

Learning from the Evidence on Forced Displacement

Program Brief





Program Brief

A new policy approach to the forced displacement challenge

In recent years, forced displacement has become a phenomenon of tragic proportions. Every year, more people are forced to flee their homes to safer shelter, either within their countries' borders or in the low- and middle-income countries where 76 percent of the forcibly displaced find refuge. A historian writing in the 22nd century may regard the first quarter of the 21st century as a pivotal period for the history of forced displacement, when the number of forcibly displaced persons more than doubled from approximately 40 million people in the early 2000s to 108.4 million people at the end of 2022. This amounts to a staggering 1 in every 74 people on earth. These figures are provoked by protracted conflicts and new conflicts, violence, persecution, or severe political and economic crises taking place in many parts of the world.

Displacement is rarely a short-term predicament. Many who become displaced remain displaced for years. At the end of 2022, 67 percent of the 108.4 million people who have fled their homes endured protracted displacement. For the displaced, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities become uncertain.

Most of the displaced take refuge in low- and middle-income countries. Media coverage often focuses on refugees fleeing into affluent nations, such as the influx of Syrians and Ukrainians to countries in Europe. However, nearly seven out of ten people who flee violence are internally displaced within the borders of their home countries or live as refugees in neighboring low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).¹

A new policy resolved started taking shape at the height of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015. Increasingly, forced displacements were viewed as a humanitarian *and* development challenge. Development and humanitarian practitioners recognized the protracted nature of forced displacement situations and their impact on many already struggling low- and middle-income countries. They also recognized the need for more cooperation and coordination between humanitarian and development actors in these contexts. The ratification in 2019 of the **Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)** was an important milestone in support of a shift to an improved forced displacement response, anchored on the principle of 'responsibility sharing'.

In the implementation of this new policy resolve, forced displacement stakeholders, from host governments to donor governments as well as development and humanitarian organizations, were confronted with the stark lack of data and evidence that could guide policy. In 2015, reliable microdata on refugees was scarce and difficult to obtain; for internally displaced persons (IDPs), such data was nearly non-existent. Not only was data on displaced populations hard to find, but when available, it was rarely comparable to the data collected on host communities through national household surveys. In some contexts, the absence of comparable data on displaced and host populations put humanitarian organizations such as the UNCHR in a difficult situation, where they were unable to justify why displaced populations may need their support beyond the initial phase of displacement.

The difficult data landscape discouraged researchers from pursuing forced displacement research. As a result, economics research on the forcibly displaced was rare and limited to studies on refugees in high-income countries. There were also no econometrics models that could account for the fundamental differences between migrant populations and the forcibly displaced, such as the planned versus unplanned nature of movements, the oftentimes complete loss of

¹ Data points in these paragraphs are taken from UNHCR's Global Trends Report 2022.

assets and documentation, and the trauma involved with escaping to save lives.² In terms of data availability and quality as well as methods, the gaps were enormous. This constrained opportunities for evidence-based policymaking.

Eight years later, the state of data and evidence on forced displacement has improved significantly. Datasets representative of both displaced and host populations are now available, thanks to efforts being made by host countries to include refugees and IDPs in national surveys and other data collections.³ Such efforts are supported by initiatives such as the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement⁴ whose mission is to improve the availability of comparable socio-economic data on displaced and host populations, and the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS),⁵ whose objective is to aid the collection of such data through the development of international recommendations on how to produce, compile and disseminate data on these populations.

Filling knowledge gaps: Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement

The *Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement* program was conceived to fill this critical research gap. Inspired by a successful collaboration between the World Bank and UNHCR in the Middle East and North Africa region, the partners forged a formal partnership with financial support from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO). Subsequently, the program was structured into six pillars.

The first pillar, ***Global studies***, financed large multi-country and multi-partner research projects that addressed key questions of global interest in four sectors - education, health, social protection, and jobs - and two thematic areas - gender and social cohesion. As an example, the social protection global study sought to generate evidence on how humanitarian and national social protection systems may be effectively linked to meet the needs of displaced households and host communities alike.

