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# HUMAN RIGHTS COMPASS

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Presidential Advisor for Human Rights Guillermo Rivera (left) and USAID/Colombia Mission Director Peter Natiello (right) speaking at Atlas release event  
Photo Credits: USAID's HRP III

## Atlas Captures Regional Human Rights Impact from Colombia's Armed Conflict

Documenting and accurately capturing the impact of Colombia's protracted conflict has long presented a major challenge to Colombia's institutions given the conflict's rapidly evolving dynamics, issues, actors, and drivers. Policy makers throughout the decades have made approximations and generalizations on the regional dimensions of the conflict's impact with scattered data to support their theories. However, on April 21, the latest tool developed by and for Colombia's government, with USAID's Human Rights Program support, was unveiled. In downtown Bogotá, the Presidential Advisor for Human Rights Guillermo Rivera accompanied by USAID/Colombia Mission Director Peter Natiello presented the Atlas of the Regional Impact of Colombia's Armed Conflict, an 800-page plus compendium of Colombia's conflict from 1990-2013.

Over the past two years, HRP III-hired consultants worked with the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Human Rights' Observatory in order to finalize this initiative which represents a culmination of 15 years' worth of information collection and analysis. This critical support facilitated the extensive interviews, research, data compilation and final publication that went into producing this Atlas. Remarking on having reached this landmark day Peter Natiello stated, "For over 10 years, USAID has supported the GOC's efforts to document and analyze gross human rights and international humanitarian law violations [in Colombia]...a valuable lesson from this has been that the conflict does not affect all populations or regions equally, and this is important to take into account particularly in contemplating public policy development."

Neatly divided into ten chapters replete with vivid maps, Colombia's conflict over the course of some of its most challenging and violent years comes into sharp focus through compelling statistical data and analysis. For the first time, Colombians, ranging from policy makers, to average citizens, to victims of the conflict, can access a comprehensive compilation of key statistics walking its reader through each region touched by the conflict, breaking down key human rights indicators and impacts affecting respective populations. The regional analysis highlights critical developments across artificial boundaries, such as departmental divisions, providing for a more comprehensive understanding of where the threats were located and which populations suffered the most severe forms of human rights violations.

Laid out in a visually captivating and reader-friendly format, striking facts of the conflict's development come to light such as the fact that 2014 marked the first time in 30 years in which Colombia reached its lowest homicide rate or that Colombia's Pacific Corridor has seen the most dramatic and violent change over the past 20 years due to the conflict. The Atlas not only allows Colombia's conflict history to be accurately recounted, but it also provides the necessary information and analysis to make appropriate decisions and adequate policies for a new post-conflict chapter in Colombia's history.

*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*

# Fight for Women's Rights Echoes in GBV Documentary Film Premiere



Filming of winning GBV documentary with Gilma Lopez. Bottom: GBV documentary premiere expert panel discussion. Photo Credit: USAID's HRP III

During the 1970s, a young wide-eyed 19-year-old, Gilma Jimenéz, leaves all that she has ever known in her hometown in search of greater opportunities in the bustling city of Medellín, the capital of Antioquia. Calming her greatest worries, Gilma quickly finds plenty of work and study opportunities. However, what Gilma did not expect was an edging sense of personal insecurity and anxiety derived from both subtle and explicit forms of gender-based violence (GBV) that awaited her. She encountered GBV on a daily basis in different public spaces making Gilma's world seem so much more confining and dangerous. It became so acute that she believed her life was threatened. After reaching a breaking point, Gilma felt compelled to abandon her university studies to avoid being further harassed.

Almost thirty years later, her daughter, Juliana Toro Jiménez, documents this story, which she has heard since she was a child. Some of the situations are replayed in front of the camera where Gilma and Juliana relive what happened, as they walk through the city streets of Medellín hoping the past will not repeat itself. As the winner of USAID's HRP III short-film documentary competition in December 2014, Juliana showcased her directorial debut of her mother's gripping account entitled, *Mujeres, a la Calle*, on April 27 in downtown Bogotá. The 30-minute production was warmly received before a crowded room of supporters from leading women's rights groups, academics, and media and film students as well as competition sponsors HRP III, the Ministry of Culture, the Presidential Advisor for Women's Equity, *Universidad Javeriana*, and *Señal Colombia*.

