

Welcome to the event!

***‘Forced Displacement
and the Role of Research
in the 21st Century’***

June 8, 2023. Geneva.



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Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement

“Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement”

Insights from a Global Research Partnership Program

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UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



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Presentation

- Background
- Program's overview
- Key findings
- The state of research on FD
- Impacts on policies and programs

Background

- The 2011 Syrian crisis
- The 2015 EU migration “crisis”
- A new resolve: Increased political commitment and financial means
- An old problem: Lack of microdata and quality research on FDPs
- An experiment: “[The Welfare of Syrian Refugees](#)”. WB-UNHCR partnership using UNHCR administrative and survey data (34,000 downloads)
- Establishment of a formal multi-year research partnership (UK-WB-UNHCR) “*Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement (BEoFD)*” program

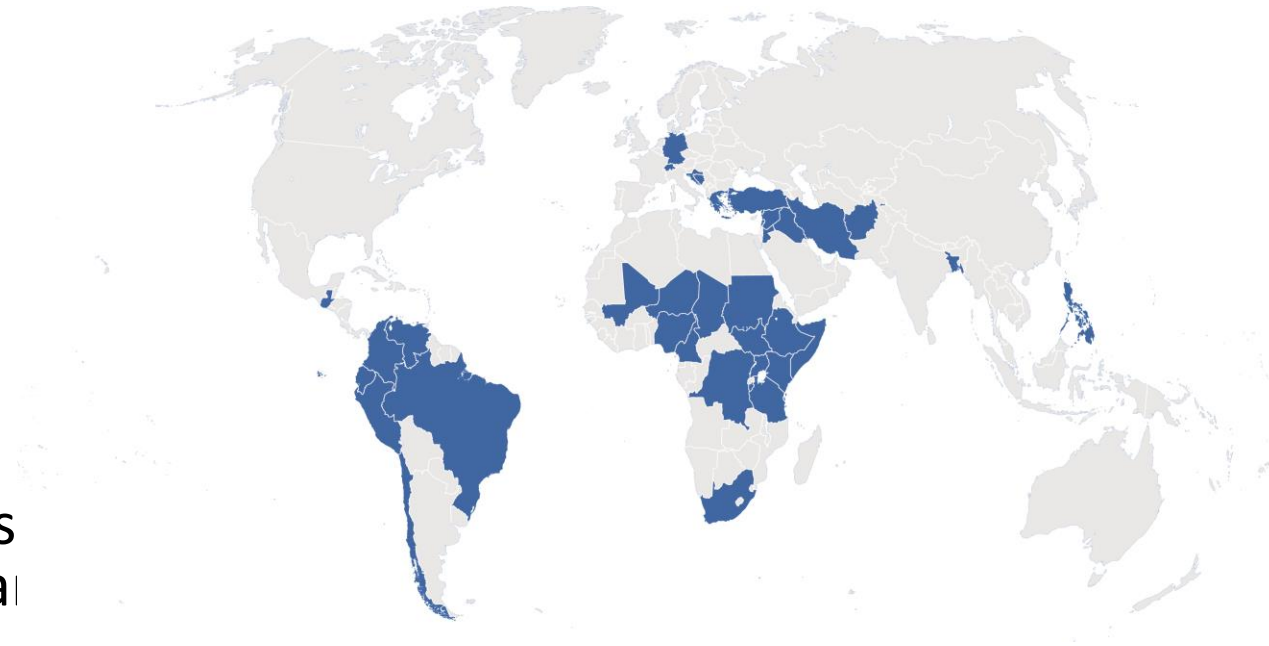
The Research Program

- 16 m USD (UK Aid)
- 7 years (2016-2023)
- 8 pillars:
 1. Global studies for global questions
 2. Impact evaluations of specific programs
 3. Focus studies on compelling questions
 4. Young Fellows Program
 5. Microdata initiative
 6. Data portal
 7. Uptake/dissemination program
 8. Training program

The Research Program

- 6 global research projects
- 15 impact evaluations
- 12 focus studies
- 24 young fellows
- 1 data portal
- A microdata program/JDC
- Seminar series, newsletters, policy notes
web portal, social media, training program

