



Employment Services For Displaced Women In Bogota Colombia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is an analysis of an attempt to implement an employment-training program for displaced women by the Bogota Wage Subsidy Project (BWSP) in Bogota Colombia. The analysis will start with an introduction, the methodology used, and a historical perspective about the root causes of displacement from the long-standing conflict between government, guerillas and paramilitaries Next, the analysis will cover the process the Bogota Wage Subsidy Project staff completed in order to understand the needs of the community followed by an analysis of the project's implementation. In the next section we look at lessons learned. The conclusion will detail some key findings and make recommendations as to how the BWSP may proceed in its efforts to make sure the program is indeed the correct intervention for the community and how to help the project spread and be more effective. Since the BWSP's inception in 2012, it has since grown from a pilot project into an on-going effort due to the continued support of 50 individual donors. The Bogota Wage Subsidy Project is now a 501c3 non-profit in the U.S. and a registered foundation in Colombia. The primary operations are conducted at Carrera 3A #61 - 15, Chapinero Alto, Bogota Colombia.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis paper seeks to answer two questions that will help determine 1) whether or not there are adequate job training programs for internally displaced persons (IDP)¹ in Bogota Colombia and 2) does the Bogota Wage Subsidy Project provide the

¹ "An Internally displaced person, or IDPs, are among the world's most vulnerable people. Unlike refugees, IDPs have not crossed an international border to find sanctuary but have remained inside their home countries. Even if they have fled for similar reasons as refugees (armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations), IDPs legally remain under the protection of their own

correct intervention to help IDP women find employment in Bogota? This question is important to the author as the founder of the Bogota Wage Subsidy Project. The BWSP's mission is to provide short-term job training to displaced women in Bogota Colombia. By connecting them with employers that train them in their workplace for a trial period of three months. During the three-month training period, the women are paid a wage to help them begin stabilizing their households immediately. At the end of the three months, the hope is that the employer will hire the women permanently. When the BWSP was originally started, the staff interviewed local Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and government agencies to see if this kind of subsidized wage training was being offered specifically for displaced women in Bogota. At the time, the answer was no. To be more exact, yes there are job-training programs that connect low-income women with employers. However, there was only one other job-training program that provided a wages and its focus is on Afro Colombian and Indigenous women on the Pacific coast of Colombia. While this kind of hands on job-training program is very popular in the United States, especially for individuals on public assistance, it is still a relatively unused mechanism for displaced persons and individuals on public assistance in Colombia. The Bogota Wage Subsidy Project was started with the intention to test the market in Bogota Colombia to see if this kind of training program could actually work and if the local organizations that works with displaced women wanted and would support it. After two full years of operating and helping 15 women find employment, the organization is seeking to evaluate its efforts to see if the program is correctly serving

government – even though that government might be the cause of their flight. As citizens, they retain all of their rights and protection under both human rights and international humanitarian law”. (UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency 2012)

the needs of displaced women. The following analysis will seek to answer this question through interviews with local organizations, employers, government agencies and displaced persons. The analysis will review the implementation of the Bogota Wage Subsidy Project and then look at some key findings that will help analyze whether or not the project is providing the correct solution to help displaced women in Bogota find employment and how to proceed with these findings.

METHODOLOGY

The following research methods were used to gather data for the paper: 1) Surveys of organizations in Bogota Colombia who work with Internally displaced persons. These organizations were made up of faith-based organizations, local social service organizations, international Non-Government Organizations, government agencies and persons affected by displacement. 2) Interviews of displaced persons, coordinators and directors of local NGOs and faith based organizations. 3) Web based research via articles and websites from magazines, newspapers and government agencies. 4) Articles, books and lectures from Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy's Global Master of Arts Program.

THE COLOMBIAN CONFLICT

Displacement in Colombia is a result of the war that has been raging between the government, The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and right-wing Paramilitaries, for the past 50 years. The roots of the conflict started in the 1940's, when presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala became the front-runner as a populist candidate during the 1948 elections and it appeared as though he was going to win. On

April 9, 1948 Gaitán was assassinated. His murder set off a series of riots in Bogota called *El Bogotazo* where approximately 5,000 people were killed in a 10-hour period, destroying central Bogota. The violence in Bogota eventually spread to the countryside where groups from the conservative and liberal parties continued to fight setting off a period know as *La Violencia* that lasted until 1958 with more than 300,000 Colombians killed.

During *La Violencia*, the lack of protection by the state forced many rural communities to organize self-defense groups which eventually morphed into larger Marxist ideologically based resistance movements such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN). These self-defense groups designated themselves as protectors of the rural farmers or *campesinos*, and eventually confronted the state as it attempted to reassert control in areas where the self-defense groups had filled the void of keeping law and order. The largest of the self-defense group, the FARC, formally organized as an armed force in 1964 and has been the primary faction currently fighting against the Colombian government.

In response to kidnapping and extortion by the FARC in the 1980's, wealthy cattle ranchers and the drug cartels funded private armies referred to as Paramilitaries to resist the FARC. These Paramilitary groups became aligned with the government and have been used to conduct massacres, rapes, kidnapping and intimidation of communities considered to be sympathetic to the FARC. This fighting between the government, the FARC and the Paramilitaries is the major cause of Colombia's displacement leaving close

to five million Colombians to flee for their safety².

