

Report

Social protection responses to forced displacement in Colombia

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About this publication

The overall aim of this project is to better understand access to social protection and humanitarian assistance for displaced populations, and to explore mechanisms for linking social protection programmes and humanitarian assistance. By providing clearer guidance about when, how and why different linkages might be considered, the project aims to develop the theory, evidence base and operational guidance on how social protection systems and humanitarian systems can work together to meet the needs of people affected by displacement crises, including the displaced and also vulnerable households in host communities. The research is grounded in three country contexts with a total of six study sites presenting different contexts of displacement and humanitarian response: Greece (Athens and Ioannina), Colombia (Bogotá and Cúcuta) and Cameroon (Far North and East). The project is led by ODI, in close collaboration with the Centre for Applied Social Sciences Research and Training (CASS-RT) in Cameroon, the Alberto Lleras Camargo School of Government at the University of Los Andes in Colombia, and the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) in Greece.

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Contents

Acknowledgements / i

Display items / iv

Acronyms / v

Key messages / vii

Executive summary / 1

1 Introduction / 6

2 Overview of research and methods / 8

2.1 Research questions / 8

2.2 Methods used / 8

2.3 Data collected / 10

2.4 Limitations / 12

3 Country context / 14

3.1 Country overview / 14

3.2 Legal and policy framework for displacement response / 18

4 Access to and linkages between social protection and humanitarian assistance / 25

4.1 De facto access for the forcibly displaced to social protection and humanitarian assistance / 25

4.2 What are the current system linkages? / 37

4.3 What factors and processes led to these linkages? / 43

5 Outcomes of assistance approach / 47

5.1 Evidence of outcomes for affected communities and the role of social assistance / 47

5.2 What are the benefits and drawbacks for wider stakeholders? / 57

6 Conclusions and policy implications / 61

6.1 Conclusions / 61

6.2 Policy implications / 63

References / 68

Display items

Boxes

Box 1 Site selection / 9

Box 2 Lessons for linking humanitarian assistance with social protection, based on the Colombia experience / 64

Tables

Table 1 Survey sample description / 11

Table 2 Qualitative sample description / 11

Table 3 Social protection beyond cash and in-kind assistance / 34

Figures

Figure 1 Displaced population by department, 2020 / 18

Figure 2 Host population perceptions of displaced Venezuelans / 23

Figure 3 Proportion of households receiving assistance, and breakdown by type / 26

Figure 4 Programme source, for those who receive assistance / 26

Figure 5 Proportion of households reporting receipt of identified government schemes / 28

Figure 6 For those receiving government cash transfers, breakdown by type of programme / 28

Figure 7 Registration in SISBÉN, by household composition / 30

Figure 8 Details of assistance: PEP vs. non-PEP transfer recipients / 30

Figure 9 Knowledge of assistance programme, by provider / 37

Figure 10 Approaches to linking social protection and humanitarian assistance / 38

Figure 11 Perceived importance of transfers to transfer recipients / 49

Acronyms

CNC	Centro Nacional de Consultoría (National Consulting Centre)
CNMH	Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Centre for Historical Memory)
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Administrative Department of Statistics)
DNP	Departamento Nacional de Planeación (National Planning Department)
DPS	Departamento de Prosperidad Social (Department of Social Prosperity)
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (People's Liberation Army)
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces)
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEIH	Gran Encuesta Integrada de Hogares (Integrated Household Survey)
GIFMM	Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos (Interagency Group on Mixed Migrant Flows)
GTM	Grupo de Transferencias Monetarias (Cash Transfers Group)
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Colombian Institute for Family Welfare)
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally displaced people
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IVA	Impuesto al Valor Agregado (Value Added Tax, VAT)
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PAE	Programa de Alimentación Escolar (School Feeding Programme)
PEP	Permiso Especial de Permanencia (Special Stay Permit)
PIP	Permiso de Ingreso y Permanencia (Entry and Stay Permit)
PPT	Permiso de Protección Temporal (Temporary Protection Permit)
PTP	Permiso Temporal de Permanencia (Temporary Residence Permit)

RAMV	Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos (Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants)
RUV	Registro Único de Víctimas (National Victims Registry)
SISBÉN	Sistema de Identificación de Potenciales Beneficiarios de Programas Sociales (Identification System of Potential Beneficiaries of Social Programmes)
SNARIV	Sistema Nacional de Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (National System of Comprehensive Care and Reparation for Victims)
TMF	Tarjeta de Movilidad Fronteriza (Border Mobility Card)
UARIV	Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (Unit for Attention and Reparation to Victims)
UNGRD	Unidad Nacional para la Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres (National Unit for Disaster Risk Management)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

Key messages

- Assistance programmes for host and displaced communities in Colombia are largely run by government rather than international agencies. Many internally displaced households in our sample received transfers, in part reflecting their preferential access to state assistance under the 2011 Victims' Law. Venezuelans' access was patchier and primarily linked to Covid-19.
- Although limited in size relative to national provision, the international response to internal displacement has linked closely with government systems. The international response to the Venezuelan influx is increasingly linked with the government's response, but in a somewhat ad hoc manner.
- Where linking of national and international systems has occurred, it has been driven by the urgency, magnitude, and long-term horizon of the displacement crises, and the government's political will, strong and accepted coordination role and progressive overall policies towards the IDP and Venezuelan populations. Sub-national government participation and the Covid-19 crisis also played catalysing roles.
- Assistance to displaced populations helps them meet their basic needs, but improved programme design that better addresses long-term needs and promotes longer-term economic agency is required. Current provision is not seen as a sufficient source of financial stability to plan for the future or overcome socio-economic vulnerabilities.
- Social cohesion is strongly influenced by assistance provision. While assistance for displaced populations strengthens their relations with the state, government support to Venezuelans can damage community relations, where it appears to divert public resources away from vulnerable citizens. International funding for the Venezuelan response is key, both to ensure fair-sharing of the displacement burden and to enable the government to realise its progressive displacement response while addressing pressing internal demands and inequalities.

Executive summary

Recent years have seen growing interest in the use of national social protection systems as a crisis response mechanism in forced displacement contexts. Yet there is only nascent research to date on linking assistance for displaced populations with government social protection, and on the impacts of differing forms of alignment or integration of humanitarian and social protection systems. Colombia offers an interesting case to study these research questions, since it combines a long history and established response to internal displacement with a more recent international influx, hosting over 1.7 million Venezuelans fleeing political and economic turmoil since 2014.

To explore the social protection and humanitarian response to these IDP and Venezuelan populations, our research combined a 1,500-household survey with in-depth interviews and focus groups with Venezuelans, IDPs and host community members in low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta, alongside 24 key informant interviews with government, civil society, and international agencies. While not nationally representative, the data provide important insights in relation to vulnerable host and displaced populations in Colombia's largest metropolis (Bogotá) and in one of the cities on the Venezuelan border most acutely affected by the recent displacement crisis (Cúcuta).

What is the current state of access to social protection and humanitarian assistance for displaced populations?

In our sample from low-income neighbourhoods, 76% of IDPs had benefited from at least one cash or in-kind transfer in the past year, compared to 62% of host households and around half (48%)

of Venezuelans. The bulk of assistance comes from the Colombian government; among those receiving transfers, 78% of Venezuelans, 94% of IDPs and 93% of host population households report receiving government programmes.

Government cash transfers were the dominant assistance modality for Colombian households, while for Venezuelans there was a more even cash/in-kind split. For both host and Venezuelan households, *Ingreso Solidario* was the main cash transfer received by a large margin, highlighting the role of the Covid-19 pandemic in expanding coverage to un- or under-served groups (*Ingreso Solidario* targeted households not previously in receipt of any cash transfers to support them during the pandemic). Although still not a majority, IDPs were far more likely than host and Venezuelan households to have been benefiting from routine cash transfer schemes that pre-dated the pandemic, particularly *Familias en Acción* (which covered 35% of IDP households in our sample). This relatively high coverage rate of IDPs in part reflects their special entitlements to State assistance under the 2011 Victims' Law and related policy framework.

In-kind or mixed-modality assistance was received by at least a quarter of IDPs and Venezuelans, and one-sixth of host households, almost always initiated within the previous year and predominantly from government. In the case of IDPs, only around 4% reported benefiting over the past year from the government's *Atención Humanitaria* for victims of the conflict (with slightly higher but still low coverage for those displaced within the past year and therefore eligible for the most intensive components of that scheme).

We do not find evidence of notably greater barriers to access for IDPs relative to host recipients, although IDPs did report delays in the initial process to register their displacement status. Venezuelans found it easier to access in-kind assistance than citizens, and those already in the social registry (SISBÉN) appear to have had no more difficulties overall accessing cash transfers than IDPs or hosts. However, Venezuelans were more likely to cite lack of access to technology as a challenge for accessing cash transfers, and were also far more likely to struggle with SISBÉN registration, principally due to lack of documentation.

To what extent and in what ways has humanitarian assistance linked with social protection in different displacement contexts?

In response to **internal displacement**, there is a comprehensive legal and operational framework in place for the Colombian government to assist IDPs, meaning provision is primarily nationally led with relatively limited international programming. The latter is principally focused on the emergency response to new displacement and is largely integrated with government systems, following government-established policies and using joint coordination mechanisms and administrative systems.

In the **Venezuelan response**, the government still provides most services and support. After some initial fragmentation, the growing international response is increasingly aligning or even fully integrating with government systems, with joint coordination mechanisms, nationally led legal frameworks, and even some instances of fully integrated financing (where international funds are channelled through government systems to support Venezuelans). Where international actors deliver their own programmes, cash transfer

values must align with national schemes, and eligibility criteria, targeting and referral systems are also sometimes linked.

While this suggests a relatively high – and growing – degree of integration, there is still a sense that many of the links between humanitarian agencies and government social protection in the Venezuelan response have been ad hoc and not yet consolidated into a larger migration policy framework. This may also explain Venezuelans' own perceptions that programming is fragmented, with unclear access routes and eligibility requirements between different schemes.

What factors and processes led to the adoption of these approaches?

The government's political will to develop an effective joint response to the Venezuelan influx was driven by the urgency and magnitude of the crisis, alongside other likely influences, such as the recognition among policy-makers of the economic benefits of well-regulated migration, the long history of mobility and complex political relations between the two countries, and cultural ties and language similarities between the displaced and host populations.

For international agencies, closer links with government systems were driven by a recognition of the need to maximise limited resources as well as avoid duplication supporting populations that would likely remain displaced on a protracted basis. National laws and policies promoting IDPs and Venezuelans' access to broad socio-economic rights (coordinated by a clear government focal point) created a conducive collaboration environment and provides a defined role for humanitarian assistance, at least on paper (with aid required in the immediate aftermath of

displacement, but not indefinitely, since displaced populations in theory have access to services and opportunities to rebuild their lives effectively).

Alongside the direct interests and concerns of international and national agencies, two other factors appear to have had a central role in influencing system linkages: (i) sub-national governments and their planning processes, which determine the local use of social protection systems to assist displaced populations; and (ii) the Covid-19 crisis, which triggered unprecedented levels of international-national cooperation to mitigate the pandemic's dire socio-economic impacts on both host and displaced populations amidst challenging lockdown measures.

What have been the benefits and drawbacks of these approaches for different stakeholders, and what is perceived to have driven these impacts?

Our study considered outcomes of the assistance model for displacement-affected populations (relating predominantly to government programming, given the limited number of households receiving non-governmental assistance in our sample):

For most **basic needs and wellbeing measures**, Venezuelans fare much worse than IDPs and the vulnerable host population in our survey. While we are generally unable to detect a significant association between social assistance receipt and basic needs measures (due in part to data limitations), we do detect statistically significant effects along certain dimensions. Moreover, in both the quantitative and qualitative research, displaced populations repeatedly highlight the vital importance of assistance for helping to

meet needs, whether for daily food and shelter (Venezuelans) or for more wide-ranging basic needs such as education and healthcare (IDPs).

In relation to **longer-term economic agency**, all groups, but especially IDPs, rated their financial situation poorly and steady employment was low for all. Venezuelans have the worst access to financial services, and both Venezuelans and IDPs have fewer assets than hosts. While assistance receipt was associated with increased access to bank accounts, current provision is perceived to have limited effect on displaced populations' broader economic agency, as it does not allow them to plan for the future or feel economically secure (in the case of IDPs, this was partly due to the long delays in accessing the lump-sum compensation that could significantly improve their living conditions).

'Horizontal' social cohesion outcomes (host-displaced relations) showed clear tensions, particularly in relation to Venezuelans. Only around a third of hosts and IDPs agreed that Venezuelans and Colombians get along well; 68% of Venezuelans agreed with that statement, but Venezuelans were also significantly more likely than IDPs to report having experienced harassment or discrimination (although also more likely to report having received host support). While our survey did not detect a significant association between assistance receipt and horizontal cohesion measures, the impacts of assistance on community relations were frequently highlighted in the qualitative research. This showed strong host support for assistance provision to IDPs, as vulnerable conflict victims; however, many IDP and host households in the low-income areas studied expressed concerns that the government should not provide further resources to Venezuelans until all vulnerable

citizens are covered (this referred to government provision specifically, rather than internationally financed programmes).

In relation to **‘vertical social cohesion’** (trust between people and institutions), Venezuelans report significantly higher trust in government and UN agencies than host and IDP households. Assistance receipt was strongly associated with greater trust in government and international agencies.

Our study also looked at the perceived benefits and drawbacks for other stakeholders:

For **government** stakeholders, perceived benefits of improved linkages between humanitarian assistance and social protection include reduced duplication, improved targeting of recipients, expansion of coverage and services, increased institutional capacity and opening up of additional resources.

For **international organisations**, better linked assistance models were likewise deemed advantageous in optimising limited resources, expanding overall coverage, securing a better long-term approach to support the growing displaced population, and facilitating identification of gaps in programming, unmet needs and opportunities for improved provision.

Despite these benefits, integrating international and government assistance more closely was also associated with various **challenges**, notably the logistical and operational difficulties of secure and responsible data-sharing; fears that government commitments to displaced populations may be undermined by budgetary pressures; and social tensions that may result from apparent increases

in government provision for Venezuelans, if it is perceived to come at the expense of support for vulnerable citizens.

What are the insights for linking social protection and humanitarian assistance in different displacement contexts?

Linking international assistance with government social protection will not always be appropriate, but it is far more feasible when there is a consolidated, long-term vision in place to comprehensively address the displaced population’s needs, with a clear framework outlining different actors’ roles. International agencies can prepare to collaborate with social protection by harmonising their own activities, articulating their offer to strengthen government systems, and engaging government agencies in small-scale joint programming. Care must be taken to ensure that alignment with government transfers, eligibility criteria or administrative systems does not undermine the protection of vulnerable populations or the adequacy and accessibility of support for them, particularly those who are undocumented or fearful of registering as displaced.

The research also offers lessons for **ensuring that the government social protection system is better able to support displaced populations.**

These include practical adjustments to tweak programme design and administration for displaced populations. They also include more fundamental shifts, to move from narrow, short-term assistance models to more medium- to long-term measures that promote access to decent work and financial security in practice, and that ‘level the playing field’ for displaced children and youth, so that the inequalities their parents face are not perpetuated over time.

The government's new 'Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans' decree provides a unique opportunity to develop this longer-term vision in Colombia, with more coherent and comprehensive programming in response to the Venezuelan influx. However, while the broad policy landscape and vision is encouraging, robust action must be taken to convert rights on paper into real opportunities in practice. Furthermore, this course of action must be charted in a manner that is sensitive to social tensions and does not – and is not perceived to – come at the expense of support for vulnerable citizens.

International financing has a key role to play here, since it can enable the government to realise its progressive long-term vision for Venezuelans, without jeopardising much-needed ongoing attention both to continued internal displacement and to pressing socio-economic inequalities among citizens, which have only been heightened by the pandemic. **While the government has adopted strong, nationally led displacement responses, this does not remove the need for the international community to share the burden of one of the largest – and, currently, most underfunded – displacement crises of modern times, through adequate, responsive, and long-term financing.**

1 Introduction

The number of people who are forcibly displaced has more than doubled in the last decade, passing 100 million globally in 2022 (UNHCR, 2021; 2022). Those affected increasingly find themselves displaced on a protracted basis, and are now more likely to be living alongside host community members in urban or semi-urban areas, rather than in designated camps for refugees or internally displaced people (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2019a; UNHCR, 2020; OCHA, 2017).

The increased duration and urbanisation of displacement means that traditional ‘care and maintenance’ models of humanitarian assistance, based on providing immediate relief to meet emergency needs, are poorly suited to most displacement situations today. Over the years, various initiatives have sought to promote more sustainable and development-oriented solutions to displacement challenges, including greater engagement with and strengthening of national social protection systems as a potential crisis response mechanism.¹

In contexts of forced displacement, there is growing interest in the potential for humanitarian assistance to link with national social protection systems to meet the needs of both displaced and host communities. Yet there is only nascent research on the extent to which displaced populations are covered by social protection systems, on how linking with these systems could work in practice in different displacement

contexts, and on the potential impacts that may emerge from aligning or integrating humanitarian assistance and social protection systems (Peterman et al., 2018).

To help address this knowledge gap, ODI was commissioned by the World Bank to lead a two-year project (2020–2022) exploring when and how humanitarian and social protection systems can best work together to respond to forced displacement. This report presents the findings from primary research in Colombia, undertaken by researchers at the Alberto Lleras Camargo School of Government at the University of los Andes, in partnership with ODI. Colombia was selected as an interesting case study for this project, as it combines a long history of conflict-induced internal displacement with much more recent experience of international displacement, as the main host country for Venezuelans fleeing one of the largest displacement crises in the world (UNHCR, 2021). It is the only upper-middle income country and the only Latin American country in the larger study, and provides insights into the potential uses of a relatively mature social protection system in a context where there is a high degree of linguistic and cultural similarity between the host and displaced² populations.

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the research questions and methods. Section 3 describes the country context, and provides an overview of the national and

1 For example, see the commitments to increase engagement with social protection systems and promote displaced populations’ access to such systems in the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, the Grand Bargain emerging from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees.

2 ‘Displaced’ is used throughout the case study to refer both to those who are internally displaced in Colombia (IDPs) and those who are internationally displaced (Venezuelans).

international responses to the Venezuelan influx and internal displacement in Colombia. Section 4 explores the role of social protection in assisting displacement-affected populations, first looking at de facto access to social protection and humanitarian assistance for displacement-affected populations (Section 4.1), then assessing the linkages between the social protection and humanitarian systems (Section 4.2), and finally exploring the factors and processes

that led to this approach to assistance delivery (Section 4.3). Section 5 analyses the outcomes of the current assistance approach, looking in particular at correlational evidence of impacts on displacement-affected populations (Section 5.1), as well as the impacts on other stakeholders from government and the humanitarian sector (Section 5.2). Section 6 reflects on emerging lessons and policy implications.

2 Overview of research and methods

2.1 Research questions

To help identify the optimal approaches for linking social protection and humanitarian assistance in different displacement situations, the research aims to answer the following key questions:

1. What is the current state of access to social protection and humanitarian assistance for displacement-affected populations? (Section 4.1)
2. To what extent and in what ways has humanitarian assistance linked with social protection in different displacement contexts? (Section 4.2)
3. What factors and processes led to the adoption of these approaches? (Section 4.3)
4. What have been the benefits and drawbacks for different stakeholders (including for host and displaced populations themselves), and what is perceived to have driven these impacts? (Section 5)
5. What are the insights for linking social protection and humanitarian assistance in different displacement contexts? (Section 6)

While these questions were the foundation of the research project, emphasis was placed on the most pertinent focus areas for each case study.

In this study, most displaced households were found to be receiving assistance only through government programmes, so the focus is on the extent to and ways in which displacement-affected populations have been supported through the government social protection system, as well as the drivers and outcomes of that government-led response. This means that most of the case study insights relate to the ‘nationally led’ approach to assistance delivery in the project’s

Analytical Framework (Lowe et al., forthcoming, building on Seyfert et al., 2019; Barca, 2019). In these discussions, we explore ‘integration’ in relation to the inclusion of displaced populations within the national social protection system, and identify lessons for improving their future integration into this system, where this appears to be a desirable and effective strategy to assist them (which would not necessarily be the case in all displacement contexts).

However, interviews with international and government agencies also highlighted various ways in which the (smaller) international humanitarian response has aligned or integrated with government social protection programmes when assisting displacement-affected populations in specific areas. These allow for a brief exploration of the broader system linkages, looking in Section 4 at how and why humanitarian agencies align with, piggyback on, or fully integrate with the social protection system in their own policies and programming. In these cases, we explore ‘integration’ in relation to the closer integration of international humanitarian assistance with national social protection systems. Nonetheless, it was not possible to analyse the impacts of these alternative forms of ‘systems’ integration on displaced and host households in detail, since few in our sample reported receiving non-governmental assistance.

2.2 Methods used

To answer the above research questions, we employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews and focus group discussions that, together, provide

insights on the situation of and support provided to displaced Venezuelans, IDPs and vulnerable households in the host population in Colombia.

Both types of data were collected in two sites within Colombia to capture differences across

locations. Throughout this report, we present results for the full sample (in both sites) and highlight differences between locations when relevant. Box 1 highlights and characterises the selected sites.

