

A DREAM COME TRUE FOR AN INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATION



Now the internally displaced population from different regions around Colombia can reach out to numerous centers that seek to tend to their needs. These are the *Comprehensive Family Care Centers* (or CAIF in Spanish). More than simple constructions, these Centers have become community educational projects. Their purpose is to provide comprehensive care to small children, teenagers, pregnant and nursing women, and displaced and highly vulnerable families. The Centers seek to care for these people by re-establishing their basic rights, particularly their rights to nutrition, health, education, organization, community participation and training. CAIFs are basically a comprehensive initiative.

This dream came true for thousands of low-income families thanks to the support provided by the U.S. Government, through its Agency for International Development's (USAID) Support to Internally Displaced and Vulnerable Groups Assistance Program. They provided the funding to help internally displaced populations and other vulnerable groups gain access to basic health, housing, education and income generation services. The program offers support to fight poverty and improve the quality of life of vulnerable groups like Afro-Colombians and Indigenous people.

USAID's program also promotes public policies on: displacement, institutional strengthening at national, departmental and local levels; and the participation of the private and public sectors in these initiatives to face the crisis of displacement.

To this date there are three CAIFs: one in Soacha (Cundinamarca), one in Floridablanca (Santander) and the most recent one built in Popayan (Cauca).

USAID CONTRIBUTIONS TO CAIF PROJECT

Soacha (Cundinamarca Dept.)

USAID Contribution: USD 324,779

Benefited: 364 people

Floridablanca (Santander Dept.)

USAID Contribution: USD 271,300

Benefited: 1,632 people

Popayan (Cauca Dept.)

USAID Contribution: USD 175,940

Benefited: 1,696 people

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



MERY GENOI SOLARTE: AN EXAMPLE OF PERSEVERANCE

Very low-income families live at Communes No. 7 and 9 in Popayan. Most of them consist of people who have found themselves displaced from their homes in rural areas because of the armed conflict. Using wood, cardboard, plastic and wicker, they managed to improvise small 9 m² (96 ft²) shelters where 5-6 people live together.

This is the story of Mery Genoi Solarte. A mother who, like many others in her situation, dreamt of a place where her children and family could have fun and for a moment forget their troubles, get a steady job, buy food, and send their children to school. Thanks to the support provided by the United States, Mery's dream and that of 630 other mothers came true.

On September 2007, the Comprehensive Family Care Center (CAIF in Spanish) in Popayan opened its doors to the public and along with them, the Center's comprehensive care program, to help everyone who lives in the nearby vicinity. Around 1,696 children, parents and young people have received free assistance in the last year.

Mery's dream has gone a step further. Because of her skills with children, in 2007 she was trained and hired to become the Center's community mother, in a joint venture between the Program and the Family Wellbeing Community Institute (ICBF in Spanish). She used to make a living as a laundress and her husband would sell fruits on the street. Together they made around \$8,000 pesos (around two dollars) a day, barely enough to sustain their four children.

Today, thanks to CAIF, Mery works part time at the Center earning \$280.000 pesos and has basic medical insurance.

“My home has changed a great deal. Not only do I work at the Center, but my children enjoy its facilities: they get schooling, meals and free health care. And I can spend more time with them”, says Mery.



“I am very grateful for this program” says Mery about the USAID project that changed her life.

SERVICES AVAILABLE AT CAIF

Children

- Psychosocial care
- Pre-School
- Early education phasing: the World of Colors, the World of Friends and the World of Ideas
- Personal hygiene, oral health
- Reading development and citizenship
- Extracurricular activities: dance, music classes and sports
- Food safety standards

Young people

- Psychosocial care
- Skills orientation (guidance counseling)
- Training in various skills prior to getting a job

Adults

- Family Counseling

Participating Organizations in CAIF Popayan

- USAID
- Pan American Development Foundation - PADF
- The Colombian Institute of Family Welfare - ICBF
- Colombian Association of Schools of Medicine
- Cauca Family Compensation Program -Comfacauca
- World Food Programme (WHO)
- Funda Colombia