



Working paper

Humanitarian assistance and social protection in contexts of forced displacement

Effects on social cohesion

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and Amanda Gray Meral**
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Key messages

Where tensions exist around assistance to displaced people, they are rarely caused by the assistance itself; they are instead typically a symptom of existing social discontent within the host community. This often relates to perceived institutional neglect of hosts' socioeconomic concerns and needs, and is best addressed by tackling these, rather than by reducing critical support for vulnerable displaced households.

Perceptions of assistance influence cohesion dynamics more than the actual support provided. Social tensions are most likely to arise when assistance is perceived to be diverting resources or attention away from vulnerable citizens.

International financing is therefore critical to ensure that assistance to displaced people can be delivered while maintaining existing services and filling prior gaps in provision for vulnerable citizens.

Even if assistance is internationally financed, it may be publicly perceived to be state-funded, particularly if it is linked in some way with government systems. Such an assumption may strengthen recipients' relations with the state but may also aggravate tensions among non-recipients. Programme framing is therefore key, and should be carefully tailored to the context.



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Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement

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About this publication

The overall aim of this project is to better understand effective mechanisms for linking social protection programmes and humanitarian assistance. By providing clearer guidance about when, how and why different linkages might be considered, the project will develop the theory, evidence base and operational guidance on how social protection systems and humanitarian systems can work together to meet the needs of those affected by displacement crises, including not only displaced people but vulnerable households in their host communities as well. The research is grounded in three country contexts with a total of six study sites that present different contexts of displacement and humanitarian response: Greece (Athens and Ioannina), Colombia (Bogotá and Cúcuta) and Cameroon (Far North and East). The project is led by ODI, who work in close collaboration with the Centre for Applied Social Sciences Research and Training (CASS-RT) in Cameroon, the School of Government at the University of Los Andes in Colombia and the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) in Greece.

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Acronyms

CAR	Central African Republic
ESTIA	Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (programme) (Greece)
EU	European Union
FGD	focus group discussion
HELIOS	Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (project)
IDI	in-depth interview
IDP	internally displaced person
KII	key informant interview
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Executive summary

The increasing and sustained presence of displaced people in host communities worldwide has led to a rising focus on social cohesion in displacement settings, and how to improve it. Many factors influence social cohesion, and assistance from governments or international agencies is unlikely to be the central determinant. However, assistance provision may nevertheless play a role in influencing attitudes and interactions between displaced and host communities (horizontal cohesion) and between those communities and the state (vertical cohesion). Our research explores this relationship in various displacement settings. What are the potential effects of assistance on social cohesion? And how do these effects differ if assistance is delivered by independent humanitarian agencies versus linked in some way with the state social protection system?

This paper combines findings from mixed-methods primary research conducted in 2020–2021 in six sites across three countries (as part of our wider research project):

1. **Cameroon:** in the East region, refugees from the Central African Republic (mostly since 2015 in our sample); and in the Far North region, Nigerian refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), displaced by conflict with Boko Haram since 2015. Assistance for displaced people is largely internationally financed and provided.
2. **Colombia:** in the capital city of Bogotá and border city of Cúcuta, IDPs displaced by decades of internal conflict and violence, and Venezuelans displaced since 2015. Assistance for displaced people is mostly nationally financed and provided.
3. **Greece:** in the capital city of Athens and the smaller north-western municipality of Ioannina, asylum seekers and refugees fleeing Syria and elsewhere, mostly arrived since 2014. Assistance for displaced people was largely internationally financed and provided at the time of our research.

A survey of approximately 1,500 displaced and host community members was conducted in each country from January to April 2021. In addition, we held focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with members of displaced and host populations, and with representatives of government, UN, non-government and donor organisations.

Two overarching findings emerge from our research. First, the effects of assistance on cohesion depend on *perceptions* about assistance provision, which often diverge substantially from actual arrangements. It should not be assumed that assistance recipients and non-recipients necessarily know what assistance is being provided, to whom, and from which source.

Second, where social tensions exist in relation to assistance provision, they are unlikely to be caused by the assistance itself. Rather, assistance can aggravate existing tensions – where social discontent among the host community already exists and where institutions are perceived to be

failing to address those concerns. Displaced people, and the assistance they receive, may become targets for pent-up resentment, particularly when this is encouraged by high-profile public or political narratives.

With these broader points in mind, our research highlights various ways in which assistance provision, and its degree and type of linkages with government social protection systems, may influence horizontal and vertical cohesion.

