



FACT SHEET

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexual (LGBTI) Programs

Discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity are serious problems throughout Colombia. Colombia Diversa, a leading LGBTI organization, estimates that in 2010-2011, 51 of 271 total murders were determined to be based on anti-LGBTI population motives. In Cali, in the department of Valle de Cauca, violence against transsexual women has been particularly severe. In response, USAID has provided support to LGBTI organizations to create training programs on risk awareness, self-protection, and advocacy, and has supported training for police and other public servants on respecting and protecting LGBTI rights.

Other priorities for the LGBTI community include fighting discrimination and stigmatization and promoting the rights to same-sex marriage, partnership benefits and adoption. With support from USAID, Colombia Diversa was instrumental in litigation that led the Colombian Constitutional Court to extend certain property, inheritance, and other benefits to same-sex couples in 2007, and recognize *de facto* civil unions in 2009. In January 2011, a group of NGOs, including Colombia Diversa, filed a petition for a special writ (*tutela*) with the Constitutional Court challenging the prohibition against same-sex marriage on constitutional grounds. The Court's ruling recognized same-sex unions as families under the constitution, but allowed the Colombian Congress two years to pass legislation relating to same-sex marriage. In September 2011, the Colombian Congress passed a new law penalizing discrimination based on race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. USAID played a critical role in passage of this landmark legislation.

Colombian National Police

In 2009, the USAID Human Rights Program started providing support to promote dialogue and improve relations between the police and NGOs advocating for LGBTI rights in the country. As a result, the Colombian National Police issued Directive No. 006 of 2010 on non-discrimination, including the recognition of sexual diversity and gender identity. USAID has also promoted dialogue between the police forces and the LGBTI population in eight cities, contributing to the prevention of human rights violations committed by the police. In 2010, USAID and the Swedish Embassy sponsored an international seminar on successful experiences in improving police-LGBTI relations that included participation by police officials from Sweden, Great Britain, and Colombia.

Colombia Diversa

Colombia Diversa is one of the leading Colombian NGOs dedicated to the defense and promotion of LGBTI rights. Since 2007, the USAID Human Rights Program has provided technical assistance and grant funds to Colombia Diversa to build its advocacy capacity, support litigation to recognize and enforce rights, and monitor violence against the LGBTI community. As mentioned above, Colombia Diversa has been instrumental in litigation that led the Constitutional Court to extend partnership benefits to same-sex couples and recognize *de facto* civil unions.

USAID also supported Colombia Diversa's 2010 bi-annual report on LGBTI rights in Colombia, which was disseminated at a seminar sponsored by the Embassy that included speeches by the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission and the Colombian Vice-President. The report includes statistics on violations of LGBTI rights between 2008 and 2009, and informs on the six areas of major concern for the organization: police abuse; bias-motivated violence; rights of same-sex couples; jail conditions; forced displacement and armed conflict; and mass media treatment of

diversity. On May 31, 2012, Mark Lopes, LAC/DAA, launched a \$295,000 program with Colombia Diversa to support efforts to advocate for LGBTI rights and to improve the rates of prosecution of hate crimes and prejudice against the LGBTI community.

Santamaria Fundación

Santamaria Fundación is a Colombian NGO based in Cali dedicated to the defense and promotion of the rights of transsexual women. Since 2009, the USAID Human Rights Program has supported *Santamaria* to develop a human rights observatory that has documented 133 cases of human rights violations of transsexual women in Cali, primarily murder and physical violence, frequently involving local police. *Santamaria* also designed and distributed information on self-protection measures for transsexual women, and implemented a program to provide legal assistance and representation to transsexual women in Cali whose rights have been violated. In 2011, the USAID Access to Justice Program provided a grant to *Santamaria* to replicate its programs for the transsexual community in Buenaventura, Colombia's largest Pacific port, which is also located in the department of Valle de Cauca. Under the third phase of the Human Rights Program, Colombia Diversa will be working with *Santamaria Fundación* to improve its documentation of LGBTI human rights violation cases.

Fundación Radio Diversia

In 2010, the USAID Human Rights Program provided grant funds to the *Fundación Radio Diversia* to broadcast a series of radio productions to disseminate Constitutional Court decisions related to the rights of same-sex couples, promote these rights, and monitor compliance by Colombian authorities.