

CHAPTER 7

Forced Migration Fragility, Resilience, and Policy Responses

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KEY MESSAGES

- The decision to migrate is complex, driven by a wide range of context-specific push and pull factors, including economic, social and cultural, environmental, and safety factors.
 - Forced displacement – when people must leave their original place of residence – results from various triggering factors, events, and shocks. These include climate change, armed conflict, criminal violence, and economic shocks, which are often interrelated, multiplying their impact. About four-fifths of displaced people have experienced acute hunger and malnutrition.
 - Migration, including forced migration, constitutes an important adaptation strategy, with both challenges and opportunities. It can have benefits for migrants and for hosting and sending communities. It is a fundamental component of economic development, allowing individuals to respond to economic incentives or seek out better opportunities.
 - Policies that restrict the rights of migrants to work and choose a place of residence in hosting countries should be considered barriers to economic and social integration and development.
 - Migration requires resources and socioeconomic networks, and often those who stay behind are the most vulnerable.
- To improve the outcomes of forced migration, it is critical to:
- Invest in research to develop better-tailored policies that expand the positive effects of migration and limit negative ones on migrants and their families, sending communities, and hosting communities.
 - Adopt nontraditional methods and analytical approaches to trace migration. These can provide new research avenues to better understand the key factors driving forced migration, including irregular migration, which is inherently more difficult to measure and analyze.
 - Align social protection and climate action objectives. As conflict and climate change further worsen the global humanitarian crisis – and drive forced migration – humanitarian and climate investments must mutually support peace, security, and climate adaptation and mitigation.
 - Identify measures for accelerating the transition from humanitarian aid to development policy and for better integrating refugees into hosting communities. Different options should be considered for integration, with special attention given to the needs of displaced women.
 - Prioritize addressing “forced immobility” (that is, the situation of those who are not able or choose not to relocate) – a problem that has received little policy attention.



Migration is a recurrent, complex, and multi-dimensional phenomenon driven by a broad set of factors. These include both “push” factors that encourage or force people to move from their current location and “pull” factors that attract people to a new location.¹ Migration is also an important adaptation strategy and development pathway that can support livelihoods, build resilience, and protect against fragility and armed conflict. Natural barriers and policy restrictions to migration may similarly result in important welfare losses.²

Individuals or households migrate for multiple reasons, including being forced to leave their homes due to climate change, armed conflict, criminal violence, or economic needs, among other triggering factors. This chapter discusses migration as a result of “forced displacement,” which occurs when people must leave their “original place of residence as a result of an idiosyncratic shock, whether manmade or environmental.”³ Interactions among these driving forces, such as conflict and/or extreme weather events combined with food insecurity, may also lead to threat-multiplying effects.⁴

Recent examples of forced migration include refugees⁵ displaced by the Syrian civil war and by the Russia-Ukraine war, the Rohingya people fleeing violence inflicted by Myanmar’s state forces, Venezuelan migrants seeking asylum to escape food insecurity and oppression, and people from Central America taking treacherous routes to the United States to escape gang violence and persistent poverty.

Of people forcibly displaced worldwide, as of mid-2021, 80 percent had experienced acute food insecurity and high levels of malnutrition.⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic also increased the vulnerability of displaced people and migrants. In East Africa, including the Horn of Africa, for example, the challenges of displaced people were exacerbated by reduced humanitarian funding, a decrease in remittance flows due to travel freezes, and hundreds of thousands of job losses.⁷

Even migration forced by war and violence requires resources and relies heavily on networks.⁸ People with more liquid resources are more able to flee,⁹ though perhaps less likely to do so,¹⁰ while better social networks can also facilitate

FIGURE 1 Key migration facts

ONE IN EVERY SEVEN PEOPLE IN THE WORLD IS A MIGRANT

763 million are internal migrants and 281 million are international migrants.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION SURGED BY 107 MILLION OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

52% of international migrants are men, about one-third are 15–34 years old, and a large share originate from rural areas.

THERE ARE ABOUT 84 MILLION INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS, REFUGEES, AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Most people displaced by armed conflict or other forces are from developing countries, and 80% experience acute food insecurity.

CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT HAS RECEIVED SPECIAL ATTENTION IN RECENT YEARS

75% of recent displacements are due to natural disasters, and many people displaced by climate change are women, who are also at greater risk of violence.

FORCED MIGRATION MAY ALSO RESULT IN IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Apprehensions at the US–Mexico border set a new record in fiscal year 2022 and almost tripled compared to 2019.

Source: Data from FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Rural Development* (Rome: 2016); IOM, *World Migration Report 2020* (Geneva: 2020); J. Barchfield, “Pandemic Deepens Hunger for Displaced People the World Over,” UNHCR, March 31, 2021; USAID, U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy (Washington, DC: 2021); IOM, “Migration in the World,” and “Key Migration Terms,” accessed January 2023; OHCHR, “Climate Change Exacerbates Violence against Women and Girls,” (2022); USCBP, “U.S. Border Patrol Apprehensions,” Washington, DC, Dec. 19, 2022.

migration.¹¹ Thus, migrants are not necessarily those most affected by triggering factors, and they may be relatively better equipped with knowledge and skills that are useful for adaptation in hosting communities than those who remain behind.

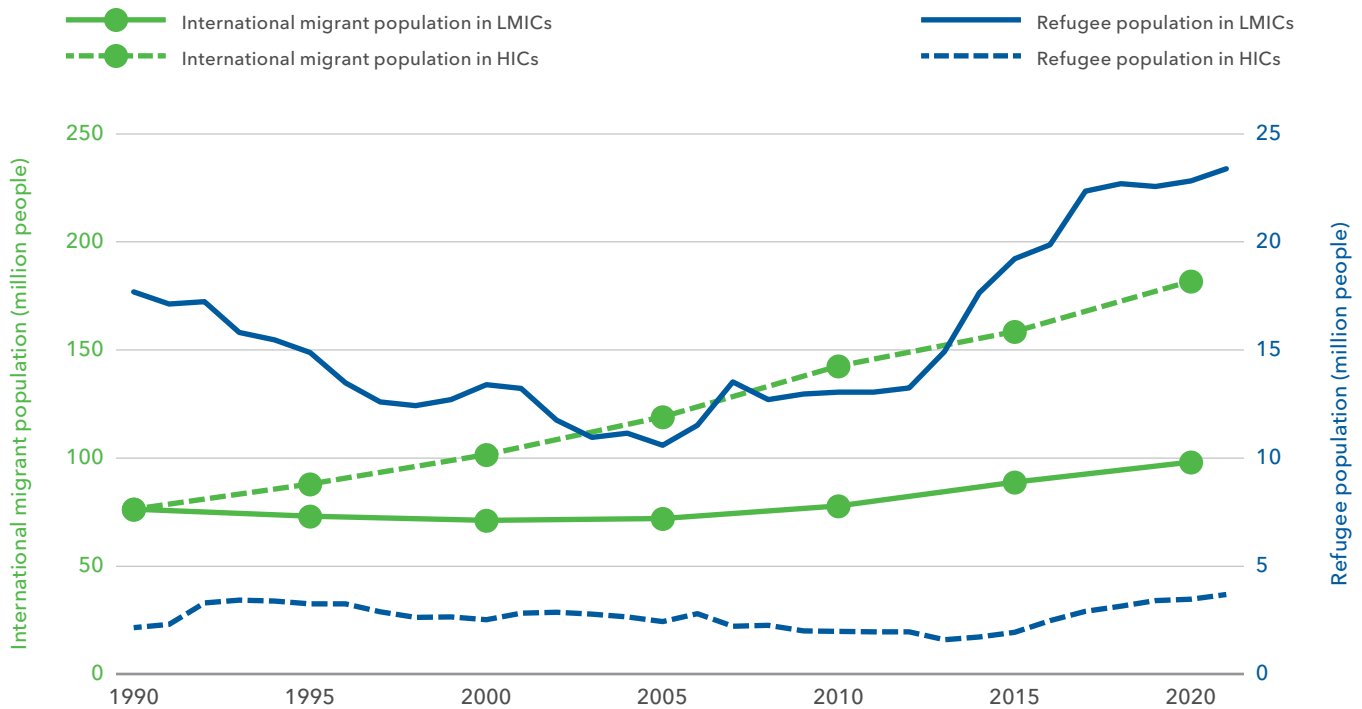
RELEVANT MIGRATION FACTS

Worldwide, one in every seven people is a migrant, whether a forced or voluntary migrant¹² (Figure 1). Of these approximately 1 billion migrants, 763 million are estimated to be internal migrants (migrating within their country of origin), while 281 million are international migrants. International migration has received more attention recently, as it surged by 107 million between 2000 and 2020. During this period, Western Europe and the United States were the main destinations for migrants. Among international migrants, 52 percent are men and roughly one-third are between 15 and 34 years of age. About 40 percent of international remittances are sent to rural areas, reflecting the rural origins of many migrants.¹³

