

# Promoting Recovery and Resilience for Internally Displaced Persons: Lessons from Colombia\*

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## Abstract

The number of forcibly displaced persons has increased substantially since the early 2000s and has more than doubled in the last decade. Responding to the needs forcibly displaced persons requires comprehensive legal and policy frameworks and evidence-based programs that promote durable solutions, including sustainable movements out of poverty and their successful integration into hosting communities. In this paper we review the dynamics of forced displacement in Colombia, the country with the largest number of Internally Displaced Persons worldwide, and the progression of legal and policy frameworks that have been implemented since the late 1990's. We also review over two decades of research on the economic, social, and psychological consequences of forced displacement following an asset-based poverty trap framework which allows us to understand how forced displacement can alter poverty dynamics across time and generations. Throughout the review we draw lessons for other contexts and countries affected by forced displacement and refugee flows.

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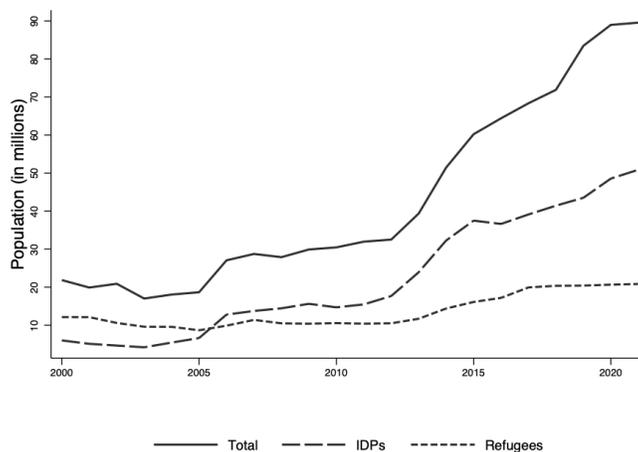
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# 1 Introduction

By the end of 2020, more than 82 million people were estimated to have been forcibly displaced worldwide due to “persecution, conflict, violations of humanitarian rights and events seriously disturbing public order” (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2021). This figure includes 48 million internally displaced people (IDP), 26.4 million refugees,<sup>1</sup> 4.1 million asylum-seekers, and 3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad. Although forced displacement is not a new phenomenon, the magnitude of the crisis is unprecedented: the number of forcibly displaced persons and of those in need of protection and assistance has more than doubled in just one decade (see Figure 1) and is the highest than at any other moment in modern history, representing over one percent of the global population. Moreover, this is a crisis that brings a higher burden to low and middle-income countries which host 85 per cent of all forcibly displaced persons.

**Figure 1:** Forcibly Displaced Persons Worldwide 2000-2020



Notes: The continuous line plots the evolution in the number of forcefully displaced persons, including IDP, refugees, returnees, asylum seekers, and since 2018 Venezuelan forced migrants. The two dotted lines the evolution in IDP and refugees. Figure is based on data from UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database, retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/> on December 1, 2021.

The magnitude of forced migration, along with (mis)perceptions about the consequences of increasing flows of refugees to high-income countries, has attracted the attention

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<sup>1</sup>Under UNHCR or UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) mandate.

of governments, international organizations, donors, and researchers into trying to address what it is currently known as the “Global Refugee Crisis”. But as Figure 1 illustrates, this is not only a refugee crisis; this is a crisis of forcefully displaced persons in general. IDP represent 58 percent of the overall figure of forcefully displaced persons worldwide and the increasing trend in the last decade of forced displacement is explained to a large extent by *internal* displacement.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, and in contrast to refugees who are under the protection of the international community, the protection of IDP is the sole responsibility of national governments, which brings additional challenges given that they are facing war, conflict, or intense violence. Protecting the forcibly displaced population, including IDP and refugees alike, is therefore one of the main development challenges nowadays.

Responding to this challenge requires establishing comprehensive policy and legal frameworks, and implementing evidence-based programs towards promoting the social, economic, and psychological recovery of forcibly displaced persons and their successful integration into hosting communities. This process should be grounded on a better understanding of both the consequences of forced displacement and the characteristics, capacities, and needs of these populations. For example, legal frameworks should recognize that forced displacement is seldom a choice and that should thus have a different focus than frameworks implemented for regular migrants. Likewise, policy responses should consider that forced displacement often erodes displaced person’s productive, social, and psychological capacities thus hindering the right and opportunities to recover and to lead productive and fulfilling lives. A more informed understanding on the characteristics of forcibly displaced persons and of the mechanisms through which forced displacement increases their vulnerability to chronic poverty will facilitate the design of more effective policies and programs and a shift from standard policy responses.

While humanitarian assistance is a necessary component to address short term needs,

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<sup>2</sup>Contrary to refugees and asylum seekers, IDP do not cross international borders and migrate within their own country ([United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2021](#)).

legal and policy frameworks should seek for durable solutions focused on the capacities of forcibly displaced persons that enable recovery and resilience. A better understanding of the dynamics and consequences of forced displacement will reinforce the need to move beyond a standard humanitarian approach towards a development-oriented framework, as suggested by the *Refugee Compact* and the report of the UN Secretary General’s High Level Panel on Internal displacement ([United Nations, 2018](#), [High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, 2021](#)).

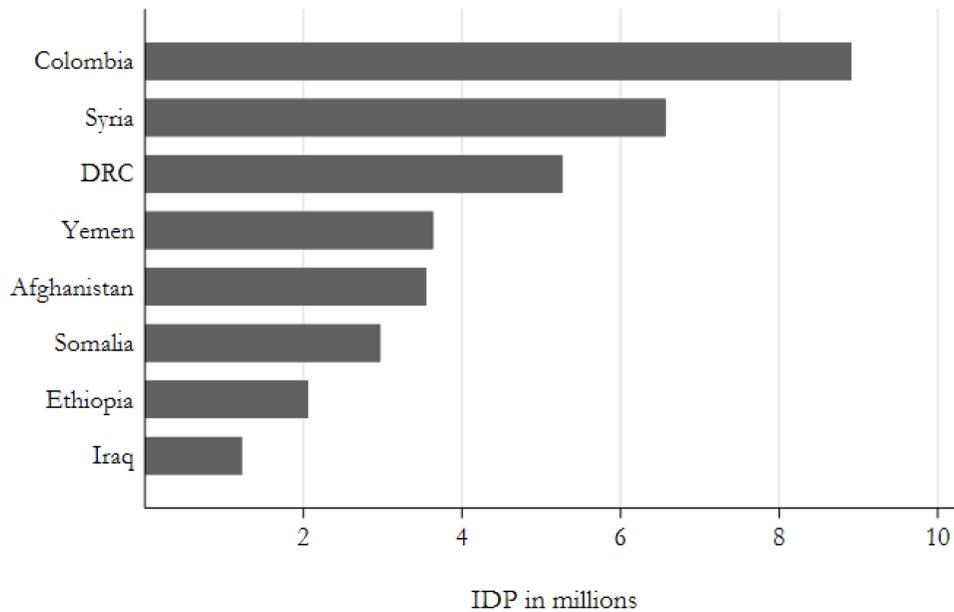
To contribute towards understanding how to support forcibly displaced persons, we review a track record of over two decades of evidence, legal frameworks, and policies that have been implemented in Colombia to assist and support IDP. Our focus on Colombia is first motivated by the magnitude of *internal* forced displacement which has affected 8.2 million persons in Colombia.<sup>3</sup> This figure corresponds to 16.4 percent of the Colombian population and 17 percent of IDP worldwide. This figure also implies that Colombia is the country with the largest internally displaced population in the world, surpassing other countries like Syria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, and Afghanistan, that have received considerable attention recently (see Figure 2) ([United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2021](#)).

Although the dynamics of conflict and internal displacement vary greatly across these different settings, our focus in Colombia is further motivated by the fact there are key elements for which the Colombian case may be informative for other countries. First, as we mentioned above, IDP and refugees are by and large hosted in low and middle-income countries, like Colombia, that are characterized by wider sources of risk and that lack resources to address the needs of forcibly displaced persons. Second, much as Colombia, some of these countries are also experiencing protracted and active conflicts where forced displacement is

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<sup>3</sup>Official statistics collected by the “Registro Único de Víctimas” (RUV) indicate that by the end of 2021, 9.1 million people were identified as victims of the civil conflict, including 8.2 million IDP. Source: <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394>, retrieved on November 3, 2021.

**Figure 2:** Forcibly Displaced Persons Worldwide 2000-2020



Notes: Number of IDP in the 7 countries that host the highest number of IDP worldwide based on data from UNHCR Refugee Population Statistics Database, retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/> on December 1, 2021.

driven by violence and human rights violations among other factors ([High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, 2021](#)).<sup>4</sup> The Colombian case highlights that it is both possible and necessary to protect forcibly displaced persons even in resource-deprived contexts and in fragile-and conflict affected settings.

Perhaps more importantly, our focus on Colombia is motivated by the breath of evidence on the far-reaching consequences of forced displacement and the track record by the Colombian state to recognize IDP and to implement legal frameworks and policies to protect and support them. The review of this evidence and policy response is the focus of this article and can contribute in highlighting key lessons and challenges that can inform policies and research in other countries torn by conflict and forced displacement, as well as in countries receiving refugees or other persons of interest. To date, forty three countries have put in place policies to address the needs of IDP ([High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, 2021](#)), 18 of

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<sup>4</sup>Conflict and violence haven been important determinants of internal forced displacement, but are certainly not the only cause. Natural disasters, climate change, human rights violations, limitations of rights and civil liberties have also been highly correlated with internal forced displacement ([Ibáñez, 2014](#)).

which have enacted national laws of different scopes and reach.<sup>5</sup> The lessons from Colombia we discuss in this paper may contribute to strengthen existing policies in other countries and draft new ones in countries lacking the instruments to support IDP.