DISPLACEMENT

Each year, tens of thousands Colombians continue to be driven from their homes because of fighting between the FARC and the Colombian military forces the civilian population to flee seeking shelter in other parts of the country. Displacement happens when people in small towns are threatened by the FARC or Paramilitaries for supporting one side or the other. Often times, the Paramilitaries will show up at a farm and accuse a family member of being a part of the FARC and tell them they have until nightfall to get out of town or they will be killed. The ones that are given notice are lucky. The Paramilitaries and the FARC are also known to engage in extortion. Many people simply flee their homes rather than face the consequences of not being able to pay whatever was is being demanded. Another cause of displacement is the recruitment of minors. The FARC are known to forcefully recruit children as domestic servants and soldiers³. The BWSP has heard numerous accounts from participants who have fled their homes because the local FARC commander came to their house and requested that their teenage son or daughter come to the camp the next day. Instead, the entire family flees with what they have on their backs to other parts of the country to avoid violent retribution for not obeying the FARC's orders. All of these illegally armed groups have also been accused of forcing farmers to give them a cow, a pig, bags of rice and other supplies to feed their soldiers. Rather than continue to be extorted and/or be accused by one side for

² Human Rights Watch, World Report 2012, (accessed January 2, 2014), available from <http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/colombia>

³ FARC Systematically Recruit Child Soldiers: Report, Accessed January 10, 2013, available at: <http://colombiareports.co/farc-systematically-recruits-child-soldiers-study/>

supporting the other (because they unwillingly gave them food), many families simply leave their homes hoping to return when things are more secure. Once a family abandons their land one of the illegally armed groups usually occupies it and begins to cultivate cocoa with the intent of distributing it. If a displaced person returns home to reclaim their lands, they will more than likely be subject to threats, violence and murder. Land recuperation and restoration has become a major problem throughout all of Colombia.

The majority of IDPS end up in Colombia's larger cities such as Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Cartagena and Barranquilla. Unfortunately for most IDP's, once they arrive in the city, their situation doesn't improve immediately because they have no contacts, no family and no means of employment. Most start their new lives worse off than they were. IDP families tend to look for inexpensive housing on the outskirts of the major cities and typically end up living in informal housing situations in areas of high insecurity. Therefore, they need to quickly figure out how they are going to restart their lives by getting their children into school and finding work.

Displacement in Colombia has disproportionately affected women and children. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), over 50% of refugees and displaced persons in the world are children⁴. Although, the government of Colombia is obligated by law to provide financial assistance to displaced families for a period of three months to a year, depending on family size, the amounts vary from COP 120,000 pesos (USD 50)/month for a single person up to COP 1,000,000 (USD 500)/month

⁴ UNHCR, "Facts and Figures for Refugees." Accessed February 25, 2014. <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/about-us/key-facts-andfigures.html>.

for a family of five, is barely enough to survive. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, only 11% of IDPs in Colombia have access to adequate housing; half experience food insecurity and fewer than 5% are given opportunities to generate income. As a result, many displaced persons turn to informal occupations such as:

- Recycling of cardboard and aluminum
- Mobile vending of snacks, fruits and vegetables on the side of the road
- Prostitution (it is legal in many parts of Colombia)
- Selling of household items at busy intersections
- Begging

At best, these activities are less than ideal for many IDPs, and provide unstable incomes that commonly yield far less than minimum wage. Considering the cost of living in many of the larger Colombian cities, these jobs do not generate enough to support food, transportation, housing and health costs for an individual or small family. Colombia's growing economy (approximately 3% annually⁵) is further raising the country's cost of living expense, placing greater stress on low-income families who are not seeing comparable wage increases. Women are at the top of this disparity with 23% unemployment versus 15% for men and 43% of employed women work in the informal sector⁶. Often times, when the informal sector is not available and they are having a hard time finding work, many displaced women turn to the church and other social service organizations seeking emergency assistance. Unfortunately due to the large number of persons (low-income, homeless, disabled and displaced persons) seeking assistance the

⁵ Trading Economics, "Colombian GDP Growth." Accessed February 25, 2014. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/colombia/gdp-growth>.

⁶ Eduardo, Delgado. DANE, "Market Behavior 7th Edition." Accessed February 16, 2014. <http://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/mercado-laboral/empleo-y-desempleo>.

churches and social services, there simply is not enough capacity in the system to help individuals find work. When this happens, churches turn to NGO's to help them assist their clients. Organizations like the Bogota Wage Subsidy Project can be of assistance in filling the lack of capacity that the churches and governments face in the area of job placement assistance.

In looking at the ability of organizations like the BWSP to help displaced women find formal employment in Bogota we need to further define the terms formal and informal employment within the Colombian context? The BWSP defines **Formal employment** as a job or position that has a minimum of 20 hours of work per week and generates the federally mandated minimum monthly income of \$308/month along with social security and health insurance⁷. Unfortunately, while this is the law in Colombia very few employers comply with it. An example of formal employment would be an administrative assistant in a government office.

Informal employment, on the other hand, is a job where a worker is not paid the minimum monthly wage, lacks social security and health insurance. An example of informal employment is a mobile street vendor selling various candies and cigarettes from a makeshift shopping cart or table on a street corner.

These two definitions are important, given that as stated above, the majority of displaced persons in Bogota Colombia find themselves working in informal employment.

The ability to move from informal to formal employment is based in part on the following

⁷ Colombia Reports, Colombia's Sets Minimum Wage Increase for 2014 for 4.5%, Maren Soendegaard, (accessed January 2, 2014), available from <http://colombiareports.co/colombias-minimum-wage-rises-4-despite-union-objections/>

factors: 1) The level education 2) Work experience in the formal sector 3) Social network 4) and strata.

Level of Education

A survey of displaced women by the BWSP, found that 70 % had only finished high school and less than 5% had some form of post secondary education and none had a college degree or higher⁸. A survey of the formal employment sector demonstrates that the majority of jobs where career laddering is possible require at least some form of post secondary education. These jobs are administrative, secretarial, customer service, sales and other entry-level employment where a person may have a chance to at least move up the income ladder and potentially access further career advancement opportunities.

