



Forced Displacement Literature Review

November 2019

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¹ The JDC Literature Review provides summaries of recently published research to encourage the exchange of ideas on topics related to forced displacement. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in the literature included in this review are entirely those of their authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Joint Data Center, UNHCR, the World Bank, the Executive Directors of the World Bank or the governments they represent. For convenience, the literature review contains links to websites operated by third parties. The Joint Data Center and its affiliate organizations do not represent or endorse these sites or the content, services and products they may offer, and do not guarantee the accuracy or reliability of any information, data, opinions, advice or statements provided on these sites.



Climate, conflict and forced migration

Guy J. Abel, Michael Brottrager, Jesus Crespo Cuaresma, and Raya Muttarak

Global Environmental Change, Volume 54 (2019), Pages 239-249

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.12.003>

There is growing public interest in climate as a driver of conflict and forced migration, however there is little empirical evidence that demonstrates a causal path from climate to conflict to forced migration. This paper **assesses the determinants of refugee flows to examine the causal link between climate, conflict and forced migration**. Exploiting data on asylum applications for the years 2006–2015 for 157 countries, the authors employ a gravity-type model with endogenous selection to: (a) estimate the impact of climate on conflict; and (b) assess how conflict influences forced migration.

Key results:

- **There is no empirical evidence of a robust link between climatic shocks, conflict and asylum seeking for the full period 2006–2015.**
- **Climatic conditions, by affecting drought severity and the likelihood of armed conflict, played a significant role as an explanatory factor for asylum seeking only in the period 2011–2015.** The severity of drought episodes is mostly able to explain conflicts occurring in the interval 2010–2012 and so appear related to the emergence of armed conflict in the context of the Arab spring and the Syrian war, during which many countries were undergoing political transformation.

The authors conclude that climatic shocks will not generate forced displacement everywhere, and **the causal relationship is highly dependent on the specific country context**. They argue that climatic variations are more likely to generate asylum seeker flows in countries undergoing political transformation where conflict represents a form of population discontent towards inefficient response of the government to climate impacts. The authors also suggest that policies to improve the adaptive capacity to deal with the effects of climate change in developing countries may have additional returns by reducing the likelihood of conflict and consequent refugee outflows.



A gravity model analysis of forced displacement in Colombia

Juan Francisco Saldarriaga and Yuan Hua

Cities, Volume 95, 2019

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2019.102407>

This article **analyzes flows of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Colombia between 1986 and 2015 to identify some of the main factors associated with IDPs' choice of destination**. The authors make use of gravity models to examine the correlation between an IDP's path and the characteristics of the origin and destination municipalities. Besides the classical gravity model variables, such as population and distance, the authors consider: intensity of violence at origin and destination municipalities/regions; the level of community participation at origin and destination; and the extent of the social network at destination. The analysis is based on municipal-level data from the Registro Único de Víctimas, the official database of victims of the Colombian conflict for the period 1986-2016, as well as population estimates and data on community participation from the Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE).

Key findings:

- Intensity of violence at the origin municipality appears to be the most important driver of forced displacement.
- Distance between origin and destination, and population size at the destination, are statistically correlated to the number of IDPs arriving in a municipality.
- **The number of previously displaced people from the same origin at the destination municipality is the strongest predictor of displacement volume**. This suggests a much stronger link between social networks of victims and their choice of destination.

The authors recommend that forced displacement be treated as a regional-level phenomenon and planners, city officials, and aid organizations should focus their attention on medium-sized regional centers. Given the importance of social networks in driving IDPs' choice of destination, the authors propose that city officials, planners and aid organizations should closely collaborate with grassroots community organizations to allocate resources and plan for new arrivals.



One-sided Violence in Refugee-hosting Areas

Kerstin Fisk

Journal of Conflict Resolution, Volume 62, Issue 3, 2018, Pages 529-556


<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002716656447>

This paper **studies the relationship between within-country patterns of refugee settlement and patterns of civilian victimization during armed conflict**. The author posits that:

- **Armed actors victimize civilians at higher rates in areas with larger refugee populations**, because: (a) these areas offer armed groups opportunities for concealment/sanctuary as well as “refugee resources” (humanitarian aid, recruitment potential) that enhance their strategic value; (b) consequently these areas may be more likely to be militarized by armed groups (storage and trafficking of arms, presence of active and ex-combatants, recruitment, military training, use of camps as military bases) leading to violence against civilians; (c) government forces and government-affiliated non-state armed groups (from both origin and host countries) are more likely to target militarized areas to eliminate strategic advantages for their opponents; and (d) difficulties of distinguishing combatants from civilians lead to collective targeting of refugee and local civilian populations in these locations based on ascriptive clues (nationality, ethnicity, language).
- **Armed actors victimize civilians at higher rates in areas that host larger self-settled refugee populations**. Compared to locations that host camp-settled refugees or no refugees, areas home to self-settled refugees (who live among the local population, do not have official legal status as refugees, and cannot rely on formal/dedicated protection and assistance) may be used as a proxy for rival support since self-settled refugees are more likely to share an affinity (language, kinship ties, ethnicity) with the host community. This makes collective targeting more likely in these locations.