To guide the discussion, we structure our review around a simple framework as follows. First, in section 3 we review the progression and implementation of a policy framework to assist IDP. Colombia has one of the more progressive and comprehensive policy framework in this area. The legal and policy responses by the Colombian State began in 1997 and have evolved over time responding to political debates, to the changing dynamics of the internal conflict, and to the findings drawn from multi-disciplinary academic research. This analysis can be informative for other contexts because it highlights the progression of this framework and how its focus shifted from providing humanitarian assistance and access to regular State services towards including specific components to promote more durable solutions.

The second element in our framework is the review of the evidence on the far-reaching consequences of forced displacement and its implications for poverty dynamics. We review this body of work in section 4, where we first take advantage of unique micro-level and administrative data, which allows us to assess how forced displacement alters poverty dynamics, and to better understand the mechanisms through which it thrusts IDP into a state of chronic poverty. Our take on this literature is guided by an asset-based approach to poverty traps, which highlights that by eroding IDP economic, social, and psychological assets, forced displacement increases their vulnerability to chronic poverty. This asset-based framework is useful to assess which components of the policy framework address the loss of assets and capacities and thus whether they promote sustainable movements out of poverty. Likewise, this framework allows us to draw lessons for other contexts and countries affected by forced displacement and refugee flows. Although the specific ways in which such asset losses man-

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/global-database-on-idp-laws-and-policies/>. retrieved on February 1, 2022. The first country to enact a piece of legislation to assist the needs of IDP was Colombia in 1953. In most recent decades, Azerbaijan (1992), Croatia (1993), Russia (1993), Tajikistan (1994), and Georgia (1996) passed legislation recognizing the legal status of IDP.

ifest themselves may be different in each setting, understanding that forced displacement erodes productive, social, and psychological capacities can lead to the design of policies that are better suited to promote the recovery, resilience and self-reliance of IDP.

The third element of our framework, in Section 5, is the review of an upcoming body of work that has analyzed the impacts of different programs and policies aimed at improving IDP lives. We conclude by summarizing lessons for the design of legal and policy frameworks that address IDP short-term needs as well as their capacities to make sustainable transitions out of poverty.

## 2 Forced Displacement in Colombia

Internal forced displacement has been a phenomenon constantly present in the Colombian history. In the last two decades, the dynamics of displacement has increased both in the number of persons affected and in its geographical scope (see Figure 3). While in the 90s only three percent of the municipalities in the country had been affected by displacement, by 2020 all municipalities have been affected by forced displacement.<sup>6</sup>

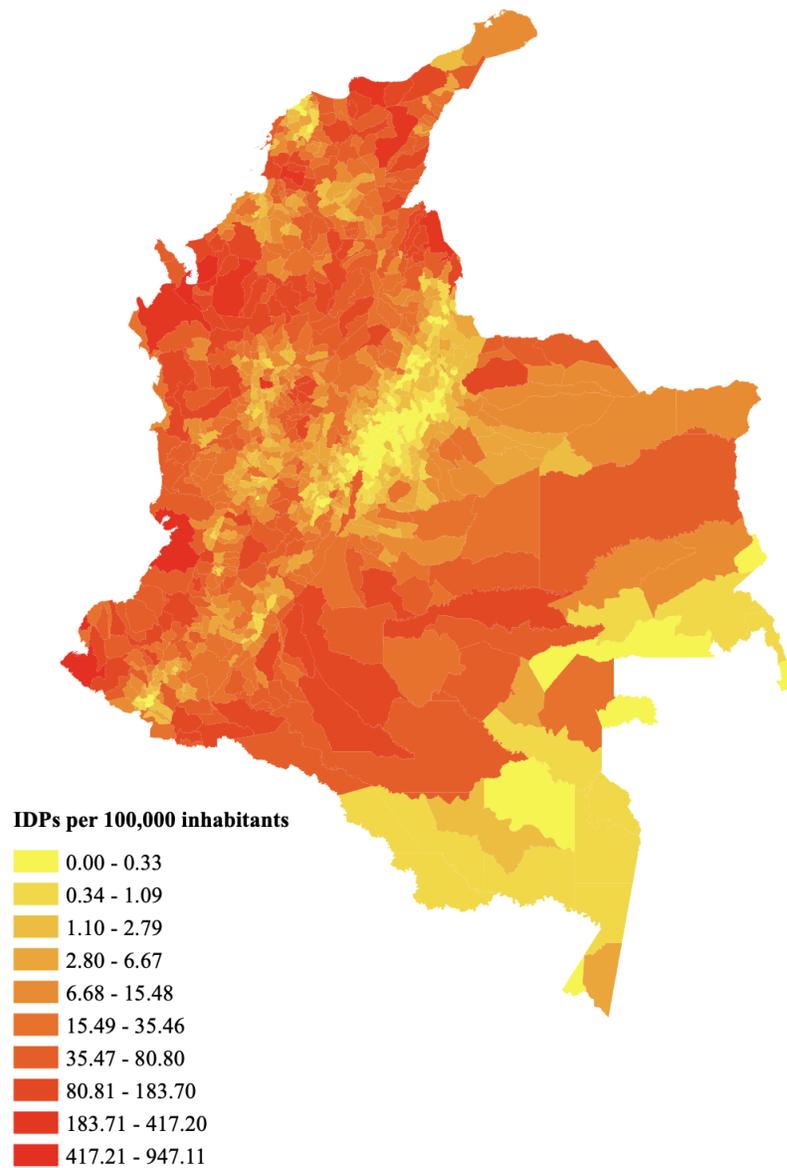
The first wave of internal displacement occurred during the period known as *La Violencia* (1948-1958), when more than two million people - ten percent of the population- were displaced from rural to urban areas of the country (Schultz, 1971; Oquist, 1980; Karl, 2017; ?). The second wave was triggered in the sixties by the intensification of the agrarian conflicts and the the emergence of left-wing guerrilla groups in rural, southern regions of the country (Guzmán et al., 1963; Karl, 2017).<sup>7</sup> In the 80s, the emergence and increase of illegal crops intensified the conflict for two main reasons: first, it became an important financial source of the rebel groups, and second, these new resources also funded right-wing

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<sup>6</sup>Municipalities are the smallest administrative units in Colombia.

<sup>7</sup>A direct comparison of the migrant population during both waves is challenging because of lack of data during “La Violencia”. However, evidence has shown that both populations suffered high levels of victimization, came mainly from rural places, and they suffered the loss of their lands Oquist, 1980.

**Figure 3:** Geographic Distribution of Forced Displacement in Colombia



*Notes:* The map illustrates the intensity (number) of displaced persons by municipality. The map is based on data from the Registro Unico de Victimas, retrieved from <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/reportes> on December 2021.

paramilitary groups aimed at protecting land-owners and drug lords, while restraining the expansion of the guerrilla groups (Duncan, 2006; Angrist and Kugler, 2008).

In this context, direct attacks to the civil population became a deliberate strategy of non-state armed groups to increase territorial control, prevent civil resistance, and weaken the support to opponent groups (Engel and Ibáñez, 2007; Velásquez, 2008; Ibáñez and Moya, 2010b). Between 1970 and 1991 homicides more than tripled and rural areas witnessed a spike in armed confrontations, massacres, attacks by armed rebels, and use of land mines (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2016). Forced displacement peaked between 2000 and 2004 and started to fall concomitantly once the negotiation process of the Government with paramilitary groups started, leading to the demobilization of a large percentage of these groups in 2006. In 2012, the Colombian State and the FARC guerrilla began to craft a peace accord that led, in 2016, to the demobilization of over 12,000 combatants from the largest guerrilla group in the hemisphere. Unfortunately, despite the peace agreement, violence subsides in some regions of the territory and forced displacement increased by more than 100 percent percent between 2020 and 2021.

Below we describe some of the dynamics of forced displacement, how individuals and households are forced to migrate, and some of the characteristics of IDP. This discussion, based on Ibáñez (2008), highlights some salient characteristics of forced displacement in Colombia that shaped the design of the Colombia policy.

First, forced displacement is classified as *reactive* when it occurs as a consequence of direct exposure to violence, or *preventive* when individuals migrate to avoid victimization. The former is the largest driver of displacement, representing 87 percent in 2004 of all displacement episodes (Ibáñez, 2008). *Reactive* displacements are often triggered by the accumulation of multiple sources of violence, including direct threats, homicide or homicide attempts, forced disappearances, kidnappings, sexual violence, confrontations between armed groups, and massacres (Ibáñez, 2008; Sánchez Gómez et al., 2015; Grupo de Memoria

[Histórica, 2016](#)). This means that the large majority of IDP in Colombia are victims of both direct violence and of forced displacement.

Understanding these two types of forced displacement and the degree to which IDP are also exposed to traumatic violence is important to identify the degrees of heterogeneity in the consequences of displacement and in the corresponding policy responses, which we analyze in the following two sections. For example, [Ibáñez and Vélez \(2008\)](#) find that the consequences of forced displacement on IDP wellbeing is smaller for those who were displaced preventively, presumably because IDP in this case are better able to prepare the migration process by selling or protecting their assets and by contacting potential networks in their destination. These social networks, in addition, are important determinants of how IDP decide where to migrate.

Second, the decision to “migrate” is made at the household level, and in the vast majority of the cases all household members migrate together, which partially explains why most of IDP perceive their displacement as a permanent decision and very few return.<sup>8</sup> In addition, most of households migrate directly to their final destination, which half of the times is within the same department, and in around 18 percent of the cases within the same municipality, to facilitate the protection of their assets and social networks in their place of origin.

