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Tackling Gender-based Violence through the Lens of Young Filmmakers



USAID/Colombia Mission Director, Peter Natiello, addresses competition ceremony. (Top right) Training workshop (Bottom right) Competition participants and sponsoring entities
Photo Credit: USAID's HRP III

Over the past year, USAID's HRP III enlisted the talent, creativity, energy and vision of aspiring, young documentary filmmakers to capture an inspirational message of women's rights and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) in Colombia through a unique documentary scholarship competition. However, beyond a traditional competition to produce a next best short film documentary on women's rights, this collaboratively designed competition introduced a dynamic component to help shape and equip rising documentary filmmakers with production techniques and information on women's rights and GBV. The combination of these elements in this year's competition led to one of HRP III's most exciting and dynamic teaching and learning processes in the arts and human rights. In turn, competitors were incentivized with not only a chance to participate in documentary production workshops, but the winner will receive financial and technical support to produce and broadcast their film nationally, as well as attend an international film festival in Latin America.

After several months of planning among partnering entities including the Ministry of Culture, the Presidential Advisor for Women's Equality, *Universidad Javeriana*, and *Señal Colombia*, HRP III's open call for proposals of short films (no longer than 25 minutes), lasting from July 18-September 26, resulted in 39 submissions. By early December, a seven-person judge panel had carefully reviewed and ranked each entry to come up with ten semi-finalists. The semi-finalists went on to participate in an enriching five-

day training guided by experts in the field of women's issues as well as filmmaking. In these sessions, participants were provided with an open, creative space where they received hands-on technical training from experts in the field of media and filmmaking to fine-tune their project proposals. Semi-finalist Francesca Fichera enthusiastically reflected, "This workshop for me has really served as a huge help to not only help shape my documentary, but to train me as a documentarian and even as a journalist."

On December 10, Human Rights Day, USAID/Colombia Mission Director Peter Natiello opened the competition's award ceremony by sharing his thoughts on Colombia's disturbingly high levels of violence against women and expressing, "For this reason, it's important to constantly reflect on women's rights, the need for prevention, and to denounce any violence against them. The scholarship's main objective was to build projects to raise awareness of the different forms of violence against women." Following a captivating dialogue with experts during a public forum on media and women's rights, Ms. Juliana Toro was announced as the winner of the competition. With HRP III support, Ms. Toro's film proposal to explore the subtle and overt challenges stifling women's advancement and safety in an urban setting such as Medellín will go from a concept to a fully produced, screened, and nationally broadcast film while making a bold statement to stamp out violence against women.

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Strengthening Police Human Rights Conduct towards Vulnerable Populations



USAID/Colombia Mission Director Peter Natiello and National Police leadership at unveiling of the Police Conduct Guide for Vulnerable Populations (Below) Police officers trained on Guide
Photo Credit: USAID's HRP III

Vested with the duties to protect and uphold civil and human rights of every Colombian regardless of status, race, color, ethnicity, political affiliation or sexual orientation, the National Police, with the support of USAID's HRP III, has strengthened its response to some of Colombia's most vulnerable populations. On December 10, HRP III, along with the National Police, presented a roomful of police officers from Bogotá and across Colombia's regions a key tool equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and conduct protocols taking into account the conditions and needs of special vulnerable populations. The Police Conduct Guide for Vulnerable Populations is the culmination of a yearlong project between USAID and the National Police's highest leadership to address serious gaps and challenges faced by the police regarding their interaction with seven identified vulnerable groups including women, the LGBT community, unionists, human rights defenders, Afro-Colombians, indigenous community members, and internally displaced persons. With training exercises geared to challenge police officers' attitudes, behaviors, and assumptions of vulnerable populations, this joint project has served to clarify and improve core understandings guiding police conduct and interaction with these populations.

