



Evidence for Responding to Displacement

A Scoping Review of Rigorous Impact Evaluations

November 2023

Acknowledgments

This review was prepared by Innovations for Poverty Action, with partial funding support from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office through the Government, Crime, and Conflict Initiative's [Peace & Recovery Program](#). Editing and additional study summary support from Caroline Lawton, Ayda Lulseged, and Daphne Schermer, and editing support from David Berry. We are grateful to Jeannie Annan, Veronique Barbelet, Sarah Baum, Theresa Beltramo, Sarah Charles, Sebastian Chaskel, Stefan Dercon, Paola Elice, Beth Ferris, Thomas Ginn, Kerrie Holloway, Sarah Kabay, Julie Kedroske, Aprille Knox, Julia Lendorfer, Amanda Gray Meral, Mushfiq Mobarak, Ricardo Morel, Radha Rajkotia, Ellen Reid, Isabela Salgado, Daphne Schermer, Kirsten Schuettler, Simar Singh, Brian Ssebunya, Paolo Verme, Jeremy Weinstein, and Rebecca Wolfe for their input.

Disclaimer

The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of any of the publication's funders or those who provided input. Innovations for Poverty Action bears sole responsibility for the content of this report.

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Abbreviations

CBT	Cognitive behavioral therapy
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EMDR	Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing
IDP	Internally displaced persons
IO	International organization
IPA	Innovations for Poverty Action
J-PAL	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
LMICs	Low- and middle-income countries
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
NET	Narrative exposure therapy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RCT	Randomized controlled trial
RDD	Regression discontinuity design
SEL	Social and emotional learning
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Key Terms

Comparison or control group	Participants who are assigned to not participate in the intervention being evaluated that serve as a counterfactual
Cost-effectiveness	The ratio of the "impact" to the monetary cost of a program, allowing for comparison between different programs evaluated in different contexts across different time frames
Displaced persons	People in need of international protection—those who are refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless—as well as internally displaced persons and others in refugee-like situations, whether this be to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural- and human-made disasters
Impact	The measured effects that can be attributed to an intervention or program being evaluated
Impact evaluation	An evaluation methodology that assesses the changes that can be causally attributed to a particular intervention, whether those changes are intended or unintended
In-kind transfer	The transfer of non-monetary goods or assets (e.g. food, livestock) without the expectation of repayment
Intervention	The policy or program being tested through an impact evaluation, often used interchangeably in this review with “program”
Multi-sectoral or “integrated” programs	Programs that have several components from different sectors that are implemented together (e.g. WASH and nutrition)
Post-traumatic stress disorder	A mental health condition triggered by either experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event, which may bring about flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event
Randomized evaluation or randomized controlled trial	An impact evaluation methodology that randomly assigns study participants to one or more groups that receive an intervention, and often to a comparison group that does not receive an intervention
Regression discontinuity design	A quasi-experimental impact evaluation methodology that measures the impacts of an intervention by comparing participants on either side of a cut-off score or threshold that is “as if” random
Unconditional cash transfer	Cash provided without any conditions placed upon how the receiver spends it

Introduction

Globally, displacement is at an all-time high and climbing. Every minute, 20 people worldwide are forced to flee their homes due to conflict, violence, or persecution (UN 2022). As more people around the world experience the effects of climate change, natural disasters, and political instability, and as the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to fuel an increase in extreme poverty, responding to displacement is now both more pressing and challenging than ever.

Humanitarian and development actors are working to respond to these crises, but the scale of displacement is outpacing solutions for those displaced. With a growing number of displaced people worldwide, their concentration in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and limited options for return, governments and humanitarian actors need to know which interventions produce positive outcomes, for whom, in which contexts, over what period, and at what cost. Rigorous research can help us better understand how to improve the design, reach, targeting, relevance, delivery, and effectiveness of policies and programs responding to displacement. Fortunately, the number of rigorous impact evaluations of programs for displacement-affected populations, which identify the causal effect of a given intervention on specific outcomes, has grown significantly over the past five years, providing decision-makers with more data on which to base policy and practice.

This scoping review provides an overview of the small but growing evidence base from the **44 published impact evaluations** on programs for displaced populations that fit our inclusion criteria.¹ It also highlights areas where further research is needed and, in some cases, other relevant rigorous research. The review is organized as follows:

- **Part I** provides a high-level summary of the evidence
- **Part II** discusses the evidence base in each of the following areas:
 1. Strategies to Improve Household Welfare and Food Security Outcomes
 2. Strategies to Improve Education Outcomes
 3. Strategies to Improve Health Outcomes
 4. Strategies to Improve Livelihoods Outcomes
 5. Strategies to Improve Social Cohesion Outcomes
- **Part III** provides short summaries of all studies included in the review

This review is intended to support policymakers and practitioners in making evidence-based choices about policies and programming for displaced populations. That said, impact evaluations are only one component of a broader evidence base on displacement, which

¹ Papers included in this review use rigorous evaluation methods, and are either published randomized evaluations (RCTs) or regression discontinuity designs (RDDs). More information on our inclusion criteria and search methodology can be found in Annexes I and III. The evaluations included in this review disaggregated impacts for displaced populations.

includes the many other recent sector-specific and/or largely non-experimental reviews, particularly on humanitarian assistance and psychosocial interventions (for example, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab 2022; WFP and World Bank 2022; Schuettler and Caron 2020; Bangpan et al. 2019; Harvey and Pavanello 2018; Baird et al. 2018; Bastagli et al. 2018). Moreover, there is often a broader evidence base with non-displaced populations on relevant questions or interventions in a given context. These studies may be more predictive of outcomes for displaced populations in that context than studies with displaced populations that are facing vastly different circumstances. Accordingly, this review is meant to complement and be considered alongside those other sources of evidence.

Why focus on rigorous impact evaluations?

This review is limited to studies that are randomized evaluations or employ regression discontinuity designs. These rigorous impact evaluation designs can help identify whether programs causally lead to their desired outcomes, which program components are driving impact, and whether programs are cost-effective. They can also:

- *Identify unintended consequences.* For instance, two studies in Palestine found that a three-day writing intervention led to a short spike in depression symptoms immediately after the interventions (Lange-Nielsen et al. 2012 and Punamäki et al. 2014), and may have been too short to affect children’s post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety.
- *Show whether programs are more effective for some groups than others.* Studies from Palestine (Khamis et al. 2004) and Uganda (Bolton et al. 2007) found that different group-based psychosocial programs had limited or negative impacts on male adolescents, despite having positive impacts on other groups, citing adolescent boys’ particular vulnerabilities.
- *Probe who is best placed to deliver programs.* For example, one study found stronger impacts of Narrative Exposure Therapy when using trained lay therapists compared to another study where the same intervention was delivered by non-local graduate students with local interpreters (Neuner et al. 2008; Neuner et al. 2004).
- *Determine if program impacts persist over time.* One study that compared unconditional cash transfers to three sizes of business grants in Somalia among internally displaced entrepreneurs found that the unconditional cash transfers’ effects on various livelihood outcomes did not persist three years after the intervention, while the impacts of the medium and large business grants on the likelihood of owning non-farm businesses did (Abdullahi et al. 2022).
- *Compare the cost-effectiveness of different approaches.* The same study in Somalia found that the impacts of both the medium and large business grants converged after three years, suggesting that the medium-sized business grant was more cost-effective (Abdullahi et al. 2022).

There are many challenges to conducting impact evaluations in displacement-affected settings, including insecurity, population mobility, a need to quickly adapt programming, ethical concerns, and a lack of research infrastructure. More on these challenges can be found in Annex IV. As a result, the impact evaluations in this field are a product of both what kinds of programs *can* be evaluated given these constraints, and what programs *have* been evaluated rigorously. The bulk of the evidence is concentrated in areas where there has historically been sufficient implementer willingness, researcher interest, and funding, such as on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

Evidence Summary



Overall, there is a **small, growing number of rigorous impact evaluations on the efficacy of programming for displaced populations**, though there is still very limited evidence in several sectors and on several topics, such as sexual and gender-based violence, shelter, social cohesion, and decision-making.



44 rigorous impact evaluations of programs for displaced populations, summarized in 48 papers, met our inclusion criteria, across 27 displacement settings.



80 percent of evaluations measured the impacts of programming on health outcomes, of a majority studied the impacts of **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programming**. These evaluations cover many different types of interventions; however, few of these evaluate interventions that are commonly implemented in displacement-affected settings (Elrha 2021).



The research is highly concentrated among **certain demographic groups and contexts**. For instance, half of all the interventions reviewed targeted children and adolescents, very few disaggregated impacts by gender, and only 12 studies evaluated programming for internally displaced persons (IDPs). The places with the most evaluations are Lebanon (eight), Uganda (seven), and Palestine (four).



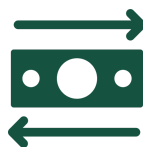
More information is needed both on the **cost-effectiveness** of programs for the displaced, particularly comparing commonly implemented programming modalities to one another, and on the medium- and **long-term impacts** of programming for displaced populations.



It is **difficult to conduct rigorous research** in displacement-affected contexts, given they are characterized by short implementation timelines, insecurity, population mobility, and a lack of research infrastructure. In part due to these challenges, much of the impact evaluation research only measures short-term effects (immediately after the intervention is finished) and/or has very small samples of participants.



Several studies demonstrate that trained, **lay community members can effectively deliver a wide range of MHPSS interventions**, including parenting and social and emotional learning interventions. This is particularly promising given there is often a lack of mental health practitioners and other trained professionals in these settings.



Cash assistance is the most commonly evaluated intervention across all thematic areas, indicating both increased use of cash and growing evidence supporting its benefits in humanitarian and displacement settings. Evaluations suggest that **cash and voucher assistance can have positive impacts on a range of outcomes**, including consumption, overall spending, food security, and nutrition. There is suggestive evidence that cash can improve mental and physical well-being, increase access to clean water and healthcare, reduce negative coping strategies, and lift barriers to school enrollment for displaced children.



Notably, **households tend to spend cash on basic and immediate needs** (food, water, shelter). Only once these needs are met do they spend it in other areas, like livelihoods, secondary healthcare, or less essential goods.

1. Strategies to Improve Household Welfare and Food Security Outcomes

Many displaced households suffer catastrophic losses over the course of their displacement, including loss of homes, properties, assets, and family members, especially breadwinners and heads of households. Displaced households are often caught in poverty traps, limiting their ability to gain and maintain wealth. Further, more than 80 percent of all displaced individuals live in countries and regions with severe food insecurity and malnutrition (Barchfield 2021). Given these realities, international aid organizations and governments have used cash, vouchers, and in-kind transfers as a way to increase households' access to basic food and non-food items and services, and to address food security and nutrition needs.

While many programs exist to improve household welfare for displaced populations, the **eight published evaluations** focus on cash, vouchers, and in-kind transfers, as they are the most commonly used modes of social assistance. The outcomes most frequently evaluated include food and non-food spending and consumption, dietary diversity and food security, and reliance on coping strategies.²

There is a large body of evidence supporting the positive effects of cash transfers on household welfare outcomes in contexts not affected by displacement (for example, Bastagli et al. 2018). The nascent evidence of cash, voucher, and in-kind transfers in displacement-affected contexts is overall positive across a set of outcomes, although it suffers from significant variance in transfer type, conditions, value of the transfer, distribution method, intervention duration, and follow-up data collection, making it difficult to make generalizations about specific transfer types and comparisons between interventions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Overall, cash, voucher, and in-kind transfers can lead to significant improvements in displaced households' consumption and spending.
- Evidence suggests that cash transfers may be more effective at improving dietary diversity compared to vouchers and food transfers. Cash has also been shown to increase non-food expenditure and lower households' reliance on some negative coping mechanisms such as child labor.

² Evidence on the impact of cash on health outcomes, including nutrition, is discussed in Section 3, and evidence on livelihoods outcomes is discussed in Section 4.

- Different transfer modalities have varied impacts across outcomes and contexts. Low-income settings like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia face particular challenges—such as limited local market capacity, lack of access to a diverse set of food and non-food items, and security concerns—which may mean that cash is less effective than other modalities or less effective than it might be in middle-income settings, like Lebanon or Ecuador.

1.1 Dietary Diversity

Overall, nascent evidence suggests the impact of cash, vouchers, and in-kind transfers on household dietary diversity for displaced populations is mixed, with most studies suggesting that economic transfers alone may not have significant or lasting positive effects on various metrics of dietary diversity among displaced households.

Some studies highlight that the lack of impact on dietary diversity could mean the additional income is being used to increase the amount of food consumed—given the high food insecurity among participants—rather than improve dietary diversity. Additionally, it is possible that recipients might not be aware of the nutritional composition of different food groups or that those food groups are not commonly available to them. There is suggestive evidence that economic transfers can impact certain dietary diversity outcomes when implemented alongside nutrition education training (Hidrobo et al. 2014). Given the only study reporting positive results was conducted in Ecuador, more research may also be needed on whether cash tends to have greater impacts on dietary diversity in countries with a higher average income, where diverse foods may be more readily available.

In the DRC, two separate studies found that restricted food vouchers and vouchers for essential household items did not increase dietary diversity among severely food-insecure IDPs in the medium- or long-term (Aker 2017; Quattrochi et al. 2022). Quattrochi (2022) found positive effects on dietary diversity six weeks after their voucher program, but the effects did not persist 12 months after the intervention. In a comparable setting with IDPs in Somalia, researchers who studied the relative impacts of unconditional cash transfers and small, medium, and large business grants did not find significant impacts or differences on dietary diversity (Abdullahi et al. 2022; Hassan, Mutiso, and Sulaiman 2018).

Two studies that probed the impacts of medium and large cash transfers alongside a World Food Programme (WFP) food voucher program for Syrian refugees in Lebanon did not find that cash had significant impacts on dietary diversity among recipient households (Battistin 2016; Salti et al. 2022). That said, Salti et al. (2022) found that cash transfers had a small impact on food consumption among households that received regular transfers for a long period (between 16 and 22 months).

Only one study—which evaluated the effects of cash, vouchers, and food transfers among Colombian refugees and poor hosts in Ecuador—found that all three transfer modalities had significant positive impacts on dietary diversity (Hidrobo et al. 2014). Researchers found food vouchers to be the most effective transfer modality for increasing dietary diversity (16 percent increase) compared to cash and food transfers (11 percent and 12 percent increases, respectively). Importantly, all transfer modalities were conditional on attendance at monthly nutrition sensitization programs, which could have driven their impact on dietary diversity.

1.2 Caloric Intake

While dietary diversity is important, increasing the caloric intake of food-insecure, displaced populations is also a matter of concern. Two studies found positive impacts of cash, food, and voucher transfers on household caloric intake, with significant differences across transfer modalities (Hidrobo et al. 2014; Salti et al. 2022). Hidrobo et al. (2014) found vouchers and food transfers produced greater increases in caloric intake (6 percent and 9 percent, respectively) compared to cash recipients, mainly due to larger increases in consumption of cereals (41 percent of households' caloric intake).

1.3 Coping Strategies

Another goal of programming is the prevention and reduction of negative coping strategies, such as reduction and restriction of meals and meal size, sending children to eat at another household, borrowing, selling assets, child labor, child marriage, and dangerous or hazardous work. Some qualitative work suggests evidence that displaced households tend to deploy or rely on various coping strategies to ensure their basic food needs are met (e.g. UNHCR 2015). Given these diverse types of coping strategies, researchers use various ways to measure households' reliance on them. With the exception of child labor incidence, no two studies reported on the same coping mechanisms, making it difficult to draw specific insights and compare across modalities.

Overall, the evidence on the impact of cash on coping strategies is mixed and limited to a few studies. Both Aker (2013) and Lehman and Masterson (2014) found that cash can lower the chance of households engaging in child labor. Aker (2013) found that cash transfers reduced the frequency of removing children from schools and the incidence of early marriage, while Lehman and Masterson (2014) found that cash transfers reduced the frequency that households reduced their meals and meal size, as well as reduced the restriction of adults' food consumption to children's advantage. Battistin (2016) reported that cash recipients resorted less to borrowing food and sending household members to eat elsewhere, but found no significant impacts on child labor. Additional studies suggest that individual effects may be context-

measure-, and intervention-specific, as well as short-lived, as they do not find significant impacts 12-22 months after the transfers (Battistin 2016; Salti et al. 2022; Özler et al. 2021).

1.4 Non-Food Expenditure

Several studies measure a diverse set of outcomes to study cash’s impact on non-food expenditure. Overall, the evidence suggests that cash can increase households' spending on gas, both cooking (Battistin 2016; Salti et al. 2022) and heating (Lehman and Masterson 2014), although only the impacts on cooking gas were found to be significant in the long-term (Salti et al. 2022). Cash transfers have also been found to increase spending on school-related expenses (Lehman and Masterson 2014; Salti et al. 2022; de Hoop et al. 2019; Hidrobo et al. 2014). The evidence on the use of cash for other expenses and services, such as housing and shelter, paying down debt, health services, and transportation, is minimal, which may in part be due to challenges in measuring the impacts of cash on any one category of expenses.

Evidence on the relative effectiveness of cash vs. vouchers among food-insecure IDPs in the DRC found that households that received cash were more likely to pay for school fees, buy medicine, reimburse debts, and purchase livestock, clothing, and housing materials compared to households that received vouchers (Aker 2017).

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
Cash-Like Vouchers Improve Psychological Well-Being of Vulnerable and Displaced Persons Fleeing Armed Conflict (2022)	Quattrochi et al.	DRC (Vulnerable IDPs and local hosts in 25 villages)	RCT	p. 62
Cash, Food, or Vouchers? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Northern Ecuador (2014)	Hidrobo et al.	Ecuador (Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorian households in urban settings)	RCT	p. 66
Comparing Cash and Voucher Transfers in a Humanitarian Context: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo (2017)	Aker	DRC (IDPs in an informal camp)	RCT	p. 64

Emergency Economies: The Impact of Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2014)	Lehman and Masterson	Lebanon (Severely food-insecure Syrian refugee and host households in an urban setting)	RDD	p. 65
Impact Evaluation of the Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme (2016)	Battistin	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 71
Supporting Micro-enterprise in Humanitarian Programming: Impact Evaluation of Business Grants vs. Unconditional Cash Transfer (2022)	Abdullahi et al.	Somalia (Somali IDPs in IDP camps)	RCT	p. 81
More Cash, Bigger Impacts? A Field Experiment of Cash Transfers in Somalia (2018)	Hassan et al.			
No Lost Generation: Supporting the School Participation of Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon (2019)	de Hoop et al.	Lebanon (Vulnerable Syrian refugee households with children ages 5-14 in a rural setting)	RDD	p. 83
The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Evidence from a Multidimensional Regression Discontinuity Design (2022)	Salti et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 87

2. Strategies to Improve Education Outcomes

Displaced children often face many barriers to school access, including limited school availability, political limitations on access to national education systems, poor transportation, lack of school supplies, and inadequate money for school fees, among others. Additionally, for those who do have access to school, attending school does not guarantee learning. Schools are often overcrowded and under-resourced, instruction might be delivered in an unfamiliar language, and children's ability to meaningfully engage can be affected by behavioral and mental health issues born from their displacement experiences as well as subsequent discrimination and exclusion.

In the previous section, we highlighted suggestive evidence that, on average, households that receive unconditional cash transfers spend more on school-related expenses than those that do not receive cash transfers. In this section, we dive deeper into various interventions that measure school participation (i.e. enrollment, attendance, drop-out rate, and attainment) and learning outcomes (i.e. scores on cognitive, language, and mathematics tests) for school-age, displaced children.

The **eight studies that met our inclusion criteria** probe interventions that aim to incentivize students to enroll and attend school, and interventions that aim to improve the quality of education and learning environment in schools for displaced children. Two studies evaluated the impact of labeled cash and food for education transfers on two main indicators of school access: school enrollment and attendance (de Hoop et al. 2019; Alderman et al. 2012). Two additional studies evaluated the impacts of unconditional cash transfers on school enrollment. Three studies evaluated the relative impact of literacy and numeracy interventions provided via informal tutoring programs on various indicators for children's academic, social, and emotional learning (Tubbs Dolan et al. 2021; Brown et al. 2022; Kim et al. 2023). Finally, one study evaluated the impacts of a perspective-taking social cohesion intervention on host language acquisition (Alan et al. 2021).

This section is divided into two parts. Section 2.1 looks at interventions that aim to improve school participation (access, enrollment, and attendance), while Section 2.2 examines interventions aimed at improving learning and academic outcomes for displaced children. Studies covering the nutritional effects of school feeding interventions are discussed in section 3.2 on Nutrition, and violence in school settings is discussed in section 3.5 on Violence Prevention.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Evidence suggests that cash transfers can have small positive effects on school enrollment among displaced children.
- There are few evaluations of programs that impact learning outcomes or socio-emotional outcomes for displaced children, though emerging evidence suggests that socio-emotional learning and tutoring programs may have impacts on basic literacy and numeracy skills.

2.1 School Participation

Cash Interventions

Overall, most studies suggest that unconditional cash transfers can have small positive impacts on school enrollment (Salti et al. 2022; Lehmann and Masterson 2014; Hassan, Mutisao, and Sulaiman 2018). This is consistent with broader findings from LMICs that cash transfers improve school participation (Zie 2020). These studies found that cash can lift the barriers to school enrollment by providing households with the means to cover school-related costs, such as clothing, transportation, supplies, and enrollment fees. Although the effects observed are only reported among primary-aged children, these studies offer promising starting points for future research.

Another study suggests that children whose households received cash were not more likely to be enrolled in school, but those who were already enrolled and received the cash transfer attended more days of school compared to those who did not receive cash (de Hoop et al. 2019).³ This suggests that there may be other factors keeping children from attending school, in addition to the monetary barriers to participation. What is more, results from the broader literature on cash transfers suggest that improving participation may not necessarily translate into improved learning outcomes (for example, De Walque and Mavridis 2022).

