Forced Displacement Literature Review

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Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement

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Child growth and refugee status: evidence from Syrian migrants in Turkey

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This study **investigates health and nutrition disparities between native Turkish children and Syrian refugee children in Turkey**, aiming to inform targeted interventions to improve refugee child wellbeing. Turkey hosts 3.8 million refugees, mostly Syrians, with nearly half under 18 years old.

Using regression models and controlling for birth, maternal, and household characteristics, the authors estimate the impact of refugee status on child health outcomes and examine how exposure to war in Syria during pregnancy affects birthweight and anthropometric measures. The main data source is the 2018 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS), which provides nationally representative data on birthweight, anthropometric measures, and detailed socioeconomic and health behavior information for both native and Syrian refugee children.

Main empirical results:

- **There is no evidence of a difference in infant or child mortality between refugee children born in Turkey and native children**, indicating comparable survival rates.
- **Refugee infants born in Turkey have lower birthweight and age-adjusted weight and height compared to native infants**. On average, refugee infants weigh almost 200g less at birth, with birthweight 0.26 standard deviations (SD) lower.
- **After accounting for birth, maternal, and socioeconomic characteristics, gaps in birthweight and age-adjusted height persist, but the gap in age-adjusted weight disappears**. These characteristics explain about 35 percent of the birthweight gap and over half of the age-adjusted height gap. Even after accounting for these characteristics, refugee infants' average birthweight is 0.17 SD lower and age-adjusted height is 0.23 SD lower. Gaps are larger for refugee infants born outside Turkey.
- **The observed gaps are concentrated at the lower end of the distributions of weight and height outcomes**. Refugee infants born in Turkey are 4.8 percentage points (pp) more likely to have low birthweight, 2.4 pp more likely to be underweight, and 6.0 pp more likely to be stunted. There is no evidence of a gap at the upper end of the distributions of weight and height outcomes.
- **Differences in prenatal care behavior persist between native and refugee mothers even after accounting for socioeconomic factors**. These differences explain a further 30 percent of the remaining birthweight gap and 11 percent of the age-adjusted height gap. Refugees are less likely to receive postnatal care, but this does not explain residual anthropometric gaps. No gap exists in vaccination behavior after accounting for covariates, but significant differences in breastfeeding and nutrition remain, contributing to the height gap.

- **Exposure to war in Syria during pregnancy has detrimental effects**. Children whose mothers spent their first trimester in Syria or were conceived there have significantly lower age-adjusted height and weight.

The authors conclude that while infant and child mortality rates are similar, **Syrian refugee children in Turkey face significant disparities in birthweight and anthropometric measures, especially at the lower end of the distribution. These gaps are largely due to pre-migration conditions, war exposure, and differences in prenatal care and nutrition.** The findings highlight the need for targeted programs for high-risk refugee infants to address low birthweight and early-child deficits, complementing Turkey's universal health insurance.

Forced Displacement, Gender, and Livelihoods: Refugees in Ethiopia

Yeshwas Admasu

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The article **examines gender differences in employment among refugees and host communities in Ethiopia**. Ethiopia's refugee population has grown rapidly over the past decade, exceeding 735,000 in 2020. Most refugees reside in 24 government-managed camps near the borders of their countries of origin, located in the Tigray region and four emerging regions: Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, and Somali. These regions are among the least developed in Ethiopia, characterized by poor infrastructure, high poverty rates, low administrative capacity, and weak development indicators.

This paper analyses data from the 2017 Skills Profile Survey, which predates the 2019 national refugee proclamation, which granted refugees freedom of movement and the right to employment. The survey covered refugees in camps and members of surrounding host communities, with a sample of 5,317 households: 3,627 refugee households (837 South Sudanese, 871 Somalis, 893 Eritreans, and 1,016 Sudanese) and 1,690 host community households, stratified by the main refugee-hosting regions.

The analysis employs a probit model to examine gender differences in the probability of employment (formal or informal) among refugees and host communities and uses a Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition to identify factors contributing to gender gaps in employment. The analysis is disaggregated between wage employment and total employment, the latter including paid employment, farm employment, self-employment, or family business.

Main empirical results:

- **Women are less likely to be employed than men, with gender gaps larger among hosts than refugees.** The gender gap for wage employment is 15 percentage points among hosts and 9 percentage points among refugees; for total employment, the gap is 28.5 percentage points for hosts and 10.4 for refugees.

- **Education has a stronger effect on wage employment for refugees than hosts.** For refugees, primary, secondary, and tertiary education all significantly increase the probability of wage employment for both men and women. Among hosts, secondary and tertiary education have a strong positive effect.
- **Longer displacement increases refugee women's likelihood of wage employment.** Women displaced for at least three years are more likely to be employed in wage work than those displaced for less than three years.
- **Lack of physical safety reduces wage employment for host women, but not for refugees.** Feeling unsafe at home or in public significantly lowers the likelihood of wage employment for women in host communities, while no such effect is observed for refugees.
- **Access to land increases total employment for both refugees and hosts, while livestock ownership increases employment for refugees.** Access to land raises total employment for host women by 11 percentage points and refugee women by 4.6 percentage points, while livestock ownership boosts employment for refugees but not hosts.
- **Receiving remittances reduces employment among hosts.** Both men and women in host communities who receive remittances are less likely to be employed.
- **Household characteristics—female headship, access to land, and number of young children—affect women's employment.** Female refugees in female-headed households are 3.6 percentage points more likely to be in wage employment, while more young children in the household reduce refugee women's employment but not men's. Access to land lowers wage employment for hosts but has no effect for female refugees.
- **Regional differences are pronounced, with Somali refugees having better employment outcomes.** Female and male refugees in the Somali region are 2.6 and 4.6 percentage points more likely to be in wage employment than those in Tigray and Afar, while male refugees in Benishangul-Gumuz are 9 percentage points less likely to work.
- **Self-employment and agricultural work drive differences between refugees and hosts.** Refugees are less likely to be self-employed or work on family farms than hosts, mainly due to limited access to land and business opportunities.
- **Most of the gender gap in employment, especially among hosts, is unexplained by observable factors.** The Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition shows that only 14.3 percent of the gender gap among hosts and 26.4 percent among refugees is explained by endowments, with the rest likely due to discrimination and social norms. Host women face a larger unexplained gap, suggesting greater barriers.
- **Somali refugees benefit from shared language and culture with hosts, supporting better integration and opportunities.** This peaceful coexistence leads to greater socio-economic integration and improved employment outcomes for Somali refugees compared to other groups.
- **Among women, access to land explains differences in self-employment and farm activity between refugees and hosts.** Refugee women in Benishangul-Gumuz are less likely to participate in self-employment or farm work, while host women are more likely to engage in agriculture.