Box 1 Site selection

We selected two study sites that serve as either initial destinations or longer-term settlements for both the internally and internationally displaced. First, we study the city of Cúcuta, where Venezuelans are most likely to arrive as their first point of entry. Second, we selected the capital city of Bogotá, where internally and externally displaced people are more likely to settle in the medium to long term.

Cúcuta is the capital of the Department of Norte de Santander, located on the north-eastern border of the country. It is home to both IDPs (3.6% of all IDPs in Colombia) and Venezuelans (11% of all Venezuelans in Colombia). Cúcuta has income poverty rates above the national average, with 53.5% of its population living below the poverty line in 2020 (DANE, 2021). Its unemployment rate of 21% is also higher than the national average of 15.8%. The labour informality rate (71%) is the highest of all Colombian urban areas.

Bogotá is in the centre of Colombia and therefore far from any land border, and yet has a sizeable population of Venezuelans (20% of all Venezuelans in Colombia) and IDPs (5.1% of all IDPs in Colombia). Bogotá's poverty rates are 40.1%, just below the national average of 42.5%. Given its status as the capital and the availability of more work opportunities, labour force participation and employment rates are higher than national averages. However, its unemployment rate in the first trimester of 2020 was 18.5%, 7.3 percentage points higher than it was in 2019. Rates of informality in Bogotá (41.2%) are lower than the national average of about 50%.

Together, these sites provide an interesting contrast between two locations that are destinations for displaced persons, but with important differences in size, socioeconomic context and type of displacement. While the results obtained from these two sites cannot be generalised to the whole country, they do provide insights into situations faced in similar regions. For example, the situation in Cúcuta is likely similar to other departments along the border with Venezuela, and the case of Bogotá should be broadly comparable with other cities where displaced households settle in the longer term, such as Medellín, Cali and Bucaramanga.

The survey data was collected by the *Centro Nacional de Consultoría* (CNC) in both study sites. Our objective was to interview 1,500 households

in total, equally distributed between the three relevant populations in this study (displaced Venezuelans, IDPs and vulnerable households in

the host population). Geographic sampling was employed to reach the three groups using data from the National Statistics Department (DANE, for its acronym in Spanish) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This information allowed CNC to identify low-income city blocks³ with a large proportion of displaced individuals. The systematic selection of low-income city blocks means that the sample will by design have lower measurements on key welfare variables than the average for the country, Bogotá or Cúcuta. However, given that the underlying goal is to understand how social protection systems can support vulnerable populations, this sample targeting is necessary. Sixty-five randomly selected blocks in each case study site were chosen from eligible locations, and 30 enumerators conducted in-person interviews from 25 January to 12 February 2021, following strict Covid-19 protocols. The questionnaire collected information on demographics, household attributes and composition, displacement, education, health, labour markets, social cohesion, food security, finances, and security, asking 197 questions in total (see Annex 3 for the full questionnaire in Spanish).

While the survey data provides valuable and novel information on displaced populations, it is unable to provide in-depth knowledge of some aspects of these people's lives. For this purpose, we also employ qualitative methods, using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Owing to difficulties in recruiting participants during the pandemic and Covid-19 restrictions, participants were randomly selected from survey respondents who voluntarily consented to be contacted for further inquiries.

Alongside the research with displaced and host community households, we also conducted in-depth interviews with key informants in the policy arena: government officials, policy-makers and members of national and international humanitarian and non-governmental organisations. Organisations were purposively selected from a list of key institutions serving Venezuelans and IDPs in the country, some of whom referred us to other institutions or individuals.

We collected qualitative data using different 'socially distant' methods, following health mandates restricting face-to-face gatherings at the time of fieldwork. Techniques included Zoom videoconferencing, WhatsApp chats and phone calls. We recorded and transcribed the interviews and focus groups verbatim. Analysis was conducted with the Nvivo software, using axial coding (Simmons, 2017).

Our mixed-methods approach was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Universidad de los Andes, protecting the confidentiality of the survey, interview and focus group participants. Throughout the data collection process, we obtained informed consent from all participants, after providing information related to the research project.

2.3 Data collected

The survey was conducted successfully, with a sample size of 1,532 households (511 host households, 512 internally displaced households and 509 households with Venezuelans).⁴ Table 1 shows demographic attributes from our

3 Geographic locations in Colombia are classified into economic strata, ranging from 1 (poorest) to 6 (richest). In our study, we focus on locations in strata 3 or lower.

4 A Venezuelan household is one in which the interviewee stated that he/she was born in Venezuela. This includes some households with mixed nationalities.

Table 1 Survey sample description

	Our survey			DANE's GEIH		
	Hosts	IDPs	Venezuelans	Hosts	IDPs	Venezuelans
Sex of respondent						
Male (%)	30	24	20	51	53	51
Female (%)	70	76	80	49	47	49
Age group of respondent						
18-29 (%)	17	17	42	33	22	51
30-49 (%)	33	47	47	39	36	41
50-64 (%)	34	28	9	19	24	7
65 or over (%)	16	9	2	10	18	1
Highest education level of respondent						
Primary or less (%)	36	45	12	3	3	3
Secondary (%)	42	41	52	64	65	72
Vocational or technical training (%)	14	10	12	18	18	11
University (%)	9	4	23	15	15	14
Number of observations	511	512	509	16,603,375	13,286,593	1,594,893

Table 2 Qualitative sample description

	Hosts	IDPs	Venezuelans	Total
In-depth interviews	6	6	6	18
Bogotá residents	3	3	3	9
Cúcuta residents	3	3	3	9
Focus groups	4	4	4	12
Bogotá residents	2	2	2	6
Cúcuta residents	2	2	2	6
Key informant interviews	0	9	15	24
On the response in Bogotá				7
On the response in Cúcuta				7
On the response at national level				10

sample compared to countrywide statistics from DANE's GEIH household surveys. We expect to find differences among our sample and these national surveys due to the differences in geographic coverage and the sampling frame, and the inability to precisely identify IDPs and Venezuelans in the GEIH.⁵

Our sample of respondents consists of more women than men compared to the national distribution, the age group composition is slightly older on average and the educational distribution in the sample is lower compared to the GEIH surveys, which is expected given that our survey purposely interviewed low-income households.

2.4 Limitations

The data and methods employed in this report help answer the research questions outlined at the beginning of this section. However, while they provide relevant and novel information on social protection coverage, integration and other aspects of the welfare of vulnerable groups in Colombia, they nevertheless face several limitations.

First, the quantitative survey data was collected in only two sites and targeted low-income areas. As such, it is representative of vulnerable host and displaced populations in Bogotá and Cúcuta, but not representative of the three population groups at the national or city level. Additionally, while the survey is comprehensive, time constraints did not allow us to inquire in depth about all welfare dimensions or topics. Furthermore, the survey

constitutes a cross-section and does not allow us to investigate how outcomes vary over time. It should be noted that the data was collected 11 months into the Covid-19 pandemic. This will have influenced many aspects of respondents' lives, and we cannot identify how responses may have differed in the absence of the circumstances due to the pandemic (although our analysis of assistance received does attempt to distinguish between support related to the Covid-19 response and support that predated the pandemic). Finally, we are unable to make direct causal claims since there is no exogenous variation in our study design. Where possible, we try to approximate causal relationships, but we remain cautious and make the necessary disclaimers to avoid drawing erroneous causal claims.

The qualitative data is essential to understand the experiences of the three populations with respect to our research questions. Nonetheless, there are some necessary words of caution when interpreting our findings. The opinions voiced in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with vulnerable groups and the key informant interviews with policy-makers reflect the views of those who were selected and chose to participate. The attributes, views, and experiences of those willing to take part in our study might differ from those who chose not to participate. Additionally, while the qualitative research sample was initially drawn from survey participants who consented to answer follow-up questions (and who had been recruited in person through random sampling in low-income neighbourhoods), the final recruitment of focus group and in-depth

5 DANE's household surveys allow the identification of internal migrants as persons who are living in a municipality different from that of their birth, but are less precise as to the reasons for their migration. Additionally, for both internal migrants and Venezuelans, they only inquire about recent migratory movements. However, there is less available information from other administrative sources to compare the composition of our sample to nationwide statistics.

interview participants was done by phone, and the interviews themselves were carried out remotely through phone calls or WhatsApp discussions. This may therefore have excluded some individuals who no longer had access to the phone number that they provided at the time of the survey. Additionally, while we as researchers can take steps to reduce and acknowledge potential sources of bias, our perspectives are inherently present at every step in the research process (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

Despite these limitations in the quantitative and qualitative data, which are common in many similar studies, we consider that these sources of information are suitable to adequately explore the questions that motivate this research, and to provide new insights on displacement-affected populations in Colombia and the role of social protection in protecting vulnerable populations, today and in the future.

3 Country context

3.1 Country overview

Colombia is an upper middle-income country, with a population of just over 50 million, per capita GDP of US\$ 6,428 in 2019, one of the world's highest inequality rates (2019 GINI Index of 51.3) (World Bank, 2021; Meléndez et al., 2021), and a 2020 income poverty headcount of 42.5% at the national poverty line (DANE, 2021). Over the past few decades, Colombia has enjoyed stable macroeconomic growth, with just one year of negative growth since 1962 (UNDP, 2021), and has made important progress in poverty reduction. However, the Covid-19 pandemic threatens to undo much of this progress, with an increase in the income poverty rate of 6.8 percentage points since the start of the pandemic and forecasts suggesting that its costs could amount to a decade of economic development (Cárdenas and Martínez, 2020).

Part of the explanation for Colombia's income poverty reduction across the past two decades has been its social protection system (Stampini and Tornarolli, 2012). Social protection in Colombia takes a comprehensive approach, seeking to address vulnerability and poverty, provide protection against lifecycle risks, respond to crises and shocks and promote human capital development, including through universal education and healthcare (Acosta Navarro et al., 2015; Meléndez et al., 2021). The system aims to achieve this through both contributory (financed by payroll contributions) and non-contributory pillars (financed from the general government budget), although fragmentation between these components is a challenge. The vulnerable population is meant to be covered by the non-contributory system, which includes various

social programmes for marginalised households. Many of these are targeted using a proxy means test for imputing household income from socio-economic data provided by the household and verified through a home survey. This system is institutionalised in the System of Identification of Potential Beneficiaries of Social Programmes (SISBÉN, for its acronym in Spanish).

There are several social assistance programmes operating nationally. *Familias en Acción*, the largest conditional cash transfer scheme, has been running in Colombia since 2000 and grants benefits to 2.6 million vulnerable households, with associated school attendance and health conditions (DPS, 2020). *Colombia Mayor* provides cash (and some in-kind) assistance to 1.6 million senior citizens who do not have a retirement pension and whose income lies below the poverty line. *Jóvenes en Acción* is a conditional cash transfer programme that promotes human capital accumulation to improve employability among Colombian low-income youth (around 300,000 participants in 2020). *Devolución del IVA* is a new unconditional cash transfer targeted at around 2 million low-income families with the objective in theory of paying back eligible individuals' expenditure on value-added taxes, although in practice the transfer amount is fixed as an estimated average and does not depend on an individual's consumption. This programme was originally scheduled to start in January 2021, but was brought forward to April 2020 to help mitigate the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis. *Ingreso Solidario* is another new unconditional cash transfer initiated during the Covid-19 crisis to aid 3 million low-income families not covered by existing cash transfer programmes; it was initially expected to be only a short, temporary

programme, but has continued throughout the pandemic and is expected to remain as a permanent scheme in some form. These five programmes are implemented by the Department of Social Prosperity (DPS). Finally, *Colombia Está Contigo* provided food and nutritional assistance from the beginning of the pandemic. This last programme is led by the national government with logistical support from the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management.

3.1.1 Internal displacement due to conflict

Colombia is home to one of the largest populations of IDPs in the world as a result of decades of armed conflict, violence over the control of illicit economies and land conflicts (UNHCR, 2019a; IDMC, 2020).⁶ As of June 2021, around 8.1 million people were registered as IDPs in the government's Victims' Registry (the *Registro Único de Víctimas*, or RUV) (UARIV, 2021a).⁷ Although a peace agreement in 2016 officially ended the conflict between the Colombian government and the insurgent *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC-EP), several other armed groups, including the *Ejército Popular de Liberación* (EPL), *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) and the *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia*, remain active and are currently fighting for control over land and illicit crop production in areas vacated by the FARC-EP (IDMC, 2020).

According to IDMC (2019) and OCHA (2017), internal displacement in Colombia is primarily

urban, with most people being displaced from rural to urban and peri-urban areas. IDPs tend to settle in slums and shanty towns rather than rural areas. Social networks play a large role in their choice of destination; they are more likely to move to locations where other displaced individuals from their place of origin chose to settle (Saldarriaga and Hua, 2019). Crime and violence in the areas in which IDPs settle result in high levels of secondary displacement (OCHA, 2017), forcing many households to relocate more than once. While most IDPs were displaced during the height of the violence in the late 1990s and early 2000s (CNMH, 2015), many end up in protracted displacement for years or decades. Recently, there has been a rise in the number of newly displaced people (OCHA, 2017; IDMC, 2020). In 2019, 139,000 Colombians were reported to be newly displaced by conflict (IDMC, 2020). This is likely to be an underestimate, as threats by armed groups against displaced people and officials involved in the registration of IDPs impede precise counting of the newly displaced (European Commission, 2019).

Earlier research has highlighted high poverty rates among IDPs, with deprivation levels two to three times higher than in the general population (OCHA, 2017). According to IDMC (2017), around 80% of IDPs live below the poverty line, with headcount rates even higher among the newly displaced. IDPs are also up to three times more likely to be unemployed. Most IDPs, particularly those originally from rural areas, including marginalised indigenous or Afro-Colombian communities, tend to work in the informal sector as unskilled labourers or street sellers for low

6 Disasters triggered by natural hazards are another important driver of displacement, with 35,000 people being newly displaced by disasters in 2019 (IDMC, 2020). However, the focus of this case study is on those who have been displaced by conflict, as they are by far the largest IDP group.

7 Since the RUV records the cumulative total of people who have been displaced by armed conflict over the decades, the number of current IDPs (excluding those who have passed away or reached a durable solution) is estimated to be a lower figure of around 5.6 million people (IDMC, 2020).

pay and without benefits (in terms of social protection, this implies that they are excluded from contributory coverage). IDPs settled in rural areas with access to land may struggle to develop sustainable livelihoods due to difficulties selling their agricultural products in markets (ibid.).

3.1.2 The Venezuelan influx

Colombia has received the largest share of displaced Venezuelans, driven by the political, economic and humanitarian crisis in neighbouring Venezuela (UNHCR, 2019a).⁸ Since 2014, over 1.7 million Venezuelan citizens have relocated to Colombia (GIFMM, 2020).⁹

Historically, many border crossings between Colombia and Venezuela have been a ‘pendulum’, with citizens of both countries frequently crossing the border for a few hours or days to access goods and services, attend school or visit relatives (Panayotatos and Teff, 2019). About 30,000–40,000 crossings happened daily, usually by means of a Border Mobility Card (*Tarjeta de Movilidad Fronteriza* or TMF), which grants Venezuelans access to a designated border area for seven days. However, since the beginning of the pandemic, the Colombian government has restricted border crossings to minimise contagion and in response to the Venezuelan government’s own border closures. The number of incoming Venezuelans has fallen by 90% since official border crossings were closed (Colombia

sin Fronteras, 2020), but this measure is believed to have led to increased illegal crossings into Colombia (R4V, 2021a).

There is disparity in the available information on Venezuelans in Colombia as most are irregular, which complicates the tracking and characterising of this population (Tribin et al., 2020). However, several sources help paint a picture of who these Venezuelans are, such as the 2018 census, household surveys, the Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (RAMV, for its acronym in Spanish) run by the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management, and statistics from the government agency *Migración Colombia*. While all these sources collect valuable data, each has limitations. The 2018 census was the first to include a migration module, but only captures migration during the past five years. Household surveys include a migration module every month, but they have a similar time window to the census and do not inquire about IDPs. The national statistics office DANE recently launched a migration survey, *Pulso Migratorio*, which includes data on the impact of Covid-19 on the Venezuelan population in Colombia. The RAMV, in turn, collects information on documented Venezuelans, but only does so in 441 municipalities (approximately 35% of all districts), and does not collect data for undocumented migrants. Finally, *Migración Colombia* collects quarterly statistics on the number of documented migrants and provides an estimate for undocumented migrants, but does not provide socioeconomic information

8 As discussed further in Section 3.2.1, Venezuelans in Colombia are defined as a forcibly displaced population by UNHCR. However, the vast majority (99%) have not officially sought asylum, and are therefore often referred to as ‘migrants’, including by the Colombian government. For this reason, the term ‘Venezuelan migrants’ is sometimes used in the report, although in subsequent sections we prefer the term ‘displaced Venezuelans’ to recognise that they have been forcibly displaced rather than being voluntary migrants.

9 Over 800,000 Colombian citizens who were previously living in Venezuela have also now returned to Colombia as part of the recent influx (GIFMM, 2020). However, Colombian ‘returnees’ are not a focus of this case study.

on these individuals. Despite these drawbacks, together these sources constitute a useful starting point to characterise the Venezuelan population in Colombia.

As of June 2021, official government figures placed the number of Venezuelans in Colombia at 1,742,927, of whom 43.6% had ‘regular’ migrant status, and the remaining 56.4% ‘irregular’ status (Migración Colombia, 2021). Regular status implies that Venezuelans have official documentation and are in good legal standing, while irregular migrants are undocumented. In our survey sample, 40% report having documentation while the remaining 60% are undocumented.

According to the World Bank, using household survey data from 2014–2019 which captures both regular and irregular migrants, Venezuelans tend to be younger than the Colombian host population (Sebastian et al., 2020). Recent migrants aged 15–25 represented a third of all Venezuelans entering Colombia, while Colombians in this age group represent about 25% of the host population. While at the beginning of the influx most migrants were men, recent waves have featured greater gender balance. According to a survey by *Proyecto Migración Venezuela*¹⁰ (2021), more than half of surveyed Venezuelans had lived in Colombia for one to three years; 48% lived in overcrowded conditions; and 52% lived in poverty.

Before the start of the pandemic, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) calculated that displaced Venezuelans were likely to increase Colombia’s gross domestic product (GDP) by about 0.3 percentage points from 2017–2030 due to

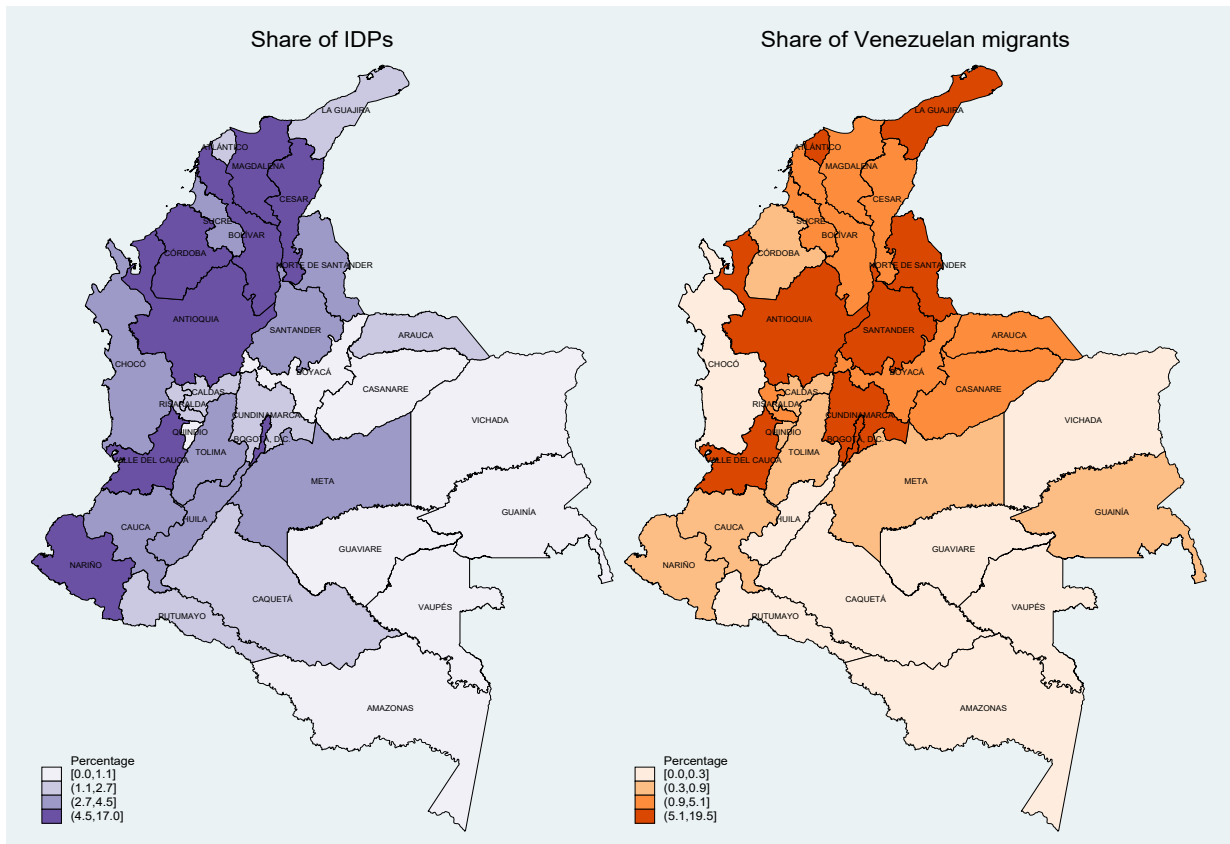
increases in the skilled labour force (Fernandez and Guajardo, 2019). An in-depth investigation of newly regularised migrants in 2018 reveals that Venezuelans are well-educated on average: at least 83% of working-age migrants have a high school degree, compared to 66% of the host population (Bahar et al., 2018). This trend has increased over time, with more recent migrants having greater average human capital than the local population (Sebastian et al., 2020). These patterns are crucial when determining the type of support Venezuelans may need to successfully rebuild their lives post-displacement, and may in part have influenced the Colombian’s government response to the Venezuelan influx (see Section 5.3).

