



USAID | **COLOMBIA**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

BRINGING HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE REGIONS

Colombia Human Rights
Program III Final Report



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BRINGING HUMAN RIGHTS TO THE REGIONS

Colombia Human Rights Program III Final Report

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LEFT: Women leaders trained by HRP III on women's rights and Law 1257 worked with municipal authorities to declare 2015 as the "Year of Non-violence against Women" through Decree 014. The march was organized by this group and supported by the Municipal Social Policy Committee (COMPOS) to raise awareness on violence against women and motivate behavioral changes.

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INSIDE FRONT COVER: 40 Indigenous authorities and the indigenous guard of the Pijao and Nasa communities met at an ancestral hut in Tolima to attend the screening of the HRP III-supported documentary, "Quintín Lame, Raíz de Pueblos." The screening was followed by reflections from those who personally knew him on his teachings to inspire future generations of indigenous human rights defenders.

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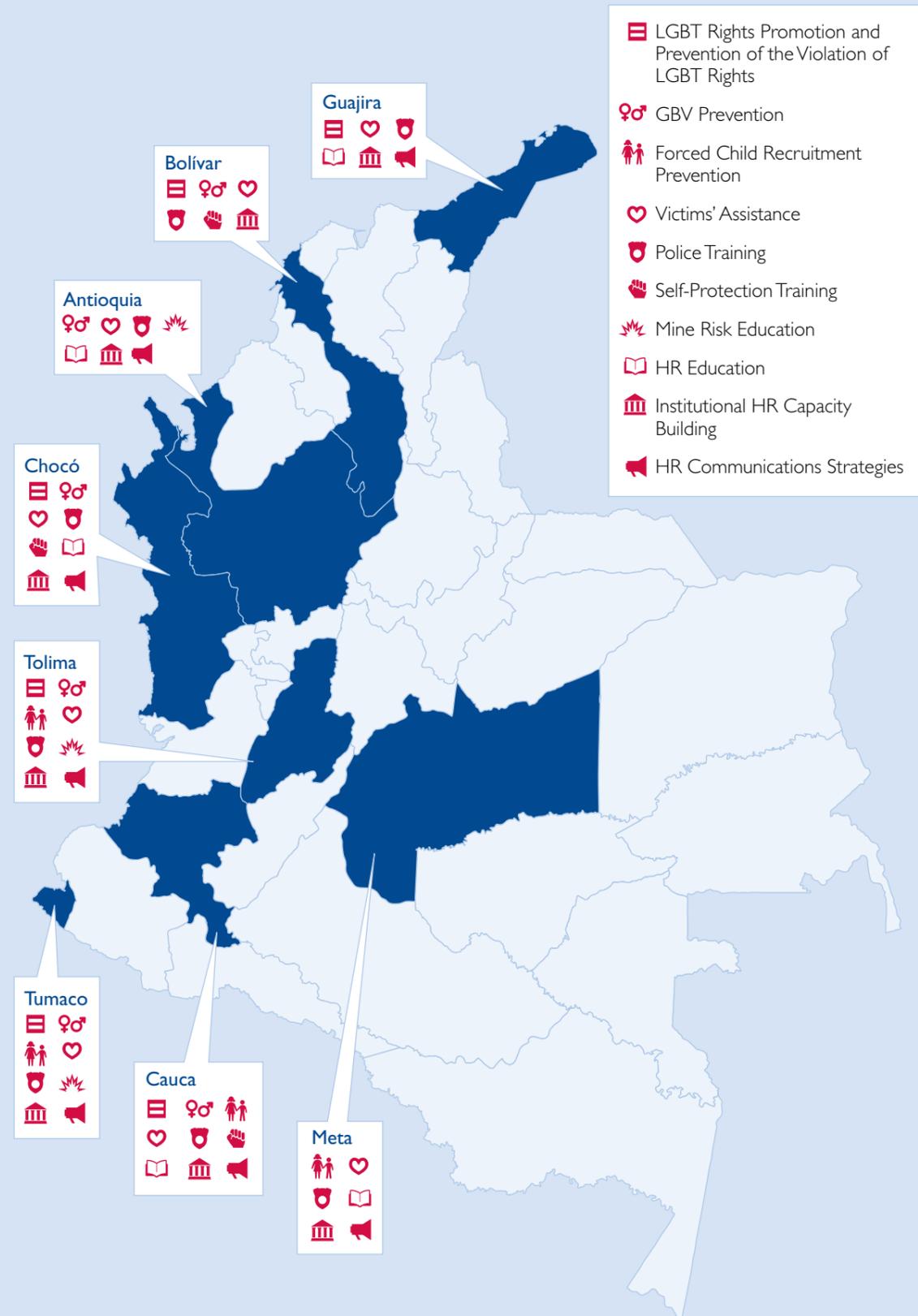
FRONT COVER: HRP III grantee Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas trains women on advocacy skills and Law 1257 to prevent and respond to violence and discrimination against women.

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BACK COVER: Youth in Tumaco, Nariño, paint a community mural as part of a human rights training initiative supported by USAID's HRP III and the municipality.

COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM III

MAP OF HRP III THEMATIC PRIORITIES



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colombia's internal conflict is the oldest active armed conflict in the Western Hemisphere. The toll of human suffering over the past five decades is staggering and nearly immeasurable. The intransigence of this conflict illustrates the high stakes involved in the quest for peace and the importance of prioritizing the protection of human rights. Debilitating social and economic inequalities, deepening poverty, marginalization of minority populations, and violent disputes over land have remained entrenched as root causes of the highly complex conflict, embedding deep social and political divides.

Against this backdrop, the Colombian government, largely in response to civil society advocacy efforts, has taken progressive steps in recent years on its commitment to address the human rights crisis. In a momentous turn, the government of Colombia

entered into peace negotiations in Havana, Cuba, with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in late 2012. Since then, national debates have ignited concerning a potential post-conflict phase and its implications for key human rights issues including truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition.

To fully support Colombia's endeavors in tackling some of the most challenging human rights issues today, USAID initiated its 3.5-year Human Rights Program III (HRP III) in March 2012. With a \$21,282,383 budget, HRP III developed an innovative country strategy focused on regional efforts targeting eight departments and 40 municipalities and based on four core components: promotion of a culture of human rights, prevention of human rights violations, response to human

rights violations, and a focus on gender issues. Never executed in this manner with such emphasis at the regional level, HRP III's deep regional coverage and impact has been widely recognized by program counterparts.

Guided by these core pillars, HRP III concentrated its efforts to reach communities in need in some of the regions hardest-hit by the conflict. A historically weak state presence in these regions has exacerbated conditions of already vulnerable populations. To this end, HRP III's initiatives were designed to develop sustainable human rights solutions, hand-in-hand with civil society and state institutions, to provide much-needed assistance and support to victims of human rights violations where institutional mechanisms had fallen short.

Mindful of the ever-changing dynamics of Colombia's conflict and associated violence, HRP III's flexibility, adaptability, and proactive approach were fundamental in timely shifts in planning while maintaining an eye on beneficiary security, priorities, and objectives. This became particularly evident as HRP III quickly recognized and responded to the potential impact that the peace negotiations would have on human rights policy planning and implementation at the national and local levels, especially in areas where the peace accords would have the most impact, such as Antioquia, Meta, Tolima, and Tumaco.

HRP III's strategy followed a two-pronged approach: engaging leading institutions and civil

society organizations (CSOs) with a focus on capacity building to improve conditions for victims, and increasing the capacity of CSOs and institutions to prevent human rights abuses. With an emphasis on the regions, HRP III technical assistance empowered communities. Technical support included training regional public officials to better understand human rights-focused national laws and policies. By translating these into operational frameworks at the local level, HRP III improved institutional prevention strategies and response to victim populations. Given the ambitiously drafted Victims' Law and limited resources, the government of Colombia's capacity to implement the Law has been constrained. To respond, HRP III emphasized developing and/or strengthening institutional strategies, tools, and mechanisms to improve service delivery to victims of human rights abuses and oversight of the implementation of the Victims' Law. HRP III engaged in 19 projects with the government of Colombia and State entities such as the Ombudsman's Office, Victims' Unit, National Protection Unit, Ministries of Interior and Education, and the Inspector General's Office (IGO). These partnerships initiated wide-reaching projects that bridged the distinct branches and levels of government, Colombian oversight entities, and non-governmental stakeholders in a more integrated and streamlined fashion. Similarly, HRP III continuously brought officials from national institutions to the regions to understand local realities and better plan for

local implementation of laws and policies.

HRP III's projects also ensured a differentiated approach by bringing issues to the forefront, impacting Colombia's most vulnerable populations including women; Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) communities; journalists; and youth. This diverse approach allowed HRP III to meet all of the 89 contract deliverables, and surpass initial targets such as 28,681 human rights defenders trained and 18,731 victims assisted. Over the 3.5 years, HRP III secured grant partnerships with 44 CSOs such as *Colombia Diversa*, *Sisma Mujer*, CRIC, ACIN, AFRODES, FENALPER, CODHES, ASOLPINAR, and FLIP, of which 82 percent are regionally based. Totaling \$4,375,000, the program's grants fund effectively extended reach and provided on-the-ground support for human rights activities throughout its target regions. HRP III also designed and applied an organizational strengthening methodology to eight grantees with modules on communications, M&E, finance and administration and proposal development. FENALPER, *Familia Ayara*, FLIP, *Caribe Afirmativo*, CCJ, IPC, *Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres*, and *Sisma Mujer* are now better equipped to receive direct USAID funding.

