

# IMPACT STORY

## ACTIF Project 2024

### Dialogo Diverso

Zooming in on one of Rainbow Railroad’s ACTIF-funded project partners in Latin America, Dialogo Diverso is the program partner that implemented work in Ecuador. Dialogo Diverso is an organization that provides legal, health and social services to LGBTIQ+ people. 90% of the people they serve are Venezuelan migrants.

Ecuador



**Danilo Manzano**

Danilo Manzano, the Executive Director of Dialogo Diverso, says “the program that Dialogo Diverso developed for supporting LGBTIQ+ migrants is called My Home Away From Home (in Spanish, Mi Casa Fuera de Casa). With My Home Away from Home, we provide medical assistance, psychological assistance, legal assistance, and social assistance. At the same time, we pay for medicines, for medical tests and exams, and we provide hygiene kits and food particularly focused on LGBTIQ+ migrants living with HIV. Our program focuses directly on LGBTIQ+ migrants in very difficult circumstances and also we provide the same support for the LGBTIQ+ Ecuadorian people.”

With the ACTIF funds, Dialogo Diverso was able to focus on providing psychosocial support, which means they were able to pay for psychologists to work with LGBTIQ+ migrants. Manzano explains: “The circumstances here is that LGBTIQ+ migrants don’t have jobs, and that creates a lot of worries, because they have families to support back home. And they don’t have the money to send to their families. At the same time, some of them feel lonely in Ecuador. And also, many people came out of the closet when they arrived in Ecuador because they didn’t feel safe to do so back in Venezuela because they say back home, they didn’t have human rights.”

As a grassroots organization, Dialogo Diverso works directly with the community in a by-and-for model. More than 80% of the professionals they work with are from the LGBTIQ+ community and some of them are also migrants. Working with peers allows them to build confidence and trust from the beginning and they do this by working with local promoters (in Spanish, *promotores locales*). These are people who are in the community, talking about the services that Dialogo Diverso provides for free.



Dialogo Diverso currently works in two cities in Ecuador: Quito and Cuenca. With the approval of new project funding from other funders, Dialogo Diverso will be able to open two new offices in two other cities of Ecuador. Manzano explains: *“right now, we are not only having LGBTIQ+ migration from Venezuela, we are now also having LGBTIQ+ migrants from Colombia, because of all the conflict in Colombia, which dates back from many years where protections are rarely enforced, and anti-LGBTIQ+ violence is on the rise since the peace agreement.”* One explanation for the rise in violence is that illegal armed actors are repeating historical patterns of discrimination by continuing to use violence against women and LGBTIQ+ people as a mechanism to consolidate power and territory. And the political circumstances in Venezuela also mean there are now projections that over 3 million people will migrate out of Venezuela.

Dialogo Diverso currently works in two cities in Ecuador: Quito and Cuenca. With the approval of new project funding from other funders, Dialogo Diverso will be able to open two new offices in two other cities of Ecuador. Manzano explains: *“right now, we are not only having LGBTIQ+ migration from Venezuela, we are now also having LGBTIQ+ migrants from Colombia, because of all the conflict in Colombia, which dates back from many years where protections are rarely enforced, and anti-LGBTIQ+ violence is on the rise since the peace agreement.”* One explanation for the rise in violence is that illegal armed actors are repeating historical patterns of discrimination by continuing to use violence against women and LGBTIQ+ people as a mechanism to consolidate power and territory. And the political circumstances in Venezuela also mean there are now projections that over 3 million people will migrate out of Venezuela.

The ACTIF-funded project ended in December 2023 and Manzano says that created uncertainty about funding to keep the mental health professionals they had engaged to help queer and trans migrants in their healing journey. Knowing that Rainbow Railroad would not reapply for ACTIF project funding, Manzano said that meant they needed to pivot fast by approaching other donors and present the results from the ACTIF project. *“So ACTIF gave us the opportunity to open new doors.”* New doors which have allowed Dialogo Diverso to secure more funding for the next two years from other donors to keep serving queer and trans migrants by providing free access to psychologists and psychiatrists and the medicines they may need.

Manzano says the work is not just about numbers but is also about saving lives, and that Dialogo Diverso creates safe places so people can feel free to be who they are.