Geographical patterns of displacement

Displacement has been concentrated in certain areas, as shown in Figure 1.

Most IDPs have settled in the north and west of the country, mainly in the departments of Nariño, Valle del Cauca, Antioquia, Bolívar, Córdoba, Magdalena, and César, as well as in Bogotá. Most Venezuelans are in the centre and north-east of Colombia, especially in border regions such as La Guajira and Norte de Santander. However, many also settle in major cities, including Bogotá, Barranquilla, Medellín, Cúcuta and Cali (Tribin et al., 2020). Estimates suggest that the number of Venezuelans who reside in these regions ranges from 4% to 15% of the local host population (GIFMM, 2020).

10 *Proyecto Migración Colombia* is an initiative of the Social Innovation Team of *Revista Semana* that seeks to inform and raise awareness of the migration of Venezuelan citizens to Colombia, as well as the return of Colombians residing in Venezuela. The project is financed by USAID through its operator in Colombia, Acdi/Voca.

Figure 1 Displaced population by department, 2020

Source: Authors' elaboration from administrative records

3.2 Legal and policy framework for displacement response

3.2.1 International law

The national response to internal and international displacement is in part shaped by global and regional legal frameworks that cover Colombia.

The right to social protection is embedded in a number of general human rights instruments to which Colombia is party, notably Articles 22 and 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 9 of the International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Both of these instruments cover all individuals, citizens and non-citizens alike (Kool and Nimeh, 2021).

In relation to displaced Venezuelans specifically, UNHCR considers that the majority of those fleeing the country are in need of international refugee protection (UNHCR, 2019b), whether under the 1951 Refugee Convention (to which Colombia is party) or under the broader refugee criteria of the regional protection framework, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration (which Colombia has adopted). However, given delays or gaps in asylum procedures in some countries in the region (including Colombia), many Venezuelans who would meet the criteria for refugee status

are instead opting for alternative legal forms of stay as regular migrants (although they are still categorised as forcibly displaced by UNHCR) (UNHCR n.d.; UNHCR, 2021). This is the case in Colombia, where only 1% of the internationally displaced population are reported by UNHCR to be seeking asylum, with the other 99% classified as ‘displaced Venezuelans’ residing in Colombia with either regular or irregular migrant status. In these cases, international frameworks relating to the rights and freedoms of migrants are also applicable. Among others, this includes the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (to which Colombia is party), which outlines migrants’ rights to social protection (IPC-IG, UNICEF LACRO and WFP, 2021).

In relation to internal displacement, there is no legally binding global instrument conferring IDPs special status in international law with rights specific to their situation, since IDPs are entitled to enjoy the same rights and freedoms as any other citizen, including in relation to social protection (IDMC, n.d.; OHCHR, n.d.). The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement bring together these existing rights and protections, and highlight governments’ primary responsibility to assist and protect IDPs, with the international community playing a complementary role (OHCHR, n.d.).

3.2.2 National government response

Given the coexistence of two displaced populations in Colombia, the response from the government has two different facets. On the one hand, there is a consolidated legal and institutional response for IDPs, given the ongoing nature of the internal conflict, as well as the vast number of victims. On the other, the Venezuelan influx is more recent and less consolidated in comparison.

Government assistance to IDPs

The government in Colombia has been lauded for developing ‘the world’s most comprehensive legal system for IDPs’, along with strong government institutions at the national level to protect and assist them (Ferris, 2015). This assistance is mandated by the 2011 Victims and Land Restitution Law and implemented by the Unit for the Attention and Reparation of Victims (UARIV), affiliated to the Department of Social Prosperity (DPS), via the National System of Comprehensive Care and Reparation for Victims (SNARIV). Victims are defined as those who, since 1 January 1985, have individually or collectively suffered harm because of violations of International Humanitarian Law or serious and manifest violations of International Human Rights standards due to the internal armed conflict (Law 1448 of 2011). The Victims’ Law focuses on three pillars: attention, assistance and reparation.

The Victims’ Law outlines provisions to address IDPs’ needs on three levels (IDMC, 2017; OCHA, 2017). First, IDPs are entitled to various types of humanitarian aid (*‘Atención humanitaria’*), provided by the UARIV (UARIV, 2018). Initially, this consists of *immediate assistance* (food, toiletries, other basic supplies and temporary lodging), which is provided by the municipality receiving IDPs to people who have applied to the Victims’ Registry but have not yet been included. Once registered, they have access to *emergency assistance* within their first year of displacement, or for those deemed at high risk of falling below minimum subsistence levels. Finally, there is *transition assistance*, which aims to help IDPs who have been displaced for over a year and who are ineligible for emergency assistance, but lack adequate temporary accommodation and/or food to settle in their current locations. This last

type of assistance is supposed to be delivered to registered IDPs until they can secure adequate housing and food security.

The second tier of entitlements under the Victims' Law provides IDPs with preferential access to social assistance, as well as a wider array of social programmes. As noted above, access to many social programmes in Colombia is first determined by a proxy means-testing targeting system called SISBÉN, which calculates a vulnerability score out of several indicators. While having been displaced is not factored into the calculation of the score itself, IDPs are identified in the SISBÉN database, and this is used to target routine cash transfers and other social programmes to victims of the conflict (Ibañez and Velasquez, 2008). In addition, some agencies/programmes use information directly from the Victims' Registry (rather than the SISBÉN) to identify participants for their programmes. During Covid-19, the Colombian government provided additional assistance to IDPs to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic, as well as adapting processes to enable continued registration of new IDPs (UARIV, 2020).

The third level of entitlements under the Victims' Law relates to reparations. This includes cash compensation, rehabilitation, restitution and guarantees that the violations of victims' rights will not be repeated.

Officially, this system constitutes a consolidated multi-tier mechanism for meeting the needs of IDPs. However, funding and coordination among the different entities remains a challenge in practice (Sherriff, 2019). To fully implement the 2011 Victims and Land Restitution Law, OCHA

(2017) estimated that the government would require US\$1 billion per year for the next decade. However, the government had an estimated fiscal space of US\$3 billion for all expenditures beyond those already mandated by law, which implies that fully implementing the Victims' Law would require one-third of the fiscal space (ibid.).

Government assistance to displaced Venezuelans

The Colombian government's overall response to Venezuelans has been based on a policy of solidarity and characterised as exceptionally hospitable in providing them with wide-ranging rights and services (UNHCR-IOM, 2021), although access to these provisions does vary significantly depending on whether they are 'regular' (less than half as of June 2021) or 'irregular' (around 60%) (Migración Colombia, 2021).

According to the World Bank (2018), the Colombian response to Venezuelan migration occurred in three stages. The first, starting in 2015, was primarily an effort to help coordinate the return of Colombians who had been living in Venezuela through greater institutional presence in border crossing areas. The second stage started in 2017, when the government created two mechanisms to regularise migrants: the *Tarjeta de Movilidad Fronteriza* (TMF), a card that allows Venezuelans access into Colombia for up to seven days, and the *Permiso Especial de Permanencia* (PEP), which granted them regular migrant status, the right to work and access to basic services such as health and education, as well as a path to residency. The third stage began in 2018 when the

government increased control along the border and created several institutional mechanisms¹¹ to expand and improve attention to Venezuelans.

In March 2021, the government issued another decree aimed at regularising undocumented Venezuelans through the creation of the ‘Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans’, a permit valid for 10 years.¹² This status applies to individuals remaining for a temporary period in Colombia who fall into one of four categories: have regular migratory status, with a valid permit; possess safe passage documentation (SC-2 form) that confirms them as asylum-seekers;¹³ have irregular migratory status but proof of arrival in Colombia before 31 January 2021; all Venezuelans who enter two years from the starting date of the decree, subject to fulfilling specified legal requirements. These individuals are eligible to begin the regularisation process allowing them to be hired legally and providing the broadest entitlements in terms of rights and services.

In relation to social protection, legalised migration status is one of the entry points into the social assistance system. Having a PEP, for instance, allows Venezuelans to request to be registered in SISBÉN. Once in SISBÉN, they are part of the pool eligible to be considered for existing social programmes, as well as new forms of assistance targeting Venezuelans. In practice, very few have

received the largest social assistance programmes that are targeted through SISBÉN (e.g. *Familias en Accion*, *Jovenes en Accion*, and *Colombia Mayor*), since budgetary constraints have prevented these programmes from enrolling all households that meet the eligibility criteria (World Bank, 2018). However, while both demand issues and supply limitations prevent migrants from receiving established social assistance programmes, around 40,000 Venezuelan households enrolled in SISBÉN were eligible for the Covid-19 emergency cash transfer programme *Ingreso Solidario* (accounting for 2% of total recipients) (Fundación ProBono, 2020; IPC-IG, UNICEF LACRO and WFP, 2021), while in Bogotá, 0.08% of recipients of the mayor’s Covid-19 vouchers and in-kind support were foreigners, including Venezuelans (Alcaldía de Bogotá, 2020).

In terms of broader social protection, Venezuelans are officially covered by basic services such as education and health. All Venezuelan children, regardless of their migrant status, are permitted to enrol in basic education (up to 11th grade). Access to university education requires regular migrant status, although some vocational programmes are more lenient on admission policies.¹⁴ In terms of health, the system does not deny emergency treatment to any individual at public hospitals. However, access to specialised medicine and any other service not classified as

11 In terms of institutional coordination, Migración Colombia is the main entity in charge of border control, allowing entry to all migrants and granting the TMF and PEP for regular migrants in the country. The Presidential Border Management Agency coordinates policies for the Venezuelan response throughout the country. There is also the Interagency Group on Mixed Migrant Flows (GIFMM, for its acronym in Spanish), co-led by UNHCR and IOM, which complements the government response to refugees, migrants, returning Colombians and other vulnerable populations (R4V, 2020). Other key agencies that assist migrants include the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) and the Departamento de Prosperidad Social (DPS).

12 This is in contrast to the PEP, which was valid for only two years and had to then be renewed.

13 While SC-2 holders can choose to apply for the PPT/TPS, this will cancel their application for asylum.

14 The legislation that guarantees basic education is Sentence SU 677/2017, CONPES 3950, Decree 1288/2018, and Circular 16/2018.

an emergency requires either regular migratory status or legal action via a *tutela*.¹⁵ Venezuelans with regular status can choose a health care provider and receive the same services as the host population via the national health insurance system, either through the contributory system (if they are employed formally or as independents who contribute), or otherwise through the government-financed non-contributory system.

In addition to these basic services, the Colombian government has provided other forms of assistance to the Venezuelan population. During the first wave of migration in 2015, several existing programmes were scaled up to provide returning Colombians and Venezuelans with psychosocial assistance, legal advice,¹⁶ nutritional guidance and technical training (Uribe, 2016, cited in Cherrier, 2019). As more Venezuelans crossed the border, those with regular status began receiving other types of support. Services provided by the Colombian Institute of Family Wellbeing (ICBF for its acronym in Spanish), such as child development centres and psychosocial family support, were made available to children, adolescents and families. Venezuelans also received benefits through schools, such as the School Feeding Programme (PAE, for its acronym in Spanish) (IPC-IG, UNICEF LACRO and WFP, 2021). In 2017, the ICBF provided care to 22,100 Venezuelan children and adolescents through its institutional

programmes,¹⁷ increasing to 105,200 in 2019. Most of those assisted were children below the age of five (ICBF, 2018; ICBF, 2020).¹⁸

This generous government response to Venezuelans was initially met with tolerance and solidarity from the host population, given Colombia's own large diasporas to Venezuela and other countries, sparked by its long-standing internal conflict (Graham et al., 2019). However, as the financial and social costs increased, this positive reception waned. Anti-immigrant sentiment has grown among the host population, politicians and the media, resulting in several violent incidents targeting Venezuelans. As shown in Figure 2, perception surveys show an increasing trend of negative attitudes towards migrants (Invamer, 2020, cited in Proyecto Migración Venezuela, 2020).¹⁹ We explore these trends further in Section 5.

3.2.3 International humanitarian response

The response to internal displacement in Colombia has largely been government-led (Ferris, 2015; OCHA, 2017). The role of the international community has been to support the government in responding to the needs of IDPs and other conflict victims (OCHA, 2017). However, since the signing of the 2016 peace agreement, international involvement with IDPs has been gradually winding down (Panayotatos and Teff, 2019).

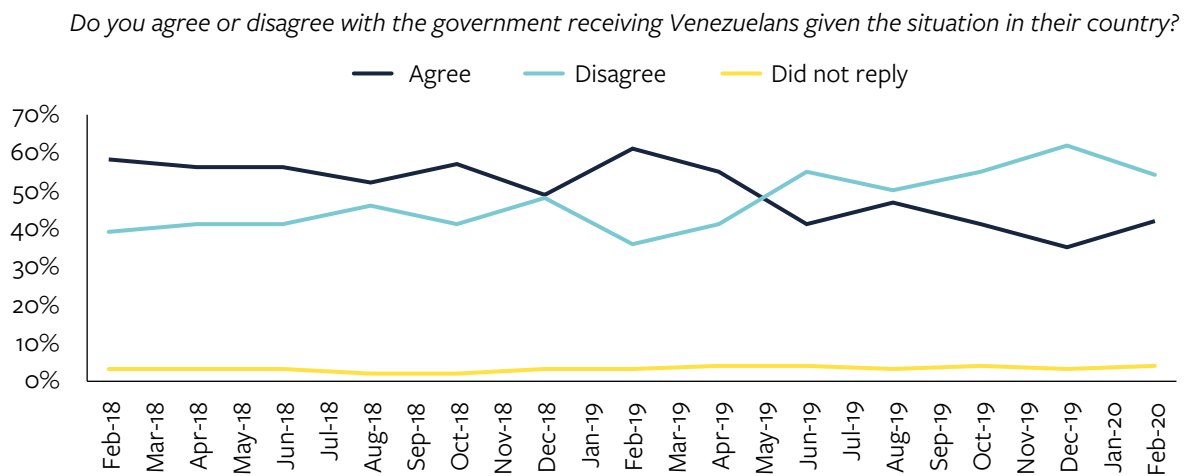
15 The legislation that defines migrants' access to health is the Constitution of 1991, Law 1551/2015, Decree 780/2016, Sentence SU 667/2017, Resolution 3015/2017.

16 Such as units of 'Defensorías de Familias' rotating in the shelters to deal with threats, non-observance or violation of rights.

17 ICBF divides its programmes into several groups: Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence, Nutrition and Protection.

18 Of the 105,200 children and adolescents covered by ICBF programmes, 90,800 were assisted by early childhood programmes, 5,500 by child and adolescence programmes, 5,100 by nutritional programmes, 2,200 by child protection programmes and 1,600 by family programmes.

19 See also the Barometro de Xenofobia: <http://barometrodexenofobia.org>.

Figure 2 Host population perceptions of displaced Venezuelans

Source: Authors' elaboration using data from the Observatorio del Proyecto Migración Venezuela, based on the Invamer Gallup-Poll, 2018–2020

To the extent that resources have been allocated, international donors have focused more on transitional justice, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, with relatively limited resources going to support durable solutions for IDPs (OCHA, 2017). The Venezuelan crisis has further accelerated the shift in resources and focus away from IDP needs towards displaced Venezuelans (Panayotatos and Teff, 2019).

The international humanitarian response to the Venezuelan crisis has also been limited, with most of the burden falling on host countries (International Rescue Committee, 2019). During the first four years of the crisis, humanitarian funding amounted to US\$125 per capita for displaced Venezuelans, one-twelfth of the average of US\$1,500 per capita for Syrian refugees (Bahar and Dooley, 2019), making it the most underfunded refugee response in modern history (Bahar and Dooley, 2021). Among the countries receiving Venezuelans, Colombia required US\$782 million to finance its relief efforts in 2020, of which only 38% had been raised abroad by the end

of 2020, most of it funded by the United States (GIFMM, 2021). Overall, support for Venezuelans has largely had to be financed directly by the Colombian government. From 2017 to 2019, resources spent on Venezuelans for health, education and early childhood programmes amounted to 0.12% of Colombia's GDP over the three-year period (Melo et al., 2020; Tribin et al., 2020). In comparison, total international humanitarian assistance to Colombia from 2017 to 2019 (for all humanitarian needs, not just the Venezuelan response) amounted to about US\$468 million, which equates to less than 0.05% of Colombia's GDP for that period (OCHA, 2021).

There has also been a perceived lack of coordination between governmental and non-governmental assistance (World Bank, 2018). To improve coordination, the Interagency Group for Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM, for its acronym in Spanish) was created at the end of 2016, including United Nations agencies, national and international NGOs and the Red Cross (GIFMM, 2020). It is co-led by IOM and UNHCR and has

61 member institutions and eight local offices in Antioquia, Arauca, Atlántico, Bogotá, La Guajira, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Valle del Cauca.

The *Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos* (GIFMM) is implementing the Colombia strategy within the Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants, which coordinates non-governmental and intergovernmental agencies responding to the crisis. The 2021 Colombia plan costs US\$641 million, about 68% of which is channelled through 12 UN agencies, 28% through international NGOs and 4% through national NGOs, civil society organisations and religious institutions (R4V, 2021b).

After primary medical attention, the largest sums in the Response Plan are budgeted for cash assistance (US\$141 million from all sources) and food security (US\$163 million from all sources) (R4V, 2021b). Cash transfers have become the preferred programme modality of the international humanitarian community throughout the Covid crisis. Through the Cash Working Group, GIFMM members coordinate to ensure harmonisation in terms of selection criteria and targeting mechanisms, coordinate across sectors and define exit strategies from programmes (including transition to the national social protection system).

The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) lead efforts in relation to food security. WFP focuses on border areas with greater levels of food insecurity, providing nutritional assistance in seven departments: Arauca, Cesar, La Guajira, Norte de Santander, Nariño, Magdalena, and Atlántico (WFP, 2020). These efforts are coordinated with the government, other agencies, and UN partners.

In conclusion, since the dominant channel of assistance for IDPs is through the government, the focus of our IDP case study is on the government assistance model, including the extent to and ways in which assistance for IDPs is linked with the national social protection system. There is a greater presence of international actors in the Venezuelan response, but most of the burden still falls on the government, which has devoted significant resources to it, as well as taking steps to facilitate access to legal residence and opportunities for Venezuelans in the country. As explained in the following section, government programmes constitute the dominant source of assistance among displaced Venezuelan households in our study. For this reason, the Venezuelan case study also focuses principally on the nature and impacts of government-led assistance, although the ways in which international humanitarian assistance has linked with the government social protection system are also discussed.

4 Access to and linkages between social protection and humanitarian assistance

This section presents our research findings on access to social protection and humanitarian assistance among Venezuelan, IDP and vulnerable host populations in low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta (4.1). It also considers the linkages between social protection and humanitarian assistance, and the factors and processes that may have led to the current model (4.2).