The second pillar, ***Operational support***, funded impact evaluations of specific World Bank or UNHCR-funded projects. These include the evaluation of access to the Public Distribution System (PDS) for displaced households in Iraq, the evaluation of a government graduation program in Afghanistan, the evaluation of the UNCHR cash reintegration assistance to Afghan returnees from Pakistan, the evaluation of a cash for work project in Bangladesh, and the evaluation of a socioemotional skills intervention in schools in Jordan.

The third pillar, ***Policy support/Focus studies***, summarized and synthesized lessons emerging from the entire research program and supported the program with additional methodological studies, such as those testing imputation methods to estimate poverty levels of displaced households. The pillar was also leveraged to produce demand-driven research such as methodological papers to predict the spread of COVID-19 in camp settings.

The fourth pillar, the ***Post-Doc Young Fellows Program***, welcomed nationals of low- and middle-income countries to expand the network of researchers dedicated to forced displacement. The program placed 24 Fellows into World Bank and UNHCR units with the objective of conducting research relevant to projects and operations. Following the fellowship, many of the fellows were hired by the World Bank, UNHCR, and other UN organizations and continued working on forced displacement research.

The fifth pillar, the ***Microdata Initiative***, provided technical assistance to the UNHCR to improve on its refugee registration system and, more generally, the collection of socio-economic data. In 2019, thanks to initial funding from Denmark, the US, and the European Union, this initiative developed into a full-fledged data partnership between the World Bank and the UNHCR - the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement (JDC) based in Copenhagen. Under this pillar, *Building the*

² The Economics of Forced Displacement: An Introduction, 2016.

³ For example, Uganda ([Refugee and Host Communities Household Survey 2018](#)), Kenya ([Understanding the Socioeconomic Conditions of Refugees in Kenya: Volume A - Kalobeyei Settlement: Results from the 2018 Kalobeyei Socioeconomic Survey](#)), and Nigeria ([Profile of Internally Displaced Persons in North-East Nigeria 2018](#)).

⁴ <https://www.jointdatacenter.org/>

⁵ <https://egrisstats.org/>

Evidence maintained the development of the [Fragility, Conflict, and Violence data collection](#), a live data platform that is, part of the World Bank microdata library and regularly updated with curated datasets relevant to situations of fragility, conflict and violence.

The sixth pillar, the **Research Uptake Program**, disseminated research findings among stakeholders and the public including through blogs, newsletters, a seminar series, workshops, and a training program titled *Learning from the Evidence on Forced Displacement*. The training program was comprised of eight modules delivered weekly in the last quarter of 2023. The program received high levels of interest and participation from the World Bank, UNHCR, UN agencies, donor governments, host governments, and think-tanks. In 2024, the contents will be available to the public as self-paced e-learning.

In its strengthening of data availability and research capacity, the research program has surpassed expectations.

Its findings represent novel evidence that can help governments, development institutions, and humanitarian and civil society organizations working with forcibly displaced and host populations to improve policy and programming. The program also advanced research methodology and catalyzed new publicly available data platforms and resources on forced displacement.

At the time of the program's closure in December 2023, the partnership had marked seven years of robust research produced with a budget of US\$16.5 million. The output included 144 new studies, of which 36 were published in top economics, development, health, migration, and population journals. Table 1 below showcases the number of studies by topic and geographic area.

Table 1 – Final Number of Studies by Topic and Geographic Area⁶

Theme	Global	Europe & Central Asia	Latin America & Caribbean	Middle East & North Africa	South Asia & East Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Total
Education	2		1	3	1	4	11
Health	5		2	1	3	3	14
Jobs/Livelihoods/Labor Market Impacts	3	1	3		4	9	20
Social Protection	7	1	1	4	1	1	15
Social Cohesion	7	9	7	4	1	12	40
Gender	4		1	4		14	23
Data/Methods	7			5	1	5	18
Other	1				1	1	3
Total	36	11	15	21	12	49	144

⁶ The complete list of studies is enclosed at the end.

