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# HUMAN RIGHTS COMPASS

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Cover image of Colombia Diversa annual report  
Photo: USAID HRP III



Panel with Vice President Garzón and USAID Mission Director Peter Natiello  
Photo: USAID HRP III

## Raising the Banner on LGBT Rights for Gay Pride Month

In recognition of Gay Pride Month, USAID's Human Rights Program III supported trailblazing research and advocacy initiatives in promoting and protecting rights of the LGBT community throughout Colombia. In Bogotá before a packed auditorium at Universidad de los Andes on June 26, USAID/Colombia Mission Director, Peter Natiello, accompanied high-level public officials and LGBT community activists to launch HRP III grantee *Colombia Diversa's* annual report entitled, "Cuando el perjuicio mata: Informe anual de LGBT 2012." Opening the event, Peter Natiello remarked, "Protecting our brothers and sisters of the LGBT community is one of today's major challenges confronting fellow human beings...this report calls to attention violence as an expression of deep-rooted structural discrimination permeating through society..."

With a focus on prejudice-based crimes committed against the LGBT community, the report introduces an analysis that depicts the pervasive and insidious nature of violent acts, language, attitudes, and behaviors displayed by institutions and society at large that targeted this marginalized population. Nationally in 2012, 105 crimes were committed against the LGBT community; however, underreporting remains very high due to fear and distrust of institutional response. A panel discussion and remarks followed, including the resolute support by Vice President Angelino Garzón in promoting LGBT rights at the institutional level.

In the same spirit, HRP III organized several community-level initiatives and events engaging institutions to highlight LGBT rights and related issues. In Chaparral, for example, HRP III partner *Caribe Afirmativo* carried out a training that engaged police officers and public officials to better understand their constitutional and legal responsibilities with regard to the protection of LGBT rights and community members. The newly developed virtual training tool created with HRP III support was implemented to educate participants on Directive 006, a fundamental policy on police behavior and conduct with LGBT populations.

In municipalities such as Quibdó and Popayán, where HRP III has spearheaded bold advocacy initiatives throughout the past year, LGBT-focused discussion forums were held. Quibdó's forum supported by the municipal Gender Secretary raised awareness on the invisible human rights situation affecting the Afro-Colombian LGBT population. In Popayán, HRP III grantee *Santamaria Fundación* partnered with the dynamic Cauca's Sexual Diversity Collective and Cauca's governor's office to host an informational discussion on LGBT rights, diversity, and community respect. Through HRP III-supported efforts, the call for equality and respect for LGBT rights throughout Colombia continues to create opportunities and spaces for increased awareness and dialogue on this sensitive issue. •

*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*

## Documenting Land Resistance Movements and Land Dispossession in Cauca and Bajo Cauca



Accord signing between government officials and ethnic community leaders  
Photo Credit: UOAFROC

In a revealing article posted on *Verdad Abierta's* web page, one of Colombia's most recognized research media platforms, indigenous leader Gabriel Pavi explains, "They displaced us from the plains areas towards the hills. We are in the mountain ranges and now they want to displace us from here because the multinationals are interested in exploiting the water and gold from the hills. These areas have not been conceded to the multinational on account of our resistance efforts." Similar testimonies on the stark realities and complexities related to land dispossession, prospects for land restitution and resistance movements from the Northern Cauca and Antioquia's Bajo Cauca regions can be found as part of a riveting series of articles made possible through the support of a USAID HRP III grant with Colombian advocacy think tank *Fundación Ideas para la Paz* (FIP).

The *Verdad Abierta* media project was born out of an alliance between FIP and the magazine *Semana* to document and expose the truth behind the conflict in Colombia, its actors and their interests. The 14 in-depth articles posted on *Verdadabierta.com* since early 2014 have already garnered an average of over 3,000 hits per article. Namely these articles bring into sharp focus the very complex dynamics being played out in these regions that have received little attention or documentation including: how land dispossession and land seizure has occurred, who their perpetrators are, what the victims' situations are, and what actions have been taken by the authorities to reinstate land rights and/or bring illegal land owners to justice. Special attention was placed on illustrating collective land conflicts impacting Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities due to violence by armed actors.