At the guide's launching event, which coincided with Human Rights Day, USAID/Colombia's Mission Director Peter Natiello summarized the shared vision that marshaled this effort remarking, "... this has been an effort...to improve the protection of vulnerable populations. The Guide is not only a tool that assists [police officers] to identify factors which perpetuate vulnerabilities, but it also establishes parameters that enable institutional members to provide assistance and services in a respectful and dignified manner to each of these populations in their day-to-day activities." Following this inaugural ceremony, police leadership initiated a three-day training seminar to adopt the newly developed policies and practices which began with a comprehensive introduction to the social conditions and challenges faced by each vulnerable population. In this manner, police officers were provided with a full context of information and brief histories of these groups, particularly as it applies to regional, and often remote areas of the country.

To bolster this initiative, HRP III developed case studies as a core training component providing officers with concrete examples of how sensitive situations can arise and how to utilize the new guide to determine appropriate conduct, interaction, and response. This training component also provides police officers with hypothetical situations based on diverse and real events experienced on a daily basis. Presented as "role-play" training scenarios, officers spent time in reflection and analysis of the situation in a collective manner and formulated decisions based on gained contextual knowledge .

While 38 police officers responsible for carrying out human rights training within the institution worked through the case studies, the valuable lessons did not end there. Keeping sustainability in mind, HRP III and the National Police designed the trainings in a train-the-trainer format ensuring that the regional police officers, in particular, left properly equipped and committed to carry out further trainings at their respective posts. In fact, the guide and ancillary case studies are now a permanent part of standard police training. This training not only targets new recruits, but it has been institutionalized as a component for police officer career advancement. With a focus on strengthening police forces by replicating trainings particularly at the regional level, HRP III's efforts ensure a more prepared police corps and first responders to assist those most vulnerable. •





(Left) Human Rights Marathon in Lloró, Chocó (Right) Community March, Popayán, Cauca
Photo Credit: USAID's HRP III

Human Rights Day Celebrated throughout Colombia

On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed and recognized as the cornerstone instrument enumerating inherent rights pertaining to all individuals irrespective of race, religion, creed, sexual orientation or any other status. Since then, December 10 is celebrated and commemorated by countries around the world demonstrating their commitment to uphold and promote the values and principles embodied by the Declaration. In countries such as Colombia where conflict and violence have generated mass human rights violations over the span of five decades, commemorating Human Rights Day holds a particularly special place as a beacon and call for peace and hope. Mindful of this, USAID's HRP III fully supported its partners in organizing and participating in events held throughout its priority regions to celebrate this year's Human Rights Day.

In Antioquia, a series of events were organized to underscore the message of Human Rights Day spanning from the department's capital city of Medellín to the outreaches of more conflict-impacted municipalities such as Anorí and Cauca. As an area of Antioquia heavily impacted by conflict related to land rights, Cauca held a forum entitled, "Human Rights and Land Restitution" to open a weeklong series of planned activities. The forum gathered over 100 community members from six municipalities in Antioquia's Bajo Cauca region including community leaders, victims, indigenous communities, Afro-Colombians and public officials to raise concerns and advance solutions. HRP III provided technical assistance and partnered with the UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Land Restitution Unit to organize a dialogue led by celebrated photojournalist Jesús Abad Colorado engaging participants in a discussion based on a photo expo of his work focused on human rights and the conflict.

In Anorí, HRP III supported weeklong events focused on historical memory and reconciliation. With the participation of human rights defenders, victims' organizations, and the community-at-large, several events were held to raise awareness regarding the municipality's history in the context of the conflict and as a way to honor conflict victims.

Meanwhile in Medellín, HRP III supported the governor's office, mayor's office and other institutions in carrying out Antioquia's first sub-regional human rights roundtable conference in which delegates from Antioquia's nine sub-regions gathered to meet and work with counterparts. The day was filled with participants sharing ideas and reflecting on their roles, progress, and challenges faced by roundtables across this diverse and complex region. Regional roundtable coordinator, Cesar Rojas, commended this effort stating, "The conference allowed for an exchange of ideas, visions, and proposals among the nine regions of Antioquia towards strengthening the work of leaders and public officials dedicated to human rights as well as providing us an opportunity to set a peace agenda for the sub-regions." In addition, HRP III supported events such as an academic-led dialogue on the peace process and an open reading of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Medellín's downtown area.