Work Experience

The majority of employers that the BWSP interviewed to say they do take into account an individual's work experience when making hiring decisions. However, many of displaced persons come from agricultural backgrounds, therefore their ability to gain valuable work experience in office settings is limited. Furthermore, employers in Bogota are less impatient and willing to take on relatively low skilled employees and invest the time in training them.

Social Networks

Social networks are key to finding employment in Colombia, as family hiring is still important not only in Colombia but also across most of Latin America. Unfortunately for most displaced persons, they are far removed from their homes and therefore lack the

⁸ Participant Survey of Case Files Conducted by BWSP staff, February 20, 2014

networks that would have helped them secure employment in their native communities. Not having anyone who can verify that you are a trustworthy and reliable persons means that a business has to take a chance in hiring you. Due to the lack of trust created by years of intense war and violence throughout the country, Colombian employers are far more cautious about hiring individuals they don't know and whom they don't have a connection with and there is a lack of accountability with.

The Strata System and Family Name

In the late 1980's the Government of Colombia (GoC) instituted an urban strata system. The original idea was to group people in urban areas based on their economic needs to make it easier for the municipal governments to provide services to large clusters of families. For instance, lower income areas of the cities are designated as strata one and two, while three and four are working class or moderate income areas and five through six are high-income areas. The idea, and current practice, allows the municipal governments to charge higher prices for services in neighborhoods that are stratas five through six who then subsidize levels one, two, three and four, creating a progressive tax on the upper income levels⁹ One of the negative side affects of the strata system is that it has been used as a means to discriminate against someone based on where they live. On applications for employment, there is typically an area that asks what neighborhood do you live? Employers use this as a mechanism to discern a person's strata. Many Bogota Wage Subsidy participants have reported that this has been a source of difficulty for them because they live in the lower stratas and are afraid that the question could prevent them

⁹ The International Federation for Housing and Planning, "Colombia - Social Stratification By Law." Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://www.ifhp.org/ifhp-blog/colombia-social-stratification-law>

from gaining employment. These kinds of questions are not illegal under Colombian employment/labor law. Therefore, a person seeking employment in the formal sector could be denied an opportunity solely based on where they live. With this historical perspective and background, we will now analyze whether or not the BWSP is providing the necessary services to assist IDP women with finding employment in Bogota.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In order to understand how the BWSP came to the conclusion that it might be the best intervention, let's look at the history and some of the existing efforts that the BWSP has its origins in.

The Bogota Wage Subsidy Project (BWSP) started off as a pilot project in 2011 with the intent of testing the market to see if a subsidized wage program is a viable mechanism for helping displaced women in Bogota Colombia find employment. Subsidized wage programs are common in the United States where they are used to help individuals on public assistance find employment. The majority of the subsidized wage programs in the United States are administered through counties. The counties then contract with community organizations that administer the federal welfare to work program called *Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF)*, who provide on-going case management for individuals on public assistance. The subsidized wages are typically used to place those clients who are having the hardest time finding employment beyond three to six months of searching. An example of a hard to place TANF participant is a recently arrived refugees who speak very little English and has had little to no experience working in a Western setting. The TANF providers typically create relationships with businesses

who have high-turnover such as hotels, meat processing, food manufacturers and industrial cleaning services to name a few. The program is also used to help TANF clients gain experience in administrative, receptionist, and customer service positions as well. These employers will take on a TANF participant and train them how to do simple tasks in their businesses for three months. The idea is to help TANF participants get through the door and prove themselves as an asset to the employer while gaining valuable transferrable skills. The BWSP's services are modeled after the TNIF subsidized wage programs in Hennepin County (encompassing the Twin Cities of Minneapolis/Saint Paul) of Minnesota. As an example, Hennepin County provided approximately \$120,000 to the Center for Asians and Pacific Islanders (CAPI) where the author was the Director of Programs. The funds were used to support 62 women participating in the Project Regina sewing program. Project Regina was a social enterprise that provided contract-sewing services to various businesses. As an example, there was a business called North Star Bowling that manufactured the covers for the bowling pin sweepers in bowling Alleys. Project Regina, taught the participants how to cut and make simple stitching for the sweepers, and other products, over the course of a three month period. Many of the participants then went on to start home based sewing businesses that also provided contracted piecemeal services back to Project Regina over the years. The county supported the women by providing the funds to pay the women a part-time the minimum wage during the three month period. The women would attend English classes in the mornings and would learn sewing in the afternoons. The cost to support each participant worked out to be \$1,950 ($\$7.50/\text{Hour} \times 20 \text{ Hours/week} \times 13\text{weeks}$). The program was

designed so that 15 women per quarter could attend the training program. The BWSP follows the same programmatic design. The only difference is that the BWSP costs \$650 (\$2.50/Hour x 20hours x 13 weeks) and provides an additional transportation subsidy for the first two weeks that costs approximately \$15. The success rate for the subsidized wage program implemented by CAPI was approximately 60% meaning approximately 37 of the 62 women went on to find long-term employment (3 months or longer) beyond the end of the program. The federal guideline for long-term employment via subsidized wage programs is 50%.

PROJECT PLANNING

In order to be answering the question about the merits of the proposed solution to helping displaced women in Bogota find employment, the BWSP founders set off first to find out if there were other organizations offering subsidized wages to displaced women. To conduct the search, they had to create a point of orientation. Unlike the U.S. a lot of local community organizations and N.G.O's do not have a web presence. Furthermore, government agencies are not customer service oriented or easily accessible to individuals wanting to conduct research. Therefore, BWSP had to rely on informal networks and start with the faith community to find out who was doing what and where and then continue its research from there. BWSP staff met with the following agencies:

1. Pastoral Social
2. Migration Attention Centers (CAMIG)
3. The Colombian Campaign against landmines (CCAL)
4. The Norman Paez Bello Foundation

5. The Pan-American Foundation for Development (FUPAD)
6. The Red Cross of Colombia
7. The 20th of July Church

The BWSP asked a series of questions to help discern their needs and uncover information on existing employment programs.

