



# Learning from the Evidence on Forced Displacement:

## Social cohesion in forced displacement contexts

**UKaid**  
PART OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

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Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement

**Joint Data Center  
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Learning from the Evidence on  
Forced Displacement

## Social cohesion in forced displacement contexts: Challenges, evidence and programming

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FORCED DISPLACEMENT  
AND SOCIAL COHESION

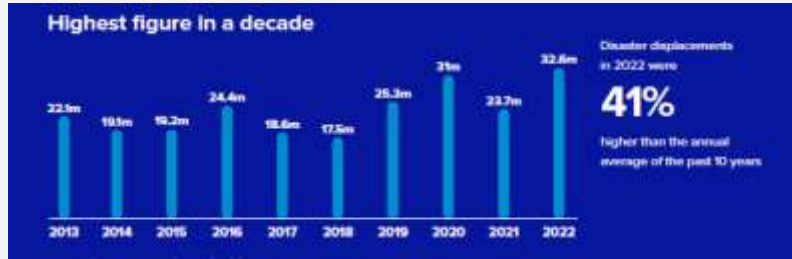
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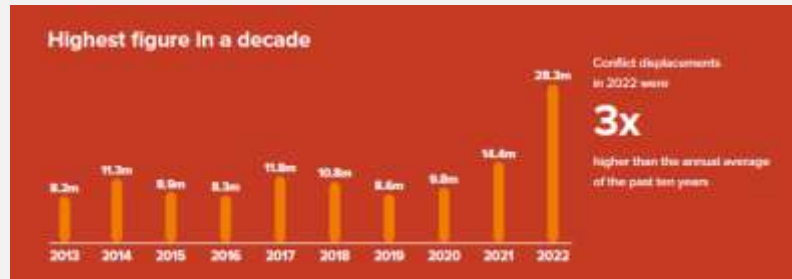
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# The Challenge: forced displacement is increasing and its root (push) factors are changing

Internal displacements by disasters in millions



Internal displacements by conflict and violence in millions



Source: IDMC, 2023

- The share of the world’s population that has been forcibly displaced because of conflict, political violence, persecution, and other crises **grew from 51.2 million as of the end of 2013 to 108.4 million by the end of 2022** (UNHCR, 2014 and UNHCR, 2023). About ¼ of the FDPs are displaced across borders.

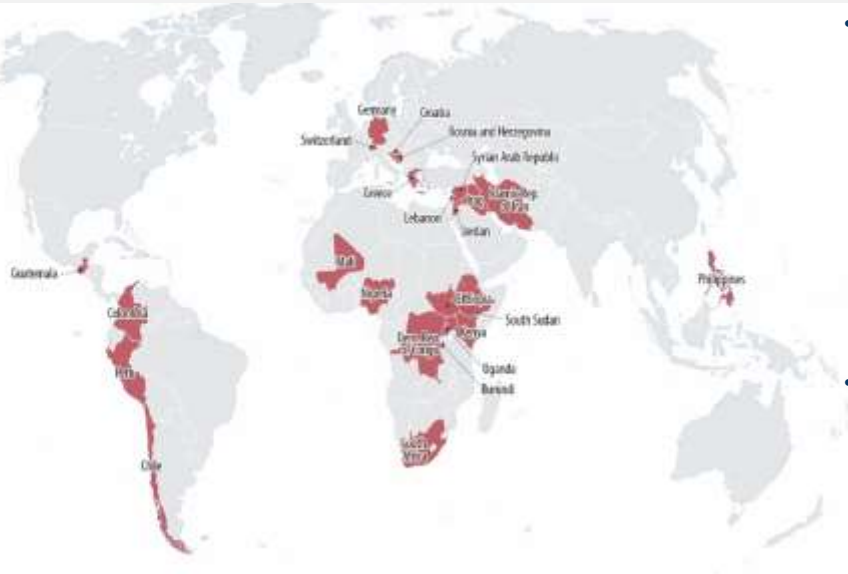
- About 87% of all refugees worldwide at the end of 2022 originate from 10 countries: Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Venezuela, South Sudan, Myanmar, DRC, Sudan, Somalia and CAR (UNHCR, 2023).

- Between 2009 and 2020, disasters—such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, and extreme temperatures—**drove a larger proportion of internal displacement than conflict.**

# What is social cohesion?

- Social cohesion is defined as “a sense of shared purpose, trust and willingness to cooperate among members of a given group, between members of different groups, and between people and the state” (Barron et al, 2023).
- That social cohesion originates from a range of academic disciplines helps explain the fact that it is a multi-faceted concept that covers several dimensions of intergroup relations.
- Dimensions of social cohesion — including norms of cooperation, interpersonal trust, collective action, and civic engagement— are important to development because they have clear implications for the functioning of social, political and economic life.