Program results and impact

Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement has achieved results on various levels. It has **improved the availability of quality data, evidence, and methods** on forced displacement in low- and middle-income countries. It has **promoted evidence-based programming and policymaking** in the field of forced displacement by informing programs and policy. Finally, it has provided a basis to **inform future forced displacement research programs**.

Improving data, evidence, and methods

In terms of improving the research landscape on forced displacement, the program contributed in three ways: by increasing research quantity and quality, strengthening research content, making existing data more accessible, and advancing research methods.

- **Increasing research quantity and quality.** Between 2016 and 2023, research on forced displacement skyrocketed, and the *Building the Evidence* program significantly contributed to such growth with a total of 144 studies, including 89 working papers and 36 journal publications. As of November 2023, three dozen of the program's papers have been published in top ranking journals, including *Nature Medicine*, the *American Economic Review*, the *Journal of Development Economics*, the *Journal of Development Studies*, *World Development*, and the *Journal on Migration and Health*. These numbers are expected to grow as papers advance through the journal publication processes.
- **Strengthening research content.** With the *Gendered Dimensions of Forced Displacement Research Program*, the program generated the first evidence base on the intersectionality between gender and forced displacement. A similar initiative, entitled *Forced Displacement and Social Cohesion*, conducted groundbreaking work on social cohesion and forced displacement in low- and middle-income countries. Similarly, the examination of the integration of healthcare systems in forced displacement contexts - *The Big Questions in Forced Displacement and Health* - was the first initiative of its kind in the research landscape.
- **Making existing data more accessible.** The availability of forced displacement data has grown exponentially. Tens of representative datasets on forcibly displaced households and host communities are now available on the UNHCR and World Bank microdata libraries. World Food Program food price data are now available with filled data gaps on the FCV collection of the World Bank microdata library.⁷ This development has allowed hundreds of scholars and scores of international organizations to carry out research on the forcibly displaced.
- **Advancing research methods.** The program has contributed to advancing poverty estimation methods for displaced populations.⁸ Such methods are now being widely used by the UNHCR in contexts such as the Ukraine, Colombia, and Bangladesh, resulting in a better characterization of these populations that allows for more targeted programming and advocacy efforts. Furthermore, the program allowed the development of a new machine-learning approach to fill the gaps in the World Food Program's food prices series.⁹

⁷ As of November 2023, the FCV collection contains 1340 datasets.

⁸ (Estimating Poverty among Refugee Populations : A Cross-Survey Imputation Exercise for Chad, 2020); (Measuring Poverty in Forced Displacement Contexts, 2023); (Estimating Poverty for Refugee Populations : Can Cross-Survey Imputation Methods Substitute for Data Scarcity, 2019)

⁹ (Publication: Estimating Food Price Inflation from Partial Surveys, 2021)

Box 1: Selected Key Sectoral and Thematic Findings from the Research

The program delivered compelling findings across sectors and themes, including the selection below:

- A multi-country study covering Colombia, Jordan, Ethiopia, and Uganda, found that **overall, labor market effects of hosting refugees are modest, or even positive, although some host country workers can be adversely affected as others enjoy new opportunities.**
- Research from Roraima state, the Brazilian state most affected by the influx of Venezuelan refugees, found that **the net fiscal impact of refugee presence was zero** - what the host government spends in the refugee response is offset by refugees' income tax contribution.
- The gender global study found that **there are important differences between displaced and non-displaced households along gender dimensions and that household composition is an important determinant of such differences.** For example:
 - In Somalia, displaced women work more than non-displaced women but earn less.
 - In both Somalia and Jordan, male-headed households were income poorer than female-headed households, but single females experienced the highest poverty rates.
 - Displaced households with more female earners were at lower poverty risk, while for non-displaced households, those with more male earners were at lower poverty risk.
- According to the social cohesion global study, **more interaction between hosts and displaced yields to better levels of social cohesion.** A related impact evaluation found that **simple messaging about the positive impacts of refugee presence on hosts, delivered alongside a project supporting small businesses in an urban setting, can improve social cohesion.** The social protection research found that **host perceptions of displaced households are driven by perceived rather than the actual levels of assistance received by the displaced.**
- Another social protection study found that **returnees who received a higher amount of cash reintegration assistance upon return were better off many months after return** on important dimensions such as asset ownership and possession of documentation, compared to those who received a smaller amount.
- The health global study research conducted in Bangladesh, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Jordan found that **the cost of health care for users is the most important factor limiting accessing to health care, both for displaced and host populations.** Further, displaced populations face specific challenges such as service delivery gaps in mental health care, treatment of chronic diseases, and specialized care.
- The education global study research conducted in Chad, Colombia, Jordan, and Pakistan found that **resource constraints, such as the availability of secondary schools, but also language of instruction, limit the ability of countries to implement inclusive education systems.**
- **Equitable provision of social protection** to forcibly displaced and hosts and **the targeted alignment of social protection services for forcibly displaced and their hosts is critical** for growing social protection in a socially cohesive environment.



Promoting Evidence-Based Programming and Policy Making

At the heart of *Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement* is the mission to better inform governments in designing policies and projects that improve the wellbeing of forcibly displaced populations and host communities. The following are some of the policy areas influenced by the program.

- **‘Graduation’ programming.** Positive findings from the impact evaluation of the Targeting the Ultra Poor Program in Afghanistan ([No Household Left Behind Afghanistan Targeting the Ultra Poor Impact Evaluation](#))¹⁰ informed the World Bank IDA-19 replenishment process, which translated into the allocation of more IDA resources to these types of programs. The findings informed the State of Economic Inclusion Report as well, which in turn influenced the World Bank Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice agenda and the projects pipeline.
- **The fiscal impacts of hosting refugees.** As part of the Young Fellows program, *Building the Evidence* produced one of the first papers quantifying the net fiscal impact of hosting refugees in the state in Brazil most affected by the influx of displaced Venezuelans. The research provided the first evidence base on the impact of displaced populations in the local economy of Roraima state, refuting claims that refugees burden host communities, and instead presenting evidence that refugees account for a net fiscal impact of zero on the local economy, as additional government expenditures for hosting them are offset by their tax contribution to the local economy.¹¹ Another study documented the non-formal barriers confronting Venezuelans while seeking work, a school placement, and social protection, despite formal legislation that grants them access to jobs, education, and social protection in Brazil.¹² According to UNHCR, these studies helped UNCHR ‘create solutions’ in close partnership with the Brazilian government.
- **Reforming social protection systems.** In Iraq, the program played a crucial role in enabling an evidence-driven reform of the social protection sector and particularly the reform of the Public Distribution System (PDS), one of the world’s largest food distribution programs, through an [impact evaluation](#) which examined the extent to which access to the PDS helped displaced households cope with the adverse effects of displacement.¹³ A Young Fellow paper also evaluated whether the government social protection targeting system would be effective in targeting displaced households.¹⁴
- **Designing gender-sensitive programs.** The program rapidly generated the first evidence base on the intersectionality between gender and forced displacement (the [Gendered Dimensions of Forced Displacement Research Program](#)). Selected papers will be published as part of a Special Issue in the *Journal of Development Studies* and two background papers were featured in the UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel Report on Internal Displacement. These papers represent novel evidence on the intersectionality between gender and forced displacement and provide a base for gender-sensitive programming in forced displacement contexts.
- **Designing programs that maintain and foster social cohesion.** The findings of the global study on social cohesion ([Forced Displacement and Social Cohesion](#)) formed the basis of a series of events and workshops, including in South Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia, during which stakeholders discussed the application of the findings in their respective country contexts. Eight background papers were published as part of a Special Issue in *World Development*.

