

Vance Center eNotes

PBDA Implementation in Colombia

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Following up on the establishment of Fundación Pro Bono Colombia (FPBC) and concomitant Roundtables held in Bogotá in May, the Vance Center continued to build the momentum to achieve implementation of the Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas (PBDA) in Colombia by sending staff to interface directly with the local legal community over a sustained period. For two months during the summer of 2009, the Vance Center worked on-site in Colombia to accomplish several missions. We met with representatives of seventeen Colombian law firms that are PBDA signatories to assist them in reaching their commitment to provide an average of 20 hours of pro bono work per attorney per year. Launched in January of 2008, the PBDA gives signatories until the end of 2010 to meet this commitment, and the Vance Center's presence at the half-way mark was intended to provide transitional assistance to ensure that pro bono practice in Colombia becomes fully operative.



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During meetings, pro bono coordinators and associates engaged in wide-ranging discussions about the status of their pro bono programs, their interests and concerns with respect to pro bono work and their ideas for how to continue to promote a pro bono culture within the Colombian legal community. "By working on the ground with Colombian lawyers and hearing their practical concerns, we were able to garner insights that will help us customize our programs to respond specifically to the needs of this country," observed Vance Center attorney Cristina Quintero, who added, "The firsthand experience we gained was invaluable."

In addition, the Vance Center worked to support the newly established FPBC in its efforts to expand the pro bono network in Bogotá. In dialogues with the FPBC's Board of Directors and Executive Committee, we advised on ways in which the FPBC could continue its work, by organizing Bogotá's legal profession and serving primarily as a clearinghouse for pro bono projects and cases. The Vance Center also expanded its reach beyond Bogotá by accompanying FPBC staff to Medellín, where the Universidad EAFIT hosted a presentation to introduce the FPBC attorneys and law students in Medellín.

Whenever possible, the Vance Center distributed hardcopies and electronic versions of our recently published manual *[Pro Bono Implementation Guide for Law Firms](#)*, which was enthusiastically greeted by the firms. The Guide is available at our website, at www.vancecenter.org. We also solicited submissions for our ongoing compilation of pro bono projects, *[Spotlight on Pro Bono in Latin America](#)*, and worked on the survey the Vance Center is conducting whose results will be synthesized and analyzed in the upcoming *[Interim Report on Pro Bono Activities at Latin American Firms](#)*. Our on-site work in Colombia enabled us to produce a detailed report on the pro bono discourse in Colombia specifying unique characteristics of the local legal environment that impact pro bono including decades of conflict and civil war; disincentives to unpaid work built into firms' salary structures; lack of expertise in legal areas affecting indigent individuals; social divides; and safety issues that require special sensitivity. In response to similar questions raised by local attorneys regarding the implementation of pro bono, the Vance Center will soon produce a document containing "Frequently Asked Questions" and their answers.

PBDA Roundtables in Peru

During the week of November 16-20, 2009, the Vance Center sent a delegation to Lima, Peru to meet with representatives from law firms, non-governmental organizations, law schools and journals to continue the dialogue about the best strategies for supporting the ongoing institutionalization of a pro bono culture and network in Peru. Entitled *Cultivating Pro Bono Networks in Peru: A Week of Dialogue*, this program occurred just a few weeks shy of the two-year anniversary of the launch of the PBDA.



The distinguished international delegation assembled by the Vance Center included the following: Elise Colomer, Director of Latin American Programs, Vance Center (New York); Todd Crider, Founding Chair & Vice Chair, Vance Center Committee and Partner, Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett (New York); Jaime El Koury, Partner, Cleary, Gottlieb (New York); Pablo Guerrero, Managing Partner, Barros & Errázuriz Abogados and Director, Fundación Pro Bono (Chile); Kristen Hutchens, Attorney, Vance Center; Judy London, Attorney, Public Counsel (Los Angeles); Marcia Maack, Assistant Director of Pro Bono Activities, Mayer, Brown (DC); Guillermo Morales, Partner, Morales & Besa Abogados (Chile); Paula Samper, Partner, Gómez-Pinzón Zuleta (Colombia); Antonia Stolper, Chair, Vance Center Committee and Partner, Shearman & Sterling (New York); and Jonathan Taylor, Attorney, Rainforest Foundation.

As part of the week-long event there was an international seminar on the Peruvian Code of Professional Conduct and Pro Bono at which our delegates served as panelists. Sponsored by the Catholic University of Peru, The World Justice Project, Ciudadanos al Día of Lima (CAD) and the Vance Center,

this conference involved discussions on subjects related to professional responsibility and pro bono practice. Topics covered included: conflicts of interest; lawyer conduct in the face of client fraud; confidentiality; the fixing and recovery of fees; maintaining standards of lawyer competence; permissible use of the media in the context of litigation; enforcement of professional discipline; protection of attorney work product; and implementation of the PBDA; In addition, the Vance Center participated in the launch of CAD's pro bono clearinghouse, the first-ever in Peru.

While in Lima the delegation also visited 20 Peruvian firms to promote the PBDA. "Overall the trip had a tremendous impact in terms of presence," observed Elise Colomer, Vance Center Director for Latin America Programs. Follow up activities will include establishing a regional network to select focal points for pro bono work and pairing of New York firms with Peruvian firms in connection with joint projects. Todd Crider stated that the conference was an "excellent meeting that serves as a textbook case exemplifying what we can accomplish with our model." To Antonia Stolper, the "best part is the larger context in which Peruvian pro bono implementation is taking place, enabling lawyers to fight corruption, further development, build institutions and become involved in making the country a better place."



Nature Conservancy Projects

The Vance Center has been working with the Nature Conservancy in Latin America to locate pro bono lawyers to support their conservation projects in the area of carbon credits. Thus far, we have paired them with lawyers in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela that have carried out legal research and analysis. The Vance Center also helped the Nature Conservancy identify pro bono lawyers to assist the Conservancy and the Government of Namibia in setting up a new conservation area there.



Pictured are Elise Colomer, Director of the Vance Center's Latin American Program, Laurel Mayer, Deputy General Counsel of the Nature Conservancy, and Jonathan Ritter, Senior Attorney of the Nature Conservancy.

New Staff Additions

During 2009 and 2010, the Vance Center will be able to increase the impact of its work through the efforts of three lawyers who are working with us through law firm secondment programs. Kristen Hutchens, an incoming associate at Shearman & Sterling, worked with Elise Colomer on the organization and execution of the roundtables in Peru and the PBDA survey. Cristina Quintero, a

Public Interest Fellow from Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, is spending one year focusing on PBDA implementation in Latin America, including working on site in Colombia and Mexico. In 2010, Wendy Fu from Weil, Gotshal & Manges will concentrate on creating opportunities for New York lawyers to support human rights and public interest work in Africa and Latin America.

Communications at the Vance Center

Now it is easier than ever to follow the activities of the Vance Center. Please visit our new online network for global justice advocates at <http://www.VanceNet.org>, a site that includes a blog, directory, and discussion forums. Additionally, we urge you to visit our revised and updated website at <http://www.VanceCenter.org> to obtain an overview of the Vance Center's organization and projects, and to learn how to support our mission. Finally, we invite you to follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/VanceCenter> for current notices.

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at vance@nycbar.org or call 212-382-6795