

**AFRO-COLOMBIAN ASSESSMENT  
PHELPS STOKES FUND  
COVER PAGE**

The following executive summary was prepared by USAID based on the content of the Afro-Colombian Assessment conducted by the Phelps Stokes Fund. It reflects the recommendations and conclusions of the Phelps Stokes Fund.

**AFRO-COLOMBIAN ASSESSMENT  
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**A. The Afro-Colombian Population in the National Context.**

The World Bank estimates that between 20% and 25% of Colombia's total population identifies itself as Afro-Colombian (2005). Approximately 76% of Afro-Colombians live in the coastal areas of the Caribbean and Pacific regions, and the vast majority face conditions of extreme poverty and social exclusion.<sup>1</sup> According to the United Nations, 82% do not have access to basic health and education services. Life expectancy for Afro-Colombians is 65.6 years, compared to a national average of 73.8 years. The average infant mortality rate for Afro-Colombians is 45/1000 births versus the national average of 23/1000 births.

Taking into account the historical marginalization of this group, the 1991 Constitution not only declared Colombia a multicultural and multiethnic nation, but also recognized Afro-Colombians as an ethnic group with particular cultural and territorial rights (Article 55 transitory). In developing this mandate, the Colombian Congress approved Laws 70 and 47 in 1993, which define the legal framework for the protection of the environmental, territorial, and cultural rights of Afro-Colombians. Despite these significant legislative advances, the situation of Afro-Colombians is grim, mainly due to armed conflict and drug trafficking. Up to 30% of displaced persons are estimated to be Afro-Colombian.<sup>2</sup> More than 60% of Afro-Colombians from collective territories have been forced to abandon their livelihoods to seek refuge in large cities, where they have few employment opportunities, limited access to social services and face discrimination.

**B. USAID and the Afro-Colombian Population.**

During Phase I of Plan Colombia (2000-2005), USAID invested \$5M in projects targeted at Afro-Colombians, and \$16M in activities in Afro-Colombian communities (Magan, 2005). Since 2003, USAID has contributed to the institutional strengthening of the Association of Afro-Colombian Mayors and Municipalities (AMUNAFRO), Association of Municipalities of the Northern Cauca (AMUNORCA), and the Federation of Municipalities of the Pacific Coast (FEDEMPACIFICO), which represent municipalities with high concentrations of Afro-Colombians. In addition, USAID facilitated the creation of the Afro-Colombian Congressional Caucus (*Bancada Afro-Colombiana*).

The implementation of Plan Colombia-Phase II began in 2006. USAID's new strategy is organized in four thematic areas: democratic governance, alternative development, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and vulnerable groups, and demobilization and reintegration. Since the beginning of the new strategy, USAID has invested \$21M in projects targeted at Afro-Colombians in these four strategic areas. The Embassy and USAID consider assistance to Afro-Colombians to be a high priority. Given the \$15 million earmark included in FY08 appropriations for USAID programs in Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities, it is expected that US Congressional interest in Afro-Colombian development will continue.

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<sup>1</sup> From the National Federation of Colombian Municipalities.

<sup>2</sup>According to AFRODES. For more information on displacement see: *Association of Afro-Colombian Displaced – AFRODES*. Website: [www.afrodes.org](http://www.afrodes.org). This differs from the statistics gathered by the Colombian government. As of August 6, 2007, Acción Social stated that less than 6% of IDPs in the Sistema Único de Registro (SUR) are Afro-Colombian.

### C. General Recommendations for USAID Activities in Afro-Colombian Communities.

- **USAID should design and implement programs that account for the complexities and cultural identity of Afro-Colombians.**

Cultural understanding is key to advancing the identity, self-esteem, creativity and development potential of Afro-Colombians. USAID contractors have made efforts to incorporate Afro-Colombian perspectives into development projects; however they do not yet have sufficient knowledge of how Afro-Colombian cultural identity impacts the outcomes of these projects. Afro-Colombian cultural identity is often reduced to folkloric and artistic expression, thus, overlooking the complexities in defining such a diverse group (i.e. rural versus urban Afro-Colombians).

- **Development and implementation of programs directed towards Afro-Colombians must include effective participation and capacity building of Afro-Colombian organizations, as well as non-Afro-based organizations that have experience working with this population. Particular emphasis should be placed on building capacity of Afro-Colombian women's organizations.**

USAID-funded activities have resulted in the institutional strengthening of relatively well-established political/ethnic-territorial organizations at the national level. However, more focus needs to be given to local, community-based organizations. USAID projects should provide technical, administrative, financial, and logistical training to Afro-Colombian grassroots organizations. Since Afro-Colombian women face tremendous social disenfranchisement and discrimination, even within their own communities, USAID should give special attention to women's organizations.