The study reveals **gender gaps in economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities in Ethiopia, with women—especially in host communities—facing greater barriers to employment**. The author calls for expanding access to education and skill development for refugees, particularly women. Additionally, policy actions should address gender-specific constraints such as childcare responsibilities, limited access to land, and discrimination, while promoting economic inclusion through investments in refugee-hosting areas and improved market infrastructure. The findings also highlight the importance of community security and peaceful coexistence, as demonstrated by the better integration and economic outcomes among Somali refugees, where shared cultural and linguistic ties with hosts have fostered greater opportunities.

Cash-based interventions improve multidimensional integration outcomes of Venezuelan immigrants

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World Development, Volume 181 (2024), Article 106658

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This paper **evaluates the impact of cash-based interventions (CBIs) on the multidimensional integration outcomes of highly vulnerable Venezuelan immigrants in Peru**. Since 2015, more than 7 million Venezuelans have been displaced, with 1.5 million settling in Peru, making it the second-largest host country for Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The influx has resulted in significant vulnerability, with 29 percent of Venezuelan migrants living below the poverty line, and 12 percent suffering from extreme poverty, three times the rate of native Peruvians.

The study employs a quasi-experimental design, leveraging the staggered rollout of a CBI program that provided a one-time payment of 760 soles (about 190 US$, or 74 percent of the monthly minimum wage) to weekly cohorts of highly vulnerable beneficiaries, 82 percent of whom were women. This staggered rollout, combined with panel data collection, enables empirical comparisons between refugees who received the CBI and similar refugees who received it later.

The authors assess the effects of the CBI on a comprehensive set of economic and non-economic integration outcomes three months after cash receipt, using the Immigration Policy Lab (IPL-24) index adapted for the Peruvian context. The IPL-24 index measures six dimensions of integration: psychological, economic, political, social, linguistic, and navigational (the ability to navigate the host society's institutions). It emphasizes both knowledge (such as language fluency and ability to navigate labor and social systems) and capacity (economic, social, and mental resources for future investment). In addition to the overall index and its subcomponents, the study analyzes employment status, intention to emigrate from Peru within 12 months, perceived discrimination, and the use of coping strategies such as borrowing money, buying food on credit, withdrawing children from education, accepting dangerous jobs, begging, or working informally.

The main data sources are an original panel survey of CBI beneficiaries, conducted via phone, and the ENPOVE II survey, a nationally representative dataset on living conditions in

Peru. The ENPOVE II data is used both to contextualize the study sample within the broader Venezuelan immigrant population and as an additional control group for robustness checks.

Main results:

- **The CBI produced a small but statistically significant improvement in overall integration**. The CBI raised the IPL-24 index by at least 0.12 standard deviations three months after cash receipt. This effect is mainly driven by gains in economic, social, and navigational integration, while effects on political integration are small and not robust.
- **Self-employment rates increased by at least 1.9 percentage points following the CBI**. This aligns with the finding that over 90 percent of beneficiaries expressed a desire to start their own business prior to the intervention. Moreover, household income gains were greater for self-employed beneficiaries, indicating self-employment is a successful economic strategy in this context.
- **The CBI increased the intention to emigrate by 1.2 percentage points**. The CBI increases the intention to emigrate from Peru, presumably because the additional cash brings the long-term goal of returning to Venezuela or moving to a third country within closer reach.
- **The benefits of the cash transfer diminish sharply with household size**. Effect sizes for overall and economic integration, as well as emigration intention, decrease as household size increases.
- **The impact of the CBI on integration is strongly dependent on education level.** It is negligible for beneficiaries with only primary education but increases substantially with higher education. For those with upper-level education, the effect on overall integration is around 0.4 standard deviations and on economic integration about 0.2 standard deviations, suggesting that more educated beneficiaries can leverage cash support more effectively.

The authors conclude that **even a one-off cash payment can generate significant benefits for immigrants' social and navigational integration**. The benefits are most pronounced among beneficiaries with higher education levels but diminish with larger household size. The authors advocate for scaling up CBI programs and expanding them to other contexts, emphasizing the need to tailor cash assistance to household size and education level to maximize impact and equity.

Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Systematic Review of Prior Research and Agenda for Future Research

Alexander Newman, Luke Macaulay, and Karen Dunwoodie

International Migration Review, Volume 58, Issue 3 (2023)

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This article **presents a systematic review of the refugee entrepreneurship empirical literature**. The systematic review provides insights into the factors which shape refugees' initiation of, engagement in, and performance of entrepreneurial activities.