Third, the large majority of forced displacement in Colombia does not occur massively and rather happens by the displacement of a single or a handful of households who settle in slums and outskirts of urban areas.<sup>9</sup> This is in strike contrast to other countries with high levels of IDP, where displacement occurs massively and forced migrants reallocate to refugee camps and cross international borders [Summers \(2012\)](#). In fact, individuals seldom migrate internationally.

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<sup>8</sup>Up till 2004, only 11% of IDP in Colombia expressed a desire to return to their hometown [Arias et al. \(2014\)](#)

<sup>9</sup>A massive displacement is legally defined when more than 50 people or 10 households jointly migrate. By 2007, 80 percent of forced displacement in Colombia had occurred individually.

In addition to identifying the key elements of the migration process, it is also important to characterize the displaced population to identify their vulnerabilities in the receiving municipalities (Ibáñez and Moya, 2007). Table 1 shows their main characteristics compared to poor households in urban regions, poor households living in rural regions and homeless individuals living in urban places.<sup>10</sup> An important takeaway from this table is that the displaced population have similar characteristics to the poor and most vulnerable population in Colombia: large households with a high dependency rate, low human capital, and female household heads and ethnic minorities are overrepresented in this population. We discuss the importance of these characteristics in the context of the consequences of displacement in section 4.

**Table 1:** Characteristics of the Internally Displaced Population

Variable	IDP <sup>1</sup>	Urban Poor <sup>2</sup>	Rural Poor <sup>2</sup>	Urban Homeless <sup>2</sup>
Household size	4.9	4.4	4.7	4.4
Number of children younger than 14 years old	2.14	1.5	1.9	1.7
Number of individuals between 14 and 60 years old	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.4
Number of adults older than 60 years old	0.23	0.3	0.3	0.3
Female household head (%)	38	35.7	22.7	37.5
Widow household head (%)	14	10.5	10.2	11.6
Years of education of household head	4.5	5.8	3	4.9
Years of education of other adults older than 18 years old	4.3	6.4	3.6	5.4
Households who belong to an ethnic minority (%)	21 <sup>3</sup>	9.3	13.6	10.5

*Notes:* Table adapted from Ibáñez and Moya (2007)

### 3 Policy Framework and State’s Response

The Colombian State has developed a progressive legislation to assist the victims of forced migration. These policies were designed and implemented in the midst of the armed conflict, which offers a very unique setting in the world. In addition the richness of data available,

<sup>10</sup>This Table is based on Table 5 in Ibáñez and Moya (2007)

through the official registry and several surveys applied since 1995, offer an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of IDP policies and programs. These policies have evolved through a trial and error process with a strong involvement of the three state branches, international organizations, academics and, most importantly, victims' groups. The lessons learned from this process are consequential thus for countries tackling forced migration, including refugees. The purpose of this section is to critically discuss the evolution of Colombia's policy for internal displacement to feed the policy recommendations discussed in Section 6. Figure 4 depicts a timeline of the main legal provisions enacted by the Colombian State to address the needs of IDP and protect their rights.

The first State action to support IDP was Decree 1725 of 1953. The Decree created an office within the Presidency of Colombia to assist forced migrants on their "economic rehabilitation", through their return to their place of origin and credits for housing reconstruction.<sup>11</sup> The policy was a small piece on a larger military strategy of the short dictatorship of General Rojas Pinilla to establish State control on conflict regions. Once democracy returned, president Lleras Camargo implemented peace-making programs for reconstruction of rural areas, land restitution, and promoting the return of rural dwellers that had fled to urban areas (Karl, 2017).

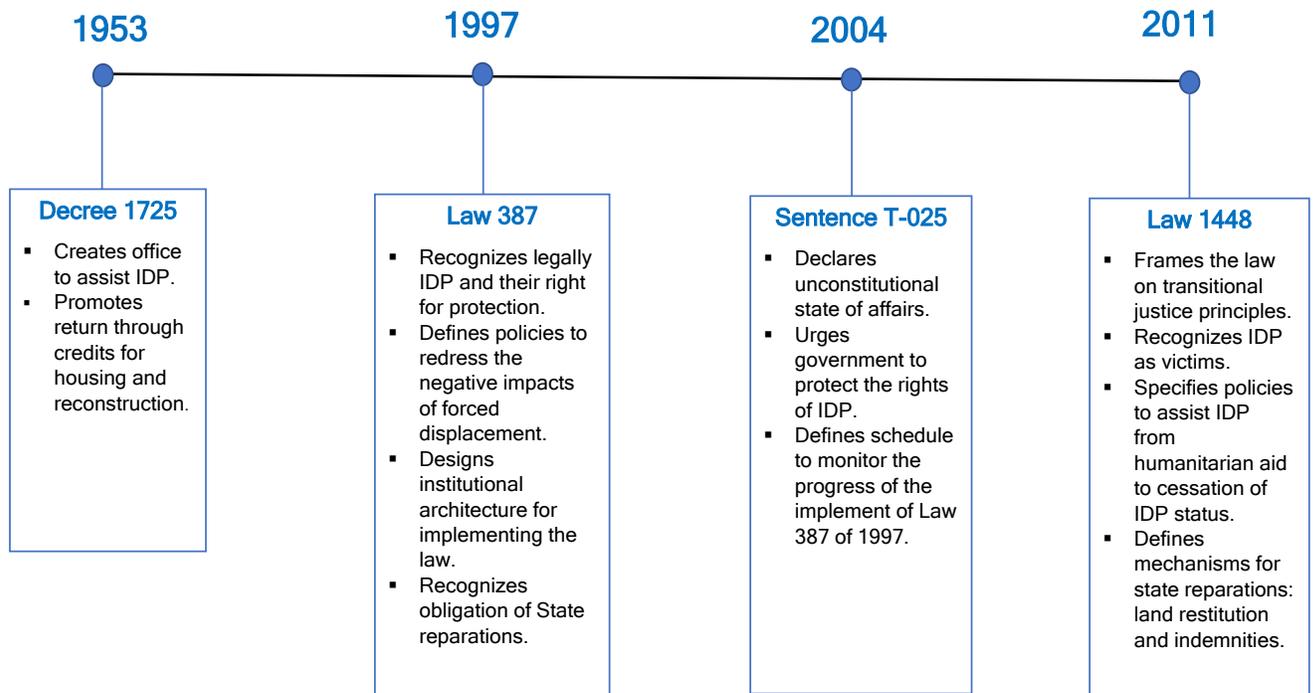
Law 387 of 1997, the first broad piece of legislation enacted by Colombia, defined legally the status of internally displaced persons and sought to redress the negative impacts of forced migration.<sup>12</sup> The goal of the law was to bring IDP back to their welfare levels before displacement. Ibáñez and Vélez (2008) estimate that welfare losses for the average

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<sup>11</sup>See <http://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Decretos/1337842> retrieved on November 3, 2021

<sup>12</sup>According to the Law, a person is internally displaced when forced to migrate after being the victim of conflict or to prevent victimization. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines the term refugee, recognizes the legal rights of this population, and outlines the legal obligations of States and the international community towards refugees. Because IDP move within the geographic boundaries of their country, the 1951 Convention does not protect them. However, the United Nations issued in 1998 the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement to provide guidance for national governments. See <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

**Figure 4:** Timeline: Main Displacement Legislation



IDP household in Colombia amounted to 37 percent of the net present value of lifetime aggregated consumption.

The law was overly ambitious given the State's capacity and the later intensification of IDP flows. In 1997, the stock of IDP was near 880 thousand. However, the flows grew exponentially reaching in 2002, the peak of yearly displacement, a stock of 3.5 million with 780 thousand displaced that year only.<sup>13</sup> The law proved difficult to implement in a country ravaged by war, the many needs of the population, and the intense political opposition to the law. Weak state capacity proved also to be an important obstacle. The most limiting dimensions of state capacity for the purpose of having an effective policy response were related to the lack of a strong coordination among several institutions, and staff with experience on humanitarian assistance. The new responsibilities were not accompanied with additional resources and personnel, overloading institutions. Nonetheless, some features of the Law were important and were later refined with additional legislation: (i) the legal recognition of IDP and their rights for protection; (ii) the creation of the State Registry for the Displaced Population (RUPD by its Spanish acronym and today renamed as the Registry for Victims - RUV); (iii) the obligation of State reparations through land restitution and indemnities; (iv) the acknowledgment on the need to design special interventions for IDP instead of providing preferential access to anti-poverty and development programs; and (v) the design of the institutional architecture for implementing the law.

Lack of wide political support to Law 387 debilitated its implementation. The government of president Uribe pushed for the return of the population given the improvements in security conditions in many regions of the country and provided preferential access to government programs, while neglecting specific programs for the displaced population. The Constitutional Court weighed in by declaring the unconstitutional state of affairs and urged the national and local governments to protect the rights of the IDP population, forcing the

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<sup>13</sup><https://www.datos.gov.co/Inclusi-n-Social-y-Reconciliaci-n/VICTIMAS-POR-A-OS-NACIONAL/uyyb-qiip> retrieved on November 3, 2021

government to abide by Law 387 of 1997. In addition, the Court defined a strict schedule to monitor the progress of IDP policies, in which it required the government to submit mandatory periodic reports and created an independent Commission to apply a yearly representative household survey to the IDP for measuring the progress on the implementation of the law. The contempt of the Court's mandate entailed legal implications for government officials, obliging the government to allocate additional resources to strengthen the IDP policy.<sup>14</sup>

The accumulation of knowledge on effective IDP interventions led a group of legislators and victims' groups to design and propose a new law in 2007 to substitute for Law 387. The proposal adopted several provisions of Law 387, while incorporating new ones based on the lessons learned from ten years of policy experimentation. The proposal broadened the scope and framed the law on transitional justice principles, recognizing IDP as victims of conflict. The proposal faced intense political opposition and, after four years, the Congress approved Law 1448 of 2011 amid the peace negotiations with FARC.<sup>15</sup> The Law legally recognizes IDP as victims of the Colombian conflict, making it the largest and most ambitious reparation and peace-building program in the world in absolute and relative terms (Sikkink et al., 2014; Guarín et al., 2021).