There is little evidence on the impacts of conditional cash transfers on the school participation of displaced children, although such transfers have been widely used to facilitate educational enrollment and regular school attendance in LMICs broadly. In exchange for their children's regular attendance (usually above 80 percent), households receive a payment. While no studies that met our inclusion criteria evaluated the impact of conditional cash transfers on displaced children's school participation, the broader literature suggests that conditional cash transfers have led to significant increases in school attendance, with some studies suggesting that effects

³ A quasi-experimental study of a cash transfer intervention in Turkey, which did not meet our criteria for inclusion, found that the impacts on school attendance were only significant among the most vulnerable households that received the cash transfer (Ozler et al. 2021).

are the highest among disadvantaged groups (Bastagli et al. 2018, Bastagli et al. 2016).⁴ This could be a promising avenue for future research in displacement-affected contexts.

School Feeding Interventions

Although there is limited evidence of school feeding programs in displacement-affected settings, evidence from LMICs suggests that these programs have the potential to improve overall schooling (WFP 2021). There is suggestive evidence that similar interventions can positively impact school attendance and enrollment among displaced children. Alderman et al. (2012) is the only identified study that rigorously evaluated the impact of school feeding programs for displaced populations. In Uganda, the researchers found that while school meals were more effective at increasing the likelihood that primary-age children ages 6-13 enrolled in school, both at-school meals and take-home rations increased the likelihood that adolescents ages 10-17 attended more classes.⁵

2.2 Academic and Learning Outcomes

School Feeding Interventions

Evidence from Alderman et al.'s (2012) study of a school feeding program, mentioned above, suggests that school feeding may impact learning outcomes by increasing enrollment and attendance. It found that both school meals and take-home rations improved the math test scores of children aged 11-14, although no impact was found on literacy scores. Future studies could measure the impacts of such programs on total time in the classroom or students' ability to concentrate to further explore the mechanisms through which school feeding programs can improve academic and learning outcomes.

Social-emotional Learning and Tutoring Programs

Within the last decade, displacement actors have emphasized the need to improve the environment in which students learn and invest in the social and emotional skills children need to succeed in the classroom and beyond. Motivated by the large evidence base on social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions and both academic learning and socioemotional skills in high-income countries, a set of randomized evaluations tested the effectiveness of various iterations of an International Rescue Committee-implemented tutoring program among displacement-affected children in Lebanon and Niger.

⁴ A quasi-experimental study that did not meet our inclusion criteria found that a conditional cash transfer, which included regular child protection visits, increased school attendance among refugee children in Turkey (Ring et al. 2020).

⁵ Additionally, one quasi-experimental study that did not meet our inclusion criteria from a school feeding program in Mali found small positive impacts on school attendance among refugee children compared to general food distribution (Aurino et al. 2018).

Three published randomized evaluations studied the impacts of providing safe and supportive learning environments (tutoring programs) either separately or together with skill-targeted SEL activities (mindfulness and brain games) on children’s academic and learning outcomes among displaced children in Lebanon and Niger (Tubbs Dolan et al. 2021; Brown et al. 2022; Kim et al. 2023). Children who had access to either of these interventions had small but significant improvements in basic literacy and numeracy skills compared to children who only had access to public school (Tubbs Dolan et al. 2021; Brown et al. 2022; Kim et al. 2023). The studies, however, did not find that the SEL activities impacted social and emotional outcomes, or that there was an added benefit of the SEL activities above the tutoring programs.

That said, there is a [growing body of evidence](#) looking to evaluate similar interventions based on SEL best practices on the learning outcomes of displaced children. This includes upcoming results from [several coordinated evaluations](#) on the impacts of children’s mass media and SEL in Lebanon and Jordan, which suggest that a Sesame Workshop and International Rescue Committee-developed program had significant impacts on children’s literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional outcomes.

Social Cohesion Interventions

One study suggests that fostering social cohesion between displaced and host children in mixed schools may have the added benefit of augmenting language learning outcomes. In Turkey, researchers studied the impacts of a perspective-taking curriculum delivered to elementary school students in classrooms that included both Syrian refugee children and Turkish hosts. The intervention, which included interactive activities that encouraged students to consider others’ perspectives, improved refugee children’s Turkish language skills (Alan et al. 2021).

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
Building Social Cohesion in Ethnically Mixed Schools: An Intervention on Perspective Taking (2021)	Alan et al.	Turkey (Syrian refugee and Turkish host children in a school setting)	RCT	p. 60

Emergency Economies: The Impact of Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2014)	Lehman and Masterson	Lebanon (Severely food-insecure Syrian refugee and host households in an urban setting)	RDD	p. 65
Remedial Programming and Skill-Targeted SEL in Low-Income and Crisis-Affected Contexts: Experimental Evidence From Niger (2022)	Brown et al.	Niger (Internally displaced Nigerien and refugee Nigerian children)	RCT	p. 78
Supporting Micro-enterprise in Humanitarian Programming: Impact Evaluation of Business Grants vs. Unconditional Cash Transfer (2022)	Abdullahi et al.	Somalia (Somali IDPs in IDP camps)	RCT	p. 81
More Cash, Bigger Impacts? A Field Experiment of Cash Transfers in Somalia (2018)	Hassan et al.			
Supporting Syrian Refugee Children's Academic and Social-Emotional Learning in National Education Systems: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial of Nonformal Remedial Support and Mindfulness Programs in Lebanon (2021)	Tubbs Dolan et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee children ages 5-15)	RCT	p. 82
No Lost Generation: Supporting the School Participation of Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon (2019)	de Hoop et al.	Lebanon (Vulnerable Syrian refugee households with children ages 5-14 in a rural setting)	RDD	p. 83

Testing the Impact of a Skill-Targeted Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum and Its Variation by Pre- and Post Migration Conflict Experiences: A Cluster Randomized Trial With Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon (2023)	Kim et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee children ages 5-16)	RCT	p. 84
The Impact of Food for Education Programs on School Participation in Northern Uganda (2012)	Alderman et al.	Uganda (Internally displaced households with children aged 6-17 in rural camp settings)	RCT	p. 79

3. Strategies to Improve Health Outcomes

It can be very challenging to deliver health, water, and sanitation services to displaced populations. Refugees and IDPs tend to live in densely populated areas where access to water, sanitation, and hygiene is poor and health resources are limited. In addition to these challenges, displaced populations have complex psychosocial needs born from experiences before, during, and after displacement. This review identifies **36 studies** that evaluated the impacts of various interventions on health outcomes, including disease incidence, nutrition, psychological symptoms and mental health (PTSD, anxiety, depression), children’s social and emotional development, children’s anthropometric measures, health expenses, and general measures of well-being.

Due to the wide variety of health topics and outcomes these studies address, this section is divided into five subsections.

- Disease prevention and access to clean water
- Nutrition
- Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), including a subsection that reviews studies that explore caregiver and family-focused interventions and a subsection on the impacts of cash-based interventions on mental health
- Violence prevention
- Uptake of health services

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Cash transfer programs have been found to have impacts on several health-related outcomes, including access to clean water, micronutrient intake, psychosocial well-being and mental health, health-related expenses, and access to healthcare.
- Several studies demonstrate that trained, lay community members can effectively deliver a wide range of MHPSS interventions, including parenting and social and emotional learning interventions. This is particularly promising given there is often a lack of mental health practitioners and other trained professionals in these settings.
- While a majority of the included studies focus on MHPSS, few evaluate interventions that are commonly implemented by organizations in displacement-affected settings.
- There is little rigorous evidence on several important health-related topics, including WASH and nutrition.

3.1 Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water

There are few high-quality evaluations on the delivery and effectiveness of WASH interventions for displaced populations, or in fragile or humanitarian contexts generally (Doocy et al. 2022). The evidence that exists only covers water-related interventions that focus on improving access to safe drinking water through the provision of household water treatments and cash. This evidence is comprised of only **two randomized evaluations** of preventative water treatments (improved water storage and chemical disinfection), which were found to reduce the incidence and prevalence of waterborne diseases among children under five in refugee camps in Malawi and Liberia (Roberts et al. 2001; Doocy and Burnham 2006).

That said, there is some broader evidence on the impacts of cash on access to clean water, though not on disease outcomes. Evidence from **three evaluations** in Lebanon found that unconditional cash transfers can increase household water expenditure and access. In studies by Battistin (2016) and Lehman and Masterson (2014), cash recipients reported increased overall monthly expenses, which included water. Similarly, Salti et al. (2022) found that households that received cash reported having significantly better access to safe drinking water relative to comparison households.

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
Emergency Economies: The Impact of Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2014)	Lehman and Masterson	Lebanon (Severely food-insecure Syrian refugee and host households in an urban setting)	RDD	p. 65
Impact Evaluation of the Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme (2016)	Battistin	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 71
Keeping Clean Water Clean in a Malawi Refugee Camp: A Randomized Intervention Trial (2001)	Roberts et al.	Malawi (Mozambican refugee households in camp setting)	RCT	p. 73

Point-of-Use Water Treatment and Diarrhea Reduction in the Emergency Context: an Effectiveness Trial in Liberia (2006)	Doocy and Burnham	Liberia (IDP households with a child under 5 in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 75
The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Evidence from a Multidimensional Regression Discontinuity Design (2022)	Salti et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 87

3.2 Nutrition

The majority of the chronically food insecure, and many of the malnourished, live in countries affected by both insecurity and conflict (FAO 2021). While there is a growing evidence base on nutrition in humanitarian settings, few evaluations with displaced populations have focused on nutrition outcomes. **Two evaluations** met our inclusion criteria, one of a nutrition-specific program, or a program intended to treat malnutrition, and one of a nutrition-sensitive program, or a program intended to prevent malnutrition.

One study looked at the impact of a school feeding program (nutrition-specific) on anemia among internally displaced adolescent girls in Uganda. In this study, both take-home rations and at-school meals led to a significant decrease in anemia prevalence (Adelman et al. 2019). Both interventions also had unintended positive impacts on participant household members' health and nutrition outcomes, including the mothers and younger siblings of the adolescent girls.

In Lebanon, an unconditional cash transfer program (nutrition-sensitive) was found to significantly improve households' micronutrient and protein intake above and beyond the food voucher transfer (Salti et al. 2022). Researchers found that the discontinuation of cash transfers resulted in significantly higher consumption of cheap energy and protein sources. This is in line with a growing body of literature from humanitarian settings suggesting that unconditional cash transfers, at times coupled with nutrition training, have the potential to positively impact nutrition outcomes (WFP and World Bank 2022).

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
School Feeding Reduces Anemia Prevalence in Adolescent Girls and Other Vulnerable Household Members in a Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial in Uganda (2019)	Adelman et al.	Uganda (Internally displaced households with children aged 6-17 in rural camp settings)	RCT	p. 79
The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Evidence from a Multidimensional Regression Discontinuity Design (2022)	Salti et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 87

3.3 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

MHPSS interventions draw on psychological techniques to address the effects of exposure to violence and displacement—manifested as PTSD, depression, anxiety, grief symptoms, and social and emotional problems—which are often prevalent among displaced populations. This section reviews evidence from **19 randomized evaluations of psychosocial programs**, which constitute a significant portion of the existing literature on displacement, and **five additional evaluations of cash-based interventions** that report impacts on mental health. The psychosocial programs evaluated include:

- Specialized interventions, which are delivered by trained mental health specialists
- Structured individual and group psychosocial therapies
- Skills- and activity-based interventions
- Flexible diagnostic approaches
- Caregiver and family-focused interventions

The mechanisms through which the psychosocial interventions aimed to improve mental health outcomes varied, with some focusing primarily on verbal processing of past events (often related to trauma, violence, or torture), some using a variety of skills- and activity-based strategies to help individuals cope with current stressors, and others combining both. Multi-pronged interventions are becoming more common and aim to concurrently address a number of issues in the individual’s environment and social networks, as well as past experiences.

While it is hard to generalize findings from this evidence base due to the focus and design of the studies (see box below), overall one key finding emerges: evidence suggests that training lay community members to deliver interventions has been effective across settings, program types, and population groups. This finding is particularly promising given there is often a lack of doctors, nurses, mental health practitioners, and other trained professionals to deliver MHPSS interventions in many displacement-affected settings.

A word of caution

Overall, despite the number of MHPSS studies, the evidence base is fractured and limited. The evidence base for any intervention type is small and limited to one to three studies, limiting our ability to generalize or draw out lessons. Additionally, particular vulnerabilities may lead to different outcomes for specific demographic groups, such as adolescent boys, which are underexplored in the literature. It would be beneficial for future studies to disaggregate impact by gender, age, and exposure to violence to expand the evidence in this area. This is consistent with broader findings from the humanitarian evidence base (Haroz et al. 2020, Elrha 2021).

Our ability to generalize is also limited by several common design features of the MHPSS literature with displaced populations. These include small sample sizes, differential levels of attrition between intervention and comparison groups, different metrics for mental health outcomes, limited studies that tested the effectiveness of different types of therapy, lack of a pure comparison group, and long-term follow-up. Additionally, the wait-list comparison design used by many of the studies makes it difficult to evaluate whether the effects are sustained in the medium- and long-term. Finally, some of these studies were not designed to disentangle whether impacts are driven by the therapy itself or by the non-therapeutic parts of the intervention, such as the social components (i.e. meeting with peers) or getting regular attention and support from the counselor.

Specialized Treatment Approaches

Specialized treatments are delivered by trained mental health specialists, access to which is often limited in displacement-affected settings. As a result, only one specialized treatment approach, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), was evaluated with a displaced population (Acarturk et al. 2016).⁶ While EMDR was found to significantly reduce participants' PTSD and depression symptoms among Syrian refugees on the Turkey-Syrian border, results were only measured shortly after the intervention ended. Additionally, specialized interventions like EMDR are costly to implement and replicate as they require highly trained mental health professionals.

⁶ According to the American Psychological Association, EMDR incorporates the use of eye movements and other forms of rhythmic left-right (bilateral) stimulation (e.g. tones or taps). While clients briefly focus on the trauma memory and simultaneously experience bilateral stimulation, the vividness and emotion of the memory are reduced.

Community-based Treatment Approaches

Given the large gap between the significant numbers of individuals in need of psychosocial assistance and the limited number of qualified mental health professionals in resource-constrained settings, implementers and researchers have developed and tested the effectiveness of community-based treatment approaches. These approaches require treatments to be culturally appropriate and/or locally adapted. They must be short, target the effects of multiple traumatic stressors, and be sufficiently easy to learn so that they can be delivered by lay community members with little training in mental health or counseling. This task-shifting approach, which builds the capacity of lay providers to administer community-based programs, is employed in the remainder of the evaluated psychosocial interventions.

Narrative-based Interventions

Narrative approaches and therapies, particularly Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) and Writing for Recovery, provide evidence for one avenue for treating PTSD and other trauma symptoms among displaced populations. Narrative-based interventions focus on helping children process their thoughts about previous traumatic experiences by writing narratives. However, these approaches need to be implemented with caution and ought to consider what the minimum duration of the program should be in order to meet the needs of the target population, as evidence suggests these interventions may exacerbate trauma symptoms and other mental health conditions among children and adolescents in the short-term.

Three randomized evaluations of NET—all from Northern Uganda—found positive long-term effects (12 months post-intervention) on trauma-related symptoms among adults and adolescents (Neuner et al. 2004; Neuner et al. 2008; Ertl et al. 2011). All three studies compared NET to other counseling approaches, and found that NET was more effective at decreasing the prevalence of clinical PTSD symptoms among refugee adults (Neuner et al. 2004; Neuner et al. 2008), and improving functional impairment among displaced adolescents (Ertl et al. 2011).

Two randomized evaluations measured the impact of Writing for Recovery, a short-structured expressive writing intervention with elements of cognitive reframing in which adolescents write about emotional experiences to normalize distressing reactions. While Kalantari et al. (2012) found this therapy to reduce some indicators of traumatic grief and distress among Afghan refugee students, Lange-Nielsen et al. (2012) found no effect on Palestinian refugee students' PTSD, depression, and anxiety symptoms. Additionally, both studies reported a short spike in participants' PTSD and/or depression symptoms post-intervention, further emphasizing the need for care when implementing these interventions.

Skills- and Activity-based Psychosocial Interventions

Skills- and activity-based strategies, most often targeted at children and adolescents in school settings, focus on strengthening children’s resilience through the learning and application of coping skills, practices (i.e. mindfulness, grounding, breathing exercises), and activities to manage current stressors and symptoms. There is evidence to suggest that future interventions should consider specific vulnerabilities (i.e. gender, age, and exposure to violence) in their design and implementation.

One such intervention is Teaching Recovery Techniques, which consists of weekly group psychoeducation sessions delivered by trained school counselors. Evidence from two randomized evaluations with displaced Palestinians suggests that delivery mechanisms and/or the number of delivered sessions may impact program effectiveness. While Barron et al. (2013) found that this short intervention improved refugee students’ mental health outcomes when implemented within the school curriculum over five sessions, Punamäki et al. (2014) found that four extracurricular sessions had null impacts on various mental health outcomes.

There is suggestive positive evidence in support of other structured psychosocial skills- and activity-based interventions delivered in groups to children and adolescents. Khamis et al. (2004) found that a highly structured expressive-behavioral group activity intervention improved Palestinian children’s and female adolescents’ perceived emotional outcomes. Panter-Brick et al. (2018) likewise found that an activity-based psychosocial intervention had positive outcomes related to emotional well-being among Syrian refugee adolescents in Jordan. Notably, the study found greater positive impacts for adolescents with higher levels of trauma exposure and childhood adversity. Finally, Bolton et al. (2007) found an interpersonal skills therapy group to be effective at decreasing depression symptoms among female internally displaced adolescents in Uganda. Of these three studies, however, one found limited impacts on depression among male adolescents (Bolton et al. 2007), and one found limited or negative impacts on a range of psychological outcomes for male adolescents (Khamis et al. 2004), which authors suggest highlights adolescent boys’ particular vulnerabilities in such contexts.

Transdiagnostic Approaches

Randomized evaluations in Thailand, Jordan, and Uganda examined the impacts of three innovative transdiagnostic interventions on displaced populations’ mental health outcomes. Transdiagnostic approaches combine aspects of disorder-specific interventions to address signs and symptoms of various mental health disorders at the same time. While we cannot compare the relative effectiveness of these interventions given their unique approaches, all three evaluations reported some positive mental health outcomes among participants. Results also suggest that these flexible approaches can be delivered by lay, trained community counselors in both low- and middle-income displacement settings.

Bolton et al. (2014) found that the Common Elements Treatment Approach in Thailand was successful at reducing PTSD, depression, and anxiety symptoms, as well as improving functional impairment among adult Burmese refugee participants compared to those in the comparison group. Tol et al. (2020) found that Sudanese female refugees who received the Self-Help Plus program in Uganda reported greater reductions in psychological distress, PTSD, depression, and anger, and had improved functional impairment compared to enhanced usual care. Finally, Bryant et al. (2022) found that the group Problem Management Plus program reduced depression scores, disability, severity of personally identified problems, and inconsistent disciplinary parenting compared to enhanced usual care among Syrian refugees in Jordan. However, it was not found to have an impact on PTSD, anxiety, or other mental health outcomes.

Caregiver and Family-focused Interventions

Displacement-affected settings can be especially challenging for young children and their parents. Exposure to past trauma, violence, and ongoing stressors can manifest into chronically heightened caregiver stress, which can result in compromised parenting, leading to adverse impacts on children's well-being (Betancourt et al. 2013). Caregiver and family-focused interventions thus share three main goals: improving caregivers' coping skills and non-violent behavior management strategies, building caregivers' knowledge of positive parenting and discipline strategies, and strengthening positive parent-child relationships, including by increasing responsive caregiving.

There is limited experimental evidence on caregiver interventions in displacement-affected settings. This review identifies five randomized studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Thailand, and Bangladesh, which generally found caregiver-focused strategies effective at improving mental health outcomes and some disciplinary practices for parents, with potential avenues for improving social-emotional outcomes for their children. Three of these studies focused on the mother-child relationship (Dybdahl 2001; Islam et al. 2022; Ponguta et al. 2019), while the remaining two targeted both parents in the intervention (Miller et al. 2020, Annan et al. 2017). Outcomes of interest include maternal and child mental health and development, and parenting strategies.

There is a growing body of evidence that examines the intergenerational relationship of mental health between caregivers and children in displacement-affected contexts. In a recent IPA review, Kabay and Smith (2022) found that parenting programs in LMICs that include explicit content on responsive care can lead to significantly improved outcomes for children aged 0-3. A recently published randomized evaluation of a mother-child intervention with explicit content on responsive care for the first two years of the infant's life found positive impacts on the mother's mental health and well-being as well as children's development and social-emotional outcomes (Islam et al. 2022). Importantly, this study found that increased daily time mothers spent with their children was a plausible mechanism through which children's health outcomes improved.

The evidence on the impacts of parenting interventions on young children (ages 2-7) suggests that improved outcomes for parents may not always translate to improved outcomes for children. A randomized evaluation found that a psychosocial intervention improved mothers' trauma symptoms and children's physical and cognitive development outcomes, with no impact on children's mental health outcomes or the mother's overall well-being (Dybdahl 2001). Two randomized evaluations in Lebanon found that parenting programs have the potential to decrease harsh parenting and lower caregiver stress, but these improvements do not translate into better well-being and social-emotional development outcomes for children (Ponguta et al. 2019; Miller et al. 2020).

That said, one study found that a parenting intervention had impacts on the mental health of older children. A parenting and family skills program among displaced Burmese families in Thailand improved several measures of mental health for children aged 7 to 15 years old, including reducing children's externalizing behavior (aggressive behavior, rule-breaking behavior, and social problems) and improving child attention.

Cash-Based Interventions

A nascent and growing area of research suggests that cash-based interventions can affect mental health outcomes for displaced adults and children. The provision of unconditional economic transfers (both cash and in-kind) has been shown to increase households' purchasing power, food and non-food consumption, and diversified spending (Aker 2013; Hidrobo et al. 2014; Battistin 2016; Lehman and Masterson 2014; Salti et al. 2022). Through these channels, economic transfers have the potential to lessen daily stressors related to chronic poverty and uncertainty about the future and improve food security, potentially contributing to improvements in mental and physical health.

