

> Colombia

Humanitarian Relief and Long-Term Aid for Displaced Families

CHF International began working in Colombia in 2001 to address the immediate issues affecting displaced communities. Our programs quickly expanded to include long-term development and rehabilitation.

Political violence has deeply affected Colombia for more than 40 years, displacing an estimated 3.5 million people. With a staggering 23 million Colombians (55 percent of the population) already living below the poverty line, the last 15 years have seen an escalation of violence that has increased the need for both short-term and longer-term humanitarian and development programs for Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Our range of programs are supported by the **Government of Colombia** (*Accion Social*), the **U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration** (BPRM), and the **U.S. Agency for International Development** (USAID).

Immediate Relief in a Conflict Community:



Resettlement kits provide food, hygiene products, mattresses, sheets, and towels.

An estimated 13,000 families are forced to flee from their homes each month due to continuing violence and instability in many parts of Colombia. We are working with several local organizations to provide humanitarian kits, which include food, hygiene products, and basic household items, to those in need for an average of three months of displacement.

In addition, CHF International is providing temporary shelters, implementing a range of community efforts to improve sanitation and water supply sources, and working to strengthen the capacity of non-governmental organizations in Colombia to assist IDPs.

Long-Term Aid and Rehabilitation:

Recognizing that the needs of displaced people go beyond emergency assistance, we are also improving the long-term



CHF International's programs include psychosocial support and activities for thousands of children to help them deal with the trauma of conflict and displacement.

economic conditions of the displaced communities by:

- > supporting **microenterprises**;
- > providing **psychosocial support** to displaced families;
- > rebuilding **infrastructure** destroyed by the conflict;
- > conducting **vocational and employment training**;
- > administering **job placement** initiatives;
- > providing **permanent shelter** for long-term displacement;
- > promoting **conflict mitigation** and prevention; and
- > disbursing **microcredit** loans for home improvement and small businesses.

A Holistic Approach:

CHF International is also widely recognized in Colombia for providing much needed **psychosocial support** to displaced families who have been victimized by years of internal armed conflict. Such support facilitates social and family integration, positively addresses grief, and improves the physical and mental health of its beneficiaries. Several articles have been published by our staff on psychosocial support, as well as a comprehensive guide to providing such support as part of broader humanitarian assistance efforts.

As always, we work with stakeholders and local municipalities to identify and prioritize the reconstruction projects that will be implemented. By involving the beneficiaries, the programs also aim to discourage continued displacement and restore residents' quality of life.

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The Youth for Change and Conflict Resolution program is supporting youth leadership through a variety of efforts, including 'peace grants' for youth-organized activities that are aimed at building peace, including this 2005 soccer tournament between rival gangs.

Featured Program

Given the harsh realities of conflict, lack of economic opportunities for their families, and widespread apathy, young people in many parts of Colombia often join illegal armed groups for the excitement, opportunity, and steady income. In response, CHF International's **Youth for Change and Conflict Resolution** (YCCR) program is working to engage young people in two of Colombia's more volatile areas: *Altos de Cazucá*—an impoverished urban area outside Bogotá with a substantial paramilitary presence that is a fertile recruiting ground for these illegally armed groups—and *Comunas 13 and 15* in the city of Cali—a center of gang-related activity.

Funded by USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM), the YCCR program was initiated in July 2005 with the following three key objectives:

1. Generate positive economic opportunities for young people;
2. Support and strengthen youth leaders and youth groups that are advocating for peace and stability;
3. Strengthen community security through the formation of committees to liaise between groups, coordinate security workshops and security awareness campaigns.

Through these efforts, CHF is supporting more than 1,500 young people, expects to create at least 750 new jobs, and is training more than 50 youth in mediation techniques and neighborhood watch strategies. Together, these three initiatives are substantially reducing the risk of violent conflict in these strategically important communities.

Success Story: A Second Chance in Cali

Three years ago, **Juan Carlos Perez*** was displaced from the city of *Cúcuta*, in the *Norte de Santander* region, where he had worked as a cabinetmaker, a trade he learned from his father. One of Juan Carlos' children served as a soldier in the military and, causing armed groups to target his family and murder his wife and his son.

Distraught, Juan Carlos made his way to *Cali, Valle de Cauca*, with his five children, 17 grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. In Cali, Juan Carlos received psychological assistance to help him deal with the trauma he had faced and helped him open a small cabinet-making workshop in an effort to return some normalcy to his life. A friend lent him the money to get the business started since he had little initial capital as a displaced person living in a new city.

When Juan Carlos heard of PAE (the Economic Assistance Program), implemented by CHF International and funded by USAID, he submitted his application to participate received a small business grant to purchase tools, expand his business and produce more for larger contracts. Juan Carlos has since developed a line of tools for physical and massage therapy and has created an exclusive line of wooden bases for industrial use in the beverage industry. The business is now generating employment for ten people and Juan is planning to expand his workspace and employ even more workers.

** The name has been changed to protect his identity.*

By the Numbers

By April 2006, CHF/Colombia had:

- > distributed 15,705 resettlement kits;
- > provided psychosocial support to 16,700 families;
- > generated 2,000 months of employment and created jobs for 36,000 people;
- > provided 21,000 families with housing subsidies;
- > funded 14,600 business and employment plans;
- > trained 21,000 internally displaced people for employment and small business opportunities;
- > disbursed 15,200 microenterprise loans and 600 home improvement loans; and
- > conducted training for the staff members of 15 NGOs and 11 municipalities.