Special initiative

PROINTEGRA - Economic integration of internally displaced persons and host communities in Norte de Santander, Colombia

Where and how we work...

For more than five decades, Colombia was marked by armed conflict. Even the peace agreement signed in 2016 between the guerrilla organisation FARC and the Colombian government has not yet brought permanent stability to some areas of the country. Not all of the Colombian guerrilla organisations are committed to the agreement and therefore the causes of the conflict persist: land tenure problems, lack of access to natural resources and human right violations. During the conflict one million people have been victims of assassination, kidnapping, disappearance, torture and other types of violence. More than seven million Colombians have been displaced within their own country. Deprived of their livelihoods, they have occupied land on the outskirts of large cities where they have had to face great personal instability. Most of these slums have little access to public services. Only a few people receive adequate psychosocial care to process their traumatic experiences. Many displaced persons work as street vendors or are hired in the informal labour market. They often lack the necessary self-confidence and support to start a new business. For example, start-up capital for the creation of micro-enterprises is difficult for them to access. The Colombian government has taken the initiative to promote inclusion in the labour market as part of the peace process.

Laying the foundation for a way out of poverty

PROINTEGRA is a project commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to economically stabilise internally displaced persons and host communities in the department of Norte de Santander. 280,000 internally displaced persons live in this region in the northeast, near the border with Venezuela. More than 60% of them live in poverty. As the implementing organisation, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) supports its Colombian state and non-state partners in adapting their services more effectively to the needs of the IDPs. Together they review, for example, psychosocial care programmes, develop support to promote micro-entrepreneurs or help returnees and residents in expanding agricultural production.

In addition, PROINTEGRA advises local governments in the search for alternatives to legalize human settlements that up until now have been mostly illegal. In this way, slum dwellers get better access to public services.

Die COVID-19 pandemy had a serious impact on the economy of displaced families in 2020. Many micro-entrepreneurs were forced to close their businesses. To tackle this situation somewhat, PROINTEGRA made a cash-transfer to more than 800 people.

What we have achieved so far...

- More than 5,500 persons supported to overcome psychosocial affectations.
- Approximately 200 professionals from governmental and non-governmental organizations, who provide care and guidance to victims of the armed conflict, received training in
psychological first aid and self-care.

- Advise to 19 associations of small farmers, made up of more than 1,000 families, to improve their agricultural production and marketing with the aim of achieving greater income.
- 275 internally displaced persons have created, strengthened and managed their micro-enterprise.
- 840 internally displaced persons were trained to improve their employability.
- About 700 internally displaced persons have been formally employed on a temporary or permanent basis through counselling and labour intermediation.
- Ten informal settlements with approximately 10,000 people legalized their neighborhood to improve access to basic services.

For a better future

Small businesses, big action - Footballs are needed anywhere

Manuel Ladino is Colombian. He lived for many years in Venezuela and was owner of a small company producing footballs there. In 2015, when he was in Cúcuta/Colombia on a business trip, they closed the border between the two countries. Manual could not return, and his company was looted. Some time ago, he opened a new factory in Cúcuta. He hired employees, taught this work to men and women, and with the support of PROINTEGRA he found new markets for his products. This allows him not only to increase his own income, but also to create new jobs.