

¿EN QUÉ VA EL APOYO?

Huellas de Cooperación Bilateral



Bogotá D.C.

May 15, 2008

U.S. Embassy

OPTIONS FOR DISPLACED FAMILIES

Thanks to the support provided by the United States Government, thousands of internally displaced families throughout Colombia have been able to find new work options that have provided them with stability and a better future for their loved ones. One of these cases can be found in Cartagena.

Julio Contreras is currently general manager for *Alimentos Aliprocar*, a successful meat processing plant established in July 2003. Contreras grew up in Unguía, Chocó, but in 2001 his family was threatened by illegal armed groups fighting over drug-trafficking routes. Fearing for their lives, Contreras and his family abandoned their home. Leaving everything behind, he arrived in Cartagena with less than \$120,000 Colombian pesos in his pocket, just to be mugged by petty thieves.

Change was difficult for Julio and his family. They were used to a life in the country and lacked the necessary skills to find a job in the city. Everyday life was very difficult until Julio heard of the work carried out by *Actuar por Bolívar* (Acting for Bolivar), a non-government organization supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) that provides people displaced by violence with social and economic assistance.

Actuar offered them with business training and approved a microloan for them to open a co-op to manufacture sausages. The products were very successful and now the business is generating over 100 direct and indirect jobs.

Today, *Aliprocar* has received the required health licenses from *Invima* (National Institute of Food and Drug Vigilance) and has 11 associates responsible for production and administrative activities. The company has 25 merchandisers who generate 136 jobs. Forty-five per cent of them are women heads of household



"We received help and now we want to help other displaced families. At the Co-op everyone receives a basic wage, all employees receive health benefits and now we can own a house," says Julio.

who make an average of \$500,000 Colombian pesos a month. The company manufactures different type of sausages, known as *butifarras*, *chorizos*, *salchichones*, and hamburger patties already being sold locally and in some supermarket chains under the label *Unicarnes*. Some of its clients are: *Comfenalco*, *Los Chagualos* and *Megatiendas Express*.



"I used to be a peasant, but the illegal armed groups forced me out of my own land. And just 'in the nick of time'. Two months later my older brother Was murdered," Julio pointed out.

USAID's ASSISTANCE

In 2001, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) assigned resources to support a credit assistance fund to generate employment and create a business partnership in Cartagena. The project was developed in alliance with Fomipyme, *Acción Social*, the San Buenaventura University, SENA, CHF International, among others, and implemented by the NGO *Actuar por Bolívar*.

USAID donated \$280,000 dollars and, with the support of other organizations, managed to benefit 600 Cartagena families with machinery and equipment, furnishings and other goods. In addition to the micro credit fund that benefitted 587 families, 30 families were relocated to new homes and 200 people were trained in business techniques. Over 3,000 people have benefited and now enjoy a better lifestyle.

The average monthly sales for 2007 were \$28 million Colombian pesos. Sales in 2008 averaged \$31 million Colombian pesos. *Aliprocar* received the *Premio al Empresarismo de Población en Situación de Desplazamiento* (Businessship Award for the Internally Displaced Population) sponsored by the MicroBusiness Development Corporation.

If you're interested in publishing this story or obtaining more information on US support to Colombia, please call: (57-1) 383-2625 or write to: AndradelE@state.gov