Effects of assistance model on horizontal cohesion

Direct effects of assistance provision

In general, our research suggests that concerns about unfair assistance provision principally lead to resentment and frustration with the agencies responsible for assistance, more than with other community members – affecting vertical more than horizontal cohesion. Nonetheless, there are indications from all three case studies that concerns about unfair assistance provision sometimes spill over to influence inter-community tensions, in two ways.

First, inter-community tensions sometimes arise regarding the unfair *allocation* of assistance, related primarily to the inadequacy of assistance overall, as well as to its unfair distribution. Tensions are particularly likely if a host community is perceived to be receiving much less than displaced groups. In Greece, this relates principally to concerns about differing values of assistance to displaced people relative to other vulnerable households. In Cameroon, host community members rarely seemed to know or care what value of assistance displaced households received. There, the main issue is uneven allocation in terms of coverage, since very few host-community households receive any form of assistance, compared to relatively widespread coverage for displaced groups.

Second, the specific *source* of assistance is sometimes a notable issue, when assistance is – or is perceived to be – diverting government resources towards displaced people (especially displaced non-citizens) at the expense of vulnerable citizens. This is particularly likely where the assistance is perceived to be government-financed and more closely integrated with mainstream social protection, as in Colombia.

Indirect effects of assistance provision

Our research also highlights several ways in which assistance provision indirectly affects displaced–host relations, both positively and negatively. As indicated by host communities in Cameroon, assistance is felt to strengthen displaced–host relations where it is spent in the local economy, shared between communities, or thought to reduce theft or begging. Yet assistance is also associated with tensions, in all three case studies, when it is perceived to undercut local prices, benefit external rather local markets, or generate excessive demand for local services, thereby straining local provision.

Potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

Our research identifies several ways in which the above effects might differ when assistance is more closely linked with, or even fully integrated into, the national social protection system, rather than delivered through a parallel humanitarian system.

In terms of programme design, we find that aligning transfer values between humanitarian and social protection systems may not necessarily improve perceptions of fairness. In some cases, differentiated levels of support are either unknown or uncontroversial. In other cases, transfer values may indeed cause tensions, but these may be rooted in false assumptions about the generosity of provision, or persist even despite attempts to align transfer values across schemes. Concerns about unfair assistance levels may therefore be more a pretext for resentment, rather than the real cause of resentment itself. Moreover, the lower-value transfers associated with social protection programmes, compared to humanitarian assistance, may reduce local economic or community benefits that host populations accrue from assistance to the displaced, which could negatively affect social cohesion.

In relation to programme targeting, evidence from Greece and Colombia indicates that assisting displaced people through mainstream social protection can sometimes create tensions where well-known and endorsed eligibility criteria are modified in a way that appears to give displaced people (particularly non-citizens) preferential access. This means that it may at times be preferable from a cohesion perspective to maintain at least some degree of separation in assistance programming for displaced populations.

At the policy level, concerns about unfair provision often relate more to inadequate provision for host communities than to ‘excessive’ provision for displaced households. Any initiatives that improve overall availability of assistance or fill gaps in provision for neglected groups could therefore have positive effects, suggesting important potential benefits from better coordination of provision across humanitarian and social protection systems. However, the case studies also illustrate potential ways in which greater reliance on state systems might reduce the assistance available overall, and therefore potentially exacerbate tensions, due to either resource diversion or lower international funding levels.

Furthermore, linking more closely with state systems (at any level) may generate perceptions that the programme is government-funded. In Greece, for example, linking programme administration more closely with government systems sometimes resulted in the incorrect conclusion that assistance for displaced people was funded from the state budget. While this may have notable benefits for vertical cohesion (as discussed below), in some contexts it may heighten concerns about displaced households (especially refugees as non-citizens) taking government resources or attention away from vulnerable citizens.

Effects of assistance model on vertical cohesion

State involvement in effective provision for displaced people can potentially lead to improved relations between displaced people and the state. Assistance may serve as a visible and tangible example of the government ‘doing something’ for the population, which in turn may help strengthen trust in the state (as was reported in our case studies in Colombia and Cameroon – even though assistance in the latter was primarily humanitarian). In some cases, transfers associated with government may also help to foster a greater sense of belonging and affiliation to the nation-state. Where enshrined in comprehensive legal and policy frameworks (as under the Victims’ Law, in Colombia), assistance may also help strengthen recipients’ voice, agency and consciousness of their rights, as well as their access to wider state services.

However, these effects are only likely when people are aware of their entitlements and able to access them fairly and effectively. As indicated by the Greek case study, recipients’ relations with the state are unlikely to improve, and may even worsen, where such awareness is marginal or provision felt to be flawed. Recipients’ trust in government will be largely mediated by their prior and wider interactions with government officials.