The authors identify 76 empirical articles through searches in the Web of Science and Scopus databases using relevant keywords. The review excluded non-English articles, conference papers, books, conceptual work, and studies focused on internally displaced or voluntary migrants. The selected articles were coded based on entrepreneurial outcomes (initiation, engagement, performance), research design, and theoretical approach.

The authors note that refugee entrepreneurship is a relatively underdeveloped research topic, with most articles published in the last decade. Research has predominantly used exploratory qualitative research designs, such as semi-structured interviews and case studies, due to challenges in accessing large-scale quantitative samples. This inductive approach underscores the need for more deductive, quantitative studies to validate findings and broaden understanding.

Main findings:

- **Personal and contextual factors drive entrepreneurial intentions.** Research finds that entrepreneurial intentions and motivations among refugees are shaped by personal factors (such as self-efficacy and risk tolerance) and contextual influences (like community support and institutional environments).
- **Prior experience, language skills, and business training affect entry into an entrepreneurial career.** Refugees with prior entrepreneurial experience in their home country are more likely to start businesses in host countries. Language barriers are significant obstacles, while business training in the host country increases entrepreneurship rates. There is mixed evidence on whether labor market exclusion drives refugees toward entrepreneurship.
- **Refugee entrepreneurs use their connections to both home and host countries to create entrepreneurial opportunities**, such as leveraging home country resources, acting as cultural intermediaries, and engaging in social entrepreneurship.
- **Resource acquisition depends on legal status and networks.** Unclear legal status and lack of business track records hinder access to finance, while co-ethnic networks help with market knowledge, initial financing, and finding human resources when establishing a business. Host community ties assist in accessing knowledge about the local market and navigating complex legal and bureaucratic procedures when establishing a business. Social networks can be developed through work experience in the host culture or through training programs and business incubators run by government, educational institutions, or non-governmental organizations. Refugee and government agencies also play important roles in supporting refugee entrepreneurs to establish businesses by assisting individuals to access advice, financial support, and other support to start their businesses.
- **Entrepreneurship enhances wellbeing but can be stressful.** Engaging in entrepreneurship supports psychological wellbeing and identity reconstruction, especially for those seeking integration, but can also be stressful, particularly for women.
- **Entrepreneurial success for refugees is shaped by personal traits, prior experience, financial resources, and supportive social networks**. Personal factors such as persistence, resilience, self-efficacy, and prior entrepreneurial experience are crucial for refugee entrepreneurs' success. Refugees from wealthier backgrounds tend to

be more successful due to greater investment resources, while contextual factors like social networks and family support also play a critical role.

- **Firm performance and growth among refugee-owned businesses depend on financial, human, and social capital, as well as access to information and communication technology (ICT)**. Firm performance and growth among refugee entrepreneurs are often limited by lower financial and human capital compared to host country nationals. Social capital, including co-ethnic networks and relationships with the host community, plays a crucial role in supporting business growth and success.
- **Economic and social integration of refugee entrepreneurs in the host country is shaped by both individual and contextual factors**. Entrepreneurship enables refugees to develop language skills and build relationships with host country nationals, supporting their integration. Refugee entrepreneurs also support the economic integration of other refugees through job creation. Returnee refugee entrepreneurs play a role in promoting economic development and social stability in their home countries.

Research on refugee entrepreneurship is largely exploratory, with few quantitative studies and limited understanding of factors like satisfaction, wellbeing, and empowerment. Key gaps include comparisons with voluntary migrants and the effects of social capital and policy support. The authors call for more large-scale, longitudinal, and comparative research, cautioning against treating refugees as a homogeneous group and recommending broader theoretical approaches. For policy and practice, the review highlights the need for targeted training, mentoring, and access to business networks, as well as building social capital within co-ethnic and host communities. Tailored support for refugees with prior entrepreneurial experience and those facing labor market barriers is essential for effective integration and business success.

Entrepreneurship Support for Host and Displaced Communities: An Impact Evaluation of the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project

Chloë Fernandez, Samih Ferrah, Andrea Guariso, Marcus Holmlund, Tara Mitchell, Carol Newman

Endline Evaluation Report (2024), World Bank

http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099062624150011318

This report **evaluates the impact of the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project (PARCA), focusing on its Entrepreneurship Support Program and its effects on the livelihoods of host communities and displaced households in Niger**. Niger hosts over 800,000 forcibly displaced people, including over 400,000 refugees and over 400,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) as of April 2024.

The Entrepreneurship Support Program aimed to empower community members to invest in productive assets or start and expand income-generating activities (IGAs) by removing barriers to investment. The program provided a one-time US$200 cash grant (over a third of Niger's annual GDP per capita), life skills training, and a six-day business training covering both agricultural and non-agricultural skills, including financial education, micro-enterprise

management, and technical skills relevant to the local market. Participants were required to verbally present an IGA idea to a local NGO, and upon completing the training, received the cash grant.

The study used a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design, with villages randomly assigned to treatment or control groups. Eligible households in treatment villages were selected via public lotteries, allowing for assessment of direct impacts, differences between host and displaced populations, and spillover effects. The final sample included 170 villages (88 treatment, 82 control).

The analysis was based on household surveys at baseline (2022) and endline (2023), collecting data on income, consumption, food security, social capital, aspirations, mental health, trust, and community integration. **Baseline results revealed significant vulnerability**: half of surveyed households included a forcibly displaced person, 88 percent of household heads had no education, and 75 percent of households experienced food insecurity in the past month. Most households relied on agriculture, with limited employment opportunities and poor psychosocial wellbeing. Interactions between host and displaced people were generally neutral, though 10 percent of households reported disputes.

