



SUCCESS STORY

Rebuilding Homes, Lives, and Dreams

A hardworking couple builds a new home with their own hands



Photo: International Organization for Migration

Flor and José Baca pose in front of their new home in Los Andes de Sotomayor, Nariño, which USAID helped them build with their own hands.

“It is never too late to learn something new,” said Flor Deida de Baca. She and her husband built their home with their own hands, even though neither had ever built a home before.

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Flor Deida de Baca does not give up easily. Every day she strives to learn a bit more so she can give her children more than she had growing up. Flor lives with her husband, José, and their two children in the municipality of Los Andes de Sotomayor, in southwest Colombia. In 1998, she left the region “to learn something new in the world.” She went to Puerto Guzmán in the neighboring region of Putumayo, where she found a job as a domestic worker, grew medicinal plants, and bred cattle. Flor also met and married her husband there. They were very happy in Puerto Guzmán, until they were forced to leave.

Illegal armed groups threatened and terrified the inhabitants of the town, leaving the young couple scared and desperate for safety. Although they were finally at the top of a waiting list to get a permanent home in Puerto Guzmán, they decided that the uncertainty and danger of staying was too high a price to pay. When they fled to Flor’s hometown in Los Andes de Sotomayor, they arrived with nothing. Like many of the millions of people displaced by conflict in Colombia, they had to start all over again. Three years later, with two little children, they began dreaming again of acquiring their own home.

That dream came within reach when they received a rural housing subsidy from a program funded partly by USAID. The program helps displaced families like Flor’s integrate into new communities by assisting them with jobs, health care, education, and housing. When Flor and her husband learned that the program would help them get their own home, they were so excited that they offered to build it themselves. They learned enough masonry to construct a stable structure, and then began building. While it took a lot of hard work and time, the Bacas are proud of their new home. They are especially pleased to be able to raise their children there.

Settled comfortably into the house of their dreams, the Bacas are still ambitious and strive to achieve great things for their family. Flor and Jose have enrolled in a training program in metal work at the San Juan Bautista School, which they hope will bring them better jobs someday. By helping families like the Bacas integrate into new communities, USAID is helping displaced Colombians recover from the past and improve their future.