While the increase in international migrants has mostly occurred in high-income countries over the past three decades, the rising refugee population has been concentrated more in low- and middle-income countries (Figure 2). The number of refugees has roughly doubled since the early 2000s, reaching 27 million in 2021, and more than 86 percent of them have been hosted by these countries.

Forced displacement may also result in irregular migration, which is the movement of people that occurs outside of the laws and regulations of the sending, transit, and receiving countries.¹⁴ Irregular migration is generally more difficult to track, and there is more information on irregular migration flows to Europe and the United States than within Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where they are likely to be significant.¹⁵ Although stringent border controls and migration policies at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a temporary decrease in irregular migration, these crossings seem to have resumed – and even increased – since 2021.¹⁶ Apprehensions at the US–Mexico border, for example, numbered 800,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2019,

FIGURE 2 International migrants and refugees in low-, middle-, and high-income countries



Source: UNHCR Refugee Data Finder. <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

Note: LMICs = low- and middle-income countries; HICs = high-income countries.

400,000 in FY 2020, more than 1.5 million in FY 2021, and 2.2 million in FY 2022.¹⁷

CAUSES OF MIGRATION

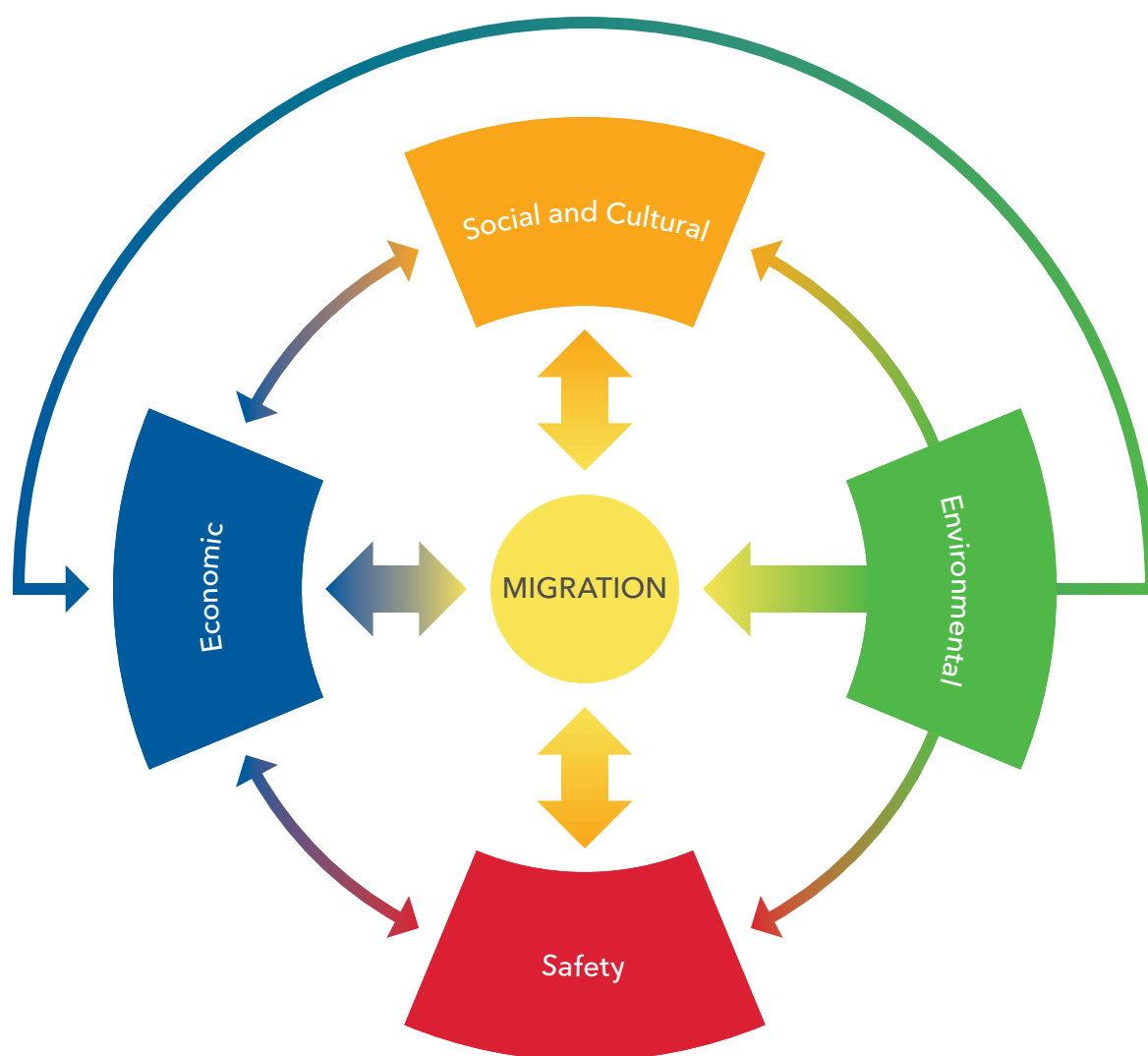
Formally identifying migration-triggering factors requires a careful and comprehensive analysis, as many of the factors that influence migration decisions are interrelated, vary over time, reinforce one another, and cannot always be observed.¹⁸ Factors that drive migration are generally grouped into four categories: environmental (such as extreme weather events), safety (such as political instability, conflict violence, and crime), economic (such as income shocks or job opportunities), and social/cultural (such as family and social networks) (Figure 3). These triggering factors are also context-specific and may vary by region or country. They can occur at the individual or household level, as well as the local, regional, and national levels.