Five of the eleven evaluations of cash transfers and vouchers reported impacts on mental health outcomes for displaced populations (Salti et al. 2022; Battistin 2016; de Hoop et al. 2019; Quattrochi et al. 2022; Hussam et al. 2022). In general, these studies found positive evidence that both cash and in-kind transfers can play an important role in improving some mental health outcomes for adults in displacement-affected settings. Salti et al. (2022) and Battistin (2016) found that Syrian refugee households' self-reported psychosocial well-being was positively impacted by unconditional cash transfers, which were provided on top of food vouchers. In particular, Salti et al. (2022) found that the higher the amount and longer the duration of the transfer, the greater the impacts. Alternatively, a recent evaluation of the relative impact of a cash-for-work program compared to cash alone found that the psychosocial impact of cash was small compared to wage employment, especially for men (Hussam et al. 2022). These results reinforce the importance of comparing intervention types, and disaggregating impacts by intervention duration and gender, to capture crucial differences.

The evidence on whether vouchers impact mental health outcomes is limited to one randomized evaluation from the DRC. Quattrochi et al. (2020) found that households that received vouchers for non-food items reported positive long-term (12 months post-intervention) impacts on measures of well-being and life satisfaction compared to comparison households. Researchers found no impacts on children’s physical health or individuals’ anxiety or depression scores.

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
<i>Specialized treatment approaches</i>				
The Efficacy of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Depression among Syrian Refugees: Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial (2016)	Acarturk et al.	Turkey (Syrian adult refugees in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 85
<i>Narrative-based interventions</i>				
A Comparison of Narrative Exposure Therapy, Supportive Counseling, and Psychoeducation for Treating Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in an African Refugee Settlement (2004)	Neuner et al.	Uganda (Sudanese refugees in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 58
Community-Implemented Trauma Therapy for Former Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2011)	Ertl et al.	Uganda (displaced former child soldiers living in IDP camps)	RCT	p. 63
Efficacy of Writing for Recovery on Traumatic Grief Symptoms of Afghani Refugee Bereaved Adolescents (2012)	Kalantari et al.	Iran (Afghan refugee adolescents in a school setting)	RCT	p. 69
Short-Term Effects of a Writing Intervention Among Adolescents in Gaza (2012)	Lange-Nielsen et al.	Palestine (Adolescent refugee students ages 12-18 in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 80

Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by Trained Lay Counselors in an African Refugee Settlement: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2008)	Neuner et al.	Uganda (Rwandan and Somalian refugees in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 89
<i>Skills- and activity-based psychosocial interventions</i>				
Insecurity, Distress and Mental Health: Experimental and Randomized Controlled Trials of a Psychosocial Intervention for Youth Affected by the Syrian Crisis (2018)	Panter-Brick et al.	Jordan (Syrian refugee and Jordanian adolescents in an urban setting)	RCT	p. 72
Interventions for Depression Symptoms among Adolescent Survivors of War and Displacement in Northern Uganda: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2007)	Bolton et al.	Uganda (Internally displaced adolescents ages 14-17 in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 73
The Impact of the Classroom/Community/Camp-Based Intervention (CBI) Program on Palestinian Children (2004)	Khamis et al.	Palestine (Palestinian children and adolescents ages 6-16)	RCT	p. 87
Psychosocial Interventions and Emotion Regulation among War-Affected Children (2014)	Punamaki et al.	Palestine (War-affected Palestinian students ages 10-13)	RCT	p. 77
Intervention Effectiveness among War-Affected Children: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial on Improving Mental Health (2012)	Qouta et al.			
Randomized Control Trial of a CBT Trauma Recovery Program in Palestinian Schools (2013)	Barron et al.	Palestine (Palestinian children ages 11-14)	RCT	p. 78

<i>Transdiagnostic approaches</i>				
A Transdiagnostic Community-Based Mental Health Treatment for Comorbid Disorders: Development and Outcomes of a Randomized Controlled Trial among Burmese Refugees in Thailand (2014)	Bolton et al.	Thailand (Burmese adult refugees)	RCT	p. 58
Effectiveness of a Brief Group Behavioral Intervention for Common Mental Disorders in Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2022)	Bryant et al.	Jordan (Syrian adult refugees with children ages 10-16 in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 67
Guided Self-Help to Reduce Psychological Distress in South Sudanese Female Refugees in Uganda: A Cluster Randomized Trial (2020)	Tol et al.	Uganda (Sudanese female refugees in Rhino camp)	RCT	p. 71
<i>Caregiver and family-focused interventions</i>				
Children and Mothers in War: An Outcome Study of a Psychosocial Intervention Program (2001)	Dybdahl	Bosnia and Herzegovina (IDP mother-child dyads in camp and urban settings)	RCT	p. 63
Effects of the Mother-Child Education Program on Parenting Stress and Disciplinary Practices Among Refugee and Other Marginalized Communities in Lebanon: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial (2019)	Ponguta et al.	Lebanon (Palestinian, Syrian, and other refugee households with at least one child in urban settings)	RCT	p. 68
Forced Displacement, Mental Health, and Child Development: Evidence from the Rohingya Refugees (2022)	Islam et al.	Bangladesh (Rohingya refugee women and children dyads in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 70

Improving Mental Health Outcomes of Burmese Migrant and Displaced Children in Thailand: a Community-Based Randomized Controlled Trial of a Parenting and Family Skills Intervention (2017)	Annan et al.	Thailand (Burmese refugee households with children ages 8-12)	RCT	p. 86
Supporting Syrian Families Displaced by Armed Conflict: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial of the Caregiver Support Intervention (2020)	Miller et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee and host families with at least one child)	RCT	p. 81
<i>The intersection of cash-based interventions and mental health</i>				
Cash-Like Vouchers Improve Psychological Well-Being of Vulnerable and Displaced Persons Fleeing Armed Conflict (2022)	Quattrochi et al.	DRC (Vulnerable IDPs and local hosts in 25 villages)	RCT	p. 62
Impact Evaluation of the Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme (2016)	Battistin	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 71
No Lost Generation: Supporting the School Participation of Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon (2019)	de Hoop et al.	Lebanon (Vulnerable Syrian refugee households with children ages 5-14 in a rural setting)	RDD	p. 83
The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Evidence from a Multidimensional Regression Discontinuity Design (2022)	Salti et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 87
The Psychosocial Value of Employment: Evidence from a Refugee Camp (2022)	Hussam et al.	Bangladesh (Rohingya refugee adults in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 88

3.4 Violence Prevention

There is limited data and evidence on the drivers and effective prevention of interpersonal and community violence against women and children in displacement-affected settings, despite its scale and the increased risk of violence that both displaced women and children face. Violence against women and children is pervasive worldwide and is associated with long-term adverse health and socio-economic outcomes (Felitti et al. 1998; Krug et al. 2002; Olofsson et al. 2012). Researchers have documented high levels of interpersonal violence in humanitarian and conflict-affected settings, and studies have highlighted that certain groups have a greater risk of this violence, including children, adolescent girls, and women (Rubenstein & Stark 2017; International Rescue Committee 2017). Furthermore, displacement increases women and girls' likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence (George Washington University's Global Women's Institute and International Rescue Committee 2017).

Five randomized evaluations that measured impacts on violence were found in displacement-affected contexts, four of which studied or disaggregated intervention impacts for displaced women and children. These studies focused on a range of interventions and types of violence, making it difficult to draw conclusions across studies. Studies examined interventions aimed at reducing individuals' experiences of violence from teachers, family members, peers, and community members through parenting and teacher training and dialogues; life skills training; mentorship; provision of safe spaces; economic transfers; and perspective-taking. Overall, researchers found no impacts of a life-skills and safe spaces program on girls' exposure to violence in Ethiopia (Stark et al. 2018), no impacts of a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)-inspired teacher training program on students' exposure to physical and emotional violence in Tanzania (Fabbri et al. 2021), and limited impacts of a parenting and family skills intervention on parents' discipline practices in Thailand (Puffer et al. 2017). That said, two evaluations found positive short-term impacts. Researchers found that economic transfers (cash, vouchers, and in-kind) had a positive impact on women's experiences of moderate physical and sexual violence in Ecuador (Hidrobo et al. 2014), and perspective-taking was found to reduce peer violence amongst Syrian refugee and Turkish host children in Turkey (Alan et al. 2021).⁷

Despite the scant evidence from evaluations in displacement-affected settings, two recent reviews of quasi-experimental and experimental studies that focused on the prevention of violence against women and girls in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings found that community-based gender-transformative interventions are a promising approach to reducing interpersonal violence (Murphy et al. 2019; J-PAL and IPA 2021). Successful interventions took a community-wide approach that engaged members of the community in group dialogues and messaging. In particular, some studies found that including trusted community figures in the design and implementation of these interventions, or applying training to culturally relevant

⁷ Hidrobo et al. 2014 did not disaggregate impacts between Colombian refugee women and Ecuadorian host women.

practices, were crucial to improve participation and encourage structural changes in individuals' attitudes and behaviors toward gender roles, inequality, and violence (Siddiq et al. 2018; Glass et al. 2019; Palm et al. 2019; Hossain et al. 2014). More research is needed to understand what aspects of similar community-based gender trainings are feasible to implement in displacement-affected contexts and most effective at reducing violence against displaced women and girls.

Gender-transformative programming typically entails trainings and discussions that leverage insights from behavioral science to develop participants' critical thinking around gender norms and shift their attitudes and behaviors, with the goal of leading to healthier and more peaceful relationships.

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
Building Social Cohesion in Ethnically Mixed Schools: An Intervention on Perspective Taking (2021)	Alan et al.	Turkey (Syrian refugee and Turkish host children in school setting)	RCT	p. 60
Preventing Violence against Refugee Adolescent Girls: Findings from a Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial in Ethiopia (2018)	Stark et al.	Ethiopia (Sudanese and South Sudanese adolescent girls and their caregivers in a refugee camp setting)	RCT	p. 76
Cash, Food, or Vouchers? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Northern Ecuador (2014)	Hidrobo et al.	Ecuador (Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorian households in urban settings)	RCT	p. 66

The EmpaTeach Intervention for Reducing Physical Violence from Teachers to Students in Nyarugusu Refugee Camp: A Cluster-Randomised Controlled Trial (2021)	Fabbri et al.	Tanzania (school teachers and refugee students in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 85
The Impact of a Family Skills Training Intervention among Burmese Migrant Families in Thailand: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2017)	Puffer et al.	Thailand (Burmese refugee households with children ages 8-12)	RCT	p. 86

3.5 Increasing Uptake of Health Services

Displaced populations face many barriers to accessing and using social services globally. These include both demand-side barriers (such as health-related costs, preferences, attitudes, knowledge, and information) and supply-side barriers (such as eligibility and availability of services). **Seven evaluations** met our inclusion criteria. The majority of evaluated interventions to date focus on providing solutions to demand-side barriers. We review evidence from cash transfers and information campaigns that are aimed at improving access to and use of social services. The main outcomes measured include changes in health-related expenditures (medicine, transportation, fees), access to healthcare services, and utilization and knowledge of health services.

Evidence from five randomized evaluations generally found cash transfers to increase health-related expenditures, including healthcare expenses for children, and improve access to healthcare services. However, their impacts on the *use* of health care services were inconclusive (Aker 2013; de Hoop et al. 2019; Salti et al. 2022; Battistin 2016; Abdullahi et al. 2022). Aker (2013) found that households that received cash reported spending higher amounts on medicine compared to households that received vouchers. Salti et al. (2022) found that medium- and long-term cash-recipient households reported having more access to primary healthcare compared to households that did not receive cash. This improvement in healthcare access was higher among children aged 5-19 years old. Both de Hoop et al. (2018) and Abdullahi et al. (2022) found that cash assistance increased expenditure on healthcare for children. However, Battistin (2016) found that cash transfers had no impact on households’ use of health services or households’ adoption of unhealthy behaviors. Salti et al. (2022) found that while cash improved access to primary health care, it did not impact household health expenditures.

The lack of impact of cash on the use of health care services may be due to a variety of factors, including information and awareness gaps about services and eligibility, and the availability of health services. While cash transfers may help households afford medicine, cover the cost of transportation to health services, and afford other health-related expenses, more targeted interventions may be needed to drive specific health-related outcomes among displaced populations. Researchers in Colombia tested the efficacy of one solution to bridge such information and awareness gaps among IDPs. Blanco and Vargas (2010) found positive impacts of an SMS campaign on IDP households’ awareness of eligibility for services. While the study did not evaluate healthcare uptake or spending, information provision may prove to be a promising area for future evidence-building.

Only one evaluation focused on supply-side barriers. In Colombia, researchers evaluated the impacts of a large-scale regularization program for Venezuelan migrants that provided access to subsidized healthcare and expanded access to health services (Ibáñez et al. 2022). This was found to improve the mental and physical health of migrants. In qualitative interviews, migrants also reported that access to these services reduced out-of-pocket health expenses.

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
Comparing Cash and Voucher Transfers in a Humanitarian Context: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo (2017)	Aker	DRC (IDPs in an informal camp)	RCT	p. 64
Empowering IDP with SMS: A Randomized Controlled Trial in Bogotá (2010)	Blanco and Vargas	Colombia (IDPs in urban settings)	RCT	p. 69
Impact Evaluation of the Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme (2016)	Battistin	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 71
Life out of the Shadows: Impacts of Amnesties in the Lives of Refugees (2022)	Ibáñez et al.	Colombia (Venezuelan migrants nationally)	RDD	p. 74

Supporting Micro-enterprise in Humanitarian Programming: Impact Evaluation of Business Grants vs. Unconditional Cash Transfer (2022)	Abdullahi et al.	Somalia (Somali IDPs in IDP camps)	RCT	p. 81
No Lost Generation: Supporting the School Participation of Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon (2019)	de Hoop et al.	Lebanon (Vulnerable Syrian refugee households with children ages 5-14 in a rural setting)	RDD	p. 83
The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Evidence from a Multidimensional Regression Discontinuity Design (2022)	Salti et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 87

4. Strategies to Improve Livelihoods Outcomes

Given increasing recognition of the protracted nature of displacement, humanitarian actors, international donors, and researchers have begun to search for more cost-effective and sustainable solutions to displacement, including through economic integration into host communities, and by addressing the legal and non-legal barriers to sustainable livelihoods for displaced populations.

What do we mean by livelihoods?

Livelihoods are the capabilities, activities, and assets (material and social resources) required for living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can withstand the stress and shocks of changing circumstances.

The 2018 Global Compact for Refugees highlighted the need for greater investment in refugee self-reliance, livelihoods, and economic inclusion, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of refugees' right to work. While there has been some advancement in this area, legal frameworks vary substantially, and many countries place restrictions on where refugees can work and what types of jobs they can have. Further, a recent report found refugee rights are often not upheld, many legal frameworks fall short in practice due to implementation or design failures, and right-to-work frameworks remain absent in many refugee-hosting LMICs (Ginn et al. 2022).

Displaced populations face additional non-legal barriers to sustainable livelihoods, including loss of assets and capital, limited social networks and market information, skills mismatch, lack of accreditation, discrimination, and impaired social functioning and decision-making. Together, these factors can result in low numbers of refugees taking up formal and informal work opportunities. In order to inform expanded right-to-work frameworks, rigorous research is needed to identify effective interventions that support displaced populations' access to employment, integration into local labor markets, and self-reliance.

There is little evidence on displaced livelihoods; however, this is changing. This section reviews experimental evidence from **ten evaluations**, including both evaluations of explicit livelihoods programs and evaluations of cash transfer programs that contribute to livelihoods outcomes. We have additionally identified over [15 ongoing rigorous evaluations](#) in this area, making it one of the fastest-growing areas of research.⁸ These studies focus mainly on employment-related

⁸ We expect this area to continue to expand rapidly in the coming years, given new investments in livelihoods-related impact evaluations, including the [IPA and J-PAL's Displaced Livelihoods Initiative](#) supported by the IKEA Foundation.

outcomes such as employment rate, earnings, and assets, though some studies consider other related outcomes, such as well-being, and physical and mental health.

In this section, we review the evidence, or lack thereof, on five primary program types:

- 1. Information Assistance**, including informational and campaign interventions that use various methods (i.e. flyers, videos, vignettes) to bridge information gaps.
- 2. Employment Assistance**, including business and skills training, coaching and mentorship, job matching interventions, and subsidized employment. These aim to help refugees use their existing skills or acquire new ones, and match them with formal jobs.
- 3. Financial Assistance**, including unconditional cash transfers, cash assistance for job-seekers, and one-off transfers used for business capital investment. These aim to help offset the capital losses incurred from displacement and the uncertainties about future investment.
- 4. Psychological Support**, including soft-skills interventions such as guided imagery, CBT, job-search planning sessions, and nudge interventions. These aim to address the mental health issues that constrain displaced people’s ability to process trauma, help improve their outlook, and support visualizing and planning for the future.
- 5. Graduation Programs**, which combine a set of poverty alleviation approaches to augment livelihoods outcomes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Particular mental barriers may be present for displaced populations, such as risk-aversion and short-term thinking, which can limit the impacts of interventions.
- There is mixed evidence on the impacts of cash transfers on employment outcomes. Evaluations suggest that cash may grant displaced adults occupational choice (i.e. ability to look for higher-paying, less dangerous, and/or better-quality jobs), and that larger cash transfers may be more effective at improving livelihoods outcomes.
- Emerging evidence on the effectiveness of the graduation approach among refugees is promising, and several ongoing studies will further develop this evidence base.
- There is limited data on the impacts of livelihoods programs on women and women’s labor market participation.

Legal Frameworks

Refugees’ access to livelihood opportunities in host countries presents a major barrier to livelihood promotion and economic inclusion. A recent report found that more than half of all refugees live in countries that significantly restrict their right to work (Ginn et al. 2022). Furthermore, large gaps exist between refugees’ legal right to work and their reality.

Only one evaluation that met our criteria looked at the impact of extending access to work permits on livelihoods outcomes. Researchers in Colombia found that providing regularization to displaced Venezuelans increased the likelihood of a Venezuelan migrant attaining formal employment by 10 percent (Ibañez et al. 2022).

That said, especially in places with large informal labor markets, the provision of the right to work may not immediately translate to large increases in formal employment (Bahar et al. 2021). Even with the Jordan Compact of 2016—which contributed to a modest increase in labor-force participation among adult male Syrian refugees—a significant portion of adult Syrian refugees remain out of the labor force, and there is extremely low labor participation among women (Tiltnes et al. 2019). These findings suggest that additional interventions, beyond right-to-work legislation, are needed to help refugees overcome the myriad barriers to employment in these contexts.

It is important to note that most studies focus on interventions that, for the most part, require an enabling environment, with legal frameworks that allow refugees to work and move freely to find employment (Schuettler and Caron 2020). We recognize the design and implementation of many livelihoods programs are reliant on the right to work, and therefore the evidence produced may be most applicable in states that adopt inclusive labor market integration policies for displaced populations.

4.1 Information Interventions

Discrimination and information frictions often limit refugees' entry into the labor market, both from their lack of information about employment rights and from employers' misinformation about hiring refugees. Researchers in Jordan evaluated an information intervention—where refugees received information on how to prepare for a job interview and were informed about their legal rights in formal jobs—and found that it increased job search rates and had significant, yet short-lived, impacts on refugees' employment and earnings (Caria et al. 2020).

Other research that did not meet the inclusion criteria for this review explores how discrimination can affect both sides of the labor market, both among firms and within host communities. For instance, a lab-in-the-field experiment tested whether reducing information frictions on the legal framework around refugees in Uganda changes firms' beliefs and attitudes towards refugees and their willingness to hire them (Loiacono and Silva Vargas 2019). The study found some evidence of discrimination by businesses in major urban areas, and significant incomplete or wrong beliefs within businesses about the legal status of refugees in the country.

4.2 Employment Assistance

There are a variety of employment assistance interventions that address supply (preparing refugees for formal or informal work via job training, entrepreneurship support, and mentorship) and demand (job-matching programs and subsidizing refugee employment) within the labor market.

Vocational, Business, and Entrepreneurship Skills Training

Vocational, business, and entrepreneurship training programs have become a common approach to promoting economic inclusion and improving well-being among poor and unemployed populations. These programs are generally designed to help individuals develop the skills needed to obtain jobs, set up firms that can provide them with a basic livelihood, or, in the case of established businesses, increase profits and improve productivity.

Business Skills and Practices

There is a relatively large experimental literature on the efficacy of group-based business and skills training in LMICs not affected by displacement. The bulk of this evidence suggests that business skills training—which focuses on record keeping, financial management, and marketing—can be effective at improving business practices and modestly increasing sales and profits for microenterprises, at least in the short term. However, a meta-analysis found that participants of business skills programs implemented very few of the practices taught in the training sessions (only 1 out of 20), citing strict entry requirements and quality of training delivery as possible reasons for why some firms achieved larger impacts (McKenzie and Woodruff 2021).

While these interventions have demonstrated promise in non-displacement settings, there are still many open questions about how to best implement them, whether they can improve employment rates, and whether they are effective for displaced populations. Overall, evidence from various descriptive and qualitative studies found business skills training programs to be either unsuccessful at helping refugees find jobs or not cost-effective (Schuettler and Caron 2020).

One evaluation met our inclusion criteria. Lyall, Zhou, and Imai (2019) found that a bundled hard and soft skills vocational intervention, which also provided trade-specific start-up kits upon program completion, increased the likelihood of at-risk youth—including internally displaced youth—having earned income in the past month, although overall income was not affected by the program.

Soft-skills Training

Soft skills training, an alternative to traditional business skills training that emphasizes goal setting and future-oriented thinking, has shown promise in boosting business performance, though evidence among displaced populations is limited.

Personal initiative training is a specific type of soft skills training that encourages business owners to adopt a more proactive entrepreneurial mindset by constantly looking for new opportunities, setting goals, and planning for the future. Ongoing studies in [Colombia](#) and Ethiopia are currently evaluating the effectiveness of these techniques (Ashraf et al. ongoing, Delfino et al. ongoing). Randomized evaluations in Togo (Campos et al. 2017) and Jamaica (Ubfal et al. 2019) found personal initiative training to be more effective than traditional business training at improving the business sales and profits of non-displaced microentrepreneurs. Despite these programs' successes in non-displacement settings, they generally pay little attention to motivation and internal barriers to learning and decision-making, which are particularly relevant for displaced and conflict-affected populations (Bremner et al. 2006). As a result, researchers suggest that skills training programs may lead to greater impacts on employment-related outcomes for displaced populations when combined with other techniques that target these barriers, such as imagery techniques, which encourage participants to imagine future scenarios or adopt the perspectives of others (Ashraf et al. ongoing).