4.1 De facto access for the forcibly displaced to social protection and humanitarian assistance

We focus on access to cash and in-kind transfers, as these types of assistance are common to both social protection and humanitarian programming, and are identified as being primary candidates for linking international and government-led responses to displacement crises.²⁰ However, as noted in the previous section, social protection in Colombia consists of a much broader system of policies and programmes aimed at preventing and reducing poverty and vulnerability, protecting against risks and shocks and promoting the accumulation of human capital. We therefore also look at different populations' access to broader social protection, including social security, healthcare and education.²¹

4.1.1 What proportion of the IDP, Venezuelan and host population in our sample receive cash and in-kind assistance?

Compared to host households, IDP households in our sample were significantly more likely to have accessed cash or in-kind assistance in the past year, and Venezuelan households significantly less likely. In our survey of low-income neighbourhoods, 76% of IDPs were benefiting from at least one such programme, compared to 62% of host households and only half (48%) of Venezuelans. When disaggregating by type of benefits, we find that Venezuelans who receive assistance are marginally more likely to receive this in-kind than in cash. In contrast, Colombian households who receive assistance (both hosts and IDPs) are far more likely to receive this in cash, as shown in Figure 3.²²

4.1.2 Who provides this assistance?

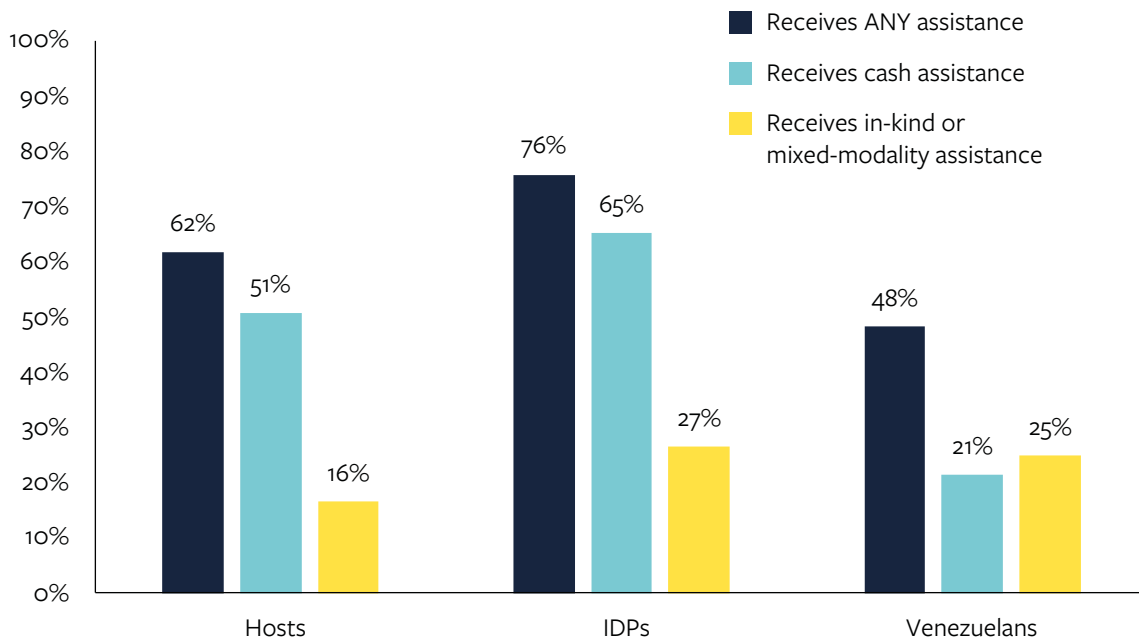
The bulk of reported assistance comes from the Colombian government. Overall, among those receiving assistance, 78% of Venezuelans, 94% of IDPs and 93% of host population households report that this assistance comes from the Colombian government. Only 8% of Venezuelan households that benefit from assistance reported receiving it from a non-governmental (or

20 See e.g., World Humanitarian Summit (2016); New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016); Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (2018).

21 We also recognise that informal social protection – care and support provided through social structures and networks – plays a critical role in the lives of displaced and host populations, but this was beyond the scope of our study.

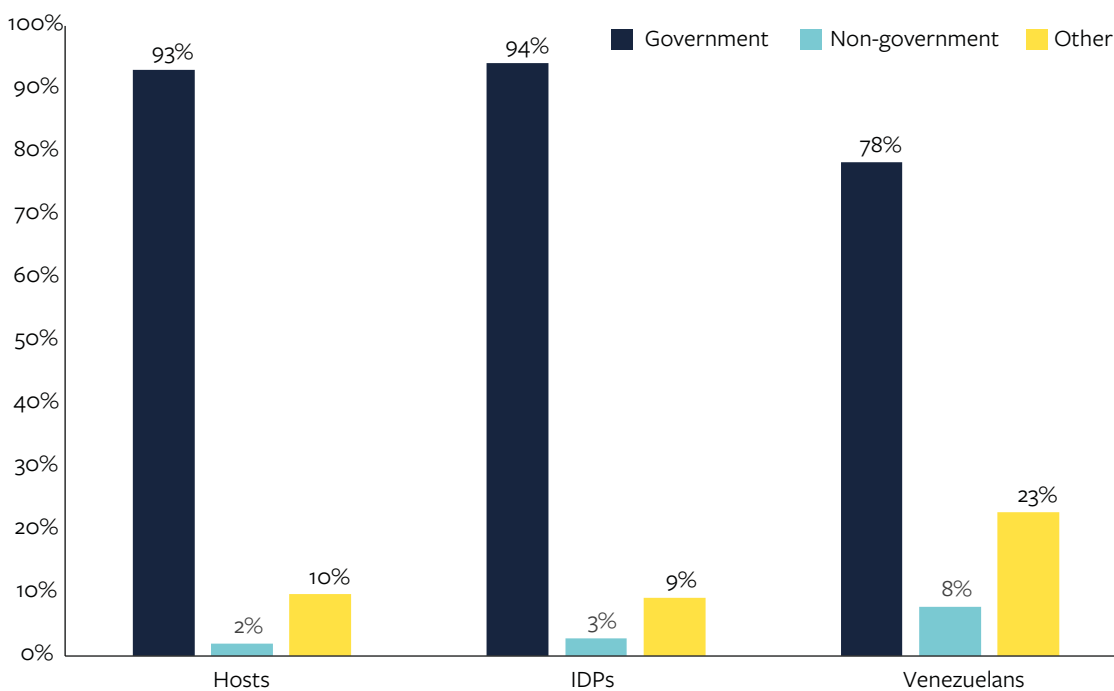
22 For calculations of the coverage figures discussed throughout this section, see Table 4.1 in Annex 1.

Figure 3 Proportion of households receiving assistance, and breakdown by type



Source: Authors' elaboration using data from survey of low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta

Figure 4 Programme source, for those who receive assistance



Source: Authors' elaboration using data from survey of low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta

international) organisation. Reported receipt of assistance from non-governmental organisations is even lower for hosts (2% of recipients) and IDPs (3% of recipients), with key informant interviews (KIIs) with policy-makers confirming that the majority of international humanitarian assistance is directed to Venezuelans:

The migration issue has been hard on internal displacement ... All the resources of international cooperation that were oriented towards peace, now are oriented towards demobilised persons, or migration problems, and less and less to [internal] conflict. But the conflict continues and while resources decrease, displacements increase. (KII IDP response, government agency Bogotá-BOG21)

Alongside the small number assisted by non-governmental or international organisations, a non-negligible minority of households were also supported by other actors such as churches, private individuals, and community members. This is evident in the survey, where some households receiving assistance described it as ‘Other’ rather than as a government or a non-governmental organisation programme (meaning it was categorised as ‘Unidentified’). Among those receiving assistance, 23% of Venezuelans, 9% of IDPs and 8% of the host population reported that it came from ‘Other’ sources (overall, this equates to 11% of Venezuelans, 7% of IDPs and 6% of the host population in our sample). In the case of Venezuelans, some indicated that they usually apply for a wide range of programmes regardless of who provides them, and they are often unsure

which actor provides the support (this uncertainty was not evident in conversations with IDPs and the host population).

A detailed exploration in Table 4.1 (Annex 1) shows that, where assistance was initially described as ‘Other’ and therefore marked as ‘Unidentified’, it often related to community-based provision from churches, private individuals, and anonymous donations. This suggests that other sources of assistance besides government and humanitarian agency provision are also relevant for displaced populations in Colombia.²³

4.1.3 Are there differences in the programmes accessed by each group?

Cash assistance

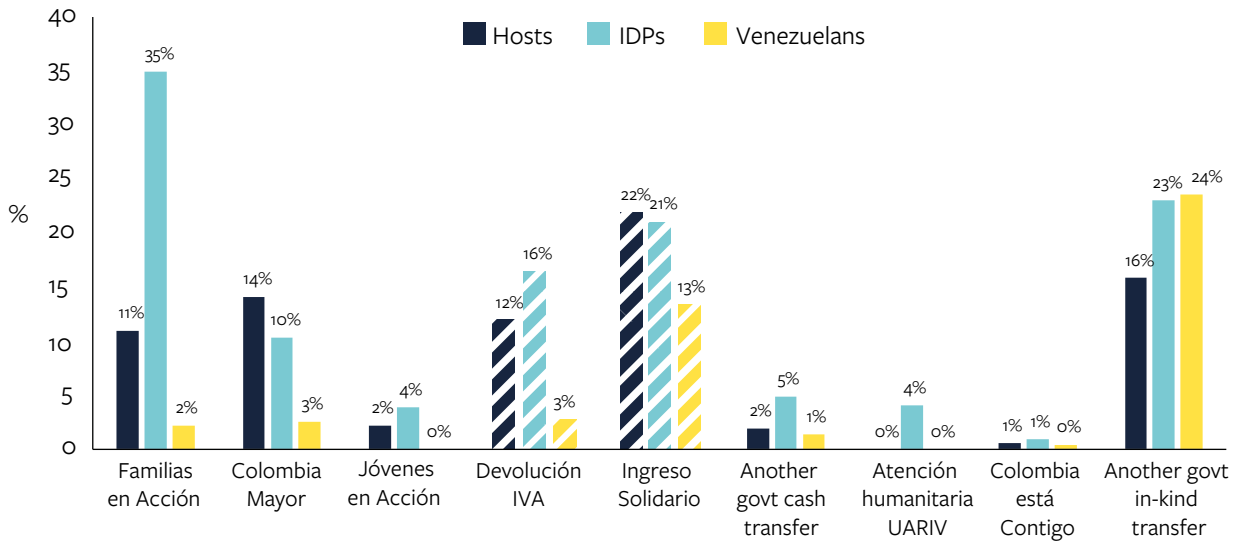
Overall, two-thirds (65%) of IDPs in our low-income neighbourhoods sample, half of the host population (50%) and just under a fifth of Venezuelans (19%) reported that they received cash from a government transfer scheme.²⁴

However, this hides important differences between those covered by routine (pre-pandemic) social protection and those accessing assistance only as a result of Covid-related programming. To explore this, we look in Figures 5 and 6 at those accessing government cash transfers and plot the breakdown of programmes received. *Familias en Acción*, *Jovenes en Acción*, and *Colombia Mayor* are the three main routine government cash transfer programmes available before the pandemic, while *Compensación del IVA* and *Ingreso Solidario*

23 In some cases, community-based providers may have been implementing partners of international humanitarian agencies; however, this was generally not visible in our data, as the details of the ‘Other’ responses only indicated a link with a non-governmental organisation in about one in five unidentified cases.

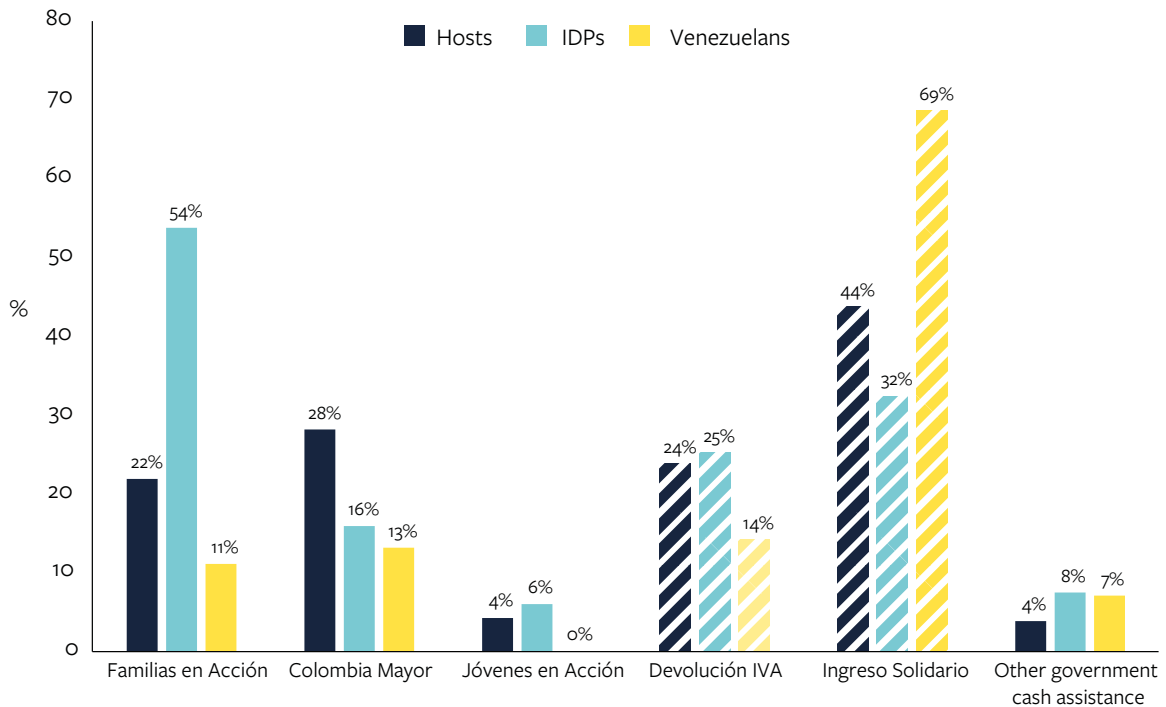
24 Since less than 1% of each population group in our sample reported receiving cash assistance from a non-governmental organisation, our focus is on understanding the differences in access to government cash transfers.

Figure 5 Proportion of households reporting receipt of identified government schemes



Source: Authors' elaboration using data from survey of low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta.
 Note: Striped refers to programmes introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 6 For those receiving government cash transfers, breakdown by type of programme



Note: Total number of government cash transfer recipients in sample: 256 respondents for host population; 333 for IDPs; 99 for Venezuelans. Striped refers to programmes introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic.
 Source: Authors' elaboration using data from survey of low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta

are programmes initiated during the pandemic (although both are now expected to remain in some form on a long-term basis).

For IDPs, *Familias en Acción* was the main cash programme (received by 54% of IDP government cash transfer recipients, or 35% of total IDPs in our sample). This reflects their preferential access to such schemes and suggests that these households were already receiving assistance before the pandemic, which in turn made them ineligible for *Ingreso Solidario* (since the latter targeted vulnerable households not receiving any of the main pre-Covid programmes). This does not mean, however, that these IDPs' needs were neglected during the pandemic, since the government aimed to provide temporary 'top-up' payments for all *Familias en Acción*, *Jóvenes en Acción*, and *Colombia Mayor* recipients during the crisis.

Despite their higher routine coverage rates, more than half of the IDPs in our sample did not seem to have been receiving any government cash transfers prior to Covid-19. One-third of IDPs receiving government cash transfers – or 21% of total IDPs in our sample – were receiving *Ingreso Solidario*, implying that they were not accessing any pre-Covid government cash programmes. A further 35% of IDPs in our sample were still not receiving any government cash assistance at the time of the survey.

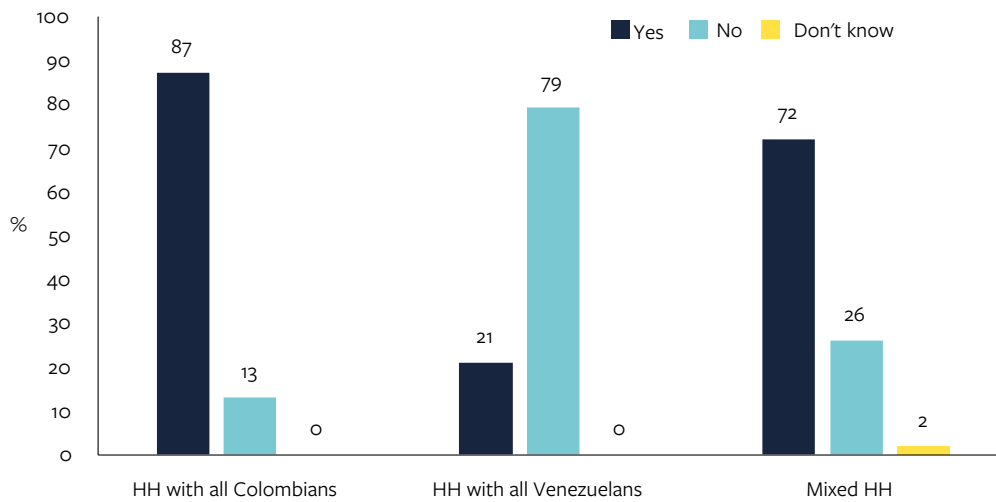
For both host and Venezuelan households, *Ingreso Solidario* is the main programme received by a large margin, indicating even more strongly the role of pandemic-related assistance in expanding coverage of un- or under-served groups. *Ingreso Solidario* accounted for nearly seven in ten government

cash transfers received by Venezuelans and nearly half for the host population; overall, the programme covered 13% of Venezuelans and 22% of the host population in our sample. When combined with households still not receiving any government cash transfers in our sample (81% of Venezuelans and 50% of the host population), this suggests that **around three-quarters of the vulnerable host population surveyed and almost all Venezuelans were not covered by routine cash transfer schemes prior to the pandemic.**

The fact that *Ingreso Solidario* was the most common cash assistance for host and Venezuelan households is in some ways not surprising. First, *Ingreso Solidario* was a larger scheme than any of the pre-Covid cash transfer programmes (covering 3 million households, compared to 2.6 million for the largest pre-Covid scheme *Familias en Acción*) (DPS, 2021). Second, *Ingreso Solidario* was designed to cover vulnerable households regardless of nationality. This meant that it included regularised Venezuelans who were registered in the SISBÉN database and met the specific eligibility criteria. **These Venezuelans had not been benefiting from long-standing cash programmes, in some cases because they may not have met the eligibility requirements but mainly because enrolment into those programmes has been closed in recent years:**

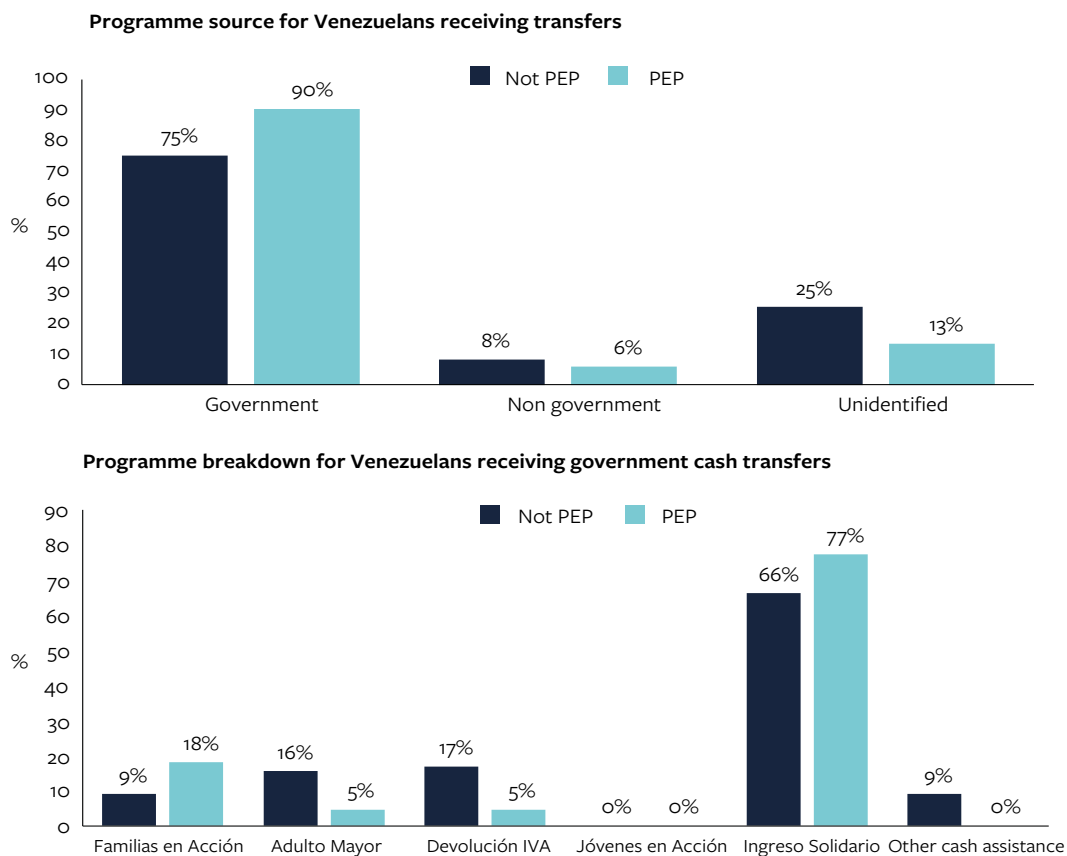
Currently, conditional cash transfer programmes do not include Venezuelans because registration to the programmes has not opened recently. Registrations for *Familias en Acción* date back a while and for the case of *Jóvenes en Acción*, it mostly depends on whether beneficiaries are enrolled

Figure 7 Registration in SISBÉN, by household composition



Source: Authors' elaboration using data from survey of low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta

Figure 8 Details of assistance: PEP vs. non-PEP transfer recipients



Source: Authors' elaboration using data from survey of low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta

in a university. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Colombia-COLO3)²⁵

However, while Venezuelans were not officially targeted by pre-Covid cash transfer schemes, a handful in our sample were accessing these schemes, which can likely be explained by mixed-nationality household composition. Despite not including Venezuelans as directly as the new *Ingreso Solidario* scheme, *Familias en Acción* and *Colombia Mayor* were covering 11% and 13% respectively of Venezuelan government cash transfer recipients (or 2% and 3% of Venezuelans overall in our sample). To explore this, we study the role of household composition in programme coverage. Households may consist of all Colombian citizens, all Venezuelan citizens or a mix of both nationalities. Our calculations indicate that 57% of all households surveyed consist of only Colombian citizens, 15% have only Venezuelan citizens and 29% of households are mixed, with both Colombian and Venezuelan household members. Figure 7 shows registration in the SISBÉN database – which is one of many requirements for applying for most government transfers – for different types of household in our sample.