HRP III worked with key stakeholders to pioneer innovative, effective, and sustainable solutions. Highlights include the first-of-its-kind "Atlas of the Regional Impact of Colombia's

Armed Conflict 1990-2013"—a resource that allows for improved public policy prioritization and planning considering victims' needs, particularly regarding a post-conflict phase based on regional need and impact; the first Colombia National Police Conduct Guide for Vulnerable Populations, now in use for all officer training; and technical support to the Colombia's Attorney General's Office (AGO) to transform its institutional culture to adopt case prioritization techniques and strategies to slash high impunity levels.

This report illustrates HRP III's comprehensive and dynamic experience over the past 3.5 years in advancing human rights in Colombia. Through key alliances focused on developing and/or strengthening sustainable and innovative strategies, tools, and mechanisms, HRP III's achievements were often groundbreaking, transformative, and focused on supporting vulnerable communities and victims of human rights violations. HRP III and its partners' achievements over the course of the program is largely credited to Colombia's deep commitment, from government leadership and civil society, particularly at the regional level, to create a Colombia recognized for its innovation, spirit of progress, and a culture respectful of human rights for all of its citizens. HRP III's contributions towards this vision stand on the added value of the following achievements as well as the lasting bonds made within communities who pledged their trust and efforts to make this vision a reality.

COMPONENTS AND RESULTS

IMPROVE THE PROMOTION OF A CULTURE THAT RESPECTS HUMAN RIGHTS

 **28,681** human rights defenders trained

 **33** organizations that represent vulnerable populations supported

 **6,809** people with increased knowledge of human rights issues and concepts

 **759** teachers in 40 municipalities trained as part of PLANEDH implementation

 **6** documentary productions (ACPEM, CRIT, University of Tolima, Colombia Diversa: Retratos de Familia, GBV) increased visibility of human rights issues

 **387** journalists trained in freedom of expression and self-protection

 **Human rights schools** established in 19 municipalities of Antioquia

IMPROVE THE CAPACITY TO PREVENT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

 **7** Afro-Colombian and indigenous organizations designed and implemented self-protection mechanisms

 **1,334** people trained in self-protection

 **40** *personerías* received equipment and training to improve their capacity

 **Police Officer Conduct Guide** for Vulnerable Populations was designed to improve response for six vulnerable populations. 330 police officers received training.

 **A new risk evaluation model** developed for the Ministry of the Interior's Inter-Agency Early Warning System Commission (CIAT)

IMPROVE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA RESPONSE TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

 **18,731** victims received legal orientation and/or psychosocial assistance

 **29** municipalities assisted in developing Municipal Contingency Plans

 **32** articles published on land seizure and land restitution in Cauca and Antioquia

 **60** cases of land seizure and abandonment documented for land restitution claims

 Technical assistance provided to the **Land Restitution Unit** to improve available information on land seizures

 Support for the implementation and monitoring of the **2013 National Victims Survey** carried out by the Comptroller General's Office

GENDER AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

 **442** gender-based violence (GBV) cases assisted in Tumaco and Chocó through the Ombudsman Office's legal and psychosocial *duplas*

 **10** LGBTI organizations' capacities strengthened

 **2,574** people trained in LGBTI community rights

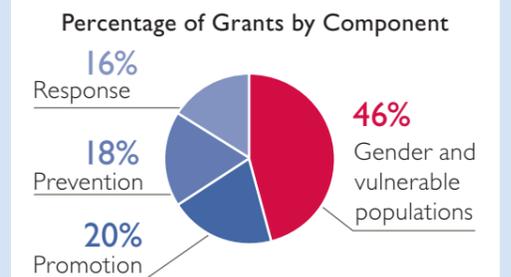
 **749** public officials trained on Law 1257 and women's rights

 Support provided to Office of the Presidential Advisor for Women's Equality to develop and disseminate its Regionalization Manual which serves as a critical tool towards implementing **Colombia's Gender Public Policy**

 Launched the **GBV documentary production scholarship**: 39 applications received and 9 semi-finalists selected and trained

SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY

 **56** grants signed





Community display of white umbrellas symbolizes peace in Ituango, a municipality particularly afflicted by conflict in northern Antioquia, to inaugurate Antioquia's Human Rights and Civic Responsibility School designed by USAID's HRP III and Antioquia's governor's office.

CHAPTER I

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Ravaged by internal conflict for more than 50 years, Colombia's prospects — for a future free from armed conflict and human rights abuses — are threatened by violence, fear, and uncertainty. For many of Colombia's most conflictive regions, just the mention of "human rights" can raise suspicions and put people at risk. Many human rights defenders, including journalists, unionists, and teachers, have been branded as "terrorists" and persecuted by armed interest groups. Cultivating a culture of respect and value for human rights across Colombia must be the foundation for transformative change to build a sustainable peace.

In designing the third phase of the Human Rights Program, USAID/Colombia identified

eight priority regions where a historically weak state presence had undermined respect for human rights. The lack of leadership, security, and institutional support has provided scant opportunity for people to openly champion human rights. Where resources or mechanisms do exist, such as municipal and departmental human rights committees, weak implementation support and lack of capacity hamper efforts to improve the situation.

While the national government has made important progress in the development of human rights policies, regional implementation has faced major impediments. One example is the slow progress in the formalization of a human rights education system despite the fact that its importance is recognized in Colombia's 1991 Constitution.

APPROACH

Operating in this challenging environment, HRP III partnered with key government institutions and local civil society organizations (CSOs) in the eight priority regions to develop and promote strategies that raised awareness and increased acceptance and understanding of human rights. HRP III supported projects with a broad reach and focus on conflict-affected communities. Working with institutions and CSOs, HRP III tackled complex issues such as the stigmatization of human rights defenders and the integration of human rights into formal and non-formal educational systems. The program worked to increase public officials' awareness of human rights issues in Colombia, fostered youth advocates of peace, prepared future human rights defenders, and promoted human rights at the community level by engaging with CSOs and community groups.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Incorporating Human Rights into Colombia's Informal, Non-formal, and Formal Education Systems

Local implementation of the National Education Plan on Human Rights. Classrooms are an important space for developing the tools, skills, and values necessary to rebuild a Colombia defined by less violence and conflict. The ongoing peace process has underscored the

urgency of advancing human rights and peace education for future leaders. Initially designed with USAID support, Colombia's National Education Plan on Human Rights (PLANEDH) was incorporated into the National Development Plan in 2009. But in March 2012 when HRP III began, PLANEDH had not been finalized or begun regional implementation. Over the next two years, HRP III supported the Ministry of Education to finalize methodologies, pedagogies, and training modules, and worked with department-level secretaries of education to implement the plan. PLANEDH is now positioned to be adapted in 250 schools throughout six departments — Cauca, Meta, La Guajira, Nariño, Chocó, and Antioquia — and more than 700 teachers from 40 conflict-affected municipalities have been trained in PLANEDH's innovative, dynamic human rights classroom teaching methodologies.

Establishing the first human rights school in Colombia. The establishment of Antioquia's Human Rights and Civic Responsibility School in January 2015 marked the culmination of a two-year collaborative design effort by HRP III, working with Antioquia's governor's office, *Empresas Publicas de Medellín* (EPM), *Universidad Católica del Norte*, and *Universidad Católica de Oriente*. As the first human rights school in Colombia, this pioneering model targeted 270 public officials and community leaders across 19 municipalities with high levels of human rights violations. HRP III designed



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Youth beneficiary of HRP III-supported project in which traditional Wayúu authorities worked with teachers, municipal authorities, and children to create the first protection *ruta* regarding sexual and gender-based violence against Wayúu children and women in La Guajira department. This alliance resulted from the pressing need to reduce violence levels impacting the most vulnerable populations as well as to promote institutional commitment to guarantee their protection.

methodologies, pedagogies, and training modules for the school that fostered and enriched discussions, analysis, and studies on human rights issues — and provided comparative lessons on development of international and national human rights legislation and public policies. This endeavor comes at a precipitous moment given the ongoing peace negotiations and when human rights leaders and advocates are needed to help the government of Colombia and its people experience life without considerable violence and conflict.

Empowering communities through human rights training

diploma courses. The HRP III team harnessed its extensive regional experience and suite of resources and tools in human rights training to develop an innovative and dynamic human rights training diploma course for community leaders. This 120-hour course equips participants with human rights knowledge and practical analysis tools to develop human rights prevention and response strategies and is adaptable to regional community needs. For example, in Meta, the diploma course gave emphasis to prevention of forced child recruitment by illegal armed actors that has affected many communities. In Cauca's indigenous areas of Silvia and

CONNECTING TEACHERS TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Complementing this initiative, HRP III's support led to the launching of a new tool that brings families, teachers, students, and communities together to discuss human rights education. Using a dedicated Facebook page, the 40 targeted municipalities and more than 330 members now form part of a human rights education network where they exchange ideas, reflections, and information on human rights education and its impact on their communities and schools.