Main results:

- **The program led to improvements in household income.** Program participation increased the likelihood of reporting positive income by 4 percentage points, and among those with positive income, by 17 percent. Impacts were stronger for displaced households. The benefits of the program extended beyond its direct recipients, with positive impacts also for other households in program villages.
- **Expenditure on essentials increased.** Food spending increased by 14 percent and utility spending by 49 percent, while spending on tobacco and alcohol fell by 29 percent. No significant change was observed in medium-term expenditures (e.g., school, health, social events). The wider community in program villages also increased their expenditure.
- **Positive impacts on profits from existing non-farm income generating activities.** Profits from existing non-farm IGAs rose by 98 percent for participants, with host households benefiting more (161 percent increase) than displaced households (61 percent). The program did not affect profits for non-participating households and may have reduced IGA opportunities for some.
- **Livestock ownership increased.** Livestock ownership increased by 7.3 percentage points (11.4 percent relative to control).
- **Displaced households increased the size of rented agricultural land.** While the program did not affect the probability that a displaced household would start renting agricultural land, the size of the rented land area of displaced households increased by 62 percent. Some non-participants also increased rented land.
- **The program had positive and significant impacts on household financial wellbeing.** Outstanding loans dropped by 41 percent, and reported savings increased by 183 percent. These improvements were more pronounced for displaced households. Non-participants saw a 40 percent reduction in loans.

- **Generalized trust increased but tensions rose.** Generalized trust increased by 0.13 points (4 percent), but reported disagreements between host and displaced groups also rose, especially over access to land, water, and discrimination.

The **PARCA Entrepreneurship Support Program delivered meaningful short-term improvements in economic and social outcomes for both host and displaced households**. Notably, the program also generated significant spillover benefits for non-participating households in program villages, including increased income, higher essential expenditures, improved financial wellbeing, and greater trust within the wider community. However, rising tensions over resources and discrimination highlight the need for future interventions to tailor support to specific groups and include conflict mitigation measures, especially when resource injections benefit some households more than others.

Sustainable Livelihoods of Refugees in Rwanda: Results from a Survey and Self-Reliance Measure

Juan Carlos Parra and Christian Gomez

World Bank (2025)

https://hdl.handle.net/10986/43472

This report **presents findings from a survey on sustainable livelihoods of refugees in Rwanda**. The data is also used to calculate a Refugee Self-Reliance Measure (RSRM) that will inform the targeting of humanitarian assistance and the design of policies and programs to improve refugee wellbeing.

The analysis draws on the second round of household panel survey data, representative of Rwanda's five refugee camps and the Kigali urban area. The survey, conducted in April 2025, covered 2,025 households (representing 23,622 households and 117,195 refugees) and included topics such as demographics, education, health, employment, community relations, wellbeing, public services, income, savings, debts, and housing. Comparisons with non-refugee households were made using Rwanda's Integrated Living Conditions Survey 2023/24 (EICV7) and the Labor Force Survey 2024.

The RSRM is a composite, multidimensional tool developed with the Ministry in Charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA), UNHCR, and WFP to assess the extent to which refugee households can sustainably meet their basic needs without humanitarian aid. The RSRM encompasses both monetary and non-monetary indicators across seven dimensions: income, labor, education, health, food security, housing (for urban refugees in Kigali), and social capital. Each dimension contains several indicators, with scores assigned from 1 (poorest outcome) to 5 (best outcome), and households are considered self-reliant in an indicator if they score at least 3. The overall RSRM score is a weighted average of the dimension scores, ranging from 0 to 100, with thresholds set to categorize households into low, moderate, or high self-reliance. The RSRM is intended to guide the targeting of assistance and the design of policies under Rwanda's Refugee Sustainable Graduation Strategy 2025-2030.

Main findings:

- Mahama camp hosts nearly half of all refugee households, while Kigali hosts 17 percent. Mahama and Kigali refugees are mainly from Burundi, while the other camps mainly host refugees from DRC. Refugee households in camps are larger and have more children than non-refugee households. Most refugees have lived in Rwanda for over six years.
- Refugees in Kigali are generally more educated than those in camps. About one-third of refugees aged 16 years and older have at least secondary education, similar to non-refugees. School attendance among children is high across camps, exceeding non-refugee rates.
- About 15 percent of refugees required medical assistance and 35 percent of households reported a chronic illness. Barriers to healthcare access affect 19 percent of the population requiring medical assistance. Health issues interfere with income-generating activities for about 10 percent of working-age refugees.
- Refugee households in Rwanda are facing significant difficulties in meeting their food needs through normal means and are regularly using coping strategies that can have negative long-term impacts on their health, nutrition, wellbeing, and livelihoods. Many households in camps consume only one meal a day, with the highest rates in Kigeme (74 percent) and Mugombwa (72 percent). Skipping meals is common, especially in camps, mainly due to insufficient food or financial constraints.
- Refugee labor force participation and employment rates are low (28 percent and 21 percent, respectively), much lower than non-refugees. Labor force participation and employment rates are twice as high in Kigali than in the camps. Unemployment is particularly high in camps, and many employed refugees work very few hours, resulting in low incomes.
- Income generation is a major challenge, especially in camps where less than 8 percent of households earn over FRW 60,000 (about US$20) per month. Kigali households fare better, but most refugees remain heavily dependent on aid and are unable to save.
- Only 5.1 percent of refugee households are highly self-reliant, and 72.7 percent have self-reliance levels considered too low. Self-reliance is much higher in Kigali (22.5 percent highly self-reliant) than in camps (less than 2.1 percent), and Burundian refugees tend to be more self-reliant, partly due to their urban concentration.
- The main challenges to self-reliance are in food security, income, and labor: most households have poor food consumption, low incomes, and low employment rates, especially in camps. Education and social capital are relatively stronger, but health and housing remain mixed, with issues like chronic illness and housing affordability persisting.