Mentorship, Individual Coaching, and Job-matching

Displaced populations face particular challenges when starting and maintaining a business, or finding and applying for formal employment opportunities. A lack of social networks and information often contributes to these challenges. Several related intervention types address these barriers, including mentorship, individual coaching, and job-matching programs.

Mentorship interventions, which link job seekers to peers or mentors in their field, may overcome some of these barriers and have been shown to have positive impacts on business performance in LMICs (McKenzie and Woodruff 2021). No evaluations report the impact of mentorship on refugee entrepreneurs, though a study in Uganda found mentorship by either a refugee or Ugandan mentor did not significantly impact business outcomes for host entrepreneurs (Baseler et al. 2023). That said, there is an ongoing randomized evaluation of the International Rescue Committee's Re:Build program in East Africa, which is examining the impacts of mentorship and cash grants among refugee and host entrepreneurs (Zeitlin et al. ongoing).

Similarly, no rigorous impact evaluations of individual coaching or job matching programs have been conducted in LMICs with displaced populations, although a quasi-experimental pilot in Rwanda, South Africa, and Tanzania found intensive case management increased rates of employment among urban refugees (CWS 2016). These types of interventions offer promise,

and several ongoing studies will evaluate their effectiveness among displaced populations (for example, Leight et al. ongoing).

Subsidized Employment (Cash-for-Work)

Subsidized employment strategies—in particular, cash-for-work programs—are a popular tool for social protection assistance and livelihoods promotion. Cash-for-work programs involve cash payments provided on the condition of undertaking designated work. Common programs include public infrastructure construction or community work programs, but they can also provide other forms of work. Such programs have the potential to provide short-term employment and income for crisis-affected populations, in addition to often building needed infrastructure and other public works in host communities (CALP Network 2014; Zintl and Loewe 2022). Despite the common implementation of these programs, there is little empirical evidence of their impact on displaced livelihoods.⁹

The experimental evidence on cash-for-work programs is limited to one noteworthy randomized evaluation in Bangladesh, which focused on the psychological impacts and relative effectiveness of cash-for-work compared to cash transfers among Rohingya refugees (Hussam et al. 2022). While this study did not find significant differences in consumption between those who received cash transfers vs. cash-for-work, researchers did find substantial health, psychological, and social benefits to the cash-for-work program, over and above the impact of cash alone.

There is a broader literature on cash-for-work's viability within displacement-affected settings, which could provide directions for future research. In Jordan, a quasi-experimental evaluation of Oxfam's cash-for-work programs that did not meet our inclusion criteria found positive impacts on household wealth, but only modest impacts on skills learned, self-esteem, and opinions about gender equality (Lombardini and Mager 2019). Other studies found similar limitations regarding cash-for-work's ability to promote workforce participation among particular groups, such as women and differently-abled persons (CALP Network 2014; Camacho and Kreibaum 2017).

4.3 Financial Assistance

While only five studies evaluated livelihoods-specific programs, a larger body of literature, mostly on cash assistance, speaks to the impact of other types of programming on livelihoods outcomes.

⁹ For example, Tiltnes, Zhang, and Pedersen (2019) found that, during a one-year span, one-fifth of all Syrian refugees in Jordan had participated in at least one cash-for-work program.

Unconditional Cash Transfers

Six studies evaluated the impacts of cash transfers on a variety of employment-related outcomes among displaced populations (income, assets, business ownership, labor market supply, and occupational choice) and found mixed results. In the DRC, Aker (2014) found that compared to vouchers, cash transfers (US\$130) did not significantly improve households' income or the value of assets owned. Similarly, Lyall et al. (2019) found weak evidence that recipients of a US\$75 cash transfer in Afghanistan had more livestock but fewer household assets. Furthermore, the authors found that cash recipients reported spending the majority of the cash transfer on basic needs, while only a small number said they used it to start a new business or reinvest in an existing one.

There is suggestive evidence from two studies that larger cash transfers may be more effective at improving livelihoods outcomes. Compared to repeated cash transfers, researchers in Somalia found that lumping these transfers into one large payment had a larger impact on the likelihood of owning a business, having a higher income, and saving (Abdullahi et al. 2022). A separate study found that Afghan returnees from Pakistan who received a larger reintegration allowance (US\$350) were more likely to purchase long-term assets such as land, transportation, and housing compared to those who received a smaller allowance (US\$150). That said, they were no more likely to find employment 16 months after receiving the intervention (Esper et al. 2022).

Finally, evidence on whether cash transfers reduce labor supply is inconclusive. Two studies from Lebanon found that repeated cash transfers can reduce labor supply in the short term (Lehman and Masterson 2014; Salti et al. 2022). However, studies from Somalia and Pakistan evaluating larger lump-sum transfers find no evidence of this decrease (Esper et al. 2022; Abdullahi et al. 2022). Researchers suggest that one factor that could contribute to the decline in labor supply—at least among men—may be that cash allows displaced populations to have increased occupational choice, leading them to choose higher quality, better paying, or less hazardous jobs (Salti et al. 2022, Caria et al. 2020, Lehman and Masterson 2014, and Abdullahi et al. 2022).

Cash Transfers for Job Search Assistance

Cash transfers can also be labeled specifically to cover the various costs of searching for work (basic needs, transportation, or childcare) or conditional on individuals undertaking job search activities. Researchers in Jordan found that, compared to an information and nudge intervention, a cash transfer was more effective at boosting Syrian refugees' job search and employment rates, and even increasing earnings two to four months post-intervention (Caria et al. 2020). This finding is in line with evidence on transport subsidies in LMICs broadly, which found them effective at helping individuals search for and find work (Baird et al. 2018). Importantly, Caria et al. (2020) also found that the impact of cash transfers on job search and

employment rates was much weaker among Jordanian host communities. This underscores that effects among displaced populations can differ from host communities, and highlights the need for targeted programming and policies.

Cash Transfers for Small Business Start-up and Growth

In many LMICs, small enterprises are one of the main ways for people to make a living. Due to the loss of property and assets often associated with fleeing their homes, displaced populations generally lack the capital and resources to start or develop a business. Research has shown that this lack of capital often limits the impacts of business training interventions (CWS 2016). Capital transfers to start and grow small businesses aim to alleviate these capital constraints and provide cash and resources to help displaced populations become successfully self-employed, either by starting a business or investing in an existing one.

One randomized evaluation, from Somalia, examines the impacts of business grants of varying sizes combined with business training on refugee entrepreneur income (Abdullahi et al. 2022). This study suggests that grant size matters: recipients of larger grants (US\$500, US\$1000) displayed greater sustained impacts on business ownership, income, and savings after three years, while those who received small grants (US\$175) saw no significant long-term improvements. Interestingly, researchers found that the impacts of the medium and large grants converged after three and a half years, suggesting that the medium grant was the most cost-effective.

4.4 Psychological Support

An individual's social functioning, including their conduct and decision-making, can be affected by trauma and violence (World Bank 2017). In particular, psychological stress may make displaced people more risk-averse, more fearful of potential shocks, less able to imagine future opportunities, or less optimistic about social mobility, which can affect their economic integration (Moya 2018). Given the prevalence of trauma and exposure to violence among displaced populations, this issue is particularly relevant for program design and implementation. Nevertheless, the evidence on interventions aimed at addressing these internal barriers to promote sustainable livelihoods is limited.

While there is a large body of evidence on psychological interventions for displaced populations, only one study evaluated the impacts of an intervention intended to overcome psychological barriers on livelihood outcomes. Caria et al. (2020) studied the impacts of a job search planning package—intended in part to address the potential reduction in intrinsic motivation to search for employment caused by trauma, uncertainty, and societal exclusion—on job search rates among Syrian refugees in Jordan. The study found that facilitating job search planning sessions, including outlining specific week-by-week action plans, helped boost job seeking and applications for refugees, but only in the short term.

Ongoing research focuses on the use of imagery techniques, a particular psychosocial intervention that helps participants imagine a positive future, which is often constrained by experiences of trauma. Studies in Colombia and Ethiopia will examine whether this positive imagery can improve livelihoods outcomes for forcibly displaced populations (Ashraf et al. ongoing; Delfino et al. ongoing).

4.5 Graduation Programs

Multi-faceted interventions that aim to generate long-term reductions in poverty are implemented increasingly to support poor and vulnerable displaced and host populations. The “graduation approach,” established by BRAC in Bangladesh as “Targeting the Ultra Poor,” is a poverty alleviation program that attempts to address many of the aspects of poverty simultaneously. Typically, ultra-poor households are provided with an asset to spur income generation; training on how to manage the asset; basic food or cash support; coaching visits to reinforce skills, build confidence, and help problem-solve; access to a savings account; and health education and/or health care access. This model is currently implemented worldwide by different organizations, including in humanitarian settings, and has been extensively evaluated in stable development settings. Overall, evidence suggests that the model is effective at increasing consumption, household assets, savings, food security, and mental well-being (Banerjee et al. 2015). However, studies have only recently begun to examine how graduation programs or their variations can be implemented in conflict-affected areas or settings affected by displacement.

Evaluations have found that graduation programs can have significant impacts even in fragile settings (for example, Bedoya et al. 2019, Karimli et al. 2020). Forthcoming work from Uganda also suggests that the graduation approach can have significant positive impacts for both program refugees and host communities on key outcomes, including food security, nutrition, and self-reliance (Brune et al. forthcoming). Building on this evidence, the graduation approach is being expanded to reach additional refugee and host community households in 35 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East through the Poverty Alleviation Coalition. That said, questions remain about how this approach can be best adapted for displacement-affected settings, especially given the assets provided are often livestock and displaced populations frequently face limitations on their access to or ownership of land.

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
An Adaptive Targeted Field Experiment: Job Search Assistance for Refugees in Jordan (2020)	Caria et al.	Jordan (Syrian refugee and Jordanian job seekers in urban setting)	RCT	p. 59
Can Economic Assistance Shape Combatant Support in Wartime? Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan (2019)	Lyall et al.	Afghanistan (IDPs and hosts in camp and urban settings)	RCT	p. 76
Can Redistribution Change Policy Views? Aid and Attitudes toward Refugees in Uganda (2023)	Baseler et al.	Uganda (Congolese refugees and Ugandan micro-entrepreneurs in an urban setting)	RCT	p. 61
Comparing Cash and Voucher Transfers in a Humanitarian Context: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo (2017)	Aker	DRC (IDPs in an informal camp)	RCT	p. 64
Emergency Economies: The Impact of Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2014)	Lehman and Masterson	Lebanon (Severely food-insecure Syrian refugee and host households in an urban setting)	RDD	p. 65
Life out of the Shadows: Impacts of Amnesties in the Lives of Refugees (2022)	Ibáñez et al.	Colombia (Venezuelan migrants nationally)	RDD	p. 74

More is Better: Evaluating the Impact of a Variation in Cash Assistance on the Reintegration Outcomes of Returning Afghan Refugees (2022)	Esper et al.	Afghanistan (Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan)	RDD	p. 75
Supporting Micro-enterprise in Humanitarian Programming: Impact Evaluation of Business Grants vs. Unconditional Cash Transfer (2022)	Abdullahi et al.	Somalia (Somali IDPs in IDP camps)	RCT	p. 81
More Cash, Bigger Impacts? A Field Experiment of Cash Transfers in Somalia (2018)	Hassan et al.			
The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Evidence from a Multidimensional Regression Discontinuity Design (2022)	Salti et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	p. 87
The Psychosocial Value of Employment: Evidence from a Refugee Camp (2022)	Hussam et al.	Bangladesh (Rohingya refugee adults in a camp setting)	RCT	p. 88

5. Strategies to Improve Social Cohesion Outcomes

Displacement has substantial socio-economic impacts on both hosts and those displaced. The sudden influx of displaced populations at times places heavy burdens on host communities and can strain public services, increase job competition, and deplete resources (Pham et al. 2022). Various studies document how changes in social dynamics caused by displacement can cause major backlash from hosts as new grievances emerge and out-group prejudice and stereotypes increase (for example, Arbatli et al. 2020). The potential for tension between displaced populations and host communities has motivated humanitarian actors and researchers to look for ways to mitigate and prevent negative intergroup interactions and promote cohesion within communities.

What do we mean by social cohesion?

While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of social cohesion, this report uses Sonnenfeld et al.'s (2021) framework, which identifies five key dimensions of social cohesion that can be measured through attitudes and norms, as well as behaviors. These dimensions are trust, sense of belonging, willingness to participate in political and civic society, willingness to help, and acceptance of diversity. The framework focuses primarily on horizontal intergroup social cohesion, or relationships between groups, reflecting the focus of much of the displacement literature.

While questions about social cohesion and integration among displacement-affected communities are not new, the first rigorous impact evaluations have only been published in the past few years.¹⁰ This section reviews evidence from **eight evaluations** total, six that evaluated social cohesion outcomes as their primary goal (Alan et al. 2021; Baseler et al. 2023; Mousa 2020; Valli, Peterman, and Hidrobo 2019; Zhou and Lyall 2022; Lehman and Masterson 2019) and two additional studies that evaluated social cohesion outcomes as a secondary measure (Quattrochi et al. 2022, Caria et al. 2020).

The evaluated interventions aim to primarily improve relations and mitigate negative interactions between hosts and displaced populations. The outcomes and measurement tools used vary greatly between studies and are often context- or intervention-specific. Some common outcomes include trust in others, support for inclusive refugee-hosting policies, and the number of social ties with outgroups. Given variations in measurement, it is challenging to make direct comparisons between studies.

¹⁰ The 1951 Refugee Convention first outlined several social rights designed to facilitate integration between hosts and displaced communities.

In this section, we review the evidence from three types of interventions:

1. **Social Protection:** interventions that provide aid to both displaced populations and local communities, fostering equality and unity due to the universal reception of aid.
2. **Intergroup Contact:** interventions targeted at both displaced and host communities that promote inclusive behaviors by fostering contact between groups.
3. **Perspective-taking:** low-cost interventions often targeted at host communities that aim to encourage imagining another's perspective, correcting misperceptions about displaced populations and their characteristics.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Three studies suggest that cash and voucher assistance can impact measures of social cohesion, while two other studies found null results.
- There is limited and inconclusive evidence on the impact of intergroup contact on social cohesion among displaced populations and hosts.
- Perspective-taking interventions were found to improve measures of social cohesion in the short term in three countries.

5.1 Social Protection

Perceptions matter: how humanitarian aid is delivered, and to whom, can help influence intergroup attitudes and behaviors. One common theory states that by increasing non-recipients' perceptions of unfairness, aid can increase hosts' resentment and potentially exacerbate violence toward displaced populations (Devereux et al. 2017). Alternatively, if hosts perceive that the aid benefits the local economy, whether directly or indirectly, this aid can promote feelings of equal treatment and reduce feelings of hostility (Leites et al. 2017). In light of these discussions, there is a growing practice among humanitarian actors to include vulnerable hosts in their programming and to evaluate host attitudes towards displaced populations.

In displacement-affected settings, evaluated social protection interventions have included cash, food transfer, and voucher programs. These programs and evaluations vary significantly, including by taking different approaches to targeting, communication, and messaging; by being bundled with different activities in some cases; and by measuring social cohesion differently.¹¹ Overall, the five published evaluations of social protection programs found mixed impacts on social cohesion outcomes. Notably, no study found negative impacts on social cohesion.

¹¹Some targeted female heads of households, some targeted both refugees and locals, others targeted refugees only.

Three studies found largely positive effects of social protection programming on social cohesion. A study from Uganda found that recipients of a business grant were more likely to support inclusive policies toward refugees (Baseler et al. 2023). Studies from Lebanon (Lehman and Masterson 2020) and Ecuador (Valli et al. 2019) found that short-term humanitarian aid via cash, vouchers, and/or food transfers did not increase anti-refugee violence while increasing some measures of social cohesion among displaced populations. In particular, researchers in Lebanon found that cash recipients were more likely to report receiving local assistance and less likely to be insulted by the host population (Lehman and Masterson 2020).¹² Additionally, researchers in Ecuador found that the program significantly increased refugee social participation, personal agency, and attitudes toward accepting diversity, with no impact on trust in individuals and freedom from discrimination. Social cohesion measures among hosts were not impacted by the program (Valli et al. 2019).¹³

Two studies found no effects of social protection on social cohesion. Both a study of a voucher program in the DRC and a study of a livelihoods cash intervention in Jordan found no short- or long-term (one-year) impacts of cash on various social cohesion measures, including trust and social participation (Quattrochi et al. 2020, Caria et al. 2020).

5.2 Intergroup Contact

A growing number of studies evaluate how bringing displaced populations and hosts together through collaborative and meaningful intergroup contact can improve social cohesion. This type of programming—which borrows heavily from social psychology research on prejudice reduction—brings together individuals from different social groups to build tolerance, augment attitudes, and improve behaviors. Social psychology suggests four criteria are necessary for intergroup contact to be effective: cooperation, equal status between groups, support from authorities, and a common goal (Allport 1954).

While this approach has been studied frequently in other settings, until recently there were no rigorous studies of this approach in displacement-affected contexts. In general, studies suggest that intergroup contact can help reduce prejudice by fostering empathy, highlighting similarities, breaking down stereotypes, and creating bonds between population groups. However, a 2018 meta-analysis points out that contact interventions targeting racial or ethnic bias have significantly weaker effects (Paluck and Green 2019).

In displacement-affected settings, two randomized evaluations examined two distinct ways that intergroup contact can affect beliefs and attitudes: through sports (Mousa 2020) and through

¹² Authors suggest this latter finding may be partly explained by cash recipients' substitution of public with private means of transport and thus reducing contact with potential aggressors.

¹³ Notably, although this study included various targeting, messages, and a monthly shared interaction (nutrition sessions), researchers were unable to disentangle which effects resulted from the aid received and which resulted from the monthly interaction between locals and displaced populations.

vocational skills training (Zhou and Lyall 2022). In Iraq, Mousa (2020) found that although a mixed-group soccer league was shown to improve behaviors toward Muslim peers, it did not affect intergroup attitudes among displaced Christian youth. Further, these effects did not translate to tolerance beyond the intervention, and the effects dissipated over time. In Afghanistan, researchers found that prolonged contact in a vocational skills-training program with internally displaced Afghans did not affect locals' attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors toward IDPs in the short or long term, though this could have been because they were from the same ethnic group (Zhou and Lyall 2022).

Mousa's study, along with others, suggests that in fragile and/or displacement-affected contexts, attitudes may be more difficult to change, or may change more slowly, than behaviors.¹⁴ Future research should explore whether positive behavioral changes persist over time, whether behavioral changes eventually translate to attitudinal changes, and to what extent these interventions can impact the attitudes or behaviors of non-participant community members (spillover effects).

5.3 Perspective-taking Interventions

A growing literature evaluates interventions that encourage individuals to connect their experience with that of others, understand their perspectives, and accept individual differences. Through personal narratives, interactive games, and other activities, perspective-taking interventions can promote trust and acceptance, increase inclusionary behavior, and lower social aggression across different groups.

Perspective-taking is a cognitive process of viewing a situation from the perspective of another person. These interventions borrow heavily from the field of social psychology and vary greatly in how they are delivered, from listening exercises, to school curricula, to online video games, to documentaries.

The bulk of the evidence supporting perspective-taking interventions comes from high-income countries and controlled lab settings, where it is shown to improve attitudes towards different groups and positively affect social cohesion. Results from displacement-affected settings suggest that low-cost perspective-taking interventions can be applied to positively affect social cohesion outcomes, at least in the short term. Ongoing research will further develop this evidence to evaluate which specific components are leading to changes in attitudes and behaviors and whether these changes persist over time.

¹⁴ This study was particularly innovative in the way it measured its outcomes, and measured a range of behavioral outcomes in addition to attitudes, such as whether Christian players voted for a player of the outgroup for a sportsmanship prize, patronized a Muslim-owned business, or continued to train with Muslims six months after the intervention.

Only one study included both refugee and host perspectives in the perspective-taking intervention. In Turkey, researchers found that a school-based perspective-taking curriculum implemented by teachers over the course of a year lowered peer violence and victimization, increased inter-ethnic friendship and academic support ties, and promoted prosocial behaviors like trust, cooperation, and altruism (Alan et al. 2021).

Another study in Uganda targeted host attitudes, finding promising improvements in hosts’ prosocial attitudes towards displaced populations. Researchers found that an empathetic listening exercise delivered by a refugee-led non-profit organization increased support for refugee-hosting policies among Ugandan hosts (Baseler et al. 2023). Similarly, there is a broader literature that did not meet our inclusion criteria, either because they only targeted host communities or due to their designs, which suggests that perspective-taking can effectively change attitudes towards displaced populations. For instance, Chatruc and Rozo (2021) found that both an active role-playing online game and a video that included personal testimonies from Venezuelans improved prosociality toward migrants in Colombia.

