

Project Updates Colombia Human Rights Program (HRP)

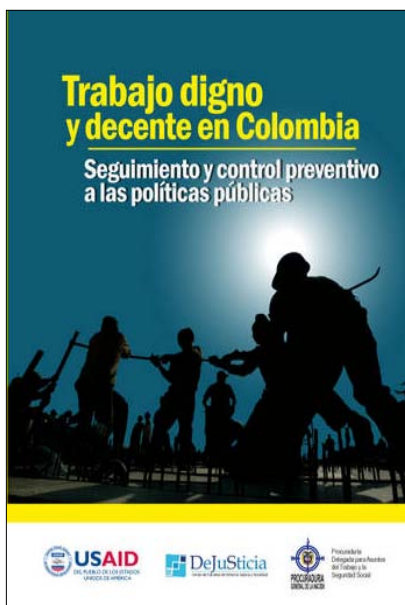
November/December 2011

HRP Holds IX Human Rights Moot Court University Competition

The annual Human Rights Moot Court University Competition aims to promote an understanding of human rights and International Humanitarian Law while helping law school students polish their research and advocacy skills. After preliminary hearings in September, this year's final hearing took place in November 2011 at the Nueva Granada Military University in Bogota. A total of 73 universities from around the country registered to participate in the competition; 65 submitted written briefs and 24 two-person teams continued on to the oral phase. The 24 teams argued a human rights case on the alleged violation of workers' rights to freedom of association involving 250 male and female nurses, members of a work cooperative. The winning team, the Javeriana University of Cali, will travel to Washington, D.C. to participate in the Moot Court Competition organized by American University in May 2012. The second-place winners, from the EAFIT University of Medellín, received a full scholarship to complete the human rights postgraduate course at the Nueva Granada Military University.



Judges hear oral arguments at the final hearing of the IX Human Rights Moot Court University Competition, held in Bogota, November 2011.



HRP Launches Report on Dignified Work

On November 29, 2011, with support from the Human Rights Program, the Inspector General's Office presented a study undertaken by Colombian think tank Dejusticia on the situation of dignified work in Colombia. The report concludes that the deficit of dignified and decent work in the country could be reduced through the design of a public policy underpinned by a human rights perspective, labor market diagnostics, and broad-based social dialogue. The report recommends the adoption of a national pact on dignified work, productive transformation, and social protection, which would prioritize: i) public debate on the generation of dignified work; ii) a labor bill establishing the universal nature of social protection for all workers; iii) removing obstacles to union freedoms; and iv) the fight against the pervasive violation of labor laws. The launch event was attended by the Vice President of Colombia, the Inspector General, the USAID Interim Mission Director, the Minister of Labor, and representatives of unions and business associations.

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HRP Donates Equipment to the Inspector General's Office

On October 25, 2011 the HRP delivered a donation of audiovisual and forensic investigation equipment, specialized software and hardware, and a mobile forensic unit to the Inspector General's Office (IG) for use at the national and regional level. This equipment will critically augment the ability of the IG's Special Investigation Unit to gather evidence in the field, make more expert analyses, and provide technical and scientific assistance to the disciplinary investigation of cases of human rights violation and breaches of International Humanitarian Law. Preliminary evaluations show that the initial donation of computer equipment has reduced the average time for disciplinary proceedings.



Donation of mobile forensic vehicle to Office of the Inspector General. Pictured here: Inspector General Alejandro Ordoñez (fourth from right); Don Chisholm, Deputy Director of the USAID Human Rights and Democracy Office (third from right); and Lucía García, MSD Colombia Chief of Party (fifth from left).