# Key findings from 26 new studies looking at social cohesion among the forcibly displaced and host communities



- The World Bank, in partnership with UNHCR and FCDO, **builds on how humanitarian aid, development investments and policies can reduce inequalities, alleviate social tensions, and promote social cohesion between and within displaced populations and host communities.**
- This learning module builds on the following sources:
  - 26 background papers covering countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe
  - 1 global report to synthesize the findings
  - Additional relevant academic articles

## Key findings

- Displaced people and migrants often elicit negative responses from host citizens.
  - But not always!
  - And the factors affecting response are complex.
- Limited evidence of negative economic consequences from hosting large displaced populations.
  - And some positive!
  - Consequences differ across countries and sectors
- Growing evidence that there are policy tools - such as adopting inclusive refugee hosting policies and development investments – that can improve social cohesion.

## Migrants and refugees often elicit negative attitudes from hosts (1/2)

- Migrant presence can increase anti-immigrant violence (Albarosa and Elsner 2022) and support for anti-immigration policies and parties (Alesina and Tabellini 2022).
  - These findings span many (mostly, but not only high-income) countries.
  - A recent meta-analysis finds a 1% increase in immigrant share in a European locality → 0.57% increase in the vote share for anti-immigration far-right parties (Cools et al. 2021).
- But attitudes towards migrants and refugees are heterogeneous both within and across countries (Domenico Tabasso, 2022).
  - For example, asylum seekers' religion affects attitudes of hosts (Bansak et al., 2016).
  - Aksoy and Ginn (2022) find that, **on average**, the volume of refugees has no effect on attitudes toward them across low- and middle-income countries.



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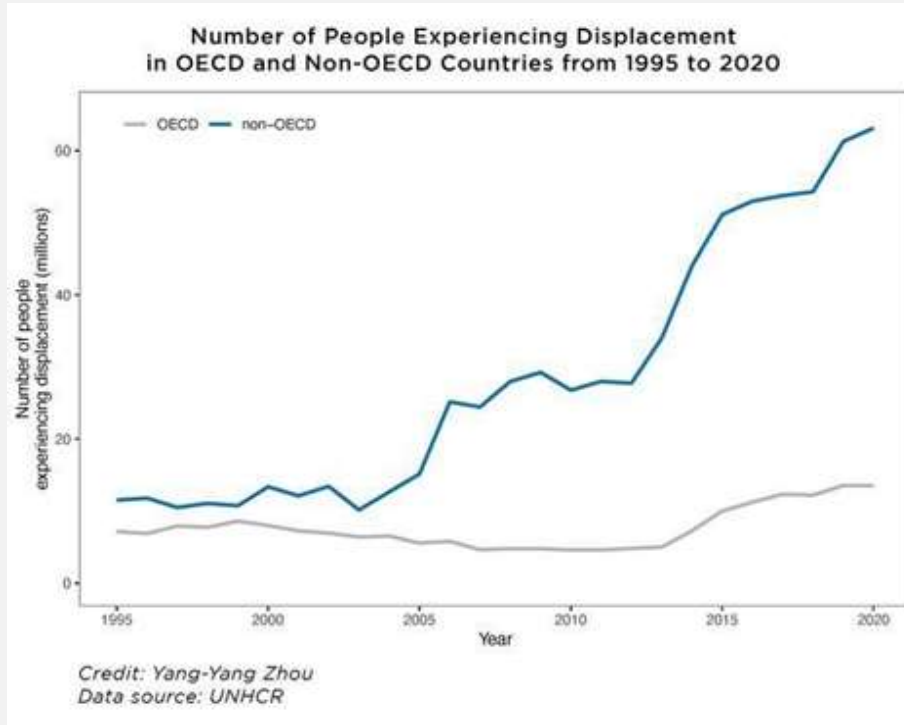
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## About 76% of refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries (2/2)





# The economic consequences of hosting large displaced populations are varied and context-specific

## Employment:

- Adverse effects of hosting Syrian refugees in Turkey on some native workers (Aksu et al., 2022).
- But Venezuelan refugees in Peru are associated with *increased* employment for Peruvians (Groegger et al. 2021).

## Prices:

- Higher housing expenditures for Jordanians (Rozo et al., 2020).