10 (No Household Left Behind : Afghanistan Targeting the Ultra Poor Impact Evaluation, 2019)

11 (Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Brazil, 2021)

12 (Integration of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Brazil, 2021)

13 (Iraq’s Universal Public Distribution System : Utilization and Impacts During Displacement, 2020)

14 (How Can Vulnerable Internally Displaced Persons Be Transitioned from Humanitarian Assistance to Social Protection ? Evidence from Iraq, 2022)

Three areas of recommendation for addressing forced displacement

The analysis of common findings that emerged from the research program delivers the following three areas of recommendation: **collect and use data to inform policy and programming; promote inclusive approaches while addressing host populations' needs; and close the gap between policy and practice.**

Collect and use data to inform policy and programming

Effective policymaking requires data on the population it targets. Whether pertaining to education, health, social protection, or livelihoods, data on the forcibly displaced has increased in quantity and quality but remains insufficient in many contexts. An enormous data gap remains for IDPs, who are largely dependent on the capacity and political will of the government to count and support them. A lack of disaggregated socio-economic data can prevent effective targeting of programs. For example, as found in the Health Global Study, poor data on gender or mental health care needs can constrain the provision of specialized healthcare as much as the lack of accurate and timely epidemiological data constrains the planning and financial allocation processes of healthcare delivery. These considerations lead to the following recommendations:

- **Continue collecting data to improve understanding of both displaced and non-displaced household characteristics and design targeted programming and policy.** The protractedness of many displacement situations calls for targeted policies for two populations: the displaced and the hosts. Some datasets covering both populations are now available in countries such as Jordan, Bangladesh and Colombia, these datasets allow the generation of insights on the distinct needs of host and displaced populations. For example, according to a study on Syrian refugees in Jordan, Syrian adolescent girls do not enjoy the same level of mobility as their Jordanian counterparts, likely due to higher real and perceived safety threats in public spaces.¹⁵ This suggests the need for programming that enables safe mobility and access to safe spaces, especially for refugee girls. Investments in the collection and analysis of such data need to continue, particularly to fill the persisting enormous data gaps for internally displaced people.
- **Systematically collect data on program costs.** In the education sector, existing research lacks any cost-effectiveness analysis that indicates which programs and interventions may represent more value for money.¹⁶ Collecting adequate data on access to education and learning outcomes for displaced learners, as well as program expenditure data, emerged as a policy recommendation from the global study on education, which attempted to access cost data across organizations and contexts but failed to do so.¹⁷ Similarly, global study on jobs faced huge challenges accessing cost data. Despite the challenges, the research succeeded in delivering ground-breaking findings on the cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of different jobs support interventions.¹⁸
- **Invest in impact evaluation.** The program's impact evaluation work is pioneering in this emerging field. Results from [the Targeting the Ultra-Poor impact evaluation](#) in Afghanistan have been highly influential for policymaking. In forced displacement contexts, where policy can change suddenly, opportunities for rigorous evaluation may occur more often than expected. Some insightful evaluations made possible using existing administrative data delivered important findings. Two examples are the assessment of the cash reintegration assistance to Afghan returnees from Pakistan¹⁹ and the evaluation of the mass regularization of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia.²⁰ More investments in impact evaluation are needed to understand program impacts, as highlighted in the global study on jobs.

15 (How Do Gender Norms Shape Education and Domestic Work Outcomes The Case of Syrian Refugee Adolescents in Jordan, 2021)

16 (Forced Displacement and Education : Building the Evidence for What Works - Evidence Synthesis and Intervention Map, 2023)

17 (Forced Displacement and Education : Building the Evidence for What Works - Case Study Summary, 2023)

18 (Cost-Effectiveness of Jobs Projects in Conflict and Forced Displacement Contexts, 2022)

19 (More Is Better : Evaluating the Impact of a Variation in Cash Assistance on the Reintegration Outcomes of Returning Afghan Refugees, 2022)

20 (Give me your tired and your poor: Impact of a large-scale amnesty program for undocumented refugees, 2021)

