training at a military base in the United States, a program which was portrayed by some Haitians as an effort to infiltrate and indoctrinate the new force. Police cadets taught partially in the United States do not appear to be distinguished in any significant fashion from peers taught entirely in Haiti. (Neild 1996)

Recruitment processes for police trainers must assure that they select instructors who have appropriate and up-to-date knowledge and skills.

> In **Guatemala**, instructors recruited for the police academy were found to have antiquated knowledge and were unaware of international standards and relevant national political and legal reforms. (WOLA 1997)

3. Basic Police Curriculum

Basic police training comprises legal training and practical training. Typical basic police training in the United States includes instruction in constitutional norms and rights, state and local criminal law, giving court testimony, and general police training in procedures and skills such as interviewing, paperwork requirements, crime scene protection, use of weapons, use of force, self-protection and so on. Increasingly, basic police training includes courses in cultural awareness and mediation skills as departments adopt community policing approaches.

Observers' general assessments of the quality of training, particularly academic standards, in El Salvador and Haiti have been positive despite some specific areas of weakness.

In both countries trainers noted their difficulties in getting good feedback on the training after police were deployed. During large-scale reform processes, the academic curriculum of the police is new and is often developed based on external models devised by foreign experts. Good feedback is essential to adapt academy training to the national realities of policing. In response, donors and academy leaders coordinated with UN police monitors to obtain information on issues arising among the graduate cadets that could be addressed with changes in training. Human rights monitors, particularly UN missions but also NGOs, also played an important role in commenting on the comportment and standards of the new police.

In the United States, most police departments have obligatory ongoing training that continues throughout the police career. Typical components include: use of firearms, both requalification in target practice and in legal obligations regarding use of weapons; updates on legal developments and new case precedents; and specialized courses such as domestic violence, treatment of handicapped citizens, and medical emergency training. Officers and agents must be certified to remain on the force. U.S. police officers also note that "roll call" -- the briefing of all police at the start of their shift which informs them of assignments and any developments they need to know -- performs a training function.

The following table from the Salvadoran police academy gives a general sense of basic training programs adopted in the region. (WOLA has some lesson plans for training on "human rights and policing in a democracy" available on file.)

CURRICULUM FOR BASIC LEVEL TRAINING (6 MONTHS)

Module I	Module II	Module III	Module IV	Module V
Constitutional Law (36h)	Penal Law (48h)	Penal Process Law (48h)	Report Writing and Police Documentation (40h)	Criminology (36h)
Police Ethics and Functions (36h)	Democracy and Human Rights (48h)	Introduction to Psychology and Criminology (48h)	Police Information and Interviewing Techniques (36h)	Patrolling (12h)

Special Laws I (36h)	Special Laws II (48h)	Drugs (36h)	Police Intervention I (48h)	Police Intervention II (48h)
Basic Police Instruction (36h)			Traffic Control (36h)	City Geography (12h)
		Grammar (24h)	First Aid (24h)	Typing (24h)
				Self-Defense (48h)
Firearms Training (72h)	Firearms Training			Firearms Training
Physical Instruction (24h)	Physical Instruction	Physical Instruction	Physical Instruction	Physical Instruction

Source: Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública (ANSP) 1997

4. Human Rights Training

Human rights training should be an integral part of police training, not an "add-on" course marginal to the core body of police instruction. Rights issues should imbue all aspects of police training; in particular, such sensitive areas as security doctrine, use of force, search and arrest procedures, and interrogations techniques should include a strong rights focus, imparted through practical and role-playing exercises in addition to traditional classroom lectures. It is of little use for police to learn the academic and legal theory of human rights if the officer or agent is not also equipped with practical skills in police work so that s/he can pursue, search, arrest, subdue and interrogate a suspect without violating those rights. In the Netherlands, Amnesty International works with the Dutch police to incorporate human rights elements through police training.

In **Haiti**, police trainees receive nine hours of human rights instruction, and a sixteen-hour "human dignity" course which seeks "to imbue police practice with a heightened understanding of human dignity as an innate quality possessed by all human beings" and "to reaffirm values such as empathy, caring, honor, respect, integrity and fairness, both as central tenets of life and as important guideposts in the day-to-day work of policing." They also receive ten hours instruction on "Police Mission and Role in a Democratic Society." After some months, the UN/OAS human rights mission took over the human rights class, which includes basic international human rights instruments, code of conduct for law enforcement officials, and practical exercises where students are confronted with problems based on real situations and asked to respond. ICITAP trainers stated that human rights issues arose through most of the courses. While arrest procedures and firearms courses were distinct from human rights training per se, they incorporated

human rights issues as fundamental concerns framing police practice in these areas. (John Jay College of Criminal Justice and ICITAP 1993: 1; John Jay College 1993: 1)