## Wages, Consumption, Poverty :

- Reduced wages for urban unskilled Colombian workers (Calderón-Mejía et al, 2016).
- But Venezuelan refugees in Peru are associated with higher host incomes and expenditures, especially among women (Groegger et al. 2021).
- Similar findings among households in Malawi on wealth, inequality and poverty (Foltz et al. 2021).
- For a review of the research, see [\(Paolo Verme, Kirsten Schuettler. 2021\)](#)

# Why do migrants and refugees elicit negative attitudes from hosts? The Economic vs. Culture debate

## Economic concerns

- Concern that refugees' and migrants' presence depress low-skilled wages and/or compete for jobs
- Concern that refugees and migrants “drain” the welfare state
- Concern that refugees and migrants overwhelm public services (health and education)

## Cultural / symbolic concerns:

- Concerns over preservation of “ways of life”
- Concern over status competition from ascending migrant communities

## Inclusive policies can result in better development outcomes for hosts, with implications for social cohesion

**Zhou, Grossman and Ge (2022) provide detailed evidence from Uganda that:**

- Areas with greater refugee exposure experienced better access to public services (school and health access, health utilization, road density), but only after Uganda adopted inclusive refugee policies.
- The more host communities benefit from refugee-related aid, the more supportive they are of inclusive refugee policies.

**Aksoy and Ginn (2022) use data from low and middle income countries, and find that:**

- More inclusive policies do *not*, on average, result in more negative attitudes toward refugees.

# Improving social cohesion in displacement situations

## Five ways that forced displacement is related to social cohesion

1. Displacement directly affects social cohesion outcomes among *the displaced*
2. Displacement affects social cohesion outcomes by shaping the attitudes and behavior of *host communities*
3. Pre-existing socioeconomic conditions and attitudes in host communities moderate how displacement affects social cohesion
4. The presence of displaced populations in host communities drives socioeconomic conditions of some host groups that in turn affect social cohesion
5. Policy interventions designed to influence the economic and security conditions of refugees and host populations affect social cohesion

# How to improve social cohesion in displacement situations?

- Host communities in low and middle income countries tend to benefit from the presence of refugees in the long-term (WDR, 2023).
- However, in the short to medium term public debate tends to focus on the costs of absorbing large inflows of FDPs.
- This can explain host citizens' negative attitudes, which can manifest as increased prejudice, including hostility and violence.
- What can be done to reduce hosts' prejudice and thereby improve social cohesion?

## Four types of interventions to improve social cohesion

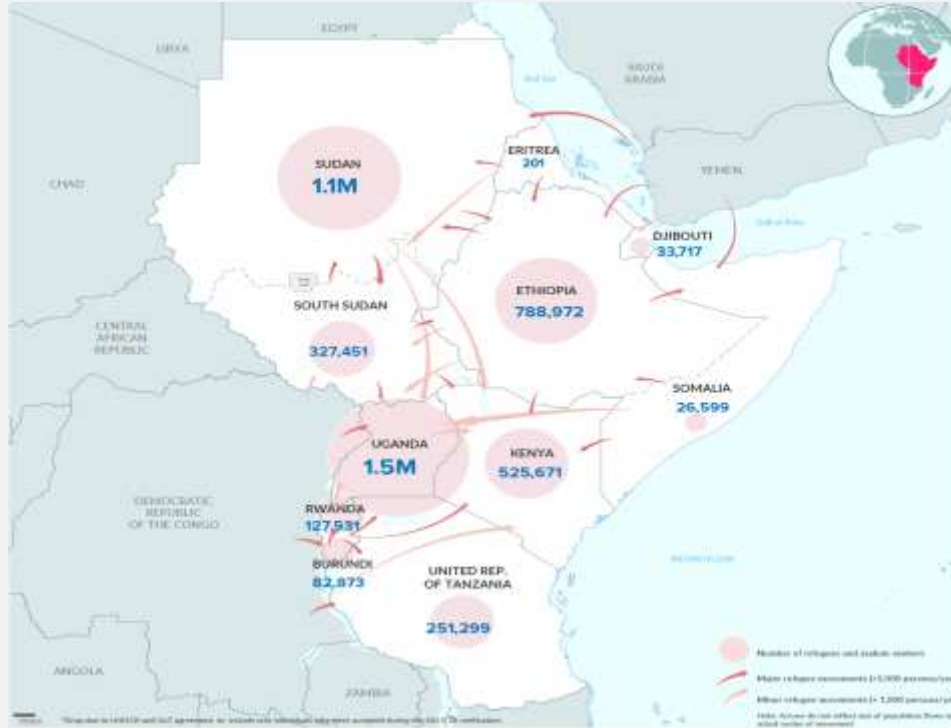
1. Ensure that development investments to displaced people are also used to improve local public goods (e.g., Uganda).
2. Support the economic integration of displaced people, via cash transfers (e.g., Lebanon), work permits, right to own business, land and properties (e.g., Greece).
3. Change psychological disposition, for example via perspective taking, and by exposing locals to personal narratives of the displaced, etc. (e.g., Kenya).
4. Increase contact: both physical contact (e.g., Iraq) and parasocial contact (e.g., Rwanda), but this is effective only under somewhat restrictive conditions.