Promote inclusive approaches while addressing host populations' needs

- Forced displacement can alter social cohesion in the short term by increasing existing inequalities via changes in prices, environmental pressure, straining of public services, and competition for scarce jobs. However, inclusive policies such as those that grant the right to work, freedom of movement, access to social services and the right to own and rent property can promote social cohesion and self-reliance of displaced populations.²¹ The following are key areas of recommendation emerging from the program to facilitate inclusive policies:
- **Bestow legal status.** Extending legal status to the forcibly displaced is one way to effectively implement inclusive policies. For example, granting the right to work to refugees can potentially reduce competition with host workers in informal jobs. Granting freedom of movement can reduce competition in labor markets around camps. Legal status is also critical in ensuring the ability and willingness of the forcibly displaced to access services such as healthcare, as found in the global study on health.²²
- **Recognize that there are winners and losers from a forced displacement crisis, especially in the short-term, and actively mitigate negative impacts.** Emerging evidence shows that, on average, communities mildly benefit from refugee presence. However, some segments of the host population may be adversely affected by forced displacement. For example, a meta-analysis study found that, when significant, decreases in employment and wages in the host community were more likely to occur in the short-term, in middle-income countries, and affect women as well as young and informal workers.²³ Policies are needed to mitigate the negative short-term impacts experienced by those who are losing out.
- **Promote the positive impact of hosting the displaced.** There is growing evidence that hosting displaced populations brings benefits to the host community. Research in Uganda revealed that households, particularly those involved in subsistence agriculture, benefit from living close to refugee settlements.²⁴ More research from Uganda finds that service provision improves for hosts in refugee-hosting areas compared to non-refugee hosting areas, due to development investments directed to these areas.²⁵ A study of Ethiopia shows that, by creating secondary occupations and triggering more demand for livestock products, refugee inflows bring substantial overall benefits to host communities.²⁶ Finally, an impact evaluation study in an urban setting in Uganda found that communicating to hosts about the benefits of inclusive approaches (in this case the benefits of Uganda's aid-sharing policy) can improve support for such inclusive policies.
- **Encourage interaction and inclusion.** Restrictive policies are often enacted in the name of protecting host populations and minimizing social tensions, yet the relationship between restrictive policies and attitudes towards displaced groups is not proven.²⁷ Instead, more interaction between host and displaced households seem to foster better social cohesion. In Colombia, respondents with less contact with Venezuelans primarily view the situation as an economic problem and tend to support more restrictive policies.²⁸ In East Africa, a study found a significant positive effect between refugee-host interaction in urban areas and the perception of hosts towards refugees.²⁹ Employing participatory approaches, trained facilitators, and public messaging to promote positive interactions and empathy between host residents and displaced persons was one of the recommendations emerging from the global study on social cohesion.³⁰

21 (Social Cohesion and Forced Displacement: A Synthesis of New Research, 2022)

22 (The Big Questions in Forced Displacement and Health, 2022)

23 (The impact of forced displacement on host communities: A review of the empirical literature in economics, 2021)

24 (How to Cope with a Refugee Shock Evidence from Uganda, 2022)

25 (Inclusive refugee-hosting can improve local development and prevent public backlash, 2023)

26 (Livelihood Impacts of Refugees on Host Communities : Evidence from Ethiopia, 2022)

27 (Attitudes and Policies toward Refugees : Evidence from Low- and Middle-Income Countries, 2022)

28 (Policy Preferences in Response to Large Migration Inflows, 2022)

29 (Social Cohesion and Refugee-Host Interactions : Evidence from East Africa, 2022)

30 (Social Cohesion and Forced Displacement: A Synthesis of New Research, 2022)

Close the gap between policy and practice

Some host countries are well intended in their policymaking and issue policies that are inclusive of displaced populations. Yet, the research found that gaps in policy and implementation remained and impeded the forcibly displaced from fully accessing opportunities. The strategies below can help close this implementation gap.