STUDIES				
Title	Authors	Country & Population	Design	Summary
An Adaptive Targeted Field Experiment: Job Search Assistance for Refugees in Jordan (2020)	Caria et al.	Jordan (Syrian refugee and Jordanian job seekers in urban setting)	RCT	p. 59
Building Social Cohesion between Christians and Muslims through Soccer in Post-ISIS Iraq (2020)	Mousa	Iraq (IDP Iraqi Christians displaced by ISIS and Iraqi Muslims)	RCT	p. 60
Building Social Cohesion in Ethnically Mixed Schools: An Intervention on Perspective Taking (2021)	Alan et al.	Turkey (Syrian refugee and Turkish host children in school setting)	RCT	p. 60

Can Redistribution Change Policy Views? Aid and Attitudes toward Refugees in Uganda (2023)	Baseler et al.	Uganda (Congolese refugees and Ugandan micro-entrepreneurs in an urban setting)	RCT	p. 61
Cash-Like Vouchers Improve Psychological Well-Being of Vulnerable and Displaced Persons Fleeing Armed Conflict (2022)	Quattrochi et al.	DRC (Vulnerable IDPs and local hosts in 25 villages)	RCT	p. 62
Does Aid Reduce Anti-refugee Violence? Evidence from Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (2020)	Lehman and Masterson	Lebanon (Severely food-insecure Syrian refugee and host households in an urban setting)	RDD	p. 65
Economic Transfers and Social Cohesion in a Refugee-Hosting Setting (2019)	Valli et al.	Ecuador (Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorian households in urban settings)	RCT	p. 66
Prolonged Contact Does Not Reshape Locals' Attitudes toward Migrants in Wartime Settings: Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan (2022)	Zhou and Lyall	Afghanistan (IDPs and hosts in camp and urban settings)	RCT	p. 76

Study Summaries

1. [**A Comparison of Narrative Exposure Therapy, Supportive Counseling, and Psychoeducation for Treating Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in an African Refugee Settlement \(2004\)**](#), Frank Neuner, Margarete Schauer, Christine Klaschik, Unni Karunakara, Thomas Elbert, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*
Location: Uganda
Method: RCT
Implementer Type: INGO (Vivo International) and Academic Institution (University of Konstanz)
Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)
 - In 2000-01, researchers evaluated the relative impacts of three short-term psychotherapy approaches implemented by Vivo International and University of Konstanz-based therapists on PTSD symptoms among adult Sudanese refugees.
 - 43 Sudanese refugees diagnosed with PTSD were randomly allocated to one of three short-term psychotherapy conditions: Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), supportive counseling, or psychoeducation only. NET consisted of four sessions where participants constructed detailed chronological accounts of their traumatic experiences. Supportive counseling consisted of four sessions of flexible psychotherapy based on participants' needs. All program groups attended a one-time psychoeducation session that covered the nature and prevalence of PTSD symptoms.
 - One year after the intervention, NET improved participants' PTSD symptoms more than either supportive counseling or psychotherapy alone. The impact on anxiety, depression, and overall mental health did not vary significantly between interventions.
 - A larger percentage of participants who received NET no longer showed any PTSD symptoms one year after the program compared to those who received supportive counseling and psychotherapy.
 - This particular intervention was very costly, as European psychologists delivered the sessions with the help of interpreters.

2. [**A Transdiagnostic Community-Based Mental Health Treatment for Comorbid Disorders: Development and Outcomes of a Randomized Controlled Trial among Burmese Refugees in Thailand \(2014\)**](#), Paul Bolton, Catherine Lee, Emily E. Haroz, Laura Murray, Shannon Dorsey, Courtland Robinson, Ana M Ugueto, Judith Bass, *PLOS Medicine*
Location: Thailand
Method: RCT
Implementer Type: INGO (Burma Border Projects) and Local NGOs (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners–Burma, Mae Tao Clinic, and Social Action for Women)
Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- Between 2011-2012, researchers evaluated the impacts of the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA), a flexible psychotherapy program, on PTSD, depression, anxiety, functional impairment, aggression, and substance abuse symptoms among adult Burmese refugees living in Thailand. The study was implemented by Burma Border Projects and three local nonprofits.
- 347 adult Burmese refugees (63 percent female) with trauma exposure and depression were referred by local organizations and randomly selected to receive CETA or be placed on a wait-list comparison group. CETA participants were offered weekly transdiagnostic program sessions where trained lay counselors individualized program plans (including locally adapted elements of psychoeducation, cognitive coping, anxiety and stress management, behavioral activation, and substance abuse treatment) based on participants' symptoms and needs over three months.
- One month after program completion, CETA had significantly reduced symptoms of depression, PTSD, and anxiety, and moderately improved functional impairment among participants who received the intervention. However, it did not have a significant effect on alcohol use, which decreased among both the intervention and comparison groups.

3. [An Adaptive Targeted Field Experiment: Job Search Assistance for Refugees in Jordan \(2020\)](#), Stefano Caria, Grant Gordon, Maximilian Kasy, Simon Quinn, Soha Shami, Alex

Teytelboym, *SSRN Working Paper*

Location: Jordan

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee)

Topics: [Livelihoods](#), [Social Cohesion](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impacts of three job support interventions—part of the International Rescue Committee's Project Match between February and November 2019—on wage employment, earnings, well-being, social integration, migration among Syrian refugees and Jordanian job seekers. Researchers also studied the effectiveness of an adaptive intervention assignment process that learns from earlier recruitment periods and assigns more participants to better-performing programs in later periods.
- 3,770 job seekers ages 18-45 were randomly assigned to receive one of three interventions, or to a comparison group. The interventions were either a labeled cash transfer of US\$92 intended to help participants pay for job search-related costs, an information provision intervention where participants learned about employee rights and how to prepare for an interview, or a psychological support intervention consisting of a four-week job search calendar and reminder texts to strengthen job search motivation and help participants overcome self-control problems.
- The cash transfer was the most effective at boosting refugees' job search and employment rates, and at increasing earnings two to four months after the intervention.

- The information and psychosocial support interventions also boosted refugees' job search rates and had significant impacts on employment and earnings after two months, but to a lesser extent. These effects dissipated after four months.
- Researchers did not find any impacts on job search rates or labor market outcomes among Jordanian hosts for any intervention except the psychosocial nudge (reminder texts), which increased job search rates.
- None of the interventions had impacts on refugees' well-being or social integration outcomes.

4. [Building Social Cohesion between Christians and Muslims through Soccer in Post-ISIS Iraq \(2020\)](#), Salma Mousa, *Science*

Location: Iraq

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Government (Nineveh Governorate Council, Strategic Planning Committee), Local NGO (MaakThahTheh), and Faith-based Organization (Syriac Catholic Church of Iraq)

Topic: [Social Cohesion](#)

- This evaluation studied the impacts of an intergroup contact intervention, which facilitated contact via a soccer league, on a variety of behavioral and attitudinal outcomes among Iraqi Christians and Muslims living in Iraqi Kurdistan. All participants had been displaced by ISIS. The study was implemented in partnership with the local government, a local NGO, and a faith-based organization.
- 42 soccer teams across two sites were selected to be part of the study. Iraqi Christian youth were randomly assigned to an all-Christian soccer team or a team mixed with Muslims. The soccer league ran for ten weeks from September to November 2018.
- Six months after the intervention, Christians with Muslim teammates demonstrated more tolerant behaviors towards their Muslim peers. They were more likely to continue training with Muslim players and to vote for a Muslim player not on their team to receive a sportsmanship prize.
- However, these changes did not extend to Muslims in the broader community. Players were no more likely to attend a mixed-religion social event or patronize a Muslim-owned business. Furthermore, their views on salient issues, like blaming Muslims for Christian suffering, remained unchanged.
- The author suggests that although contact can build tolerant behaviors towards peers within an intervention, building broader social cohesion outside of it is more challenging.

5. [Building Social Cohesion in Ethnically Mixed Schools: An Intervention on Perspective Taking \(2021\)](#), Sule Alan, Ceren Baysan, Mert Gumren, Elif Kubilay, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*

Location: Turkey

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Government (Turkey’s Ministry of Education)

Topics: [Education](#), [Health \(Violence Prevention\)](#), [Social Cohesion](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impact of a curriculum called “Understanding Each Other” on peer violence, social exclusion, and prosocial behavior outcomes among Turkish host and Syrian refugee students. The intervention was implemented by Turkey’s Ministry of Education and took place from May 2018 to May 2019 in two provinces in Southeastern Turkey, where 18 percent of the children are refugees.
- 80 elementary schools, covering 7,000 children ages 8-12, were randomly allocated to intervention or comparison groups. Teachers in the intervention schools received training and materials to implement the program modules—which included activities and pedagogical tools to foster perspective-taking and social cohesion—as a weekly two- to three-hour curriculum over the entire 2018-2019 school year. Teachers in the comparison group engaged in various unrelated extracurricular projects.
- Immediately after the intervention, the program was found to reduce high-intensity peer violence and victimization and increase children’s likelihood of forming inter-ethnic friendships, thereby reducing ethnic segregation in the classroom. The effect was stronger among refugee children, who were significantly more likely to form friendships with host classmates. Students who participated in the program also demonstrated more socially positive behaviors, such as trust, reciprocity, and altruism.
- Researchers are currently studying the long-term effects of this program.
- The program may have had bigger effects due to disparities in teacher participation. Researchers reported that 16 percent of teachers did not comply, and those who did only covered about 60 percent of the curriculum on average.

6. [Can Redistribution Change Policy Views? Aid and Attitudes toward Refugees in Uganda \(2023\)](#), Travis Baseler, Thomas Ginn, Robert Hakiza, Helidah Ogude, Olivia Woldemikael, *Center for Global Development Working Paper*

Location: Uganda

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Refugee-led Local NGO (Young African Refugees for Integral Development)

Topics: [Livelihoods](#), [Social Cohesion](#)

- In collaboration with Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), a refugee-led organization, researchers evaluated the impact of programs supporting Ugandan micro-enterprises—business grants, information on aid-sharing, and mentorship—on social outcomes, including support for hosting more refugees and allowing them the right to work. Other outcomes included business profits, household

food security, and attitudes towards other out-groups. The program was implemented between March and May 2021.

- 1,406 Ugandan microentrepreneurs were randomly assigned to one of five groups: a group that received a business grant of US\$135 to purchase business capital of their choosing; a group that received information about Uganda’s national aid-sharing policy, YARID’s outreach with both refugees and Ugandans, and personal stories of being a refugee; a group that received a business grant of US\$135 *and* information linking it to Uganda’s national aid-sharing policy; a group that received mentorship, where business owners were randomly assigned to a mentor who was either an experienced refugee or Ugandan business owner; or a comparison group that received no intervention.
- The business grants provided alongside information linking them to Uganda’s national aid-sharing policy, as an example of compensation for Ugandans, significantly increased Ugandans’ support for inclusive refugee hosting. These effects persisted over two years. Information alone and the grant alone also increased support for inclusive hosting, but by smaller amounts. Mentorship by a refugee had a small impact on attitudes towards hosting after six months, but no durable impacts after two years.
- None of the interventions had significant impacts on business outcomes or household welfare, which the authors suggest may be in part due to COVID-19 lockdowns.

7. [Cash-Like Vouchers Improve Psychological Well-Being of Vulnerable and Displaced Persons Fleeing Armed Conflict \(2022\)](#), John Quattrochi, Ghislain Bisimwa, Peter van der Windt, Maarten Voors, *PNAS Nexus*

Location: Democratic Republic of Congo

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: IOs (OCHA and UNICEF)

Topics: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#), [Household Welfare and Food Security](#), [Social Cohesion](#)

- Researchers studied the effects of a humanitarian assistance program, which provided non-food vouchers for essential household items to recently displaced persons in the DRC, on child physical health, adult mental health, social cohesion, and resilience. The program was implemented between May 2017 and April 2018 in 25 villages in North Kivu province, as a component of an OCHA and UNICEF-managed humanitarian assistance mechanism.
- 976 vulnerable households were randomly selected to receive non-transferable vouchers (worth US\$75 on average) to purchase essential household items at a voucher fair organized by NGOs and participating businesses. Vouchers were used in this context, instead of direct cash transfers, due to the absence of markets to purchase essential items, safety concerns for NGO staff traveling with cash, and improved targeting through the decreased probability of leakage.
- At six weeks, recipient households reported having more assets and greater dietary diversity. They also had more debt and consumed more alcohol and/or tobacco

compared to households in the comparison group. The authors suggested that increased debt may indicate that households are more creditworthy, and that increased consumption of alcohol and/or tobacco may support households to cope with the stress of displacement or be used to strengthen social bonds.

- 12 months after the intervention, households that received the vouchers were more likely to report improvements in well-being and life satisfaction compared to households that did not receive the intervention.
- The voucher program did not have an impact on children's physical health or social cohesion.
- Researchers reported 10 percent attrition after six weeks and 24 percent after one year, which did not differ by program status.

8. [Children and Mothers in War: An Outcome Study of a Psychosocial Intervention Program](#)

(2001), Ragnhild Dybdahl, *Child Development*

Location: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: IO (UNICEF)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In 1996, in partnership with UNICEF, researchers studied the impact of a five-month psychosocial intervention on the mental health of internally displaced Bosnian mothers, as well as the psychosocial functioning of their children.
- 88 mother-child pairs were randomly assigned to a psychosocial intervention group or a comparison group receiving basic medical care only. The psychosocial intervention consisted of semi-structured group meetings for mothers that focused on coping with problems and promoting good mother-child interactions. The intervention was delivered by trained school teachers from the community.
- Mothers who received the intervention showed improvements in trauma symptoms and perceived social support, and children experienced improvements in weight gain and cognitive performance. However, the intervention had no impact on mothers' overall well-being or children's reported well-being, concentration problems, or depression scores.
- This study had a particularly small sample and may have been underpowered to detect important differences between mother-child pairs living in settlements versus private housing.

9. [Community-Implemented Trauma Therapy for Former Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda: A Randomized Controlled Trial \(2011\)](#), Verena Ertl, Anett Pfeiffer, Elisabeth Schauer, Thomas Elbert, Frank Neuner, *Journal of the American Medical Association*

Location: Uganda

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (Vivo International)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- Researchers compared the impacts of Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)—which is a short individual-based, trauma-focused intervention—and an academic catch-up program on reducing PTSD and other trauma-related symptoms among former child soldiers living in IDP camps in three regions in Northern Uganda. The program was implemented from November 2007 to October 2009 by Vivo International.
- 85 former child soldiers ages 12 to 25, who were mostly female (68 percent) and had been diagnosed with PTSD, were recruited and randomly assigned to one of three groups: a group that received NET, a group that received an academic catch-up program with elements of supportive counseling, or a wait-list comparison group. The interventions were delivered by trained lay therapists in eight individual at-home sessions over three to four weeks
- At 12 months, researchers found that NET significantly reduced the severity of participants' PTSD symptoms and increased self-functioning both overall and compared to the academic catch-up program. Youth who received NET also reported fewer feelings of guilt compared to those who did not receive the intervention.
- Both interventions led to improvements in depression, suicidal ideation, and stigmatization, with no significant differences across interventions.
- Notably, the study occurred when Uganda started its transition to the post-conflict era, which gradually reduced trauma reminders and conflict-related stressors for the general population.

10. [Comparing Cash and Voucher Transfers in a Humanitarian Context: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo \(2017\)](#), Jenny C. Aker, *World Bank Economic Review*

Location: Democratic Republic of Congo

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (Concern Worldwide)

Topics: [Health \(Increasing Uptake of Health Services\)](#), [Household Welfare and Food Security](#), [Livelihoods](#)

- Researchers studied the relative impacts of cash and voucher transfers targeted at female household members living in informal IDP camps in Eastern DRC between 2011 and 2012. Outcomes measured included food purchases and expenditures, asset ownership, food security, savings, risk coping strategies, and intra- and inter-household decision-making. The program was implemented by Concern Worldwide.
- 474 households, sorted by neighborhood, were randomly assigned to receive either an unconditional cash transfer of US\$130 or an equivalent voucher to spend on any items at pre-organized voucher fairs. The total value of the transfer was approximately two-thirds of the total annual GDP per capita for the DRC.

- At seven months, households that received vouchers were more likely to purchase specific items like salt, and purchase items in greater quantities, while households that received cash purchased a more diverse set of food and non-food items and invested more in their children's education.
- Cash transfer recipients were more likely to maintain money from savings than voucher recipients, but there were no differences in dietary diversity, food security, income, asset ownership, or the use of coping strategies between the two transfer modalities.
- The limited impacts of both cash and vouchers may have been a result of high levels of food insecurity, and the fact that both groups reported sharing the money or items they bought with other households.
- The researcher suggests that unconditional cash transfers might be more cost-effective at improving households' purchasing power in complex emergencies, while giving households the freedom of choice.

11. [Does Aid Reduce Anti-refugee Violence? Evidence from Syrian Refugees in Lebanon \(2020\)](#), Christian Lehmann and Daniel Masterson, *American Political Science Review*, and [Emergency Economies: The Impact of Cash Assistance in Lebanon \(2014\)](#), Christian Lehmann and Daniel Masterson, *International Rescue Committee*

Location: Lebanon

Method: RDD

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee) and IO (UNHCR)

Topics: [Education](#), [Health \(Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water\)](#), [Household Welfare and Food Security](#), [Livelihoods](#), [Social Cohesion](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impact of a winterization program on household well-being, negative coping strategies, household consumption, and the local economy. It was implemented by UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee, and other partners from November 2013 to April 2014 to keep people warm, dry, and healthy during winter months.
- 1,358 Syrian refugee households residing between 450-550 meters in altitude were selected for the study. Households residing above 500m altitude received unconditional cash transfers amounting to US\$575 via ATM cards over the course of five months, while those residing below 500 meters in altitude served as the comparison group. The monthly payments equaled about two-thirds of the comparison group's average monthly income.
- At five months, researchers found that households that received the cash transfer increased their spending on heating fuel, clothing, food and water, and school-related expenses compared to non-recipient households, and were less likely to engage in negative coping strategies such as child labor and dangerous work.

- The cash assistance was not enough to pay for heat for 45 percent of the households, according to researchers. Despite also receiving food vouchers from WFP, cash recipients spent most of the assistance on food, water, and immediate needs.
- Researchers suggested that the program did not have a meaningful impact on local prices or labor supply, but it did produce significant multiplier effects on the local economy.
- Additionally, researchers found that the cash transfer did not increase anti-refugee violence and may have reduced it, potentially due to reduced contact with potential aggressors, higher demand for local goods and services, and increased aid sharing with hosts. The researchers recommended further study into alternative interventions to understand the conditions under which aid may have different effects on hostility towards refugees.
- In the case of Lebanon, the local market supply accommodated the increased demand of cash transfer recipients. However, the researchers cautioned that in other settings, similar programming might lead to inflation.

12. [Economic Transfers and Social Cohesion in a Refugee-Hosting Setting \(2019\)](#), Elsa Valli, Amber Peterman, Melissa Hidrobo, *The Journal of Development Studies*, [The Effect of Cash, Vouchers and Food Transfers on Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Northern Ecuador \(2016\)](#), Melissa Hidrobo, Amber Peterman, Lori Heise, *American Economic Journal Applied Economics*, and [Cash, Food, or Vouchers? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Northern Ecuador \(2014\)](#), Melissa Hidrobo, John Hoddinott, Amber Peterman, Amy Margolies, Vanessa Moreira, *Journal of Development Economics*

Location: Ecuador

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: IO (WFP)

Topics: [Health \(Violence Prevention\)](#), [Household Welfare and Food Security](#), [Social Cohesion](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impacts and cost-effectiveness of a cash, food voucher, and in-kind food transfer program among forcibly displaced Colombians and poor members of the host community in Ecuador. The program was implemented by the WFP in seven urban centers in Ecuador between March and November 2011.
- 2,122 Colombian and Ecuadorian households randomly received either a conditional cash transfer, a food voucher, or a food transfer valued at US\$40 once a month for six months, with an accompanying nutrition curriculum that was the same for all participants. They were compared to households that did not receive the program.
- All of the transfers were distributed monthly, equivalent to US\$40, and targeted to women. Cash transfers were delivered via ATM cards, while vouchers were redeemable for pre-approved foods at local supermarkets. Food transfers consisted of rice, oil,

lentils, and canned sardines. In 2011, US\$40 was approximately 10 percent of household pre-transfer monthly consumption.

- Cash, food vouchers, and food transfers all significantly improved the quality and quantity of food consumed, and also increased the consumption of non-food goods such as transportation, housing, clothing, shoes, and education. Food transfers led to a significantly larger increase in calories consumed, and vouchers led to significantly more diverse diets.
- In this urban setting, with well-functioning food markets, food was the least cost-effective modality for improving outcomes, vouchers were the most cost-effective modality, and cash was the cheapest modality to implement.
- Participants preferred cash over other transfer modalities, and cash recipients spent the least amount of time and money to receive the transfers due to the time required to travel to distribution points and wait to receive in-kind and voucher transfers.
- All transfer types reduced controlling behaviors and physical and/or sexual violence in households by 6 to 7 percentage points.
- Seven months after the intervention, the program was found to improve social cohesion among displaced Colombians in hosting communities, including by increasing personal agency, improving attitudes accepting diversity, increasing confidence in institutions, and augmenting social participation for Colombians. The program did not have impacts on measures of social cohesion among the host population.
- Targeting, messaging, and nutrition training facilitated interaction among groups and were components of every program arm. Therefore, the program was unable to measure the impact of different transfer modalities on social cohesion.
- Future programs should examine the mechanisms through which such a program can improve social cohesion, and if there are diverse social cohesion experiences among other household members, including children.

13. [Effectiveness of a Brief Group Behavioral Intervention for Common Mental Disorders in Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A Randomized Controlled Trial \(2022\)](#), Richard A. Bryant,

Ahmad Bawaneh, Manar Awwad, Hadeel Al-Hayek, Luana Giardinelli, Claire Whitney, Mark J. D. Jordans, Pim Cuijpers, Marit Sijbrandij, Peter Ventevogel, Katie Dawson, Aemal Akhtar, *PLOS Medicine*

Location: Jordan

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Medical Corps)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In collaboration with International Medical Corps in Jordan, from October 2019 to July 2020 researchers evaluated whether a brief group psychosocial intervention called Group Problem Management Plus (gPM+) delivered by trained lay workers could

improve common mental health symptoms, parenting behavior, and children's mental health among Syrian refugee adults in Azraq refugee camp.

- 410 Syrian adult refugees with children aged 10-16 years old were screened and randomly allocated to receive gPM+ or enhanced usual care. gPM+ consisted of five weekly group therapy sessions where lay, trained facilitators taught participants skills in stress management, problem-solving, and behavioral activation. Enhanced usual care consisted of a visit by International Medical Corps staff with information about services in the camp that could assist with mental health and other problems.
- At three months, gPM+ significantly reduced depression scores, disability, severity of personally identified problems, and inconsistent disciplinary parenting compared to enhanced usual care.
- Neither intervention had significant impacts on PTSD, anxiety, grief, disability, psychotic symptoms, or child mental health problems.
- The degree of trauma exposure and ongoing stressors among participants did not significantly impact results.

