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# HUMAN RIGHTS COMPASS

USAID HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM

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## Celebrating International Human Rights Day

Angelino Garzón, Colombia's Vice President opening the conference.

In celebration of International Human Rights Day on December 10, USAID's Human Rights Program organized and supported a series of public events throughout Colombia. In Bogotá, together with the Universidad Nacional and the Ombudsman's Office, the Program hosted an event at the Universidad Nacional's Bogotá campus which included speeches made by the Vice Dean of the university, as well as the Ombudsman and the USAID Director of the Democracy and Human Rights Office. The speeches were followed by a panel of leading experts and academics on implications of transitional justice and peace process on human rights. The Human Rights Program designed and distributed bracelets that read "December 10, Human Rights Day" as well as the bookmarks and banners that decorated the university's Law School auditorium.

Also, during the afternoon of December 10, to mark Human Rights Day and demonstrate US support for the topic, a small ceremony was held with the USAID Mission Director and Colombia's Vice President to celebrate the signing of an MOU between USAID and the Colombian Government. The Vice President extensively thanked USAID for their ongoing commitment and support for Human Rights, the National Human Rights System and Observatory as well as the National Conference.

In Medellín, celebrations supported by USAID consisted

of a human rights festival with cultural activities and a forum on Human Rights Success Stories in Colombia which included seven panels on a variety of topics to promote respect for human rights. The events drew an impressive turnout which included civil society leaders, renowned authors, journalists and human rights defenders.

Immediately following International Human Rights Day, from December 11-13, USAID provided support to the National Human Rights Conference, held in Bogotá. This high profile event convened over 2,000 participants and included speeches made by the President and Vice President of Colombia, the Mayor of Bogotá, the Vice Minister of Justice, the Minister of Defense, the Ombudsman, the Inspector General and civil society leaders. The focus of the conference was on the creation of a human rights policy and the implementation of the national human rights system. Fernando Calado, the USAID Human Rights Program Director, moderated a panel on transitional justice and the Program's Coordinator for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights moderated a panel on Afro-Colombian rights. Additionally, USAID grantee, Viva la Ciudadanía, produced materials for the conference and documented its outcomes.●

*The opinions expressed by the author may not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government*

# Tenth Annual University Moot Court Competition on Human Rights

On December 10, USAID kicked off the Tenth Annual University Moot Court Competition on Human Rights together with the Ombudsman's Office. Forty-seven universities from 17 departments throughout Colombia participated in the competition with 24 universities in attendance for the 5-day oral phase of the competition.



*Representatives from USAID, Universidad Nacional and the Ombudsman participating in the opening session of the Moot Court competition.*

The annual Moot Court competition between Colombian universities was created by USAID and the Ombudsman's Office in 2002, to promote education in human rights and international humanitarian law as well as the use of related national and international jurisprudence. Moot courts create an environment where students research and present their arguments before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights.

The competition began with an inaugural ceremony at the Universidad Nacional's campus in Bogotá where remarks were made by USAID's Todd Sloan, Director of Democracy and Governance, the Vice Dean of Universidad Nacional and the Ombudsman.

This year's hypothetical case was on a peace negotiation process with guerilla groups in the fictitious island of "Republic of Atlanta." The case required students to debate support to victims, truth and reconciliation processes as well as dealing with human rights violations committed by illegal armed groups and the military. Students drew from jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court on Human Rights to argue their case.

The Program staff and other human rights lawyers ac-

ted as judges and announced Angie Katherine García and Natalia Arévalo Gil and their tutor, Andrés Felipe Zuluaga Jaramillo, from Universidad de Medellín as the winners of a trip to attend a course on human rights at American University in Washington, D.C. The second place team was from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Cali.

"The competition is an incredibly enriching experience that permits students to apply material taught in undergraduate education to interact with the Inter-American and international system of Human Rights. I would do it again without any hesitation, Moot Court is exciting." Stated Stephanie Baquero Castrillon, a former student of the Universidad Javeriana in Cali and member of the winning team from last year's 9th Annual University Moot Court Competition on Human Rights in 2011. •



*Winners Of 10th Annual University Moot Court Competition*

"Professionally, this achievement was a determining factor for me in choosing the emphasis for my career. My experience participating in the competition allowed me to become familiar with the Inter-American System and how arguing cases before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights works. This exercise gave law and political science students the opportunity to become interested in the topic."

Natalia Arévalo Gil, Winner 10th Moot Court Competition from Universidad de Medellín

# Providing victims with access to Reparation in 28 municipalities



Mass Declaration Days with the Victim's Mobile Unit

With the passing of the Victims' Law in 2011, which included multiple new responsibilities for the *personeros*, they have been overburdened by the increase in demand for services from victims as required in the Law, particularly in taking victims' declarations. Beginning November 29, USAID's Human Rights Program has been addressing this issue together with the Ministry of Justice and the Ombudsman's Office by sponsoring two or three-day orientation and mass declaration events for victims in the departments of Antioquia, Guajira, Meta, Tolima, Cauca, Bolivar and Nariño covering 28 of the Program's municipalities.