1. Does this kind of program exist in Bogota?
2. Have there been past or similar efforts to what we are proposing?
3. Would you use this kind of program?
4. Would this program help displaced women find employment?
5. Why will this program succeed or fail?
6. Is there a reason that we should not pursue this program?
7. If you could design an employment program for displaced women, what would it look like?
8. Are there other organizations BWSP should be talking to?
9. Are there any security risks in working with displaced women?
10. Do you have funding to help support the program or the participants?

Regarding the first question, ***does this kind of program exist in Bogota Colombia?*** all five organizations answered that no the subsidized wage part of the program did not exist, especially solely for displaced women. Regarding the second question, ***have there been past or similar efforts to what we are proposing?*** Five out of seven organizations had not heard of any similar initiative to the one that the BWSP was proposing. One

organization talked about a similar initiative being spearheaded by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). However, when the BWSP finally got the chance to sit down with the IOM, it turned out that their initiative was a micro-lending initiative aimed at indigenous women in rural areas in Colombia.

On the third question, **would you use this program?** All seven said they thought they could use the program, but said it with hesitancy, as they really weren't sure as to whether the staff at the BWSP could actually pull it off. On question number four **would the program help displaced women find employment?** They were all skeptical for a variety of reasons: 1) getting employers to take a chance on hiring displaced women was going to be hard. Part of the problem is that employers were skeptical in hiring people whom they don't know and who have no personal references and 2) the other issue was that the staff at the BWSP was going to encounter displaced women who may not actually want to work because they are afraid of losing their government sponsored benefits due to the new income. All of the organizations felt that convincing some displaced participants was going to be a very difficult at times. On the fifth question, **why will this program succeed or fail?** All of the organizations again cited motivation as an issue among their participants. The benefits can range from 100,000 pesos to 1,000,000 pesos per month for three months to a year. The result is *"many displaced persons have a perception that the benefits will last forever and don't look at the long term,"* said sister Marta Diaz of the Migration Attention Center in Bogota¹⁰. Displaced persons are also fearful that if they start working and earning income they will lose their benefits.

¹⁰ Cook, Robinson. Interview with Martha Diaz. Personal interview. Colombia, February 6, 2012

Therefore, convincing some displaced women that working was going to benefit them in the long run was going to be the biggest challenge. One displaced participant told the BWSP staff, *"I don't want to lose the medical benefits for my child"*¹¹ which turned out to be one of the greatest concerns of many participants with small children. Another reason cited for why the program could fail was the expectations of the employers. *"Employers will say they want to work with displaced persons, but they only want a certain kind of person. Someone who is pretty, skinny and young. They don't want women over 40, especially retailers"*, said sister Martha Diaz¹². The other problem is that employers are worried about displaced persons stealing from them. *"We have had a few issues with persons who are in severe financial crisis steal things out of the stores where we are cleaning. This creates a problem for us because as the employer we are then responsible for any items that are lost and have to spend time getting the items back if we can. It ends up hurting our relationship with the store,"* said Elodia Cordoba from Coopsermujer¹³.

On the sixth question, One of the things that would make the program successful according to the local NGO's was the BWSP's ability to pay a part-time wage to the participants, especially for those participants who are not working and are in need of immediate income. Another attraction would be the transportation support that the BWSP provides to each participant for the first two weeks of his or her employment. Many displaced persons live in neighborhoods that are far away from the commercial centers of Northern and Central Bogota. A 60 - 90 minute bus ride in each direction is fairly common along with at least two transfers. The transportation subsidy would help to

¹¹ Cook, Robinson. Interview with Dolly Bolanos. Personal interview. Colombia, July 5, 2013

¹² Cook, Robinson. Interview with Martha Diaz. Personal interview. Colombia, February 6, 2012

¹³ Cook, Robinson. Interview with Elodia Cordoba. Personal interview. Colombia, January 28, 2014

remove any barriers of getting to and from work. Childcare was another factor that the organizations identified that would further help the participants be successful. Many of the women have at least one or two children under the age of 10. *“When I leave for work at 7:30 in order to arrive by 9:00am, I have to leave my daughter with a neighbor...an then I need to be back home by 2:00pm to pick up my daughter...I have to pay extra if I am late.”*¹⁴ Participants will also leave their children with another family member who may have to work in the afternoon, so they have to be back home to make sure the family member can get to work as well to keep the household running smoothly.

On the seventh question, ***if you could design an employment program for displaced women, what would it look like***, 4 out of the seven organizations expressed that they would like to expand their current offerings of training women to create micro-enterprises. These micro-enterprises tended to consist of making pastries or foods and selling them on the street or some kind of sewing or alterations business. Upon further research, the BWSP staff found that there are a large amount of dollars being poured in by international NGO’s and the Colombian government to support these kinds of activities. In fact, the Colombian government agency, Department for the Prosperity of the Family has established a multi-million dollar initiative to promote the strengthening of the entrepreneurship among women in low-income communities. For that reason, the BWSP thought it would be best not to duplicate an existing government program with.

Regarding question number eight, ***are there other organizations BWSP should be talking to***, early on in the process, Pastoral Social suggested that we talk with the

¹⁴ Cook, Robinson. Interview with Leidy Castellano. Personal interview. Colombia, December 6, 2013

Colombian Campaign Against Landmines (CCAL). Although at first glance the name of the organization may not sound like it serves displaced persons, the victims of land mines are often times also victims of displacement. This suggestion proved to be a critical one as the CCAL turned out to be a huge asset and accompanying partner of the BWSP to this day. Through the BWSP's relationship with the CCAL, it would go on to meet several of the other partnering organizations (CAMIG and Norman Paez Foundation) who the BWSP still has relations, served as a consistent referral base to the project.