We observe that 87% of households with only Colombian citizens are registered in SISBÉN (which reflects the fact that our sample was specifically drawn from the vulnerable population). In turn, 21% of households with all Venezuelan citizens are registered – a small but by no means trivial proportion. However, 72% of mixed households are registered in SISBÉN, which

explains why some Venezuelans report receiving cash assistance from programmes that do not directly target them.

We also study coverage for Venezuelans based on whether they have a PEP or not (as noted earlier, PEP implies documented/regular status). Respondents with the PEP were significantly more likely to receive assistance than those without PEP (57%, compared to 46%). Figure 8 shows the proportion receiving assistance by source (top panel) and by programme (bottom panel) (see Table 4.1A in Annex 1 for details).

Once again, most assistance comes from the government. PEP holders were significantly more likely than non-PEP holders to be assisted by government. Yet despite the requirement of a PEP for registration in SISBÉN (and access to social protection programmes), several undocumented Venezuelans were accessing government transfers, which is explained by the existence of mixed households. Therefore, **despite some legal requirements excluding undocumented Venezuelans from social assistance, some are indirectly covered because of migration networks and family ties.**

In-kind assistance

One-quarter of IDPs (27%) and Venezuelans (25%) in our sample, and around one-sixth (16%) of host households, reported receiving a specific in-kind or mixed-modality assistance programme, mainly from the government.²⁶

Benefits may include temporary shelter, food, water, clothes, and personal hygiene kits.

²⁵ *Jóvenes en Acción* is a cash transfer programme that provides a stipend for vulnerable students enrolled in tertiary education, which implies that eligibility depends in part on their ability to enrol in higher education.

²⁶ This analysis focuses on identified programmes only, so does not include the 7% of IDPs, 11% of Venezuelans and 6% of host households who reported receiving ‘Other’/‘Unidentified’ assistance.

In the case of IDPs, there are national government protocols to deliver these benefits immediately after displacement, led by the UARIV (Victims' Unit) in coordination with local governments. Among the IDP households receiving in-kind/mixed-modality assistance, 16% were benefiting from the UARIV's *Atención Humanitaria* scheme (or 19%, if restricted only to IDPs displaced in the last year and therefore officially eligible for the immediate and emergency phases of assistance under that programme). **Current coverage of this government-provided IDP humanitarian assistance scheme was therefore low, reaching only 4% of IDP households overall in our sample over the past year.**

For Venezuelans, the delivery of in-kind assistance is not yet clearly specified, resulting in great variation in the timing and type of in-kind benefits provided at the local level.

Specific examples of in-kind programmes include a hotline in Bogotá for Venezuelans managed by the local government, where they can reach out to request in-kind assistance, and the *Centro de Atención Transitoria al Migrante* in Cúcuta, where they can receive these in-kind benefits.

Due to the pandemic, there was an increase in in-kind support and food vouchers delivered by governmental and non-governmental organisations to IDPs, Venezuelans (regardless of their status) and host households. One example of this is the *Programa de Alimentación Escolar* (PAE), which transitioned from providing

meals to students at school to delivering food packages or food vouchers to the students' homes, particularly during lockdowns. The qualitative research indicated that this assistance was well-recognised, particularly by Venezuelans, and provided support despite irregular migration status (unlike emergency cash assistance through *Ingreso Solidario*).

4.1.4 How does the amount of assistance received vary by group?

The survey questions on the frequency, value and duration of assistance shed further light on the extent of support available to the different population groups.²⁷ Detailed results are shown in Table 4.2 in Annex 1, with key findings highlighted here.

The value and frequency of cash payments is similar across groups. However, in-kind benefits are significantly larger for IDPs compared to hosts and Venezuelans.²⁸ For all groups, most assistance is regular (usually fortnightly or monthly), only relating to a one-off transfer in a handful of cases.

In line with the finding that much assistance was Covid-related, most cash transfer recipients either started receiving support during the past year, or otherwise were long-term recipients benefiting for at least three years (with Venezuelans overwhelmingly in the former category, and IDPs more likely in the latter).

²⁷ When looking at experiences of programme receipt in Sections 4.1.4, 4.1.5 and 4.1.7, we compare responses to the detailed questions that all respondents were asked in relation to up to two programmes (Q96-119). Most households received two programmes or less so were by definition asked about all programmes received. However, for the minority of households receiving three or more programmes, the responses are not comprehensive and relate to only two of the programmes that they receive.

²⁸ Our analysis throughout this section compares averages (mean values) for each group to each other. We test if the estimated differences are statistically significant from zero (p-value ≤ 0.10). The term 'significant' is only used when the difference is statistically significant.

Ninety per cent of Venezuelan cash transfer recipients and 59% of host households received their first payment within the last 12 months (prior to the date of the survey), compared to 42% of IDPs. By contrast, 50% of IDPs and 32% of host population recipients had been receiving transfers for more than three years, reflecting their participation in longer-term programmes.

In the case of in-kind assistance, virtually all reported support was recent, with around 90% of recipients only accessing the programme within the past year (for host, Venezuelan, and IDP households alike).

4.1.5 Are there differences in the quality of assistance delivery?

Around seven in 10 surveyed households report that in-kind support was received on time with no statistically significant differences across groups. Cash payments are reportedly less punctual for all groups, and over a month late in a quarter of cases.

Venezuelans are significantly more likely to report receiving payments on time (62%) than IDPs (54%) or host households (56%). Among those who had not received cash payments on time, the delay was typically more than a month and sometimes over three months (in 21% of delayed cases for the host population, 28% for IDPs and 33% for Venezuelans, without statistically significant differences between the groups). For in-kind support, very long delays were significantly more common for IDPs than host households; 49% of IDPs who experienced

late receipt reported delays of over three months, compared to 15% of host population households (for Venezuelans the proportion was 31%, but the difference from the other groups was not statistically significant).

Regarding the accuracy of transfer amounts, IDP households were significantly less likely to report that they always received the correct cash payment amount (56%), compared to hosts (70%) or Venezuelan households (71%), but this in part seemed to be because routine scheme transfer values varied a lot during the pandemic as they were sometimes combined with Covid-related top-up payments, which means they could have been confused about amounts. Only a relatively low proportion of households reported that the amount received was regularly or always less than it should have been (less than 10% for both cash and in-kind assistance, across all three groups).

Cash assistance is mostly delivered or collected in person. Although IDPs and Venezuelan households are less likely to receive cash payments in person than hosts, in-person delivery is the most common modality across all three groups, followed by receipt by bank transfer and cell phone transfer.²⁹ These electronic transfers were as common or more common among Venezuelans than Colombians, likely reflecting the fact that Venezuelans often received assistance for Covid-related programmes, which relied more heavily on digital transfers.³⁰

29 In Table 4.2 (Annex 1), we interpret reported receipt of in-kind assistance by phone as reflecting the fact that households were told to collect their assistance through the phone, or received an electronic voucher. The delivery of the benefits themselves may have been in person, but the notice of their availability was conducted remotely.

30 There may also be some differences in readiness to receive digital transfers, but our data did not allow for a representative exploration of this.

Table 3 Social protection beyond cash and in-kind assistance

	Hosts	IDPs	Venezuelans
If employed, respondent contributes to social security	34%	38%	5%
Highest-earning household member pays social security	51%	44%	19%
Covered by health insurance	86%	88%	25%
Insurance type, for those with health insurance			
Contributory	28%	20%	13%
Subsidised (EPS-S)	66%	75%	80%
Other	2%	2%	2%
Don't know	5%	3%	5%
Access to healthcare			
Yes	53%	49%	32%
No	47%	51%	68%
Education			
School enrolment	90%	88%	67%
Early childhood education enrolment	32%	39%	30%

Note: Access to healthcare means that, when ill, the respondent went to a doctor/health insurance provider and received medical care. School enrolment and early childhood education enrolment are calculated only for households with children of relevant age (5–17 years for school, <5 for early childhood education).

4.1.6 Beyond cash and in-kind transfers: are there differences in access to broader social protection?

Social protection in Colombia goes beyond cash and in-kind assistance to include access to both social security and social services that protect against lifecycle risks and promote human development. Table 3 shows the dimensions we consider.

Access to social security

As noted earlier, the Colombian social protection system is divided into contributory and non-contributory components, with less than half of the total population contributing to social security (Meléndez et al., 2021). **In our sample, social security contributions are made by only 26% of**

employees overall, and only 5% for employed Venezuelans, reflecting lower rates of formal employment (discussed further in Section 5). When asked about the highest-earning household member, only 19% of Venezuelans reported coverage, significantly lower than IDPs (44%), who themselves have significantly lower coverage than hosts (51%). Therefore, most of the vulnerable population studied here are not covered by contributory social protection.

Access to health coverage

Colombia has a long trajectory of improving access to social health insurance and moving towards universal health coverage, through the expansion of the national health insurance system (which includes both contributory and non-contributory/subsidised schemes). We find

a stark difference in health coverage among groups, particularly for Venezuelan households. **While over 85% of host and IDP households report having health insurance, only 25% of Venezuelan households do.** Moreover, barriers to healthcare are significantly higher among Venezuelans. Over two-thirds (68%) report not having access to healthcare, compared to 47% for hosts and 51% for IDPs.

Access to schooling and early childhood care and education

Venezuelan households with school-age children are significantly less likely to have their children enrolled in school (67%) compared to hosts (90%) and IDPs (88%). In terms of childcare services, Venezuelan households are **also significantly less likely to have access to childcare compared to IDPs but not to host households.** Access to early childhood education is low among all groups (less than 40%).

4.1.7 How do the barriers to social protection access vary by group?³¹

As mentioned earlier, Colombia has a long-standing system to identify and target social programmes (via the SISBÉN). For most means-tested social protection programmes, households first need to be registered in SISBÉN, and eligibility for the different programmes then depends on their SISBÉN score, along with other requirements, which vary by programme. The survey reveals that IDPs live in households that are significantly more likely to be registered in SISBÉN (91%) than hosts (83%) or Venezuelans (44%). As shown earlier, in Figure 7, the large number of Venezuelans in households registered

in the SISBÉN is in part due to mixed Colombian-Venezuelan living arrangements; about 21% of Venezuelans in our sample in the SISBÉN are in Venezuelan-only households, which suggests that the remaining 23% registered in the SISBÉN live in mixed-nationality households. Venezuelans are significantly more likely to report difficulty registering in the SISBÉN than host or IDP households, and were also much less likely to have applied for inclusion in the SISBÉN but not yet been successfully registered.

Close to half of assistance recipients reported that they needed to register for the programme they are currently receiving. IDPs are more likely to report the need for registration than hosts and Venezuelans, which is consistent with the process by which IDP social assistance has been deployed over the last decade (to access some schemes, IDPs must be registered as victims of forced displacement in the RUV or in SISBÉN).

Among those who had to register for programmes, about one-third of hosts and IDPs perceive that the process was very easy or easy. **For in-kind programmes, Venezuelans are significantly more likely to report that the process was very easy or easy than IDPs or host recipients, which might be explained by the active search strategies to find and support this group.** They are also more likely to report receiving support from others for getting access to in-kind benefits (although support for the registration process for cash transfers is equally low across the three groups, reported by between 12% and 15% of respondents). **The importance of friends, relatives, and community networks in establishing access to assistance was also highlighted** in the qualitative interviews and

³¹ See Table 4.4. and 4.5. in Annex 1 for full details on registration processes and barriers to access.

focus groups, where Venezuelans discussed how they ‘got word’ from others on when and how to register to receive benefits.

Difficulties with the registration process were reported more frequently for cash transfers:

44% of host recipients who had to register reported that the process was somewhat difficult or very difficult; this proportion was 39% for IDPs and 32% for Venezuelans (although the differences are not statistically significant between the groups). For in-kind programmes, 18% of hosts, 9% of IDPs and 14% of Venezuelans receiving assistance reported experiencing difficulties with the registration process. The main reasons for difficulties in access to cash programmes vary between groups. **For hosts and IDPs, the primary reason is long delays in the process, while Venezuelans predominately cite a lack of access to technological devices to apply for the cash benefits.** In the case of in-kind benefits, one outstanding difficulty for Venezuelans is that they do not understand the requirements. This was also an important complaint among IDPs, along with the lengthy process and long distances to the offices of service providers.

Evidence from focus groups and KIIs also suggests that accessing assistance might take longer for IDPs than Venezuelans because of the administrative requirements involved in being recognised as victims of armed conflict. These delays may be particularly relevant for the one-time cash compensation that victims are entitled to receive.

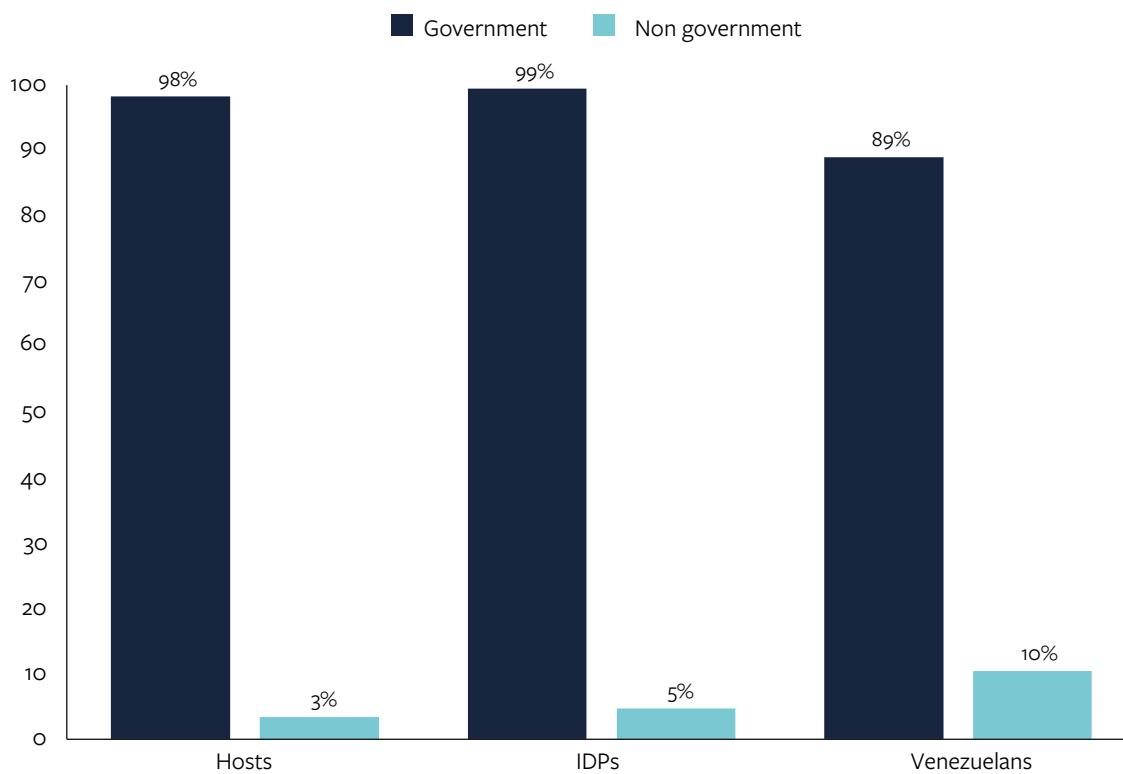
The processes are very slow and delayed. You know that here the recognition [as victims] can take a while, even years ... And from there until they give a subsidy or a response. From the

national level, it can take a considerable amount of time. (KII IDP response, non-governmental agency Cúcuta-CU22)

During in-depth interviews and focus groups, Venezuelans, IDPs and hosts reported similar barriers to access social assistance, including the timing of registrations for programmes with infrequent enrolment processes, lack of time and financial resources to complete registration procedures (including transportation to programme offices), and a lack of accurate information on the requirements and necessary steps to apply for assistance. **One specific barrier to assistance mentioned by Venezuelans was their lack of documentation. Several IDPs observed that fear of repercussions can be a barrier to seeking assistance:**

I also think that there are people who don't do it [seek help] out of fear, because they feel they will continue to be victims and people will attack them. (Focus Group IDP Recipient, Bogotá)

The survey asked participants if they had tried to apply to a programme in the past five years without success. Most instances related to attempts to access government cash programmes such as *Familias en Acción*, *Colombia Mayor* or *Ingreso Solidario*. Venezuelans are less likely to report trying and failing to access a programme (28%), compared to hosts (41%) and IDPs (46%). **Among Venezuelans, lack of required documentation is the main reason they report for not having received the programme they applied for.** Reasons reported among host and IDP households are more varied (including not having the documents needed, that the process was not clear or that the registration was online and they lacked access to a digital device), without any reason dominating the rest.

Figure 9 Knowledge of assistance programme, by provider

Source: Authors' elaboration using data from survey of low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta

In Annex 1, we present additional versions (A and B) of Tables 4.4 and 4.5, focusing on recipients of two specific programmes: *Familias en Acción* and *Ingreso Solidario*. In general, the findings by programme suggest that *Familias en Acción* registration was significantly easier for IDPs to navigate than host households. Reasons for registration challenges related to delays, remote office locations and lack of access to technology. For *Ingreso Solidario*, there were no statistically significant differences between groups in registration difficulties; common barriers for all were delays, physical constraints in requiring some of those eligible for assistance to go to offices, and a lack of clarity during the process.

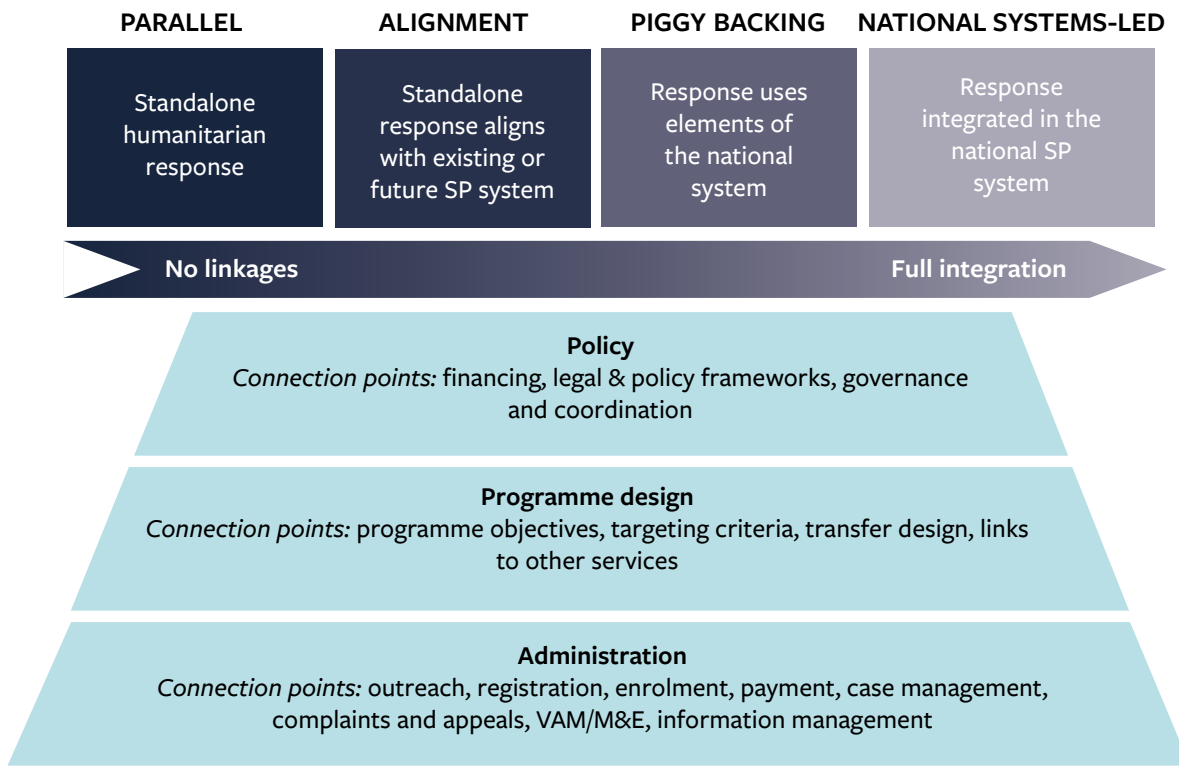
The survey also asked respondents if they had heard about a set of governmental and

non-governmental programmes. We find that governmental programmes are much more well-known than non-governmental programmes, as shown in Figure 9. Although knowledge of governmental programmes is slightly lower among Venezuelans, it is still high: 89% in this group report knowing about at least one governmental programme, compared to 98% of hosts and 99% of IDPs (for details, see Table 4.6 in Annex 1). The most widely known programme among respondents (without significant differences across groups) is *Ingreso Solidario*.

4.2 What are the current system linkages?

As outlined in Section 1, a key aim of this paper is not only to analyse de facto access to government

Figure 10 Approaches to linking social protection and humanitarian assistance



Source: Lowe et al. (forthcoming), building on Seyfert et al. (2019) and Barca (2019)

and international humanitarian assistance for displaced persons, but also to explore the linkages between these systems. As shown in Figure 10, from the project’s Analytical Framework (Lowe et al., forthcoming), we analyse the linkages between humanitarian assistance and social protection in terms of Policy, Programme Design and Administration, with various potential ‘connection points’ at each of those three levels.