*Community driven development is one tool that has been used to deliver services to refugee hosting communities. It could be adapted to include additional interventions like perspective-taking, contact, etc.*

**Ensuring that development investments to  
the forcibly displaced are also used to improve local public goods:  
A case study of inclusive policies in Uganda**



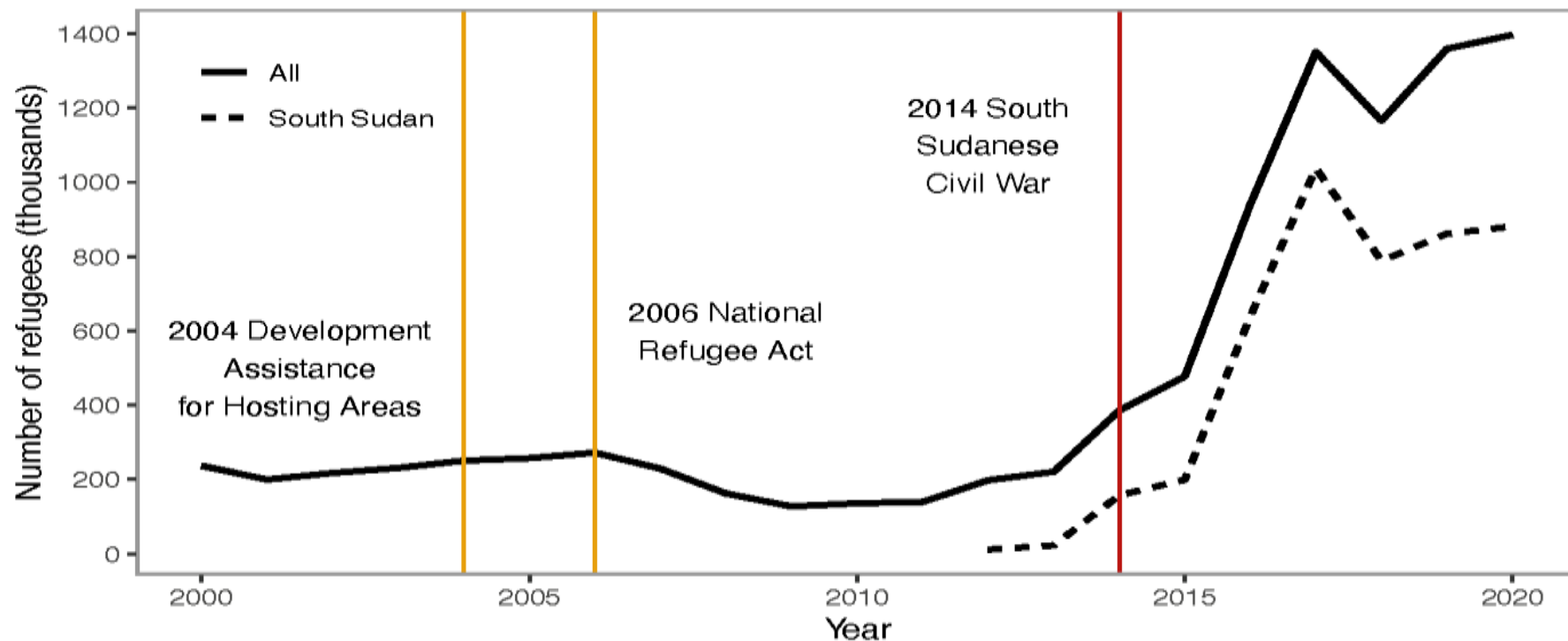
# Uganda is the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, 4th largest in the world (1/4)



## Refugee and asylum policy regime (2/4)

- **Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas (DAR, 2004)**
  - Resource allocation: '70-30 Principle' (30% of refugee aid needs to be allocated to host communities).
  - Integrating refugee aid allocation within the development plans of national ministries and local governments.
- **National Refugee Act (2006)**
  - Right to documentation, access public services
  - Freedom of movement, and of religion
  - Right to family unification
  - Right to work, to own and rent land, to transfer assets

## Number of refugees overtime (3/4)



# What do we know about host-refugee relations in Uganda? (Zhou, Grossman and Ge, 2023) (4/4)

## 1. On one hand, no backlash to Uganda's inclusive refugee hosting policies:

- Ugandans benefited from refugee-related humanitarian aid, but only after Uganda adopted a set of new hosting policies in the mid 2000s.
- The greater the local benefits – in terms of improved education, health and road quality – the more supportive host communities are of refugee hosting policies.