The Law 1448 has two broad objectives to protect and support IDP. First, it defined the different stages of IDP interventions from transition to the termination of the IDP legal status. Each stage covers policies designed to specifically address the needs of IDP as well as the mandate for preferential inclusion in anti-poverty programs, and social protection. Law 1448 defined a need-based criteria to cease the special protection to IDP, which implies

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<sup>14</sup>See [Rodríguez-Garavito and Rodríguez-Franco \(2015\)](#) for a legal analysis on the effect of the Constitutional Court ruling on the policy for IDPs in Colombia

<sup>15</sup>The peace negotiation with FARC started with a secret exploratory phase in 2011, a short secret phase in 2012, and a public phase by the end of 2012. The Victims' Law is an integral part of the transitional justice system put in place by the Final Accord signed in 2016, which complement the transitional justice system designed during the demobilization of paramilitary groups (Peace and Justice Law - Law 1975 of 2005)

that the legal status of IDP ends when the person achieves “socioeconomic stabilization”. In 2015, the National Government defined the criteria for identifying whether a household had overcome the vulnerability conditions caused by internal displacement. This threshold is achieved: (i) once the rights of the household, grouped on seven dimensions, are fulfilled;<sup>16</sup> (ii) when the household’s monthly income is 1.5 times the poverty line and the right to health, education, identification and family reunification are fulfilled; or (iii) when the victim voluntarily requests to be withdrawn from the victim’s registry. Until the conditions of vulnerability are not overcome, the IDP population continues to be under special protection of the State. [Ibáñez et al. \(2012\)](#) simulate the fiscal impacts of not achieving this goal and find that the increasing demand for fiscal resources renders Law 1448 unsustainable in the future.

Second, the law defines two mechanisms to compensate IDP for their loss: indemnities and land restitution. Indemnities are a one time lump sum of up to US\$ 10,000, which is equivalent to 3.3 times the annual household income of IDP ([Guarin et al., 2021](#)). To incentive victims to adequately invest the indemnity, recipients need to participate in investment workshops and government fairs. These compensation mechanisms seek a twofold objective: recognize the suffering that victims faced and help them move out of poverty, akin to development programs ([Vallejo, 2021](#)) (see Section 5). Land restitution, on the other hand, follows a three stage process. First, the national government identify areas to initiate the restitution process based on security conditions, density of land claims, and local conditions to return. Claimants may in parallel submit an application to the Restitution Unit (URT) of the Ministry of Agriculture requesting inclusion on the Registry of Forcibly Usurped and Abandoned Land (RUPTA for its Spanish Acronym). If the request is approved for eligibility by the URT, the claimant or the URT should file a legal claim to a Restitution Judge. By 2019, the number of hectares registered in RUPTA amounted to 7.3 million hectares

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<sup>16</sup>The seven rights include identification, health, education, food security, housing, family reunification, and income generation

(Arteaga et al., 2017).

The pace on the effectiveness of State support to IDP increased gradually. By the end of October 2021, the percentage of compliance on the seven dimensions to overcome the vulnerability conditions caused by displacement ranged between 0.5 percent for family reunification and 94 percent for health coverage.<sup>17</sup> With respect to restitution and compensation policies, up to August 2021, 1.1 million victims had received indemnities for a value of US\$2.2 billion, equivalent to 0.8 percent of Colombia’s GDP (Guarin et al. 2021). Judicial sentences for restitution by September covered near 485 thousand hectares.<sup>18</sup> The slow pace of restitution is explained by the pervasive informality of property rights, 63 percent of hectares registered in RUPTA lacked a legal title (Arteaga et al., 2017); institutional overload; the difficulties on the ground brought by second occupants in good faith; and low willingness to return of many IDP (García-Godos and Wiig, 2018).

The following sections examine how the consequences of forced displacement in Colombia may create poverty traps for the IDP population and discuss the effect of government interventions on their lives.

## 4 Micro-level Consequences of Forced Displacement

What are the consequences of forced displacement and how do they alter IDP socioeconomic trajectories? We take a look at these questions by taking advantage of rich micro and administrative-level data and over 20 years of research on the consequences of forced displacement.<sup>19</sup> Our review, however, is not intended to be comprehensive. On the one hand,

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<sup>17</sup>The percentage of compliance for the other dimensions are: food security (74%), education (22%), income generation (54%), identification (98%), housing (46%), psychological support (11%). See <http://fichaestrategica.unidadvictimas.gov.co>, retrieved on November 3, 2021

<sup>18</sup><https://www.restituciondetierras.gov.co/estadisticas-de-restitucion-de-tierras> retrieved November 3, 2021

<sup>19</sup>This data and research have been motivated by the magnitude of forced displacement, the protracted nature of the Colombian conflict, and the debates surrounding policy framework to support IDP. In turn, this data and evidence have also contributed to the design and evaluation of different programs and policies. In the Appendix, we describe this data in detail, including data collected under the first wave of forced

it is largely based on research in economics and mainly draws on our own work in the topic. Although we review some studies in psychology and law studies, we do not do justice to the body of interdisciplinary work on the topic because a proper review falls beyond the scope of this article. On the other hand, because we are interested in highlighting lessons that can strengthen policy frameworks to support forcibly displaced populations, our review does not address the impacts of displacement flows on host communities.<sup>20</sup> Despite the rather narrow focus, our review provides a picture of the persistence of poverty among IDP and allows us to understand the mechanisms through which forced displacement can lead to the reproduction of poverty across time and generations. In doing so, we provide a conceptual framework that reinforces the need to move towards more durable solutions to support forcibly displaced persons in Colombia and elsewhere.

## 4.1 Poverty

We first analyze the evolution in poverty and extreme poverty rates for IDP and compare it with national trends. We pool together data from the different surveys we describe in the Appendix along with official figures on poverty rates available from the Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE, for its acronym in Spanish). In Figure 5, we plot the poverty and extreme poverty rates for IDP as estimated by the different surveys, along with the corresponding national figures. Although we cannot ensure that the methodologies to estimate household income are entirely comparable across surveys, the two figures allow us to illustrate the vulnerability to poverty of IDP. For instance, in 2005, the data from [Ibáñez et al. \(2005\)](#) reported poverty and extreme poverty rates of 90 and 75 percent, respectively. These were more than two and five times above national averages,

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displacement after *La Violencia*.

<sup>20</sup>Work on the consequences of forced displacement for host communities has received relatively less attention in Colombia than in studies of refugee flows where it has been a focal point. Nevertheless, available studies have analyzed the impacts on wages ([Calderón-Mejía and Ibáñez, 2016](#); [Morales, 2018](#)), labor informality ([Rozo and Winkler, 2021](#); [Bozzoli et al., 2013](#)), and housing prices ([Depetris-Chauvin and Santos, 2018](#)).

respectively. Similar figures were observed by the National Monitoring Commission on Public Policies for Forced Displacement in 2008 and 2010.

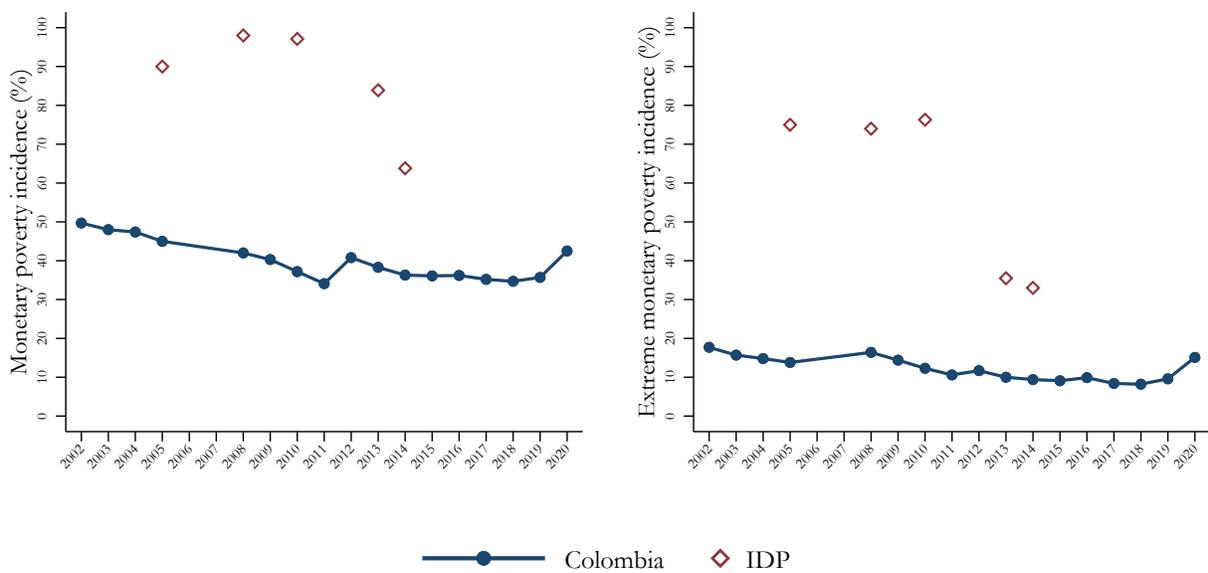
More recent figures indicate that IDP poverty and extreme poverty rates declined. For example, the data from the National Victims Unit reported poverty and extreme poverty rates of 64 and 33 percent, respectively, which are well below those estimated in the mid 2000's. This trend may be partially explained by the strengthening of support programs to IDP. Despite this progress, in 2013 and 2014 IDP were still 1.7 and 3.5 times more likely to be below the poverty and extreme poverty lines, respectively, relative to national averages. Hence, the data in Figure 5 illustrates the larger vulnerability to poverty of IDP that has persisted over time even after the implementation of a comprehensive and progressive policy framework. This picture is consistent with recent data from the National Victims Unit that finds that 62 percent of IDP are still in a condition of vulnerability.<sup>21</sup>