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HRP III documentary competition winner Juliana Toro's mother, Gilma Jimenez, during filming of the GBV prevention and women's rights documentary "Mujeres, a la calle" in Medellín, Colombia. The documentary short film competition aimed to foster young talent in the communications field to raise awareness of GBV issues.

Totoró, the diploma course included a focus on gender and cultural norms given especially high levels of gender-based violence (GBV). In total, 657 individuals received training, including 237 public officials from 11 municipalities.

Building Institutional Capacity for the Promotion of Human Rights

When HRP III began in 2012, regional and local institutional mechanisms for protecting human rights — human rights committees, political and social policy committees, and municipal transitional justice committees — were barely operating or did not exist. Human rights committees can be an important platform to give voice to citizens and victims on critical human rights issues. In municipalities such as Cauca, in the Bajo Cauca region of

Antioquia, the absence of these committees had created an information gap that limited government support to victims and others in need.

HRP III targeted human and technical resources and efforts to strengthen these committees for quick and sustainable impact. Regional program staff directly trained 336 public officials and community committee members and reinforced 125 human rights and related committees on Colombia's human rights laws and policies serving conflict victims and vulnerable populations such as human rights defenders, journalists, and ethnic groups. Due to these efforts, local committees are now not only raising the profile on human rights issues to the appropriate institutions/agencies, but also engaging them to develop effective and timelier responses, including on emerging risks and

complex issues, such as forced child recruitment, anti-personnel mine accidents, and GBV.

Human rights committees in action. HRP III's efforts to fortify these committees paid immediate dividends as communities mobilized to introduce a culture of concern for human rights. In Cauca, HRP III supported the establishment of the first Human Rights Committee, which helped to deconstruct negative perceptions and prejudice against human rights defenders. The committee launched an innovative local radio program, "Vive tus Derechos," that has fostered conversations on human rights issues and features local thematic experts, human rights defenders, and public officials. Cauca's model was so successful that, within a year, a human rights-focused news radio program was replicated in a separate municipality in the uppermost northern coast of the department of La Guajira. In the municipality of Riohacha, heavily populated by indigenous communities, a small but energetic network of human rights CSOs united in raising human rights issues via the airwaves, focused on culturally sensitive issues such as GBV and sexual abuse against children. With technical support from HRP III and the national Ombudsman's Office, the initial broadcast of "La Guajira al Derecho" hit the airwaves on December 10, 2014, in commemoration of Human Rights Day. These types of dynamic, educational programming have, for the first

time, helped bridge communities and government officials to publicly engage in conversations on forced displacement, land restitution, access to health, and other human rights issues.

Empowering Youth to Adopt a Culture of Respect for Human Rights

Youth promote human rights through the arts. Colombia's youth (defined as ages 14-26) have been particularly badly affected by the ongoing turmoil. Conflict and violence have deprived youth of opportunities and left them with limited, often perilous life choices, including forced recruitment by illegal armed groups. In poverty-stricken and isolated regions of Colombia such as Tumaco and Chocó, the odds are further stacked against Afro-Colombian and indigenous youth who have limited opportunities and poor access to education and healthcare. Combined with their historical social marginalization and discrimination, youth are lured by the quick gains offered by omnipresent illegal armed groups.

Despite these odds, HRP III discovered young people who have the will to reclaim their communities and futures. An HRP III grant to *Familia Ayara* allowed 106 youth from Chocó and Tumaco to participate in a unique and creative training project that combined human rights education with audiovisual production skills. Using these new tools, they were given free rein to design, write, produce,

film, record, and publicize messages promoting peace and human rights through hip-hop, dance, and other artistic expressions. The youth organized six community-wide festivals to showcase their skills and contagious rhythms, rhymes, and beats. Music videos, posters, pamphlets, and radio clips with pro-human rights messages have expanded peer learning and disseminated inspiring messages on the importance of human rights throughout Colombia.

Youth reclaim futures and their communities. The Afro-Colombian population of Tumaco has suffered unbridled violence and armed confrontations by illegal groups in recent years. In the wake of this chaos, a group of approximately 50 youth came together in 2015 to demonstrate their will to thrive and build peace through a unique HRP III-supported arts project. For 2.5 months, meeting every Saturday morning, high school students from Tumaco and surrounding rural areas met to participate in human rights training designed to inform and encourage reflection on their situation. The program formed strong bonds and heightened self-awareness of the pitfalls of joining illegal armed groups. As a visible expression of their newfound pride and knowledge, the youth painted a community mural in April 2015 where once drab, concrete slabs occupied a central downtown block. The vivid messages of peace, hope, and non-violence came

through. Reflecting their deep commitment to better their communities, these youth have gone on to replicate training for 700 students in 10 Tumaco schools.

Fostering New Generations of Human Rights Defenders

To help cultivate a future generation of human rights leaders, HRP III worked with young law students to harness their interest and passion for human rights, to explore cutting-edge issues and enhance their knowledge and professional skills. Over a three-year period, HRP III, together with the Ombudsman's Office, supported and enhanced the annual Human Rights Moot Court Competition. For the first time in almost a decade of the competition's existence, HRP III efforts contributed towards increasing participation from regional law schools and universities. With this regional emphasis, a total of 390 students, representing 113 universities from eight departments, took part in moot court preparation leading to the main event. Each year the winning team travelled to Washington, D.C., with USAID support, to compete at the Inter-American Human Rights Moot Court Competition sponsored by American University. Alumni have returned to participate in the competition as judges, mentors, and coaches and have proclaimed the event's importance to their own legal and human rights careers.

HIGHLIGHT

ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS AMONG ETHNIC COMMUNITIES



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Colombia's Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups remain among the most vulnerable and disproportionately affected populations from the conflict. Illegal armed groups seeking social and territorial control target ethnic territories, generating high numbers of casualties and forced displacement. While ethnic communities are recognized and protected under Colombia's Constitution, little progress has been made with respect to protecting them or granting them land titles, leaving them very vulnerable.

HRP III emphasized supporting ethnic CSOs to strengthen their organizational capacities on issues of self-protection, GBV, collective historical memory documentation, prior consultation, and planning for peace. In total, HRP III reached 8,320 members of ethnic groups through training and assistance through direct support and grants to 15 ethnic organizations.

The program helped ethnic communities to develop self-protection mechanisms in the wake of an alarming rise of threats and acts of aggression. As a result, 916 ethnic community leaders and seven ethnic CSOs are now equipped to reduce their risk and engage responsible entities to obtain support.

To improve collaboration on critical issues impacting ethnic communities, HRP III fostered partnerships between ethnic communities and the government of Colombia to improve trust and consensus on issues such as security, prior consultation, land rights, and illegal mining. In August 2013, with the participation of high-level government officials including President Santos, HRP III supported the first National Afro-Colombian Autonomous Congress to build consensus and develop joint work plans and agendas to push progress on long-delayed issues. This Congress also marked a major first step for Afro-Colombian communities in self-organization and representation.

Strengthening ethnic communities and military relations is an urgent but sensitive and highly complex issue, marred by a history of violent disputes and tragic outcomes. To start building mutual trust, HRP III hosted human rights dialogues engaging 51 members of 19 indigenous communities from Tolima and La Guajira and 56 members of the Ministry of Defense and police, creating opportunities to cultivate greater understanding on indigenous rights and the Ministry's human rights policy. HRP III's technical assistance to partner indigenous organizations proved critical to prioritizing and voicing their concerns and proposals regarding their security, and respect for their cultural laws and norms.



A youth participates in awareness-raising activities designed to strengthen cultural identity and highlight the risks involved in joining illegal armed groups. Children and youth are continuously targeted by illegal armed groups to join their ranks. HRP III supported organizations and communities to develop and implement community prevention strategies.

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CHAPTER 2

PREVENTING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

RISK OF DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2014, a record number of threats and risks to human rights defenders were reported. According to Colombian NGO *Somos Defensores*, Colombia registered a 133 percent increase in aggressions targeting human rights defenders (209 to 408) from 2013-2014. In 2014, an alarming 626 human rights defenders and 212 social organizations were subject to acts of aggression. Compounding matters, most of the conflict zones deeply impacted by human rights violations lie in Colombia's expansive territories that historically have little to no State presence. Local communities and civil society have largely taken on the responsibility of self-protection. With the progress of peace negotiations in Havana, bolstering prevention capacities is even more important to ensure a secure post-conflict transition.

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Preventing human rights violations in Colombia presents particular challenges for areas of the country that remain in the middle of a constantly evolving conflict. The government of Colombia has recently made important institutional changes aimed at improving prevention-oriented strategies and mechanisms to protect the most vulnerable. However, it has not been able to effectively implement these policies, especially in remote conflict-affected regions, and reform of structural inefficiencies has not sufficiently progressed.

APPROACH

From its launch, HRP III strengthened protection mechanisms for individuals and communities facing human rights threats due to the internal

armed conflict. Through a strong focus on regional nuances and civil society, HRP III ensured the participation of both victims and responsible institutions to develop and implement strategies and tools focused on identification and response to risks. Empowered at-risk populations have developed essential tools for monitoring, enforcement, and oversight of policies and mechanisms intended to prevent and protect them from human rights violations.