14. [Effects of the Mother-Child Education Program on Parenting Stress and Disciplinary Practices Among Refugee and Other Marginalized Communities in Lebanon: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial \(2019\)](#), Liliana A. Ponguta, Ghassan Issa, Lara Aoudeh, Cosette

Maalouf, Sascha D. Hein, Anna L. Zonderman, Liliya Katsovich, Kaveh Khoshnood, Johanna Bick, Abir Awar, Sawsan Nourallah, Sarah Householder, Christina C. Moore, Rima Salah, Pia R. Britto, James F. Leckman, *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*

Location: Lebanon

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Local NGO (Arab Resource Collective)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impacts of a group-based Mother-Child Education Program (MOCEP) on parenting stress and practices and children's social-emotional development among two refugee communities and one peri-urban community in Beirut, Lebanon. The program was implemented in three waves by the Arab Resource Collective between April 2015 and April 2016.
- 106 mother-child pairs were randomly assigned to either the intervention or a wait-list comparison group. The intervention, MOCEP, was delivered by specialist providers and it combined lectures and practical demonstrations of mother support and cognitive training components to provide mothers with techniques to support several child development domains.
- Mothers who attended MOCEP meetings reported less harsh disciplinary practices and less parenting stress. MOCEP had no impact on children's social-emotional development.

- This study had a small sample, and researchers reported an average attrition rate of 38 percent. As a result, researchers suggest that the lack of measurable effects may be because the majority of children attended other early childhood development or education programs at baseline.

15. [Efficacy of Writing for Recovery on Traumatic Grief Symptoms of Afghani Refugee Bereaved Adolescents \(2012\)](#), Mehrdad Kalantari, William Yule, Atle Dyregrov, Hamidtaher Neshatdoost, Sayed Jafar Ahmadi, *Omega*

Location: Iran

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Academic Institution (University of Isfahan)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- Researchers studied the impact of a manual-based group intervention, called Writing for Recovery, on trauma and grief symptoms among adolescent Afghan refugee students ages 12-18 enrolled in a school set up for refugees in Qom, Iran. The intervention was implemented by University of Isfahan-based researchers in 2009.
- 61 adolescents who had experienced trauma were randomly allocated to an intervention group, which received the Writing for Recovery program, or a comparison group. The intervention group completed six short writing sessions (both structured and unstructured writing) over three consecutive days to cope with trauma and grief symptoms.
- At one week, the intervention was found to decrease all but two traumatic grief symptoms; however, the researchers did not identify which specific symptoms decreased or what the results were for the other symptoms. This might have been due to the study design, which examined composite (as opposed to individual) symptom scores.
- Researchers stated that their planned six-month follow-up was not possible due to logistical issues, which made it impossible for them to evaluate mid-term impacts.

16. [Empowering IDP with SMS: A Randomized Controlled Trial in Bogotá \(2010\)](#), Mariana Blanco and Juan F. Vargas, *Social Science Research Network Working Papers*

Location: Colombia

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Government (Acción Social, Colombian Department for Social Prosperity)

Topic: [Health \(Increasing Uptake of Health Services\)](#)

- In coordination with the Colombian Department for Social Prosperity, researchers studied the effectiveness of an SMS campaign on benefit eligibility awareness among IDPs in Colombia. The intervention was delivered between September 2009 and February 2010.

- Registered internally displaced households in Bogotá were randomly assigned to receive SMS text messages that communicated their eligibility for social benefits or a comparison group with no intervention.
- At six months, researchers found that the intervention increased benefit eligibility awareness of treated households by 15 percent when compared to those who did not receive the intervention.
- The positive results suggest that SMS awareness interventions can be cost-effective, particularly for displaced populations that are mobile.
- This study suffered from large sample-size losses, which the authors suggest did not bias the results. The study did not disaggregate results by age or sex group.

17. **[Forced Displacement, Mental Health, and Child Development: Evidence from the Rohingya Refugees \(2022\)](#)**, Asad Islam, Tanvir Ahmed Mozumder, Tabassum Rahman, Tanvir Shatil, Abu Siddique, *QPE Working Paper*

Location: Bangladesh

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (BRAC)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In partnership with BRAC, from September 2019 to October 2020, researchers evaluated the impacts of a multifaceted group mother-child psychosocial support program on the psychological well-being of Rohingya refugee mothers as well as the mental, socioemotional, physical, cognitive, and anthropometric development of their children aged 2 and under.
- 3,499 mother-child pairs were randomly assigned to the intervention or a comparison group that attended weekly unstructured social gatherings with other mothers. The intervention was delivered by trained volunteers, who were also mothers, and consisted of 44 weekly sessions with psychoeducation, parenting support, and play activities.
- One month after the intervention ended, the intervention was found to improve both mothers' and children's trauma and depression severity and subjective well-being. Additionally, the program had small but significant impacts on children's communication and problem-solving skills, marginal impacts on social skills, and no impact on fine motor skills. Children's gender did not significantly impact results.
- Regular attendance was correlated with better mental health outcomes for mother-child pairs.
- Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, researchers suspended the intervention for two and a half months, and conducted roughly half of the sessions over the phone. Additionally, researchers reported differential attrition of 19 percent; higher in the comparison group relative to the intervention group.¹⁵

¹⁵ When baseline characteristics of mothers/children who attrited were compared with baseline characteristics of mothers/children who remained through endline, they were found to be similar in most ways except mothers being

18. [Guided Self-Help to Reduce Psychological Distress in South Sudanese Female Refugees in Uganda: A Cluster Randomized Trial \(2020\)](#), Wietse A. Tol, Marx R Leku, Daniel P. Lakin, Kenneth Carswell, Jura Augustinavicius, Alex Adaku, Teresa M. Au, Felicity L. Brown, Richard A. Bryant, Claudia Garcia-Moreno, Rashelle J. Musci, Peter Ventevogel, Ross G. White, Mark van Ommeren, *The Lancet Global Health*

Location: Uganda

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: IO (World Health Organization)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- Researchers studied the impact of a facilitator-led group-based self-help intervention on psychological distress among female Sudanese refugees living in Rhino Camp in Uganda. The program was implemented by the World Health Organization from May 2016 to January 2018.
- Within 14 randomly selected villages, 694 eligible Sudanese female refugees were randomly allocated to receive either the Self-Help Plus program or enhanced usual care. Self-Help Plus, based on a variant of CBT called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, consisted of five weekly group therapy sessions with 20-30 participants and was delivered by trained, lay, female facilitators.
- Immediately and three months post-intervention, the Self-Help Plus program resulted in significantly greater reductions in psychological distress relative to enhanced usual care.
- While researchers found that Self-Help Plus was associated with larger improvements in post-traumatic stress and depression symptoms three months after the intervention, impacts on other measures of psychological distress were no longer significant after three months.

19. [Impact Evaluation of the Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme \(2016\)](#), Francesca Battistin, *International Rescue Committee, Lebanon Cash Consortium, Save the Children*

Location: Lebanon

Method: RDD

Implementer Type: INGOs (Lebanon Cash Consortium: Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee, ACTED, CARE, Solidarités International, and World Vision International)

Topics: Health ([Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water](#), [MHPSS](#), [Increasing Uptake of Health Services](#)), [Household Welfare and Food Security](#)

- In 2015, researchers evaluated a cash assistance program known as the Lebanon Cash Consortium for economically vulnerable Syrian refugee households. Comparing households on either side of a proxy-means testing cutoff point, researchers evaluated

head of household, which was significant at the 5 percent level. Attrited mothers were also 'marginally' newer in the camp and their children were shorter in height, which was significant at the 10 percent level. A joint F-test suggested attrition was not differential by baseline characteristics.

the impacts of cash assistance on Syrian refugee households' self-reported measures of physical and material well-being.

- 247 households received unconditional cash transfers of US\$174 monthly for four to six months, and were compared to 261 households with a similar proxy-means test score that did not.
- Seven months after the last transfer, refugee households who received the cash had higher monthly expenditures, consumed more food and cooking gas, were more likely to count on work as their main source of income, and were less likely to rely on debt to pay rent. Cash was not found to increase dietary diversity or other food security measures.
- Recipient households reported a greater sense of psychological well-being and higher trust in the community, though they also reported higher levels of financial stress.
- The program did not have a significant impact on extreme coping strategies such as child labor, child marriage, or dangerous work.
- The cash program was found to increase reported levels of trust in the host community among recipient households.
- Notably, researchers reported that household size varied substantially within the sample and increased significantly from baseline to midline, which they attribute to childbirth, family reunification, and restructuring.

20. [Insecurity, Distress and Mental Health: Experimental and Randomized Controlled Trials of a Psychosocial Intervention for Youth Affected by the Syrian Crisis \(2018\)](#). Catherine Panter-Brick, Rana Dajani, Mark Eggerman, Sabrina Hermosilla, Amelia Sancilio, Alastair Ager, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*

Location: Jordan

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (Mercy Corps)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In collaboration with Mercy Corps, between March 2015 and February 2016 researchers evaluated the impacts of a facilitator-guided, group-based psychosocial intervention on insecurity, stress, mental health difficulties, and prosocial behavior among Syrian refugee and host community youth ages 12-18.
- 817 Syrian refugee and Jordanian youth from four cities were randomly allocated to receive the intervention or be placed on a wait-list comparison group. The intervention, called the Advancing Adolescents Programme, consisted of eight weeks of skills training and relationship-building group activities led by trained lay facilitators and coaches.
- Ten weeks after the intervention, the program was found to have positive impacts on measures of human insecurity (such as fears about the future and family safety), distress, and mental health outcomes. At 11 months, however, the effects were only sustained for measures of human insecurity.

- Syrian refugee youth with higher levels of trauma exposure and childhood adversity experienced more positive impacts than Jordanian host youth.
- The researchers suggested that in order for interventions to achieve long-term benefits, they need to enhance familial and structural support, as well as provide individual and interpersonal support.

21. [Interventions for Depression Symptoms among Adolescent Survivors of War and Displacement in Northern Uganda: A Randomized Controlled Trial \(2007\)](#), Paul Bolton, Judith Bass, Theresa Betancourt, Liesbeth Speelman, Grace Onyango, Kathleen F. Clougherty, Richard Neugebauer, Laura Muray, Helen Verdeli, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*

Location: Uganda

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGOs (World Vision and War Child)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In partnership with World Vision and War Child, from May 2005 to December 2005 researchers studied the impacts of two short group therapy- and activity-based interventions on depression, anxiety, and function among internally displaced adolescents living across two camps in Northern Uganda.
- 314 adolescents ages 14-17 were randomly assigned to one of three groups: interpersonal therapy, which focused on identifying and building skills to manage interpersonal problems; creative play, in which adolescents participated in creative activities (art, music, sports, games) to strengthen their verbal and nonverbal expression; or a wait-list comparison group. The interventions were led by trained lay facilitators and were offered weekly over 16 weeks.
- One month following the intervention, all three groups saw a decline in depression symptoms.
- Adolescent girls who received interpersonal therapy had significantly reduced rates of depression symptoms compared to both creative play and those who did not receive an intervention. That said, interpersonal therapy was not found to be effective at improving outcomes among adolescent boys.
- Neither interpersonal therapy nor creative play was effective at improving anxiety, conduct problems, or functioning.

22. [Keeping Clean Water Clean in a Malawi Refugee Camp: A Randomized Intervention Trial \(2001\)](#), Les Roberts, Yves Chartier, Oana Chartier, Grace Malenga, Michael Toole, Henry Rodka, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*

Location: Malawi

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: IO (UNHCR), Government (US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and INGO (Médecins Sans Frontières)

Topic: [Health \(Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water\)](#)

- In 1993, in partnership with UNHCR, Médecins Sans Frontières, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, researchers studied the effects of distributing improved water buckets on household water contamination among Mozambican refugees living in Nyamithuthu Camp in southern Malawi.
- 401 Mozambican refugee households were randomly allocated to receive a 20-liter water container with a cover and a spout for water collection, alongside a brief hygiene education program, or assigned to a comparison group.
- After four months, researchers found that the intervention decreased diarrheal disease in children under five, but did not have a significant impact on adults.
- The authors suggest that improved hygiene education needs to accompany water provision efforts, and that protection of water can produce health benefits even without chemical disinfection.

23. [Life out of the Shadows: Impacts of Amnesties in the Lives of Refugees \(2022\)](#), Ana María Ibáñez, Andrés Moya, María Adelaida Ortega, Sandra V. Rozo, Maria José Urbina, *World Bank Policy Research Working Papers*

Location: Colombia

Method: RDD

Implementer Type: Government (Colombian Ministry of Work)

Topics: [Health \(Increasing Uptake of Health Services\)](#), [Livelihoods](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impacts of large-scale regularization policy that allowed previously registered Venezuelan refugees access to social services, safety nets, and the right to work.
- The Colombian Ministry of Work's Permiso Especial de Permanencia (PEP) program was rolled out unexpectedly in 2018, which allowed researchers to use a fuzzy regression discontinuity design to compare consumption, health, and labor market outcomes between Venezuelan migrants who had previously registered in the census and were eligible for the PEP program and undocumented migrants who were ineligible for the program. In total, 3,896 migrants in 2,232 households were surveyed.
- The PEP program improved migrants' consumption, income, overall well-being, likelihood of having a formal job, and feelings of integration, compared to those who were ineligible for the program.
- Given the program was not implemented randomly, there are some self-selection issues. Mistrust and fear of being deported may have affected an individual's decision to register for the census and later apply for the program or not.

24. [More is Better: Evaluating the Impact of a Variation in Cash Assistance on the Reintegration Outcomes of Returning Afghan Refugees \(2022\)](#), Hisham Esper, Nandini Krishnan, Christina Wieser, *World Bank Policy Research Working Papers*

Location: Afghanistan

Method: RDD

Implementer Type: IO (UNHCR)

Topic: [Livelihoods](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impact of a change in the amount of cash assistance provided by UNHCR to Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan. Those who returned between July 2016 and March 2017 received a larger reintegration allowance of US\$350 per person, compared to the US\$150 returnees received after April 2017. Researchers used a regression discontinuity design to analyze the effect of the larger allowance on households' outcomes post-return.
- Participants who received US\$350 were more likely to own a home and purchase long-term assets, while those who received US\$150 were more likely to use it for immediate food consumption. The larger transfer also increased households' likelihood of being issued legal documentation for all household members.
- Researchers find no impact on the likelihood of having an employed household member or enrolling children in school approximately 16 months after receiving the cash.
- This is the first study to rigorously study the impacts of large cash transfer programs on post-return livelihood outcomes among refugees.

25. [Point-of-Use Water Treatment and Diarrhea Reduction in the Emergency Context: an Effectiveness Trial in Liberia \(2006\)](#), Shannon Doocy and Gilbert Burnham, *Tropical Medicine and International Health*

Location: Liberia

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee)

Topic: [Health \(Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water\)](#)

- In partnership with the International Rescue Committee, researchers studied the impacts of improved water treatment and storage on reducing diarrhea among IDP households living in camps in Liberia from July to September 2004.
- 400 IDP households from two camps were randomly assigned to either the intervention or to a comparison group. Intervention households received a point-of-use flocculant-disinfectant product and an improved water storage container and funnel, while the comparison group only received the improved water storage container.
- After three months, households with both the improved bucket and the point-of-use flocculant-disinfectant product had significantly larger reductions in diarrhea incidence (90 percent) and diarrhea prevalence (83 percent) relative to comparison households.

26. [Preventing Violence against Refugee Adolescent Girls: Findings from a Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial in Ethiopia \(2018\)](#), Lindsay Stark, Khudejha Asghar, Ilana Seff, Gary Yu, Teame Tesfay Gessesse, Leora Ward, Asham Assazene Baysa, Amy Neiman, Kathryn L. Falb, *British Medical Journal Global Health*

Location: Ethiopia

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee)

Topic: [Health \(Violence Prevention\)](#)

- In partnership with the International Rescue Committee, researchers evaluated the impact of a life skills and safe spaces program on experiences of violence and social outcomes among Sudanese and South Sudanese adolescent girls residing in refugee camps in Ethiopia from July 2015 to September 2016.
- Sudanese and South Sudanese girls ages 13-19 and their caregivers were recruited and randomly allocated to either receive the life skills and safe spaces program or to a wait-list comparison group. The intervention, Creating Opportunities through Mentorship, Parental Involvement and Safe Spaces (COMPASS), consisted of 30 weekly life skills sessions in safe spaces for girls, and eight complimentary discussion group sessions for their caregivers. The girls' sessions were delivered by trained female refugee mentors, while the caregivers' sessions were delivered by International Rescue Committee staff.
- At six months, the intervention was found to improve social support networks, such as having friends and trusted non-family female adults. It was also found to improve gender attitudes around rites of passage, such as completing an additional year of schooling, waiting to get married, and having children after the age of 18.
- COMPASS did not reduce girls' exposure to specific forms of violence and did not affect girls' perceived feelings of safety.
- Researchers suggested that a longer period of follow-up may have been necessary to document changes in violence. Their third round of data collection was not possible due to funding issues.

27. [Prolonged Contact Does Not Reshape Locals' Attitudes toward Migrants in Wartime Settings: Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan \(2022\)](#), Yang-Yang Zhou and Jason Lyall, *OSF Preprint*; and [Can Economic Assistance Shape Combatant Support in Wartime? Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan \(2019\)](#), Yang-Yang Zhou, Jason Lyall, Kosue Imai, *American Political Science Review*

Location: Afghanistan

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (Mercy Corps)

Topics: [Livelihoods](#), [Social Cohesion](#)

- In collaboration with Mercy Corps in 2015-16, researchers evaluated the effects of vocational training, an unconditional cash transfer, and both interventions together on economic outcomes, attitudes towards out-groups, and support for combatants among internally displaced and host “at-risk” youth in Kandahar, Afghanistan.
- 2,597 “at-risk” youth were randomly assigned to receive a vocational skills training program, to receive a one-time unconditional cash transfer of US\$75, to receive both interventions, or to a wait-list comparison group. The vocational training program—Introducing New Vocational Education and Skills Training (INVEST)—involved both hard and soft skills education for three or six months. Participants were given trade-specific start-up kits upon program completion. The unconditional cash transfers were distributed as a lump sum via a mobile phone-based electronic payment system.
- Eight months after the intervention, vocational training alone had a significant impact on the likelihood of having earned cash in the past month. The cash intervention had no impact on personal net income or household assets.
- The INVEST program, which the researchers suggest facilitated intergroup contact between internally displaced and host community youth, did not impact hosts’ perceptions or attitudes toward internally displaced youth. Null findings hold regardless of course duration, participant composition, and participant traits (age, gender, ethnicity, or prior exposure to violence).
- The authors argued that the null results suggest that even intensive intergroup contact interventions may struggle to shift attitudes in active conflict settings.

28. [Psychosocial Interventions and Emotion Regulation among War-Affected Children \(2014\)](#),

Raija-Leena Punamäki, Kirsi Peltonen, Marwan Diab, Samir Qouta, *Traumatology*; and [Intervention Effectiveness among War-Affected Children: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial on Improving Mental Health \(2012\)](#), Samir Qouta, Esa Palosaari, Marwan Diab, Raija-Leena Punamäki, *Journal of Traumatic Stress*

Location: Palestine (Gaza)

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Academic Researchers (Islamic University Gaza and University of Tampere)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- Researchers studied the impacts of an extracurricular group-based CBT intervention, Teaching Recovery Techniques, delivered by trained counselors on emotional regulation and mental health among war-affected Palestinian students ages 10-13. The program was implemented by academic researchers beginning in May 2009.
- 482 school classes were randomly allocated to Teaching for Recovery Techniques extracurricular groups, or to a wait-list comparison group. Those assigned to the intervention received two-hour, twice-weekly sessions for four weeks, aiming to help

children develop effective coping skills, empowerment, and emotion regulation through narrative, imagery, body- and mind-related, and psychoeducational techniques.

- After six and nine months, the intervention was not found to affect children's emotion regulation, but it did improve measures of mental health.
- Researchers suggest the intervention may have been too short to combat children's hardships and did not adequately respond to children's specific emotional needs.

29. [Randomized Control Trial of a CBT Trauma Recovery Program in Palestinian Schools \(2013\)](#), Ian G. Barron, Ghassan Abdallah, Patrick Smith, *Journal of Loss and Trauma*

Location: Palestine (West Bank)

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (Children and War Foundation)

Topics: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In collaboration with the Children and War Foundation, researchers studied the impacts of a short group-based, CBT trauma recovery program delivered by trained school counselors on trauma symptoms among Palestinian children ages 11-14.
- School counselors were trained in an extracurricular group-based CBT intervention, Teaching for Recovery Techniques, and then randomly assigned to either deliver the program immediately (intervention group) or deliver the program after the evaluation was completed (wait-list comparison group).
- Students in intervention classrooms received five weekly, one-hour group sessions that aimed to build effective coping skills, empowerment, and emotion regulation through narrative, imagery, body- and mind-related, and psychoeducational techniques. Students in the wait-list group received the usual school health education curriculum.
- After two weeks, students who received the intervention reported significant reductions in post-traumatic stress, depression, traumatic grief, negative school impact, and mental health difficulty.
- The authors suggest that the Teaching for Recovery Techniques program can be effective at reducing trauma symptoms among displaced children in contexts of ongoing violence, and that schools can be an effective venue for delivering MHPSS interventions in such contexts.

30. [Remedial Programming and Skill-Targeted SEL in Low-Income and Crisis-Affected](#)

[Contexts: Experimental Evidence From Niger \(2022\)](#), Lindsay Brown, Ha Yeon Kim, Carly Tubbs Dolan, Autumn Brown, Jennifer Sklar, J. Lawrence Aber, *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*

Location: Niger

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee)

Topic: [Education](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impacts of two forms of nonformal remedial support programming infused with SEL components on academic and social and emotional outcomes among local and internally displaced Nigerian and Nigerian refugee children in grades 2-4. The programs were implemented over 22 weeks in the 2016-17 school year by the International Rescue Committee.
- 30 schools in Diffa and Maine-Soroa with 900 students each were paired and randomized into two groups: a Healing Classrooms group, which consisted of a six-hour weekly remedial tutoring program, and a Healing Classrooms and SEL group, which consisted of the Healing Classrooms intervention in addition to targeted social and emotional learning activities (mindfulness and brain games). Within both groups, eligible students were further randomized into either an immediate delivery group or a wait-list comparison group.
- Average attendance for the programs was 58 percent in both groups, attributed mainly to an ongoing strike in public schools in the Diffa region.
- At 22 weeks, both interventions significantly improved reading and math skills among children. The addition of SEL programming did not augment these effects.
- The addition of SEL programming did, however, improve children's grades in public school compared to those who only had access to Healing Classrooms. Those who only had access to Healing Classrooms had grades similar to those without access to the tutoring program.

