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**COLOMBIA**

# CASE STUDY

## Empowering Local Leaders Using Participatory Facilitation Techniques

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Photo: USAID/LRDP

Group “Brainstorming” is a technique development practitioners can use to build inclusive spaces for dialogue.



Photo: USAID/LRDP

Following an APM workshop with LRU and INCODER officials in April 2014, a participant shared, “We have never been in such an efficient space where we could speak to one another.”

### Telling Our Story

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The USAID Land and Rural Development Program (LRDP) provides technical support to the Government of Colombia (GOC) to implement its land and rural development agenda. One of LRDP's focus areas is Montes de María (MdM), an area in northern Colombia with approximately half a million inhabitants. Between 1996 and 2003, MdM was the principal zone of confrontation between paramilitaries and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC in Spanish) in the Colombian Caribbean region. MdM was infamous for being the site where armed actors began to use massacres and forced displacement to break the social tie between the FARC and rural communities. Many rural areas were abandoned as a result of the massive displacement that followed in the wake of violence. However, after years of bloodshed and fear, citizens are beginning to return home and rebuild their lives. Currently, 68 percent of MdM's population does not enjoy adequate public goods and poverty is widespread. Local fiscal and administrative capacity are in short supply and the GOC has a lot of work ahead

Because broad-based, inclusive rural development is based on partnership and participation, LRDP's staff has been trained in Advanced Participation Methods (APM). APM provides an effective way to focus people on determining what course a group should take to achieve a desired result, address potential roadblocks, and conceptualize solutions.

Using the toolbox of APM skills, staff members from the MdM LRDP regional office are bringing local GOC counterparts together to gather information about institutional bottlenecks and establish spaces where regional actors can envision joint solutions. LRDP had expected that interagency coordination and dialogue would be stronger at the local level and instead found it to be the opposite. Typically, when a local entity employee encounters an obstacle in obtaining critical information or an agreement from another institution, rather than work toward a solution, he or she simply stops action. The LRDP APM-guided workshops represented the first time many local entity employees from different local organizations sat down together to discuss issues, despite the physical closeness of living in a small rural communities

To date, the team has held five APM-guided workshops, including:

- An interagency working group with public officials to identify ways to resolve a regional barrier limiting the effective implementation of INCODER's Accord 266 under Law 1448 of 2011 (Victims and Land Restitution Law)
- Four focus groups with civil society members, public officials and land experts as part of the construction of the LRDP MdM regional office's stakeholder map

LRDP has empowered public officials working with GOC partners to become change agents who are better equipped to resolve institutional impasses and enhance service delivery capacity to the benefit of the rural poor.