- **The Afro-Colombian strategy should feature holistic and sustained leadership development as the most effective, long-term tool for the advancement of Afro-Colombians.**

Although Afro-Colombian leaders have been effective in advancing some of the social needs of their communities (i.e. territorial rights in the Pacific Coast), USAID should help cultivate a new generation of competent managers through recruitment and leadership training programs. These efforts should emphasize the development of Afro-Colombian women leaders.

### D. Operational Action Lines for Program Effectiveness.

- **Integrated geographic focus.** Greater regional coordination among USAID implementers is needed. Programs for internally displaced and vulnerable groups serve as useful models of organization because they have adequately developed regional committees.
- **Monitoring and systematic evaluation.** Encourage the Colombian government to define baseline indicators and benchmarks to evaluate the progress of Afro-Colombians. Also, USAID should request its partners to provide racially and ethnically disaggregated indicators in a systematic manner.
- **Effective communication** USAID should create mechanisms such as a web-based documentation center and utilize communication techniques traditionally found in Afro-Colombian communities to increase public awareness of USAID activities.

- **Harmonization of program methodologies.** USAID should develop a unified methodology to address Afro-Colombians through better coordination of the programs and methodologies of its implementing partners.

## **E. Specific Recommendations for Programs.**

### *Democratic Governance:*

- **In order to facilitate Afro-Colombian input in local, regional, and national policy formulation, USAID should expand this population’s capacity to articulate their demands.**

USAID assistance through democratic governance programs has significantly increased the political profile and voice of Afro-Colombians in the policy making process. Nevertheless, USAID should help the Afro-Colombian Congressional Caucus build external networks of support and expand their internal technical capabilities. This will promote open dialogue and help evaluate the impact of policy initiatives on the Afro-Colombian community.

- **Build capacity and prioritize support for Afro-Colombian grassroots organizations to further social movements, particularly those in the Caribbean region and those focused on women.**

Social movements, especially those related to the struggle for land, collective territories, and affirmative action, have driven Afro-Colombian participation in Colombian democracy. USAID should continue to expand its support to urban and rural grassroots organizations, and increase the visibility of Afro-Colombian groups in regional and national networks. It is critical that USAID’s democracy programs include specific outreach to organizations located on the Caribbean Coast and those focused on Afro-Colombian women.

- **Support activities that recruit, retain and promote Afro-Colombians in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.**

Afro-Colombians are not well-represented in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Since several government sectors are recipients of USAID assistance, the Mission’s democracy program has some leverage in creating working groups, diversity programs, and forums to promote Afro-Colombian leadership in all government ranks. Furthermore, it can provide technical assistance in designing legislation such as affirmative action policies that will strengthen Afro-Colombian presence in Colombian politics.

- **Increase access to justice, particularly in communities with internally displaced persons.**

Afro-Colombians lack adequate access to judicial, economic, and physical security in their daily lives. Consequently, they feel that most aspects of the judicial system are either unfair or non-existent. Nonetheless, Afro-Colombians have a very positive perception of the USAID-sponsored justice houses. The democracy program may consider the following recommendations: a) Execute a public awareness campaign about justice houses, primarily aimed at displaced communities; b) Establish mobile justice houses in different river basin areas, to compensate for the severely limited access to justice faced by communities living in Black Community Collective Territories c) Provide small, competitive grants to

Afro-Colombian civil society organizations that can assist beneficiaries in obtaining proper legal representation.<sup>3</sup>

- **Maintain efforts to improve the protection of human rights, especially those that pertain to truth, justice, and reparations for Afro-Colombian communities.**

According to the U.S. Department of State, Colombia's respect for human rights continues to improve, although serious problems remain, especially in historically Afro-Colombian areas. USAID is working with Afro-Colombian human rights organizations to prevent displacement and massacres. However, USAID projects are sometimes designed without fully considering the complexities of their beneficiary communities. Hence, USAID should incorporate a human rights dimension that coincides with the objectives of the Long-Term Development Plan for Afro-Colombians in its programs.<sup>4</sup>

- **Continue support for local governance in Afro-Colombian municipalities.**

Through the former local democracy program and the ongoing ARD-ADAM program, USAID has successfully worked with AMUNORCA, FEDEMPACIFICO, and most notably, AMUNAFRO. USAID has supported Afro-Colombian institutional conferences that allowed representatives from nearly all Afro-Colombian political and social sectors to congregate and discuss issues of common concern. This type of assistance should be expanded to include regional and national associations and networks in Afro-Colombian municipalities.