Most often, a combination of factors triggers migration. The decision to migrate may be

associated with climatic conditions and extreme events; conflict, violence, and crime; food insecurity and malnutrition; job opportunities (or lack thereof); social and political instability in the local area; and/or illegitimate institutions and government repression, among others. In the case of forced internal migration in Africa and the Middle East, for example, the main driving forces include conflict and insecurity, repressive governance, lack of economic opportunities, and climate shocks.¹⁹ The major drivers of irregular migration from Central America to the United States include unemployment (especially among youth), transnational ties (family networks), victimization (crime), and agricultural stress due to natural disasters²⁰ (although most of the available studies are based on anecdotal evidence and cross-sectional assessments that only allow us to approximate correlations rather than causality).

While Europe is currently experiencing its largest refugee crisis since World War II – with close to 8 million people fleeing Russia’s war on Ukraine,

FIGURE 3 Factors driving migration



Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Note: The arrows indicate the direction of causality, which is bidirectional in most of the cases between each factor and migration, as well as between the factors themselves.

the vast majority of people displaced from their homes by armed conflict or other forces globally are from developing countries.²¹ As of 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported more than 84 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and asylum seekers.²² Three-quarters of all IDPs (34.5 million) were living in 10 countries, with half of them in Syria, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Of all new internal displacements in 2019, 25 percent

were triggered by conflict violence and 75 percent by natural disasters. Similarly, of the estimated 26 million refugees worldwide in 2019, two-thirds were from 5 countries (in order of refugee population: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar).