While it is important that human rights training be oriented in a practical fashion toward the challenges that police face on the street, it is also important that police understand that human rights are internal legal principles and therefore binding national law at the highest level. ICITAP's "Human Dignity Course," for example, while it includes psychological exercises addressing issues of respect for the person, never mentions the words "human rights," as ICITAP personnel found that Latin American police reacted very negatively to the very term and would resist any instruction framed as a class on rights. Yet, the core of the police task is to enforce the law and respect for rights; in doing so, they must respect rights themselves. Any police agent or officer who rejects this perspective is inappropriate for police service in a democratic society.

Training alone will not change the behavior of an abusive police force or prevent abuse from arising in a new force unless it is accompanied by complementary measures that demonstrate an institutional commitment to rights-based policing. Foremost among further guarantees for human rights are:

1. the existence or establishment of effective mechanisms to detect, investigate and punish abusive police behavior (See "Internal Controls and Disciplinary Units" and "External Controls");
2. the incorporation of rights issues into all police procedures, including leadership appointments and promotions and close supervision from superiors and quality control offices to ensure compliance with these procedures;
3. the creation of mechanisms that guarantee police transparency, such as reporting on the initiation and results of internal investigations in abuse and reporting on police activities and crime statistics more broadly; and
4. the adoption of a police doctrine that replaces the "national security doctrine" approach of the Cold War era with a rights-based, civilian approach to law enforcement.

5. Leadership and Specialized Training

In addition to basic police training, police academies or other civilian academic institutions have to provide more specialized training for police leadership and for specialized units, such as forensic capabilities, special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams, anti-narcotics units, and, depending on the legal division of labor between the police and military, sometimes bodyguard functions for government officials and coast guard and national border controls. As noted in the introduction to this section, in the United States and other countries, many universities offer master's degrees and other advanced courses for police. International donors are often in a position to offer courses at academies abroad for police leaders and for specialized functions, and national governments can send officers abroad for training while they build their national training capabilities in these areas.

In **Haiti**, the highest-scoring ten percent of each class received additional training for supervisory level positions (up to the rank of sergeants and lieutenants), often at night and on weekends. Some 30 to 40 members of each class were selected to receive additional training in investigative techniques and form the judicial police. Following the full deployment of the HNP, the Haitian government and international donors focused ongoing training efforts on the development of specialized units and skills, including additional training in police leadership, weapons, use of force, crowd control, anti-narcotics, and coast guard functions. (WOLA 1996; WOLA 1995)

6. Length of Training

The most common criticism of police training during the reform processes -- and in many countries throughout the hemisphere -- is that it is too short and police are poorly prepared for the complex and stressful situations that they face when deployed. While many police in the United States receive only six to eight months of basic training, they are entering well-established and professional forces with long traditions of civilian policing, and increasingly have several years of college education or a degree. (In Baltimore, for example, basic police training is sixteen weeks at the academy followed by fourteen weeks of field training; a total of seven-and-a-half months.) Many police trainers say that cadets require a year's training to develop professionalism. However, in countries throughout Latin America, police receive six months training or less despite the lack of a tradition of civilian and professional policing.

In South Africa, as the new, black majority government designed the reform of the South African Police Service (SAPS), they increased police training from six to twelve months. (O'Rawe and Moore 1997) During police reform processes in Central America and Haiti, national governments and international donors have repeatedly chosen to increase the overall number of cadets trained and put police on the streets as rapidly as possible rather than increase the length of training and seek other solutions to the crime problems they face in the interim. (It must be recognized that interim policing in the wake of peace processes or major political transitions poses difficult political and practical problems as there is often no alternative to continued reliance on feared and despised old police and military for interim security tasks.) Later analyses of the performance of the new police in these countries have repeatedly faulted programs for inadequate preparation for the new police.