A total of 134 separate studies covering 36
countries, 200+ researchers



Distribution of Studies by area

<i>Theme</i>	Europe & Central Asia	Global	Latin America & Caribbean	Middle East & North Africa	South Asia & East Asia	Sub- Saharan Africa	Grand Total
Education				4		3	7
Gender		10	2	2		10	24
Health		7	2	1	3	3	16
Impact on hosts	2	1	1			4	8
Jobs/Livelihoods	1		1		4	10	16
Other (climate, land use)	1	1		2	1	1	6
Methods		1		4	1	5	9
Social Cohesion	8	8	5	5	3	11	40
Social Protection	1	1	1	3	1	1	8
Grand Total	13	29	12	21	13	48	134

Some quality indicators

- All studies have been peer-reviewed and published with the exception of four studies deemed for internal use only
- 35 publications in refereed journals within one year from production including top economics journals (Nature, AER, EER, JDE, WD, JDS, JoPE, ...). Special issues in WD and JDS.
- 24 Post-Doc Young Fellows who published their work and were subsequently hired by WB, UNHCR, and other international organizations
- A microdata program that became the Joint Data Centre
- Positive annual evaluations from the donor (AABAAA) and final evaluation from stakeholders (8.8/10)

Some general key findings

- Displacement crises have, on average and in the long-run, positive economic outcomes for host communities;
- These average and long-term effects hide a more complex picture with adverse effects being short-term, localized and concentrated among vulnerable groups;
- There is nothing inevitable among the negative externalities of FD crises. It is how governments and international actors respond to these challenges that matters.
- Programs that target these vulnerable groups are effective in mitigating or reversing the negative effects;
- Policies that foster freedom of movement and freedom of work reduce the range and duration of the negative effects for the displaced population and their hosts;

Some sector specific key findings

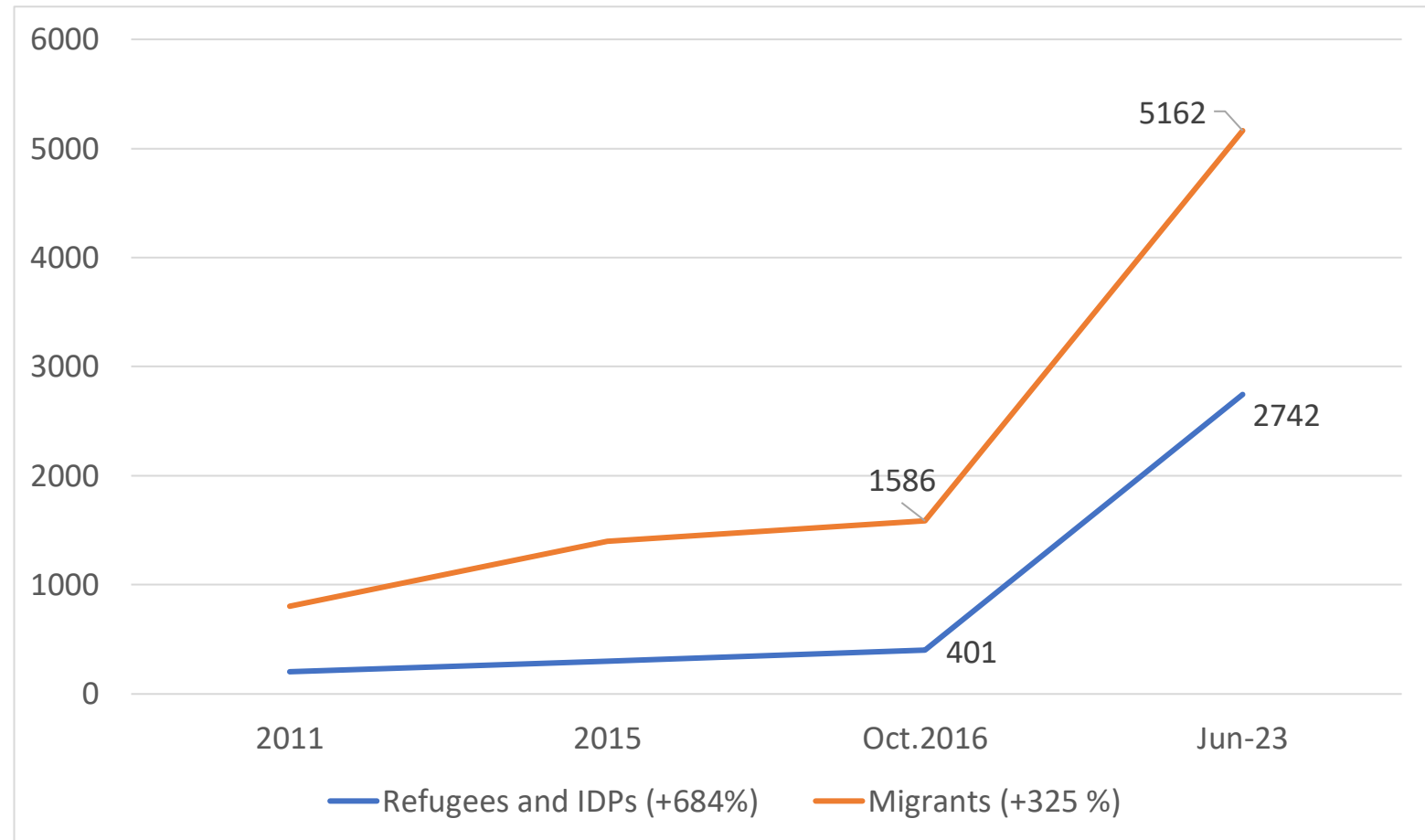
- The labor market impact of FDPs on hosts is mostly non-significant but there are winners and losers during a forced displacement crisis.
- Lack of data and financial resources, and weak institutions are the main factors constraining health care provision for FDPs and their hosts
- Equitable provision of social protection and the alignment of social protection services for FDPs and their hosts is key for growing the provision of social protection in a socially cohesive environment
- Several educational programs for FDPs have been proved successful but lack of specific information on programs' costs, target beneficiaries, and local constraints limit their applicability and expansion.
- FDPs are poor and vulnerable but poverty and vulnerability are not the same for all FDPs, particularly along gender dimensions

