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Enhancing Livelihoods for Venezuelans in Colombia

Due to the deteriorating economic and political situation in Venezuela, more than 4 million Venezuelans have fled to neighboring countries. Nearly 1.3 million Venezuelans resided in Colombia as of March 2019, the highest number of Venezuelans in any country in the region.

Since September 2018, USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) partner the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has supported Venezuelans in Colombia's Cundinamarca, Nariño, and Norte de Santander departments by providing livelihoods support, among other activities. Beneficiaries receive training to develop and implement small business plans, allowing individuals to generate income and integrate into Colombian host communities.

In Colombia's Nariño Department—located along the border with Ecuador—NRC is providing livelihoods support to more than 60 Venezuelan beneficiaries with funding from USAID/OFDA.

In March 2018, Gloria and Maria, who recently departed Venezuela, traveled to Nariño's Pasto City to seek job opportunities. In January 2019, both received training and start-up funding from



Photo by Hannah Waller/USAID

NRC. The duo opened a sandwich business in February and already serve between 100-150 regular clients per day. Gloria and Maria currently prepare sandwiches in their apartment before delivering the food to clients, but they hope to open a store in the future to accommodate their expanding business.

According to Maria, a day's wage in Venezuela could only buy one loaf of bread in Colombia; however, as a result of USAID/OFDA and NRC support, she now has the opportunity to own a business and earn a livable income in Colombia.

The business owners plan to remain in Pasto, where they recently received official registration and licenses for their sandwich business. Gloria reflected on her past, remarking, "When I left Venezuela, we lost everything. I had two suitcases to my name...now I have a home and our business, thanks to USAID/OFDA and NRC."