The findings confirm that most refugees in Rwanda are in protracted displacements situations. While refugees have good access to education and healthcare, they face significant challenges in food security, income, and employment, especially in camps. Outcomes are better in Kigali, suggesting that policies encouraging urban integration could improve self-reliance, though continued assistance will be necessary for many. The RSRM will be a key tool for targeting support and monitoring progress under the new graduation strategy, and ongoing efforts should focus on improving food security, income generation, and labor market integration, particularly in camp settings.

Making Refugee Self-Reliance Work: From Aid to Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa

Johannes Hoogeveen, Karishma Silva, and Robert Benjamin Hoppe

World Bank (2025)

https://hdl.handle.net/10986/43145

This report **seeks to understand the factors that support or hinder refugee self-reliance, explore opportunities for a more sustainable refugee response system**, and identify policy actions for a more efficient approach to hosting refugees. The report introduces a new measure of self-reliance, defining refugees as self-reliant if their consumption from non-humanitarian sources exceeds the poverty line—meaning they generate sufficient income to meet a locally relevant minimum standard of living without humanitarian aid. The authors empirically assess the degree of self-reliance among refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and estimate how increased self-reliance could reduce the costs of care and maintenance.

The methodology assumes that any consumption not provided by humanitarian agencies is self-earned, whether through production, paid work, or remittances. The benchmark cost of subsistence is calculated by multiplying the number of refugees in each income category by the relevant poverty line, with income estimated using the complement of the refugee poverty gap. For five countries with available data, actual figures are used; for others, a 50 percent estimate is applied. Microdata from Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, and Uganda—countries hosting over half of SSA's refugees—form the basis of the analysis. In four of these countries (Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda), data are further disaggregated by refugees' living arrangements (camps versus elsewhere).

Main findings:

- **Refugees in SSA experience high poverty and low self-reliance compared to hosts.** Poverty rates among refugees range from 57 percent in Kenya to 75 percent in Ethiopia, while national poverty rates are much lower (39 percent and 25 percent, respectively). Self-reliance rates are also substantially lower for refugees than hosts in Chad (18 percent versus 42 percent), Ethiopia (15 percent versus 75 percent), Niger (31 percent versus 54 percent), Uganda (14 percent versus 63 percent), and Kenya (29 percent versus 60 percent). Notably, though, refugees in some Kenyan camps have lower poverty than local hosts.
- **Refugees outside camps are more self-reliant and receive less aid than those in camps.** Urban refugees in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda show higher self-reliance, often approaching host levels except in Ethiopia. Camps in remote areas (e.g., Kakuma, Kalobeyei) have lower self-reliance than those near population centers and trade routes (e.g., Dadaab), reflecting differences in economic opportunity.
- **Self-reliance is inversely correlated with subsistence aid.** Refugees in urban areas receive minimal aid (e.g., 3 percent of the poverty line in N'Djamena, Chad and 1 percent in Addis Ababa and Nairobi), while those in camps receive much more (15 to 19 percent in Chad, 36 percent in Ethiopia, 33 percent in Kalobeyei, Kenya).

- **Aid significantly reduces refugee poverty, but its impact varies by country.** In Kenya and Uganda, aid lowers refugee poverty by nearly 25 percentage points, while in Niger, where aid is limited, the reduction is only 7 percentage points.
- **The annual benchmark cost to bring all refugees' consumption to host levels is US$8.51 billion.** This figure reflects an 18 percent reduction from the initial US$10.4 billion estimate to bring all refugees' consumption up to the poverty line, with 65 percent of costs in low-income countries.
- **Refugees cover about 62 percent of their subsistence needs through their own economic activity.** This amounts to US$5.24 billion per year, while humanitarian aid accounts for only 20 percent (US$1.75 billion), leaving a US$1.5 billion annual shortfall in assistance. This shortfall represents a lower-limit estimate because humanitarian spending goes not just to refugees; a nontrivial share goes to host communities.
- **Increasing self-reliance is more effective than increasing aid for closing the poverty gap.** To meet subsistence needs through aid, assistance would need to rise by 180 percent in Chad, 100 percent in Ethiopia and Uganda, 120 percent in Kenya, and 250 percent in Niger. By contrast, if the shortfall was made up by increases in refugees' earnings, incomes would have to increase by 47 percent in Chad, 94 percent in Ethiopia, 34 percent in Kenya and Niger, and 64 percent in Uganda.
- **Area-based development alone may not significantly improve self-reliance.** In Kenya, even full economic integration of encamped refugees would not substantially raise incomes, as hosts in these areas also face high poverty.
- **Factors associated with low self-reliance include the adverse impacts of conflict and forced displacement on refugees' human, financial and social capital, encampment policies, the location of camps in lagging regions, and employment restrictions**. Poverty among encamped refugees is extremely high, ranging from 45 percent in Dadaab in Kenya to 84 percent in Ethiopian camps. In Kenya, self-reliance among refugees is lower in Kakuma (16 percent) and Kalobeyei (7 percent) than in Dadaab (39 percent), which benefits from closer proximity to population centers and trade routes. Refugees in urban areas tend to have higher rates of self-reliance than those in camp settings (e.g., 4 percent in Ethiopian camps vs. 91 percent in Addis Ababa).
- **Subsistence aid and self-reliance are inversely related.** Refugees in settings with low self-reliance receive higher aid, while those with higher self-reliance receive less.
- **A 25 percent increase in refugee incomes could reduce humanitarian aid needs by US$900 million annually.** These savings could be redirected to support the most vulnerable refugees or invested in job creation and economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities.