With these tools, organizations are better able to identify risk factors and develop tailored processes aimed at reducing their vulnerability to threats while effectively raising awareness of their situation and needs. Through the enhancement of organizational and advocacy skills, organizations such as the Cauca-based Afro-Colombian



LOCAL PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

FENALPER

“For the first time, *personerías* have a national platform to coordinate national and regional processes to guarantee and protect human rights as well as recover credibility, trust, and transparency in public institutions.”

—Andrés Santamaria, FENALPER’s president, on HRP III’s impact

HRP III’s financial, technical, and in-kind support to Colombia’s National Federation of *Personeros* (FENALPER) transformed what was once a loose-knit and passive association into a leading support organization for the countrywide network of *personerías*, or local offices charged with human rights promotion and citizen oversight. Looking towards a potential post-conflict phase, *personeros*’ roles will be critical to ensuring human and civil rights are protected during transition. HRP III’s support enabled FENALPER to draft its first ever five-year strategic plan providing an organizational roadmap with clearly defined goals and priorities.

organization UOAFROC and indigenous association ACIN formed coalitions and key partnerships with national human rights organizations such as Somos Defensores, the National Protection Unit and the Ombudsman’s Office to reduce and mitigate direct threats and/or harm from armed actors. Equipped with these tools, organizations can effectively document and report risks to relevant authorities as well as better understand the institutional and social dynamics which may play a strong role in improving their protection.

HRP III also addressed strategic institutional gaps, increasing knowledge, skills, and tools for the Ombudsman’s Office, IGO, National Police, and *personerías* to deliver needed services and resources to those most at risk. With an emphasis on sustainability, HRP III developed or reinforced institutional systems and tools that promote durable solutions for prevention of human rights violations, particularly in a future post-conflict phase.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Strengthening Institutional Capacity to Prevent Human Rights Violations

National Protection Unit’s prevention and protection capacities increased. Colombia’s National Protection Unit (NPU), under the Ministry of Interior, is the primary government entity responsible for organizing,

coordinating, and issuing protection measures to persons at risk. Newly commissioned in 2012 with increased responsibility and resources, the NPU was faced with a huge undertaking of quickly enhancing internal capacity to fulfill its mission. Realizing this, HRP III became a key partner, providing support to update the protection caseload database and improve performance delivery. HRP III support resulted in the updating and verification of 12,760 database entries on protected individuals, out of a total 17,723, reducing institutional inefficiencies and ensuring beneficiaries receive the necessary protection. HRP III also strengthened the NPU’s protection capacities through an overhaul of its emergency risk evaluation processes that documented vulnerable groups, regions, and communities, improving context analysis and developing new criteria to streamline resource allocation decisions. HRP III also helped the NPU enhance their knowledge of collective risks and protection needs such as those faced by Afro-Colombian communities through dialogues and workshops with the Afro-Colombian advocacy organization *Asociación de Afrocolombianos Desplazados* (AFRODES).

Institutional capacity for risk evaluation and mitigation of human rights violations improved at the national and regional levels. Risk evaluation and mitigation is not only a national mandate entrusted to the Inter-agency



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Police officers receive training on the HRP III-developed Police Conduct Guide for Vulnerable Populations. During this two-day course, officers are invited to put themselves in the shoes of vulnerable groups through case studies and case re-enactment, thus re-examining their own prejudices and adopting non-discriminatory actions.

Commission for Early Warnings (CIAT), but is also a lifeline for local communities that otherwise have limited recourse in the wake of violence and armed conflict. CIAT resulted from the high-profile murder of two university students in January 2011, when risk alerts had been disregarded, stressing the urgent need for the Ministry of Interior to address adequate and coordinated institutional response. However, CIAT’s initial efforts often failed to produce an adequate response. An HRP III-led assessment identified institutional bottlenecks and capacity gaps that produced ambiguous, unactionable recommendations.

To respond, HRP III led efforts to develop a new and more effective risk evaluation methodology for CIAT, including working with local authorities from 15 municipalities to ensure that regional implementation reflected local realities. The updated methodology improved actions that mitigate risks of human rights violations by providing local authorities with guidelines to implement risk report recommendations and adequately report their response.

EWS capacity to measure risk increased. As the primary institutional instrument designed to prevent mass human rights violations in Colombia, the



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The *Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (ACIN)* indigenous reservation guard are trained by an HRP III expert on self-protection strategies and mechanisms. Indigenous leaders have been killed and threatened at an alarming rate as they have been caught in the crossfire between government security forces and illegal armed groups operating in their territory.

Ombudsman's Office Early Warning System (EWS) faced significant resource deficiencies impacting its performance at national and local levels. As a quick measure to facilitate improved local response, HRP III provided needed logistical and communications support to field analysts, enabling them to timely assess threats and risks in often remote, hard-to-reach areas. HRP III's results-oriented approach with the EWS achieved its 100 percent sustainability through the modernization and streamlining of processes contributing to improved performance and providing field analysts with vital funding support, which was previously stuck in bureaucratic

red tape. With the introduction of the Victims' Law in 2011 and rise of threats against land claimants, it became clear that the EWS would require a new set of tools to identify and monitor risks related to land restitution. With HRP III support, the EWS developed new land restitution risk indicators and enhanced its capacity to monitor and follow up on risks to land claimants. These new indicators also equip the Ombudsman's Office with the tools to recommend more concrete policies and programs for protection of this at-risk population.

IGO institutional capacity increased to monitor and respond

COMMUNITIES EQUIPPED WITH SELF-PROTECTION TOOLS

HRP III worked with Afro-Colombian leaders to develop a self-protection manual entitled "Prendiendo el foco para perder el miedo." This easy-to-follow manual provides communities and organizations with visual, concrete guidelines on managing and presenting information on security incidents to institutions as an effective means to call attention to their situation as well as gain enough political capital to deter potential wrongdoers. The manual also depicts dissemination strategies to effectively heighten visibility regarding hardships, challenges, and threats endured by affected communities/organizations, without incurring greater risks.

to risk. HRP III began working with the IGO in 2012 to build capacity of the recently created Land Restitution Delegate to monitor implementation of the land restitution process under the Victims' Law. From this partnership, HRP III helped design and establish the first Land Restitution Observatory to provide the Colombian government with an essential tool to identify bottlenecks in the restitution process and propose policy and procedural changes. Also in partnership with the IGO, HRP III supported the Human Rights Prevention Delegate to develop a new Prevention Protocol to improve its capacity to monitor the government's implementation of preventive and protection measures at the municipal level. Similarly, HRP III developed a manual to improve oversight of the government's intelligence activities as mandate through the recently approved Intelligence Law (1621 of 2013).

Enhancing the National Police's response to vulnerable populations. Claims of mistreatment of vulnerable populations have plagued Colombia's police. The National Police agreed to receive HRP III support to change officers' behaviors and attitudes through increased understanding of the characteristics of certain population groups, ultimately leading to the HRP III-designed Police Conduct Guide on Vulnerable Populations. This guide is designed to enhance police officer knowledge, attitudes, and practices with respect to the specific needs and

challenges faced by vulnerable populations including Afro-Colombians, indigenous communities, the LGBTI community, women, internally displaced persons, unionists, and human rights defenders, and now forms part of their professional training and advancement process. HRP III subsequently developed a training module and conducted nine regional training sessions involving 330 police officers in the municipalities of Cauca, Quibdó, Popayán, San Jacinto, Ibagué, Medellín, Villavicencio and Riohacha. The training used case studies based on real incidents addressing each vulnerable population to generate reflection, discussion, and analysis. Two additional trainings of regional police human rights advisors were held at headquarters in Bogotá using a train-the-trainer model.

Strengthening Civil Society to Prevent Human Rights Violations

Self-protection and community prevention strategies enhanced. Given the heavy volume of threats targeting human rights defenders and organizations in recent years, HRP III worked directly with high-risk populations, such as Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, women, the LGBTI community, and journalists to develop and adapt self-protection measures for human rights violations. HRP III awarded grants to five widely recognized ethnic community CSOs: COCOMACIA – FISCH (Chocó); UOAFROC, ACIN, and CRIC (Cauca);

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF MINE ACCIDENTS

From 2011-2013, Antioquia registered some of its highest levels of land mine accidents. Of the 277 accidents reported in the department, 56 percent of these took place in HRP III municipalities (Briceño, Anorí, Cáceres, El Bagre, Tarazá, and Valdivia). Mindful of this, HRP III grantee Corporación Paz y Democracia, together with Antioquia's governor's office, and DAICMA, empowered communities and local institutions to reduce the risk of these types of accidents. The initiative successfully trained 24 community volunteers from five municipalities in mine risk education. Volunteers were then equipped to replicate trainings in remote, rural communities where they trained a total of 3,236 individuals on mine risk education. In addition to developing communications strategies to promote risk awareness in public spaces, this grant facilitated the development of local response and assistance *rutas* in the event of an accident.

The Antioquia governor's secretary, Santiago Londoño, has lauded this program's efforts in strengthening institutional coordination and response regarding mine accident risk and stated that this project has indirectly contributed to a decrease in reported mine accident risks in 2014.

and AFRODES (national) to develop critical risk assessment and self-protection tools and strategies. Through participatory processes, each grant customized self-protection methodology to each community's needs, cultures, risk levels, and contexts. HRP III self-protection experts provided further technical assistance to ACIN, given their particular high-risk level, to *Caribe Afirmativo* and to ethnic organization partners including ACONC, and the *consejo comunitario* rio Gualajo.