Some important areas for future research

- Macroeconomics of forced displacement
- The impact of forced displacement on infrastructure and utilities
- Environmental assessments, climate change, conflict and displacement studies
- Poverty and well-being measurement for both the forcibly displaced and their hosts
- Long-term and secondary impacts
- Costs of programs

An exceptional growth in research (2016-2023)

Number of papers published in economic journals with the words refugees, IDPs, or migrants in keywords and titles



So what?

As compared to 10 years ago:

- We have more data
- We have a lot more research
- We have a lot more quality research

So what?

- Do governments make better policies because of this research?
- Are refugees and IDPs better off as a result of these efforts?
- Are programs more effective and cost efficient?

It turns out that these are not easy questions to answer.

Some impact indicators

- **More and better data:** Contributed to build the microdata infrastructure for FD research (WB-FCV microdata library, UNHCR microdata library, JDC, country Stats agencies)
- **Improved institutional capacity:** Contributed to build capacity on FD research within WB global practices, UNHCR, and Research Institutions worldwide
- **Contributions to policy discussions:** Informed IDA projects, WDR 2023, UNHCR flagship studies, UN High-level panels, WB-UNHCR missions
- **Contributions to reforms of programs and projects**

Some examples

- Impact evaluations (Paola Elice)
- UNHCR's programs (Theresa Beltramo)
- A Brazil example (Davide Torzilli)

UK Government-UNHCR-World Bank *Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement* Research Program

The Role of Impact Evaluations for Forced Displacement Programs and Policy

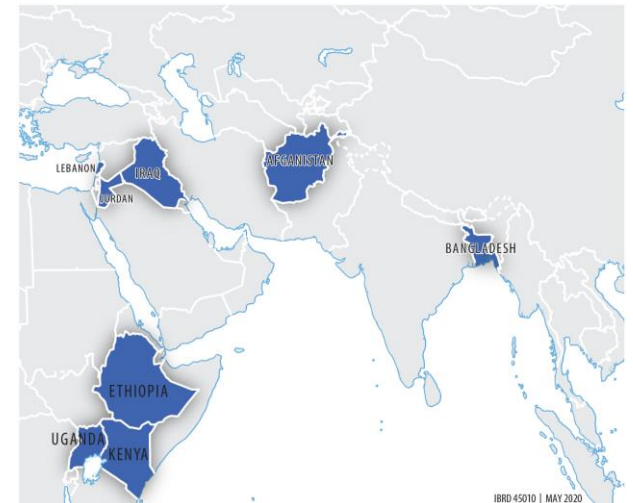
Paola Elice, World Bank

Thursday, June 8, 2023
UNHCR, Geneva



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How have impact evaluations had an impact on forced displacement programming?