The report also presents four case studies that explore refugee self-reliance in more detail.

The main messages are as follows:

- **Uganda:** Despite progressive policies granting land and work rights, only 14 percent of refugees are self-reliant compared to 49 percent of hosts. Key drivers of self-reliance include employment of household head, sufficient land (at least 0.05 ha per household member), social integration, longer stays, cattle ownership, and access to credit. However, most refugees lack adequate land and are clustered in low-opportunity areas,

limiting self-reliance. Refugees in Kampala are far more self-reliant (92 percent), underscoring the importance of urban opportunities, especially for those with urban backgrounds. Limited assistance in urban areas may deter movement out of settlements, and portable assistance is needed to encourage relocation to better locations.

- **Niger**: Inclusive policies (work rights, freedom of movement) result in the highest refugee self-reliance in SSA (31 percent) and the smallest gap to hosts, yet 62 percent of refugees remain poor versus 46 percent of hosts. Self-employment in agriculture boosts income, with income gaps stemming mainly from poor local economies rather than individual endowments. Malian refugees fare worse due to settlement in arid, low-opportunity areas, highlighting the critical role of location and economic opportunity. Location-based aid can create dependence and push refugees into sectors for which they are less equipped. Portable assistance is recommended to support movement to areas with better prospects.
- **Kenya**: Encampment policy leads to low self-reliance. New legislation aims for inclusion, but remote camps offer few opportunities. Refugees and hosts in camp areas earn similar incomes, suggesting that integration alone may not raise incomes substantially. Refugees in urban Nairobi earn more due to better market conditions, highlighting the importance of geographic mobility for self-reliance.
- **Chad**: Despite integration policies, most refugees remain in camps with limited opportunities. In 2022, 55 percent of refugees and 64 percent of nearby hosts lived below the poverty line; self-reliance rates were 41 percent for refugees and 46 percent for hosts. Economic inclusion is difficult without significant external support. If refugee incomes matched hosts, humanitarian aid needs would drop by 60 percent. Land-based inclusion and investments in connectivity and markets are needed for a “triple win” for refugees, hosts, and donors.

Promoting refugee self-reliance offers a triple win: it increases refugees’ earnings and self-reliance, reduces dependence on aid, and enables humanitarian aid to be targeted to the most vulnerable. Savings from reduced aid dependence can be reinvested in host communities, addressing any adverse impacts associated with refugee economic inclusion, while stimulating economic activity and creating jobs for both refugees and hosts. However, achieving greater self-reliance is complex and faces significant challenges. Progressive policies alone are not enough. Access to productive assets, freedom of movement, and portable assistance are essential to support both refugee self-reliance and host community development

Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Populations

Sandra V. Rozo and Guy Grossman

World Bank Policy Research Working Paper (2025), No. 11123

https://hdl.handle.net/10986/43206

This paper **reviews quantitative research on the effects of forced displacement and the policies designed to support both forcibly displaced populations and their hosts**.

The review is limited to studies published or released as working papers between 2010 and 2024 that employ quasi-experimental or experimental methods, a body of literature that has grown exponentially over this period. Methodological approaches have evolved from traditional matching and reduced-form estimations to more rigorous techniques such as difference-in-differences, randomized controlled trials (RCTs), and regression discontinuity designs, reflecting increased precision in evaluating displacement impacts and policy interventions. While labor market outcomes have remained a central focus, recent years have seen substantial growth in research on social cohesion, crime, welfare, children, and gender dynamics. The scope of inquiry has also broadened, shifting from an early emphasis on host community impacts to a growing attention to the experiences and outcomes of forcibly displaced populations themselves.

Key findings include:

- **Forced displacement generally has neutral or positive effects on native employment and wages, though vulnerable groups may face short-term challenges.** Most studies find that the arrival of forcibly displaced populations does not significantly harm native employment or wages in the short term. However, informal workers, women, and youth may experience small negative impacts due to increased competition, while workers with complementary skills and formal businesses often benefit from increased occupational mobility, demand-driven growth and reduced labor costs.

- **Public services initially experience strain but benefit from inclusive investments that support both displaced and host populations**. Education and healthcare systems can become congested if resources are not adjusted to meet increased demand, leading to displacement effects for natives. Evidence shows that proactive investments in infrastructure and inclusive policies, such as expanding health services and vaccination programs, can mitigate these pressures and improve outcomes for both groups.

- **Political responses to forced migration vary widely, with heightened anti-immigration sentiments in some developed countries and more neutral or positive attitudes in developing countries**. Refugee migration often drives support for anti-immigration agendas and right-wing parties in affluent regions of developed countries. In contrast, developing countries tend to experience more neutral or context-specific political effects, with positive outcomes linked to increased humanitarian aid and service provision.

- **Cash transfers provide immediate benefits for displaced populations but are most effective when paired with initiatives that promote self-reliance**. Cash transfers increase consumption, improve wellbeing, and reduce child labor among displaced populations, but these benefits may not persist after programs end. Longer program durations amplify these effects, and pairing cash transfers with labor market integration and self-reliance initiatives enhances their effectiveness and sustainability.

- **Labor market integration has proven transformative, yielding higher incomes, better mental health, and reduced dependency on aid**. Granting refugees the right to work, as seen in Colombia's regularization program, significantly improves economic and wellbeing outcomes for refugees, with minimal adverse effects on host communities.

