

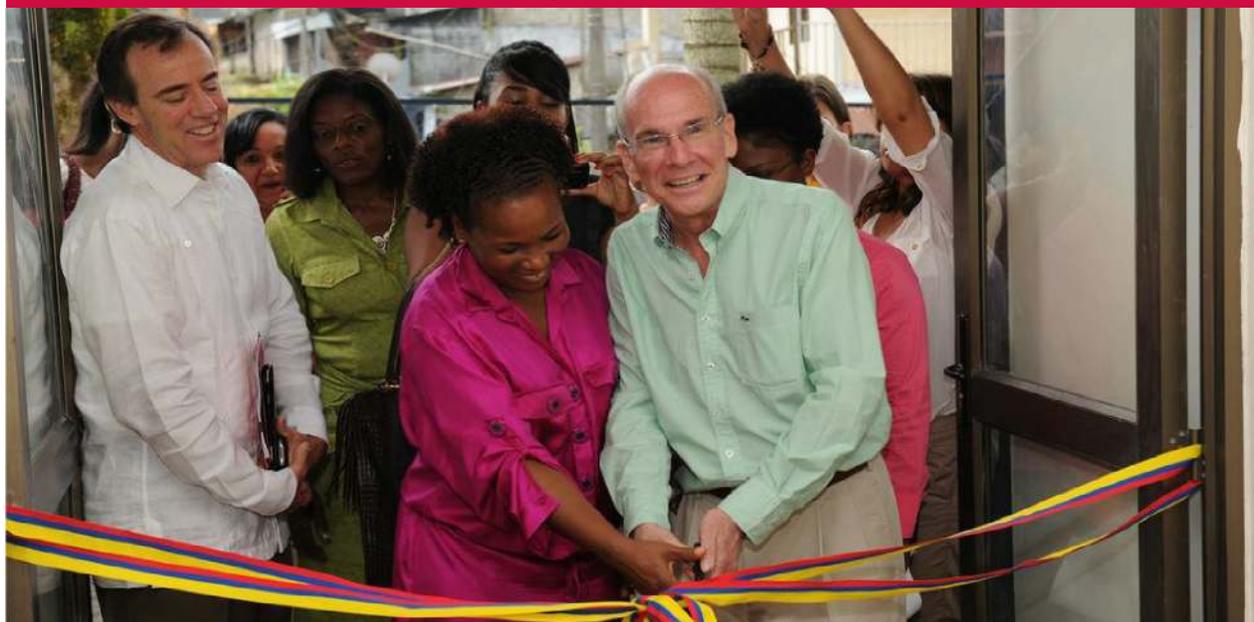


USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

HUMAN RIGHTS COMPASS

USAID HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM Bogotá, Colombia

Vol. 2, Ed. 1 July - August 2013



USAID Mission Director, Peter Natiello, Quibdó Mayor Zulia Mena and US Ambassador Michael McKinley inaugurating Sexual Violence Service and Referral Center
Photo Credit: USAID HRP III

Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence in Quibdó

July 8 was a triumphant day for women victims of sexual violence as the new Victims of Sexual Violence Service and Referral Center supported by USAID was officially inaugurated in Quibdó. With the full backing and presence of US Ambassador Michael McKinley, USAID Mission Director Peter Natiello, and Quibdó Mayor Zulia Mena, the Center's doors were opened to serve as Quibdó's focal point for providing immediate services to women victims of sexual violence. The Center is based out of the Quibdó's Justice House where USAID's Human Rights Program III has hired a *dupla* team, or the gender-focused lawyer and psychologist team from the Ombudsman's Office. This specialized team will extend their professional services to guarantee women's rights and contribute to the prevention of re-victimization.

The official data that is known about this type of human rights violation against women in Colombia, due to the conflict and otherwise, are both startling and perturbing. National statistics depict a grave situation for women with regard to sexual and gender-based violence for Quibdó and Chocó. In 2011, the Colombian Institute of Forensics (*Instituto Nacional de Medicina y Ciencias Forenses*), reported 85 sexual violence cases and 305 intra-fa-

miliar violence against women cases in Quibdó. The more disturbing reality, however, speaks to the myriad of women's cases that remain in the shadows and invisible to State institutions or agencies responsible for their care and protection. Official figures indicate that the high levels of underreporting stand at 73% of women victims not reporting incidents of violence.