4.2.1 Linkages in provision for IDPs

As outlined in Section 3.2.2, there is a comprehensive legal and operational framework in place for the Colombian government to assist IDPs, both in the immediate aftermath of their displacement and in the longer term. International humanitarian agencies’ programming for IDPs is

substantially smaller than for Venezuelans, and only a handful of IDPs in our survey reported receiving non-governmental assistance. As a result of this smaller international response, few examples arose of international humanitarian agencies linking programming for IDPs with government systems. International actors regard the Colombian government as the primary actor responsible for IDP assistance programmes. As a result, examples of system linkages emerged primarily in relation to the policy and administration levels, rather than programme design.

Linkages at the policy level

The policy level is fully integrated as there is a national system-led response with clear roles for governmental and non-governmental

organisations in the response to IDPs. KIIs point to an immediate response model to internal displacement that describes the protocols to follow once displacement occurs. This guide outlines the roles, responsibilities and action routes that each actor must take in such cases and designates the Colombian government as holding primary responsibility.

Everything is brought together in the objectives of the Action Plan and the Operational Plan. Nothing falls outside of that ... we work with children who are victims of the conflict, and logically, we do that in partnership with Save the Children, [and] the regional and municipal Education Secretariat, from each one of the territorial entities. (KII IDP response, governmental agency Cúcuta-CU23)

At the policy level, key informants also point to the importance of coordination mechanisms between non-governmental and governmental organisations at the local level. Some of these mechanisms have been operating for more than five years with the objective of coordinating the response to IDP needs.

It's the coordination of a group, where you find all the international cooperation in Norte de Santander ... this same dynamic is also replicated in other departments of the country. We coordinate the emergency responses from the humanitarian component in any of these two emergencies: in conflict or [natural] disaster. So, how do we respond? We have a Local Coordination Team. At the moment, there are approximately 30 international cooperation organisations, among them United Nation agencies, and other NGOs and partners ... we organise ourselves ... in collaboration with the government. (KII IDP response, non-governmental agency Cúcuta- CU22)

Finally, it is worth noting that there has historically been – and remains, in a limited manner – some degree of integration of international and national financing. While most government assistance to IDPs has been nationally financed, in some cases the budget for this has been bolstered by international actors. There are cases where international funds are executed through state channels. This integration is mainly used to help the government expand its coverage, but also to build institutional capacity, benefiting the displaced and host population. This is also the perception of some programme recipients. When asked about the funding source for the programmes they were receiving, 14% of IDPs benefiting from cash assistance believed that the funding came from United Nations agencies (compared to 11% of Venezuelans and 6% of the host population). The contribution of international actors was also recognised in the focus groups and in-depth interviews, although there was also a strong overall sense that the Colombian government held primary responsibility for providing social assistance and protection to IDPs.

Linkages of administrative systems

According to the framework, the linkages of administrative systems can be best classified as 'piggybacking'. There is evidence of collaboration through the sharing of databases of assisted households. Similar to the case of Venezuelans, there are instances where non-governmental agencies share databases with the government and vice-versa to improve targeting mechanisms and referral channels. There are several instances in which the state's capacity is insufficient to respond to needs, and international agencies complement the response mainly through in-kind assistance.

When there are cases of rental assistance, we exchange databases with them, and they support us. So, the framework of coordination on that is the Local Coordination Team. (KII IDP response, governmental agency Cúcuta-CU21)

In addition to shared databases, key informants identified instances of governmental and non-governmental agencies sharing information regarding security concerns across the country, communities in need of support and other inputs for programme design and delivery. One of the main examples of this integration occurs through the *Observatorio de la Unidad para las Víctimas* (the ‘Victims’ Unit Observatory’ platform), where information from different data sources is centralised and used to improve support for IDPs and other victims of armed conflict.

Overall, linkages of international and national systems to assist IDPs appear to relate mainly to the immediate displacement response, with less evidence of integration to address IDPs’ medium- and long-term needs; this responsibility is firmly allocated to the government, with limited involvement of international agencies.

4.2.2 Linkages in provision for displaced Venezuelans

With regard to assistance to Venezuelans, we find linkages between government and international humanitarian responses across all three dimensions, although the government leads most of the response, with non-governmental agencies providing technical assistance, funding and other help for the government behind the scenes.

Linkages at the policy level

First, regarding policy, the extent of linkages falls somewhere between piggybacking and full

integration, according to the framework in Figure 10. In some instances, the humanitarian response uses elements of the national system to coordinate action, while in others the response is integrated into the national social protection system.

KIIs point to the existence of frequent coordination meetings between agencies to articulate their strategies, as well as coordinating groups helping to align the work done by several organisations. These meetings take place at the national and local levels, and bring together non-governmental and governmental agencies. Coordination meetings have been led among others by the Cash Working Group (GTM, for its acronym in Spanish), GIFMM, *Mesas Migratorias* (‘Migration Roundtables’), and *Puestos de Mando Unificados* (‘Unified Command Posts’). Key informants suggest that these spaces have been useful in improving the response for Venezuelans.

Second, key informants note that the legal framework (e.g., memoranda of understanding, the UN Framework of Cooperation and government directives on cash transfers) has allowed and facilitated linkages between humanitarian agencies and social protection programmes. This legal framework has been developed within larger institutional efforts to coordinate the work of multilateral agencies and bilateral government aid in the country. In cities such as Bogotá and Cúcuta, linkages have been consolidated through guidelines that define the parameters, conditions and objectives of cooperation between the state and various non-governmental agencies.

The role of cash transfer programmes and humanitarian assistance is never to replace the national government. It is always to complement and support. So, let’s say that there is some level of collaboration, very very important, between

the government and us ... they developed the cash transfer guidelines to harmonise the systems. (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Bogotá-BOG02)

At the policy level, KIIs from non-governmental and governmental agencies mentioned the technical assistance provided by humanitarian agencies to local governments to help them improve their programming and the management of the Venezuelan crisis. A specific example is the development of contingency plans in border areas since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Humanitarian organisations provide technical assistance to local governments so that their local development plan includes actions and a budget for migrants. In that way, afterwards there can be training and work opportunities to go along with the formulation of local integrated migration management plans. (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Cúcuta-CU04)

Finally, there are examples of closer integration of financing mechanisms, with international funds that would previously have been used by international humanitarian agencies being channelled towards the government social protection system. This integration has allowed the government to expand the population it supports, and international agencies to capitalise on existing infrastructure to facilitate the delivery of aid. This type of integration has benefited both Venezuelans and the host population as, for example, international funds may be used to cover Venezuelan households, allowing local government to shift some of its spending to other households.

If ... the World Food Programme comes and wants to sign an agreement with the

government to give us, I don't know, 10,000 or 15,000 food quotas for migrants. [That means that] the food that we had that was provided by the government goes towards more Colombian kids that are also excluded from the school feeding programme. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Cucutá-CU03)

Linkages in programme design

Regarding programme design, KIIs indicate two specific connection points between government and humanitarian actors: aligned transfer design and shared targeting criteria. As described below, the approach in programme design is on the way to full integration in these two specific connection points.

KIIs with both government and non-governmental agencies identified government guidelines on cash transfer design (Government of Colombia, 2020) as a key connection point. These guidelines were formulated by the government to regulate the size of the transfers delivered by non-governmental agencies and to align humanitarian assistance with the existing social protection system. The guidelines also encourage the use of school and health-related conditions similar to those of national programmes and encourage the international community to devote 25–30% of their budget to support vulnerable host communities.

When we wanted to provide humanitarian assistance and we entered [the crisis situation], it was very difficult to convince the Colombian state about doing humanitarian [cash] transfers; but once we started doing them, that was when they came out with government directives. And that's when they looked and said: 'Well you have to align with the social protection system'. So, in a way, they did want us to follow the social

protection system, the rules of co-responsibility that they call conditional transfers ... and [the delivery of] very similar amounts. (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Colombia-COLO5)

We have achieved excellent coordination with GIFMM and bilateral agreements for different actions: delivery of transfers, technical assistance, for example with USAID, IOM and with the transfer consortia. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Bogotá-BOGo4)

With respect to targeting criteria, there were examples of non-governmental organisations choosing their programme target audience by applying the vulnerability criteria of government social protection programmes (discussed further below, in relation to linked targeting mechanisms).

Linkages of administrative systems

Regarding administration, several international agencies have begun to piggyback on or even fully integrate with government systems. KIIs report a few cases in which databases of recipients have been shared between the government and humanitarian agencies. One of the main goals of this strategy is to better target those in need, particularly Venezuelans who might not be registered across all databases. An important example of these linkages is sharing the SISBÉN database managed by the *Departamento Nacional de Planeación* (DNP) with WFP to improve the identification of Venezuelans and host community members in need in Arauca as part of a pilot food assistance programme (delivered to 46,000 recipients in cash, and to 25,000 people through food baskets, where cash was less feasible) (WFP, 2021).

In addition to aligning targeting systems, there have been efforts to integrate referral channels between humanitarian agencies and local governments. In both Bogotá and Cúcuta, some humanitarian agencies receive referrals to serve populations that are not covered by local government programming.

At a local level what we do is we receive referrals. As the government doesn't have a cash transfer programme as such, we receive referrals of cases from the local mayors for those who need housing support and monetary support. (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Bogotá-BOGo2)

Finally, there has been at least one effort to pursue co-evaluations, with a proposal from the national government to evaluate a pilot intervention implemented in collaboration with an international organisation. In this case, the international organisation received databases of recipients from the government to deliver cash and in-kind transfers, which the government, in turn, proposed to evaluate.

What's been planned is to do an evaluation ... with the government ... DNP and *Prosperidad Social* proposed to undertake an evaluation of the process and the pilot results, and it's very interesting because all of these findings in terms of databases are going to be useful for the state ... So, the government proposed two evaluations, one for results and operation of the pilot, and another one that is ... an impact evaluation of the extraordinary transfers from *Familias en Acción*. Remember that we always stick to what the government does, so if we can do it ... they will be able to give us elements to say that this works, let's continue doing it, and what's not working ... (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Colombia-COLO2).

In conclusion, there have been several efforts at integration at both the national and local levels, and there is a clear trend of experimenting with closer alignment or even full integration of international and national systems. However, many of these efforts have been ad hoc and have not yet been consolidated into a larger migration policy framework (although some efforts are under way to provide longer-term stability: see Section 5, e.g., in relation to the Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans). There also appears to be a gap between the linkages as described by key informants and the experience of displaced Venezuelans who participated in the interviews and focus groups. Although no questions were directly put to Venezuelans on the linkages between humanitarian assistance and social protection, there was a general sense of a lack of integration across the programmes that Venezuelans can access. Participants complained that access routes and eligibility requirements are often unclear and that it is hard to find reliable and complete information about programmes and how to access them.

4.3 What factors and processes led to these linkages?

Our research also explored the key factors, processes and events that have facilitated, accelerated, or deepened linkages between government and humanitarian systems.

The urgency and magnitude of the Venezuelan crisis overwhelmed local capacity

One factor highlighted by the KIIs related to the scale of the Venezuelan crisis and the difficulty the Colombian government faced in appropriately responding to it on its own. Although the government took the lead in facing the crisis, it

exceeded its capacities and available resources, forcing it to request additional assistance. The magnitude of the crisis was particularly pressing in Norte de Santander, where Venezuelans flooded the streets and where social programming lacked the resources to tend to the increasing number of people in need of assistance. Faced with this situation, different actors, including international agencies and local governments, started joint efforts to help deal with the crisis.

When you have the problem so close you are forced to make transitions towards some solutions. However, I do think that it was the fieldwork and the magnitude of the crisis that made Norte de Santander find innovative and quick solutions and then at the national level make the adjustments. It's like the work and the crisis in the field led us to be faster and try to pilot some models to then find national programmes that stabilise or give a legal framework to the situation. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Cúcuta-CU03)

Government had the political will to tackle the crisis and cooperate

Faced with overwhelming crisis needs and capacity constraints, the Colombian government has demonstrated extensive political will to develop legal and policy frameworks for the Venezuelan response and to collaborate with different agencies. This political will has been a second important factor in facilitating both increased linkages between international and national response systems, and increased integration of Venezuelans into government social protection systems.

There is a clear and important political will and a very important budget that the President

and the Treasury allocated to the whole Venezuelan issue. (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Bogotá-BOGO1)

The nature and extent of political will to take in and support displaced Venezuelans shown by the Colombian government has been characterised as exceptional compared to other governments globally (UNHCR-IOM, 2021). According to the government strategy document for the Venezuelan response (CONPES 3950), the official rationale justifying this policy approach relates to the potential economic benefits that can be realised from well-managed migration. The document highlights the economic advantages that migration can bring for both the host country and migrants' country of origin, citing both internal government analysis and international organisations' studies estimating the potential positive impacts of the Venezuelan influx on Colombia's economic productivity, labour market, consumption, and investment levels. Realising these benefits depends on Venezuelans' successful integration into the Colombian economy, which requires a strategic policy response with a long-term vision.

The economic case is therefore presented on paper as being a key driver of the government's response to the Venezuelan influx. However, in practice multiple factors are likely to lie behind the government's willingness to support Venezuelans through government systems (including the long history of mobility and complex political relations between both countries, and their cultural and linguistic similarities), and it is difficult to assess the relative weight of these different influences.

NGOs understood the importance of linking with local systems given the long-term horizon of the Venezuelan crisis

Non-governmental organisations have also demonstrated their willingness to support and complement the programming offered by the Colombian government, and emphasise that this willingness derives from the need to avoid duplication and competition. Key informants indicate that this general sense of support for linking social protection and humanitarian assistance is in part driven by the recognition that many Venezuelans are not in the country temporarily, but are likely to stay for the long term. This logic may equally be applied to the IDP response, where many victims have been displaced for decades, making a nationally led response more logical, with international agencies supporting and strengthening permanent systems.

The government's progressive overarching policy towards displaced populations provided a framework for joint action to promote fulfilment of their rights

The Colombian case also illustrates that the incentives for linking international humanitarian assistance with government social protection programming are stronger when there is a coherent and progressive overall policy towards the rights and residence of the displaced. In the case of the IDP response, the existence of a comprehensive and much-lauded legal and policy framework to attend to IDP needs has been a major factor explaining international agencies' willingness to bolster the national response. In relation to the Venezuelan influx, several key informants highlighted the role of government laws and policies to regularise the stay of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia in facilitating linkages between governmental

and non-governmental organisations. The most recent and important development is the Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans, under which some humanitarian agencies have started to cooperate with the social protection system by providing technical support and assistance (e.g., supporting data collection and registration). At least in theory, this progressive wider migration policy provides a defined role for humanitarian assistance – while such assistance may be required in the immediate aftermath of displacement, there is an expectation that it will not be required indefinitely since displaced people (at least on paper) have access to rights and opportunities that should allow them to rebuild their lives effectively.

Another one is the access to documentation that is also included in the statute. So, that will also enable them to integrate in a better way to rights such as health, work, education ... and to progressively generate income so they can reduce the dependency they have on humanitarian assistance. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Bogotá-BOGo4)

The emergence/designation of a clear coordinating actor was key for linking systems

A key component in linking humanitarian assistance and social protection has been the establishment and endorsement of a clear coordination focal point. With respect to IDPs, this role has been legally and practically delegated to the UARIV, which leads and coordinates actions to serve the victims of the conflict. This coordination also involves the facilitation of relationships between governmental and non-governmental organisations in preventing and assisting in humanitarian emergencies. With respect to the

Venezuelan response, some interviews suggest that there is a high degree of recognition that the Colombian government plays the central role in responding to the Venezuelan influx, with other agencies supporting and complementing the state through a coordinated response system, as discussed above.

Local/sub-national governments took the initiative to incorporate Venezuelans into their development plans

Key informants highlighted the influence of local governments and their planning processes in determining the extent to which the social protection system is used to assist displaced populations. For example, there have been increased efforts by local governments to include goals related to supporting Venezuelans in their local development plans. Some key informants argue that this inclusion facilitates the integration of Venezuelans into the social protection system, as well as linkages between the humanitarian response and social protection, by facilitating the allocation of public resources to meet the goals formulated in the plans.

I think that the strength is the binding character that the topic has at this moment. Being part of a sectoral goal, a development plan... and having goals... it gives us a binding foundation, starting with the development plan... there were some actions in the emergency service framework, this forces us to have a budget.... At the district level, this has materialised into a specific project: Project 7730 for assisting people in mixed migration flows in the 20 localities, with a budget that's not so big but enough to at least move along. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Bogotá-BOGo4)

Conversely, key informants also highlight that local government reluctance (sometimes based on defaulting to the status quo, and sometimes based on legal limitations or electoral/popularity concerns) can also hinder the delivery of assistance to Venezuelans through the social protection system.

Advocating for the migrant population to be included in various assistance programmes ... for the vulnerable population ... there are obstacles ... legal limitations, or even customary [obstacles] like ... 'We have never done it, we are not going to do it now'. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Colombia-COLO1)

The Covid-19 crisis generated an urgent need for an enhanced and immediate social protection response

Finally, the crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated and facilitated closer linkages between social protection and humanitarian assistance due to the need for immediate responses. Some of the actions taken in response to the emergency included database exchanges, increased coverage of certain programmes, shared referral channels, increased budgets for social assistance, and greater coordination between and within agencies.

So, in the end the pandemic has been useful to converge data, to start thinking about something much more integrated and we've taken really important steps, but we are not there yet. I don't even think this divergence is only with international agencies but also within the inside of [government] social programmes. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Bogotá-BOGO1)

5 Outcomes of assistance approach

This section considers the outcomes of current approaches to assisting displacement-affected populations. We look first at the outcomes of Venezuelan, IDP and host population households themselves, and the potential contribution of assistance (primarily through government programmes) to these outcomes (Section 5.1). We then explore the perspectives of wider government and humanitarian sector stakeholders, focusing on the benefits and drawbacks they associate with efforts to link with government systems for assistance provision (Section 5.2).

5.1 Evidence of outcomes for affected communities and the role of social assistance

In our research we analyse socioeconomic outcomes for displacement-affected communities focusing broadly on basic needs and wellbeing; longer-term economic agency; and social cohesion.³² For each set of outcomes, we explore the potential contribution of assistance provision to these outcomes. We focus on the role of social protection provision, since most assistance recipients were supported by government programmes and the size of the sample receiving non-governmental assistance was too small to compare with government schemes. However, where insights emerged through the qualitative research about

differing impacts of governmental versus non-governmental assistance and of parallel versus more integrated systems, these are highlighted.

5.1.1 Basic needs and wellbeing

Our survey found that, for most outcomes related to basic needs, Venezuelans fare much worse than IDPs and the host population.

Venezuelans are significantly less likely to have access to running water (95%) or sewage systems (83%) than IDPs and host households' near universal access (see Table 5.1. in Annex 1 for full details). Venezuelan households are also more likely to live in overcrowded dwellings (44%) than IDPs (27%) and host households (18%). IDPs' access to housing is similar to host households in terms of dwelling conditions, access to electricity, clean drinking water and sewage systems. They are, however, more disadvantaged than hosts in terms of overcrowding and internet access. Moreover, IDPs fare worse than both hosts and Venezuelans in terms of food security (the food insecurity index³³ is 3.94 for IDPs, compared to 3.34 for hosts and 3.66 for Venezuelans – these differences between groups are statistically significant).

The disadvantage observed in unmet basic needs for Venezuelans in comparison to hosts and IDPs contrasts with their more positive self-perception of well-being. Venezuelan respondents report higher life satisfaction than

³² We calculate and compare average outcomes for Venezuelan, IDP and host populations based on the status of our respondents; however, it is important to note in practice there are significant overlaps between these communities.

³³ The food insecurity index is a five-item scale that relates to how often the household had difficulties securing food over the previous seven days (depending on inexpensive food, asking for food from family or friends, limiting the size of meals, restricting consumption of adults in order to be able to feed children, and reducing the number of daily meals).

IDPs and similar levels to host households. They are also significantly less likely than IDPs to report negative emotional outcomes such as being nervous or feeling that they are unable to control aspects of their lives. There are no statistically significant differences in life satisfaction or negative emotional outcomes between host respondents and IDPs.

In terms of health, two-thirds of Venezuelan respondents report having very good or good health, significantly higher than hosts (60%) or IDPs (51%). In contrast, IDPs are significantly more likely to report fair or bad health status than hosts and Venezuelans: 42% of IDPs report fair health status (compared to 36% for hosts and 32% for Venezuelans), and 7% report bad health (compared to 4% for hosts and 2% for Venezuelans).