The analysis is based on an original dataset on the locations and demographics of refugee populations within host countries in Africa from 2000 to 2010. Key findings:

- There is evidence of **systematic violence against civilians in refugee-populated regions throughout Africa** in the period under investigation.
- **Locations with larger refugee populations experience a significantly higher number of intentional attacks on civilians**—by both sending country and host country combatants—compared to other locations.
- **The effect of refugee population size on civilian victimization is conditional upon how they are settled in the host country**. While regions hosting larger numbers of self-settled refugees experience a significant increase in incidents of one-sided attacks on civilians compared to other regions in the host country, larger camp-settled populations are shown to be unrelated to the level of violence.



The findings draw attention to the importance of simultaneously addressing the security challenges refugee populations can potentially pose as well as threats to refugees themselves.

Effect of forced displacement on health

Ivan Zilic

Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Series A (Statistics in Society), Volume 181, Issue 3 (2018), Pages 889-906

<https://doi.org/10.1111/rssa.12322>


This paper **analyzes health consequences of forced displacement during the war in Croatia between 1991-1995**, part of the larger-scale conflicts that accompanied the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. Specifically, the authors test whether displacement is relevant in explaining various dimensions of health of females, including measured and self-assessed health. The authors employ an instrumental variable approach to address the potential endogeneity of displacement status (using civilian casualties across counties as an instrument for displacement status). The analysis is based on data from the 2003 Croatian Adult Health Survey 2003, which coincides with the return of the majority of IDPs to their homes.

Key findings:

- **Displacement has an adverse effect on measured and self-assessed health outcomes for females.** Displacement significantly increases the risk of hypertension and tachycardia and it also reduces self-assessed health and subjective indicators of emotional and mental health. Incidence of obesity is not affected by displacement status.
- **Faced with armed conflict, individuals with better latent health, conditional on age and education level, were more likely to move.**
- No robust and significant effects of displacement on healthy behaviors, nor on marriage status and labor activity.
- **Displacement leads to a higher probability of reporting below average household income.** This suggests that displaced individuals are, due to dispossession, facing adverse economic conditions.

The Labor Market Effects of a Refugee Wave: Synthetic Control Method Meets the Mariel Boatlift

Giovanni Peri and Vasil Yassenov



Journal of Human Resources, Volume 54, Issue 2, Spring 2019, Pages 267-309

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/724354>

This article **reexamines the labor market effects of the migration of almost 125,000 Cuban refugees to the United States between April and September 1980, known as the Mariel Boatlift**. The Mariel Boatlift has been the subject of several economic studies because it provides a natural experiment to test theories about the effects immigration on the wages and employment of native workers. The majority of the Mariel Cubans settled in Miami, increasing Miami's labor force by about 8 percent, and increasing the workforce without a high school degree by around 18 percent. Card's (1990) seminal paper found no evidence of any effect on the wages or employment of low-skilled non-Cubans in Miami, while Borjas (2017) found that the wages of low-skilled workers fell by 10 to 30 percent. The authors of this paper argue that they improve on previous studies by employing a synthetic control method, which involves identifying an 'optimal' control group or 'synthetic' city, that best matches Miami's labor market trends pre-Boatlift. The authors look for a significant difference in Miami's labor markets' outcomes from those of its synthetic control between 1981 and 1983, as potential evidence of an effect of the Mariel Boatlift on local labor markets.

Key findings:

- **There is no significant difference in the labor market outcomes of high school dropouts between Miami and its synthetic control, confirming the results of Card (1990)**. Neither wages nor unemployment rates of high school dropouts differ significantly between Miami and its control group during the 1981–1983 period.
- **There is no consistent evidence of large negative effects such as those presented in Borjas (2017)**. By focusing on small subsamples and matching the control group on a short pre-1979 series, as done in Borjas (2017), it is possible to find large wage differences between Miami and the control because of large measurement error.

The authors conclude that **the lack of a significant wage effect is consistent with the recent literature emphasizing mechanisms that allow absorption of immigrants through complementarity, technology adjustment, increases in demand, and efficiency**.