These sessions are being carried out through a mobile unit with three consultants, traveling throughout Colombia. In coordination with the regional Ombudsman's Office, the municipal *personero's* office and Mayor's Office, the Unit aims to increase the number of victims' declarations taken by the Ombudsman's Office and improve the government's outreach efforts to victims. In just two months of operation, the mobile unit has taken 381 declarations. In addition to making declarations, 1,099 victims also had the opportunity to learn about accessing the victims' reparations routes, and they received guidance on the process of victims' declarations as well as legal and psycho-social support. By mid-April, the mobile unit is expected to result in the registration of around 1,300 victims, significantly alleviating the backlog of victim registration in the Program's municipalities.

In its first two months, the mobile unit made its first stop in Valdivia, followed by Taraza, Cáceres and Caucasia in the department of Antioquia. In the department of La

Guajira, the unit stopped in Dibulla, Uribia, Maicao and Riohacha as well as in Granada, San Juan de Arama and Villavicencio in the department of Meta. In the upcoming months, stops will be made in Cauca, Bolivar, Tolima and Nariño.

According to the Personero of Maicao, Alexander Idaburo, "The session in Maicao reduced the Personeros office's waiting list, which had victims up until the month of June 2013. With the mobile unit, we were able to take 200 declarations, leading to a decrease in the number of people coming to the *personero's* office from an average of 11 victims to an average of four victims per day. This valuable support from USAID has led to an improvement of assistance provided to victims and an alleviation of our backlog of declarations."

Additional activities to assist local authorities with their obligations to assist victims included the drafting of Action Plans for Victims (*Planes Territoriales de Atención a Víctimas-PATs*). To that end the Program, with its Human Rights Advisors and the expertise of five consultants, provided technical assistance to departmental and municipal authorities for the drafting and completion of 31 PATs, helping mayors to meet the December deadline established in the Victims' Law. The PATs included critical victims' diagnostics. Activities to follow will include following up on the priorities established in the PATs and using permanent participation roundtables starting March 2013 to discuss advances and gaps in plans, as well as the monitoring of their implementation.●

## Promoting the Rights of Ethnic Communities and Vulnerable Populations

The Human Rights Program kicked off 2013 with a series of activities with Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. This included support for Afro-Colombian leaders' advocacy efforts to improve the government's protection measures provided to the community. The Program also supported Afro-Colombians leaders to meet with the Ministry of Agriculture and INCODER to agree upon a prior consultation process on the draft Land and Rural Development Law. The consultation process is a required step which the government must take before presenting the draft law to Congress. To date the draft law has been held up due to the lack of proper prior consultation process.



The anticipated outcome of the meeting is that the process to carry out the prior consultation will be approved in the upcoming months. Support was also provided to the Afro-Colombian Consejo Comunitario of Alto Atrato in Chocó - COCOMOPOCA to train its members in their right to prior consultation. This *consejo* recently received 73,000 hectares of collective land in four municipalities and requested this training support to ensure members understand their rights regarding the land.



Training with Cocomopoca on human rights, January 23-24 in Quibdó, Chocó

In February, workshops to train Wayuu police in La Guajira in human rights, indigenous rights and Wayuu ances-

tral justice will commence in the municipality of Uribia. These trainings address the fact that Wayuu police have been trained to be members of the police force, but trainings in indigenous rights are needed to ensure respect for the particular rights of the Wayuu community. The trainings are being organized with the indigenous association AKUAIPA WAIMAKAT and the mayor's office of Uribia. Participants in these trainings will include 120 Wayuu police, 20 Wayuu indigenous authorities, five *palabrer*os, and five regional Wayuu organization representatives. •

## Women leaders Convene to Improve Institutional Responses for Victims of Gender-based Violence

On January 29, in Bogotá, the Program hosted a breakfast where nine women representatives from women's organizations in Colombia, Peter Natiello, Mission Director of USAID and 14 staff members from the Embassy and USAID convened to discuss the severe situation of gender based violence (GBV) in Colombia.



Colombian women leaders discussing gender-based violence with USAID

Topics discussed included the high level of impunity for victims of GBV within the context of the conflict; the serious lack of institutional coordination at the regional level in order to appropriately respond to victims of GBV; and the many challenges in the application of national policies locally as well as plans and jurisprudence that guarantee the protection of women victims of violence.

The participation of women leaders was very productive and provided USAID with many thoughts on how to improve the implementation of local level institutional responses for victims of GBV. •