Regarding question number nine, ***are there any security risks in working with displaced women***, most organizations did not think there were immediate risks in working with displaced women here in Bogota. In the countryside, however, they advised that the BWSP be very careful working in these areas, as they tend to be much more under the influence of illegally armed groups. Fortunately, the BWSP does not work outside of Bogota, but took the warning seriously nonetheless. The other caution provided to the BWSP staff was that they should not recruit participants from the street. The most cited reason for this was that the project would not have a way of knowing whether or not a person was actually who they said they were. Secondly, because the BWSP is offering monetary compensation, there could be individuals who would seek to take advantage of this who were not really displaced. Another concern, is that once word gets around that the BWSP is an *extranjaero* lead organization, there could be individuals, criminal gangs or illegally armed groups who would seek to extort the project for money. In Colombia, it is estimated that *Micro-extortion* has generated more than \$1billion/year

annually and continues to grow and be a significant problem¹⁵. All agreed that the BWSP strategy to only receive references from organizations that already have established relationships with displaced women should help mitigate the security risks. The last caution that the BWSP was given was in relation to the BWSP website. One organization noted that the BWSP named several notorious illegally armed groups (the FARC, ELN and some paramilitary organizations) as responsible for causing displacement. While it is true that they are all to blame, their suggestion was that the BWSP should use the term *illegally armed groups* instead of naming each individually and publicly. These groups are all known to have significant technological capabilities to search the web for criticism of their organizations and seek to quiet individuals or organizations that speak out against them in Colombia. There was a 2012 assassination attempt in Bogota on an outspoken radio personality who has been a critic of the FARC. The attack was carried out in broad daylight and killed his driver highlighting the dangers faced by individuals who speak out against illegally armed groups¹⁶. Furthermore, according to the 2013 freedom index compiled by Reporters Without Borders, Colombia ranked 129 out of 179 countries despite it being the oldest democracy in Latin America¹⁷. The BWSP removed any references to these groups immediately after receiving this advice.

For the last question, ***do you have funding to help support the program or the participants***, all of the organizations stated that they did not have any funds to help

¹⁵ Natalie, Southwick. In SightCrime, " Colombia Micro-Extortion Targets Teachers, Bicycle Taxi Drivers ." Accessed February 12, 2014. <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/colombia-micro-extortion>.

¹⁶ Sequera, Vivian. The Huffington Post, "Bogota Bomb: Fernando Londo, Former Colombian Official, Targeted In Attack." Accessed

¹⁷ Reporters Without Borders, "Press Freedom Index 2013." Accessed March 5, 2014. <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-013,1054.html>.

support the project. Two organizations suggested that it would be easier to raise money from the U.S. versus looking for funds in Colombia. Furthermore, as this was a pilot project, the organizations were still trying to measure the sincerity of the BWSP staff's efforts. The concept of sincerity turned out to be very important as the BWSP staff learned that many of these organizations needed to be careful about referring their participants to an unknown organization for employment assistance. The promise of employment assistance was an antecedent to the *Falso Positivos* (False Positives) scandal that rocked Colombia in 2012.

The *Falsos Positivos* was a scandal where the army units were found guilty of the extrajudicial killing civilians and dressing them up as FARC Guerrillas to present them as combat kills. The majority of the *Falso Positivos*, approximately 3,800 since 1986, have taken place in rural areas¹⁸. In one case a group of 19 men from a large suburb of Bogota called Soacha (Swah-cha) were lured out into the countryside by members of the Colombian military with the promise of employment. They were encouraged to bring their friends as well. Once the men arrived at the location, they were shot to death and then dressed up to look like enemy combatants. Many of the young men's bodies were dismembered or buried several hundred miles away from Soacha¹⁹. So far six military officers have been convicted and the Colombian prosecutors has made promises to pursue the more than 3,800 cases that have gone uninvestigated²⁰. The result of the false positive scandal is that displaced persons in general are very skeptical and nervous about

¹⁸ Adriaan , Alsema. Colombia Reports, "False Positives - Fact Sheet." Accessed February 12, 2014. <http://colombiareports.co/false-positives/>.

¹⁹ Ellie Mae, O'Hagan. Vice, "The Families of Colombia's 'False Positive' Victims Are Still Fighting for Justice." Accessed February 12, 2014. <http://www.vice.com/read/colombias-false-positives-scandal-lives-on>.

²⁰ Anastasia, Moloney. Thompson Reuters Foundation, "Interview: Colombian mother tackles military over son's murder." Accessed February 12, 2014. <http://www.trust.org/item/?map=interview-colombian-mother-tackles-military-over-sons-murder/>.

promises of employment. One of the participants who was referred to the BWSP project was a wife of one of the *Falso Positivos* from Soacha. When the staff of the BWSP met with her for the first time, she brought her father along with her and her boyfriend to the next meeting with the employer. From the beginning, it was very apparent that she was nervous about the entire encounter. Fortunately, per the BWSP protocol, the representative from the referring agency was there to help alleviate her fears. This protocol has helped ease the initial introduction period with other participants as well. Although BWSP staff always meets at the referring agency's location with the participant for the time, the participants are still nervous when they go to meet the employer for the initial interview. BWSP has noted that the participants always bring a husband, boyfriend or neighbor with them the first time to make sure the employer is of good standing and that the location is secure.

After talking to organizations, the BWSP then interviewed several employers to introduce and seek their support for the program. The BWSP talked with the following employers:

1. Grupo Texmoda (Women's clothing)
2. CoopserMujer (Janitorial Services)
3. Deep Dish Pizza (Restaurant)
4. Personal Growth Institute (English Learning Institute)
5. The Upstairs Institute
6. Adidas International
7. Tequendama Concrete

8. Pet Paws Dog Food (Pet Retail)
9. Sinergia Wellness Center (Massage and healing)
10. Fun N Learning (English Institute)

BWSP staff asked the following questions of each employer:

1. Does this kind of program exist in Bogota?
2. Would you use this kind of program?
3. Would this program help you increase the capacity of the organization?
4. What would prevent you from using this program?
5. What are the difficulties in employing displaced persons?
6. Are there any reasons that we should not pursue this program?

