

¿EN QUÉ VA EL APOYO?

Success stories of U.S. - Colombia cooperation programs



Bogotá D.C.

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U.S. Embassy

NEW JUSTICE HOUSE TO SERVE BUENAVENTURA



Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and David Delgado, advisor to USAID-Colombia Director, inaugurate the Justice House in Buenaventura.

Since June 4, 2005, the people of Buenaventura (Valle) have had access to a new conflict resolution mechanism. Thanks to the opening of the Justice House in commune 12 of Buenaventura, almost 30,000 people, mostly Afro-Colombians, enjoy official services that will help them find local solutions to some of the people's most common problems. Also,

the Justice House will help the community become better acquainted with their rights, and contribute to preventing crime and impunity.

This new Justice House, built with the support of the U.S. Government through its Agency for International Development (USAID), is part of the National Justice House Program supported by the U.S. Government to "strengthen and promote a more efficient, participative and responsible democracy in Colombia." At the Buenaventura Justice House, the following government institutions are present: the General Prosecutor's Office, the Ombudsman's Office, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF-its acronym in Spanish) and the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences. At a regional level, there are a Municipal Family Affairs Office, a Judge of the Peace, an Ethnic Office and a Legal Office.

The U.S. Government contributed \$243,000 to establish this Justice House and the Buenaventura's Mayor's Office contributed \$71,429. To date, U.S. Investment in this program totals \$6.8 million.

SITUATION IN BUENAVENTURA

The population that benefits most from services rendered by the new Justice House are people who live in extreme poverty, a condition that causes havoc in a family structure and, hence, leads to an increase in family violence and sexual and child abuse. This population also has health problems due to the lack of sanitation.

This region suffers from violence, vandalism, drug trade and delinquency. In addition, the situation is exacerbated due to the arrival in Buenaventura of a high number of internally displaced people who flee violence caused by illegal armed groups.

NATIONAL JUSTICE HOUSES PROGRAM

This interagency project was created in 1995 as a result of an agreement between USAID and the Colombian Ministry of Justice and Interior to



Site of the Justice House in Buenaventura.

increase access to justice and alternate mechanisms of conflict resolution. In addition to developing outreach projects on citizen rights and duties, Justice Houses support local governments in preventing and fighting delinquency. USAID's contribution to the Justice Houses Program also includes the construction and refurbishing of facilities and the supply of equipment to provide an efficient service to its users. National and regional governments are responsible for staffing and sustaining the Houses.

With the creation of this program in Buenaventura, Colombia now has 39 Justice Houses and it is expected that by 2005 there will be 42 nationwide. To date, over 3.1 million cases have been seen in the 38 Houses in Colombia. This figure does not include the Buenaventura Justice House.