- **Addressing mental health challenges is essential for fostering individual resilience and enabling successful integration.** Poor mental health reduces employment

probability and earnings among forcibly displaced populations. Interventions such as parenting and peer-based support programs show promise in improving mental health and facilitating integration.

- **Inclusive aid programs that benefit both host and refugee populations are critical for reducing tensions and fostering trust.** Programs in countries like Uganda and Lebanon that integrate support for both groups have successfully improved social cohesion and reduced hostility. In contrast, exclusionary models that benefit only refugees risk amplifying resentment and undermining long-term stability.
- **Discrimination is a critical barrier to effective integration, limiting access to opportunities and resources for forcibly displaced populations**. Biases and exclusion can be mitigated through public awareness campaigns, inclusive policies, and initiatives that promote positive intergroup contact.

Overall, the literature emphasizes that there is no universal solution to forced displacement; policies must be tailored to local contexts. Key policy implications include transitioning from humanitarian aid to self-reliance models, bridging policy implementation gaps, investing in mental health and social cohesion, and adapting interventions to local realities. Future research should address the impact of displacement on origin communities, the vulnerabilities of displaced children, and gender-sensitive approaches to ensure comprehensive support for all forcibly displaced populations.

Host Environments and Welfare of In-Camp Refugees: Evidence from Ethiopia

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This paper **examines welfare disparities between in-camp refugees and host communities in Ethiopia**.

The majority of refugees (92 percent) are housed in around 30 camps and sites across the Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Somali, and Tigray regions, with a notable number residing in the capital, Addis Ababa. The geographic distribution of camps is diverse, with approximately 38 percent of refugees residing in arid, lowland pastoralist areas and 60 percent in more agriculturally viable lowland regions.

To identify the sources of welfare disparities, the authors employ econometric analysis using fixed effects, which allows them to isolate the impact of refugee status on welfare outcomes. This approach ensures that comparisons between refugees and hosts are not confounded by differences in conditions across various camps or regions.

The study draws on data from the 2023 Socio-Economic Survey of Refugees in Ethiopia (SESRE), conducted between November 2022 and January 2023. The survey covers refugees in 24 camps nationwide, refugees living outside camps in Addis Ababa, and host

communities. The final sample consisted of 1,296 in-camp refugee households, 431 out-of-camp refugee households and 1,725 host households.

Main findings:

- **In-camp refugees are significantly poorer than host communities.** Their total consumption per capita is about 60 percent lower than that of hosts, and their poverty rate is roughly 40 percentage points higher. These disparities persist even after accounting for socio-economic differences and location-specific fixed effects. In-camp refugees largely depend on aid as their main source of income, and this aid is insufficient to address the high levels of poverty. Poor labor outcomes exacerbate poverty, with in-camp refugees having lower labor force participation and employment rates compared to host communities.
- **Favorable host environments contribute to better welfare for in-camp refugees.** Refugees living in host communities with higher welfare, lower poverty, and better access to services experience improved welfare outcomes.
- **Favorable host environments do not improve labor outcomes for refugees.** Restrictions on refugees' rights to seek employment outside camps mean that better host environments do not translate into higher labor force participation, employment rates, off-farm employment, or wages for in-camp refugees.
- **Positive attitudes of hosts towards refugees are associated with improved refugee welfare.** Social cohesion and welcoming attitudes from host communities play a crucial role in refugees' economic integration, influencing their opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and overall wellbeing.
- **A significant share of in-camp refugees seek employment outside camps, despite not having permits.** About 40 percent of in-camp refugees who worked in the past year did so outside the camps. Female refugees are less likely to work outside the camps. Those working outside camps tend to come from poorer households and have lower education levels.
- **Working outside camps is associated with lower household welfare.** Refugees working outside camps are less likely to secure off-farm or formal jobs and are more often employed in agriculture or informal sectors, which are linked to lower welfare and higher poverty.
- **Working outside camps increases refugees' sense of autonomy and self-determination.** Although it does not offer clear welfare benefits, employment outside camps is positively associated with a stronger sense of control over one's life and fate, which are important aspects of wellbeing.

This study reveals significant welfare gaps between in-camp refugees and host communities, driven by restricted employment opportunities and resulting aid dependency. While supportive host environments can improve refugee welfare, labor outcomes remain poor due to work restrictions, and refugees working outside camps often face lower welfare and higher risks. Expanding both legal and practical access to employment is essential for fostering self-reliance and local economic growth. Effective implementation of policies—such as Ethiopia's recent directive granting refugees the right to work—and integrated approaches that benefit both refugees and host communities are crucial for promoting social cohesion and shared prosperity.

How do perceptions, fears, and experiences of violence and conflict affect considerations of moving internally and internationally?

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This article **examines how perceptions, fears, and experiences of violence and conflict shape young adults' considerations of internal and international migration in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Somalia**. The authors disaggregate violence and conflict into subjective measures (perceptions, fears, and experiences) and focus on whether mobility is being considered, rather than whether it occurs or is desired. They also distinguish between internal and international migration considerations.

The main data source is the MIGNEX survey, which includes over 5,000 in-person interviews with young adults aged 18-39 across ten local areas selected for their varied experiences with violence and conflict. The authors use a linear probability model (LPM) to estimate the effects of different dimensions of violence and conflict on migration considerations. The independent variables are: (1) perceptions of safety/insecurity (e.g., feeling unsafe at night, perceiving increased danger over five years); (2) concerns and fears of violence (e.g., concern about conflict, fear of violence at rallies, by armed groups, or in the local area); and (3) actual experiences of violence/conflict in the past five years (personal or household experiences of physical violence or theft).