“Tired of Running” Repeated displacement and premature returns in South Sudan

Chloe Sydney

IDMC's 'Invisible Majority' thematic series, November 2019




<http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/tired-of-running-repeated-displacement-and-premature-returns-in-south-sudan>

As of December 2018, there were 1.9 million IDPs in South Sudan, and a further 2.3 million South Sudanese had sought refuge abroad. Despite the unstable situation, around 183,500 refugees had returned spontaneously to South Sudan by the end of June 2019. As many as 684,000 IDPs may have returned since 2016, although they are unlikely to have found durable solutions. This report **examines the relationship between internal displacement, cross-border movements and durable solutions in South Sudan** including: drivers of displacement and onward movements within and across borders; IDPs' and refugees' priorities/preconditions for voluntary return; and obstacles and opportunities faced by returning IDPs and refugees to achieve durable solutions. The analysis is based on more than 200 interviews with IDPs, returning IDPs and returning refugees in and around Bentiu and Juba in July 2019 (data is not representative).

Key findings include:

- **Repeated displacements are very common.** Over three-quarters of those surveyed had been displaced more than once. Around a third had tried to return to their homes, only to be displaced again by renewed violence.
- **Not all IDPs who want to leave the country are able to do so.** Almost 80 percent of surveyed IDPs cited cost as a barrier to cross-border movement, and two-thirds of IDPs mentioned insecurity as another barrier.
- **Refugees have often been first internally displaced.** More than 80 percent of surveyed returning refugees had previously been IDPs before they left the country.
- **Returns of IDPs and refugees have increased following the signing of the revitalized peace agreement in 2018.** The majority of the surveyed returning refugees had returned in 2018 and 2019.
- **Not all refugee returns have been voluntary, particularly among refugees returning from Sudan.** Some returning refugees said the security forces had forced them to leave or they had been threatened with arrest and deportation, and others returned because of political unrest in Sudan.
- **Among refugees who returned voluntarily, improved security in South Sudan was the main motivation, followed by reunification with family and friends.** Poor living conditions in displacement were an important secondary motivation.
- **Returning IDPs surveyed said they mainly wanted to recover their livelihoods.**
- **The majority (around 85 percent) of returning refugees live in IDP-like situations.** Predominantly because of insecurity, two-thirds of surveyed returning refugees were living outside their area of origin, including in Protection of Civilians sites (PoCs). Others, as well as many returning IDPs, live in temporary shelters because their homes were destroyed.
- **Destruction of property is a major barrier to durable solutions for both IDPs and returning refugees.** More than 80 percent of the IDPs surveyed had property before their displacement, but 70 percent of these said it had since been destroyed.

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- **PoC sites provide essential protection, but more support is needed for those who return.** 80 percent of the IDPs surveyed want to return to their area of origin, but only half think they will be able to within a year. Many are unwilling to return because they do not trust the revitalized peace agreement. PoCs provide essential protection for those afraid of being targeted on ethnic grounds. Those who do choose to return are in significant need of support, which so far has not been forthcoming.

Painting the full picture: Persistent data gaps on internal displacement associated with violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras

Álvaro Sardiza Miranda, Adrián Calvo Valderrama and Michelle Kissenkoetter

IDMC, November 2019

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/painting-the-full-picture-displacement-data-gaps-in-the-ntca>

Internal displacement in the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA) is a serious and growing issue. However there are no comprehensive and reliable data on internal displacement to properly understand the scale, triggers, drivers, patterns and impacts of the phenomenon, prevent the conditions that lead to internal displacement, and inform programming, policymaking and advocacy for IDPs' protection and assistance. This report **presents the current situation in terms of data on internal displacement in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, highlights critical data gaps and recommends areas for improvement.**

The report identifies several challenges:

- Complex drivers and triggers of displacement in the region, many of which overlap or are interlinked, make it difficult to capture reliable data.
- Governments' unwillingness to recognize that internal displacement is taking place in their country and that they are required to lead an effective response.
- The lack of a shared conceptual framework of internal displacement.
- Lack of communication and coordination between civil society organizations that collect and analyze data on internal displacement, leading to isolated pockets of data. Additionally, governments have been reticent to share data that might reveal the magnitude of displacement in their country.
- Significant security risks associated with recording information on internal displacement and being identified as an IDP in the NTCA.

The authors recommend:

- Government authorities should formally recognize the phenomenon of internal displacement, regardless of its causes, triggers and drivers.