Communities improve land mine accident prevention. Colombia has one of the highest numbers (11,000) of land mine victims in the world. Residents in conflict-affected areas face great threats by simply walking across a field; in a recent case, a seven-year-old girl lost her life as she walked home from school. A prioritized human rights issue in regions such as Tolima and Antioquia, HRP III engaged Colombia's leading institutions such as *Dirección para la Acción Contra Minas Antipersonales* (DAICMA) and local governments to provide needed technical support and response mechanisms. In Tolima, HRP III regional advisors assisted in carrying out a rapid assessment for the municipal contingency plan to identify the extent of the land mine problem in southern

Tolima and worked with local government in improving its knowledge and capacities on mine risk education.

Supporting communities and institutions to combat forced child recruitment. The 2012 Ombudsman's Office Warning Report regarding high levels of forced child recruitment in southern Tolima catalyzed HRP III to activate an immediate inter-institutional and comprehensive response to the crisis. Engaging the National Coordination for Forced Child Recruitment (CIPRUNNA), Victims' Unit, and National Consolidation Unit, HRP III provided invaluable technical, planning, and training support to municipalities to develop and implement local forced child recruitment prevention *rutas*. The design of the *ruta* itself involved the participation of 120 local public officials from institutions including the ICBF, mayor's offices, *personerías*, the police, healthcare providers, teachers and parents. As a result of HRP III support, a regional roundtable dedicated to this issue was established as well as Rapid Response Teams. By 2015, this model was replicated to address rising forced child recruitment rates in Meta.

HIGHLIGHT

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF PEACE



COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM III

Since the start of the Havana peace negotiations between FARC and the Colombian government, there have been several historical milestones towards a political solution to the conflict that has lasted for more than 50 years. The success of any peace accord will rely heavily on the buy-in and commitment of communities. To address this, HRP III worked closely with local governments and civil society partners in geographic areas that are critical to the peace process, including in Antioquia and Meta, to create platforms and projects that engage key stakeholders to address the implications of a post-conflict phase.

In Antioquia in 2015, Colombia's first Human Rights and Civic Education School introduced a new vision for education in human rights in one of the hardest-hit departments of the conflict. An educational space to exchange ideas, visions, and solutions, the school has also trained 270 public officials and community leaders from 19 municipalities using a rigorous human rights education curriculum. Formerly isolated communities are gaining tools, skills, and knowledge for use in re-building their communities with a human rights focus.

HRP III also worked closely with the Antioquia governor's office on the *Preparémonos para la Paz* initiative, which facilitated community dialogue on key

post-conflict issues impacting communities. Thirty-eight peacebuilding proposals resulted from the initiative, including building historical memory, promoting truth and reconciliation, developing a culture of democracy, and reintegrating ex-combatants.

In Meta, a department with large areas still under FARC control, HRP III worked with the governor's office to hold forums presenting the advances of the Havana dialogues, allowing communities such as Mesetas, Puerto Rico, and Vista Hermosa to better understand and prepare for peace. Additionally, in Meta, HRP III supported the development of new departmental human rights guidelines that re-activated multiple municipal human rights committees and initiated planning and diagnostic sessions for post-conflict scenarios.

HRP III supported critical analysis of major post-conflict issues. Support to Colombian think tank *Paz y Reconciliación* analyzed the risk of political participation in a post-conflict phase, using the rising social and political movement *Marcha Patriótica* as a case study. Similarly, a 2013 national forum organized by HRP III grantee *Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris* presented a six-month HRP III study on human rights in a post-conflict scenario, covering nine priority municipalities in Cauca, Meta, and Nariño.

ETHNIC COMMUNITIES PREPARE FOR PEACE

To enrich knowledge and increase awareness for Afro-Colombian communities, HRP III grantee *Procesos de Comunidades Negras* (PCN) facilitated eight national and eleven regional sessions with 420 Afro-Colombian leaders and victims to review the peace process and agenda items and to analyze their implications on issues of concern to the communities, including land rights, illegal mining, and other post-conflict matters. These sessions helped communities develop proposals presented at the peace dialogues in August 2015 in Havana.

Victims' Mobile Support Unit provides key support to victims in Buenos Aires, Cauca. Covering 28 of HRP III's 40 municipalities, HRP III support to the Victims' Unit provided critical surge capacity to municipal *personeros* and the Ombudsman's Office to respond to the rising demand by victims in declaring their victim status and enabling their access to government services.



CHAPTER 3

IMPROVING GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA RESPONSE TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Colombia's adoption of the Victims' Assistance and Land Restitution Law in 2011 (Law 1448 or Victims' Law) was a major turning point and historical milestone towards the recognition of Colombia's armed conflict and the State's responsibility regarding the devastating effects on its victims. While a major vindication for the more than 7 million victims who to date have suffered losses and damages to lives, lands, livelihoods, cultural identities, and environments, the State's new duties and obligations to victims have been cast as overly

ambitious given the government's limited resources and capacities. Weak institutional infrastructure at the regional level has resulted in a slow advent of victims' access to benefits and services under this new framework. Building trust with communities remains one of the government's toughest challenges.

Underlying these structural challenges, the pervasive nature of impunity in Colombia represents a primary root cause in the perpetuation of high levels of violence and conflict. Colombia's impunity levels are so pronounced and widespread — as high as 98 percent for egregious human rights violations such as sexual

violence and murders of human rights defenders — that delivering justice to victims has become nearly impossible.

APPROACH

HRP III trained public officials on roles and responsibilities and empowering communities regarding laws, policies, benefits, and services. Meanwhile, HRP III worked to build knowledge and awareness of key regional stakeholders to encourage comprehensive implementation of the law. Beyond this, the program's partnership with relevant national and local institutions and support to victim-oriented mechanisms alleviated the burden of a soaring demand for services stemming from the Victims' Law that often overwhelmed institutional response offices, such as *personerías*.

A targeted problem-solving approach was directed at institutional gaps and deficiencies hindering local implementation of the Victims' Law. HRP III set its sights on working alongside pertinent institutions at the national level to improve State capacities and oversight of the Victims' Law. Strategies and tools to strengthen regional institutional responses to impunity were also carried out with the intention to enhance their efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness to respond to cases of human rights violations.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Improving institutional capacity to respond to human rights violations

Fighting impunity through case prioritization and organizational change. Colombia's Attorney General's Office (AGO) in recent years has integrated new and serious approaches to drastically reduce impunity. The AGO's adoption of Directive 001 of 2012 ordered swift internal changes with respect to addressing enormous backlogs and bottlenecks that have exacerbated impunity rates. A re-prioritization and decentralization of its internal offices and responsibilities has allowed the AGO to better adapt its mechanisms, methods, and resources to focus on high-impact, major crimes in conflict-affected regions in a more effective and efficient manner. HRP III's support at the national and regional levels provided the AGO with the analysis tools, techniques, and confidence to make these organizational shifts. Starting with the development and implementation of prioritization plans of the AGO's 51 national and regional offices, HRP III's support was critical to increasing understanding of 360 prosecution staff on new ways of mapping, aggregating, and measuring the gravity of cases given the complex nature and dynamics of mass human rights violations and their perpetrators. HRP III also encouraged the



COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM III

An elderly woman is accompanied by her son to receive legal and psychosocial orientation at HRP III grantee Universidad de Cartagena's legal clinic. Although some victims in the region have been displaced for more than ten years, many still lack access to basic services, housing, or employment opportunities.

AGO to integrate a gender and vulnerable populations focus (see Chapter 4) in all prioritization plans to ensure a comprehensive approach.

The introduction of this prioritization policy called for a complete shift in organizational thinking and institutional culture. HRP III invited a U.S. Deputy District Attorney with experience in this type of change to lead workshops in Bogota with senior staff and prosecutors in Medellín and Quibdó, facilitating open discussions on prioritization techniques, best practices, and lessons learned. To fully integrate these efforts, HRP III also assisted in the incorporation of prioritization plans into their annual work plans, which now form part of prosecutors' annual evaluation process, and designed a toolkit for prosecutors to provide a valuable, consolidated resource

on the methodologies, protocols, manuals and other guides for case prioritization. Given the high rates of impunity and victimization, HRP III supported the AGO to develop special prioritization plans for Buenaventura, Tumaco, Bajo Cauca, and a sub-region of Chocó.

In preparation for a potential post-conflict phase, HRP III and the AGO began exploring and making inroads in establishing internal guidelines and frameworks for possible transitional justice scenarios for conflict affected communities. To this end, HRP III's support contributed to the AGO's first strategic analysis and data consolidation of FARC crimes in order to sharpen AGO abilities to process potential cases under the terms of the potential peace agreement.

HIGHLIGHT

STRENGTHENING KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC POLICY



COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM III

The government of Colombia's weakness in its ability to understand and adequately respond to victims' needs has been driven by the difficulty of capturing, documenting, and analyzing data from the constantly evolving five-decade conflict, frustrating implementation of victims' rights mandated by law. To respond to this historical issue, HRP III worked with the leadership of key stakeholders to identify gaps, bottlenecks, and other shortcomings and develop the necessary information tools to advance policy development and implementation of key legislation such as the 2011 Victims' Law.