In recent years, special attention has been paid to climate displacement, which occurs when migration is driven, at least in part, by the impacts of climate change. In 2016, the United

Nations General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which explicitly recognizes that people move “in response to the adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters (some of which may be linked to climate change), or other environmental factors.”²³ Climate change has been linked to an increase in migratory movements that result from attempts to adapt to the changing environment.²⁴ Research has also shown that, on average, people move from countries of higher vulnerability to lower vulnerability.²⁵ This is consistent with the idea that migration is an adaptation to climate change²⁶ or a response to natural disasters, where families and social networks among migrants in the destination country can play an important (host) role in response to shocks in their country of origin.²⁷ Areas severely affected by climate change are also more prone to conflict.²⁸ According to UN Environment, an important share of people displaced by climate change are women, who are also at greater risk of violence, including sexual violence (see Chapter 6).²⁹

Recent studies highlight the varying profiles of migrants who are forced to leave their communities and the different reasons driving their decisions. A synthesis brief from the CGIAR Research Program on Policies, Institutions, and Markets³⁰ provides several key findings from recent CGIAR work on migration drivers:

- The factors driving migration, whether forced or voluntary, generally differ between men and women, and by age. Men are more often motivated by employment, while women face higher barriers to employment and migrate for marriage or educational opportunities.³¹ Although both men and women may migrate in response to an income shock, men are more likely to do so.³² Youth migration is associated with lack of access to land and pursuit of education, although migration does not always lead to more education.³³
- Climate-driven migration varies by region and country and may differ by age, sex, and socioeconomic group.³⁴ Adaptation to climate change may reduce migration,³⁵ while conflict may lead to migration (though this is not always the case).³⁶

- Social protection programs have different effects on migration for men and women. For women, these programs may decrease migration, while effects for men may also depend on other factors, such as weather or socioeconomic status.³⁷ In addition, migrant networks can play an important role, particularly for permanent migration where job search costs tend to be higher.³⁸

SOCIOECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF FORCED MIGRATION

The consequences of migration are diverse and should be analyzed across three dimensions: impacts on migrants and their families; on sending communities; and on hosting communities.

For migrants themselves, migration may eventually lead to higher incomes and improved livelihoods in the hosting country, including better education and nutrition outcomes for their children.³⁹ However, these positive effects are not without costs and can take time to materialize, leaving migrants in vulnerable positions that include lower job quality than local workers and deteriorated physical and mental health and well-being.⁴⁰ IDPs are more vulnerable as they are more difficult to locate and tend to receive less international assistance. Moreover, migration generally occurs at great risk, with many migrants undergoing extreme hardship and even losing their lives in the journey.⁴¹ According to the Missing Migrants Project of IOM, more than 50,000 people have lost their lives during migratory movements since 2014. More than half of these deaths occurred en route to and within Europe, and around 5,000 people have died or disappeared en route to the United States.⁴²

For the families who stay behind, remittances from migrants can constitute an important source of income, allowing them to invest more in education and housing and to attain a better quality of life.⁴³ Remittances were especially important as a source of income during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021 in Latin America, they accounted for 28 percent of GDP in Honduras, 27 percent in El Salvador, 18 percent in Guatemala, 16 percent in Nicaragua, and 4 percent in Mexico.⁴⁴ In the Pacific Region, these shares were even higher: 44 percent

in Tonga, 32 percent in Samoa, 12 percent in the Marshall Islands, and 9 percent in the Philippines and Fiji.⁴⁵ Despite these benefits, migration may also result in an increased work burden for family members who stay behind.

In sending communities, migration may put more pressure on wages for unskilled agricultural workers, which can have serious consequences for the farmers who hire them.⁴⁶ Migration may also affect women's workloads and empowerment,⁴⁷ and women do not necessarily benefit from the "feminization" of agriculture – that is, the increase in women's labor in agriculture, in their labor relative to that of men, or in their roles in agricultural decision-making (see Chapter 6).⁴⁸ Lastly, migration may result in either a "brain drain" or "brain gain" for sending communities.⁴⁹ High returns on human capital (education and skills) in the destination country can lead to high-skilled emigration but may also encourage nonmigrants to invest in human capital.⁵⁰

For hosting communities, the economic literature assessing the effects of forced migration is growing, although still limited.⁵¹ Research focused on the African context showed that forced migration is not an economic burden for hosting communities, at least not in a lasting way.⁵² On the contrary, these migrants tend to contribute positively to local economic growth. In Rwanda, for instance, each additional refugee has been estimated to increase annual real income in the local economy by US\$205 to \$253 through market interactions between refugees and their hosts.⁵³

