Empowering Youth to Advance Human Rights in a Conflict-Prone World
Inaugural Human Rights Delegation in Colombia

AIM
To examine Colombia’s human rights situation through intensive and experiential learning. Our delegation brought together a range of actors—from government officials in the capital, to academic indigenous leaders, to rural farmers who had been displaced during the internal conflict—to present a diverse array of perspectives on human rights in Colombia.

THEME
Embracing the contrasts. From the first day of our delegation we explained that Colombia is a country of contradictions: While Colombia has suffered more than 50 years of brutal internal conflict, it has also been named the happiest country on earth two years in a row. Rather than endeavoring to reconcile these seemingly incongruent facts, we exposed delegates to a panorama of manifold realities in Colombia.

ONGOING QUESTIONS
• How have past human rights violations been addressed in Colombia?
• What human rights issues are facing Colombia today?
• To what extent can a peace agreement between the government and the FARC improve human rights?
SUN
March 6
9.30 am  Colombian professors provide a Historical Overview
2.00 pm  Exploring Bogotá- La Candelaria Street Art Tour
5.00 pm  Orientation, Introductions, & Discussion

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Our first day of the delegation focused on laying the historical groundwork for understanding Colombia’s conflict and the impact of the international human rights movement on national initiatives.

Our five delegates:
Silvia, Catalina, Crystal, Paola, and Nicole

Saskia  
Academic Director

Alli  
Program Director

“It sincerely broadened my understanding of human rights outside of the European context, gave me a much needed crash course in International law with respect to human rights and also taught me a lot of Colombian history.”
- Feedback from a delegate

This program provided me with an immersive educational experience that allowed me to learn about human rights in various social contexts. Prior to the delegation I had a vague understanding of human rights, however, the delegation provided me with the opportunity to learn, see, and experience what human rights are and should be.
- Feedback from a delegate
MON March 7

10.30 am  Presidential Tour of Casa de Nariño

2.00 pm  Introduction to Colombian Human Rights Policy at the Consejería Presidencial de Derechos Humanos

4.30 pm  Indigenous Perspectives

PERSPECTIVES ON THE PEACE PROCESS IN COLOMBIA

Monday’s site visits exposed delegates to a range of viewpoints on human rights and the current peace talks in Colombia. In the morning we toured Casa de Nariño (the Presidential House) and spoke with various representatives from the Presidential Office for Human Rights. In the afternoon, we compared this information with a presentation from a diverse group of indigenous students.

“As a Colombian delegate this program taught me that many institutions in Colombia are creating and implementing programs to promote human rights. This made me have a different opinion about the Colombian government, because now I know all the hard work that they are doing to contribute to the country.” - Feedback from a delegate
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00 am</td>
<td>Examining issues in Education at Fundación Escuela Nueva</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.00 pm</td>
<td>Colombia Joven</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.30 pm</td>
<td>Depart to Cartagena</td>
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**EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF YOUTH**

Tuesday focused on peace education and youth movements to promote and protect human rights. We visited Fundación Escuela Nueva, a Colombian NGO that has received global recognition for its pedagogical models to improve the life chances of underserved populations. We also spoke with the director of Colombia Joven about engaging youth in peacebuilding.

“I always had a hunch that I wanted to work with kids but now the importance of education and policies has become more present. I really want to start looking at how I can impact education from a governmental position.”

- Feedback from a delegate
WEDS  
March 9  
Morning  
1.30 pm  
Exploring the Walled City 

Human Rights in Education  
I.E. Bertha Gedeón de Baladí

I was really touched by all the students and how well they engaged with all of us. Students give you hope for the future and it was like the light at the end of a tunnel to feel their energy.  
- Feedback from a delegate

A PEACE CURRICULUM FOR SCHOOLS

Global Youth Connect had the opportunity to visit I.E. Bertha Gedeón de Baladí, an urban public school in Cartagena, to attend a special opening ceremony for the Cátedra de la Paz, a nationwide program to bring peace dialogue to classrooms.

MEDIA ATTENTION

GYC’s visit to I.E. Bertha Gedeón de Baladí was aired on Canal Cartagena. Meanwhile our two Colombian delegates were featured in an article published in El Universal.
VIOLENCE, FORCED DISPLACEMENT, AND WOMENS’ RIGHTS

During this part of the delegation we considered the difficult realities facing Colombians in situations of extreme poverty that have suffered from the conflict. We visited Fundación Juan Felipe, a non-profit organization dedicated towards improving the lives of children and teenage mothers. Our two Colombian delegates also presented on regional experiences of violence to help contextualize our site visits and personally connect participants to experiences on the delegation.

“I think this delegation has helped me with my knowledge of human rights, a topic that I love, because I want to do a Masters in Human Rights and International Law. Also the connections and friendships are so important to continue working towards protecting human rights.”
- Feedback from a delegate
**FRI March 11**
5.00 am Site Visit to Montes de María
Unidad de Restitución de Tierras and Caracolí pueblo
With the Observatory for Forced Displacement

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**VIOLENCE, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE & RESILIENCE IN MONTES DE MARÍA**

Our delegation visited an area of Colombia gravely impacted by the ongoing conflict. Los Montes de María was a site of horrific massacres in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but in recent years has been transforming into a key region for peacebuilding movements and post-conflict reconstruction.

“It was beautiful to interact with community members and hear their stories and memories. It was a day that brought lots of tears. Tears of sadness for all the things they went through but also tears of happiness as we see how genuinely happy and grateful they are now.”
- Feedback from a delegate

“I have to say the experience that has had a positive impact on my life and personality was the visit to the first family in Caracolí. Their story of life gave me hope and taught me to be happy with what we have. It also made me believe more in the peace process.”
- Feedback from a Delegate
POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING

On Saturday we learned about some of the challenges facing the end of conflict. We talked with the Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración about reintegrating former combatants into civilian life. We also spoke with the Observatory for Forced Displacement about the ways that applied research at the University of Cartagena can contribute to government and civil society efforts.

"While in Colombia I did not see people who identified as victims. Instead, I saw people who were strong, resilient, and passionate about changing Colombia’s future."
- Feedback from a delegate
POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

While Colombia works towards signing a peace agreement in Havana, the country still ranks as one of the top 10 most unequal countries in the world. Millions of Colombians have been displaced by the conflict, and many are now living in informal settlements. Our delegation witnessed this inequality and lack of basic needs first hand during a site visit with the organization TECHO. It was another intense experience, and we concluded the delegation with a final reflection on challenges and reasons to remain hopefully as we look towards the future of human rights Colombia.

“My experience as a delegate handed me the opportunity to explore Colombia’s unique sociopolitical context from a diverse range of angles. These valuable perspectives really enriched our study of the country’s history with respect to human rights, and offered a strong base for further inquiry. Ultimately I’m grateful for the chance the trip gave me to explore the beautiful country and educate myself about its modern situation.”
- Feedback from a delegate

“GYC provided me with the opportunity to see where my edges are as an individual by pushing me to go beyond my limits and engage with the world around me. My experience in Colombia changed my perception of the world and it is an experience that I will never forget.”
- Feedback from a delegate

“This Human Rights Delegation in Colombia has been a comprehensive learning experience. It has exposed me to the conflict, violence and beauty of Colombia and motivates me to continue fighting for human rights.”
- Feedback from a delegate