In **El Salvador**, the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office found that most complaints against the PNC resulted from procedural faults, many traceable to deficient training. Short-term political pressures to increase police presence in the streets have made it difficult to reinforce training despite identified weaknesses of training in legal procedures and due process. In fact, the government abandoned plans to extend police training from five months' academy training and one month of field training to eight months in the academy with an additional three months' field training, instead increasing field training to three months but maintaining academy training at five months. Furthermore, the increased number of students placed sometimes excessive demands on the teaching staff of the ANSP. (WOLA and HI 1996)

In **Haiti**, four months of academy training were clearly insufficient, particularly given that the HNP was created from scratch over two years in a country with no civilian police experience in its history. ICITAP originally had proposed a six-month program that was shortened in order to train the full complement of HNP by February 29, 1996, when U.S. troops were withdrawn from the UN forces. Once deployed, the Haitian police almost immediately made serious errors and committed human rights violations, including killings, particularly during crowd-control situations when they panicked and opened fire. International monitors and human rights organizations attributed these problems primarily to lack of leadership and inadequate training. In response, ICITAP increased the amount of firearms training at the academy, emphasizing improved judgment and integrating role-playing, and also gave every HNP agent an additional week of firearms retraining, including human rights, defensive tactics, and use of force exercises. ICITAP also created specialized crowd-control units in Haiti's larger cities. While the rights record of the HNP remains poor, following these measures, killings in crowd-control situations declined significantly. (Neild 1996)

7. Field Training/International Civilian Police

Field training, or a process by which the newly graduated police agents are partnered with experienced officers as mentors during their first weeks in the field, is a common practice in police forces. There is no tradition of formal "field training" for police in Latin America. During major police reform processes, the only police experience in the new force is that of the former, militarized, corrupt and abusive institution. Or, in cases where an entirely new police force is created, there is no police experience of any sort in the new force. In these contexts, field training has emerged as an important aspect of police training.

In general terms, field training should provide valuable guidance to inexperienced graduates of police academies as they confront the realities of their job and put into practice their academic academy training. In the United States, field training varies by police department. One common model is partnering a graduate cadet (rookie) with an experienced policeman as "mentor" and partner for a set period. As with other aspects of training, human rights and professionalism considerations should guide the choice of mentors. In Los Angeles, for example, police leaders did not vet the more senior officers acting as field trainers, and individuals with records of abuse were repeatedly assigned to act as field trainers, thus rapidly imbuing the new police with bad habits and attitudes. (Chevigny 1995)

During reform processes, training needs are paramount as large numbers of new, inexperienced civilian police are deployed, often with new, inexperienced leadership, and serious administrative weaknesses and logistical limitations, and generally facing serious crime. Field training should be designed to complement and build on academy training, and should seek to encourage good practice, develop maturity and professionalism in the cadets, and provide rapid feedback on academy training.

During large-scale police reform processes in Central America and Haiti, the field training has often been conducted by UN civilian police contingents (CivPol) because there is no national institution or pool of individuals with the expertise and capabilities to carry out these functions. The typical CivPol mission serves primarily to monitor and provide field training to the national police. In Latin America, CivPol have monitored interim and new civilian police in El Salvador, Haiti and Guatemala.

> In **El Salvador**, UN CivPol provided field training to newly deployed PNC delegations in 1993. This was generally well-received by the PNC and produced good results, though its efficacy could have been improved had ONUSAL (UN Mission in El Salvador) prepared a consistent curriculum for field training to apply in various locales. ONUSAL's field training effort was also hampered by the fact that most CivPol personnel deployed in El Salvador were low-ranking police who had little if any prior training experience. The field training role had not been anticipated when the Police Division of ONUSAL was planned. After several months, the field training program was terminated by incoming PNC sub-director for operations, Oscar Peña Duran. When relations between the PNC and ONUSAL were later restored, ONUSAL no longer had sufficient police personnel to do active field training. (Costa 1998)

> In **Haiti**, CivPol provides training and guidance to the HNP and has, at times, supported community policing efforts. Field training particularly emphasized use of force issues. CivPol provided weekly training followed by brief examinations on subjects including arrest procedures, administration, security, community relations, traffic control, judicial-police relations, and report writing. CivPol are training 500 HNP officers as trainers in basic police techniques. These HNP trainers will carry out field instruction accompanied by CivPol monitors. CivPol also is working to create police "command centers," first at HNP headquarters and in each department. (WOLA 1996)

In both El Salvador and Haiti, academy trainers worked with CivPol units to obtain feedback on academy training, which could then be used to adapt or strengthen training in areas identified as weak. CivPol have also provided higher-level technical assistance to bureaus such as Inspectors General, personnel offices, and top officials in the police and ministries responsible for public security policies. Finally, CivPol missions report to national and local as well as international officials on the institutional development of the national force, often providing important insights into weak areas and other issues of concern.