Nevertheless, findings also point to rather strong distributional effects for hosting communities, especially in the short term. In the context of underdeveloped labor and credit markets, the poor – who are most vulnerable to livelihood shocks – face the greatest challenges in seizing new economic opportunities that accompany inflows of forced migrants, due to their low levels of physical and human capital.⁵⁴ Intrahousehold distributional effects have also been identified, where women with low levels of education are less likely to engage in employment outside of the household.⁵⁵ The evidence from African countries is consistent with the findings of more recent studies in the Middle East – the destination of most Syrian

refugees – and Latin America – the destination of many Venezuelan refugees.⁵⁶

More recently, researchers have started to investigate whether migrants, and especially those fleeing armed conflict, are more inclined to engage in criminal activities and organized crime in hosting countries.⁵⁷ The limited evidence from a few middle-income countries provides mixed and inconclusive results,⁵⁸ which emphasizes the need to better understand group dynamics among migrants and intergroup attitudes in refugee camps and hosting communities. The claim that cross-border refugee flows are responsible for propagating localized armed conflict has been stubbornly persistent, especially in the context of civil conflict in Africa – though it lacks strong supporting evidence. A recent study reexamining the effects of refugees on civil conflict found no evidence that hosting refugees raises the likelihood of new conflict, prolongs existing conflict, or increases the number of violent events or casualties.⁵⁹

RECOMMENDED POLICY RESPONSES TO FORCED MIGRATION

RECOGNIZE MIGRATION AS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL, COMPLEX, AND CONTEXT-SPECIFIC PHENOMENON.

Policy responses should start from a clear understanding of the causes of forced migration, which may be context-specific, and of the people who migrate, as well as the possible consequences for migrants and their families, sending communities, and hosting communities. A comprehensive analysis is required to determine key driving forces that push (or pull) people to relocate, which often interrelate or intersect in complex ways depending on each setting. New analytical approaches, such as machine learning, and unconventional data sources, such as geo-localized cell phone records or geotags posted to social media, provide new opportunities to fill gaps in data and knowledge about private migration decisions,⁶⁰ including irregular migration, which is inherently difficult to trace. Results using these data should still be interpreted cautiously because of likely biases in reporting and selection (the most vulnerable may not have access to tracked communication technology). Although humanitarian assistance is essential

in the short term to prevent hunger, malnutrition, and disease among migrants, lasting solutions require wide-ranging policy strategies. These may be tailored to different situations to address the structural causes of forced migration, including lack of economic opportunities, food insecurity, and inadequate access to basic services, and to mitigate the impacts among migrants as well as sending and hosting communities.

BROADEN THE SCOPE OF RESEARCH ON MIGRATION DECISIONS AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS. More research is needed to better understand migration decisions and their potential effects (beyond short-term impacts) on migrants, sending communities, and hosting communities to derive more tailored policies that expand positive effects and attenuate negative ones. For instance, despite a rapidly growing literature examining the socioeconomic impacts of forced migration among host populations in developing countries, surprisingly little is known about the impacts among the migrants themselves or about the costs of “forced immobility” for those who are not able or choose not to relocate. Although evidence is still limited, cash-based transfers or vouchers to refugees have shown efficiency in improving food security among refugees in Kenya, Rwanda, and Ecuador (see Chapter 5).⁶¹ Addressing forced immobility should also be a policy priority. In contrast, cash transfers (for example, cash-for-work programs) in sending communities may increase (rather than deter) migration by alleviating liquidity and risk constraints and not necessarily increasing the opportunity cost of migration (that is, potential gains of staying) among likely migrants.⁶²

ALIGN SOCIAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE ACTION OBJECTIVES. The climate crisis is exacerbating many underlying drivers of conflict and threatens to worsen the humanitarian crises, with ever more people living in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Climate adaptation, peace, and social protection objectives need to be well aligned, especially considering that funds are typically insufficient to cope with multiple crises. Climate investments should be used to support peace, security, and social protection in addition to climate

adaptation and mitigation, while humanitarian investments need to support climate action in addition to social protection schemes.⁶³ In Colombia, for example, a project led by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) is implementing sustainable land use systems to contribute to forest conservation, climate protection, and the peacebuilding process (Box 1).⁶⁴