31. [School Feeding Reduces Anemia Prevalence in Adolescent Girls and Other Vulnerable Household Members in a Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial in Uganda \(2019\)](#), Sarah Adelman, Daniel O. Gilligan, Joseph Konde-Lule, Harold Alderman, *The Journal of Nutrition*; and [The Impact of Food for Education Programs on School Participation in Northern Uganda \(2012\)](#), Harold Alderman, Daniel O. Gilligan, Kim Lehrer, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*

Location: Uganda

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: IO (WFP) and INGO (World Vision)

Topics: [Education](#), [Health \(Nutrition\)](#)

- From 2006 to 2007, researchers evaluated the impact of two WFP school feeding programs on schooling outcomes and anemia prevalence among internally displaced households with children in IDP camps in Northern Uganda.¹⁶ The programs lasted 15 months.¹⁷

¹⁶ Alderman, Gilligan, and Lehrer (2012) included households with children ages 6-17. While Adelman et al. (2019) included primary school-age adolescent girls, adult women, and children 6-59 months.

¹⁷ Displaced households were resettled out of IDP camps beginning in March 2006 which led to some disruption of the programs. Peace talks between the government of Uganda and the Lord Resistance Army began in July 2006 leading to relative security in the region and the official resettlement of IDPs.

- 31 camps were randomly assigned to either an in-school feeding program that provided enrolled students a mid-morning snack and lunch, a take-home rations program that provided rations to households once a month conditional on school attendance, or a wait-list comparison group.
- Only the in-school feeding program was found to significantly increase enrollment among children aged 6-13, suggesting that providing food to students in school, rather than households, may boost enrollment.
- At 12 months, both programs increased school attendance for children aged 10-17.
- Both in-school meals and take-home rations were found to reduce anemia prevalence in adolescent girls ages 10-13.
- Importantly, both programs had positive unintended consequences on nutrition outcomes for participants' household members. Researchers found that in-school meals improved the height-for-age of participants' younger siblings, and take-home rations improved anemia rates in mothers of young girls.

32. [Short-Term Effects of a Writing Intervention Among Adolescents in Gaza \(2012\)](#), Ida Ingridstatter Lange-Nielsen, Silje Kolltveit, Abdel Aziz Mousa Thabet, Atle Dyregrov, Stale Pallesen, Tom Backer Johnsen, Jon Christian Laberg, *Journal of Loss and Trauma*

Location: Palestine (Gaza)

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Local NGO (Child and Family Training and Counseling Center)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In collaboration with the Child and Family Training and Counseling Center in 2009-10, researchers studied the short-term impacts of a manual-based group intervention, called Writing for Recovery, on trauma and grief symptoms among adolescent refugee students ages 12-18 living in Beach refugee camp in Gaza.
- 139 refugee adolescents were recruited from six schools in the camp and randomly assigned to the intervention or to a wait-list comparison group. Students who received the intervention completed six short writing sessions (both structured and unstructured writing) over three consecutive days. The intervention was administered in a school setting by trained teachers.
- Immediately post-intervention, the program was not found to affect PTSD or anxiety symptoms and contributed to a short spike in depression symptoms. However, four to five months post-intervention, researchers found no effect on depression symptoms.
- Students in the comparison group received the program after 19 days, which made it difficult to measure effects for the four to five-month follow-up. Additionally, researchers reported differential attrition, with more wait-list comparison group students dropping out.

33. [Supporting Micro-enterprise in Humanitarian Programming: Impact Evaluation of Business Grants vs. Unconditional Cash Transfer \(2022\)](#), Arays Abdullahi, Mohamed Ali, Elijah Kipchumba, Munshi Sulaiman, *Journal of African Economies*; and [More Cash, Bigger Impacts? A Field Experiment of Cash Transfers in Somalia \(2018\)](#), Billow Hassan, Stephen Mutiso, Munshi Sulaiman, *Save the Children*

Location: Somalia

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (Save the Children)

Topics: [Education](#), [Health \(Increasing Uptake of Health Services\)](#), [Household Welfare and Food Security](#), [Livelihoods](#)

- Researchers compared the impacts of different sizes of business grants against unconditional cash transfers on livelihoods outcomes (business ownership, income, and assets) and child welfare outcomes among IDPs and returnees in Somalia in 2016-17. The program was implemented by Save the Children.
- 795 households were randomly assigned to receive either an unconditional cash transfer of US\$100-250 in two monthly installments, a small one-off business grant of US\$175, a medium-sized business grant of US\$500, or a large business grant of US\$1000. Those who received the business grants also received a short business training, and were instructed to use the cash for income-generating activities.
- Three to four months after the intervention, business grants resulted in a higher likelihood of business ownership, income, and savings compared to unconditional cash transfers. After three and a half years, effects only persist for households who received medium and large business grants, with participants being significantly more likely to own non-farm businesses.
- Large business grants had a small effect on school enrollment compared to cash transfers, though no business grants had significant impacts on child nutrition or health.
- Researchers also found that the impact of the medium and large grants converged after three and a half years, suggesting that the medium grant was the most cost-effective.
- This is one of few studies that looked at the impacts of receiving cash in a humanitarian context on labor market outcomes, which is increasingly relevant as humanitarian actors attempt to shift to longer-term resilience building.

34. [Supporting Syrian Families Displaced by Armed Conflict: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial of the Caregiver Support Intervention \(2020\)](#), Kenneth E. Miller, Gabriela V. Koppenol-Gonzalez, Maguy Arnous, Fadila Tossyeh, Alexandra Chen, Nayla Nahas, Mark J.D. Jordans, *Child Abuse & Neglect*

Location: Lebanon

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (War Child Holland)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- Between 2017-2019, in partnership with War Child Holland, researchers evaluated the feasibility of a nine-session caregiver support intervention on Syrian refugee caregivers' stress, stress management, psychosocial well-being, parenting, and child well-being as reported by parents.
- 78 families, with 151 parents, were randomly assigned to receive the intervention or to a wait-list comparison group. The intervention consisted of nine weekly group meetings co-facilitated by trained community members with supervision from a social worker and a Lebanese psychologist. The meetings covered caregiver well-being, stress management, and coping skills, and attempted to strengthen positive parenting techniques, such as the use of non-violent discipline methods.
- The intervention significantly increased parental warmth and responsiveness, decreased harsh parenting, lowered stress, and improved stress management, measured immediately post-intervention. Parents who received the intervention reported improvements in psychosocial well-being for both themselves and their children.

35. [Supporting Syrian Refugee Children's Academic and Social-Emotional Learning in National Education Systems: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial of Nonformal Remedial Support and Mindfulness Programs in Lebanon \(2021\)](#), Carly Tubbs Dolan, Ha Yeon Kim, Lindsay Brown, Kalina Gjicali, Serena Borsani, Samer El Houchaimi, J. Lawrence Aber, *American Educational Research Journal*

Location: Lebanon

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee)

Topic: [Education](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impacts of two versions of a 16-week after-school tutoring program on academic and social and emotional outcomes among Syrian refugee children ages 5-15 enrolled in second-shift classes in public schools in Lebanon. The program was implemented by the International Rescue Committee in 2016-17.
- One version of the program (SEL-informed tutoring) consisted of teacher professional development training, a school kit for students, and academic instruction in Arabic, math, and a second language three days a week. The other version tested the *additional* impacts of adding mindfulness-based stress reduction activities to the tutoring program.
- 4,784 students from 87 community-based sites were recruited and randomized, by region, into three groups: tutoring-only, tutoring plus mindfulness, and a wait-list comparison group that included students who only attended public school.
- Neither version of the program was found to impact students' overall literacy and numeracy. Tutoring and mindfulness together were found to improve certain basic academic skills.
- Both programs significantly improved children's perceptions of their school environment and had marginal positive impacts on children's behavioral regulation skills.

- While all children reported a decrease in school-related stress, those with access to tutoring plus mindfulness reported a smaller decline in school-related stress, which the authors speculate may have been because the mindfulness activities helped students become more aware of and more comfortable communicating their feelings of stress.
- Attendance for both programs was on average 50 percent. Therefore, the impacts reported are from having access to the program, rather than the average program impact for those who attended.
- In an unpublished follow-up study, authors evaluated the relative impacts of a longer duration of the tutoring program (10 vs. 26 weeks) and the addition of skill-targeted activities to the longer version of the program (26 weeks). The authors found that compared to the shorter cycle, the longer duration led to marginal improvements in students' literacy outcomes, although it was also shown to decrease children's perceptions of their school and tutoring environment. Students with access to two cycles of the program with skill-targeted activities reported higher school-related stress and did not show other significant differences in social and emotional or academic outcomes.

36. [No Lost Generation: Supporting the School Participation of Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon \(2019\)](#), Jacobus de Hoop, Mitchell Morey, David Seidenfeld, *The Journal of Development Studies*

Location: Lebanon

Method: RDD

Implementer Type: IOs (WFP, UNICEF) and Government (Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education)

Topics: [Education](#), Health ([MHPSS](#), [Increasing Uptake of Health Services](#)), [Household Welfare and Food Security](#)

- Researchers evaluated an unconditional cash transfer program for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, called No Lost Generation, intended to cover the cost of commuting to school and offset wages foregone because children were attending school instead of working. The program was implemented jointly by Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UNICEF, and the WFP during the 2016-17 school year.
- 1,440 households with children of primary school age were randomly assigned to receive a monthly unconditional cash transfer, while geographically similar households in neighboring governorates were assigned to a comparison group. The benefit for households with children ages 5-9 was US\$20 monthly, and the benefit for households with children ages 10-14 was US\$65 monthly. Transfers were unconditional but labeled as being intended to facilitate school attendance among children.
- At four months, researchers found that children who received the intervention and were previously enrolled in school spent roughly 20 percent more time in school relative to children in comparison areas. Researchers suggest the program led to improvements in

educational outcomes among children enrolled in school and increases in household expenditure on children.

- The authors reported an overall increase in school enrollment among Syrian children in Lebanon during the period of evaluation, but they could not confirm that this was solely based on cash transfers. Possible positive impacts of the program may have been reduced by limited school capacity in afternoon shift schools.¹⁸

37. [Testing the Impact of a Skill-Targeted Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum and Its Variation by Pre- and Post Migration Conflict Experiences: A Cluster Randomized Trial With Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon \(2023\)](#), Ha Yeon Kim, Lindsay Brown, Carly Tubbs Dolan, Kalina Gjicali, Rena Deitz, Maria del Sol Prieto Bayona, J. Lawrence Aber, *Journal of Educational Psychology*

Location: Lebanon

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee)

Topic: [Education](#)

- Researchers evaluated the relative impacts of adding a skill-targeted curriculum (5CSEL) to after-school tutoring programs on social, emotional, academic, and mental health outcomes among Syrian refugee children ages 6-12 in Lebanon. The International Rescue Committee implemented the programs over 24 weeks during the 2017-2018 school year.
- 57 sites with 4,366 students were randomly assigned to one of two programs. The tutoring program (also evaluated in Tubbs Dolan et al. 2021) consisted of teacher professional development training, academic instruction in Arabic, math, and a second language, and homework support sessions three days a week. The 5CSEL enhancement added a 30-minute session each day that included a lesson designed to target and develop five cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral skills: executive function, emotion regulation, positive social skills, conflict resolution, and perseverance.
- At 24 weeks, the 5CSEL program was not found to be more effective at improving any of the cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioral skills evaluated among Syrian refugee children compared to the basic tutoring program.
- The authors found no evidence that children's pre- and post-migration and conflict experiences impacted the results, and therefore concluded that the 5CSEL program does not cause additional benefit or harm to refugee children with severe conflict exposure.

¹⁸ MEHE had implemented a variety of other policies to enable primary school aged Syrian children to attend school prior, including waiving primary school fees, providing basic supplies, waiving the need for residency documentation, expanding supply by opening an afternoon shift dedicated to Syrian children, and providing an accelerated learning program for children who had been out of school.

38. [The Efficacy of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Depression among Syrian Refugees: Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial \(2016\)](#), Ceren Acarturk, Emre Konuk, Mustafa Cetinkaya, Ibrahim Senay, Marit Sijbrandij, Birgul Gulen, Pim Cuijpers, *Psychological Medicine*

Location: Turkey

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Government (Kilis Refugee Camp Psychological Support Centre, administered by the Turkish Government)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In collaboration with a Turkish Government-administered psychological support center in Kilis refugee camp on the Turkish-Syrian border, researchers studied the efficacy of an interactive psychotherapy intervention, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), on reducing PTSD and depression symptoms among adult Syrian refugees. The study was conducted between September 2013 and June 2014.
- 70 adult Syrian refugees, mainly female (74 percent), who had a PTSD diagnosis were randomly assigned to either receive the intervention or to a wait-list comparison group. The intervention was delivered in individual sessions by therapists trained in EMDR and supervised by mental health professionals.
- Immediately post-intervention and in a one-month follow-up, EDMR was found to reduce both PTSD and depression symptoms.
- Adults in the wait-list comparison group received the intervention after a five-week follow-up, which made long-term impact impossible to measure. This study also suffered from large attrition rates (28 percent), mainly among female participants.

39. [The EmpaTeach Intervention for Reducing Physical Violence from Teachers to Students in Nyarugusu Refugee Camp: A Cluster-Randomised Controlled Trial \(2021\)](#), Camilla Fabbri, Katherine Rodrigues, Baptiste Leurent, Elizabeth Allen, Mary Qiu, Martin Zuakulu, Dennis Nombo, Michael Kaemingk, Alexandra De Filippo, Gerard Torrats-Espinosa, Elizabeth Shayo, Vivien Barongo, Giulia Greco, Wietse Tol, Karen M. Devries, *PLOS Medicine*

Location: Tanzania

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee)

Topic: [Health \(Violence Prevention\)](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impact of EmpaTeach—a CBT-inspired, self-guided group teacher training—on refugee students' self-reported experience of physical and emotional violence from teachers, depressive symptoms, and school attendance. The intervention was implemented by the International Rescue Committee in Nyarugusu camp in the Kigoma region of Tanzania between January and March 2019.

- 27 primary and secondary schools were randomly assigned to either deliver the EmpaTeach intervention to teachers or to a wait-list comparison group. Teachers in intervention schools were offered 12 group training sessions led by their peers over ten weeks. Sessions included empathy-building exercises and group work to shift teachers' negative thought and behavior patterns related to corporal punishment.
- EmpaTeach did not improve refugee students' experiences of physical or emotional violence from teachers two and ten months after the intervention.
- Researchers stated that a camp-wide educational policy change during intervention implementation resulted in 14.7 percent of teachers in the intervention group receiving a compressed version of the intervention.

40. [The Impact of a Family Skills Training Intervention among Burmese Migrant Families in Thailand: A Randomized Controlled Trial \(2017\)](#), Eve S. Puffer, Jeannie Annan, Amanda L. Sim, Carmel Salhi, Theresa S. Betancourt, *PLOS One* and [Improving Mental Health Outcomes of Burmese Migrant and Displaced Children in Thailand: a Community-Based Randomized Controlled Trial of a Parenting and Family Skills Intervention \(2017\)](#), Jeannie Annan, Amanda Sim, Eve S. Puffer, Carmel Salhi, Theresa S. Betancourt, *Prevention Science*
Location: Thailand

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (International Rescue Committee)

Topics: Health ([MHPSS](#), [Violence Prevention](#))

- In partnership with the International Rescue Committee, researchers evaluated the impacts of a parenting and family skills intervention for children ages 8-12 and their caregivers on parent-child relationship quality, discipline practices, and family functioning among displaced Burmese migrant and refugee families in Thailand between 2011-13.
- 479 Burmese displaced families were recruited and randomly assigned to either the intervention or a wait-list comparison group. The intervention, Happy Families, consisted of 12 weekly parallel group sessions for caregivers and their children, followed by a joint play session. Sessions were delivered by program staff and community-based lay facilitators. Caregiver sessions included information on appropriate developmental expectations, harsh punishment, non-violent discipline strategies, positive communication, and stress management. Topics for children included communication skills, the effects of drugs and alcohol, problem-solving, recognizing feelings, and dealing with criticism and anger.
- At one month, the intervention was shown to improve the quality of parent-child interactions, increase family cohesion and communication, reduce negative family interactions, reduce children's externalizing behavior (aggressive behavior, rule-breaking behavior, and social problems), and improve child attention problems.

- Changes in discipline practices were mixed, with decreases in children’s reports of spanking and slapping, no impacts on the use of positive discipline strategies, and inconclusive impacts on the use of harsh discipline practices.

41. [The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Evidence from a Multidimensional Regression Discontinuity Design \(2022\)](#), Nisreen Salti, Jad Chaaban, Wael Moussa, Alexandria Irani, Rima Al Mokdad, Zeina Jamaluddine, Hala Ghattas, *Journal of Development Economics*

Location: Lebanon

Method: RDD

Implementer Type: IOs (WFP and UNHCR)

Topics: Health ([Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water](#), [Nutrition](#), [MHPSS](#), [Increasing Uptake of Health Services](#)), [Household Welfare and Food Security](#), [Livelihoods](#)

- Researchers evaluated the impact of multipurpose cash assistance delivered by WFP and UNHCR to Syrian refugee households in Lebanon between 2017 and 2019. An unconditional cash transfer of approximately US\$175 monthly was provided to eligible households.
- The evaluation examined impacts for recipients who received assistance for 12 months which was then discontinued, recipients who received short-run cash assistance (12 months or less), and recipients who received long-run cash assistance (12 months or more), compared with non-recipient households. The final sample included 6,207 households.
- Cash assistance increased household expenditures for all recipients, though long-run cash recipients benefited the most from the program. Long-run recipient households spent more on food and other household expenditures, had higher-quality housing, were more likely to have their children enrolled in formal schooling, and had lower levels of child labor.
- Long-run recipients were found to be 6.9 percentage points less likely to participate in the labor force than non-recipients, which researchers suggested may be because these recipients chose to reduce their participation in “low-paid, dangerous, or undesirable labor activities...or low-risk but low-profit activities.”
- Results suggested that longer cash cycles may allow households to plan for the future and decrease participation in risky or low-return work.
- Importantly, this study is the only study in this review that investigates the impact of discontinuation on previous cash transfer recipients.

42. [The Impact of the Classroom/Community/Camp-Based Intervention \(CBI\) Program on Palestinian Children \(2014\)](#), Vivian Khamis, Robert Macy, Veerle Coignez, *Save the Children*

Location: Palestine (West Bank and Gaza)

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (Save the Children)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In July 2003, in partnership with Save the Children, researchers evaluated the impact of a group-based structured activity program known as the Classroom/Camp/Community-Based Intervention (CBI) on the mental health of Palestinian children and adolescents ages 6-16 living in the West Bank and Gaza.
- 664 children and adolescents were randomly assigned either to the intervention, which consisted of 15 structured expressive-behavioral group activity sessions over five weeks classroom delivered by trained teachers, or to a wait-list comparison group.
- Up to ten days after the program ended, researchers found that the program improved mental health outcomes for boys and girls ages 6-11 and female adolescents ages 12-16, improving reactions to traumatic events, preventing negative attributions and perceptions, increasing hope, and preventing an increase in emotional and behavioral difficulties.
- Notably, researchers found limited impacts on a number of measured outcomes for male adolescents ages 12-16, and negative impacts on their reactions to and coping strategies for traumatic events.

43. [The Psychosocial Value of Employment: Evidence from a Refugee Camp \(2022\)](#),

Reshmaan Hussam, Fatima Tuz Zahra, Erin Kelley, Gregory Lane, *American Economic Review*

Location: Bangladesh

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: Local NGO (PULSE Bangladesh)

Topics: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#), [Livelihoods](#)

- Researchers benchmarked the impacts of a cash-for-work program against unconditional cash transfers on psychosocial well being, economic decision-making, time-use and consumption among Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The program was implemented by PULSE Bangladesh in late 2019.
- In this setting, Rohingya refugees are substantially limited by regulations outlawing formal work, in addition to movement restrictions that limit access to informal work in urban centers near the camps.
- Researchers randomly assigned 149 camp blocks, each with five refugees, to one of three groups: a large cash group, which received US\$5.30 weekly; a cash-for-work group where participants were offered US\$1.77 per day of work; or a comparison group which received US\$0.60 weekly over eight weeks. Households in the cash-for-work group were assigned two to four days of work per week, and further randomized into either receiving or not receiving a set work schedule, in order to vary uncertainty about their near future. In total, 745 Rohingya adult refugees were included in the study.

- The study found that employment generated significant psychosocial benefits—at a magnitude four times greater than cash alone—relative to the comparison group. The psychosocial impact of cash alone was quite small. The employment intervention was also found to significantly improve physical health and cognitive function.
- The effects of employment on psychosocial well-being were concentrated among males, who were 30 percent less likely to be depressed than their non-employed counterparts. Women benefited almost equally from both the employment and the cash alone.
- Researchers did not find any significant differences between the employment and cash interventions on overall consumption or time use.
- The study's findings suggest that idleness, among male refugees in particular, can be detrimental even if the individuals are receiving cash transfers, and that being offered employment in exchange for an equivalent amount of cash may augment a range of outcomes. This finding is particularly relevant for contexts in which refugees' right to work is constrained.

44. [Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by Trained Lay Counselors in an African Refugee Settlement: A Randomized Controlled Trial \(2008\)](#), Frank Neuner, Patience Lamaro Onyut, Verena Ertl, Michael Odenwald, Elisabeth Schauer, Thomas Elbert, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*

Location: Uganda

Method: RCT

Implementer Type: INGO (Vivo International) and Academic Researchers (University of Konstanz and Mbarara University of Science and Technology)

Topic: [Health \(MHPSS\)](#)

- In 2003-04, researchers studied the impacts of two short-term PTSD interventions, NET and flexible trauma counseling, to refugees living in Nakivale refugee settlement in Uganda. The program was delivered by six lay counselors trained over six weeks by personnel from Vivo International, the University of Konstanz, and Mbarara University of Science and Technology.
- 277 Rwandan and Somali refugees diagnosed with PTSD were randomly allocated to NET, trauma counseling, or a comparison group. Refugees in both interventions participated in six biweekly sessions. Those in NET constructed detailed chronological accounts of their experiences with the help of a counselor, while those in trauma counseling received a more flexible program based on their current needs.
- Nine months post-interventions, both the NET and trauma counseling interventions were found to reduce PTSD symptoms among refugees. However, the difference between the two intervention groups was not significant.
- The study suffered from high attrition rates, and the results were not disaggregated by sex, age, race, or trauma experience.