## 2. On the other hand, there are lingering challenges:

- There is a gap between personal experience with refugees which is positive and general perceptions (perhaps due to news coverage and social media) which can be negative
- Dramatic cuts to refugees' assistance (common when displacement is protracted) are straining the delicate status quo

# Support the economic integration of displaced people

## Lebanon (Lehmann and Masterson, 2020)

- Lebanon hosts approximately 1.5 million refugees from Syria. The media commonly reports about tensions between Lebanese and Syrian refugees.
- Authors find that a UNHCR program distributing cash transfers to refugees contributed to reducing violence and hostility, in part because refugees used the cash to purchase services from local neighbors.

## Greece (Murad 2022)

- After the Greco-Turkish conflict of 1919–1922, 1.2 million Greek Orthodox were forced from Turkey to Greece, rapidly increasing the host population by more than 20 percent.
- Greece implemented an ambitious resettlement program: refugees were provided with farmland, work permits, new houses and schools, and were granted the Greek citizenship
- Murad finds that 80 years later, refugees display a high rate of intermarriage with Greek natives, report levels of trust in others and in institutions similar to natives, and exhibit higher political engagement and participation in voluntary associations

## Reduce prejudice by affecting psychological dispositions (1/2)

- Prejudice is a preconceived negative judgment or opinion about a person or group, often based on stereotypes or misconceptions.
- Prejudice reduction is defined as “a causal pathway from some intervention (e.g., a peer conversation, a media program) to a reduced level of prejudice.” It involves changing negative attitudes and perceptions against marginalized groups (in our case – refugees).
- There is growing evidence that psychological approaches can be effective in reducing prejudice, and thereby contribute to social cohesion.

## Example of a promising psychological pathway: perspective taking (2/2)

- One promising psychological strategy is “perspective taking.”
- The idea is that when native born are “transported” into refugees’ experiences and perspectives, they are less likely to counter-argue and are therefore more receptive to conciliatory messages.
- Example of intervention forms: reading or listening to personal narratives of displacement hardship.
- Tested successfully in the USA (Adida et al. 2018), Kenya (Michelitch and Horowitz 2021), and elsewhere.
- Lingering debates about how to deliver perspective-taking interventions at scale. One option is to include as part of CDD programs.

## Intergroup Interaction approaches for prejudice reduction (1/2)

- Contact theory suggests that increased interaction and exposure between different groups (e.g., locals and refugees) can contribute to social cohesion.
- Inter-group contact has been found to reduce prejudice by alleviating intergroup anxieties, inducing empathy, highlighting commonalities, and forging friendships.



## Intergroup Interaction approaches for prejudice reduction (2/2)

**However, to be effective, contact needs to fulfil certain conditions:**

1. Positive and voluntary
2. Endorsed by communal authorities
3. Egalitarian: equality of status between the groups
4. Involve cooperating to achieve a common goal
5. Affirmation of distinct identities

Example: Creation of Christian and Muslim soccer teams have been shown to improve relations across religious lines in Iraq (Mousa 2020).

## Presenters



Erik Wibbels

Erik Wibbels is the Presidential Penn Compact Professor of Political Science, founder of DevLab@Penn, and co-director of Penn's Development Research Initiative. Current major projects include research on Guatemala deportees from the US, the [Machine Learning for Peace](#) project, and an initiative with the World Bank to understand the impact of refugees on the communities and politics of the places they arrive.



Guy Grossman

Guy Grossman is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the founder and co-director of Penn's Development Research Initiative, a member of the [EGAP](#) network, and faculty affiliate of Stanford's Immigration Policy Lab. His research focuses on governance, migration and forced displacement, human trafficking, and conflict processes, (mostly) in low and middle income countries.



