USING SOCIOECONOMIC EVIDENCE FOR ACTION IN FORCIBLY DISPLACED CONTEXTS



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EXAMPLES OF UNHCR'S USES OF SOCIOECONOMIC DATA TO INFORM EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMMING, POLICY AND ADVOCACY

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR is putting evidence at the center of its business model. With 76 percent of refugees in protracted situations, and one million children born as refugees between 2018 and 2020, sustainable solutions to forced displacement cannot be achieved without international cooperation – a fact recognized by the Global Compact on Refugees which provides a framework for supporting host communities and helping refugees to lead productive lives.

Quality socioeconomic data is necessary for engaging governments and development organizations to plan and sustainably finance programmes that promote resilience: supporting outcomes related to employment, education, social protection, and wider human development objectives described in the Sustainable Development Goals, among others.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic shock further highlight the value of comparable socioeconomic data to inform an evidence-based and inclusive response – some 90 percent of refugees are hosted by developing countries, which are themselves facing slower recovery prospects, according to the International Monetary Fund. Thus, understanding the socioeconomic recovery of forcibly displaced and stateless communities, compared to surrounding hosts, is necessary to ensuring an equitable recovery.

FEATURED EXAMPLES

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NATIONAL SURVEY TOOLS COMPLETE MISSING COMPARABLE DATA IN KENYA

Since 2018, UNHCR and the World Bank, in partnership with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, have adapted national survey modules to collect data on refugees in three sites hosting refugees. The data, which is comparable to that of Kenyan host communities, is used today to plan and monitor area-based support for refugees, stateless populations and host communities.

The survey data is contributing to policy and programme planning by the local government, UNHCR Kenya and key partners.

For example:

- Surveys in the Kakuma and Kalobeyei camps contribute to decisions by the local government's area-based development programme (Kalobeyei Integrated Social and Economic Development Programme).
- This data is an essential input into UNHCR's Multi-Year Multi-Partner strategic planning for people of concern and host communities.
- The stateless Shona survey was part of an effort to grant citizenship to this community, ending generations of statelessness for eligible individuals.
- The Kakuma survey provided evidence to donors on the need for skills and livelihoods programmes for women. It also served as important background information to inform the International Finance Corporation's work with the private sector.



Refugees in Kalobeyei Settlement.
© World Bank/Laura Abril Ríos Rivera

The Kakuma, Kalobeyei and Shona surveys are available at https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/livelihoods-and-economic-inclusion-data-and-analysis.html

DATA OPTIMIZES FOOD ASSISTANCE TO REACH THE POOREST REFUGEES IN NIGER



Surging violence in Nigeria fuels displacement in Niger. © UNHCR/Selim Meddeb Hamrouni

In response to a dramatic cut in funding resources in 2016, UNHCR and the World Food Program in Niger used existing refugee household survey data to find a better way to ensure resources were optimally mobilized towards those most in need.

Applying good practices in econometric modelling, researchers calculated welfare scores for refugee households, based on which differentiated food and cash assistance were provided. Further testing showed that the new method of targeting was more accurate and improved upon the previous categorical targeting strategy based on demographic variables, like number of children.

> ***The new strategy ensured that more assistance was distributed to the most at-risk refugees, who would otherwise have faced more severe cuts in basic living and protection needs.***

The research and analysis on the new targeting method is available at https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/livelihoods-and-economic-inclusion-data-and-analysis.html

ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT AND UNHCR ADMINISTRATIVE DATA INFORMS INTEGRATION OF VENEZUELANS IN BRAZIL

Recognizing that the economic and social integration of Venezuelans in Brazil is one of the best ways to help them build new lives, UNHCR, in collaboration with government agencies, is using available administrative data to analyze the obstacles to integration and design a strategy for how to overcome them.

The analysis has produced research that is improving the outcomes of the government's strategy of relocating willing Venezuelans to regions with more job opportunities.

The analysis also feeds into an online dashboard introduced in 2021 to monitor the wellbeing of Venezuelans participating in the national relocation programme.

UNHCR and the World Bank collaborated to further explore the extent to which Venezuelans were integrated into the labour market, education systems and social safety nets. This joint research produced a working paper in 2021 that highlights the extent of integration, the obstacles limiting it, and offers policy suggestions.