Moreover, efforts to strengthen state–society relations may be undermined by the potential for improved assistance for one group to be regarded as evidence of neglect of other groups, as in Colombia in relation to state provision for Venezuelans. As for horizontal cohesion, this outcome is far more likely if there is a pre-existing sense that the state has overlooked the needs of vulnerable citizens.

Potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

Our research highlights several factors likely to complicate or even override the basic assumption that linking assistance more closely with national systems can improve state–society relations. As discussed above, where assistance is associated with the state, it sometimes strengthens state-society relations, but in other cases may do little to overturn existing perceptions, or may even damage views of the state among dissatisfied recipients or non-recipients. Linking humanitarian assistance more closely with state systems at any level (policy, programme design, or administration) often generates perceptions that it is a state-financed scheme (which may in turn lead to the positive, negative or neutral impacts identified above). However, perceptions about the source of provision often differ from the actual source. Greater state involvement in assistance provision may therefore not necessarily be ‘credited’ as such (preventing both the potential benefits and downsides of enhanced government provision from emerging).

Emerging lessons and recommendations

Our research offers lessons to help maximise the benefits, and minimise the risks, of assistance provision for social cohesion. Overall, we conclude that strengthening displaced–host and state–society relations in affected regions requires comprehensive policy responses to address the

wide-ranging needs and rights of both displaced and host populations. A long-term strategy to enhance the overall adequacy of provision for both groups is essential. In designing this strategy, it is vital to increase total provision – and to communicate this increase – rather than divert funding away from other vulnerable groups. Achieving this will require adequate international financing, in line with existing commitments to share responsibility for global challenges and to ease pressure on host countries.

Our research also suggests that specific aspects of programme design and administration can influence cohesion dynamics. Subject to the primary goal of meeting the needs of vulnerable recipients, assistance for displaced people should be designed as far as possible also to augment the benefits and minimise downsides for host communities. This includes providing assistance in cash where feasible to benefit the local economy, combining assistance with policies expanding local service capacity to absorb additional demand, and paying careful attention to programme framing and communication. In relation to administration, efforts should be made to develop effective and transparent mechanisms for delivering assistance, paying specific attention to barriers preventing particular vulnerable groups from accessing such mechanisms in practice.

For those considering linking humanitarian and social protection systems, our research suggests that linkages with well designed and implemented state provision may help to improve cohesion in some respects, for example by strengthening displaced recipients' relationship with the state. But linkages may also risk damaging host–displaced and state–society relations, if they result in worse-quality provision in practice or reinforce perceptions that the state is attending to displaced populations at the expense of neglected hosts.

Recommendations to improve cohesion impacts of assistance provision in general

- Develop policies to invest in the broad development of displacement-affected regions and to ensure that both host and displaced populations have legal and effective access to wide-ranging social, economic and political rights.
- Develop a comprehensive social protection strategy to meet the needs of displaced and host populations.
- Ensure that new provision is funded from new sources, not diverting resources from other vulnerable communities. International actors should ensure sufficient, long-term international financing, in line with existing commitments to share responsibility globally and ease pressure on host countries.
- Clearly communicate that assistance to displaced people is not at the expense of existing recipients of social protection. Counter misinformation about displaced populations and use programme messaging to encourage positive attitudes towards displaced people.
- Consult with affected communities from the outset and throughout programme implementation to understand perspectives on fair and effective programme design.

- When assistance entails or promotes shared use of community facilities or services, ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet additional needs.
- Pay assistance in cash where feasible, communicating the wider economic benefits of this.
- Provide transfer amounts that adequately meet recipients' needs and ensure that any populations targeted by a programme can meet the eligibility criteria.
- Develop transparent, effective and responsive systems for programme administration.

Recommendations to improve cohesion impacts of humanitarian–social protection linkages

In policy:

- Ensure that linked financing results in a net increase in the assistance delivered.
- Recognise that integrating into national systems and policies does not remove the need to maintain international financing, in line with existing global commitments.
- Ensure assistance to displaced people complements –rather than appears to divert from - social protection for host populations.
- Improve coordination within and across humanitarian and social protection systems. If integrating into a single coordination mechanism, ensure this mechanism is strong enough.
- Promote and link assistance with a comprehensive nationally led legal and policy framework for the displacement response, but recognise that investment is needed to translate laws on paper into provision in practice.
- If there are key concerns about displaced people diverting support from other vulnerable groups, consider keeping an initial degree of separation between mainstream social protection provision and policies, programming or delivery for displaced people.