- **Expect barriers to implementation of policies, and follow-up policies with practical measures to eliminate them.** Favorable policies are not enough. Even in countries with inclusive policies for forcibly displaced populations, challenges remain in practice that can constrain the ability of the displaced to access basic services or earn sufficient income. For example, a global examination of the education sector, which included a review of 248 studies, found a frequent disconnect between official policies of inclusion of displaced learners in the national education systems and the practical exclusion of these students from educational opportunities and success.³¹ Another study found that Venezuelan students in Brazil were often put in lower grades in school despite the country's official policies of inclusion of refugees.³² In Colombia, the forcibly displaced face difficulties accessing state social protection systems due to the documentation and identification barriers.³³
- **Communicate inclusive policies to enhance acceptance in host communities.** A clear national policy of inclusion is an important starting point. Strong communication of inclusion policies, however, can be the missing link for successful policy implementation. In Colombia, strong messaging about including migrants in national systems helped to increase enrollment of Venezuelan children and adolescents in school.³⁴ In Uganda, the use of a simple 'informational intervention' about a cash and mentorship program for urban microentrepreneurs helped to foster social cohesion between hosts and refugees in a setting where refugees operate small businesses in the same sectors as hosts.³⁵ According to the global study on social protection, *perceived* levels of assistance towards displaced populations are the main determinants of negative sentiments towards displaced groups rather than the actual levels of assistance received.³⁶ Similarly, experimental evidence from Ethiopia and Uganda show that host workers' views of refugees depend on whether there are concerns about job competition, regardless of the actual degree of competition.³⁷
- **Prioritize addressing cost barriers that constrain patients' access to health care.** High prices of services that individuals need to bear, including informal costs such as transportation costs to a health center in rural areas, tend to deter the use of services and curtail outcomes. For example, across the countries examined for the global study on health – Bangladesh, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Jordan - price determined healthcare access for many displaced and some host populations.³⁸ Priority should be given to addressing cost as a barrier for both displaced and host populations.

Overall, the program reveals missed opportunities for more inclusion of the forcibly displaced, whose presence often brings benefits to the host economy. Conversely, missed education and work opportunities can adversely impact the host economy at large. Shifting the narrative on the forcibly displaced can be game-changing. We refer to 'human capital investments' when speaking of investments made for citizens of a country. Yet when talking about displaced populations, we emphasize costs rather than investments. It is time to change this narrative.

31 (Forced Displacement and Education : Building the Evidence for What Works - Evidence Synthesis and Intervention Map, 2023)

32 (Integration of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Brazil, 2021)

33 (Social protection responses to forced displacement in Colombia, 2022)

34 (Forced Displacement and Education : Building the Evidence for What Works - Case Study Summary, 2023)

35 (Can Redistribution Change Policy Views? Aid and Attitudes toward Refugees in Uganda, 2023)

36 (Linking social protection and humanitarian assistance: A toolkit to support social cohesion in displacement settings, 2022)

37 (Labor Market Impacts of Forced Displacement --- Jobs in Host Communities in Colombia, Ethiopia, Jordan, and Uganda, Forthcoming)

38 (The Big Questions in Forced Displacement and Health, 2022)



Informing the path forward

Research on forced displacement is only just beginning to imagine its potential. *Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement* is proud to have played a role in the evolution of this research field. Indeed, the field's scope for growth deserves research of its own; we list here only a fraction of its potential.

Future areas of research

There are realms of focus areas related to forced displacement that are waiting for more data, examination, and innovations in research methods. These areas for future research are as follows: the macroeconomics of forced displacement; the impact of forced displacement on infrastructure and the utilities; the environmental impact of forced displacement and climate change as a cause of displacement; poverty and well-being of the displaced and hosts, including child poverty and wellbeing; early childhood development in forced displacement contexts; mental health; long-term impacts; the costs of programs; the return of the displaced; and the intersectionality of forced displacement and socio-economic dimensions such as gender and poverty.

Furthermore, studying displaced populations presents unique challenges, such as their high mobility and the lack of data needed for program targeting. *Building the Evidence* has promoted methodological advancements in selected fields, for example, the development of data imputation methods suitable to estimate poverty among displaced households and alternative targeting approaches that may leverage innovative data. However, more advancements in research methods are needed.