The role of social protection provision in meeting basic needs and promoting the well-being of displacement-affected populations

Previous studies find that government assistance programmes are key to helping the most vulnerable (e.g., Grosch et al., 2008; Bastagli et al., 2016). In general, recipients of social protection programmes perceive both cash and in-kind programmes to be very important for their well-being. As Figure 11 shows, **about 80% of respondents across all three groups say that the support they receive is important or very important, in addition to a non-trivial minority who define it as indispensable for their survival.**

To further analyse the potential contribution of social assistance to well-being, we explore the association between social assistance and five sets of outcomes: life satisfaction, mental health, food insecurity, housing adequacy, and health status. Table 5.3 in Annex 1 presents two columns for each outcome: the coefficient of a bi-variate regression of well-being on recipient status, and the coefficient of the same regression also controlling for household and respondent sociodemographic characteristics. **We find no significant association between social assistance receipt and life satisfaction, mental health, food insecurity, health status or housing adequacy.**³⁴ These results hold for all groups, except for Venezuelans' mental health. For this group we find that there is a *positive* statistically significant association between social assistance and reporting feeling completely in control, but a *negative* association between social protection and reporting feeling in control of important things.

We also examined whether the correlation between social assistance and well-being varies according to the duration of assistance (Table 5.4 in Annex 1). We divided the sample of recipients in two groups: short-term recipients (receiving benefits for one year or less) and longer-term recipients (receiving benefits for more than one year). **For most outcomes we do not find a statistically significant association between short-term or longer-term receipt and well-being outcomes. However, receiving social assistance in the short term is associated with higher life satisfaction and better housing conditions for IDPs. For Venezuelans, having short-term social assistance is associated with better health status.** Also, for Venezuelans,

34 Social assistance recipients have higher levels of food insecurity and are less likely to report being in good health (likely an indication that targeting is effective), but the association is not statistically significant after controlling for household and respondent characteristics.

Figure 11 Perceived importance of transfers to transfer recipients



Note: As shown in Table 5.2 in Annex 1, there are no statistically significant differences between groups, except that Venezuelans are more likely than IDPs to report that in-kind transfers are irrelevant, at a significance level of 0.10.

having longer-term social assistance is associated with a greater perception of being in control in general, but a lower perception of being in control of important things.

We conducted a similar exercise to further understand the association between the amount of social assistance and well-being (Table 5.5 in Annex 1). **For most outcomes, there is no significant association between the amount of social assistance and well-being. There is, however, one exception: for hosts and Venezuelans, food security is positively associated with larger amounts.** Host and

Venezuelan households receiving over 300,000 pesos per month have a significantly lower food insecurity index compared to non-recipients.

While we find few statistically significant correlations between receiving social assistance and well-being outcomes from our survey data, **determining the true causal effects in our study faces limitations.** First, many of the outcomes are self-perceived measures which may capture changes in well-being in a noisy manner. Second, if social assistance is being adequately targeted to the most vulnerable, we would expect that, without it, they would have had much worse

outcomes than those who do not receive it. To the extent that we cannot entirely control for that, we would expect our estimates of the association between assistance and welfare to be underestimated. Third, determining counterfactuals without social assistance is difficult from a cross-section of observed data without some form of experimental variation. Given the difficulty in eliminating this selection bias in our observational data, the qualitative analysis may provide greater nuance on the role of social assistance in well-being for the displaced that our quantitative analysis is unable to detect.

Evidence from in-depth interviews and focus groups suggests the importance of social protection programmes for the well-being of Venezuelans, IDPs and hosts.

First, Venezuelans who receive benefits recognise the importance of social protection in covering some of their basic needs, including food and shelter. They argue that the support they receive often comes at critical times when they would otherwise be at risk of food insecurity or eviction from their dwellings.

A lot because we were going through a critical situation and when it arrived it was a blessing from God. Let's say, we didn't have [food] and suddenly the day we didn't have, the food assistance arrived, it always helped us, thank God. (Interview #3 Venezuelans, Recipient, Cúcuta)

Second, IDPs who receive benefits also highlight the short- and especially the medium-term impact of social protection on their well-being. **IDPs recognise the importance of the humanitarian assistance they receive after the victimising act**, for example immediately after their displacement and during the subsequent three months. **Although many recognise the**

importance of the lump-sum compensation (reparations from UARIV) in promoting their well-being and a better future, they also highlight the difficulties in accessing those transfers, which limits the positive impact they can have on their well-being. This adds to a general sense that the government has failed them and is not fulfilling its responsibility to help them given their status as victims of the conflict.

Unlike Venezuelans, who are less likely to receive routine conditional cash transfers (e.g., *Familias en Acción*), IDPs use regular transfers for non-immediate day-to-day needs such as transportation, medical care and education expenses, or to complement the essential foods they consume daily.

I always use [*Familias en Acción*] to buy her [the child's] vitamins, whatever she needs, or to pay for transportation when I take her to the doctor, to pay for the tests, etc. or to buy her uniforms. For things that she needs. (Interview #9 IDPs, Recipient, Cúcuta)

Finally, host households – like IDPs – use cash transfers to cover day-to-day needs that go beyond the basics. They recognise that they would not have the money to cover such expenses in the absence of these transfers.

when I was in *Jóvenes en Acción* I used the incentive to cover my study expenses, now I use *Ingreso Solidario* to supplement my household expenses. (Focus Group Host, Recipient, Cúcuta)

However, unlike Venezuelans and IDPs, hosts occasionally suggested that certain benefits were of minimal use.

I went [to] claim the mini food basket, because you can't even call that a decent food basket ... it

does not give you access to quality products in Jumbo [supermarket] either, they give people who receive assistance whatever Jumbo doesn't sell to the rich or to any other people (Interview #13 Host, Non-recipient Bogotá).

5.1.2 Economic agency

Beyond the fulfilment of basic needs, our research also explored longer-term outcomes in relation to economic agency.

The survey asked participants several questions regarding their economic situation.

All respondents reported a low level of satisfaction with their financial situation (the mean is below 5 for all groups on a scale from 1 to 10), but IDPs are significantly less satisfied economically than host and Venezuelan respondents.

When we look at economic outcomes rather than respondents' perceptions, a mixed picture emerges. Venezuelans are clearly worst off in terms of financial inclusion and asset ownership. Venezuelans are significantly less likely to have a bank account (26%) than IDPs and host households (both 49%). They are also less likely to have access to loans from a formal institution (2%) than hosts (13%) or IDPs (11%), mainly due to lack of documentation. Regarding asset ownership, Venezuelan households are 10 times less likely to own their home (5%) than hosts (48%), while IDPs are half as likely to own their homes (24%) compared to hosts. The number of durable goods also varies across groups, with hosts owning more durables than IDPs, and IDPs owning more durables than Venezuelans (see Table 5.6 in Annex 1 for details).

In all cases, less than 30% of respondents report having a paid job. However, employment

is significantly higher among Venezuelan respondents (29%) compared to Colombians from socioeconomically vulnerable households (20% for both hosts and IDPs) – although this can be any kind of employment, including informal employment. It is important to keep in mind that we sampled vulnerable Colombians, so this does not mean that the aggregate Colombian population has lower levels of employment than Venezuelans. In addition, 15% of Venezuelan respondents are self-employed, compared to 6% of hosts and 7% of IDPs. Overall, close to half of the Venezuelan respondents (49%) and less than one-third of hosts (30%) and IDPs (31%) report doing any income-generating activity. When we look at the household level, 61% of Venezuelan respondents have at least one employed adult in their household, a significantly higher level than both IDP households (43%) and hosts (48%). However, it is important to note that, **while Venezuelans report higher levels of employment, they are less likely to enjoy good-quality working conditions.**

Among those who are employed, IDPs and hosts are significantly more likely than Venezuelans to have a written contract (26-27%, compared to 4% for Venezuelans) and to have a formal job with contributions to social security (34-38%, compared to 5% for Venezuelans).

The role of social protection provision in promoting economic agency among displacement-affected populations

In our analysis of economic agency outcomes, we aimed to explore the potential contribution of social protection receipt. Earlier research suggests that cash assistance alone might be insufficient to transform IDPs' long-term economic outcomes, without specific mental health support. For example, Moya and Carter (2019) find that the psychological consequences of experiencing

violence and forced displacement induce feelings of hopelessness among Colombian IDPs that can lead them to believe that they have few prospects of economic mobility, and thus take economic decisions accordingly (such as having less long-term planning capability). A more severe experience of violence leads victims to believe that there is a higher likelihood of ending up in extreme poverty, as well as higher levels of risk aversion (Moya, 2018).

Our survey finds one clear way in which social protection receipt influences economic agency: financial account ownership. **Over two-thirds of respondents who have a bank account report that they opened it to receive a transfer. This suggests that the social protection system may be playing a role in expanding access to banking among vulnerable populations,** which had been improving prior to the pandemic but was likely accelerated because of pandemic-related cash transfer programmes, which heavily promoted the use of electronic payments (Londoño-Velez and Querubín, 2022).

However, our research also highlights several limitations of social protection in relation to longer-term economic outcomes. When asked in the qualitative research about the timing and duration of the benefits received, Venezuelans emphasise that assistance does not allow them to plan for the future or to feel economically

secure. Although Venezuelans frequently highlight how grateful they are for the support, they also argue that the size and frequency of the transfers (cash or in-kind) are not enough to meet their longer-term needs. In general, benefits are perceived as emergency humanitarian aid rather than a long-term strategy to help them overcome adversity. Indeed, several participants emphasised the need for employment programmes so that they can become self-sufficient.

We all rely on a job, you understand me? We are in a country as undocumented Venezuelans, we do not have papers, we do not have passports, we do not have authorisations to work or look for a job, imagine that. Yes, so we all need a job to be independent. (Interview #6 Venezuelans, Recipient, Bogotá)

Similarly, IDPs indicate that the benefits received do not allow them to plan for the future. Many of them are still waiting to receive the lump sum compensation they are entitled to as part of the reparation process.³⁵ They see this lump sum as an opportunity to significantly improve their living conditions. In the same vein, hosts who receive benefits indicate that this support only allows them to meet their short-term needs. It is not perceived as a significant source of financial stability that enables them to make a forward-looking plan.

35 As of early 2021, 1.1 million victims had received reparations, out of 7.3 million actively covered by the Victims' Law (UARIV, 2021b). For those who received the lump-sum compensation, recent research suggests that it has had significant impacts on both their short- and long-term wellbeing, including increasing business ownership and access to durable assets (such as home-ownership), as well as improving their earnings and job conditions, health, school performance and college attendance (Guarín et al., 2021).

5.1.3 Social cohesion

We study social cohesion³⁶ by exploring ‘horizontal’ cohesion (relations between displaced and host communities), and where feasible also ‘vertical’ cohesion (relations between those communities and governing institutions). Following Chan et al. (2006), social cohesion is defined as the interactions between these groups, as characterised by attitudes and norms (e.g., trust, a sense of belonging, the willingness to participate and help), as well as their behavioural manifestations. To study these aspects, we asked participants both about subjective measures (e.g., their perceptions of relations) and (self-reported) objective measures (e.g., the nature and frequency of interactions between different groups), relying on the qualitative research to give more colour and depth to the initial reports from the survey.

Looking first at the quantitative research, when asked about the frequency of interactions in the survey, **we find more frequent interaction between Venezuelans and hosts than between IDPs and the host population.**

Venezuelan respondents report having more frequent interactions with the host population in general than IDPs do with host population (4.42 versus 3.38, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 corresponds to interacting ‘every day of the week’).³⁷ Moreover, Venezuelans report having more frequent social interactions with the host population than IDPs do with the host population (2.86 versus 2.06, on a scale from 1 to 4 where 4 corresponds to constant social interaction).

In addition, Venezuelans are significantly more likely to report receiving support from a person from the host population (29%) than IDPs (8%), and are more likely to report providing support to a person from the host population. Consistent with this, the host population reports providing more help to Venezuelans (40%) than to IDPs (28%).

When asked in the survey about how well different groups get along, Venezuelans have a more positive outlook on their relationship with IDPs and hosts than vice-versa. **Over two-thirds of Venezuelan respondents (68%) agree that Venezuelans and Colombians get along well. In contrast, only one-third of hosts (34%) and IDPs (36%) agree** with that same statement. When it comes to the relationship between IDPs and hosts, IDPs have a more positive perception than hosts, although the difference is not as large as that observed with Venezuelans.

In contrast with their positive general perception of the relationship between Venezuelans and hosts, Venezuelans are significantly more likely than IDPs to report being discriminated against and treated differently by host community members because of their place of origin. They are also more likely than IDPs to report high competition for jobs and public services.

Although the focus of the research was on ‘horizontal’ social cohesion (relations between communities), the survey also looked briefly

³⁶ As noted, outcomes are reported according to the status of the respondent (Venezuelan, IDP, host community member). However, in relation to social cohesion, it is particularly important to bear in mind that the ‘host’ community surrounding Venezuelans includes IDPs as well as non-displaced locals, and vice versa. Respondents themselves often will not know the displacement status of individuals with whom they interact, meaning the findings are based on their *perception* of relations with other groups, which may or may not accurately reflect others’ actual displacement status.

³⁷ See Table 5.7 in Annex 1 for detailed findings from this section.

at ‘vertical’ social cohesion (relations between community members and governing institutions). In our survey, **Venezuelans report significantly higher levels of trust in government and international organisations than IDPs and hosts.** On a scale from 1 to 5 (1=totally disagree, 5=totally agree), Venezuelans score 3.84 on average on trust in national government compared to 3.12 for IDPs and 3.17 for the host population. Venezuelans score 3.44 on average on trust in local government, compared to 2.7 for IDPs and 2.9 for local government. Trust in international organisations such as the UN is also higher on average among Venezuelans (3.67) than IDPs (3.26) and hosts (3.15). These differences between Venezuelans and IDPs or hosts are statistically significant.

When discussing social cohesion with Venezuelans in the qualitative research, the results vary depending on whether information comes from in-depth interviews or focus groups. In focus groups, Venezuelans indicate that they have a good relationship with IDPs and hosts, and that hostility or xenophobia are rare. In general, Venezuelans report a good relationship with and a sense of gratitude towards the local population, whether IDPs or not. In contrast, when asked about social cohesion during the in-depth interviews, and consistent with the findings from the survey, Venezuelans in both Cúcuta and Bogotá shared some personal experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and xenophobia.³⁸

They humiliate a lot the Venezuelan people, but I try to stay out of it, you know? The xenophobia is unbelievable. At least in the

schools, anyway. I had a huge problem in my girl’s school ... because they told her ‘Veneca go back to your country’. (Interview #1 Venezuelans, Recipient Bogotá)

In terms of close interactions (i.e., frequent conversations, engaging in meetings and other events) between Venezuelans and other populations, in focus groups and in-depth interviews Venezuelans indicate that they do not have frequent contact or relationships with hosts and IDPs. Some mention that they prefer to keep a low profile in the neighbourhood, avoiding regular contact with their neighbours. Others indicate that they do not have much time to invest in building these relationships.

In focus groups IDPs express that they have a good relationship with Venezuelans and hosts. Additionally, there is a stronger tendency to report solidarity, support and empathy values in the focus groups than in the in-depth interviews. Even though IDPs report a general sense of tranquillity within their communities and a lack of conflict with their neighbours, they express general concern with issues of insecurity and drug use in their immediate surroundings, not caused by any specific population. IDPs also identify several ways in which they better integrate into their communities, sharing festivities such as Christmas, but report that some of these activities are sporadic, and some prefer to avoid frequent contact with neighbours.

In general, we have always lived in this neighbourhood. What we noticed about a year ago was when Venezuelans started arriving.

³⁸ This divergence is likely due to the nature of the data these instruments collect. Focus groups promote a group discussion about the issue of interest, while interviews delve into personal experiences. In this sense, interviews are more conducive to discussions about experiences of discrimination, while focus groups elicit public or social discourse on the issue of interest.

But we are not the kind of people who interact a lot with others, so it hasn't affected us much actually. (Interview #2 IDPs, Recipient, Bogotá)

Finally, **hosts have different perceptions of Venezuelans compared to IDPs**, which affect the relationships they establish with each group. For example, in focus groups and in-depth interviews, **they identify IDPs as a vulnerable population and victims of the armed conflict, who strongly deserve support from the government. In contrast, they expressed mixed opinions and feelings regarding the Venezuelan population.** For example, some Venezuelans are perceived as hardworking and honest, while others are perceived as engaging in inappropriate and illegal behaviours.

Between the normal people of the neighbourhood and the Venezuelans there is a division. Some of the normal civilian population accept them but others are quite unhappy with their presence and living next to them, the intolerance is really visible (Focus Group Host Non-Recipient, Cúcuta).

Therefore, **in focus groups and in-depth interviews, hosts identify hostility towards and tension with Venezuelans.** Some indicate that the origin of these tensions is related to the belief that immigration affects the labour supply, and that an increased presence of Venezuelans also increases insecurity and crime. Some IDPs

and hosts indicate that another potential source of tensions with Venezuelans is their receipt of government support. They argue that non-citizens should be supported by their country of origin or by international agencies, since the Colombian government should prioritise IDPs and other vulnerable populations.

First, the government should finish the assistance for internally displaced people due to the armed conflict, and, only after doing that, [the government] can start looking at how they can help the migrants from neighbouring countries ... I don't have anything against the migrants but first comes one thing and then the other. (Focus Group IDPs, Recipient, Bogotá)

Previous research confirms some of these findings about the drivers of social tensions by showing that many Colombians believe that the large influx of Venezuelans has led to increased demand for public services, negative impacts on the labour market, and increased poverty and crime rates, despite evidence showing that many of these perceptions are untrue.³⁹ Anti-immigrant feeling was exacerbated by a perception that Venezuelans were in part responsible for the looting and vandalism during the wave of strikes and protests against the government in late 2019 (Graham et al., 2019). The Covid-19 crisis may also have worsened discrimination against and hostility towards Venezuelans, due to economic tensions and some people's belief

39 Even while public service demand has risen substantially, the evidence does not suggest a net negative impact of the Venezuelan influx on poverty levels or labour markets (although there is evidence of impacts for specific groups such as women or informal workers) (World Bank, 2018; Bahar et al., 2020b; Bonilla-Mejia et al., 2020; Graham et al., 2020; Proyecto Migración Venezuela, 2020; Santamaria, 2020). The evidence of effects on crime is nuanced; where increases in violent crime have been identified, these related to crimes committed against Venezuelans rather than against citizens ((Bahar et al., 2020a; Knight and Tribín, 2020). In relation to IDP influxes, there has been some evidence of short-term negative effects on local economies and increased homicide rates (Calderon-Mejia and Ibañez, 2016; Morales, 2018; Gimenez-Nadal et al., 2018; Depetris-Chauvin and Santos, 2018a; 2018b).

that Venezuelans contributed to contagion (R4V, 2021b; Rodríguez Chatruc and Roza, 2021). By January 2021, almost two-thirds of Colombians had a negative perception of Venezuelans (Proyecto Migración Venezuela, 2021).

The role of social protection provision in influencing social cohesion among displacement-affected populations

As noted above, provision of assistance to displaced populations appears to influence social cohesion in different ways depending on who is receiving and providing the assistance (support for IDP assistance versus tensions about Venezuelan assistance; concerns about allocation of government resources versus support for more international aid).

We build on mixed existing evidence on this topic. For populations affected by internal displacement, previous research found that access to social assistance (specifically the *Familias en Acción* conditional cash transfer) had positive effects on vertical social cohesion by supporting the demobilisation of combatants (Peña et al., 2017). However, another study finds that extending social assistance provision to conflict-affected populations may also be associated with increased insurgent violence in these areas, as armed groups react negatively to the expansion of government territorial control (Weintraub, 2016). The literature also suggests that communities hosting IDPs are aware that these families have been granted preferential access to government social assistance, causing resentment against them in

some cases, and therefore damage to horizontal social cohesion (Vidal Lopez et al., 2011). These perceptions might be exacerbated by the fact that sudden influxes of IDPs often strain already limited social services and reduce the local government's capacity to adequately provide public goods and services (OCHA, 2017).

Our research aimed to delve further into whether individual receipt of social assistance influences perceptions and experiences of social cohesion (perhaps due to meaningful inter-community interactions that occur as a result of assistance receipt). As we did for wellbeing and economic agency measures, using the survey data we analysed the association between receipt of social assistance and social cohesion. On average, for both IDPs and Venezuelans, **we find no statistically significant association between receiving social assistance and the level of overall interaction with host population** (see Table 5.8 in Annex 1 for full details).⁴⁰ This is not surprising given the relatively low frequency of interaction reported by both groups specifically in social assistance settings; only 30% of Venezuelan respondents and 34% of IDPs report that they interact with the host population when receiving social assistance.

When looking at other dimensions of social cohesion in the survey, we also do not find a statistically significant association between receiving social assistance and perceptions of discrimination or competition with the host population for jobs or government services.⁴¹

40 Assistance recipients who belong to IDPs or Venezuelan groups have lower levels of interaction with the host population in comparison to non-recipients. However, the association is not statistically significant after controlling for household and respondent characteristics.

41 Assistance recipients who belong to IDP or Venezuelan groups have lower levels of negative perceptions regarding discrimination against them or competition with jobs or government services. However, the association is not statistically significant after controlling for household and respondent characteristics.

However, as indicated earlier, **some aspects of the research provided clear indications that the relationship with Colombians can be affected by the receipt of assistance by Venezuelans.**

IDPs in the focus groups indicated that they feel frustrated when they cannot access a transfer, school or health care programme, and compare their situation with that of Venezuelans who have managed to access one of those programmes.