Beyond the psychological and legal assistance that the Center will offer women victims, Ambassador McKinley's words at the inauguration ceremony affirmed the nature of its expansive reach stating, "We trust that the measures to be implemented will raise awareness on the issue of sexual violence as both a serious crime and a human rights violation." In this way, not only does the Center directly respond to the immediate and longer-term needs of women victims, but its presence and work in their community emits a stronger message of prevention and respect which has already led to an increase in reporting of sexual violence cases. To date, the Center has serviced eleven cases (six women and five girls).•

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



Improving Oversight for Colombia's Land Restitution Policy

*Conversation Café session on Land Restitution in Bogotá
Photo Credit: Photo Credit: USAID*

Getting Colombia's land restitution policy off the ground is where USAID is looking to raise the bar and ensure that land victims of conflict and violence receive justice under the law. Through a partnership with the Inspector General's Office (IGO), USAID's Human Rights Program III (HRP III) is laying the groundwork for providing the much needed oversight and organizational support to meet this challenge. By designing the IGO's Land Restitution Observatory, HRP III will focus on the oversight of the three phases of the land restitution process.

With the monumental effort derived from the Victims' Law to address land restitution for victims, the government isn't taking any shortcuts in getting land restitution right. While there is enthusiastic support to see this process carried out, institutional weakness and lack of coordination particularly at the regional and local levels make it evident that the process is advancing at varying paces which threatens to put the ambitious restitution goals in jeopardy. Given this, careful measures were taken regarding the Observatory's design and objectives to achieve both stronger inter-agency coordination as well as provide robust information to guide policy-making.

The Observatory's collecting, analyzing and sharing of information among the 47 relevant government entities is as only sound and effective as it is accessible and understood by those institutions it's meant to serve. Recognizing this, HRP III is ensuring that the data is relevant, user-friendly and interactive for the participating institutions. To present and discuss the Observatory's draft design and initial list of indicators, HRP III organized a "Conversation Café" session with 85 participants from

national level government institutions, NGOs and the public ministry followed by another "Café" with the participation of 54 Antioquia land restitution judges and magistrates.

Speaking at the latter event, USAID Director for Democracy and Human Rights Program underscored in his remarks, "...we (USAID) are convinced that the efforts made to provide reparations to victims and create justice requires information that allows us to anticipate risks and obstacles in order to develop policy recommendations that will guarantee the effective enjoyment of rights to land rights victims". The sessions engaged participants to review existing information gaps as well as consider how their own institutions could contribute in improving the monitoring of the Law.

As a positive corollary thus far, the IGO has gathered crucial input in terms of coordination and information gaps to be included in their annual report on the implementation of the Law to be presented in August. In the upcoming months, HRP III will run three regional case studies to pilot the Observatory before officially launching it. The Program will also share the Observatory design with relevant institutions and experts to provide technical feedback and ensure buy-in. With a Land Restitution Observatory in place in the IGO during one of Colombia's most sensitive transition periods, HRP III is investing in long-term accountability for land victims throughout the country.●



USAID Mission Director Peter Natiello and Coordinator of Red Nacional de Mujeres, Beatriz Quintero listening to testimony by threatened land restitution leader, Mayerlis Angarita.
Photo Credit: Photo Credit: U.S.AID HRP III

Raising Women's Voices Towards Equality

Corporación SISMA Mujer's latest report on women's human rights entitled, "Derechos en Femenino ¿Hacia un Real Camino a la Igualdad?" was enthusiastically embraced at an evening reception on July 10, 2013 in Bogotá. With HRP III support, the launching of this report covering 2010-2012 stood up to the high quality standards so well associated with SISMA Mujer's mission in advocacy, research and promotion of women's rights in Colombia.

According to the report, while Colombia has passed some of the most innovative and progressive women's rights laws in the world (Law 1257 of 2008, Auto 092 and multiple decrees), implementation and positive results regarding respect for women's rights has largely fallen short. High levels of violence and exclusion due to discrimination and marginalization of women persist. In a very concrete manner, SISMA Mujer's report focused on three major areas of challenges for women's rights: Women as human rights defenders, Women as victims of violence, and Women's rights to participate in politics and public life.