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# **Social Cohesion in UNHCR work in WCA**

**Learning from the Evidence on Forced Displacement - a Training Program**

**November 2023**

**Gina Kosmidou-Bradley**

# Why social cohesion in humanitarian work?

- Community-based Protection/ Area-based approaches, out-of-camp policies
- Critical for peaceful co-existence
- Social cohesion is one of 3 prerequisites for local integration



# The importance of social cohesion in refugee welfare

- Findings from the UNHCR WB research paper “Reaching the poorest refugees in Niger: An evaluation of targeting approaches for food and cash”

Authors: Theresa Beltramo, Christina Wieser, Chiara Gigliariano, Robert Heyn, August 2019

- Household size was the main predictor for refugee welfare
- However, second most important was “high incidence of inviting others to tea” as a proxy for social cohesion
- Equally important in predicting welfare as number of durable goods

# Project targeting and social cohesion

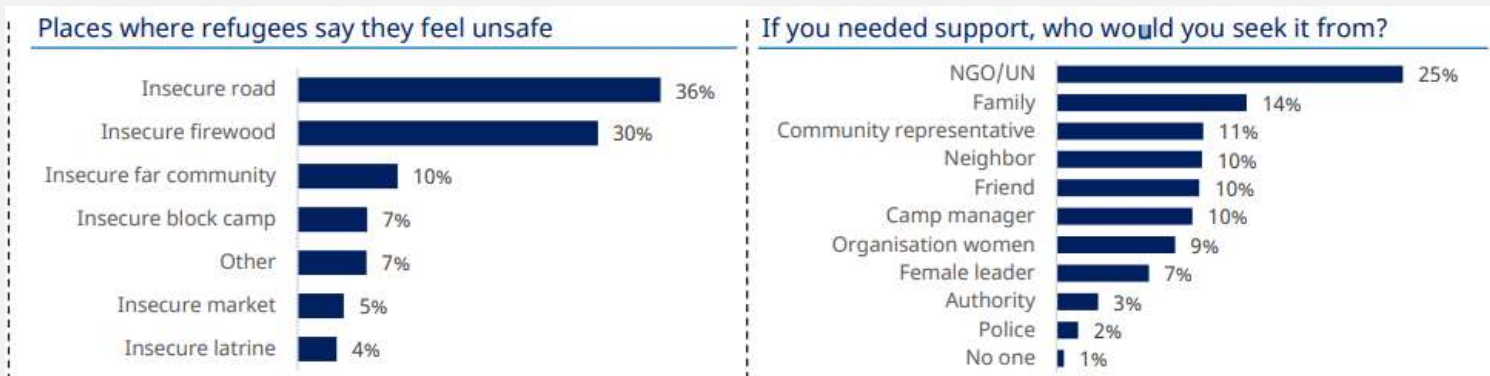
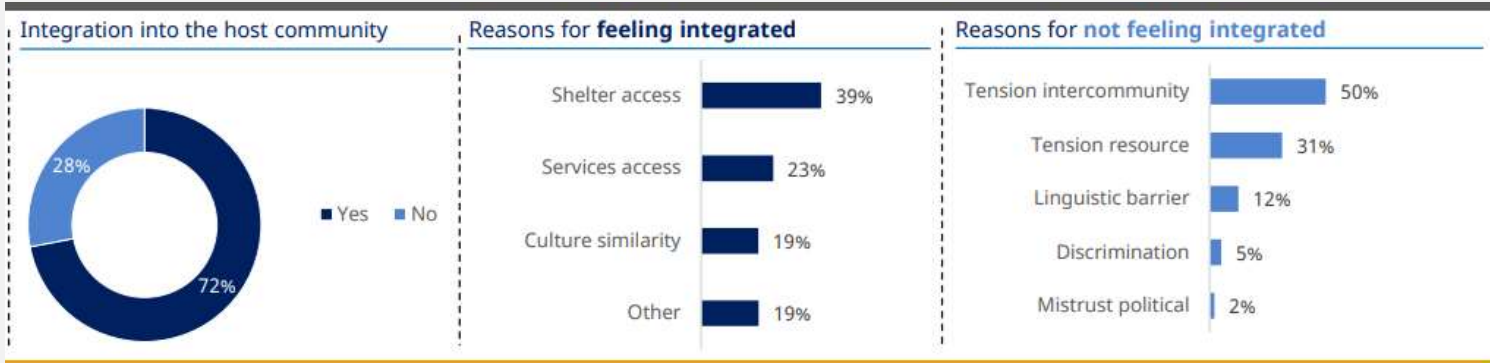
- Area-based approaches for social cohesion & peaceful co-existence
- Benchmark with host community participation as standard practice
- Different types of targeting: CBI, Livelihoods, Financial inclusion will have different percentages → ranges from 80-20% to 50-50%
- In WCA community involvement in the targeting is the rule
- Reason: better acceptance by the community where poverty is widespread, and the budget constraint imposes artificial criteria/ cut-off points in targeting models