UN human rights missions have also played an important role in monitoring police reform and supporting training in human rights. In El Salvador, ONUSAL human rights monitors initially worked closely with newly deployed PNC delegations, and human rights monitoring helped uncover correctable deficiencies in training. In Haiti, the UN/OAS human rights mission (MICIVIH) conducted human rights training at the academy and worked with CivPol to support a community policing effort in one town. The existence of distinct human rights and police missions can also encourage excessive compartmentalization of responsibilities. In Haiti, CivPol officers repeatedly deferred human rights complaints against the HNP to

MICIVIH. Some CivPol officers stated that their relations with the HNP and ability to provide field training was damaged if they focused on human rights abuses. WOLA and other human rights organizations criticized this stance. While human rights missions must be coordinated with concurrent police missions, their role should in no way detract from or substitute for CivPol's actively monitoring and training in rights issues, which are a core concern of professional, civilian policing. Silence on incidents of abuse will send a message of tolerance for abuse. (WOLA 1997)

Police commanders and agents on the ground largely welcome the support and training they receive from CivPol units. Nonetheless, many tensions can arise in this relationship. In Haiti, CivPol personnel described an evolving relationship as the HNP gained confidence and independence and wanted less international supervision. A CivPol commander commented that: "The HNP come to CivPol whenever they have a problem, but now they have much more confidence and experience and don't take so kindly to CivPol comments. So the work gets more challenging." (WOLA, HRW, and NCHR 1997: 38)

Despite the evident need for support from international civilian police missions, observers make many justified criticisms of weaknesses in CivPol units. Recruitment has been difficult and standards lax as few countries can spare police from domestic crime fighting. Some donor nations' police forces have very poor skills, and some have problematic records themselves of police abuse. Typically, CivPol receive very little training and education on their mandate and responsibilities. These factors limit the consistency, quality and extent of field training that CivPol can offer.

8. Civil Society Engagement with Police Training

There are two reasons that civil society should demand access to police academies and seek some formal or semi-formal role in police training.

1. **Transparency is a fundamental value and should be established at key points in police procedures and institutions.** Civil society has a fundamental interest in assuring that police training reflects the values of human rights, professionalism, and effectiveness. In the United States, it was only when outside visitors went to a police academy to observe training that they noted that target practice used outlines of figures that were clearly black males. The resulting outcry not only forced the police to change their targets but also led to further scrutiny of police training to identify and correct other discriminatory attitudes -- a process that still has a long way to go, as demonstrated by the Rodney King case and the more recent abuse of a Haitian-American in New York City.

2. **A fundamental goal of large-scale police reform in Latin America is to move from a model of policing based on repression and social control to a model based on prevention and investigation. This requires a new relationship between police and community characterized by transparency, dialogue and cooperation.**

> Given the historical contexts and well-founded mistrust of all security forces by large sectors of the population, this is a long-term challenge. Initiating community-police dialogue from the very beginning of the police experience at training academies may assist in this process. In Haiti, human rights organizations urged that Haitian human rights and other civil society organizations play a role in police training to help move away from the historically adversarial relationship of the people and police. Such a role would both educate civil society groups on police and security issues they had little contact with and would provide the police cadets with valuable insights into the conditions they will face and the concerns of the communities they will serve.

In **Haiti**, in response to pressures from the human rights community, ICITAP and Haitian authorities implemented the "Wednesday night forum." On Wednesday nights, civil society representatives were invited to discuss issues of policing directly with the trainees. Noting that Haitians were "nervous and skeptical" about the new police force, the program description states that its objective was "to reassure the population about [the HNP's] motivations and intentions [and] dispel misunderstandings about the police training project…. It also provides a focused way for [the cadets] to think in broad, conceptual terms about their career choice…. Such contact helps to keep the police agents from becoming isolated and alienated and thereby falling into negative behavior patterns. It promotes understanding between them and the people they serve and reinforces the idea among both groups that things have indeed changed." (ICITAP undated)

Such efforts need to be complemented by other police practices which emphasize close community-police relations and dialogue, such as community policing approaches and transparency mechanisms that provide information to the public on police doctrine, practices and activities.

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- *Policing Haiti: Preliminary Assessment of the New Civilian Security Force*. September 1995. $7.00.

El Salvador:

- *Protectors or Perpetrators? The Institutional Crisis of the Salvadoran Civilian Police* (a joint report of WOLA and Hemisphere Initiatives). January 1996. $7.00.
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1630 Connecticut Avenue, NW
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Tel: 202/797-2171
Fax: 202/797-2172
wola@wola.org

Primera Calle 2-30
Colonia Bran
Ciudad de Guatemala
Guatemala, Zona 3
Tel/Fax: 502/232-5603
wola@guate.net

Calle Siboney, #109
Colonia Miramonte
San Salvador, El Salvador
Tel/Fax: 503/260-1058

http://www.wola.org