PROVIDE OPTIONS TO MITIGATE MASS MIGRATION RISKS. Research has been limited on the potential consequences of different policy options to mitigate detrimental impacts associated with large migration flows in hosting communities. Exceptions include studies focusing on the benefits of local initiatives to better integrate forced migrants into hosting communities, on Uganda’s social protection programs for refugees, and on Colombia’s right-to-work policy for refugees.⁶⁵ Yet beyond these insightful case studies, systematic evidence is still lacking on how specific policies toward forced migrants may lead to improved development and better integration of these populations into their hosting communities.

BETTER TAILOR REFUGEE-TARGETED INTERVENTIONS TO INCREASE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS. Most studies focus on refugees living in camps, while globally most refugees in developing countries live outside of camps.⁶⁶ Particular attention should be given to displaced women, given their likely vulnerability to domestic and other forms of violence, the disruption in their access to critical services and informal safety nets, and their lower employment opportunities (see Chapter 6). Geographic mobility has been found to be key for integrating forced migrants in high-income countries, but little is known on the pros and cons of allowing such mobility in developing countries. Migrants respond to economic incentives, and migration itself can lead to a more efficient allocation of resources.⁶⁷ From a policy perspective, it is important to consider different options for the reception of forced migrants. Refugees should be allowed to move to local labor markets that offer favorable employment opportunities. Providing them with the option of choosing where to relocate could result in the most effective allocation process.

BOX 1 THE IMPORTANCE OF AMNESTY FOR REFUGEES IN COLOMBIA

Since 2017, more than 5.1 million Venezuelans have fled their country due to its collapsing economy, political turmoil, and humanitarian crisis. Two million of these refugees have relocated to Colombia, although the lack of resources in the hosting country has resulted in a need for long-term solutions and initiatives to promote the socioeconomic recovery of refugees. While previous studies have primarily focused on cash transfers and their effects on refugee welfare, little is still known about the impact of large-scale amnesty initiatives to regularize migratory status and work permits, particularly in developing countries, which often face structural problems such as discrimination in the labor market.

A recent study assesses the impact of the Permiso Especial de Permanencia (PEP) program in Colombia, which has allowed more than 442,000 refugees to find formal employment and access safety nets by regularizing their status. The study shows improvements in several outcomes, such as formal employment rates, poverty levels, access to financial services, per capita income and consumption, food security, and physical and mental health, among those who received the PEP (compared to nonrecipients). These findings demonstrate the importance of a well-conducted amnesty program to smoothly integrate migrants into their hosting communities and improve their well-being.

Source: A. Ibáñez, A. Moya, M.A. Ortega, S.V. Roza, and M.J. Urbina, "Life Out of the Shadows: Impacts of Amnesties in the Lives of Refugees," Policy Research Working Paper 9928, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2022.

Similarly, offering them opportunities to enroll in training programs that prepare them to actively participate in local labor markets and increase their language skills can enhance their employment prospects in the hosting community.⁶⁸

PROVIDE INCLUSIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR COMMUNITIES HOSTING REFUGEES. More work is needed to understand the impact of refugee-targeted interventions on host communities. In some contexts, for example, cash transfers for refugees can have a large positive impact on food consumption without affecting prices, while in others they may contribute to inflation and resentment toward the refugee population.⁶⁹ Refugees may also influence local politics by altering the support for certain parties or affecting voting behavior,⁷⁰ which can have important implications for local development. Providing aid and developing infrastructure in the hosting community, including improved public service delivery, can prevent tensions between refugees and locals. More generally, assessing the potential economic burdens of a massive influx of migrants on local infrastructure and social services can help to promote better policies for inclusion.⁷¹

Overall, forced migration is a recurrent phenomenon that should be incorporated into the global development agenda, given its magnitude and importance for economic development, as it reflects multiple challenges and opportunities for vulnerable populations. It is imperative to invest in more research to better understand migration causes and consequences, including context-specific factors, and to derive better-tailored policies that comprehensively address the phenomenon in both sending and hosting communities.