For the first question ***Does this kind of program exist in Bogota***, none of the employers knew of a program that was already in existence here in Bogota. All but one of the employers had never been approached by a non-profit or government entity to participate in some form of employment program strictly for displaced women. There are several international businesses that have social responsibility programs geared at providing opportunities for single mothers (Crepe's and Waffles and WOK). For the second question, ***would your organization benefit from this kind of program***, eight out of 10 employers had an initial reaction that yes they would benefit from the use of this kind of employment. Two of the employers stated that they were not sure because of liability issues. On the third question, ***would this program help you increase the capacity of the organization***, nine out of 10 employers thought that they could use the extra help in their

businesses. The smaller businesses (1-10) employees thought the extra assistance would help them expand the capacity of their business, while the larger businesses with more than 50 employees didn't think that the new employees would decrease or increase their capacity. 10 out of 10 employers stated that they wanted to participate because they understood the need to help out the displaced in Colombia the larger businesses usually had some kind of social responsibility department or initiative that was in charge of creating opportunities for vulnerable populations. On the fourth question, ***what would prevent you from using this program*** five out of 10 employers stated that the Colombian laws related to prohibiting labor intermediation could be a barrier to hiring a displaced problem. This preoccupation stems from recent changes to labor laws by the Colombian government. In 2011 the Government of Colombia and the United States signed a free trade agreement. In accordance with this agreement, the GoC agreed to pass sweeping labor rights legislation designed to increase the amount of formal employment. One of the laws (Code 23 of the Colombian Labor Code)²¹ in particular stipulates that employers are obligated to pay for a worker's social security, health care and provide occupational health insurance for all employers. In order for a worker to qualify as an employee of a business there are three conditions that have to be met:

1. The worker has to be taking direction from while on the job
2. The worker has to be performing the work his or her self.
3. The worker must be receiving monetary compensation for his or her work.

²¹ Colombian Ministry of Labor, "Colombian Ministry of Labor Codes." Accessed March 4, 2014. <http://www.mintrabajo.gov.co/colabora>.

Once these three conditions are met a worker performing a task at a business is considered to have a labor contract²². While it is suggested that the worker and employer have a written contract to spell out the terms, often times one does not exist. Nonetheless, Colombian labor law still recognizes the relationship as a contractual one even if it is verbal. This legislation has had both positive and negative results. The first is that millions of Colombian workers are now guaranteed to have health insurance, social security and occupational health insurance. The negative impact is that many businesses are setting up third-party subcontracting schemes to avoid having a direct employment relationship with the worker and to avoid paying the government mandated benefits. Therefore, it is much harder for a company to take on a short-term employee for three months as an apprentice or intern unless they are absolutely 100% sure they want to hire this person. The BWSP is asking the employer to not only train the participant, but to also consider them for permanent employment at the end of the three-month period, sometimes making it hard for the BWSP staff to convince employers to take a chance on someone they aren't sure of. The BWSP now provides the benefits for the participants when necessary; however, many employers are still skeptical about committing to taking on new employees because of this provision.

For the fifth question ***what are the difficulties in hiring or employing displaced persons***, eight out of 10 employers said the issue of insecurity could be a problem. Insecurity could come from theft from the fact that a displaced person could still be being pursued by an armed group, or because of the location in which they lived. The last point

²² Colombian Ministry of Labor, "Frequently Asked Questions - Labor Contracts." Accessed February 12, 2014. <http://www.mintrabajo.gov.co/preguntas-frecuentes/contrato-de-trabajo.html>.

about location speaks to the issue of the strata system discussed earlier. There is a perception among many employers that a person living in a strata one neighborhood could be followed to work by someone who would then rob the business. Another worry was the fear of extortion in that a person living in a strata one neighborhood could be forced to pay protection money by an illegally armed group. This situation actually occurred with one of the current BWSP participants. This participant worked at a motorcycle shop, as a salesperson when the FARC demanded that she deliver 10 motorcycles to them within the next few days. This participant refused to comply with the FARC's request and went to the authorities to report the incident. A few days later, four armed men showed up at her parent's house demanding her whereabouts. Her parents persuaded the men that they did not know where she was. The men then decided to wait for her return a few kilometers up the road. Luckily, the participant was tipped off that the FARC were looking for her, so she did not return home that evening. Instead, with the assistance of a family member, she left that evening with her 16-year-old daughter and drove non-stop eight hours, on a motorcycle, to Bogota. She now lives in the Southern part of Bogota in a strata one neighborhood. To make matters worse, the FARC member who originally attempted the extortion, was rumored to have come to Bogota looking for this participant. As if the writing of this paper, nothing ever came of this threat. Nonetheless, this case highlights the kinds of fears about insecurity that employers have about hiring displaced persons. This case also speaks to why employers prefer to hire family members or persons who are a part of their personal network. For the sixth and final question, ***is there a reason that we should not pursue this program***, 10

out of 10 employers didn't see any reason why the BWSP staff shouldn't at least give it a try despite some of their apprehensions.

