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E-BULLETIN

Colombianization: Working with local partners to position key policy issues



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Successful public policy reform requires buy-in and support from a diverse range of public, private, and third sector stakeholders. Policy messages are not always best framed as coming from a US government-supported program. Therefore, the **USAID Public Policy Program** worked to identify a strategic local partner, as part of its *Colombianization Strategy*, that could independently generate healthy debate on key policy issues.

In October 2011, the Program identified and awarded a grant for approximately US \$420,000 to a public policy think tank, the **Instituto de Ciencia Política - Hernán Echavarría Olózaga (ICP)**, that has the capacity to convene and lead dialogue on public policy proposals with opinion leaders, decision makers, private sector, media, civil society organizations and the general population.

Over the past 13 months, ICP-sponsored expert roundtables, legislative debates, and seminars have served two purposes. They have encouraged discussion between government stakeholders, political parties, private sector, social sector, and ethnic minorities on key aspects, difficulties, and implications of Program-supported policy reforms. On the other hand, they have created opportunities to generate innovations that improve norms and public policy instruments.

Efforts to position Program priorities on the public agenda have also had significant results. Together with *Semana* Magazine (Colombia's premiere public policy publication), ICP prepared two special reports and high level forums about land and rural development and innovative instruments to facilitate nation-region relationships. In addition to influencing public opinion regarding these crucial policies (by reaching 1,084,500 readers and over 3 million visitors to the *Semana* webpage), ICP's strategic intervention allowed the Program to gather new inputs to strengthen bills under discussion (Land and Rural Development Bill, Departmental Regime Bill, and Municipal Regime Law).

Given ICP's capacity to influence public opinion and access a wide range of stakeholders, the Program, is also working with its grantee to socialize Program objectives through ICP's website

(www.icpcolombia.org). This will provide an additional channel of direct communication with the aforementioned audiences.