In Cauca, the journalistic pieces captures this region's long history of grievances and historical claims made by indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities competing with requests from landless *campesinos* or from those who were wrongfully awarded land by the government. More recently,



Inter-ethnic hearing on illegal mining in northern Cauca  
Photo Credit: Verdadabierta.com

the rapidly spreading phenomenon of illegal mining has only further complicated matters, increased risks, and contributed to the deterioration of the social and economic constructs of impacted, surrounding communities. Although data on mining licenses varies, at least 10% of the department of Cauca has been reportedly conceded and an additional 40% has been solicited by mining companies. Among many concerns, ethnic communities fear that the environmental degradation brought on by illegal mining could spread in irreparable ways and threaten their sources of income and way of living. They also document being subject to pressure by mining interests and large agro-industrial landowners.

The stories also focus on cases of resistance and bravery in Bajo Cauca where communities were displaced by paramilitaries. Such was the case of the Piamonte region in Cáceres and the Caucana region in Tarazá. Illegal groups with ties to those structures still control the former making it very difficult to microfocalize the region, which is a prerequisite for any land restitution process. To date, the Land Restitution Unit has been unable to jump start the process, with the exception of a small village in the municipality of El Bagre.

Beyond providing expository and insightful information on the current situation affecting these regions, these articles and media tools will serve communities and authorities in decision-making processes regarding restitution, legalization, and access to justice, while exposing the truth behind land tenure and dispossession in two highly conflictive and volatile settings. These poignant articles and media tools help to raise visibility on this often overlooked aspect of Colombia's conflict and contribute towards long-term solutions to the wide range of grievances from different interests groups. Only then will there be any chance of peace and reconciliation. •

## Taking a Stand against Abuse and Violence of Wayúu Indigenous Youth



Students, teachers, parents at human rights workshop  
Photo credit: Johann Lastra, Territorio Étnico

In the far most northern tip of Colombia's territory, the Wayúu indigenous communities have been coming to terms over the past year with one of its most painful and pernicious realities plaguing its youth, family, and community structures. According to reports from several State institutions and Wayúu leaders, issues surrounding sexual and intra-familial abuse and violence against indigenous youth from the Uribia municipality have reached alarming levels. Compounding matters due to the highly sensitive nature of these cases within their culture, underreporting of abuse and violence against youth perpetuate its state of obscurity. Categorically, the protection of children and youth from these types of violence remain matters of the community and accordingly cases are handled under special indigenous jurisdiction. Shrouded in collective silence, shame, and denial, cases that do come forward are more often than not whitewashed, eschewing the gravity of these crimes while increasing youth's risks to re-victimization.

Since November 2013, HRP III grantee *Asociación de Autoridades Tradicionales de Territorios Étnicos Wayúu* has set in motion actions to begin to broach these delicate topics while strengthening Wayúu indigenous leadership on issues of human rights. Paramount to guiding this process has been the integration of traditional indigenous customs, beliefs and traditions into the construction of a protection *ruta*. With this in mind, every step taken to open dialogues in the communities has been carried out with the participation of Wayúu clan leadership (Araurayu), ancestral judicial representatives, youth, women, teachers, and parents. After several months of garnering consensus on an open and participatory approach to building a protection *ruta*, community participants also pledged to continue to raise awareness and strengthen working relationships with local institutions on Wayúu traditional mechanisms regarding the well-being of Wayúu children and youth.

Recognizing the vital role that schools can play in the prevention of child abuse and sexual violence, *Territorio Étnico* has made a concentrated effort to raising awareness and increasing knowledge within this sector. Workshops and meetings to educate Wayúu teachers, parents, and youth have been held in seven ethno-educational centers throughout Uribia's municipality. Namely, teachers have been trained on how to recognize warning signs of abuse and violence, whether physical, emotional, or sexual, and what steps to take on the matter. Through these platforms, concepts of prevention and response from key stakeholders were gathered to serve as input in the later design of the response *ruta*.