- Defining and framing internal displacement in the context of each country to enable the definition of populations and groups in scope of those definitions, and subsequently, the official statistical categories and their indicators.
- Tools and methods for collecting, aggregating and sharing of data should be identified and developed taking into account requisite data protection mechanisms and responsible data management to avoid the dissemination of sensitive or personal data.
- Governments should invest, with the support of civil society and international organizations, in efforts to establish a comprehensive set of baseline data.
- Coordination and alignment in terms of concepts and indicators, and the tools and procedures to capture, share and disseminate data.
- Better coordination among donors, and the allocation of resources and support for the development of shared and harmonized data collection, aggregation and dissemination tools would ensure more tangible outcomes and results.
- Extensive capacity building for government and civil society entities with responsibilities for capturing and addressing internal displacement, to ensure they can apply the required practices, tools and methodologies.


Private Sector & Refugees: Pathways to Scale

IFC and The Bridgespan Group, 2019

https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/region_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/sub-saharan+africa/resources/psr-pathways-to-scale

The development community is increasingly working to empower refugees as agents of their own lives and economic contributors, e.g. by providing skills training, offering employment or enabling access to financial products and services. Private sector actors are well positioned to enhance and scale these efforts, given their strategic capabilities and business models. This report **presents research on 173 early-stage private sector initiatives that engage refugee and host communities**. Many originate in host countries where there is an enabling policy environment, i.e. where refugees can participate in economic activities, and are offered opportunities for income-generation and education. The researchers also undertook a survey on actors' motivations, the barriers they face, and their outlook on future engagement.

The research **identifies five common 'pathways of private sector engagement'** beyond funding humanitarian assistance, and includes five case studies illustrating how a specific private sector actor explored, evaluated, and approached one of the five pathways to engaging refugees and host communities. The research also identified several barriers to growth and scale, including insufficient tools and information to engage refugees and inadequate coordination across stakeholders. The five pathways to private sector engagement are:

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- **Sharing capabilities** (e.g. technology or technical expertise) to provide access to humanitarian assistance, education, or financial service, e.g. IrisGuard's iris recognition technology has streamlined the process of registering and delivering services to refugees in Jordan and elsewhere. Refugees no longer have to wait at distribution points, are less susceptible to theft and corruption, and have more agency in how they receive assistance.
 - **Extending services** by adapting current business models to sell goods/services to refugees, e.g. Equity Bank provides banking products and services to thousands of refugees in Northern Kenya.
 - **Enabling employment** by providing job training and/or entrepreneurship support to refugees, e.g. Luminus Education is Jordan's first private institute to provide employment training for refugee youth. 70-80 percent of Luminus's refugee students find employment—and in some sectors, like hospitality, all of them do.
 - **Integrating into value chains** by hiring refugees directly and/or working with smaller enterprises that hire refugees through sourcing or subcontracting work, e.g. Sanivation is using an innovative approach to bring more hygienic sanitation solutions and cleaner fuel alternatives to refugee communities in Kenya, while also providing a range of employment opportunities, from manufacturing to sales.
 - **Building a business** through the selling of goods and services tailored to refugee populations, e.g. Inyenyeri's innovative cooking system is addressing cooking needs, household air pollution, and fuel efficiency issues in refugee homes in Rwanda. This affordable, market-based solution aims to reach 3,500 households in Kigeme Camp and start expanding into several other camps in 2019.

The researchers also undertook a deeper analysis of 110 initiatives across Africa and the Middle East and **identified three factors that are critical for impact and scale:**

- **Flexible financing:** Venture capital-like approaches to funding, with smaller, more flexible, and need-based investments—even within the existing pool of capital—can better enable testing and scaling for the early-stage, innovative, yet unproven initiatives that comprise much of the landscape and pipeline of work with refugees.
- **Cross-sector partnerships:** Given its scope and multifaceted nature, addressing refugee needs requires collaboration across the government, humanitarian, NGO, private, and development finance sectors.
- **Investment information:** Increasing the information flow on refugee qualifications, needs and preferences, local context, and existing efforts can ensure informed decisions by all private sector actors—especially those without the resources or connections to access such information themselves.



The effects of foreign aid on refugee flows

Axel Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Sarah Langlotz

European Economic Review, Volume 112 (2019), Pages 127-147

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2018.12.001>

This article **analyzes whether, and to what extent, foreign aid is effective in tackling the root causes of flight and reducing the flow of refugees**. The authors: (a) analyze whether inflows of foreign aid are effective in reducing the total outflows of refugees from recipient countries (to any destination); and (b) estimate the effects of aid on the number of refugees going to donor countries. The authors employ an instrumental variable approach, using the interaction between donor government/legislature fractionalization and the probability of receiving aid from a particular donor as an instrument for bilateral aid. The analysis is based on refugee data for 141 origin countries from 1976 to 2013 and bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) data.