Separately, in 2020, research on Venezuelan entrepreneurs in Brazil improved the design of government-sponsored livelihoods training efforts. This initiative also informed advocacy which resulted in improving access for Venezuelans to banking and microcredit services.





Venezuelan refugees and migrants relocating from Roraima to other cities. © UNHCR/ Allana Ferreira

Information on the online dashboard is available at https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/how-are-venezuelans-in-brazil-faring-a-new-data-dashboard-is-helping-to-provide-answers/

IMPROVING DATA COMPARABILITY AND SYSTEMS HELPS TO ENSURE BETTER PROTECTION OUTCOMES

UNHCR, in collaboration with the governments of countries that host refugees, collects data on persons of concerns during its registration process. This information helps to safeguard legal rights and identify protection needs. Recent efforts to improve the collection of information on employment, education and skills offers new opportunities for protection-sensitive programming, policy and advocacy.

Efforts are also under way to improve the frequency, comparability and quality of data collected by UNHCR, its partners and governments.

Together, these initiatives are producing data that is reliable, uses national statistical methods, and opens up new doors for evidence-based dialogue, planning and policy around inclusion.

DATA SAFEGUARDS ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES IN UGANDA



Congolese refugee children play during a UNHCR community meeting. © UNHCR/Duniya Aslam Khan

Data from Uganda's *Vulnerability and Essential Needs Assessment 2020* show that 91 percent of refugee households are highly economically vulnerable, indicating a near universal inability to afford basic needs.

Secondary analysis of the data by UNHCR indicated disproportionately higher vulnerability for households with specific needs, particularly for those with single parents, with members who have health-related problems or disabilities, or with children who are unaccompanied or separated from parents. There also was evidence supporting the need to continue providing additional assistance, beyond food assistance, to households with specific needs.

In light of the analysis, and after evaluation of the resources needed for statistically robust targeting, UNHCR determined that the targeting of assistance would be neither practical nor meaningful in the case of refugees in Uganda, given the high level of economic vulnerability across all households.

> ***With evidence in hand of high and widespread economic vulnerability, UNHCR Uganda successfully advocated for partners to continue the provision of food assistance to all refugees, rather than adopting a targeted approach.***

The secondary analysis by UNHCR is available at https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/livelihoods-and-economic-inclusion-data-and-analysis.html

INFORMING THE TARGETING APPROACH IN CHAD

UNHCR faces difficult choices on the ground. Stretched budgets have meant that universal coverage of programmes like cash or food assistance are the exception rather than the rule.

Under these tight budget circumstances, targeting becomes a very relevant activity for donors and humanitarian organizations alike.

In Chad, UNHCR and the World Bank undertook calculations to impute poverty rates for refugees using data from UNHCR's refugee registration database (*ProGres*) supplemented with available socioeconomic data on assets and animal ownership.

The data collaboration between the partners has provided UNHCR Chad with more accurate tools for targeting their assistance. Data has shown that the existing targeting strategy by UNHCR, WFP and the Refugee Affairs Department (CNARR) of the Government of Chad is efficient, despite some known challenges with implementation.

Examples of uses in policy:

- The results support advocacy for the expansion of humanitarian assistance, with an added focus on households headed by females, who tend to be more vulnerable.
- The innovative use of *ProGres* data illustrates its potential for expanding the use of combining UNHCR administrative data with other sample surveys for the purpose of targeting as well as for understanding poverty rates, which are needed for programming, planning and advocacy.



Refugee mother worries about the nutrition of her twin babies. © UNHCR/Oualid Khelifi

The study on imputation of poverty in Chad is available at https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/livelihoods-and-economic-inclusion-data-and-analysis.html

> UNHCR country economists are playing an important role in supporting our protection and solutions mandate. As UNHCR continues to facilitate and catalyze the transformation of the refugee response model in line with the GCR, socioeconomic research is complementing existing tools in a way that makes UNHCR's protection advocacy, assistance, and external engagement more impactful. Going forward, economic reasoning and models will strengthen UNHCR's protection and solutions activities in the EHAGL Region.

Yonatan Araya

SENIOR POLICY ADVISER FOR THE EHAGL REGIONAL BUREAU

> There has been significant interest in our socioeconomic studies and data on living conditions. We are having more dialogue with the government based on the studies. Development institutions have also requested closer collaboration and are discussing financing options. The studies have led to concrete impacts on the lives of displaced Venezuelans and the Brazilian communities that graciously host them.