Transforming land restitution oversight. In May 2014, HRP III established the Land Restitution Observatory (LRO) at the Inspector General's Office. A critical part of Colombia's 2011 Victim's Law, land restitution has not advanced as expected. Among the many pitfalls plaguing restitution has been the lack of accurate information, and low capacity to monitor legal responsibilities. HRP III worked with the IGO to design and implement the LRO as an essential tool in monitoring the implementation of the law. Since its inception, it has contributed significant data to the Congressional annual report regarding advances and challenges impacting the land restitution process.

Gaining a deeper understanding of the situation of Colombia's victims. Over the past 20 years, Colombia has ranked in the top two countries for number of

internally displaced persons, reporting approximately 7.5 million victims of conflict (forced displacement accounts for 87 percent) dating to 1985. While the government has covered considerable legislative ground, the situation for human rights victims continues to be dire and the sheer numbers remain overwhelming. In 2013, HRP III supported the Comptroller's Office to conduct the 2013 National Victims' Survey, providing a baseline for Law 1448, and analyzed information to capture a comprehensive portrait of victims in Colombia. Household-based surveys across 72 municipalities in areas of high displacement revealed advances in the national government's response to victims, but indicated areas of concern for their social and economic conditions. The survey made clear the need for longer-term government planning and shifts in resource allocation. Survey findings also illuminated the scale of land restitution needs, surpassing government of Colombia estimates, and its importance to achieving complete victims' reparations.

First consolidated analysis of regional impact of the Colombian conflict. Until 2015, the Colombian government's understanding of the conflict's regional dimensions consisted of generalizations and approximations, showing a lack of understanding of the conflict magnitude. Disparate information supported oft-misinformation theories of conflict drivers and trends. In 2013, HRP III began working with the Vice President's Human Rights Observatory to organize and analyze 15 years' worth of data, providing support to conduct the necessary interviews, research, data compilation, and publication to create the government's first *Atlas of the Regional Impact of Colombia's Conflict 1990-2013*. Through the use of maps and other visual aids, this 800-plus page compendium elaborates on the striking outcomes and evolutions of the conflict. The overwhelmingly positive response to the publication by government institutions and civil society underscored the great need it has filled. Policymakers can now reference the Atlas to make decisions and design appropriate policies addressing victims' needs and planning for peace.

COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM III



Claudia Mejia, director of HRP III grantee *Sisma Mujer*, presenting a progress report on the government's implementation of policies related to women's rights.

Strengthening victims' participation roundtables. A critical aspect of Colombia's Victims' Law was the creation of victim participation roundtables as the primary mechanism for ensuring effective victims' participation in all matters concerning truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition. Under the auspices of the *personerías* at the municipal level and the Ombudsman's Office at the departmental level, the roundtables serve as a space for victims and their organizations to discuss, develop proposals, and provide oversight of victim-oriented policies, programs, and projects. Recognizing the critical

role that these roundtables play, HRP III provided support early in the validation stages of the participation protocol through regional dialogues in the departments of Guajira, Chocó, and Meta, where victims' organizations provided input on the drafts. A government resolution in December 2014 called for reform of victims' participation roundtables to ensure greater inclusion and diversity for roundtable members. Embracing this reform, HRP III regional advisors strengthened roundtable members' understanding, roles and response to victims' rights through workshops for victims' organizations in



COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM III

Indigenous collective land restitution mapping exercise. HRP III grantee Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC) brought together members from different indigenous communities to identify and document cases of collective land restitution to be presented to land restitution judges under Law 1448.

eight regions. The elections successfully brought in new, fresh perspectives and voices.

Alleviating the burden of demand through support for Victims' Declarations Intake. Once the Victims' Law went into effect, several entities including the Ombudsman's Office, Victims' Unit, and *personeros* were charged with carrying out one of the law's most challenging efforts, ensuring victims across Colombia were registered in the Victims' Registry to ensure delivery of entitled benefits, services, and support. This effort required a considerable institutional undertaking

particularly from *personeros* who are on the frontline for supporting victims' registry, to collect and register millions of victims' accounts using resources already strained by the scale of the conflict. Initial HRP III support helped victims' declaration intake efforts throughout eight targeted regions, with a focus on remote, hard-to-reach areas where victims were less likely to have received information or services. HRP III's regional advisors worked diligently with local authorities and victims' organizations to spread the word and build victims' confidence in coming forward.

Support to regional institutions resulted in 35 specially targeted victim declaration sessions in 27 municipalities in eight regions, leading to the intake of 2,936 declarations. Moreover, HRP III provided temporary staff to *personerías* in the municipalities of Santander de Quilichao, Cauca, Tumaco, and Chaparral, so that they were better able to clear waitlists of victims scheduled to register, resulting in additional intake of 4,685 victim declarations. Finally, through HRP III support to the Ombudsman's Office Victims' Mobile Unit, victims' declaration services and orientation sessions on human rights issues and victims' rights reached remote, marginalized communities, resulting in an additional intake of 3,952. In total, HRP III supported the intake of 11,573 victim declarations, of which 63.5 percent of victims have been included in the Victims' Registry.

Supporting civil society understanding and capacity to request services

Access to legal and psychosocial services for victims. To combat the isolation of many rural victims and enhance the approach to victims' needs, HRP III engaged key CSOs to provide legal and psychosocial support in some of the most deeply impacted areas of Colombia. Support to CSOs bridged significant resource and capacity gaps in accessing victims and built on existing trust with communities to encourage more victims to come forward and seek assistance. HRP III's coverage through grant support included:

Ruta Pacifica (Chocó), *Mision Vida* (Meta), *Universidad de Cartagena* (Bolívar), and *Pastoral Social* (Tumaco). Through these organizations' efforts, 5,741 victims from communities that previously had very little knowledge or accessibility to assistance received the much needed legal and psychosocial support towards reclaiming their rights and achieving justice.

Improved knowledge for land restitution cases. Land restitution remains the most challenging and controversial aspect for implementation of the Victims' Law. To date the Land Restitution Unit (LRU) has resolved 2.6 percent of the 72,623 registered land claims. Meanwhile, land claimants have become the latest group targeted by illegal armed groups or large landowners, who use violence to discourage claims. Since 2008 the Ombudsman's Office and human rights NGOs agree that more than 70 land claimants have been murdered, while Human Rights Watch reports that in the past year and a half more than 500 have been threatened. To fill a major gap in data and contextual information on land restitution HRP III supported *Fundación Ideas para la Paz's* online media project, *Verdad Abierta*, to develop interactive maps and publish 32 articles using cutting-edge technology, user-friendly multimedia tools, and insightful investigative journalism, providing a comprehensive panorama on land dispossession across the northern Cauca and Antioquia's Bajo Cauca regions.

LONG DISPUTED LAND CLAIMS FIND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT AND RESOLUTION

Through a coordinated initiative with the Victims' Unit and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, HRP III convened the First Regional Land and Forest Reserve Forum in the Bajo Cauca region of Antioquia in May 2014. As an area of the country deeply impacted by conflict, forced displacement, land dispossession, and re-colonization of lands, communities have struggled to find the needed support to address complex land disputes, titling, and restitution issues. With approximately 100 participants, including public officials, *campesinos*, victims, and representative from the Ministry of Environment and INCODER, a long overdue inter-institutional coordination effort was ignited. As a result of continued inter-institutional attention, 900 hectares of the Luis Cano *vereda* of El Bagre, where land restitution claim process had once been deadlocked, was returned to claimants.

Within the first three months some articles, such as one on the role of criminal bands in land dispossession in Bajo Cauca, had been viewed more than 10,000 times.

To address the enormous challenge of navigating the volume of complex, legal information and land rights data necessary to document and resolve land restitution cases, HRP III grantee CODHES designed a valuable information tool benefitting administrators, land judges, and LRU officials. Through a dynamic information platform (<https://codhes.crowdmap.com>), CODHES systematized information on forced displacement and analyzed 360 land restitution legal sentences to provide contextual support for land restitution case preparation and processing. With this tool, land judges and LRU officials have access to a more robust portrait of the various dynamics, actors, and criminal behaviors impacting land restitution issues and cases, enabling them to build solid cases that lead to more timely and appropriate decisions.

Advancing land restitution for ethnic collective territories. Ethnic

communities have in recent years been increasingly subjected to brutal violence from the conflict, given the suitability of their land for illicit crop cultivation and exploitation of natural resources. To combat this trend, HRP III teamed up with leading ethnic organizations such as *Procesos de Comunidades Negras* (PCN) and *Organización Nacional Indígena del Cauca* (ONIC) to provide needed technical support for collecting and presenting the required documentation for collective land restitution claims to the LRU in areas where land restitution has posed heightened risk to ethnic communities and information is hard to obtain. Through this support, PCN documented cases of complex, disputed ethnic territories that affect thousands of people belonging to three *consejos comunitarios*: Unión del Río Rosario-Tumaco, Alto Mira and Frontera –Tumaco, and La Toma-Cauca. The La Toma case has since been registered with a land restitution judge in Cauca. With HRP III support, ONIC has worked with indigenous authorities to prioritize a total of 90 land restitution cases, of which 26 have been presented to the LRU.



