

Creating Hope and Opportunity in Colombia

From our humble beginnings with the first loan in Colombia 50 years ago, Waymakers like you have enabled Opportunity International and our partners in Colombia to reach 467,000 women, children, and families. Despite overwhelming odds and another challenging year, programs in Colombia continued to expand to reach even further down the economic ladder.

Thank you partnering with us to create catalytic change for clients in Colombia. With your unwavering, generous support, we are charting a pathway out of poverty and delivering hope.

Savings Groups for Displaced People and Victims of Conflict

Opportunity's longtime partner AGAPE continues to expand the number and reach of Village Savings and Loans groups. Formation and launch of savings groups in Bogotá, Cartagena, and Barranquilla are focused on reaching women, displaced families, and victims of conflict living in poverty and extreme poverty, with more than 70% of participants being women and more than 20% being migrants. Participants receive financial training and support each other on the pathway to saving. In 2021, AGAPE formed 128 groups, totaling 1,931 clients. The initial goal of launching 120 groups was surpassed three months early.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and AGAPE signed a partnership to form 12 groups with 191 participants in 2022 to empower women and rural communities in three towns impacted by violence for many years. AGAPE has set a goal for 2022 to increase impact to 150 new groups with 2,250 clients.

Marisela is a thriving dreamer. Born in Venezuela, she fled with her two young daughters to seek safety with her extended family in Colombia. Needing to earn an income, she began collecting recycling and selling bananas along the road in a small wheelbarrow. With hopes for growing her business, she joined the Los Guerreros de Dios (The Warriors of God) Savings Group. Over nine months, she learned financial management and savings skills alongside fellow women group members from AGAPE. She saved \$60, which she invested in her business and expanded to selling sweets and snacks. *"Due to this savings model, I have learned that you can save even if the circumstances are not the best. I am also grateful for the virtual financial training that I have received – it has been of great help in managing my business. I have this small business in my house, but I want to have a store, so I don't have to go out and leave my girls alone, like when I used to go out and sell green bananas."* She continues to hope for a better life. *"I am a woman strong enough to overcome every situation I have faced in this life. Little by little, I know I can achieve my dreams."*



Expanding Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs

Opportunity's partnership with UPS Foundation has expanded over the last year, with the first 20 loans distributed in Colombia. The Unstoppable Women program continues to reach more women to start and expand businesses, including provision of financial support and robust training to high-potential women entrepreneurs. The program has disbursed a total of 2,711 loans since it began in Uganda; UPS is now considering expansion of our partnership to even more countries. **The program is leading to job creation and reductions in poverty – each business established or supported employs, on average, eight people who will grow incomes to provide for their families.**



Crezcamos, our banking partner in Colombia, has identified 65,088 potential women clients who meet the criteria and have demonstrated a need for a business loan, so there is significant potential to reach more women to grow businesses and create jobs.

Rapid Response Activities

Much of the progress Colombia has achieved over the past few years hit a sweeping roadblock due to COVID-19 impacts. **Families living in poverty were hit the hardest. Approximately 6.3 million people have been pushed into poverty (\$3.12 a day) or further into poverty (\$1.34 a day).** Thanks to generous supporters who stepped in to help us meet families' immediate needs, we worked with our partners to reach those living in poverty and in remote areas with last mile health services, including transport and administration of **vaccines**, educational information campaigns via WhatsApp to combat vaccine misinformation, delivering **food ration kits** so families could safely quarantine, and emergency loan funding to schools and farmers. This immediate support during closures enabled families to meet basic needs. Our programs are now shifting to support families to go from surviving to thriving by rebuilding livelihoods.

New Ways to Reach the Most Marginalized

Building on the successful **Agriculture Finance** program in sub-Saharan Africa, we are preparing to launch Agriculture Finance in Colombia in 2022 as the first Latin American country. COVID-19 lockdowns delayed plans for launch in 2021, but virtual meetings were able to proceed with banks to establish lending partners. AgFinance is a critical component of the three-year vision and business plan for the Opportunity Zone in the Atlántico-Bolívar region, as many of the families living in extreme poverty are engaged in subsistence agriculture.

We are also finalizing our plans and rapidly fundraising with the goal of launching a new **graduation program** in 2022 to create an economic ladder to build strong rungs upward for those who are ultra-poor (\$1.25/day).

Reaching More Children with a Quality, Affordable Education

Our Education Finance program within Colombia continues to expand to support local affordable non-state schools to improve conditions for learning through a mix of training, resources, and local expertise. At the end of 2021, 43 schools were a part of the EduQuality program in Colombia, impacting 10,700 children.

Training to Control Diabetes

A pilot partnership program in Colombia is supporting women to control their diabetes and improve their health conditions.

During these training sessions, health topics are shared on: preparing healthy meals, maintaining or losing weight, physical activity, and managing diabetes.

During the course, healthy menus were shared among the group to replace more expensive foods with healthier, low-cost ingredients.

Planning is now underway for adapting and incorporating this health pilot course alongside other trainings as part of the new Opportunity Zone programs.

| Diabetes Prevention Program | Achievements to date |
|--|----------------------|
| # of group members trained | 68 |
| % of female group members | 100 |
| # of training sessions | 65 |
| % of group members living in extreme poverty | 100 |



Providing Clean Water

In Colombia, Opportunity has identified a need for water, health, and other sanitation projects alongside current projects planned in the Opportunity Zone. By installing water filters within homes, families are able to wash hands and have clean drinking water, decreasing illness and other threats to a family's health and economic well-being. Water filters are not currently provided by the government, so Opportunity is supporting the formation of Water Committees to identify households along with mobilizing volunteers for building the filters. Bio-sand filters are built using locally available materials and are designed for intermittent use. Each filter is projected to last 30 years.

| Water filters installed | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| 2017 | 12 |
| 2018 | 28 |
| 2019 | 44 |
| 2020 | 76 |
| 2021 | 50 |
| TOTAL | 210 |

See Your Impact

Planning is underway for an Insight Trip to Colombia in October. We invite you to journey with us to Colombia to see first-hand the impact of your generosity.

Waymaker, we are thankful to you for continuing on this journey with us as we empower people in Colombia to chart a brighter future for themselves, their families, and their communities.