# Social cohesion efforts / projects

- Community centers
- Community consultations for beneficiary targeting
- Targeting includes host communities
- P21- Protection monitoring including social cohesion questions and host communities
- C4C projects - "Digital Access, Communication Needs, and Community Practices"

# P21 Protection monitoring and social cohesion

A standardized protection monitoring tool- also measuring social cohesion perceptions (graphs below- Chad Sept 2023)





# Community centers

- Community centers as a public safe space
- Community outreach and mobilization, skills development, education, other support (ex. registration/ referrals/ complaint mechanisms)
- Sustainability
- Social Cohesion through programs to meet and combat stereotypes and xenophobia
- Space to discuss (ex. pastoralists vs farmers)



# Connectivity for Communication(C4C) Project

- C4C project establishes communication mechanisms for communities
- Gives an opportunity to have their voices, priorities and needs heard, to ensure informed and responsive protection and assistance by UNHCR and its partners.
- "Digital Access, Communication Needs, and Community Practices" study, in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Niger in 2020, and in Burkina Faso in 2022

	Burkina Faso	CIV	Mali	Niger	Total
Financial cost of credit/ no credit	77%	36%	47%	42%	50,5%
No network access	62%	32%	25%	16%	33,75%
No electricity for charging the phone	62%	15%	35%	38%	37,5%

# Inclusion does not mean disengagement

- **Inclusion ≠ quick exit**
- Humanitarian assistance will need to be reinforced to provide a stable platform to progressively transition to national services. Alignment of humanitarian assistance with national systems and services where relevant should be a consideration as part of program design
- **Monitor and evaluate the impacts of alignment and inclusion,** mitigating the potential duplication of humanitarian assistance by UNHCR and other agencies and establishing evidence-based advocacy for continued complementary assistance

## Program design for evidence

- The evidentiary basis to inform policy on forced displacement and social cohesion needs to be stronger.
- Distinctive challenges:
  - Refugee situations are dynamic and fast-moving
  - Policy designs are made quickly and on the fly
  - Data collection can be expensive and time consuming
  - Social cohesion is often vaguely conceptualized
  - Social cohesion is hard to measure and subject to "social desirability bias"

# Approaches to facilitate programming for evidence

- Even the fastest moving crises are amenable to gathering evidence!
- Approaches:
  - Keep counterfactuals in mind; leverage the fact that there is rarely enough aid to provide generously to everyone
  - Develop standard data collection tools for social cohesion (you can rely on us!) for quick, easy deployment
  - Rely on survey experiments to measure hateful attitudes and measure interactions most likely to reveal bias between hosts and refugees (i.e. pricing in markets)
  - Collect data on both hosts and refugees
- Academics can help build these tools.

## An example

- The policy challenge: How to reduce prejudice against the displaced in Uganda?
- There is growing evidence from lab experiments that various psychological interventions can reduce prejudice (Paluck et al. 2021)
  - But none of these interventions are easily scalable.
- Current step:
  - Test the efficacy of "edutainment", i.e. a radio program, to reduce prejudice by humanizing refugees
  - FGDs inform the design of the pilot episodes
  - Rigorous test of pilot among 225 households
- Next step: If results are encouraging, scale up intervention across refugee-hosting regions

## Key takeaways

1. In many refugee hosting settings, tensions arise between refugees and locals driving the latter to oppose "open-border" policies.
2. Improving social cohesion is important, as it affects refugees' wellbeing, including their social and economic integration.
3. Social cohesion is multi-faceted: it has material (e.g., labor concerns), symbolic (e.g., status and cultural concerns) and psychological underpinning (e.g., out-group prejudice).
4. There are several promising policy interventions – such as adopting inclusive hosting policies, and increasing positive contact – that have been shown to improve social cohesion.
5. More research is needed to identify which interventions and combinations of interventions work best in what context. You can help!

## Key readings

- ODI's "Social Protection and Forcibly Displaced People" (Gray Meral & Both)
- Uganda's policy response:
  - The 2006 National Refugee Act and its 2010 Refugee Regulations provide refugees in Uganda with rights like documentation, access to services, work, and freedom of movement. Initiatives like the self-reliance strategy (SRS), ReHoPE, CRRF, and resource allocation through the '70-30 Principle' aid refugees. The Act emphasizes integration with government development plans and grants rights to documentation, services, movement, religion, family unity, work, land ownership, and asset transfer.
- Findings from 26 new studies:
  - An influx of refugees generally doesn't lead to negative attitudes on average. However, negative attitudes are found in Germany and Switzerland. Inclusive policies, as seen in Uganda, lead to improved public services for both hosts and refugees. Economic impacts of larger refugee populations are often minimal, with some positive effects as seen in Peru. In the long run, inclusive policies foster greater social integration and social capital, exemplified by Greece.