Ombudsman's Office carrying out risk assessment in Villarrica, Tolima

SNAPSHOT Rapid Response Fund: A Sustainable Solution to Mitigating Risk

When any given regional Ombudsman's Office receives word of an imminent threat or reports of activities related to human rights violations in a particular area, there is an immediate response by trained Early Warning System (EWS) analysts. As the point person who conducts fact-finding missions, interviews victims or at-risk communities, and follows up on early warnings, the role of the EWS analyst is pivotal for the protection of individuals and communities.

Although this is how it should function, the reality for EWS analysts is often starkly different due to a lack of necessary tools and resources. Encumbering out-of-pocket expenses to cover transportation, lodging, and per diem to access remote, hard-to-reach areas of the country has resulted in the delay or absence of prevention, protection, and/or response mechanisms and follow-up on issued warnings.

USAID's HRP III saw an opportunity to assist the Ombudsman's Office to improve access to needed funds and resources for EWS analysts. In the short term, HRP III provided needed logistical and communications support, including cell phones with GPS capacity, and supported 33 trips to carry out investigations and follow-up. Meanwhile, a dedicated HRP III consultant tasked with evaluating organizational capacity challenges identified a fund access blockage. Following HRP III recommendations, a new \$8,000 Rapid Response Fund was organized and approved by the Ombudsman's Office. While this seems a modest internal reform, the ramifications of this newly established petty cash mechanism are profound in providing timely, appropriate, and efficient services and prevention measures.

According to Felipe Vargas from the Ombudsman's Secretary General's Office, "The new Rapid Response Fund has been successful in making costly trips to areas needing urgent attention possible by the EWS analysts. It should not be understated that in most of these cases and for a very long time before, staff members were supported by international cooperation...however, now the Ombudsman's Office has devised an effective response to the challenge." Operating with a new sustainable solution, remote areas in dire need are now that much more accessible to EWS analysts' reach and assistance.



Tanya, a transgender woman and member of HRP III grantee *Caribe Afirmativo*, preparing for an upcoming meeting of Bolívar's departmental LGBTI roundtable where cases of human rights violations against LGBTI population are brought forward to pressure institutional response.

CHAPTER 4

PROMOTING AND STRENGTHENING GENDER RIGHTS

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Women and the LGBTI community remain among the most vulnerable populations in Colombia due to social and cultural norms that generate high levels of social prejudices, victimization, and discrimination. The ongoing conflict has exacerbated the situation. With women representing half of Colombia's more than 6 million internally displaced persons, and almost half of displaced women victims of GBV, this phenomenon is a particular concern. Sexual violence is also used as an instrument of war to intimidate women and communities. Meanwhile, violence against the LGBTI community persists. In 2014, 81 people belonging to the LGBTI community were murdered, and 440 related cases of violence were reported

from 2013-2014. Advocacy and awareness campaigns against GBV and sexual discrimination over the past decades have led Colombia's government to take steps towards recognizing and protecting these vulnerable populations, like passing progressive legislation such as Law 1257 of 2008, which promotes women's right to life free from violence.

APPROACH

Working in some of the most conflict-affected areas of Colombia where GBV rates are high and State presence is weak, HRP III worked to advocate for the rights of women and LGBTI. HRP III brought together civil society and government institutions at the regional level to empower women and engage institutions to develop and strengthen prevention and response mechanisms related



COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM III

Wilson Castañeda, director of HRP III grantee *Caribe Afirmativo*, leading a workshop on LGBTI rights. HRP III supported strategies with civil society and government institutions to promote LGBTI rights and prevent human rights abuses against this vulnerable population.

to GBV issues, including psychosocial assistance for families. The program promoted awareness on GBV in communities where such violence had previously been accepted as culturally acceptable. HRP III also worked with national institutions, encouraging them to integrate issues affecting women and LGBTI communities into policies and programs such as the HRP III-led assessment to improve gender mainstreaming for the Ombudsman's Office. At the regional level, HRP III identified the need to train public officials on issues affecting women and girls, and on related laws and policies already in place, if not applied often or consistently. Through support to leading LGBTI advocacy groups, HRP III contributed to historic policy reforms advancing equality and a culture of respect for LGBTI rights. HRP III's strategic partnerships

with prominent CSOs *Caribe Afirmativo* and Santa Maria Fundación focused on improving tolerance by public officials through LGBTI roundtables that fostered productive spaces for exchange. HRP III's bold approach and deep commitment to gender issues in Colombia resulted in bringing these largely invisible populations' plights to the forefront of Colombia's consciousness.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESULTS

Women

Supporting institutional response to assist GBV victims. Starting in 2013, HRP III supported the Ombudsman's Office *dupla*, or gender-focused lawyer and psychologist team, to provide critical support to 442 GBV victims in municipalities with some of Colombia's highest

GBV rates: Tumaco (Nariño), Quibdó (Chocó), and Popayán (Cauca). *Dupla* teams provide legal and psychosocial assistance in coordination with other institutions to avoid re-victimization while conveying messages of recognition, support, and hope. HRP III also supported the *duplas* as proactive agents to engage institutions in GBV prevention and advocate with the Attorney General's Office, mayors' offices, and the Legal Medicine Institute to provide coordinated and effective attention to GBV victims. For a majority of women, the *duplas* represent the first contact and support received from any institution, a significant step towards rebuilding trust in the State.

Low levels of knowledge by public officials of policies and legislation regarding women's rights is a key factor in poor implementation. HRP III supported local grantees to provide gender-specific training of public officials using a version of HRP III's Human Rights Diploma, tailored to gender issues. Covering key concepts, laws, and policies such as Law 1257, CONPES 3726, and Auto 092, HRP III trained 749 regional public officials and community leaders.

Breaking the silence shrouding GBV in indigenous communities. Rates of GBV are disproportionately high among ethnic minority populations. Alarmed by high levels of sexual and intra-familial abuse and violence against women and

children reported by Wayúu and municipal authorities in Uribia, La Guajira initiated an unprecedented inter-cultural collaboration. HRP III grantee *Asociacion de Autoridades Tradicionales de Territorios Étnicos Wayúu* took on this highly sensitive issue within the Wayúu culture to break through barriers of collective silence, shame, and denial which have contributed to the perpetuation of these violations. Following 20 workshops that engaged Wayúu leadership, students, teachers, women, social leaders, and Uribia's public officials, the first inter-institutional and inter-cultural protection *ruta* was officially introduced. Prior to this *ruta*, this highly sensitive issue within the Wayúu culture was fairly unspoken, much less truly understood as a violation. This process gained buy-in from indigenous and public leaders, facilitating the adoption of the *ruta* as an inter-cultural public policy.

Developing and strengthening women's support networks. Critical to increasing GBV victims' access to services, HRP III awarded grants to train and support women's networks as key allies to the local *duplas'* GBV prevention and response efforts. These actors became some of HRP III's most effective promoters of women's rights and GBV prevention in areas where GBV has reached crisis levels, such as Quibdó and Tumaco. In Quibdó, HRP III grantee *Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas* trained 30 agents of change, who reached 600 women and 13 men across



LOCAL PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

UNIVERSIDAD DEL TOLIMA

The critical advocacy skills for GBV prevention and victims' rights gained by 126 individuals (mostly rural-based women) through HRP III grantee *Universidad del Tolima* transformed the communities of Rioblanco and Chaparral (Tolima) where institutions constrained by the conflict have largely failed to address GBV issues. Putting these newly obtained advocacy skills into motion, these women leaders and community members engaged national institutions, civil society, and GBV victims to host the first Southern Tolima Regional Women's Conference. The event brought together institutions such as mayors' offices, social workers, ICBF, and Justice Houses and 320 members of women's networks and women's organizations from Rioblanco and Chaparral to strengthen GBV prevention strategies.

72 neighborhoods. The groups also conducted a baseline survey on the perception of the situation of violence against women in Quibdó, tracking the magnitude and dimensions of the GBV crisis. The impact of this initial grant was so transformative that a follow-on grant was provided to the *Red* to train 82 women and youth in the Condoto, Tadó and Atrato (Chocó) municipalities. Similarly in Tumaco, HRP III grantee ASOLIPNAR trained and supported 144 women victims, broadening their knowledge in GBV prevention and response mechanisms, advocacy, political participation, and self-protection strategies.

Creating government tools to strengthen implementation of GBV prevention and response policy at the regional level. In 2012, Colombia passed the first National Gender Equality Policy. To support the government of Colombia's regional implementation efforts, HRP III teamed with the Office of the Presidential Advisor for Women's Equality to develop Colombia's *National Gender Equality Policy Regionalization Manual*, equipping regional officials with a clear, concise guide on integrating gender into their duties and responsibilities.

Due to HRP III support and grantee *Sisma Mujer's* efforts creating draft policies, the Guarantees Program for Women Human Rights Defenders in Colombia was created by the Ministry of Interior. This momentous policy responds to a

2013 Constitutional Court order that mandated the government to design and implement a program to address the heightened risks faced by women human rights defenders.

LGBTI community

Major advances were made in the past 3.5 years in the struggle for recognition, equality, and protection of LGBTI rights in Colombia. In large part, this is credited to HRP III grantees who boldly championed LGBTI policy and advocacy initiatives aimed at changing social attitudes and behaviors towards LGBTI community in Colombia.