While thought provoking, the analysis above is not a demonstration of a causal effect of forced displacement on socioeconomic wellbeing. Nonetheless, we can build upon the analysis from [Ibáñez and Moya \(2010b\)](#) to illustrate how forced displacement brings about substantial drops in income and consumption levels and how IDP are not able to recover over time. In Figure 6 we replicate the data from ([Ibáñez and Moya, 2010b](#)) illustrating the evolution of average annual (aggregate) income and consumption per equivalent adult before and after displacement, stratifying the data according to the time of settlement – less than 3 months after being displaced, between 3 and 12 months, and over 12 months. The left-hand panel of Figure 6 illustrates how income plummets in the first three months after the displacement. Relative to the the levels prior to displacement, this represents a loss of 95 percent of annual income per equivalent adult. Over time income-levels slowly follow an upward trajectory but IDP do not fully recover; even for those who were displaced 12 months or more before the date of the survey, income losses were still over 60 percent relative to

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<sup>21</sup>See the data from the National Victims Unit retrieved from <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/visor-superacion-de-situacion-de-vulnerabilidad/66298onDecember2,2021>

**Figure 5:** Poverty and Extreme Poverty Rates - IDP vs National Averages

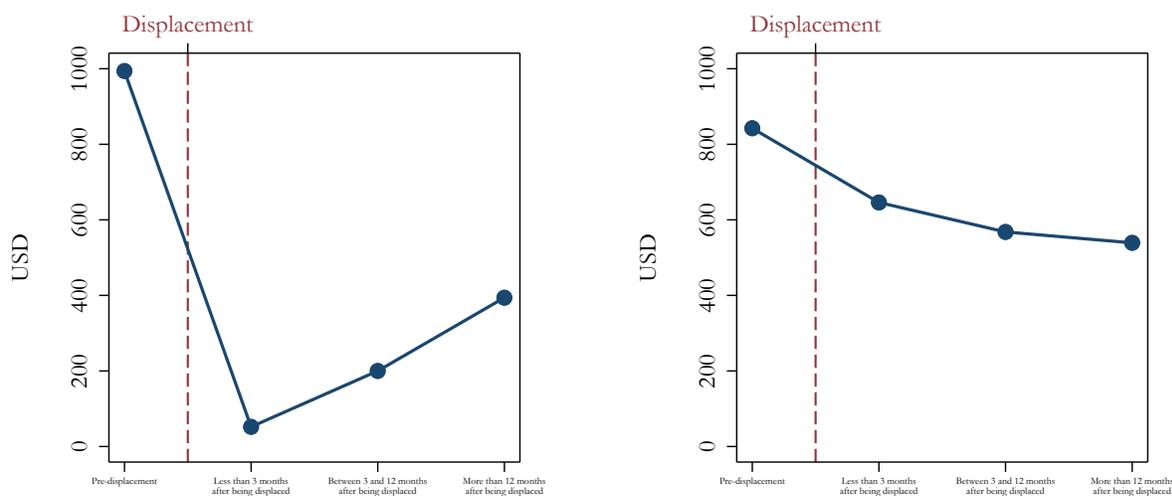


*Notes:* Evolution of poverty and extreme poverty rates (% of the population below the national income poverty and extreme poverty line). The continuous lines illustrate national poverty and extreme rates according to official statistics from DANE. The diamonds illustrate the poverty and extreme poverty rates for IDP as estimated by the following studies: 2005: [Ibáñez et al. \(2005\)](#); 2008: [Comisión de Seguimiento a la Política Pública sobre Desplazamiento Forzado en Colombia \(2008\)](#); 2010: [Comisión de Seguimiento a la Política Pública sobre Desplazamiento Forzado en Colombia \(2010\)](#); 2013: [Contraloría General de la República de Colombia \(2015\)](#); 2014: [Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística \(2015\)](#).

pre-displacement levels.

The income shock brought forth by displacement, coupled with the lack of access to formal risk-sharing mechanisms and the disruption of social networks, maps out into substantial losses in consumption. In the right-hand panel of Figure 6 we illustrate how forced displacement affects consumption by plotting the evolution of annual consumption per equivalent adult. In the first three months after being displaced, consumption falls by 24 percent relative to pre-displacement levels. While this fall is sizeable, the reception of humanitarian aid from governmental and non-governmental organizations likely prevents the severe income shock from translating into a similarly-severe consumption shock (Ibáñez and Moya, 2010b). However, as IDP settle and loose access to such aid, consumption levels continue falling. For IDP displaced for 12 or more months, the fall in consumption represents a 36 percent loss relative to pre-displacement levels.

**Figure 6:** Aggregate income and consumption before and after forced displacement



*Notes:* The figure illustrates the evolution of annual income and consumption per equivalent adult before and after displacement using the data from (Ibáñez and Moya, 2010a).

The analysis above portrays a picture of the short and medium term impacts of forced

displaced based on 2005 data from [Ibáñez and Moya \(2010a\)](#). At the time of this study, a large majority of IDP had not been included in the national registry for the displaced population and only 43 percent received any type of support, mainly humanitarian aid. Since then, the majority of victims of displacement have been included in the RUV and support has been strengthened and made more widely available following the Constitutional Court ruling of 2004 and the enactment of the 2011 Victims Law that we discussed in the previous section. Well-being and living conditions may have improved for IDP presumably as a result of such progress. Nevertheless, the analysis in this section, points towards the persistence of the vulnerability to poverty among IDP and to a vulnerability to poverty well above that of the Colombian population. The analysis below on the asset losses imposed by displacement will allow us to understand the mechanisms through which forced displacement drives IDP into persistent and chronic poverty.

## 4.2 Multidimensional Asset Losses

How does forced displacement contribute to trap IDP into poverty? The evidence we discuss below indicates that forced displacement leads to the erosion of IDP asset base, broadly understood to encompass productive, physical, human, social, and psychological assets. Although the majority of the studies in our review document short and medium run effects, we take a step back and identify key mechanisms through which these short and medium run effects can have intertemporal and intergenerational consequences. Specifically, we guide our review from the perspective of an asset-based framework to poverty traps ([Carter and Barrett, 2006](#); [Barrett and Carter, 2013](#)). Under this conceptual framework, the multidimensional asset losses that forced displacement brings about can be understood to hinder IDP productive capacities trapping them into a low-level equilibrium and a condition of chronic and persistent poverty.

*Socioeconomic Assets and Capacities*—. [Ibáñez et al. \(2005\)](#) document that over 60 percent

of IDP had access to land and 81 percent derived their livelihoods from agricultural activities before being forcefully displaced. As a result of the forced displacement, the large majority of IDP abandoned their lands or were coerced to sell them well below market prices ([Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2016](#)). Estimates by [Arteaga et al. \(2017\)](#) indicate that forced displacement led to the loss of 7.3 million hectares, which represent 29 percent of lands suitable for agricultural activities in Colombia. IDP are also forced to abandon agricultural investments, livestock, and other productive assets. Over time, few IDP are able to recover their productive asset base over time. The loss of assets worsens throughout the length of settlement as IDP either lose control of the assets they were still able to control or are forced to sell them to smooth consumption ([Ibáñez et al., 2005](#)). Forced displacement is also associated with the erosion of human assets (capital), which then becomes an obstacle for accessing labor markets at destination sites and for generating income. We identify two mechanisms through which this takes place that build upon the analysis by [Ibáñez and Moya \(2007\)](#). First, IDP are displaced to a large extent from rural to urban areas, and not only they are less educated and have higher illiteracy rates than the urban poor, but their agricultural skills and knowledge also ‘depreciate’ as they are of little or no use in urban labor markets. Second, the shock of forced displacement, and the violence that often precedes it, increase the demographic vulnerability of displaced households either by the disruption of households in reception sites, the loss of working-age members and increase in dependency rates, or by leading to higher rates of female-headed households. These two factors add up to the already vulnerable socioeconomic and demographic profile of IDP that we mentioned in the previous section. Together, they imply disadvantages in urban labor markets that translate into above normal rates of unemployment and a higher likelihood of employment in informal, low-skilled, and low-paying jobs.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>[Ibáñez and Moya \(2007\)](#) found that in the first months after being displaced unemployment rates for household head soared to over 50 percent. Over time employment rates somewhat recover but they were still persistently below those of urban poor household heads. More recent figures based on the data from the 2013 survey from the [Contraloría General de la República de Colombia \(2015\)](#) indicate that these trends have not changed over time.