Since 2014, HRP III led efforts to create this scholarship competition targeting communications and film students and/or recent film graduates to create a documentary film that promotes women's human rights and GBV prevention. Nine semi-finalists were awarded scholarships to participate in a documentary film production workshop led by documentary film and GBV issue experts. From this workshop, participants gained technical experience and tools to produce human rights-focused films as well as the opportunity to fine-tune their film submissions based on this experience.

Jean Garland, USAID's Senior Human Rights Adviser, shared opening remarks during the film premier stating, "... this process has underscored the value of youth and their capacity to share stories reaching audiences of all ages." The premiere event included an expert panel discussion on the film and how film can be used as a powerful platform to raise awareness on these types of issues. On May 3rd, the film was screened nationally on prime time through *Señal Colombia*.

Through her film, Juliana, in her role as director and city dweller, also presents the voices of three other women: Mayra, Tatiana, and Yudy who, through their own experiences, provide a wider picture of the GBV situation in public spaces. Their perspectives make it evident that her mother's situation was no different than what Juliana and millions of other women face on a daily basis, at the same time recognizing that taking an active role to counter the behavior will help them see a different future.

Poignantly, Juliana's film also brings home the message that GBV does not always come in the more visible forms traditionally captured by headlines and reports on Colombia's conflict-related violence. Instead, and perhaps more pervasive due to its subtleties, GBV emerges in the more daily aspects of women's lives. This empowering film will continue to serve as a tool to raise awareness GBV and foster dialogues on the continuing fight for women's right to a life free from violence—in all its forms. •





(From l. to r.) Jineth Bedoya, Catalina Botero, and moderator Ignacio Gómez at panel discussion  
Photo Credit: USAID's HRP III

## Weighing the Road Ahead for Freedom of Press and Expression in Colombia

According to USAID's HRP III grantee *Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa* (FLIP), freedom of press and expression in Colombia remains in a state of jeopardy for those who exercise this right in a country where impunity, threats, fear, and self-censorship obstruct journalists on a daily basis. Since 2013, six journalists have been killed, and in 2014, 174 journalists were victims of aggression in Colombia. While the good news may be that these types of human rights violations, in general, have decreased compared to previous years, Colombian journalists continue to be vigorously targeted by threats and other acts of aggression. More strikingly, cases of murder, kidnapping, assaults, threats, and any other type of crime committed against journalists can, and often do, vanish into the abyss of impunity which continues to blight Colombia's justice system.

Fundamental to a successful post-conflict transition, the protection of the intrinsic democratic principle of freedom of press and expression has become ever more paramount. For these reasons, HRP III stood alongside FLIP from May 6-8 to bring this issue to the forefront of public discourse at the International Forum for Peace Dialogues and Freedom of Press held in downtown Bogotá. In commemoration of World Press Freedom Day (May 3), this event convened over 300 Colombian and international journalists, experts, and government partners to participate in conversations reflecting on the precarious situation faced by many Colombian journalists during this historic developments that is unfolding at the Havana peace talks.

International experts from South Africa, Chile, Bosnia and El Salvador as well as other prominent authorities such as Colombia's former Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression for the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, Catalina Botero, renowned Colombian sociologist and columnist Alfredo Molano were among the many speakers to headline dialogue sessions sharing valuable insights and experiences from the field. To ensure that the voices of those bearing the most risk and often living and working in conflict zones, HRP III sponsored 30 regional journalists to partake in this unique exchange.

The international perspective deeply enriched the conversations by sharing models and lessons learned from countries or experiences that already have dealt with transitions from conflict to peace. Nonetheless, listening to the national journalists' ordeals underscored that irrespective of peace or conflict, Colombia still has a long way to go in order to achieve a culture where freedom of press and expression is respected and protected. On one expert panel, Colombian journalist Jineth Bedoya recounted her harrowing experience as a young journalist 15 years ago, when she was brutally kidnapped, raped, tortured, and left for dead on the side of a road while covering an exposé on political corruption and collusion with paramilitaries. Her case stands out as a national, tragic symbol and open wound characterizing the perils that journalists face in Colombia with respect to their protection. However, as if the severity of the abuses she endured were not enough, Jineth's tragedy lives on years later as her case is one of the thousands lost in the vaults of impunity. As a panelist, Jineth bravely remarked, "I live with the stark reality that in my lifetime my case may never be resolved."