Annex I: Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria <i>All the following were required for inclusion</i>	
1	The study evaluates an intervention implemented in an LMIC as defined by the World Bank’s income classification.
2	The study reports the impacts of an intervention on a displaced population, including refugees and IDPs.
3	The study reports impacts <i>only</i> for a displaced population OR the study disaggregates the impact of an intervention conducted by displacement status in contexts where the sample was mixed (e.g. 50 percent host community, 50 percent refugee).
4	<p>The study uses a rigorous impact evaluation methodology as defined by a Maryland Scale classification level of 4 or 5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Level 4 includes quasi-experimental studies that exploit quasi-randomness in treatment allocation. Designs that fit this category are Instrumental Variables (IV) and Regression Discontinuity Designs (RDD). ● Level 5 is reserved for Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) that involve explicit randomization into one or more intervention groups, and often a comparison group that does not receive an intervention.
5	The study was published prior to January 31, 2023.
6	Results are publicly available OR will be made public.

Annex II: Table of Included Studies

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
A Comparison of Narrative Exposure Therapy, Supportive Counseling, and Psychoeducation for Treating Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in an African Refugee Settlement (2004)	Neuner et al.	Uganda (Sudanese refugees in a camp setting)	RCT	NET, counseling, psycho-education	Health (MHPSS)	3-4 weeks	4 months and 1 year
A Transdiagnostic Community-Based Mental Health Treatment for Comorbid Disorders: Development and Outcomes of a Randomized Controlled Trial among Burmese Refugees in Thailand (2014)	Bolton et al.	Thailand (Burmese adult refugees)	RCT	Common Elements Treatment Approach-transdiagnostic	Health (MHPSS)	13 weeks	1 month
An Adaptive Targeted Field Experiment: Job Search Assistance for Refugees in Jordan (2020)	Caria et al.	Jordan (Syrian refugee and Jordanian job seekers in urban setting)	RCT	Cash, information, psychological support Value: US\$92	Livelihoods, Social Cohesion	4 weeks	2 and 4 months

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Building Social Cohesion between Christians and Muslims through Soccer in Post-ISIS Iraq (2020)	Mousa	Iraq (IDP Iraqi Christians displaced by ISIS and Iraqi Muslims)	RCT	Intergroup soccer league	Social Cohesion	8-10 weeks	Post intervention and 6 months
Building Social Cohesion in Ethnically Mixed Schools: An Intervention on Perspective Taking (2021)	Alan et al.	Turkey (Syrian refugee and Turkish host children in a school setting)	RCT	Teacher training	Education, Health (Violence Prevention), Social Cohesion	1 year	Post intervention
Can Redistribution Change Policy Views? Aid and Attitudes toward Refugees in Uganda (2023)	Baseler et al.	Uganda (Congolese refugees and Ugandan micro-entrepreneurs in an urban setting)	RCT	Cash, information, business grants, mentorship Value: US\$135	Livelihoods, Social Cohesion	6 months, 2 years	2 weeks and 16 months
Cash-Like Vouchers Improve Psychological Well-Being of Vulnerable and Displaced Persons Fleeing Armed Conflict (2022)	Quattrochi et al.	DRC (Vulnerable IDPs and local hosts in 25 villages)	RCT	Vouchers Value: US\$55, US\$75, US\$95	Health (MHPSS), Household Welfare and Food Security, Social Cohesion	1 month	6 weeks and 1 year

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Children and Mothers in War: An Outcome Study of a Psychosocial Intervention Program (2001)	Dybdahl	Bosnia and Herzegovina (IDP mother-child dyads in camp and urban settings)	RCT	Psychosocial support	Health (MHPSS)	5 months	Post intervention
Community-Implemented Trauma Therapy for Former Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2011)	Ertl et al.	Uganda (displaced former child soldiers living in IDP camps)	RCT	NET	Health (MHPSS)	3-4 weeks	12 months
Comparing Cash and Voucher Transfers in a Humanitarian Context: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo (2017)	Aker	DRC (IDPs in an informal camp)	RCT	Cash vs. Voucher Value: US\$130	Health (Increasing Uptake of Health Services), Household Welfare and Food Security, Livelihoods	7 months	Post intervention

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Does Aid Reduce Anti-refugee Violence? Evidence from Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (2020) Emergency Economies: The Impact of Cash Assistance in Lebanon (2014)	Lehman and Masterson	Lebanon (Severely food-insecure Syrian refugee and host households in an urban setting)	RDD	Cash	Education, Health (Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water), Household Welfare and Food Security, Livelihoods, Social Cohesion	6 months	Post intervention
Economic Transfers and Social Cohesion in a Refugee-Hosting Setting (2019) The Effect of Cash, Vouchers and Food Transfers on Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Northern Ecuador (2016) Cash, Food, or Vouchers? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Northern Ecuador (2014)	Valli et al. Hidrobo et al. Hidrobo et al.	Ecuador (Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorian households in urban settings)	RCT	Cash, voucher, Food transfers Value: US\$40 per month (\$240 total)	Health (Violence Prevention), Household Welfare and Food Security, Social Cohesion	6 months	2 months

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Effectiveness of a Brief Group Behavioral Intervention for Common Mental Disorders in Syrian Refugees in Jordan: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2022)	Bryant et al.	Jordan (Syrian adult refugees with children ages 10-16 in a camp setting)	RCT	Group problem management plus (gPM+)	Health (MHPSS)	5 weeks	3 months
Effects of the Mother-Child Education Program on Parenting Stress and Disciplinary Practices Among Refugee and Other Marginalized Communities in Lebanon: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial (2019)	Ponguta et al.	Lebanon (Palestinian, Syrian, and other refugee households with at least one child in urban settings)	RCT	Mother-Child Education Program	Health (MHPSS)	6-8 months	1 month
Efficacy of Writing for Recovery on Traumatic Grief Symptoms of Afghani Refugee Bereaved Adolescents (2012)	Kalantari et al.	Iran (Afghan refugee adolescents in a school setting)	RCT	Writing for Recovery	Health (MHPSS)	3 days	1 week
Empowering IDP with SMS: A Randomized Controlled Trial in Bogotá (2010)	Blanco and Vargas	Colombia (IDPs in urban settings)	RCT	SMS notifications	Health (Increasing Uptake of Health Services)	6 months	Post intervention and 3 months

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Forced Displacement, Mental Health, and Child Development: Evidence from the Rohingya Refugees (2022)	Islam et al.	Bangladesh (Rohingya refugee women and children dyads in a camp setting)	RCT	Early childhood development and maternal mental health package	Health (MHPSS)	12 months	1 month
Guided Self-Help to Reduce Psychological Distress in South Sudanese Female Refugees in Uganda: A Cluster Randomized Trial (2020)	Tol et al.	Uganda (Sudanese female refugees in Rhino camp)	RCT	Self-Help	Health (MHPSS)	5 weeks	Post intervention and 3 months
Impact Evaluation of the Multipurpose Cash Assistance Programme (2016)	Battistin	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	Cash Value: US\$173 per month (total US\$1,044)	Health (Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water, MHPSS, Increasing Uptake of Health Services), Household Welfare and Food Security	6 months	1 month

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Insecurity, Distress and Mental Health: Experimental and Randomized Controlled Trials of a Psychosocial Intervention for Youth Affected by the Syrian Crisis (2018)	Panter-Brick et al.	Jordan (Syrian refugee and Jordanian adolescents in an urban setting)	RCT	Group psychosocial support activities	Health (MHPSS)	8 weeks	10 weeks and 11 months
Interventions for Depression Symptoms among Adolescent Survivors of War and Displacement in Northern Uganda: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2007)	Bolton et al.	Uganda (Internally displaced adolescents ages 14-17 in a camp setting)	RCT	Interpersonal therapy vs. creative play	Health (MHPSS)	16 weeks	1 month
Keeping Clean Water Clean in a Malawi Refugee Camp: A Randomized Intervention Trial (2001)	Roberts et al.	Malawi (Mozambican refugee households in camp setting)	RCT	Water treatment	Health (Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water)	1 day	4 months

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Life out of the Shadows: Impacts of Amnesties in the Lives of Refugees (2022)	Ibáñez et al.	Colombia (Venezuelan migrants nationally)	RDD	Large-scale regularization program, including access to social services, safety nets, and the right to work	Health (Increasing Uptake of Health Services), Livelihoods	2 years	2 years
More is Better: Evaluating the Impact of a Variation in Cash Assistance on the Reintegration Outcomes of Returning Afghan Refugees (2022)	Esper et al.	Afghanistan (Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan)	RDD	Cash Value: US\$150-350	Livelihoods	One-time transfer	16 months
Point-of-Use Water Treatment and Diarrhea Reduction in the Emergency Context: an Effectiveness Trial in Liberia (2006)	Doocy and Burnham	Liberia (IDP households with a child under 5 in a camp setting)	RCT	Water treatment	Health (Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water)	1 day	3 months

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Preventing Violence against Refugee Adolescent Girls: Findings from a Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial in Ethiopia (2018)	Stark et al.	Ethiopia (Sudanese and South Sudanese adolescent girls and their caregivers in a refugee camp setting)	RCT	Life skills and safe spaces program	Health (Violence Prevention)	30 weeks	6 months
Prolonged Contact Does Not Reshape Locals' Attitudes toward Migrants in Wartime Settings: Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan (2022)	Zhou and Lyall	Afghanistan (IDPs and hosts in camp and urban settings)	RCT	Vocational skills-training program	Livelihoods, Social Cohesion	3-6 months	Post intervention and 8 months
Can Economic Assistance Shape Combatant Support in Wartime? Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan (2019)	Lyall et al.						

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Psychosocial Interventions and Emotion Regulation among War-Affected Children (2014) Intervention Effectiveness among War-Affected Children: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial on Improving Mental Health (2012)	Punamaki et al. Qouta et al.	Palestine (War-affected Palestinian students ages 10-13)	RCT	Teaching for Recovery	Health (MHPSS)	2 weeks	6 and 9 months
Randomized Control Trial of a CBT Trauma Recovery Program in Palestinian Schools (2013)	Barron et al.	Palestine (Palestinian children ages 11-14)	RCT	Teaching for Recovery	Health (MHPSS)	5 weeks	2 weeks
Remedial Programming and Skill-Targeted SEL in Low-Income and Crisis-Affected Contexts: Experimental Evidence From Niger (2022)	Brown et al.	Niger (Internally displaced Nigerien and refugee Nigerian children)	RCT	Informal education program	Education	22 weeks	Post intervention

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
School Feeding Reduces Anemia Prevalence in Adolescent Girls and Other Vulnerable Household Members in a Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial in Uganda (2019)	Adelman et al.	Uganda (Internally displaced households with children aged 6-17 in rural camp settings)	RCT	Food transfer	Education, Health (Nutrition)	15 months	Post intervention
The Impact of Food for Education Programs on School Participation in Northern Uganda (2012)	Alderman et al.						
Short-Term Effects of a Writing Intervention Among Adolescents in Gaza (2012)	Lange-Nielsen et al.	Palestine (Adolescent refugee students ages 12-18 in a camp setting)	RCT	Writing for Recovery	Health (MHPSS)	3 days	Post intervention
Supporting Micro-enterprise in Humanitarian Programming: Impact Evaluation of Business Grants vs. Unconditional Cash Transfer (2022)	Abdullahi et al.	Somalia (Somali IDPs in IDP camps)	RCT	Cash, Business Grants + Business Training	Education, Health (Increasing Uptake of Health Services), Household Welfare and Food Security, Livelihoods	2 months	3-4 months and 3.5 years
More Cash, Bigger Impacts? A Field Experiment of Cash Transfers in Somalia (2018)	Hassan et al.			Value: US\$100-1000			

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Supporting Syrian Families Displaced by Armed Conflict: A Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial of the Caregiver Support Intervention (2020)	Miller et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee and host families with at least one child)	RCT	Caregiver Support Intervention	Health (MHPSS)	9 weeks	Post intervention
Supporting Syrian Refugee Children’s Academic and Social-Emotional Learning in National Education Systems: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial of Nonformal Remedial Support and Mindfulness Programs in Lebanon (2021)	Tubbs Dolan et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee children ages 5-15)	RCT	Informal education program	Education	14 weeks	Post intervention
No Lost Generation: Supporting the School Participation of Displaced Syrian Children in Lebanon (2019)	de Hoop et al.	Lebanon (Vulnerable Syrian refugee households with children ages 5-14 in a rural setting)	RDD	Cash Value: US\$20 monthly (households with children 5-9), US\$65 (households with children 10-14)	Education, Health (MHPSS), Increasing Uptake of Health Services), Household Welfare and Food Security	6 months	Post intervention

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
Testing the Impact of a Skill-Targeted Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum and Its Variation by Pre- and Post Migration Conflict Experiences: A Cluster Randomized Trial With Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon (2023)	Kim et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee children ages 5-16)	RCT	Informal education program	Education	24 weeks	Post intervention
The Efficacy of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Depression among Syrian Refugees: Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial (2016)	Acarturk et al.	Turkey (Syrian adult refugees in a camp setting)	RCT	Specialized psychotherapy (EMDR)	Health (MHPSS)	1 week	Post intervention and 5 weeks
The EmpaTeach Intervention for Reducing Physical Violence from Teachers to Students in Nyarugusu Refugee Camp: A Cluster-Randomised Controlled Trial (2021)	Fabbri et al.	Tanzania (school teachers and refugee students in a camp setting)	RCT	CBT-based teacher training	Health (Violence Prevention)	10 weeks	2 and 10 months

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
The Impact of a Family Skills Training Intervention among Burmese Migrant Families in Thailand: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2017) Improving Mental Health Outcomes of Burmese Migrant and Displaced Children in Thailand: a Community-Based Randomized Controlled Trial of a Parenting and Family Skills Intervention (2017)	Puffer et al. Annan et al.	Thailand (Burmese refugee households with children ages 8-12)	RCT	Parenting and family skills training	Health (MHPSS, Violence Prevention)	12 weeks	1 month
The Impact of Cash Transfers on Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Evidence from a Multidimensional Regression Discontinuity Design (2022)	Salti et al.	Lebanon (Syrian refugee households in urban and camp settings)	RDD	Cash (short- and long-term, discontinued) Value: US\$173-75 per month	Health (Disease Prevention and Access to Clean Water, Nutrition, MHPSS, Increasing Uptake of Health Services), Household Welfare and Food Security, Livelihoods	4-12 months	Post intervention

Study Title & Year	Authors	Country & Population	Study Design	Intervention	Topics	Length of Intervention	Follow-up Data Collection
The Impact of the Classroom/Community/Camp-Based Intervention (CBI) Program on Palestinian Children (2004)	Khamis et al.	Palestine (Palestinian children and adolescents ages 6-16)	RCT	Classroom/ community/ camp-based intervention	Health (MHPSS)	5 weeks	1 week
The Psychosocial Value of Employment: Evidence from a Refugee Camp (2022)	Hussam et al.	Bangladesh (Rohingya refugee adults in a camp setting)	RCT	Cash-for-work Value: US\$1.77-5.30 per day of work	Health (MHPSS), Livelihoods	8 weeks	Post intervention and 6 weeks
Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder by Trained Lay Counselors in an African Refugee Settlement: A Randomized Controlled Trial (2008)	Neuner et al.	Uganda (Rwandan and Somalian refugees in a camp setting)	RCT	NET, Counseling, psycho-education	Health (MHPSS)	3 weeks	3 and 6 months

Annex III: Search Methodology

As our initial steps to locate literature for this synthesis review, we conducted searches using the following keywords (both alone and in a variety of combinations): “displacement,” “refugees,” “forcibly displaced,” “internally displaced,” “IDP,” “forced migration,” “RCT,” “randomized,” “impact evaluations,” “evaluations,” “quasi-experimental” in large online databases such as Google scholar, EconPapers, SSRN, and various registries of randomized evaluations. We repeated this process within the University of Chicago’s online library and collection of journals.

We also searched the websites of large international organizations (UNHCR, World Bank, IOM). In addition to these, we searched the databases of other major institutions that research displacement and/or refugees, including the Paris School of Economics; the Migration Policy Center; the London School of Economics; Innovations for Poverty Action; J-PAL; the University of Oxford Refugees Studies Center; the Overseas Development Institute; the Brookings Institute; Stanford University’s Immigration Policy Lab; UNHCR; IOM; 3ie; UK Development Tracker; WFP; and EGAP.

To expand the breadth of our scope, we next searched for reports and other resources from institutions that have focused on forced displacement or refugee studies, including the UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee, the World Bank Group’s Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Global Theme and the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice. This also included a consultation of a number of literature reviews to seek out any studies we may have missed (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2013; Verme and Schuettler 2019; Schuettler and Caron 2020). Within this collection of studies, we then applied our inclusion criteria as described in Annex I.

We also spoke to experts from various organizations to inform the publication, such as UNHCR, the World Bank, the International Organization for Migration, the Overseas Development Institute, the Center for Global Development, and the International Rescue Committee. The researchers and humanitarian actors we spoke with directed us toward additional ongoing studies and unpublished literature reviews, which include the International Rescue Committee’s Review of Impact Evidence for Interventions Targeting Forcibly Displaced Populations.

Finally, on June 18, 2020, we published [a link to our working lists of published and ongoing impact evaluations on forced displacement](#) on the [IPA blog](#) which included a space for researchers to submit missing both published and ongoing studies. This allowed for the identification of further studies. We keep this list up to date.

Annex IV: Research in Displacement-Affected Contexts

There are many challenges, both practical and methodological, that make it difficult to rigorously evaluate programs in displacement-affected contexts. Some of these constraints apply across rigorous impact evaluations but are heightened in displacement-affected contexts due to the highly mobile nature and vulnerability of the populations being targeted. Selected challenges, examples from the reviewed evaluations, and potential opportunities for responding to the challenges can be found below.¹⁹

Impediments to Long-term Follow-up

Humanitarian programming responds to an immediate need, and as a result, often comes with short funding and mobilization timelines. This program cycle makes measuring medium-term or long-term impacts of programs very difficult due to a lack of funding for follow-up data collection, (Panter-Brick et al. 2018, Stark et al. 2018), challenges tracking the sample (Kalantari et al. 2012), and pressures to expand intervention access to the wait-list comparison group (Lange-Nielsen et al. 2012). Thirty-four studies included in this review (77 percent of the included studies) reported impacts six months or less after the intervention, including fifteen that only measured results less than two weeks after the intervention (34 percent). Ten studies (22 percent) measured program effects 7-12 months after the intervention, and only three studies examined intervention impact beyond 12 months. This lack of longer-term follow-up means that less is known about whether the impacts of these programs persist beyond when the final surveys were conducted.

Attrition

Displaced populations can be highly mobile, which means displaced individuals may not complete programs they are enrolled in or may be hard to track for follow-up surveys over time. These programs are often also implemented in insecure areas, which can spur onward displacement or reduce access to participants. As a result, the number of participants that drop out of studies or cannot be located (i.e. the “attrition rate”) can be higher than for other target groups, and we found many examples of studies with high attrition rates. For instance, Tol et al. (2020) reported 20 percent attrition due to participants’ mobility and/or the inability to reach households; three other studies reported different drop-out rates between male and female participants (Acarturk et al. 2016; Khamis et al. 2004; Punamäki et al. 2014).

¹⁹ For a longer discussion of the challenges and solutions to conducting randomized evaluations in humanitarian contexts generally, many of which apply to displacement, please see [J-PAL’s Learning Agenda for Humanitarian Action](#).

Many studies attempt to address high attrition rates by selecting a larger sample of the population to study (oversampling), while others administered surveys remotely by phone to reach participants who have moved, who are in insecure areas, or who cannot be reached in person for other reasons such as the COVID-19 pandemic (for example, Baseler et al. 2023; Islam et al. 2022)

Lack of Research Infrastructure

Conducting rigorous evaluations requires the ability to collect reliable, timely data, which is a challenge in many displacement-affected contexts that are characterized by insecurity, highly mobile populations, and a lack of administrative data. What is more, there are often few research institutions with the capacity or expertise to carry out high-quality data collection.

In the last five years, however, this has begun to change. There have been significant innovations in remote data collection methods, accelerated by the pandemic, that make data collection with highly mobile and hard-to-reach populations easier. For example, Stanford’s Immigration Policy Lab, with support from IPA, developed [a public WhatsApp tool](#) that supports the delivery of remote surveys, which has been deployed with displaced populations in Colombia and the United States. There have also been new large-scale data collection efforts that provide insights into displaced populations. This includes the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center’s efforts to have displaced populations included in national surveys, and several representative panel surveys of displaced populations—such as those in [Bangladesh](#), [Jordan](#), and [Lebanon](#)—which have allowed for subsequent impact evaluations, policy analysis, and other research. Finally, more and more research implementers, including IPA, are investing in the [development of research infrastructure and expertise](#) in fragile and displacement-affected contexts, lowering the start-up costs for projects.

Alternate Designs

Many studies in displacement-affected contexts opt for designs other than randomized evaluations with a “pure” comparison group, both responding to the above challenges and to ethical concerns that at times arise in response to randomization. These include:

- **Wait-list comparison groups**, which still randomize individuals, blocks, schools, camps, or communities into receiving an intervention or a comparison group, but which provide the comparison group the opportunity to be “wait-listed” to receive the intervention at a later time.²⁰
- **A/B testing**, which tests two interventions or delivery methods against one another instead of having a comparison group that does not receive an intervention.
- **Regression discontinuity designs**, which use an as-if-random cutoff to determine intervention or comparison groups. For instance, Lehman and Masterson 2014 use

²⁰ This method limits long-term follow-up, and can potentially bias treatment effects (Cunningham, Kypr, and McCambridge 2013).

altitude above sea level, as the intervention was delivered to those above a certain altitude, and not to those below. In these cases, researchers rely on pre-intervention data and other assumptions to make comparisons between participants who are just above the cutoff and non-participants who are just below the cutoff. Six evaluations included in this review used an RDD.

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