One organization, The International Red Cross of Bogota emphasized, that the BWSP should be careful to make sure the BWSP is not duplicating the efforts of other organizations as the BWSP developed its services. Their main concern was that the BWSP needed to make sure that it was not giving the same client identical services. Abuse of the system has been rampant in the past with displaced persons attempting to go to different organizations to see what they can get. The concept of *Do No Harm* is very applicable to this situation. As stated in the lecture by Professor Kim Wilson, of Tufts University, international aid organizations need to be careful that they are not crowding out the efforts of the local community and potentially creating disharmony among organizations that are already providing services to populations in need. International organizations need to be aware that they can do more harm than good and often times can create situations with negative unintended consequences²³.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

After conducting the initial research and engagement of the community, the staff of the BWSP proceeded with the implementation of the project and returned to the United States to conduct fundraising. Upon returning to Bogota four months later, the BWSP staff began to implement the project. The first task was to loop back around and connect with all of the referring agencies and employers to let them know that the BWSP was ready to begin implementing the project. The employers first had to let the BWSP

²³ Wilson, Kim. GMAP Lecture: Planning and Delivering Aid: Practical Approaches. August 30, 2013

know if and what jobs they had available along with the employee profile they were looking for. The referring organizations also need to identify potential candidates who fit the profile the employers were looking for. Almost immediately, the BWSP received two potential participants from CCAL and one from CAMIG. Over the course of two meetings, the BWSP staff met with the potential participants to explain how the program worked and to insure that the women were interested in moving forward. Once the women agreed to participate in the project, an intake, assessment and case file with the following information was created for each participant:

1. Resume (Biographical data)
2. Participant Agreement With BWSP
3. Questionnaire (Pre/Post)
4. Proof of Identity and displacement
5. Payment Schedule/Agreement
6. Time Cards

Each document was critical to insure accountability and compliance from both a financial and documentation perspective. The participant questionnaire, in particular, was used to capture any changes in the women's lives during the training period. The questionnaire was administered on the first and last day of the three-month training period. The questionnaire captured key findings such as changes in income, location, family status and the overall mental well being of the participants. Some of the key findings are discussed later on the analysis. The participant's file is important to make sure there was an element of case management to keep track of the participant's

progress on a regular basis and maintain a historical record of each of the services provided to the participants.

A resume is then created and sent out to the prospective employer. The employer reviews the resume, interviews the candidate and agrees to train the prospective participant. The participant then works with the employer over the course of the three months with the goal of learning while on the job. The BWSP staff then follow-up with the participants and the employer every two weeks on payday to make sure everything is going fine and/or address any problems that may have arisen. At the end of the three months, the intention is that the employer will want to hire the participant as a permanent employee. If the employer does not hire the participant however, then at the minimum the participant should at least feel confident enough to find employment on her own with the newly added skills and experience learned over the past three months. While the subsidized wage portion of the program is over, if the participant is still looking for work, then the BWSP staff will assist them with finding unsubsidized employment. Out of the 15 BWSP participants who have fully completed the training, nearly all have gone on to be employed by the employer more than six months. This is long-term employment rate better than the U.S. federal guidelines of 50% discussed earlier. For those that have not been hired, they have found employment with other businesses. One of the major risks with this program is that employers can simply use the worker for three months and then not hire them at the end of the training period. To try and mitigate this possibility from happening, the BWSP does it's best to match the participant with the most compatible job opportunity that fits their skills and future aspirations so they will

succeed. The BWSP also seeks employers who are looking to expand and are in need of hiring another person, but may not quite be at the point where they have the time and energy to go through the hiring process. The opportunity to train a worker without having to pay them a salary is an attractive option for the employer to try someone on out with no strings attached. **Attachment 1** is a visual representation of a participant's life cycle in the project. Now that we have analyzed how the program works, we will try to discern whether or not the BWSP project is indeed the right intervention by analyzing some of the key findings and indicators to determine if the program will stick, spread and were there positive surprises.

LESSONS LEARNED

Increase In A Participant's Well-being. All of the participants reported that the well being of their families improved during the three-month training period. A key surprise was that several of the participants reported that they began taking their small children to doctor's visits. Another finding was the improvement of their mental state due to a reduction in stress from worrying about their immediate needs. Having a steady dependable income also provided them with an ability to begin thinking about their long-term future as well and where they might like to see their career go.

Gender Programming. On three occasions, the BWSP had employment opportunities lined up for participants to begin working after being accepted by the employer. Unfortunately, in two of the cases, the participant's husband and boyfriend stopped them from working. One participant was working with her husband doing recycling on a daily basis. The husband told her that working during the hours of 9:00a.m.

to 2:00p.m. would get in the way of their informal recycling business. Unfortunately, she never started working.

In the other instance, the woman's boyfriend did not feel comfortable with her working in the office where she was hired, even though he attended the interview and met the employer and staff at the location. BWSP staff later learned that her husband was threatened by her working while he didn't have a job. After both of these instances, the BWSP makes every attempt to engage the significant others in the hiring process to make sure they don't feel threatened by the prospect of their wife or girlfriend finding employment. This kind of gender programming is key to making sure the program does its best to include significant others in the entire process. The BWSP has to make sure the significant others understand the benefits of having a steady income while seeing himself as a partner and beneficiary of the training.

Scaling Up One of the biggest challenges for the BWSP will be its ability to scale up significantly. As mentioned above, the cost per participant to complete a full three-month training cycle is \$600. As it stands, the BWSP needs to raise about \$6,000 alone just cover the subsidized wages of 10 participants and another 10% to cover the administrative expenses. Last year, the BWSP struggled to raise approximately \$8,000 dollars from individual donors, which is currently the only source of funding. Should the project attempt to scale up, it would require extra personnel. Each staff member costs the project approximately \$2,000/year. A staff member working on the project conducting employer outreach, job development and participant registration can handle a case load of approximately 10 ten participants per quarter. Should the project be wish to scale up

to 20 participants, it would require the addition of another staff person and another \$8,000 to cover the program costs as well. If the project scaled up without the proper funds to hire another staff person, the quality of the attention that BWSP staff could pay to the participants would diminish significantly as they would be able to spend less time solving the other issues that arise during a placement. As of the writing of this paper, one of the BWSP participants experienced domestic abuse and called the BWSP staff seeking assistance because she has no immediate support network in Bogota. She also called the employer to explain that she could not continue to work because she now has child care issues. These kinds of issues come up in at least half of the cases and BWSP staff must be ready to respond and make referrals and connections to resources necessary in order for the women get the assistance they need to not only continue to advance in their careers, but also their lives and remain safe. Should the BWSP scale up exponentially, it would need to take into account its ability to respond to the participants non-employment related needs in order for it to be of full benefit to the community. A plan to scale up under the current case management model, starting with one volunteer administrative staff and one paid staff, would look something like the following:

