



# CCAI Delegation to El Salvador

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*February 4-6, 2004*

**Delegation Members:** Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Paul Singer (CCAI Board), Barbara Walzer (CCAI Board), Kerry Hasenbalg (CCAI Executive Director), Kathleen Strottman (LD for Senator Landrieu), Wendy Cosby (CCAI Program Director), and Brian Luwis (Adoptive Father).

## **Goals and Objectives:**

- Strengthen relations with El Salvadoran officials who oversee adoption and the care of children in need of homes and in particular with the First Lady, Ana Ligia de Saca, who has demonstrated a great passion for the children of El Salvador
- Demonstrate that the US government is a strong advocate of adoption for children who cannot remain in the care of their biological family.
- Obtain a deeper understanding of existing and planned laws, policies and systems related to domestic and international adoption, foster care and at-risk families.
- Encourage the El Salvadoran government to consider ratifying and implementing the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

## **Overview:**

The main goal of this brief visit to El Salvador was to encourage the efforts led by the First Lady, Ana Ligia de Saca, on behalf of children. The welfare of children, particularly those who are orphans, has been a personal priority for her and the current administration. During our discussions with her and her staff, Senator Landrieu stressed her support for their efforts to strengthen domestic programs aimed at reducing the risk of abandonment as well as the development of domestic adoption and foster care. Under the leadership of the first lady, the Government of El Salvador has been pursuing an opportunity to enter into a bilateral agreement related to international adoption. When asked about this as an



option, Senator Landrieu instead recommended that El Salvador consider becoming a party to the existing multilateral agreement, the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

The delegation also had the chance to meet with representatives from UNICEF to learn more about their work with orphaned and vulnerable children and to visit the Bloom Hospital. Another highlight included a reception at the home of US Ambassador Douglas Barclay. During this event, members of the delegation had the opportunity to interact with officials from all levels of the El Salvadoran government, as well as representatives from NGOs working with El Salvadoran children.

**Outcomes:**

It was clear to the delegation that Senator Landrieu and First Lady, Ana Ligia de Saca, had a lot in common. As a result, CCAI intends to invite her to participate in the upcoming Angels in Adoption event in September as well as engage her in other international adoption related efforts.