Reducing the high impunity levels related to LGBTI violation cases was a major priority of HRP III's LGBTI strategy. In line with the AGO's implementation of its LGBTI public policy implementation, HRP III *Caribe Afirmativo* trained 19 regional prosecutors and judicial police from the eight departments of the Caribbean region on issues such as LGBTI rights violations related to prejudice, sexual diversity and medical forensics, identification of weaknesses in LGBTI-related criminal investigations, prioritization as a strategic tool for prosecutors, and trends in LGBTI violations in the Caribbean Coast. To improve police conduct with LGBTI community members, HRP III and *Caribe Afirmativo* also developed a virtual LGBTI rights training program and creative communication pieces

HIGHLIGHT

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS



COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM III

Providing essential communications skills, tools, and techniques to CSOs and human rights committees has been pivotal in promoting and disseminating human rights messaging throughout Colombia. Effectively conveying information on often highly sensitive issues in active conflict zones requires special strategies taking into account community-specific dynamics, risk levels, and human rights knowledge. Since the project's launch, HRP III worked with 38 key local partners in eight priority regions to eliminate barriers of silence and stigmatization on human rights issues, especially for women and children's rights, GBV, ethnic community violations, land restitution, and other issues.

For the first time in more isolated and conflict-afflicted regions, such as Antioquia's Bajo Cauca region, La Guajira, Tumaco, and Popayán, conversations on human rights issues are occurring openly, through communications and media supported by HRP III. As a result of HRP III-led training workshops to local journalists and social organizations, 35 radio spots and programs dedicated to promoting human rights are broadcasted to listeners in these areas. HRP III supported "Vive tus Derechos" in Cauca and "La Guajira al Derecho" in Uribe, two radio program models arising out of local institutional collaboration and support.

HRP III employed the powerful medium of the documentary to produce three eye-opening films that shed light on some of the foremost human rights issues impacting Colombia: GBV prevention and women's rights, indigenous rights, and LGBTI rights. Through community-based participatory processes, HRP III documentary projects captured a broad audience to provide a broader, fact-based understanding of human rights issues.

INSPIRING FUTURE INDIGENOUS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THROUGH HISTORIC MEMORY

The overwhelming reception of the inspiring biopic documentary film, "Quintín Lame, Raíz de Pueblos" produced through a HRP III grant to the *Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima (CRIT)* exemplifies the impact this powerful communications tool can have. Targeting indigenous community audiences and histories rooted in Tolima and Cauca, the film's premieres in Bogotá and in Tolima provoked deep collective reflection by indigenous community members on this paramount indigenous human rights figure. Capturing the deep-seated but often neglected truths of an entire community's plight, this film has helped validate the struggle of indigenous communities for recognition of their cultural and human rights and inspire future human rights leaders.



Afro-Colombian women rally at the first Autonomous National Afro-Colombian Congress with more than 1,000 community leaders and government of Colombia high-level officials participating in Quibdó. A new Afro-Colombian working committee was created to ensure follow-through on agreements made at the Congress as well as developments on the prior consultation process.

REDUCING LGBTI VULNERABILITY IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED REGIONS

HRP III support fostered dialogue and problem-solving capacities on issues of discrimination and violence against LGBTI populations across the departments of La Guajira, Bolívar, Barranquilla, Quibdó, Cauca, La Guajira, Cali, and Nariño, including through seven municipal and departmental roundtables and support to civil society-based LGBTI collectives. Through these spaces, HRP III trained 1,048 public officials and roundtable members on roles, responsibilities, and pertinent laws and policies, and supported community-wide events such as LGBTI-focused film festivals, community marches, international LGBTI recognition days, and LGBTI rights forums throughout Colombia.

targeting police officers. In total, more than 360 police officers participated in training sessions exclusively dedicated to LGBTI rights throughout Colombia.

The landmark 2015 Constitutional Court decision granting adoption rights to same-sex couples was a watershed victory for LGBTI families. HRP III grantee *Colombia Diversa* was behind this major win. Through dialogues engaging key government institutions and civil society as well as strengthening communications strategies to disseminate facts and analysis of the LGBTI human rights situation, HRP III's support proved instrumental in advancing equality and respect for this vulnerable population.

The transgender community is among the most heavily misunderstood and violently targeted LGBTI sectors. HRP III grantee *Santamaria Fundación* helped to break down stereotypes and open paths for greater acceptance and participation, including supporting inter-institutional roundtables on LGBTI rights in Cali, Popayán, and Pasto and providing psychosocial and legal support to gay and trans women incarcerated at Cali's Villahermosa. *Santamaria Fundación's* advocacy has advanced policy and legal precedence outlawing police brutality against transgender populations, including cases presented before the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights and the International Coalition against Torture.



Colombia Diversa's annual report cover image of mural painting by LGBTI community in Bogotá.

SNAPSHOT Making Inroads in the LGBTI Rights Struggle

On June 26, 2014 more than 200 people in a full auditorium at the *Universidad de Los Andes* listened as USAID's HRP III grantee and Colombia's leading LGBTI advocacy group, *Colombia Diversa*, presented its annual report, "*Cuando El Prejuicio Mata*," on the LGBTI human rights situation in Colombia. While *Colombia Diversa's* investigator painted an alarmingly worrisome landscape impacting the LGBTI community, the event's popularity spoke volumes to the lengths reached by HRP III-supported initiatives fostering a culture of respect for all human rights, including one of Colombia's most marginalized populations.

With HRP III support, LGBTI issues in Colombia have come to the forefront of social and political discourse due to the valiant efforts of LGBTI community leaders who face enormous risks on a daily basis. Social consciousness of LGBTI rights in Colombia has begun to effect change in Colombia's most impacted regions and sectors. HRP III supported strategic advocacy initiatives at the local, regional, national, and even international levels led by civil society towards the creation of environments and societies respectful and embracing of sexual and gender diversity.

Therefore, *Colombia Diversa's* June 26 event symbolized more than just a report release. Flanked by supportive high-level government officials and community leaders, it marked a significant step forward in challenging perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes that have been the source of pain and violence for so many Colombian citizens. USAID mission director Peter Natiello said, "Protecting our brothers and sisters of the LGBTI community is one of today's major challenges confronting fellow human beings." HRP III's unwavering commitment to its LGBTI allies continues to pave new inroads of equality and respect for all human rights in Colombia.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Future human rights programs require enhanced financial, technical, and programmatic flexibility. Factors such as the ever-changing dynamic of the conflict in target areas and the election or appointments of new mayors, governors, *personeros*, and other key partners make it imperative that USAID's human rights programs maintain flexibility to include or exclude municipalities, address dire situations in certain municipalities, and/or tailor goals in certain target municipalities that may not be relevant to all target areas. In the case of HRP III, 89 of the original 94 contract deliverables were completed. Unaccomplished deliverables were removed from the contract because the intent of these deliverables was related to circumstances outside the program's control, such as shifts in institutional priorities.
2. USAID should provide immediate support to newly elected authorities. Timing is critical to ensure the inclusion of human rights in development plans and proper budget allocation. This is even more pressing in a post-conflict scenario where human rights and peace programming will be essential in the implementation of the peace agreements.
3. In every annual consultation with civil society, one of the main concerns raised is the need to address high levels of impunity for human rights violation cases. USAID should provide continued support to the Attorney General's Office's efforts to improve efficiency of case management and investigations.
4. USAID's human rights program should continue to develop local capacities to identify and address new risk scenarios, particularly adapting risk assessment and prevention methodologies for a post-conflict setting, where it is foreseeable that the risk of human rights violations may increase.
5. While HRP III constantly monitored the evolution of the peace process in Havana and adapted its programming to a potential peace agreement, USAID must be ready to act if the negotiations should fail, as it is anticipated that human rights violations will increase dramatically in HRP III target areas.
6. The shift of HRP III away from the national level towards regions was timely and a sound programmatic decision. USAID should continue to concentrate its priorities in this direction especially in the wake of peace accords whereby municipal and departmental support will be in high demand to respond to new threats and increased risk.
7. The HRP III regional teams were essential to provide technical assistance to civil society and institutional entities, and they should be an integral part of future USAID human rights programs. The two-person team and regional office arrangement served the purpose of having highly qualified and mobile staff with the capacity to cover a large number of municipalities.
8. HRP III's design of organizational strengthening training was well-received by CSOs. USAID should require that a future human rights program continue to provide this service and further organizations' capacities, particularly in four areas: finance and administration, monitoring and evaluation, communications, and new funding development or proposal writing.
9. Despite decentralization policies, there continues to be a disconnect between the national and regional levels, making the local implementation of policies and methodologies very burdensome as they often follow a one-size-fits-all design. The numerous challenges related to the implementation of Laws 1448 and 1257 are recent examples. USAID should insist on continuous efforts to bring national authorities to the regions so as to adapt policies and methodologies to local realities.
10. HRP III often includes support for the development of national policies and programs that require cumbersome processes of relationship building, consultation, and consensus with government and civil society actors. A longer project timeframe is required to produce significant results at the macro level and follow through with implementation support at the regional level. Therefore, USAID should utilize five-year program phases.

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