To achieve a fully comprehensive approach to this issue, sensitization efforts have also targeted local and regional public officials from institutions such as the family commissaries, *personeros*, police, Attorney General's Office, and the Ombudsman's Office to educate them on their institutional responsibilities and create an improved coordinated response. In July 2014, a special inter-institutional and inter-cultural forum was organized to advance the collective Wayúu protection *ruta* thus far developed. Feedback on the proposed *ruta* was provided and participants committed to next steps, including establishing a follow-up commission to ensure continuity.



Workshop for indigenous authorities addressing human rights issues  
Photo credit: Territorio Étnico

Reflecting on the progress made to protect Wayúu youth, María Tiles Tiller, Wayúu human rights defender, states, "... [this work] is very important for an area such as Uribia given that for the first time, to my knowledge, a protection *ruta* with a differential focus is being discussed for this vulnerable population. The situation in Uribia is very complex and that is why it is so important that such a project preserve the Wayúu culture through the participation of the [Wayúu] authorities and community." By placing the safety and integrity of Wayúu children and youth first, the community with institutional support is building safer environments and shattering the shame and secrecy associated with sexual abuse and violence in La Guajira. •

## Inspiring Indigenous Generations to Uphold Human Rights

In Colombia, the indigenous communities of Tolima and Cauca are reviving some of the most important chapters of their history captured through the lens of a camera. In places such as southern Tolima, indigenous human rights movements have long been persecuted and met by waves of violence. It is not surprising then that fear and silence of even discussing human rights issues in such areas prevail. Within this context, a historical creative process was born out of these communities as a means to empower and inspire future generations. Through a grant to *Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima* (CRIT), USAID's HRP III is supporting a unique documentary initiative to recapture the life and times of Colombia's forefather of indigenous resistance movements, Manuel Quintín Lame (MQL). In August 2013, a dynamic project was set into motion coupling indigenous youth and elder generations to keep the legacy of one of Colombia's most recognized human rights champions alive.



Filming musical segment in Cauca  
Photo Credit: CRIT

In reconstructing MQL's footsteps, CRIT members selected backdrops for the documentary set along the stretching foothills, streets and surrounding villages of the indigenous communities of the Nasa, Misak de Guambia, and Pijao from Cauca and southern Tolima to retrace MQL's narrative. Over the past nine months, CRIT has organized a series of workshops with community members including youth, women and elders to research, recount and reflect on not only the chronology of MQL's life but what his journey to vindicate rights means for today's and tomorrow's indigenous generations. From the onset of the project, participants worked together to create a roadmap of the entire creative process, including criteria for the interviewee list, resource document indexes, content guidelines, script outlines, and a historical memory project timeline.



Film crew in Tolima  
Photo Credit: CRIT

The documentary chronicles the formation of a socially conscious, driven leader unequivocally spurred by the relentless ordeals he witnessed of repression and injustices committed against his family and community by large landowners of the time. He was raised in the last decades of the 19th century, when *terrajoría*, or indentured servitude of indigenous folks on their own territories, was the natural order of the social and economic structure in Colombia's hinterlands. From these historical roots, surviving elders, allies, and close relatives begin to share their oral histories of the solidarity shared with MQL as he led Colombia's first indigenous resistance movement. In one of the sessions, elder Javier Calambás, an indigenous rights leader in his own right of Cauca's Misak indigenous community and who worked alongside MQL's brother, shared, "...MQL did not express anger against the enemy, instead humility. I realized that this was very important to impart with the new generation...that now unity and reason favor us because we now know that in this moment they want to take away our native lands from all of the Americas."

Storytelling workshops attended by the communities were complemented with trainings on human rights, recovery of historical memory, communications media, and film making. Meanwhile, in southern Tolima where MQL spent his last decades of life, Nasa indigenous youth on the project insisted on capturing the indigenous spirit of MQL and his crusade. To this end, youth developed a series of surveys to interview elders to document indigenous traditions and rituals from MQL's era and incorporate them into the documentary.

Once the production of the film is completed, it will then go on to serve as an integral component of a pedagogical process also being developed on collective memory. For these communities, the documentary goes beyond just the filming process of their rich histories. It carries with it a more powerful and meaningful purpose of empowerment for future generations to continue a legacy steeped in advancing human rights in Colombia. •