



## SUCCESS STORY

### Displaced Family Recovers, Rebuilds

**A courageous couple displaced by violence starts over**



Blanca, Alberto, and one of their sons at their newly opened shop.

***“Illegal armed groups came to our house and gave us 24 hours to leave. They threatened to kill us if we went to the police, or if we didn’t leave,” said Alberto, a father and husband who now supports his family with a shop he opened with USAID assistance.***

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In Colombia’s Caquetá region, more than 73,000 people have been driven from their homes by criminals and guerillas, usually at gun-point and with threats of violence. Blanca and Alberto were among those people. When forced to flee from their home with their children, they were violently uprooted from their community, family, and business.

“Illegal armed groups came to our house and gave us 24 hours to leave. They threatened to kill us if we went to the police, or if we didn’t leave,” Alberto said.

Yet relative to others, his wife Blanca considers her family lucky. “Along the way, many women lost their husbands ... The illegal groups killed them or ‘recruited’ them,” she said.

“They did not kill my husband. We and our four children must start all over again, but at least we are together,” she added.

Alberto and Blanca arrived in the Caqueta region’s capital, Florencia, where they sought assistance from a USAID-funded organization that helps people displaced by the ongoing violence in Colombia.

“The first time you go to ask for help from someone you don’t even know, it is quite embarrassing,” says Alberto. “But to my surprise, they helped us open a small business.” They received a start-up grant, and Alberto attended a small business management course.

Thanks to their hard work, Alberto and Blanca’s business is growing. Alberto makes many of the products they sell in the shop, such as brushes and clothes, while Margarita staffs the shop, selling to local customers. Together, they are supporting their family better than they ever thought possible. Although they miss home and would like to return someday, for the moment, they are grateful to be earning a living and living in peace.

Photo: IOM/Juliana Quintero