## Online resources

- Guidance on designing Impact Evaluations
- Funding sources for IEs on humanitarian crises
  - Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC)
  - JPAL's Displaced Livelihoods Initiative
- Consult with policy-forward academic researchers: PDRI/DevLab@Penn
- National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants (NRC-RIM)
- Resources for Professionals caring for Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- Women's Refugee Commission

## *Annex: overview of all background papers (1/2)*

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Country/region</b>	<b>Population(s) studied</b>	<b>Methods and data</b>	<b>Issue/policy studied (main independent variable)</b>
Agüero & Fasola	South Africa	Refugees & immigrants	Regression discontinuity design (RDD) using survey data	Cash transfers
Aksoy & Ginn	Low- and middle-income countries with large refugee populations	Refugees	DiD using data from numerous sources (Gallup World Poll, UNHCR data, etc.)	Exclusionary & inclusionary refugee policies
Albarosa & Eslner	Germany	Refugees & immigrants	DiD using survey data and violent event data based on newspaper articles, police reports, etc	Refugee inflow
Allen et al.	Burundi	Refugees	Instrumental variables (IV) estimation using survey data	Refugee return
Bertinilli et al.	23 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa	Refugees	Ordinary least squares (OLS) and IV using multiple observational sources (ACLED, Afrobarometer, UNHCR data, etc.)	Refugee-driven ethnic polarization and ethnic fractionalization
Betts et al.	Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda	Refugees	OLS, IV, and qualitative methods using survey data	Host–refugee interactions; ethno-linguistic proximity between hosts and refugees
Bove et al.	South Sudan	IDPs	IV using survey data	Presence of UN peacekeepers
Coniglio et al.	Africa	Refugees	Matching using geo-coded event data from GDELT and geo-located data from UNHCR	Presence of refugee camps
Denny et al.	Guatemala	Deportees	Natural experiment using survey data	Extortion during migration
Ferguson et al.	Jordan and Lebanon	Refugees	Quasi-experimental data	Co-educational vocational training interventions
Foltz & Shibuya	Mali	IDPs	DiD, IV, propensity score matching using survey, census, and geo-located event data	IDP presence
Groeger et al.	Peru	Refugees & immigrants	IV using multiple sources of data (surveys, census, Google trends, etc.)	Employment in the informal sector
Hoseini & Dideh	Iran, Islamic Rep.	Refugees	Natural experiment using survey data	Economic shocks

## Annex: overview of all background papers (2/2)

Paper	Country/region	Population(s) studied	Methods and data	Issue/policy studied (main independent variable)
Kaplan	Colombia	IDPs & conflict-affected individuals	Regression, matching, interviews & focus groups using surveys and interviews	Conflict exposure
Kovac et al.	Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia	IDPs, refugees, migrants	OLS using survey data	Conflict exposure
Meneses & Villamizar-Chaparro	Chile	Immigrants	OLS and RDD using administrative data	Financial aid for education
Müller et al.	Switzerland	Refugees	Natural experiment using administrative data	Employment
Murard	Greece	Refugees	OLS using survey and census data	Concerted policy efforts to integrate refugees
Parry & Aymerich	Iraq	IDPs	Case study using semi-structured interview data	Local peace agreements
Pham et al.	Congo, Dem. Rep.	IDPs & refugees	OLS using surveys and focus groups	Presence of refugees and IDPs
Ruiz, & Vargas-Silva	Colombia	Refugees & immigrants	Conjoint experiment using survey data	Host–refugee interactions, host attitudes toward refugees
Šedová et al.	Nigeria	IDPs	Two-way fixed effects and IV using numerous observational data sources (ACLED event data, World Bank data, etc.)	Presence of IDPs
Tellez & Balcells	Colombia	IDPs	Matching on observables using survey data	Displacement
Vinck et al.	Colombia, Iraq, Philippines, Uganda	IDPs	Logistic regression using survey data	Displacement
Walk et al.	Syrian Arab Republic	IDPs & refugees	Seeded models and predictive model with machine learning using geo-located social media data and survey data	IDP and refugee return
Zhou et al.	Uganda	Refugees	OLS using numerous sources of geo-located data (UNHCR refugee settlements, data on road quality, location of schools, health clinics, and health-related aid projects)	Exposure to refugee settlements

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Resources from today's session:

**<https://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2023/11/08/forced-displacement-and-social-cohesion-module-7>**