One of the most significant challenges facing women's human rights raised at the event stems from low quality and scarce quantitative information and mechanisms to gather information regarding these issues. In addition to this, underreporting levels of violence against women remains very high citing victims' economic dependence as one of the main reasons. In USAID Mission Director Peter Natiello's opening remarks, he reflected on the significance of the data present-

ed saying, "... The three mentioned areas demonstrate discouraging data about the grave situation experienced by women due to social structures that discriminate and perpetuate strong stereotypes and prejudices based on gender... This analysis [furthermore] highlights the State's obligations and directly addresses challenges that are crucial to overcome in order to meet national and international standards regarding the guarantees of human rights for women."

At the launching event, SISMA Mujer's Director Claudia Mejia and her team of experts poignantly presented these challenges and gaps to the overflowing room of attendees including public officials from HRP III regions, a Congresswoman, Bogotá council member, gender-based violence victims and international cooperation representatives. However, the most impacting pieces of the evening unmistakably were the video testimonies of women in each of these areas. They earnestly shared and depicted a very vivid human side of their experiences apart from the statistics and figures discussed earlier. As women victims and human rights defenders they eloquently expressed their struggles to fight for their justice and representation as equally contributing members and leaders in Colombia's patriarchal society.

The road for women's equality and full protection of rights in Colombia is a seemingly long one, and for many, a treacherous path ahead. However, SISMA Mujer has provided this groundbreaking report and tool empowering women leaders to continue to advocate for change. •

Hip Hop and Rapping for Human Rights in Chocó



**¡YO PROTEJO!
¡TU TAMBIÉN!**



In the coming months, the youth of Chocó look to transform their communities with powerful messaging covering some of the most severe human rights issues that touch their lives on a daily basis due to armed conflict and violence. Growing up in areas where issues such as violence against women, forced recruitment, land dispossession and invasion are prevalent, Afro-Colombian youth are disproportionately the main victims of conflict and a culture of violence. It is precisely in this environment that USAID HRP III saw an opportunity for a new, energizing, and innovative strategy to create new outlets for this largely marginalized population. Through hip hop and rap, USAID HRP III is partnering with grantee Familia Ayara to train and work with 60 youth from Chocó on human rights.

youth will produce messages on prevention, promotion, and protection of human rights making bold statements against the waves of violence engulfing so many ethnic communities across Colombia.

A sampling of this energizing and innovative approach was shared with supporters at their launching event held at their home office in Bogotá. With contagious rhythms and movements, their dancers and artists proudly voiced and displayed their enthusiasm to steer such a campaign where youth can transform from being victims into change agents. Their deep sense of pride in their cultural uniqueness as Afro-Colombians embodied their lyrics which they seek to use as armor amidst their surroundings of violence. Popo, Executive Director of Familiar Ayara, affirmed that the expectation set before their team was, "...to build on an experience of exchange and build a strategy to educate communities to not only identify human rights violations but as a community respond to them".



*Familia Ayara dancer at ¡Yo Protejo! ¡Tu También! Campaign launch
Photo Credit: Familia Ayara*

On July 18, HRP III and Familia Ayara officially launched their campaign to be implemented across six municipalities in the next nine months. It's simple and impactful message "Yo Protejo! Tu Tambien!" symbolizes a movement that Chocó youth are energized to broadcast and perform throughout their communities. Through the creation of hip-hop songs and music videos, these

Familia Ayara is a well-known and respected organization, created by a group of Afro-Colombian youth from Chocó, dedicated to promoting social issues and human rights through hip-hop music and urban art that has shown to be an effective strategy with Afro-Colombian youth. Part of its notable success is its work with the Latin Grammy award-winning hip-hop group, ChoQuibTown, to promote the use of social messaging on issues such as anti-discrimination, Afro-Colombian rights, forced recruitment of youth prevention, among others, in its rap and hip hop songs. The Afro-Colombian youth from Chocó, through these programs, will receive training and guidance from some of the most cutting-edge and creative minds and artists that Colombia has to offer. The promise planted by youth through art, music, and song will pave new paths to strengthen human rights throughout their communities. •