Scaling Up Model for the Bogota Wage Subsidy Project

Participants	Staff	Admin Staff	Funding Required for Subsidies and staff Salaries
10	1	1	\$8,000
20	2	1	\$16,000
30	2	1	\$21,000

40	2	1	\$32,000
50	5	2	\$30,000

As you can see, the more participants that are added, the more the costs increase and the need for more personnel increase. The program could simply not add staff as the number of participants increases, but that would drive down the quality and leave less time for the staff member to have meaningful conversations and facilitate connections to other services which are a critical factor of the BWSP's success and overall usefulness to the community. The same program managed by the Center for Asians and Pacific Islanders (referenced earlier in the paper) executed the program with one employment counselor and one administrative staff member for 62 women/year or 15 women/quarter. The difference however, was that the program was part of a larger community organization that also had housing, health, transportation and social services on site to help address other problems that arose. Again, should the BWSP scale up rapidly, it would have to address the trade offs that come with increasing the quantity verses providing deeply individualized and hands-on services and support. An exponential increase in quantity could end up diminishing the services the BWSP provides resulting in the loss of goodwill and trust from the community.

CONCLUSION

In analyzing the progress of the Bogota Wage Subsidy project and whether or not it is indeed the correct solution to helping displaced women in Bogota Colombia find

employment, there are three areas to consider in weighing whether or not the project was successful:

1. Does the project stick?
2. Does the project have the potential to spread?
3. Were there any positive surprises?

Regarding the stickiness of the project it is clear that there is both a need and a demand for the project in Bogota Colombia. One of the indicators that the BWSP used to measure this is that the participants have all referred family member and neighbors to the BWSP on a monthly basis. As a matter of fact, a current participant has referred two of her friends to the project and on a weekly basis the two referrals are calling the BWSP staff to see if they have found employment opportunities indicating that the community has welcomed the project. Furthermore, government agencies such as the Pan American Development Foundation FUPAD and the Bogota Mayor's office have expressed interest in collaborating with the BWSP.

Regarding the project's potential to spread, the BWSP has developed a strong network of five NGO agencies along with more than 10 employers, to help carry out the activities. All have expressed their willingness to continue working with the project. The project has also been approached by several organizations (CCAL and Project Protect) to see if it would be interested in starting initiatives in other cities in Colombia such as Medellin, Cartagena and Cali. At this point, however, the issues of scalability make expansion very difficult.

On the third and final point about finding surprises, the BWSP was recently surprised when a local collaborative partner, CAMIG, referred 30 women to the program. One of the challenges for the BWSP is that it has experienced inconsistent referrals with short periods of no referrals at all. Suddenly out of the blue, CAMIG called to say they wanted the BWSP to come to their location to talk with 30 women in their organization about the program. The BWSP staff reported that after the presentation all of the women expressed interest in participating in the program. As it stands the BWSP staff is in the process of following up with all of the potential participants on an individual bases. This kind of enthusiasm and demand for services was a nice surprise and validation that the BWSP is on the right track to make a positive contribution to the lives of displaced women in Bogota Colombia.

As of this writing, the Bogota Wage Subsidy Project has helped 15 displaced women find employment Bogota. Of those 15 participants, 10 have continued to work six months or longer. The goals for 2012 and 2013 were to help 10 displaced women annually find long-term employment. While the project fell short of this stated goal, the first two years helped inform BWSP staff greatly on how to improve its efforts. One of the major stumbling blocks the BWSP encountered was matching the participant with the employers needs. Because of the BWSP's engagement with the employer on the front end, the majority of the employers kept their requirements very basic. Typically the only skills one needed were the right attitude, a willingness to learn and a high-school education. Nonetheless, there were three employers whom initially agreed to keep their requirements basic, but in the end, really wanted persons with a higher skill level. This

happened in three instances. The BWSP staff therefore has to be much more diligent in finding the correct employers for the program and take additional time on the front end to work with employers to manage expectations. The BWSP also had very little success in working with the larger companies like Adidas Colombia, Argos and Tequendama Concrete given. Typically larger national and international companies needed to get clearance from legal and risk management departments before they could even consider participating. The BWSP had greater success in recruiting the smaller local businesses where the owner could make a decision without going through several layers of administrative bureaucracy.

The project demonstrated that there is room for a subsidized wage training program in Bogota Colombia, however, due to the labor laws in Colombia, the way in which the business structure is set up might have to be approached differently. The BWSP was set up as a non-profit 501c3 in the United States and as a *Fundacion Sin Animo Lucro* (non-profit) in Colombia. Due to labor laws, foundations are not allowed to act as a temporary agency where the BWSP pays the women's wages while working at an off-site location. Therefore, in both 2012 and 2013, the BWSP has not been in compliance with Colombian labor laws. In order for the BWSP to be in compliance the project will need to set up a separate for profit entity that would manage the subcontracting of the participants out to the companies. This is one of the key decision points that the BWSP will face in 2014 as it decides whether to continue to pursue supporting displaced women through subsidized wages and if so, how will the board and executive director maintain the funding stream that is needed.

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Attachment 1

Participant Life Cycle