In Popayán, Cauca, HRP III supported the Sexual Diversity Collective to carry out a community march for human rights which was organized by Cauca's governor's office. Convening approximately 500 community members including members of the National Police, the sexual diversity roundtable, Ministry of Interior (MOI), and several offices of the governor's office, Popayán came alive with pro-peace and diversity chants and colorful banners displaying its rich diversity.

Meanwhile in Lloró, Chocó, with the support of HRP III and the MOI, a youth-focused event was organized in the community to pass on the tradition of celebrating Human Rights Day. At the Human Rights Marathon, youth engaged in storytelling of the history of the special day, played sports, participated in dances, and enjoyed themselves in other recreational activities. Creative and diverse activities such as these abounded throughout HRP III regions as Colombians embraced their shared hope and pursuit for peace and prosperity. •

Bolstering Colombia's Capacity to Prevent Human Rights Violations



*CLAT methodology review workshop
Photo Credit: USAID's HRP III*

In the wake of a five-decade plus conflict, Colombia's institutions are faced with an enormous responsibility in terms of prevention and management of human rights violations. Since the inception of the Early Warning System (EWS) in 2002 and the subsequent creation of the Inter-sectorial Commission for Early Warnings (CIAT) led by the Ministry of Interior, the government and state institutions have come a long way in being able to identify risks and produce warnings, which is a critical component of the prevention policy. However, the process of issuing warning of imminent human rights violations has often failed to produce the expected results when it comes to timely and adequate institutional response and/or evaluation and follow-up on recommendations for action. This is often attributed to a range of issues stemming from a lack of necessary capacities, knowledge, and tools which can lead to ambiguous recommendations that are not easily translated into actions. This shortfall has contributed in the perpetuation of risks and human rights violations impacting Colombians living in some of the most affected areas of the country. Following high profile cases such as the murder of two students in January 2011 in which alerts were disregarded, the MOI sought to improve its capacity to address the need for adequate and coordinated institutional response, which is how the CIAT was born.

Although the establishment of the CIAT was an important step towards improving institutional response, challenges persist in achieving a fully functioning EWS. HRP III identified CIAT's main challenges which include misperceptions of political and economic costs by local institutions regarding issuing alerts, insufficient knowledge of public officials of risk context and nature, and lack of evaluation risk tools to manage and follow-up on accurate information regarding risk and prevention. With technical assistance from HRP III experts, a refined and upgraded CIAT methodology was adapted following a review of existing mechanisms and tools. The resulting preliminary method-

ology addressed two principal needs: 1) improving tools for risk evaluation and analysis and 2) developing appropriate recommendations to mitigate risk and/or human rights violations altogether.

With HRP III support, ten review workshops were organized for regional CIAT authorities throughout priority regions. The new tools were then tested and refined with participant feedback and adaptations. In this comprehensive manner, CIAT and HRP III finalized and formally presented the newly developed methodology and associated tools to improve the prevention capacity of the CIAT's primary function in reducing risk of human right violations. With this, the CIAT now has an improved capacity to identify and weigh three critical analysis factors which vary significantly depending on the context: 1) the dynamics of violence in the region, 2) the inter-institutional capacity at the local level, and 3) the social conditions of the population(s) at risk. This analytical capacity contributes to authorities' understanding of the regional dynamics and the necessary measures that must be taken to prevent human rights violations.

Eisleane Suárez, Ministry of Interior CIAT coordinator, expressed, "In a general sense, this project strengthened CIAT in consolidating the conceptual aspects regarding the State's responsibilities with respect to preventing of human rights and IHL violations. It allowed us to re-think CIAT's role in prevention at the national level. Regional authority participants had a hands-on role in developing this easy-to-understand and user-friendly methodology tool." Today, due to HRP III efforts and guidance, regional and local authorities can rely on prevention tools and increased knowledge, resulting in timely, appropriate, and efficient actions towards reducing risk of human rights violations while re-gaining public trust in institutions.●