I've only been here for eight months, I don't know of anyone else around here, I don't see Venezuelans. I am not interested in Venezuelans ... because of them I lost a spot in a good school I wanted for my son and because of those women the government did support them for food, education, everything, and we were left behind. (Focus Group IDPs, Recipient, Bogotá)

In some cases, Venezuelans keep their lives private to avoid communicating the fact that they receive assistance. They believe this type of information can make other people uncomfortable and can cause hostility in their communities.

When we are going to use the voucher or the school subsidy that my son receives, we do not usually cash it here in the neighbourhood, we cash it in other places, and generally I try not to talk while waiting in line, knowing that yes, these vouchers usually generate controversies because it is no secret to anyone that we migrants did come to take a place, even steal a space that many Colombians need. In addition to that, the lack of information ... about where these subsidies come from, where that money comes from and how, and not to get into politics but some politicians do politics with migrants and instead of seeing ourselves benefited, we end up being affected. (Focus Group Venezuelans, Recipient, Bogotá)

Furthermore, in the survey, less than 50% of IDPs and host populations that receive assistance state that Venezuelans should receive assistance through that programme, while more than 90% of Venezuelans who received assistance believe host populations should receive that assistance.

In relation to vertical social cohesion, we find that **assistance recipients report statistically significantly higher levels of trust in national government and international organisations**, even after controlling for individual and household characteristics (see Table 5.7 in Annex 1 for details). One possible explanation for this finding is that social assistance beneficiaries have more information and greater interaction with institutions in charge of social assistance programmes. Also, as shown in Section 4.1, while there is room for improvement, a large proportion of assistance recipients report receiving benefits promptly and accurately, which may induce greater trust in the institutions in charge of those programmes.

5.2 What are the benefits and drawbacks for wider stakeholders?

In this section, we provide evidence from KIIs on the benefits and drawbacks of efforts to link state and humanitarian assistance.

Key informants from governmental organisations identify several benefits of current efforts to link humanitarian assistance and social protection. First, **linkages between humanitarian assistance and social protection help avoid duplication** of both actions and recipients. Linkages allow for better coordination of services and better targeting of recipients, both of which lead to the optimisation of resources. Second, **linkages allow for the expansion of services** to a greater

number of recipients from all groups, including Venezuelans, IDPs and vulnerable hosts. In addition, many government officials recognise that the Venezuelan influx may well continue, and that the government should strengthen its ability to support this population. In this sense, integration between social protection and humanitarian assistance, and integration of Venezuelans into government systems, is seen as one of the ways to serve displaced individuals better, and to support their integration into society.

Key informants at the local government level also discuss the potential benefits in terms of **increased institutional capacity in the field** and improved coordination efforts between institutions. They also see potential for closer integration of government and non-governmental systems to generate a more sustainable and effective approach to providing longer-term assistance and opening up additional resources. This has led to plans to explore ways to link their efforts further, beyond the provision or receipt of technical assistance.

I believe that we have been laying out some discussions about cooperation in two senses: one, in the sense of aiming to build capacity and institutional architecture. Let's say that this implies that projects and strategic financing go a bit beyond the technical, academic, discursive, conceptual, consulting assistance; to the institutional architecture, which allows the response to be sustainable. (KII Venezuelan response, governmental agency Bogotá-BOGo4)

Key informants from non-governmental organisations, particularly international agencies, also identify some benefits from current linkages. Like key informants from the government, they point to the advantage of **avoiding duplication, which allows the expansion of services** to more

recipients. They similarly highlight the **potential for integration between humanitarian assistance and social protection to better support the increasing number of Venezuelans** coming into the country, particularly given that many are likely to stay for the long term:

And assuming that people ... a lot of them are going to stay here, we are not going to give them humanitarian assistance forever. We depend on the donors that have short-term funds ... So, it's about looking for strategies that are a little longer-term; and that allow people to secure a minimum level of well-being. Let's say, a minimum to live, no? (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Colombia-COLO5)

In addition, key informants from non-governmental agencies suggest that ongoing efforts towards integration benefit the pursuit of monitoring and evaluation activities and the fulfilment of the role that humanitarian agencies play in complementing the government's services instead of replacing them. These activities **make it possible to identify new needs, gaps and opportunities for improvement** aimed at both international agencies and the Colombian government.

There is evidence of this synergy in the joint work for the formulation of the Colombia chapter of the Regional Plans of Response to Refugees and Migrants of 2019, 2020 and 2021. Based on those plans, during the year the response is monitored monthly by GIFMM, and that process is sent back to the national government. In this way, the evolution of the response is documented and, simultaneously, there is an identification of new needs and improvement opportunities through coordinated actions. (KII Venezuelan response, international agency Cúcuta-CUo4)

Key informants also recognise that greater integration of international and national responses **provides a pathway for much-needed additional financial resources** and potentially expands the social protection system once there is full integration.

And cooperation can contribute to the mobilisation of resources so that we can have more funding for these programmes because it's important to have the liquidity to mobilise them, no? So, I think that would be an added value from us. (KII Venezuelan response, international agency Bogotá-BOGo2)

Key informants indicate that **one of the main drawbacks of linking assistance more closely with the government social protection system can be the logistical and operational challenges** that this entails. For example, data sharing involves complex processes that are not always feasible. Challenges with data sharing include extensive administrative processes, identification of confidentiality terms and limitations, formulation and approval of confidentiality agreements, meeting software and equipment requirements, and the need to maintain continuous communication between the agencies sharing and receiving the data.

We are in an imminent crisis, and everybody agreed that we had to intervene immediately, and we didn't have initial barriers. The same procedures that are always delayed, but those were not barriers, they were just the formalities of each agency to be able to do the information exchange. (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Colombia-COLO2)

Alongside these logistical and operational challenges, KIIs also highlight fears that

commitments to integrate assistance into government systems will not materialise in practice given increasing budgetary pressures:

I think that everyone sees its relevance, the problem is its feasibility. That is where the problem is, I believe because it represents quite a huge burden at the budget level for the government. And I don't think there's a lot of money left from last year. So that's going to be, for me, one of the most important challenges. (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency Colombia-COLO5)

These findings highlight the importance of continued and sufficient international funds to provide assistance for displacement-affected populations, even if the decision is taken to increasingly channel this assistance through host government systems. Shifts to more nationally led approaches should not be seen as a 'way out' of global burden-sharing commitments, but instead represent an alternative and potentially more sustainable strategy to respond to displacement crises, where government systems are suitable for assistance provision.

Lastly, key informants from non-governmental and governmental agencies **have concerns about potential social tensions** that can emerge from the provision of governmental support to Venezuelans, based on the public's belief that non-citizens should receive support from their countries of origin and from international organisations instead of from the Colombian government, as also shown to some extent in our data. Relatedly, **the integration between humanitarian assistance and social protection led by the government can have political costs** as Colombian society demands increased governmental attention to the needs of citizens. Host populations and IDPs

observe how resources and efforts are also directed towards a new vulnerable population, which at times can generate solidarity but also dissatisfaction and frustration, with potential political backlash.

6 Conclusions and policy implications

6.1 Conclusions

This report analysed how social protection in Colombia covers forcibly displaced Venezuelans and conflict-affected IDPs, compared to the vulnerable host population. We use a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative survey data with qualitative in-depth interviews and focus group discussions that, together, provide insights on the situation faced by these groups, and the role of social protection in their lives and well-being.

We find that access to cash or in-kind assistance is significantly higher among IDPs (76%) and lower among Venezuelans (48%) relative to the vulnerable host population (62%) in our sample. Venezuelans are more likely to be receiving in-kind support, while Colombians are much more likely to be receiving cash. Over 90% of Colombian households and 78% of Venezuelans who receive assistance report that aid comes from the government. There is some evidence of support from international humanitarian agencies and NGOs, but to a lesser extent. We also find that community-based provision such as from churches and anonymous private sources accounted for a non-trivial minority of assistance to Venezuelans.

A large proportion of this social assistance corresponds to programmes launched during the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g., *Ingreso Solidario*, *Devolución del IVA*), particularly for Venezuelans and, to a lesser degree, hosts. By contrast, a relatively high proportion of IDPs were benefiting from a pre-Covid cash transfer scheme (e.g., 35%

covered by *Familias en Acción* and 10% by *Colombia Mayor*). A small proportion of Venezuelans were also benefiting from pre-Covid cash assistance. SISBÉN registration, which is a key requirement (although not the only determinant) for social assistance receipt, is higher among IDPs and hosts (91% and 83% respectively), but the proportion of Venezuelans in our sample who were registered (44%) is relatively high.⁴² A major reason for this is a large fraction of mixed Colombian–Venezuelan households, which may highlight the importance of family ties and migrant networks for facilitating access to the social protection system.

In terms of access to broader social protection such as education and health, Venezuelans fare worse than IDPs and hosts. Only 5% of employed Venezuelans are part of the contributory social security system (which is accessed through formal employment or contributions as an independent worker), compared to more than one-third of employed hosts and IDPs. Venezuelans are much less likely to have health insurance or medical coverage, and their children are also less likely to be enrolled in school, especially the youngest in early childhood education.

The level of inclusion in government programmes in our sample is in many ways noteworthy compared to other countries dealing with displacement crises. At least for IDPs, there is fairly extensive programming, and we do not find evidence of notably greater barriers to access for IDPs relative to host recipients. **For Venezuelans, access is far patchier**, with

42 Nevertheless, SISBEN has a very low proportion of Venezuelans registered. According to DNP, as of January 2021, SISBEN had information on around 141,000 migrants, equivalent to only 18% of the regular migrant population and 8% of the total Venezuelan population (although DNP has been working to increase registration since then).

about 40% receiving government support but almost all of this relating to provision during the pandemic. Furthermore, there are important nuances of access in practice (e.g., between documented versus undocumented Venezuelans, and mixed-nationality versus Venezuelan-only households), and there remain disparities and information gaps in how to access these benefits. Encouragingly, Venezuelans had easier access to in-kind assistance than citizens, and those registered in the SISBÉN appear to have had no more difficulties overall accessing cash transfers than IDPs or hosts. However, Venezuelans were more likely to list lack of access to technology as a reason for cash transfer access challenges, and were also significantly more likely to struggle with SISBÉN registration. Unsurprisingly, the main barrier for Venezuelans relates to lack of documentation. It is hoped that the new Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans will help significantly in addressing this, through mass regularisation of their residence status.

How closely linked are governmental and non-governmental efforts to help the forcibly displaced? **We found evidence of several examples already under way of humanitarian agencies linking their programming closely with government systems.** At the policy level there has been integration in terms of coordination mechanisms, financing streams and the provision of technical assistance. In terms of programme design, there are government guidelines requiring the value of all humanitarian cash transfers to align with (not exceed) government cash transfer scheme values. Some humanitarian programmes have also aligned with the targeting criteria of government schemes. At the administration level, there are examples of database-sharing, integrated referral mechanisms and joint evaluations between government and humanitarian agencies.

However, important harmonisation challenges remain. **Many of the system linkages have been circumstantial, rather than a truly consolidated approach.** Improved linkages are not yet translating into an enhanced experience for displaced households, who often still find social protection and assistance fragmented and difficult to navigate. Nevertheless, it is important to take into account the time horizon of policy responses: a longer-term policy strategy for Venezuelans is just starting to take shape, in contrast to the more consolidated strategy with IDPs, due to the different timing of each displacement (IDPs have been key to policy for many years, while Venezuelans are part of a more recent migration influx).

When looking at the outcomes of current assistance programming, the quantitative results were unable to detect statistically significant effects of assistance on several measures of welfare and economic agency. However, **recipients of cash and in-kind transfers do report that they are important, very important or even indispensable** for their livelihood and highlight that such transfers play a role in improving households' financial inclusion. The qualitative research supports this indication of positive effects, with displaced households repeatedly emphasising the importance of assistance in enabling them to meet critical daily needs (for Venezuelans) or a wider range of basic household needs (for IDPs). A key takeaway from both our quantitative and qualitative analyses is that **most assistance for Venezuelans and IDPs covers short-term needs but does not guarantee longer-term stability** in terms of sustainability, employment or economic agency.

We also find that **'horizontal' social cohesion is in a delicate position**, given that different actors converge in a context where they find themselves competing for limited resources (i.e., jobs and

social assistance). While Venezuelans report having more frequent interaction with hosts than IDPs do, qualitative findings suggest that, when it comes to close and meaningful interactions, these are rare. In addition, Venezuelans report some experiences of discrimination due to negative perceptions from hosts, who sometimes generalise negative stereotypes towards the entire Venezuelan population. We did not find a statistically significant association between receiving social assistance and horizontal social cohesion. However, qualitative findings suggest that the way in which social assistance support is targeted may affect the relationship between Venezuelans and hosts. The perception among hosts is that Venezuelans should be helped, but without taking away from themselves. In terms of ‘vertical’ social cohesion, we find that Venezuelans report higher levels of trust in national and local governments and international organisations than do hosts. Also, social assistance recipients report significantly higher levels of trust in national government and international organisations, compared to non-recipients. These findings suggest that, **if well-delivered, social protection can play a role in building vertical social cohesion, but it must be handled delicately to avoid exacerbating social tensions.**

6.2 Policy implications

Our analysis holds several policy lessons for improving social protection for displaced populations and strengthening linkages between the government and international agencies, to better serve these populations.

In relation to linking international humanitarian assistance with government social protection, **effective coordination of international and government systems requires clear rules for all actors and policy-makers involved.** Despite some positive examples of coordination and

linkages, there is room for improvement in the linkages between assistance programmes so that displacement-affected populations benefit from concerted efforts from government, non-government and community-led organisations. Concrete frameworks are needed to guide this at the policy and programme design level, and administrative arrangements need to be developed further (e.g., data sharing). For more details, see Box 2.

In addition to these insights about linking international and government systems, the research also offers various **lessons for ensuring that displaced populations can be more effectively supported when assisted through the government’s social protection system.**

In terms of **practical lessons**, the research demonstrates the need for administrative adjustments to make government programming more accessible to displaced populations, including targeted outreach and active support to help displaced populations understand and navigate application processes. Specific steps must also be taken to address documentation constraints, and to ensure that registration and payment mechanisms adequately account for displaced populations’ lower access to technology and bank accounts. In terms of programme design, the IDP case study shows that officially granting displaced populations preferential access to government assistance can enhance provision, but effectiveness is greatly reduced if the process of registering displacement is itself fraught with delays. Meanwhile, the Venezuelan case study indicates likely needs for adjusted transfer values, given the much greater gaps in basic needs and higher economic insecurity among this population.

Box 2 Lessons for linking humanitarian assistance with social protection, based on the Colombia experience

AT THE POLICY LEVEL:

- Linkages are much more feasible when there is a **consolidated, long-term government vision** in place for comprehensively addressing displaced populations' needs and promoting their access to broad socio-economic rights. **Establishing in law the rights of displaced populations, and government responsibilities towards them**, provides a much stronger framework for international agencies to consider integrating their activities into a nationally led response.
- Linkages benefit from a **clear government focal point** to coordinate different agencies' roles and activities, with a concrete strategy and associated protocols for international-national collaboration. Relatedly, international agencies' links with government systems are greatly facilitated by **strong coordination and harmonised programming among international agencies themselves**.
- Where trust in the government and accountability mechanisms are sufficient, **directing international financing to national systems** can help alleviate fiscal constraints in expanding government programme coverage of displaced populations. In the case of refugee (or Venezuelan) provision, **the international origins of these funds should be emphasised** when advertising coverage expansion, to help avoid inflaming social tensions (which are greater when displaced populations are perceived to be diverting government resources away from hosts).
- **An urgent and large-scale crisis can incentivise greater collaboration** between national and international actors, and provide opportunities to trial new linked programming. Where engaging closely with the government is appropriate and feasible, international agencies should maximise these opportunities by **being ready to articulate and implement their offer to strengthen government systems**.
- Linking international assistance with social protection requires more than just national and international cooperation; **sub-national governments can also play an important role** in establishing policies and programming that enable international assistance to align or integrate with local provision.

AT THE LEVEL OF PROGRAMME DESIGN:

- Even where a programme is ultimately implemented by an international agency, **government involvement in that programme's design may lay the foundations for more nationally led provision in future**. Co-designing **small-scale pilots**, and jointly monitoring and evaluating these, may help to build the relationships and political support for closer integration down the line.

- In Colombia, the design of humanitarian cash transfers has aligned with government social protection programmes (in transfer values, the preference for conditional over unconditional assistance and in some cases in eligibility criteria). The sample size of displaced populations receiving these transfers was too small in our study to monitor the effectiveness of these transfers in meeting short- and long-term needs. Given that social protection transfer values are often inadequate to meet humanitarian needs (McLean et al., 2021), **further research on the impact of these humanitarian cash transfers is vital.**

AT THE ADMINISTRATION LEVEL:

- Where appropriate data-sharing protocols can be established, there can be strong mutual gains from enhanced database collaboration, to strengthen and expand both data and programming coverage (particularly in cases where government databases and information systems on displaced populations are themselves more advanced). **Priority should be given first to exploring the acceptability of different forms of data-sharing, and then to developing robust frameworks** and protocols for data-sharing that is feasible and desirable.
- **Clear information needs to be provided to displaced populations** about the different forms and sources of assistance, and the pathways for accessing each. Efforts to link assistance programmes should enhance rather than obscure access.
- Programming must be adjusted to **ensure that documentation challenges do not leave displaced populations without access to support.** Unless universal access to the correct documentation can be provided or documentation requirements waived, there may be a need for separate provisions to be established for those lacking documentation (e.g., a non-governmental programme established to mirror government schemes if these are restricted to those with documented residence).
- Displaced populations often have more limited access to technologies and bank accounts; **if integrating with government digital registration and payment mechanisms, alternative in-person options or support should be designed accordingly,** to support digitally and financially excluded households.
- Even where international agencies largely maintain stand-alone programmes, **collaborating more closely with government agencies to refer to each other's programmes can be an initial step** towards developing more closely integrated programming in future.
- However, displaced populations may be reluctant to identify themselves as such in government systems, due to fear of retribution (which was the case for some IDPs in our research). Care needs to be taken to **ensure that data on displacement status is kept confidential and secure, and that alternative provisions are in place** to support households who are fearful of being officially registered as displaced.

Beyond these practical tweaks, the research also highlights some **more fundamental shifts** needed in the conceptualisation of assistance programming for displaced populations.

First, as is clear from both IDP and Venezuelan case studies, most assistance for displaced populations focuses on the short term, and the way forward requires considering medium- to long-term assistance that ‘opens doors’ through access to formal jobs and other forms of economic agency that increase earnings and allow these people to pay taxes and contributory social protection. Key informants recognise the **need for longer-term measures and programmes**. They identify the immediate and short-term approach being taken, which on occasion crowds out the opportunity for longer-term integration based on better employment, education or health. In the case of IDPs, they also identify the gap between the supply of social protection and the real needs of the population. Although they acknowledge progress in the social protection of IDPs and Venezuelans, they identify the need for **durable solutions to overcome their socio-economic vulnerability**.

Second, related to the need to promote longer-term economic agency for working-age adults (discussed above), there is also a need to focus on developing **policies and programmes that ‘level the playing field’** for young children and adolescents so that the inequalities their parents face are not perpetuated over time. This is especially important in health and education since these are well-known determinants of future welfare and social mobility.

The Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans issued by the government provides a **unique opportunity to develop this longer-term vision, with more coherent and comprehensive**

programming in response to the Venezuelan influx. The temporary protection status decree will regularise many Venezuelans’ residence and could guarantee longer-term sustainability by facilitating access to formal employment and contributory social protection. This should be the way forward. However, just because the path to formal employment is easier does not guarantee that they will all transit towards this sector. Further research on how to effectively formalise the informal is essential to ensure that opportunities can be taken by Venezuelans. Key informants shared the high expectations among agencies for the possibilities of integration that the Temporary Protection Status will bring, including the consolidation of a registry for migrants regardless of their migratory status.

The new decree, and plans to institutionalise the Temporary Protection Status arrangements, present a **critical opportunity to develop improved ways of working jointly** among policy-makers. It is an opportunity to improve linkages across all three dimensions we considered: administration (e.g., information system, data); programme design (e.g., more employment-oriented programmes) and policies. This opportunity provides a platform for linking systems in a long-term manner. It is also an opportunity for dialogue between government, international agencies and community-based organisations to help consolidate short-term assistance into a broad inclusion strategy in the future.

However, while the broad policy landscape and vision is encouraging, it is **vital that the above course of action is charted in a manner that is sensitive to public perceptions and minimises tensions** between communities. Cohesion among groups has slowly deteriorated over time, and expanding social protection for Venezuelans needs to be managed carefully, since the main

issue is that the host population does not consider that resources are being diverted from aiding Colombians. In particular, there is a need to ensure that the development of an effective long-term response for Venezuelans does not – and is not perceived to – come at the expense of continued investment in a comprehensive strategy to meet the needs of the still-growing population of IDPs.

International financing for Venezuelan integration initiatives has an important role to play here, since the provision of supplementary, non-governmental funding may help counter host population concerns about Venezuelan integration diverting public resources away from citizens. The Colombian government’s willingness to adopt a strong, nationally led approach to supporting displaced Venezuelans does not remove the need for the international community to share the burden of one of the largest displacement crises of modern times by providing adequate and effective financial support to enable Colombia’s progressive long-term vision to be realised.

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