A third dimension of the asset losses refers to the disruption of social networks and social capital or assets in general. As it happens in developing contexts characterized by multiple market failures, before displacement IDP relied on social networks to fund productive activities and to mitigate the consequences of idiosyncratic shocks thus allowing them to smooth both consumption and assets. But armed conflict and forced displacement in Colombia disrupt these social networks and erode social assets in general. Because the majority of IDP are then displaced individually or in small groups, and many choose to settle in large cities where they could remain anonymous or invisible, social networks are further disrupted. As a result, IDP lose the ability to overcome market failures and to smooth consumption through social assets. For example, [Ibáñez and Moya \(2007\)](#) find that relative to pre-displacement levels, access to informal credits falls by 54 percent (from 17.1 to 9.3 percent) while participation in community organizations also falls substantially. Together, the disruption and loss of social assets contributes to explain why a considerable portion of the income shock brought forth by forced displacement translates into a severe and permanent shock to consumption and wellbeing, as we observed in [Figure 6](#).

The evidence that we have discussed so far provides a picture on the asset losses and their implications from a standard socioeconomic perspective. This body of research speaks to the progression of the policy framework that is discussed in detail in the previous section by providing evidence that supports the mandate for preferential inclusion of IDP in anti-poverty programs and programs that move beyond standard humanitarian programming towards a more comprehensive strategy that replenishes IDP asset base to ensure their “socioeconomic stabilization” and sustainable movements out of poverty.

*Psychological Assets and Capacities*—. The consequences of forced displacement are far reaching and the resulting asset losses are not limited to socioeconomic domains. Forced displacement also takes a toll on IDP mental health and this also has implications for their capacity to recover. A large body of work has in fact studied the psychological consequences

of forced displacement (see [Shultz et al. 2014](#); [Gómez-Restrepo and de Santacruz 2016](#); [Moya 2018](#); [Cuartas et al. 2019](#); [León-Giraldo et al. 2021](#) to name a few) finding that the traumatic episodes of forced displacement along with the violence that precedes it result in a myriad of psychological disorders, including chronic anxiety, severe depression, and post-traumatic disorders. The manifestations of mental illness are large: for example, [Moya \(2018\)](#) finds that the incidence at-risk symptoms of anxiety and depression is three and four times larger among IDP than in the general Colombian population.<sup>23</sup>

The psychological consequences of forced displacement are important by themselves because they directly affect IDP's wellbeing. But it also has negative effects on different socioeconomic domains and can contribute to keeping IDP in chronic poverty.<sup>24</sup> Research among IDP (or victims of violence) in Colombia has demonstrated that forced displacement and the exposure to traumatic episodes of violence distort cognition ([Bogliacino et al., 2017](#)), increase risk aversion ([Moya, 2018](#)), and lead to overly pessimistic perceptions about the ability to recover and move out of poverty ([Moya and Carter, 2019](#)).<sup>25</sup> These cognitive and behavioral effects can then have negative effects on productivity levels, educational attainment, saving and investment decisions, and behavioral biases, among others, as demonstrated by research in other countries ([Ridley et al., 2020](#)). In doing so, the psychological consequences of forced displacement can increase the vulnerability to poverty and can hinder the effectiveness of standard socioeconomic programs. For example, [Moya et al. \(2021a\)](#) find that among young IDP participating in a vocational job-training program, baseline levels of post-traumatic stress disorder were associated with lower hours attended and lower rates of graduation from the program, with a lower likelihood of obtaining formal employment, and with lower labor income. These effects are sizeable and potentially long-lasting. For

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<sup>23</sup>Further, research has identified that the experience of symptoms of psychological trauma follow a dose-response relationship; this is, more recent and traumatic episodes of violence and forced displacement are associated with more severe symptoms of psychological trauma ([Moya, 2018](#)).

<sup>24</sup>In general, mental illness reduce individuals ability to work and depression and anxiety contribute to eight percent to the days lived with disability at a global scale ([James et al., 2018](#)).

<sup>25</sup>The latter two studies demonstrate that these effects are driven by the severity of symptoms of psychological trauma.

example, a one standard deviation in baseline symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder is associated with a reduction of 10 percent in labor wages and persist 18 months after the job-training program concluded.

The evidence on the psychological and behavioral consequences of displacement therefore highlights the existence of a psychological poverty trap that would reinforce the already pervasive effects of the socioeconomic poverty trap. Understanding this interplay between the psychological consequences of forced displacement and socioeconomic trajectories of IDP is important because it provides evidence of a different mechanism through which forced displacement can contribute to the persistence of chronic poverty. In addition, it further supports the urgency of improving access to mental health services along with standard “anti-poverty” programs. Unfortunately, approximately 90 percent of IDP have not been able to access to mental health services revealing that mental health has received less attention and resources within the policy framework to support IDP.

*Intergenerational Domains*—. Finally, a small but upcoming body of work documents the inter-generational consequences of forced displacement. Perhaps surprisingly, recent work by (Monroy, 2018) finds that forced displacement is associated with positive effects on school enrollment and completion. Employing a between-siblings identification strategy he finds that schooling outcomes improve for the children who were displaced from rural to urban areas relative to their siblings who stayed behind or who completed their schooling process before being displaced. These effects are likely explained by a higher access to schools and better schooling quality in urban areas and by the preferential inclusion in conditional-cash transfers that require children to attend schools and health checkups, but also by the disruption of educational services in rural areas where conflict is still active. But when we compared displaced and urban poor children, we find that the former are at a disadvantaged position and have lower attendance and completion rates, which then map out in further disadvantages in labor markets (Ibáñez and Moya, 2007). This is consistent with the only

study that we have identified provides a long-term perspective on the effects of *La Violencia*, which finds negative and sizeable effects in schooling attainment, which then translates into employment in less qualified sectors and a lower employment rates in manufactures and services [Fergusson et al. \(2020\)](#).

The experience of forced displacement, or the violence that leads to forced displacement, during the first five years of age hinders early childhood development and can thus derail life trajectories and bring about and intergenerational effects. [Ortiz Becerra \(2014\)](#) finds that children who experience the forced displacement of their families during the first years of age have a 18 percent higher likelihood of being chronically malnourished and their size-for-age score is 0.35 standard deviations lower than children in the same families who did not experience the shock of displacement during early childhood. Recent work by ([Moya et al., 2021b](#)) suggests that experiencing violence and forced displacement at an early age is associated with higher levels of childhood trauma, which then take a toll on early childhood mental health and cognitive and socioemotional development. The effects of forced displacement on early childhood compromise children's opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives and are a mechanism through which forced displacement reproduces poverty and exclusion over time and across generations. Unfortunately, and different to what happens with anti-poverty programs and to a lesser extent with mental health programs, the policy framework does not incorporate specific programs to protect the mental health and early childhood development of children who have been exposed to violence and forced displacement.

### **4.3 Policy Implications**

These conclusions are a call to action for more comprehensive strategies based on a better understanding of the characteristics and needs of displaced populations and on the ways in which the asset losses operate. There is an obvious humanitarian aspect to the crisis of forced displacement and policy responses should address immediate needs, for example by

providing food aid or cash transfers to prevent further wellbeing losses in the short run.

Yet, humanitarian programs cannot, and do not intend to address persistent poverty among IDP. Achieving durable solutions therefore rests on the capacity to move beyond standard programming and implement program that replenish displaced persons economic, social, and psychological assets or capacities. Development-oriented frameworks can thus combine humanitarian aid or cash transfers with indemnities and land restitution to address the loss of physical assets, vocational training or skill certification to address the erosion of human assets, and psychosocial support programs to address the loss of psychological assets. Moreover, to the extent that the loss of economic, social, and psychological asset losses reinforce each other ([Moya and Carter, 2019](#)), it is possible that addressing one dimension at a time will be insufficient to break the underlying poverty traps.

## 5 Policy Effectiveness

In this section we provide a brief overview of upcoming research on the effectiveness policies and programs implemented to support IDP. We review work across four different dimensions: (1) IDP registration and information; (2) Standard anti-poverty programs (conditional cash transfers); (3) Programs specifically designed for IDP; and (4) Reparations and Land Restitution. We review this evidence from the lens of the asset-based conceptual framework we developed in the previous section. This lens allows us to understand how policies and programs address different constraints IDP face and distinguish between those that address short term humanitarian needs, those that can be thought as the extension of standard anti-poverty programming, and those that target IDP capacities and assets and this that can be better suited to promote durable solutions. We summarize the findings of this review in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2:** Policy Effectiveness

<b>Registration and information about benefits</b>	<b>IDP specific programs</b>	<b>Antipoverty programs with preferential access for IDP</b>	<b>Compensation: restitution and indemnities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IDP dispersed: demand driven instrument</li> <li>• Registration as IDP guarantess eligibility to receive aid and be legal protection</li> <li>• By 2005: 70% IDP registered</li> <li>• Most vulnerable groups were not registered</li> <li>• Low take up of aid (56%)</li> <li>• SMS messages: increased take up 12 pp</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income-generating programs: + effects on income and consumption only in the very short-term. Benefits do not persist in the long-term.</li> <li>• Psychosocial interventions: + impacts on maternal mental health, early childhood development, and entrepreneurship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• + impact of CCT on education, health, and nutrition.</li> <li>• Using existing infrastructure: useful but no sufficient to guarantee aid dependency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and potentially sustainable impacts on economic and social outcomes.</li> <li>• Move from low-wage jobs to high-wage jobs</li> <li>• Investment in education</li> <li>• Higher trustworthiness</li> </ul>

Source: Ibáñez and Velásquez (2009), Helo (2009), Blanco and Vargas (2014), Schultz et al (2019), Moya et al (2021), Guarin et al (2021), Bogliacino et al (2021), Attanasio et al (2021)

## 5.1 Registry and Information

The first dimension we review analyzes the capacity of the Colombian State to register and provide aid to IDP and the impact of different programs to increase rates registration and aid take-up through the provision of information. Identifying IDP is the first step towards establishing appropriate policy responses. In Colombia, this brought about different challenges than those that may emerge in other settings because displacement often takes place on an individual basis, and IDP are dispersed throughout the country and are not settled in displaced camps. To address these challenges, the Colombian Government designed a demand-driven mechanism whereby IDP approach a government institution to declare the circumstances and drivers of their displacement (Ibáñez and Velásquez, 2009). Once these circumstances are verified, IDP are registered and become eligible to receive aid and access the different components embedded in the legal frameworks we discussed in 3.