In programme design:

- Design transfer values according to need, which may be greater for displaced households.
- Link with social protection targeting criteria only if displaced residents can meet these criteria.

In administration:

- If linking systems, be sure to fully address displaced households' protection concerns.
- Channel additional assistance only through systems that are perceived to be fair, effective and able to absorb the additional caseload.

1 Introduction

The number of forcibly displaced people has more than doubled in the last decade, passing 100 million globally in 2020 (UNHCR, 2021; 2022). Displaced populations are now more likely to live among host communities, rather than in designated camps, often on a protracted basis (UNHCR, 2019a; 2020a; 2021; OCHA, 2017).

The changing nature of displacement has required shifts in the response approach, away from traditional ‘care and maintenance’ models of humanitarian assistance (based on providing immediate relief for emergency needs) towards longer-term, development-oriented approaches. One proposed approach is to engage more closely with national social protection systems in the provision of assistance to displacement-affected populations, where feasible and appropriate.¹ Yet there is relatively limited evidence to date of the potential outcomes that may emerge from aligning or integrating international humanitarian assistance with state-led social protection in different ways in diverse displacement settings (Peterman et al., 2018).

For displacement-affected populations, one outcome of particular interest is social cohesion. In this context, we define this as the set of relationships between displaced and host communities (‘horizontal’ cohesion) and between those communities and the institutions that govern them (‘vertical cohesion’) (de Berry and Roberts, 2018).

Social cohesion has become a matter of increasing concern for those responding to displacement situations (UNHCR-UNDP, 2015; de Berry and Roberts, 2018; Kuhnt et al., 2020; UNHCR-UNDP, 2021). While the growing, protracted presence of displaced populations in host communities has sometimes led to strong social and economic ties, in other cases inter-community tensions have posed a challenge for horizontal social cohesion. Such tensions may relate to heightened competition over services, jobs and resources, or to existing or newly formed ethnic, social or political divisions (ibid.).

The sustained presence of displaced populations has also had an impact on vertical cohesion, prompting questions about the expected roles and responsibilities of the host state in such settings (de Berry and Roberts, 2018). These concerns affect the development of the social contract in its traditional sense between the state and its citizens (covering host communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs)) and in terms of state–society relations more broadly (which extends to non-citizens who reside in the country and are governed by its laws, such as refugees).

1 For example, see the commitments to increase engagement with social protection systems and promote displaced populations’ access to such systems in the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants; the Grand Bargain emerging from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees.

Social cohesion is shaped by a wide range of factors in displacement settings (de Berry and Roberts, 2018; Fajth et al., 2019; Sonnenfeld et al., 2021). Assistance provided by government or international agencies is therefore unlikely ever to be a central determinant. Nonetheless, as outlined in Section 1.1, assistance provision can *play a role* in influencing attitudes and interactions between displaced and host communities, and between those communities and the state.

Our research explores this relationship between assistance provision and social cohesion in various displacement settings. What are the potential effects of assistance provision on horizontal and vertical social cohesion? And to what extent, and in what ways, do these impacts differ if the assistance is linked in some ways or even fully integrated into the state's social protection system, as opposed to being delivered entirely separately by independent humanitarian agencies?

In some cases, it may make little difference how assistance is provided. In other cases, whether and how a programme involves state systems in its design, implementation, governance or financing may affect the ways in which displaced and host communities view or interact with one another or with the state. Section 1.1 outlines how we set out to investigate these potential effects in this study.

1.1 Research approach and conceptual framing

In our displacement case studies, we set out to explore:

1. the effects of assistance provision on horizontal and vertical social cohesion
2. the effects on cohesion of linking international humanitarian assistance more closely with state social protection.

To study these dimensions in our primary research, we first conducted background reviews of existing evidence and literature (Lowe, 2022, building on Gray Meral and Both, 2021; Lowe et al., 2022a) to understand the pathways through which such effects are likely to occur. These pathways are outlined below in the conceptual framing.

1.1.1 Conceptual framing for studying the effects of assistance provision on social cohesion

Horizontal cohesion

As outlined in Lowe (2022), past research has highlighted various direct and indirect pathways through which assistance provision has been shown to influence horizontal cohesion in displacement contexts (Figure 1).

1. Direct effects on the type or level of interactions between host and displaced communities, because the programme:

- entails joint participation of host and displaced community members (Roxin et al., 2020; Loewe et al., 2020; Zhou and Lyall, 2020; Valli et al., 2019; Parker and Maynard, 2018)
- requires participants to use facilities that are also (independently) used by the other community (Maunder et al., 2018; Samuels et al., 2020; Ring et al., 2020).