Main empirical results:

- **General perceptions of safety and insecurity do not strongly influence migration considerations.** While there are some statistically significant associations in specific areas, most perceptions of insecurity variables are not significant.
- **Specific fears of violence, especially from armed groups, are more influential and are strongly associated with internal migration considerations**. At the aggregate level, all four measures of concerns and fears of violence and conflict show a strong statistically significant association with internal migration. Being concerned or fearing some type of violence is associated with a 5-7 percent higher likelihood of considering migrating internally.
- **Fears of violence matter more for international migration considerations than actual experiences.** Across the pooled data and specific areas, fears, particularly those related to armed groups, are more significant determinants of international migration considerations than personal experiences of violence.
- **Actual experiences of violence are more strongly associated with internal migration considerations than international migration**. Actual experience of conflict and violence is strongly associated with internal migration considerations, with a 7–10 percent higher likelihood, while the association with international migration is weaker.
- **Migration considerations are gendered in most local areas.** Gender is an important determinant in Afghan and Nigerian local areas, where young women are less likely to

consider migrating both internally and internationally compared to young men. In Ethiopian local areas, gender only affects international migration considerations.

- **Migrant networks, both abroad and internally, consistently influence migration considerations.** Having connections to migrants is a significant factor for both international and internal migration considerations.
- **Previous migration experience, especially living in a high-income country, is generally associated with migration considerations.** Having lived abroad for at least one year is linked to increased likelihood of considering migration, though the relationship is not always statistically significant and can be negative in some contexts.
- **Household economic situation, perceived inequality, and risk attitudes are less important determinants of migration considerations.** These factors are statistically significant in very few instances and do not consistently influence decisions to consider migrating.
- **The impact of violence on migration considerations varies significantly by local context.** Violence and conflict play a more important role in shaping migration considerations in Afghan areas, with the highest number of statistically significant findings.
- **Even in areas with high levels of perceived or experienced violence, these factors mostly do not result in migration considerations.** Most young adults in the surveyed areas have not seriously considered migrating, despite reporting concerns, fears, or experiences of violence.
- **There is a stronger association between conflict and internal migration considerations than with international migration.** The pooled data analysis shows that seven of the nine independent variables are statistically significant for internal migration, compared to only four for international migration. An exception is Afghanistan, where the magnitude of the coefficients tends to be larger for international migration.

The authors conclude that migration decisions in conflict-affected areas are complex and nuanced, driven more by specific fears and direct experiences of violence than by general perceptions of insecurity. **Internal migration is a more common and viable response to violence than international migration, especially when violence is not perpetrated by state actors. However, perceptions, fears, and experiences of violence and conflict mostly do not lead to migration considerations, highlighting the mobility bias in forced displacement and migration research and policy discourse**.

Conceptualizing and Measuring Conflict-Related Determinants of Migration

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This article **reviews how conflict-related determinants of migration have been conceptualized and measured in academic literature**, with the aim of deepening understanding of how conflict drives displacement.

The authors conducted a systematic review of peer-reviewed, English-language quantitative studies that included both conflict and migration-related terms in their titles or abstracts. Only studies employing regression analysis and at least one conflict-related variable were included, while those focusing solely on migration aspirations were excluded to ensure the analysis centered on actual migration behavior.

A total of 38 articles (covering 42 analyses) met the inclusion criteria. Most studies relied on aggregate country-level data and global conflict event datasets such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program Georeferenced Event Dataset (UCDP GED), with some also using survey data to capture individual experiences. The review highlights a growing trend toward using innovative data sources, including mobile phone data, social media, satellite imagery, and online surveys, to obtain more granular insights.

Main insights:

- **Most studies treat conflict as a binary variable (present or absent), which fails to capture the complexity of how conflict influences migration**. This approach overlooks important dimensions such as intensity (number of fatalities), types of violence (e.g., civilian-targeting vs state-based), actors (government vs rebels), geographic proximity to individuals, and duration.
- **The reliance on country-level data masks significant sub-national variation in both conflict exposure and migration responses**. More granular, sub-national, or individual-level data are needed to reveal localized patterns and drivers of displacement.
- **Twelve conflict-related determinants were identified, grouped into five themes: presence of conflict, conflict intensity, parties to the conflict, socioeconomic costs, and media access**. Only “presence of conflict” and “number of deaths” appeared in more than ten analyses, while half of the determinants were used in fewer than five studies.
- **Conflict influences other drivers of mobility and immobility, which are present also in more peaceful settings**. Negative socioeconomic impacts of conflict, such as economic decline and deteriorating living conditions and services also increase the likelihood of migration. These interact in different ways with resources, networks and attitudes to risk, which are likely to have important mediating roles in whether people stay or leave, and at what time during a conflict they may make different decisions. Additionally, the length of conflict affects migration in complex ways, influencing perceptions of prospects and the cumulative strain on affected populations.

- **The availability of information and media, as well as the degree of uncertainty, can influence migration decisions**, but their impact varies by context and individual circumstances.

In conclusion, the authors argue that **migration in conflict-affected areas is shaped by a complex interplay of conflict-specific and general migration determinants**. The authors argue that future studies should move beyond binary operationalizations of conflict and country-level measures, to incorporate sub-national and individual-level analysis using novel data sources. To further the conceptualization, measurement, and theoretical understanding of conflict-related determinants of migration, they **call for future research to consider the duration of conflict, uncertainty, socioeconomic costs of conflict, prospects, and migration aspirations**.