

Colombia Report

Fall 2022

“In Colombia, the goal is to keep the country on a path toward equitable and inclusive development that leads to a reduction of inequality.”
- Scott Boyce, Borgen Project

COLOMBIA: GREAT NEED, DEEP IMPACT

Colombia, as the place where Opportunity began its mission back in 1971, has been and continues to be a priority country. Colombia has lived in violence for more than 50 years, being the second country in the world that has received the highest numbers of refugees/migrants over the past several decades, with one of the highest levels of inequality in terms of income distribution, and with high levels of extreme poverty. We selected Colombia as the first country in Latin America to develop an Opportunity Zone.

OPPORTUNITY ZONE PROGRESS

The Opportunity Zone concept intentionally brings together our flagship programs into a geographical region with a significant population of those living in extreme poverty and facing other significant social challenges. The main objectives are to:

- Increase incomes, create and sustain jobs, and provide an affordable quality education for children and youth that leads to jobs, starting a business, or going to college.
- Expand the work and seek to achieve synergies that deepen the impact in Colombia by integrating our flagship programs, Graduation, and Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) methodologies to microbanking services.
- Establish partnerships with government institutions, financial, and non-financial organizations to increase the outreach and impact, and to provide other critical services to our clients based on their needs.



AGAPE Director Brian Olarte, facilitating a local training session

Thanks to your investment, we are **scaling up programs to more rapidly move families from surviving to thriving**. With your unwavering, generous support we are charting a pathway out of poverty and delivering hope:

- **Executing rapid response activities:** 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 transportation 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.
- **Creating savings groups for displaced people and victims of conflict:** In partnership with AGAPE, in 2021 we formed 128 Village Savings and Loans groups—totaling 1,931 clients—with a specific focus on women (70%), displaced families, and victims of conflict.
- **Expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs:** Thanks to a partnership with the UPS Foundation, the “Unstoppable Women” program provided loans to women to start and expand businesses. On average, for every new business established, eight people will grow incomes to provide for their families. Crezcamos, our banking partner in Colombia, has identified a large number of potential women clients who meet the criteria, so there is significant potential for growth.
- **Expanding education:** Our education finance program in 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.
- **Providing clean water:** In Colombia, Opportunity has identified a need for water, health, and other sanitation projects. 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. Since 2017 we have installed 210 water filters; each bio-sand filter is projected to last 30 years.
- **Launching Graduation Model:** Opportunity has hired a local staff member to manage the program. Field visits to several local communities have taken place, to gather information and assessments, leading to the identification of the specific communities which will participate in this program True to the definition of the initiative, clients served will be socio-economic “strata zero to strata one” (\$0.90 to \$1.90/day, focusing on under \$1.40/day—those living in extreme poverty). The model is built on four key pillars:

LIVELIHOODS	SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT	SOCIAL PROTECTION	FINANCIAL INCLUSION
Asset or cash transfer to procure a market-viable asset. Paired with technical skills training.	Regular visits and life skills support that build confidence, resilience, and promote social inclusion	Preventative, protective, and promotive support to build basic security: food support, crisis relief, access to health and education	Access to convenient formal or informal financial services paired with tailored training

LOOKING AHEAD (FY23-FY25)

With the support of partners like you and our local partners in Colombia, we will deepen and expand our work in Colombia with proven models:

- Fully establish a successful Opportunity Zone serving the Strata 0-2 (poor and extreme poor) clients
- Support Opportunity's Education Quality initiatives in both private and public schools
- Create a pathway for Savings and Loans group clients to formal financial services
- Scale up Savings and Loans groups through partnerships with local government and international relief agencies
- Establish and grow a successful Ultra Poverty Graduation program for scale



Luz Dary (left) and Andrea are members of a savings group in the south of Bogotá, Colombia. They live in Cazuca which is populated by internally displaced people who have flocked to the cities looking for safety because of violence in the countryside. Luz and Andrea are recyclers. Every night they leave their children in the care of a neighbor and rummage through garbage around the city looking for plastic, glass, metal--anything of value. They sell what recyclables they can find, typically getting 3,500 to 5,000 pesos (\$1 to \$1.50 USD). Luz dreams of completing her education and becoming a nurse; currently she is studying at a local center. She wants to inspire and motivate her children.

Luz Dary, Recycler and Savings Group Member
Cazuca, Colombia

***Thank you for your investments which enable families to take action to fight poverty
in a country of great need and potential.***