At the event, FLIP director Pedro Vaca mentioned the case of Luis Peralta, Caquetá journalist and head of the local radio station *Linda Emisora*, who was gunned down in February with his wife at his side in front of their home following threats. Vaca pointed out that the impact of these crimes extends beyond just the tragedy endured by the victim. "... [Since his murder], the local news station that provided information to five municipalities of the northern region of this department has ceased [operations], and now [this region] has gone without any information for eleven weeks," claimed Vaca. To Vaca's point, the assaults on freedom of press and expression in Colombia today are as alarming as ever in the wake of a possible transition to peace. This successful three-day event fostered rigorous and honest exchanges among key stakeholders towards building a stronger and more transparent society, while safeguarding one of its most valued democratic principles and freedoms. •



Tumaco youth work on community mural  
Photo Credit: USAID's HRP III

## Youth Take Back Tumaco

Ravaged by over a decade of intense conflict, Tumaco, a major port city in southwestern Colombia, can almost seem forgotten, if not, forsaken. With the shift in coca cultivation coming from the neighboring department of Putumayo over the past two decades, vying illegal armed groups have overrun the remote and geo-strategic municipality using violence and terror tactics to gain territorial control. According to a Human Rights Watch report, Tumaco has displayed one of the highest rates of sexual abuse and violence, disappearance, homicide, forced displacement, and landmine victims due to conflict in Colombia. Its largely Afro-Colombian population (89% of its 200,000 inhabitants) maintains illiteracy, poverty, and infant mortality rates twice the national average.

Arguably, for a youth growing up amidst this challenging environment, prospects for a future of peace, stability, economic, and personal development can seem grim, even hopeless. Too often in fact, youth are easily lured into joining illegal groups with promises of work and fast money only to perpetuate the cycle of violence that has eroded Tumaco's community social fabric. However, after a youth-oriented project supported by HRP III this past year, some 50 Tumaco youth have a very different story that they want to share about their hometown. For this youth, Tumaco is far from being counted out.

In January 2015, a community meeting was held including HRP III, Tumaco's municipal administration, teachers, and students to design an exciting youth-led initiative. From this meeting, approximately 50 selected students from 14 schools in Tumaco and the surrounding area, envisioned and came up with the idea to rebrand and rejuvenate Tumaco as a peace zone promoting a culture of respect for human rights and for each other.

To advance their vision, HRP III with other key partners such as Global Humanitarian, Norwegian Refugee Council, and the Regional Consolidation Administrative Unit together with local teachers and public officials would support a dynamic human rights trainings component based on PLANEDH, the national human rights

education curriculum. Every Saturday afternoon for 2.5 months, these youth leaders participated in human rights-related workshops to strengthen their knowledge and awareness on issues surrounding violence, conflict, consensus-building, peace-building and prospects of a post-conflict phase. With this conceptual training and background, youth were given a new analytical lens with which to view their communities, schools, and families. As a next step, they learned how to become better advocates of change and how to remain active in promoting their vision of peace and hope for themselves and their communities.

"In Tumaco, we live the conflict every day and we must have strength to keep the peace... Our message to Tumaco youth is that they should study because it is an opportunity that our parents did not have and we need to take advantage... we have great potential to invent, to plan, to dream and we should give our all in everything we set out to do... to discover and write a new and grand future," said youth participant Iván Darío Ramírez Landazuri.

Putting into practice their newly acquired knowledge and skills, the youth planned and carried out their final project as a symbol of what they wanted to leave behind marking their contribution in Tumaco: a community mural with their own messages and visions. Prominently standing out in a downtown area of Tumaco, the youth masterfully brought life to four sections of a drab, concrete wall alongside a walkway with colorful displays and messages to end violence and create a new world of respect, tolerance, and peace. However, this act also symbolized the beginning of a new phase for the youth. While the human rights training component may have technically ended, the youth committed to replicate trainings in their respective neighborhoods and communities. Today, the youth's mural stands as a vibrant and permanent emblem of Tumaco's resilience and resolution to persevere. •