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Argidius began partnering with the organisation Thrive in 2013, drawn to its unique blend of financing and social commitment. Thrive offers interest-free financing to small businesses. These loans are repaid not in cash but by donating an equivalent value of job training or basic necessities to the most vulnerable in their communities.

“When we were accepted for the programme, we couldn’t believe something good was finally happening,” Dora smiles. The couple received an Italian food mixer, weighing scales and a computer.

Thrive gets to know every business it makes a loan to, as well as the communities and ‘end recipients.’ This helps them create a network of socially responsible businesses that serve their communities over the long term.

“Of equal importance to us was the advice and mentoring we were given from Thrive,” Christian says. “It helped us identify new markets, improve our customer service and, most of all, set a price for the doughnuts that reflected their worth. That made a big difference for us as a small business. We doubled the price of doughnuts and they continued to sell. And then demand grew.” The couple have a good sales model – a team of travelling reps who purchase and then resell the doughnuts to schools and markets.

“The turn-around has felt like a miracle,” says Dora. “Since Thrive began supporting the

company, we’ve had a 200% growth in sales. Our boys are also doing well. They go to school twice a week and also help us with the business. We never use the word disability in our home. We involve them as much as we can in our working lives.”

Dora and Christian’s charity ‘repayment’ is helping other parents of children with Williams-Beuren Syndrome. “We teach parents how to bake and sell their own products and how to do this whilst enjoying their children’s company,” says Dora. “We encourage them to accept their children as they are and embrace the life they’ve been given.”

“The majority of Thrive entrepreneurs are so inspired by the impact their gifts have on others that they continue to give, transforming themselves from someone in need to someone whose donations help fortify their community,” says Jenny Mejia from Thrive Guatemala. “Fifty-nine percent of Thrive entrepreneurs keep making long-term donations to their communities.”

Christian and Dora say that whilst they are happy with what they have created for their family and business, they have dreams to expand it further. “We want Donas California to be the biggest doughnut centre in the region, with different franchises,” Dora enthuses. “Our journey so far has not always been an easy one,” Christian adds. “But I wouldn’t change my life for anything.”



Hear more from Dora Solares and Christian Herrera

WE EXIST TO GIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS THE DIGNITY THEY DESERVE

It’s early afternoon in Sinai slum, Nairobi and Josephine Suleiman is tiptoeing her way around pools of rain. Dressed in a brightly coloured blouse and dark jeans, she walks with her head raised, eyes lighting up when she sees a teenage girl washing clothes in a bucket by the side of the road, a sleeping child strapped to her back.

Josephine embraces the girl, introduces her as Faith and kisses the baby on the top of its head. Faith’s face brightens, she exchanges a few words with Josephine but she seems restless. Calling to an older woman selling charcoal, she unstraps the baby, planks it on the woman’s lap and runs off down the street.

“She has a young baby but nobody to support her,” Josephine explains. “She’s on the move trying to find work, washing clothes and fetching water to make ends meet as well as caring for her baby. It’s not easy but she’s trying hard.”

Josephine opened Olivelink Healthcare maternity clinic in 2013, wanting to create a safe place for women and girls to give birth. “I was working in a hospital about seven kilometers from here and I kept meeting women from this slum who were walking long distances to get maternity care,” she says. “I discovered that many women were giving birth at home, sometimes in

squalid conditions because of the lack of maternity services.”

Sinai is one of around 200 slum settlements in Nairobi and is home to an estimated 100,000 people and the main provider of labour to the city’s industrial area. Most residents live in extreme poverty in over-crowded shacks and lack access to basic amenities including clean drinking water, electricity and toilets.

Josephine had saved some money from her previous job working in a bank. The women from Sinai who had become her friends helped identify a place where she could rent premises. “That’s how the clinic started,” Josephine smiles.

“Rates of violence against women are high in Sinai,” says Josephine. “Rape is common and there are a lot of single mothers. We have girls as young as thirteen giving birth in the clinic. Few have been to school and it’s hard to break



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