COPANT region well represented internationally by

ROSARIO URIA FROM PERU

Rosario Uria of Peru is the leader of the IEC Affiliate Country Program, which offers developing countries a way to participate in international standardization activities and conformity assessment of the IEC without the financial burden of becoming full members.

The beginnings in standardization

Rosario is a microbiologist who began her standardization career in the testing activities. She worked in an accredited microbiological testing laboratory, and participated in standards committees. During a consultancy for an Andean project on food safety with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), she made proposals for Peru's National Plan for the improvement of national norms in the food sector.

In 2005 she joined the standards body at INDECOPI (National Institute for the Defense of Competition and Protection of Intellectual Property), when it was a corresponding member of ISO and before it worked in international standardization actively, to help build Peru’s participation. Since 2006 INDECOPI has been working with IEC via the program for adopting standards as an affiliate member. In 2007 Peru became a full member of ISO and begins to take note of the importance of international standards. In 2010 it created its National Electrotechnical Committee of IEC, and grew its membership in that organization to Affiliate Plus.

In 2006 Peru signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, a pact that emphasized the importance of participating in international standardization. Also boosting the country’s standardization activities at that time was its participation in the Norexport project in the Andean community.

In 2010, with the support of AENOR, Peru identified the need to have a quality infrastructure to better serve the country. Promoting issues related to standardization, accreditation, and metrology were also prioritized as part of a National Quality Policy — with quality at the top of the list.

The new Peruvian legislation for national quality infrastructure and the recent creation of INACAL

The National Quality System law was approved in 2014, resulting in the formation of INACAL (National Quality Institute of Peru) and the enactment of a national policy promoting quality. These efforts have enabled Peru to become more competitive and meet commitments under its various trade agreements. And at the national level, it contributes to the protection of its citizens. The need to create a new body reflected the understanding that standardization, metrology, and accreditation activities must be visible to stakeholders and provides timely services that contribute to prosperity and economic growth based on a culture of quality. INACAL is a public entity with technical autonomy under the Ministry of Production, whose purpose is to contribute to the development and implementation of national quality policy for the development and competitiveness of economic activities and the protection of the consumer. The goal is to engage more strategically in international standardization, and to highlight national issues and prepare for the enhancement of their capacities.

It is expected that INACAL will become a full member of IEC in 2018, which is why when the proposal to assume leadership of the Affiliate Country Program came up; it seemed very opportune to take advantage of all the benefits of the program and support other countries in order to share the path of learning.
Challenges to assume leadership of the IEC Affiliate Country Program

The Affiliate program has many benefits, but it takes some time to become educated about IEC activities and opportunities. INACAL began connecting with IEC gradually – first through some mentoring with Canada, and then with an MoU on quality and safety of electrical products with Korea, and as a result they have become aware of the importance of knowing more about the IEC.

It is expected that INACAL will become a full member of IEC, despite not having an electrotechnical industry, as the country is an importer of electrical products and also considers it important to participate in the standardization of the generation, transmission, distribution, and management of energy. Recently INACAL became an Affiliate Plus member, and with its increased familiarity with the benefits of the program it has recognized that the help of other countries is very important. The program can provide many benefits, but many countries do not exploit them.

With the sharing of knowledge about the program, countries can learn more about taking advantage of the benefits and opportunities and strengthening their National Electrotechnical Committees (NECs). As leader of the program, Rosario intends to ensure that the region has this opportunity by promoting broader education about the program activities and benefits. Not all countries have the opportunity to rely on the guidance of other countries, so it is important to help spread the word, update the guide for NECs, and provide examples of successful cases in each region, so that each country can relate to a leading member in its region.

How the COPANT region can benefit

COPANT and FINCA (the Forum of IEC National Committees of the Americas) can provide valuable information on how to strengthen active participation of stakeholders and how to foster good management of each country’s NEC. While sharing information and experiences contributes to this, it is also important that the NEC can set its priorities and address them by promoting active work in national standardization based on IEC standards, to the extent that the state of technology permits. To identify the needs of stakeholders, the program designed a survey of very basic questions in Google format.

As leader of the IEC Affiliate Country Program, Rosario is a good communicator on behalf of the organization. She is engaged with the Affiliate Conformity Assessment Status (ACAS) program, which provides a training module on standards and conformity assessment with examinations of progress at the different levels.

But regionally, only Peru and Uruguay are currently enrolled in the ACAS program, and Peru has been working with its NEC since the end of 2015 to start the training modules. Responses from countries have been very slow. We must not fail to disseminate this important information, as it is expected that countries will be encouraged to participate in this beneficial program.

Rosario recommends visiting the following sites:
http://www.iec.ch/affiliates/pdf/programme/affiliate_website_guidelines.pptx

How countries benefit

Countries need to begin to assume leadership and address challenges to grow internationally for the benefit of the country, and it is important to share their experiences with other countries. But it is not possible to gain from the exchange of experiences if there is no participation. It is necessary to take these steps; these tasks obviously recharge the national job, but enrich and give the opportunity to work and/or know the work of other countries.
INACAL’s plan is to become a full member of the IEC in 2018. Taking this step depends on the vision of the country. Peru has been facing several challenges related to development in electrical safety, energy efficiency, energy management, renewable energy, and others, and having the opportunity to hear the experiences of other countries— the presentation on micro grids for rural electrification in India during the forum of industrialized countries, for example— was very useful. That type of information exchange is beneficial, and Rosario requests that in the future other countries in the region take the lead at the Affiliates Program. The outcomes are greater insights, strategy, and contacts for the country, while benefitting from the personal exchange of experiences.

**The IEC mentoring program**

Mentoring program intended that members countries, who would like to collaborate, supports Affiliate Plus members. The program provides assistance by mentoring the country without generating a long-term commitment, reducing cost and time restraints.

Support is provided for specific issues such as strengthening the NEC, helping with submitting comments, the conformation of the NEC, guidance for policy making, and engagement with ACAS, depending on the maturity of the country.

To access the mentoring program, an application must be formalized through the Secretariat of the Affiliate Country Program, which in turn helps to find partners. COPANT and FINCA can assist countries seeking partners. For example, Mexico mentors Peru: the work is developed via Skype communications and the program covers visits to the country for the mentor to train the NEC with minimal financial obligation. A guide for mentoring programs is underway.

**Interrelation between COPANT, IEC/LARC, and FINCA**

This collaborative relationship between COPANT, IEC/LARC, and FINCA should help transitioning countries become full or associate members of the IEC, not only for issues related to industries, but also for trade, generation and distribution of energy, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and consumer protection. It will also help to provide insight on how the market works regarding the recognition of IEC certificates of conformity assessment.