- Test at small scale and inform scaling
- Evaluate already at-scale projects
- Test low-cost complementary interventions
- Provide rigorous findings to support advocacy efforts



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Test at small scale and inform scaling

Afghanistan

- Tested government graduation program in 1 province (1,200 households)
- Results: 2 years after the asset transfer, **significant and large impacts** across outcomes (↑consumption 30pp; ↓poverty 20pp)
- **Results informed IDA replenishment**
- **Results informed scale-up to other provinces**

No Household Left Behind: Afghanistan Targeting the Ultra Poor Impact Evaluation --- Bedoya, Coville, Haushofer, Isaqzadeh, Shapiro (WB PRWP, 2019)

Jordan

- Socioemotional learning intervention (SEL) piloted in 178 public schools (89 treatment, 89 control)
- Positive effects on a range of outcomes
- Discussions are ongoing about scaling up the program nation-wide

“The Brain is Like a Muscle”: Results from the POWER-J Socioemotional Skills Program Piloted in Jordan --- Baron, Capek, Mola-Ávila, Quota, Sun, Trzesniewski, forthcoming



Evaluate already at-scale projects

Afghanistan

- Sudden change in the **cash allowance amount** provided by the UNHCR to Afghan returnees (\$350 > \$150)
- Recipients of the larger amount were **17pp more likely to invest in durable assets (including a house) & significantly more likely to have legal documentation;**
- Evaluation relied on UNHCR administrative data (registration & return monitoring)

More is Better: Evaluating the Impact of a Variation in Cash Assistance on the Reintegration Outcomes of Returning Afghan Refugees

Esper, Krishnan, Wieser (WB PRWP, 2022)



Test low-cost complementary interventions

- **Uganda.** ‘Messaging’ in the context of a business-support project --- *Can Redistribution Change Policy Views? Aid and Attitudes toward Refugees in Uganda --- Baseler, Ginn, Hakiza, Ogude-Chambert, Woldemikael*
- **Kenya.** ‘Information provision’ to improve women’s participation in the context of a CDD project --- *Walelign and Sonne, forthcoming*
- **Ethiopia.** ‘Positive mental imagery’ intervention in the context of work permits roll-out --- *Meyer, Bryan, Delfino, Pople, forthcoming*

Provide rigorous results for advocacy efforts

- Causal estimate of the **psychosocial value of employment** among Rohingya refugees living in camps Bangladesh;
- Experiment with 3 arms: control, cash, employment (745 individuals);

Findings:

- **Employment improves psychosocial wellbeing substantially more than cash alone;**
- ... **mental health 4 times more than cash alone;**
- **66% of those employed are willing to continue working for an additional week without payment**



Image: Azim Khan Ronnie/Alamy Stock Photo

The Psychosocial Value of Employment: Evidence from a Refugee Camp
Hussam, Kelley, Lane, Zahra (AER, 2022)

To sum up

The baseline

- A review of evaluations (Puri et al., 2015) of humanitarian programs found 900 studies ... of which 38 IEs
- Another review (Tappis & Doocy, 2018) of evaluations of cash programs found 108 studies ... of which 5 IEs
- 25 randomized evaluations, most of which of psychosocial programs (IPA, 2020)

Where we are now

- Growing body of IE evidence thanks to numerous initiatives.
- Evidence on graduation programs from at least 5 countries.
- IE investments in specific sectors/themes: ECD, livelihoods, gender, etc...
- Improvement of data systems in humanitarian organizations (including cost data) + hiring of dedicated staff ... expected to boost IE capacity further + make it more demand-driven

Read more about the BEoFD impact evaluations here:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/building-the-evidence-on-forced-displacement/impact-evaluations>



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Bangladesh:

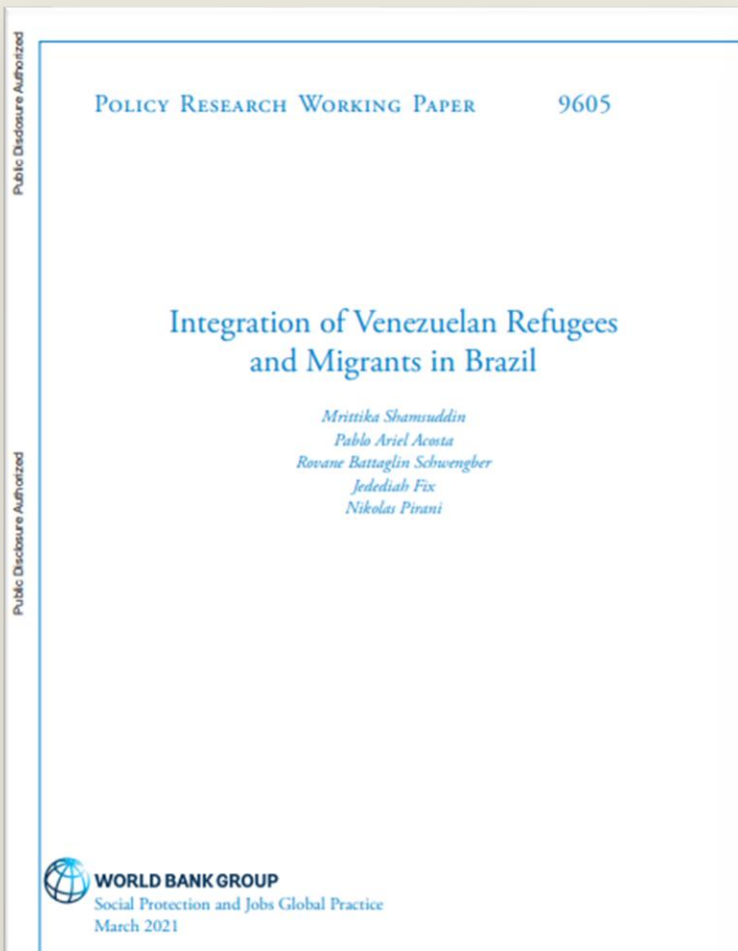
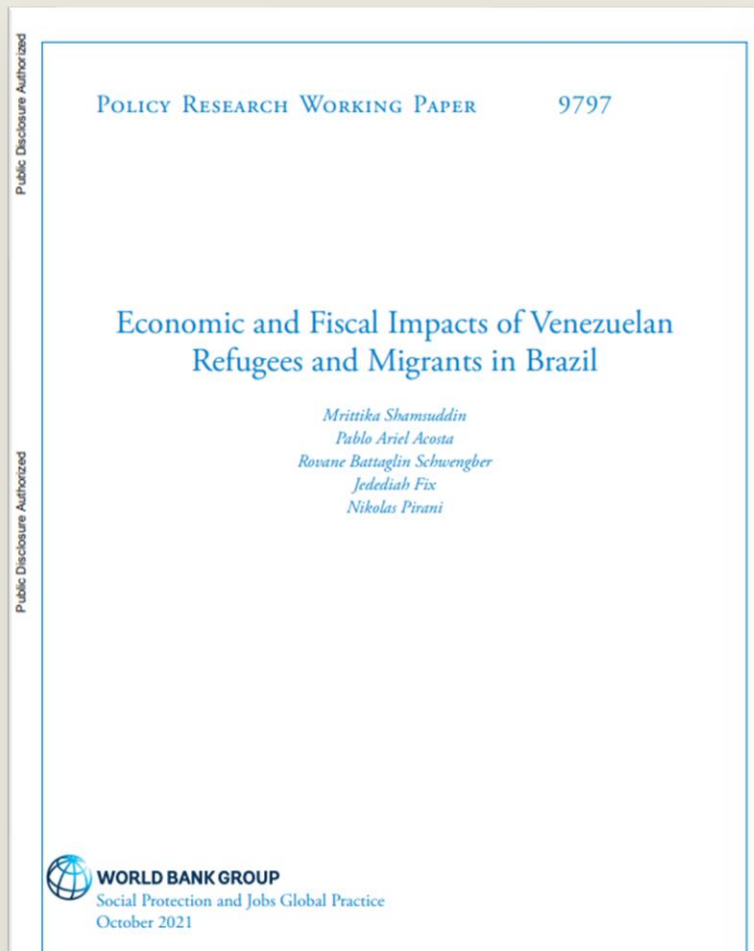
Research on volunteer
programmes in Cox's Bazar refugee
camps strengthens UNHCR's
advocacy





Chad and Jordan:
Measuring poverty using innovative approaches

Brazil: Estimating the economic and fiscal impacts of Venezuelan refugees



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