The efforts to identify and register IDP in Colombia and to provide aid have been one of the stories of success (Sikkink et al. 2014), although they have come across different obstacles where research has played a role in highlighting these obstacles and providing alternatives to overcome them. For example, a study by Ibáñez and Velásquez (2009) found out that in 2005, 7 out of every 10 IDP were registered and that exclusion from the registry was explained by a lack of information of the most vulnerable groups of displaced persons, rather than by institutional decisions or processes. In other words, Colombian State was partially successful in rapidly reaching the majority of IDP through the demand-side mechanism. Nonetheless, red tape procedures and bureaucratic obstacles resulted in a lengthy process and in delays in the delivery of humanitarian aid. On average, IDP had to wait approximately 4 months between the declaration and the reception of humanitarian aid (Blanco and Vargas 2014). In later years, the Constitutional Court's ruling that called for improvements and greater efficiency in the registry was instrumental to expand its reach to most of the IDP (Sikkink et al. 2014) and this effort has been sustained up to this point where 8.2 million displaced

persons are officially recognized as such.

Beyond the early progress in registering IDP, which was a prerequisite for the delivery of humanitarian aid, the take-up rate of benefits was low and also explained to a large extent by information constraints. In 2009, for example, only fifty six percent of those registered had received some type of aid (Ibáñez and Velásquez 2009). To alleviate such information constraints and increase the take-up of benefits, Blanco and Vargas (2014) designed a randomized controlled trial through which SMS messages were delivered with information about aid eligibility. This low cost intervention increased the take up of benefits by 12 percentage points, and later was scaled up to all IDP demonstrating the role that research played early on to improve State-led policies and programs.

Despite the potential and scalability of the SMS intervention, information constrains still prevented the more vulnerable IDP and those in isolated areas to access the benefits provided by the State and even to register, as we mentioned above. To address this challenge and to increase take up and knowledge of the Victim's Law, the Colombian Government rolled out the Mobile Victims Unit (MVU) across isolated communities. Between 2012 and 2014, the MVU was near 31 thousand victims in 164 municipalities. Following the phase-in design of the MVU, Vargas et al (2019) found that the program did not increase knowledge about the benefits and services included in Victim's Law, but had a sizeable and statistically significant 8 percentage points effect on the likelihood of registering in the RUV, which corresponds to a 10 percent effect relative to the 84 percent control mean. More importantly, the MVU increased the likelihood of receiving reparations or aid by 21 percentage points, which corresponds to a 150 percent effect over the control mean. Nonetheless, IDP served by the MVU became more pessimistic and less likely to make investment plans for the future. This latter results may be partially explained by a sense of frustration regarding the delivery, timeliness, and dosage of the State-led support and by the fact that the MVU registration process made the experience of victimization salient, which could have triggered different

behavioral reactions consistent with the findings of [Moya \(2018\)](#).

Taken together, the evidence from this subsection highlights on the importance of creating registries to identify IDP and quantifying and target the demand for aid, but also to address supply and demand-side constraints that may hinder registration and access to available services. Furthermore, our discussion highlights the positive effects of academic research in evaluating and informing programs and services to identify and address such constraints.

## **5.2 Standard Anti-poverty Programs: Conditional Cash Transfers**

In addition to humanitarian aid, the Colombian state supported IDP within the frameworks of standard social originally designed for poor and vulnerable households, including subsidized healthcare and education and conditional cash-transfers. This approach has the advantage of leveraging existing programs, capacities, and delivery platforms and thus allows assisting IDP on a more permanent basis, shifting from emergency to more stable support, without requiring investing in the design of new programs or delivery platforms. Within these services, the Constitutional Court Ruling of 2004 established the preferential access of IDP to these social protection policies. In practice, this means that IDP's access is not conditioned on the standard socioeconomic eligibility requirements that are used to target social programs.

In this subsection we review the impact evaluation of the Familias en Acción (FeA) conditional cash transfer program. Displaced persons are eligible to receive the FeA if, in addition to being registered in the RUV, they fulfill the standard eligibility criteria of conditional cash transfer programs: i) children under 18 years of age in their household; and ii) children assist to schools and attend health and nutrition check-ups.

The impact evaluation of the FeA program for displaced samples leveraged data from a

sample of 147,376 recipients living in 821 municipalities, and 203,000 non-beneficiary eligible IDPs ([Centro Nacional de Consultoria, 2008](#)). The evaluation found that the program had a positive effect on the outcomes in which the conditionality is binding, such as children's education, health and nutrition, especially for young children under the age of seven. However, the FeA program did not bring about other effects on lowering the risk of malnutrition, which has a higher incidence among displaced households, and there is no evidence on whether the program allowed displaced children to catch-up with non-displaced children. Furthermore, the program did not bring about positive effects on household wellbeing, household income, economic independence, or self-sufficiency. This latter result is not surprising to the extent that conditional cash transfer programs are not designed to alter poor and vulnerable household's socioeconomic dynamics in a profound way but rather to break the inter-temporal transmission of poverty across generations.

Taking these results in perspective, our review suggests that including IDP within standard social protection platforms may be an efficient mechanism to expand coverage and reach larger segments of displaced persons. Yet, standard social protection policies are not designed to address the specific characteristics and vulnerabilities of IDP, including their experiences of violence and trauma, their cultural uprooting, and the loss of livelihoods and multidimensional assets and capacities ([Centro Nacional de Consultoria, 2007](#)). While they may provide much necessary relief, this means that they will not allow IDP to catch-up or to break the intertemporal and intergenerational transmission of poverty and cannot be thought as the main strategies for socioeconomic stabilization. Specific programs that build upon or enhance anti-poverty strategies are much needed; this is the focus of the next subsection.

### 5.3 Programs specifically designed for IDP

We now review observational and experimental evidence on the impacts of programs specifically designed for IDP or those that build upon standard anti-poverty programming and include additional components that take into account IDP characteristics and needs.

The first set of evidence comes from two studies that assess the effectiveness of an income generating programs that sought to replenish IDP productive capacities. Specifically, the program provided a one-time cash transfer, a standard job-training component, and a short-term contract with private firms. An observational analysis by [Ibáñez and Moya \(2010b\)](#) and a structural analysis by [Helo \(2009\)](#) indicate that the program brought forth positive impacts on labor-income and consumption, but that the effects dissipated shortly after the program ended and did not translate into sustainable livelihoods or stable employment. This evidence suggests that the cash transfer provides a much necessary relief and perhaps enhanced participation by covering the opportunity cost of participating in the program, but that it did not enable households to invest in productive capacities and assets. Furthermore, that the standard job-training component are not adequately powered to replenish the skill and human capacities of IDP for whom their previous agricultural background is of little to no use in urban markets. Building upon the findings from ([Moya et al., 2021a](#)) that we discussed above, these two studies suggest that by not incorporating the psychological effects of forced displacement and how they affect socioeconomic dynamics, standard income-generation programs may be ineffective.

Building upon this last insight, recent job-training programs have included psychosocial or soft skill components as a way to address the psychological consequences of forced displacement or deficiencies in socioemotional domains. The evidence on their effect, however, is mixed. An ongoing experimental study by [Maldonado \(2021\)](#) analyzes effect of complementing the standard job-training program offered by the *Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje* of the Colombian Government with a soft-skill training module, which aims to promote teamwork,

problem solving, and socioemotional regulation. By addressing IDP skill deficiencies across standard and socioemotional domains, the bundled soft-skill and job-training program was thought to have a stronger potential towards generating sustainable effects on labor-market outcomes. However, preliminary results find no effects of the soft-skill program by itself and negligible effects of the job-training strategy as a whole. While soft skills are essential for labor market dynamics, the results from [Maldonado \(2021\)](#) suggest that soft skill are endogenous to the psychological toll of forced displacement and thus that programs should have a more comprehensive approaches to the socioemotional and psychological domains.

Precisely, recent evidence from two experimental studies that were in the ground when the Covid-19 pandemic started suggest that better-informed psychological interventions embedded within job-training or entrepreneurship programs have a higher potential at generating resilience and positive effects across psychological and socioeconomic domains. First, [Ashraf et al. \(2021\)](#) implemented a 'mental imagery intervention' designed at improving the way in which individuals project themselves into the future and move beyond pessimistic attribution styles on top of an entrepreneurship program for vulnerable youth, many of whom victims and IDPs. [Ashraf et al. \(2021\)](#) find that the intervention brought about significant effects on earnings even during the pandemic and that effects were larger for psychologically at-risk participants at baseline. Second, [Antunes et al. \(2021\)](#) evaluate the effectiveness of bundling a psychosocial support program, that combined soft-skill training and psychosocial counseling, with a job-training program. Similar to the effects form [Ashraf et al. \(2021\)](#), they find that the treatment allowed vulnerable and conflict-affected youth to better cope with effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and specifically to better manage symptoms of depressions and anxiety, even though it did not lead to significant effects on labor-market outcomes. Despite the pervasiveness of the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns, which led to an increase of 100 percent on the unemployment rate in mid-2020, the evidence from these two studies speak to the synergies that can be created by combining psychosocial and socioeconomic interventions and that can prove to be effective at breaking the reinforcing effects of

socioeconomic and psychological poverty traps. These studies however only provide preliminary and short-term evidence and there is a scope for studies that analyze these effects of these comprehensive interventions over a longer period of time.