Key findings:

- **No evidence that total aid to origin countries reduces total refugee outflows in the short term.** Only with long lags of eleven years or more does aid reduce refugee outflows, which appear to be driven by lagged positive effects of aid on economic growth.
- **However, where the share of humanitarian aid in total ODA is sufficiently high, aid reduces the number of refugees leaving their country in the short term.** Humanitarian aid is more effective in reducing refugee flows in the short run, compared to general development aid—aid reduces refugee outflows as long as the share of humanitarian aid exceeds seven percent of total ODA receipts two periods after it has been disbursed.
- Aid is also more effective (or less ineffective) in countries that are more likely sources of refugee outflows, such as countries that are poorer, more repressive, or hit by more severe conflict and disaster.
- **In the short term, donor countries experience increases in refugee inflows,** possibly driven by an improved image of donor countries through aid, or by enabling people to afford the cost of fleeing to another country.
- **Aid induces recipient governments to encourage the return of their citizens in the short term.**
- **Aid increases the number of IDPs in the short run,** possibly by enabling people to escape imminent threats to their lives, or by supporting the establishment of IDP camps that allow citizens to seek refuge within their own country.
- **Aid given to origin countries' neighbors reduces the flow of refugees from the origin country to the rest of the world and to donor countries in particular, i.e.** donors successfully use their aid to induce countries bordering the refugees' homes to block refugee flows. In the long run, aid to neighbors increases refugee flows, possibly because it becomes comparably easier and more attractive to seek refuge in a neighboring country.



Forced Migration and Asylum Policy in the Developing World

Guy Grossman, Christopher W. Blair, and Jeremy Weinstein

November 6, 2019

JDC seminar recording available at:

<https://worldbankgroup.webex.com/recording/service/sites/worldbankgroup/recording/43d37c88f4ff44ddadf4177ca4b508eb>


Despite the fact that more than 84 percent of the world's forced migrants are hosted in developing countries, refugee and asylum policies in developing countries are largely neglected in the academic literature, in part due to: (a) lack of data on migration policies outside the OECD; and (b) presumption that *de jure* policies don't matter in developing contexts because of weak enforcement and limited policy knowledge. The authors **introduce a new dataset of asylum policies in the developing world, and employ it to study the correlates of asylum policymaking in the developing world, as well as the role of *de jure* policies as pull factors in flows of forced migration.** The dataset includes 229 national-level laws relating to forced displacement in 92 African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian developing countries between 1951 and 2017. For each law, the dataset includes codes for 54 provisions across five policy fields: (1) *access*: ease of entrance and security of status; (2) *services*: provision of public services and welfare; (3) *livelihoods*: ability to work and own property; (4) *movement*: encampment policies; and (5) *participation*: citizenship and political rights.

The data suggests the following stylized facts:

- **There is much diversity in asylum policy liberality**, which cannot be explained by regional clustering.
- **Developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and the post-Soviet space, have been gradually liberalizing their asylum and refugees policies**, while developed countries have been moving in more restrictive directions. Policy liberalization has been particularly prominent on status and entry procedures (*access*) and rights to free movement and documents (*movement*), and comparatively slower on civic participation and citizenship rights.

Key findings:

- **Developing countries alter their asylum policies when intense civil wars break out in neighboring countries, leading to expectations of future forced migrant flows.**
- **Policy liberalization is more likely when co-ethnic kin are excluded from power in neighboring countries in conflict**, i.e. liberalization is a function of co-ethnic solidarity. This suggests that countries may be willing to bear greater costs to host kin groups.
- **No generalized evidence that repressive regimes liberalize in exchange for aid**, although this dynamic is relevant for some specific cases (e.g. Uganda).

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- As in Western countries, **national wealth is associated with migration policy restrictions in the developing world.**
 - **Liberal asylum policies pull forced migrants, conditional on facilitating factors (information and ethnic kin).** Liberal policies on access to services (e.g. education), employment, and free movement are the strongest pulls. In contrast to evidence from data on the OECD, there is no significant association found between asylum-seeking and citizenship or political rights.
 - **Transnational ethnic kin networks and mobile-phone and internet penetration are sources of information diffusion about de jure refugee and asylum policies.** Ethnic kinship networks have been previously identified as a pull factors directly affecting migration choice by reducing integration costs. However, part of the effect of kinship networks on destination choice is indirect by increasing knowledge about the asylum policies of (potential) target countries.
 - **The effect of kin as a pull factor is more important the more liberal asylum policies are.**