



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COLOMBIA

SUCCESS STORY

Flower Industry Gives Jobs to Displaced

Displaced Colombians learn to grow flowers, manage businesses

The number of people displaced by decades of violence in Colombia is estimated at over three million — this is one of the world’s largest populations of people displaced within their own country. Since 2000, USAID has funded a number of economic and social assistance programs for displaced people. Through one of these programs, they are building skills and careers in a blossoming industry in Colombia: flower cultivation.



Photo: USAID/German Acevedo

USAID is funding a training program to help displaced people become floriculture technicians and managers. Run in partnership with Colombia’s national association of flower growers, Asocolflores, the program trains participants in the art and science of floriculture, as well as business management. Throughout the 18-month program, participants also receive a stipend, lodging, and psychological support to help them recover from displacement.

Asocolflores representatives said that linking displaced people who need career options with the country’s fast-growing flower industry filled a key gap in expertise that inhibited the industry’s growth. As demand for Colombian flowers grew, the industry lacked enough skilled floriculture labor to keep up. Just a decade ago, floriculture was a minor industry here. Today, Colombia’s global share of the cut flower market ranks second only to Holland’s.

Rosa, a floriculture graduate at the national flower association greenhouse.

“The Asocolflores training program has totally changed my life for the better. I am confident now that I have a future worth working for,” said Rosa, an Asocolflores graduate.

Most participants are offered jobs in private companies upon graduating from the program, receiving competitive salaries and benefits. Some have even returned home to start their own flower business on family land reclaimed from guerillas or militias.

USAID’s program is creating a needed cadre of floriculture managers, helping displaced people make a lasting transition to a new life, and contributing to Colombia’s long-term economic growth. It is also inspiring others to see the potential in Colombia’s displaced population — other industries have started using the program as a model for their own development.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>