High quality data that allows comparisons of displaced and host communities is now being collected in many host countries, with support from the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement. The center will continue promoting the collection of such data in the years to come.

More learning programs and demand-driven research

Today, there is widespread interest among forced displacement stakeholders in more research and learning on forced displacement. The UNHCR, for example, has made considerable investments in making data available for public use through their microdata library. UNHCR has also invested in expanding its economists' workforce. When the research program was launched, UNHCR employed one economist; today, more than twenty economists are based in country offices and tasked with the production of data and the generation of demand-driven research.

Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement has also significantly contributed to expanding the network of researchers working on forced displacement through the Young Fellows program. More forced displacement research is continuing in the World Bank through other research initiatives, such as the PROSPECTS partnership between the World Bank, UNHCR, IFC, UNICEF, and ILO, and the *Rome Jobs and Labor Mobility Center's* Innovation Challenge on Jobs and Migration.

Beyond World Bank and UNHCR efforts, numerous initiatives are working to advance research in this area. Innovations for Poverty Action and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) have launched the Displaced Livelihoods Initiative to generate and share new evidence on the impacts of livelihoods programs for displaced populations and host communities.³⁹ A partnership between the World Bank's Impact Evaluation unit and the World Food Program is starting to produce important new evidence of WFP's emergency programming.⁴⁰ The International Monetary Fund is also now conducting research on forced displacement and its macroeconomic impacts.

Finally, the weekly learning program [Learning from the Evidence on Forced Displacement – a Training Program](#), developed by *Building the Evidence* in collaboration with the Joint Data Center on Forced drew significant interest. As a result, the training will shift to an e-learning course; participants will be able to follow the training modules at their own pace. The e-learning program will begin in 2024. More training outreach is expected in the future.

³⁹ <https://poverty-action.org/displaced-livelihoods-initiative>

⁴⁰ <https://www.wfp.org/impact-evaluation>



List of Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement papers, by research pillar

Global studies

Education

1. [Evidence Synthesis and Intervention Map](#)
2. [Case Study Summary](#)
3. [Case Study from Colombia](#)
4. [Case Study from Jordan](#)
5. [Case Study from Chad](#)

Health

6. [World Bank Consortium: The Big Questions in Forced Displacement and Health](#)
7. [Bangladesh Country Report](#)
8. [Colombia Country Report](#)
9. [Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Report](#)
10. [Jordan Country Report](#)
11. [Preventing and Mitigating Indirect Health Impacts of COVID-19 on Displaced Populations in Humanitarian Settings](#)
12. [Family Violence Protection in the Context of COVID-19 and Forced Displacement | Release event](#)
13. [Addressing the Human Capital Dimension of the COVID-19 Response in Forced Displacement Settings](#)
14. [Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Colombia on utilization of medical services by Venezuelan migrants and Colombian citizens](#)
15. [Integration Through Health During Protracted Displacement: Case Studies From Colombia and Jordan](#)
16. [COVID-19 in humanitarian settings and lessons learned from past epidemics](#)
17. [Special Issue on Forced Displacement and Health \(forthcoming\), Journal on Migration and Health](#)

Social Protection

18. [Social Protection Responses to Forced Displacement](#)
19. [Social protection and forcibly displaced people: a literature review](#)
20. [Linking humanitarian assistance and social protection in response to forced displacement: an analytical framework](#)
21. [Integrating assistance to the displaced into a social protection system in Cameroon. An ideal, but in whose interests?](#)
22. [Social protection responses to forced displacement in Colombia](#)
23. [Humanitarian assistance and social protection responses to the forcibly displaced in Greece](#)
24. [Humanitarian assistance and social protection in contexts of forced displacement: effects on social cohesion](#)
25. [Basic needs and wellbeing in displacement settings: the role of humanitarian assistance and social protection](#)
26. [Adjusting social protection delivery to support displaced populations](#)
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