The programs discussed above have focused on the socioeconomic recovery of IDP by introducing standard socioeconomic programming by themselves or by combining them with psychological components. In parallel, recent interventions have been designed to address the psychological consequences of forced displacement and these not only have promising results on the capacity to restore IDP mental health but also to permeate socioeconomic domains and break the intertemporal and intergenerational transmission of poverty and trauma.

*Semillas de Apego*, for example, is a community-based psychosocial program for primary caregivers of children 0 to 5 in communities affected by violence or forced displacement. The goal of the program is to directly improve maternal mental health as an outcome of direct importance but also as a way to improve the emotional bonds between children and caregivers that are necessary to protect and promote early childhood development. The experimental evaluation of the program found that, at the eight-month followup, the program brought forth positive and sizeable effects on maternal mental health, child-mother interactions, and early-childhood development (Moya et al., 2021b). Moreover, preliminary results from the impact evaluation suggests that the mental health intervention also allowed caregivers to better project themselves towards the future and to rediscover a sense of resilience and empowerment not only in psychosocial domains but also in terms of their educational attainments and labor-market outcomes.

Likewise, Idrobo et al. (2021) analyze the (non-experimental) impacts of the forgiveness and reconciliation clinics that have been implemented across conflict-affected regions of the country and that are characteristic of transitional justice and peace-building initiatives in other post-conflict countries. The forgiveness and reconciliation clinics led to sizeable improvements in the mental-health of the participants but also find that this mapped out

into improvements in their social connectedness and prospects of life trajectories, which are consistent with the results of [Ashraf et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Moya et al. \(2021b\)](#) discussed above.

## 5.4 Compensation: indemnities and land restitution

Section 4 documents the large vulnerability to poverty of the IDP population, which has persisted in spite of the reductions on poverty rates and the positive effect of government aid described in the previous paragraphs. The massive asset losses, mainly land, and the difficulty to fully recover from income losses drive partially this vulnerability. Although land restitution and indemnities sought to legally recognize the suffering and damages brought about by forced displacement, the design and the implementation of both provisions of the Victim's Law are inspired on development programs, and are thus dubbed as transformative reparations ([Guarin et al. 2021](#); [Vallejo 2021](#)).

An evaluation by [Guarin et al. \(2021\)](#) find indemnities are indeed improving significantly the economic and social conditions of victims, which are mostly IDP. Indemnities, a wealth transfer equivalent on average to 3.3 times the income of victims, expand the households' permanent income. These households are thus better placed to search for better income opportunities, rely more on credit markets, accumulate assets and durable goods, and invest in human capital ([Guarin et al. 2021](#)). The causal impact of indemnities on present income is sizeable. The income from indemnities bring a respite to beneficiary households, allowing them to engage on a lengthier and better job search, or to invest in their education. Victims that received indemnities are more likely to switch from higher-risk and low-wage jobs to lower-risk and high-wage jobs, or start new businesses. Future income is also likely to increase. Investment in education is higher: its members enroll more in college, their drop-out rates from college are lower, and transfer with a higher probability from technical to college education.

The effect of reparation measures may go beyond the impacts on economic conditions. In fact, the main purpose of these measures is to contribute on the healing process of victims. [Bogliacino et al. \(2021\)](#) study whether being compensated through land restitution increases interpersonal trust and trustworthiness of IDP. Using an experimental trust game, they find a strong association between participating in the land restitution program and higher trustworthiness.

## 6 Discussion

The experience of forced migration in Colombia is sobering. The flows of internally displaced persons have been a constant in the country's history, decreasing when violence subsides and intensifying when violence resumes. The country has put in place institutions, learn how to address the needs of IDP, and implemented ambitious policies to redress the damages of forced displacement, while not being able to control the violence that causes it. The efforts of the government have become gradually more effective. However, poverty across the IPD population is pervasive after decades of them being displaced. Ending the years of conflict and violence is the best and only option to prevent more forced displacement and its ensuing consequences.

The 24 year process in Colombia provides several lessons. The following are particularly salient. The transition from humanitarian aid to development aid is difficult. Forced displacement is a multi-dimensional shock. IDP migrate hastily losing their support network, productive assets and sources of income. Their absorption by labor markets is slow and usually in the informal sector with no social protection. Most are in addition victims of violence, which has a strong negative impact on their mental health. The transition from humanitarian aid to development aid for helping IDP resume their economic activities have proven difficult. The latter is however important to prevent the persistence of the negative legacies of forced migration, which may span to second generations of IDP ([Ibáñez,](#)

2008).

The evidence on the consequences of forced migration in Colombia is compelling: IDP suffer an erosion of their asset base, broadly defined, which may push them into poverty traps. Policies to compensate for the negative shock of displacement need to address in tandem the erosion of productive, physical, human, social and psychological assets. How to address multiple and simultaneous asset losses simultaneously is not trivial. Studies to understand the complementarity and substitution across the several policies to address the needs of the IPD are crucial to adjust the current policies.

Overly ambitious policies may hamper the capacity of the State to achieve the final goal. The Colombian state has designed two progressive and ambitious laws to protect and assist the IDP. Although the State has gradually strengthened its institutional and fiscal capacity to implement these policies, there is a large uncertainty on whether the final goal will be achieved. The current law covers a large number of persons with a broad set of policies and displacement persists. The difficulty to fulfill the expectations set by the Victim's Law may hamper the credibility of the State and frustrate victims even more. Policies to prevent additional displacement are paramount, not only to protect the lives of millions of civilians, but also to stop the growth on the stock of IDP to assist with special policies. Defining a reachable criteria for the cessation of the IDP may contribute as well on this goal.

The creation of the State Registry for Displaced Population was a fundamental piece for designing and implementing the IDP policy. The registry was a point of entry to rightfully identify the displaced population, estimate the support required to assist them, design special programs and interventions, and provide timely information to other institutions. This strengthened the institutional capacity of the government.

Lastly, and very importantly, IDP policies are not implemented in a vacuum. Politics play a role. How to address the needs of victims of conflict, and whether these victims should be compensated is a political decision. In the Colombian case, IDP policy was

being discussed amid a protracted conflict in which the political shift required to engage in transitional justice had not taken place (Summers (2012); ?). Moreover, land restitution implies in the long term a distribution of economic and political power (García-Godos and Wiig, 2018). Research and technocratic actors supported the claims to consider IDP as victims and to design a special policy for them, yet the final decision was in the hands of political actors who oftentimes disregarded the evidence. However, the enactment of a law to protect the IDP population allowed other State branches, namely the Judicial branch, to weigh in, ensuring thus the continuity of a State policy beyond the political preferences of a particular government.

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## Appendix: Micro-level data

Under the first wave of displacement that occurred during the period of *La Violencia*, we found prior efforts to collect data and document the consequences of forced displacement. The majority, if not all of these efforts, were led by sociologists who documented the far-reaching consequences of the civil conflict and ensuing forced displacement of millions of civilians from rural to urban areas. Among these, we would like highlight two studies. The first one from [Pineda Giraldo \(1960\)](#) who administered a household survey to understand the consequences of violence in El Libano, Tolima, one of the municipalities in Colombia more affected by bipartisan violence during this period. The second one, from [Lipman and Havens \(1965\)](#) who ran an ‘ex post facto experiment’ on how forced displacement affected the social world and psychological perspectives by collecting data on a sample of displaced persons and non-displaced persons.

To the best of our knowledge, the first attempt to collect micro-level data on IDP under the second or more recent wave of displacement came from the Catholic Church, which in 1985 set up an information system to record and characterize IDP who sought support from parishes around the country. The Church collected information on their places of origin, the drivers of displacement, and basic socioeconomic and demographic information and was the first source of information to understand the magnitude and geographical distribution of displacement in Colombia.<sup>26</sup>

In 2000, [Engel and Ibáñez \(2007\)](#) administered a household survey to 367 displaced and non-displaced households in three large cities (reception sites of IDP) and three communities torn by conflict and displacement to understand the drivers of forced displacement. These two surveys were followed by the first nationally representative survey of the displaced population that was administered to 2,448 displaced households across 48 municipalities and

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<sup>26</sup>The survey was called the RUT survey after Ruth, a biblical character who was forced to migrate after a famine and afterwards worked towards supporting migrants and other vulnerable populations.

provided the first comprehensive picture on the characteristics and socioeconomic conditions of IDP, and the drivers and consequences of forced displacement (Ibáñez et al., 2005). At the time, there were 1.6 million IDP, corresponding to 3.6 percent of the population, and the survey was thus administered before the surge in conflict dynamics and forced displacement of the late 2000.

The increase in the levels of forced displacement throughout the decade and the rulings stemming from the Constitutional Court sentence of 2004 and the Victims Law of 2012 motivated further efforts to collect representative surveys of IDP to understand their characteristics and socioeconomic vulnerabilities, document the violation in constitutional rights brought forth by forced displacement, and monitor access to programs and services. These surveys include those administered by the National Monitoring Commission on Public Policies for Forced Displacement (Comisión de Seguimiento a la Política Pública sobre Desplazamiento Forzado en Colombia, 2008, 2010), the National Comptrollers Office (Contraloría General de la República de Colombia, 2015), and by the Victims Unit and the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE for its Spanish acronym) (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, 2015).

Finally, the National Victims Unit has started collecting and reporting data to characterize IDP and other groups of victims included in the Registro Unico de Victimas and to assess the evolution in their conditions of vulnerability and the fulfillment of the rights. This data is collected and published as a response to the depositions from the *Victims Law* and is available online at: <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/reportes>.

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