Paulo Sérgio de Almeida

SENIOR LIVELIHOODS AND
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INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IMPROVES NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN COLOMBIA

The influx of Venezuelans has had an impact on all parts of Colombian society, including the government's capacity to collect and analyse the information required to identify protection needs, establish policy priorities, align funding opportunities with needs, and coordinate the response, among others

UNHCR, together with IOM, co-leads the Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (known by its acronym GIFMM). The group coordinates with its members and other stakeholders to implement a joint data collection exercise using a standardized survey instrument – including a complete socioeconomic module – to assess the needs of refugees in Colombia. These instruments are harmonized with existing government surveys to coherency and comparability.

The joint data collection effort has optimized responses by partners and promoted equity in targeting approaches. In particular, it has helped define the strategy for integration and prioritizing actions for Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

The GIFMM 2020 data collection included:

- More than 3100 phone surveys.
- Prioritized analysis for 10 sectors A particular focus on three principal needs: food and nutrition, shelter, and employment and income generation opportunities as well as protection concerns.



Venezuelan refugee with her two daughters in an informal settlement in Colombia.
© UNHCR/Santiago Escobar-Jaramillo

The GIFMM 2020 data is available at https://www.r4v.info/es/document/gifmm-colombia-evaluacion-conjunta-de-necesidades-ante-covid-19-diciembre-2020

DATA ENABLES ASSESSMENT OF VULNERABILITY AND NEEDS AMONG SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON



10-year-old Syrian refugee girl wants to become a lawyer. © UNHCR/Diego Ibarra Sánchez

The socioeconomic situation for the 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon continues to worsen as the country's economic and political struggles became more acute in late 2019. The situation of overlapping political, economic and financial crises were further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic as well the Beirut blast in August 2020.

The *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyR)* is a representative survey of Syrian refugees collected annually since 2013 by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, and it was one of very few surveys that continued face-to-face at refugees' homes in 2020 during the pandemic.

> ***The VASyR is a crucial source of information for research and programming as well as advocacy on behalf of Syrian refugees. Its data is used for targeting cash assistance and estimating poverty and food insecurity, among others.***

In addition, UNHCR and its partners Caritas, Intersos and SHEILD conduct a nationwide Protection Monitoring survey that assesses changes in the protection environment and the situation of refugees across Lebanon. At the start of the pandemic, questions were added to assess knowledge around COVID-19 and the impact of imposed restrictions. The survey findings, which are representative, are used to inform advocacy efforts and adapt programmatic interventions.

The VASyR dataset is available at http://vasyr.org

PHONE SURVEYS GUIDE COVID-19 RESPONSE



COVID-19 closed the IT repair business of this refugee in Nigeria for a year. A recent loan request helped restart his business, returning it to profitability. © UNHCR/Emmanuel Campos

The COVID-19 pandemic and its induced economic shock dramatically impacted the livelihoods and hence well-being of forcibly displaced people. To know with more certainty the areas of impact, the vulnerabilities they have exacerbated, how they compare to hosts, and to monitor these impacts over the duration of the crisis, high-frequency phone surveys were conducted for refugee and national households soon after the onset of the pandemic.

The mapping of these vulnerabilities have allowed UNHCR country operations to plan policies and programmes to address the urgent needs of forcibly displaced people and host communities, and to work with governments to advocate for support from other partners.

The surveys were undertaken either independently by UNHCR or jointly with the World Bank with support from the Joint Data Center in locations such as Nigeria, Lebanon, Costa Rica, Mexico, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti, among others.

In Nigeria: using data from these surveys, UNHCR generated a measurement of the impact on loss of jobs and sources of household income. The analysis found evidence of high and rising food insecurity, which UNHCR used to raise awareness on the matter with partners and donors, increase advocacy, and informed coordination with WFP to formulate a response plan.

In Kenya: the survey results showcased the disproportionate large impact on urban refugees early in the crisis and led to advocacy that resulted in expanding assistance for refugees living in urban areas. Pre-pandemic, urban refugees mostly did not have access to humanitarian assistance, including food programmes.

The study on imputation of poverty in Chad is available at https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/livelihoods-and-economic-inclusion-data-and-analysis.html

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