#### *Alternative Development:*

- **Define the 1993 Law 70 or Black Community Law as the core framework for development and humanitarian assistance in Afro-Colombian communities.**

The two major USAID programs that concentrate on alternative development, ADAM and MIDAS, have already started incorporating Afro-Colombian public policy interests into their activities. However, it is imperative that USAID define specific guidelines within the framework of Law 70 so that these programs not only discuss policy issues with the Colombian government when working in predominantly Afro-Colombian regions, but also consult Afro-Colombian organizations that represent communities being affected by alternative development projects.

- **Expand support for projects aimed at improving basic infrastructure (health, education, transport, and alternative energy) in Afro-Colombian communities.**

There is a consensus that Afro-Colombians, particularly those living in rural areas, lack access to education, health, labor skills and general infrastructure. Thus, basic infrastructure should be a key component of USAID development assistance through ADAM and MIDAS. USAID should also conduct a brief sub-regional assessment of Afro-Colombian competitiveness that accounts for infrastructure and service delivery in order to better target provision of these services.

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<sup>3</sup> Black Community Collective Territories are lands, primarily found in the Pacific region, granted to Afro-Colombians under Law 70.

<sup>4</sup> Plan Integral de Largo Plazo para la Población Negra, Afrocolombiana, Palenquera y Raizal or *the Long-Term Development Plan for Afro-Colombians* is a government-sponsored development plan for this specific community.

- **Deepen support for institutional capacity building and technical assistance to community-driven economic development projects, as well as local government institutions in Afro-Colombian communities.**

Community-driven projects are the most reliable and sustainable way of implementing alternative development activities in Afro-Colombian communities. Therefore, MIDAS should assist the Colombian government in identifying the technical, financial, and political resources necessary for an Afro-Colombian economic development program that helps evade bureaucracy. ADAM must simultaneously continue to support local participation and institutional strengthening of Afro-Colombian civil society.

- **Generate specific safeguard mechanism(s) to assess the legal history and human rights conditions associated with land selected for development and business projects, particularly in Black Collective Territories.**

This assessment found that there is a nominal screening process for land granted by ARD to ensure that Afro-Colombian territory was not acquired through violence or human rights violations by palm oil companies. For this reason, USAID needs to accelerate the establishment of a pro-active mechanism for land screening. Its contractors must then subscribe to this method when supporting large scale agribusiness and natural resource projects in Afro-Colombian communities.

*Internally Displaced Persons and Vulnerable Groups:*

- **Assist the Colombian government in defining and implementing a policy that guarantees the effective re-appropriation of collective territories to displaced Afro-Colombians. This policy should extend beyond universal anti-poverty programs and address the provision of land to members of this group who reside in large cities.**

Displacement has produced major demographic and territorial changes, principally for Afro-Colombians. In this context, USAID's IDP program must continue to stress that land acquisition is a significant part of any policy concerning IDPs. It can also provide technical assistance to the Colombian government under the condition that it uses a differential approach and keeps cultural sensitivity in mind when implementing IDP policies affecting Afro-Colombians.

- **Encourage the creation of a superior government registry that collects data on Afro-Colombian Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).**

According to the data analyzed for this assessment, the absolute number of Afro-Colombian IDPs has not decreased. Therefore, it is recommended that USAID support the Colombian government agency, Acción Social, in initiating a series of pilot programs that collect ethnically and racially disaggregated information on IDPs.

- **Promote Afro-Colombian participation in IDP program design and implementation through institutional strengthening, not only financial support.**

USAID has successfully strengthened the capacity of AFRODES, the most well-known organization working with displaced Afro-Colombians. However, USAID should also build the capacity of other organizations affiliated with this group.

### ***Demobilization and Reintegration:***

- **Structure reintegration programs so that they focus on education, especially for young, former combatants.**

USAID must emphasize primary, secondary, and higher education as a primary means of reintegrating demobilized youth. This is a very significant factor for Afro-Colombians, given that this population highlights education, particularly ethno-education, as being imperative to its progress.

- **Collect data on demobilized individuals using a self-identification approach so that implementing partners and the Colombian government can design appropriate services for Afro-Colombians.**

It is imperative that the USAID demobilization program start using self-identification as a basis for determining the origin of demobilized groups. By doing this, demobilization and reintegration projects can efficiently create techniques and services that account for some of the cultural distinctions of Afro-Colombians.

- **Expand support for activities that facilitate communication between reintegrated former combatants and their host communities.**

USAID should continue working with the System of Accompaniment, Monitoring, and Integration (SAME), a collective reintegration program directed toward the demobilized population. It could also provide assistance to organizations affiliated with demobilized Afro-Colombians that work with local traditional media. Mass media may help promote more efficient reconciliation and reintegration of former combatants into their host societies.