This change in interactions may in turn have indirect effects on the communities' attitudes towards each other.

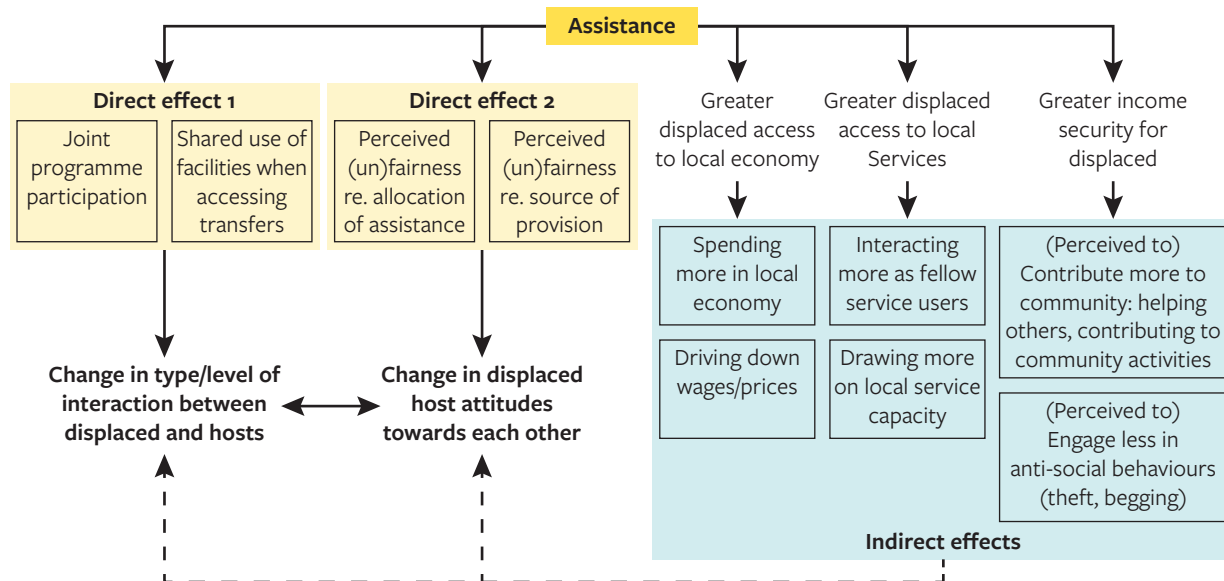
2. Direct negative effects on displaced and host communities' attitudes towards each other, because of perceived unfairness regarding the:

- allocation of assistance, meaning the targeting/amount of assistance given to different groups (Berg et al., 2013; Gureyeva-Aliyeva and Huseynov, 2011; Vidal Lopez et al., 2011; DSP, 2019; Ring et al., 2020)
- source/financing of provision, e.g. where government resources are perceived to be inappropriately diverted from the host to the displaced population (e.g. Maunder et al., 2018; Ark-Yıldırım and Smyrl, 2021).

This change in attitudes may in turn have indirect effects on the interactions that displaced and host communities choose to have with one another.

3. Indirect effects on interactions or attitudes between displaced and host communities, because the assistance programme:

- increases the displaced community's engagement with the local economy, which may have positive effects on displaced–host relations (when they are seen to be spending assistance in the local economy) or negative effects (when assistance recipients are felt to drive down local wages or increase market prices) (UNHCR, 2019b; Lehmann and Masterson, 2020; Verme and Schuettler, 2019; Samuels et al., 2020; Loewe et al., 2020)
- increases the displaced community's access to public services, which may have positive effects on displaced–host relations (e.g. if it allows displaced children to enrol in schools where they and their parents can socialise with the host community) or negative effects (e.g. if it heightens concerns about over-stretched public service capacity) (e.g. Ring et al., 2020)
- improves displaced households' income security, leading to potential positive effects on their (perceived) contribution to community life; assistance recipients may be more able to share resources with others and contribute to community activities, and may be less associated with negative social behaviours (e.g. begging or petty theft), which they may previously have been perceived to engage in out of poverty and desperation (Valli et al., 2019; Quattrochi et al., 2019; Lehmann and Masterson, 2020).

Figure 1 Conceptual framework for effects of assistance on horizontal cohesion

Source: Authors

Vertical cohesion

Drawing directly on the original framework by Alik-Lagrange et al. (2021), our background literature review identified and discussed three main ways in which assistance provision may influence state–society relations in displacement contexts (Figure 2).²

1. Effects on the material relationship between people and the state (‘redistributive’ effects).

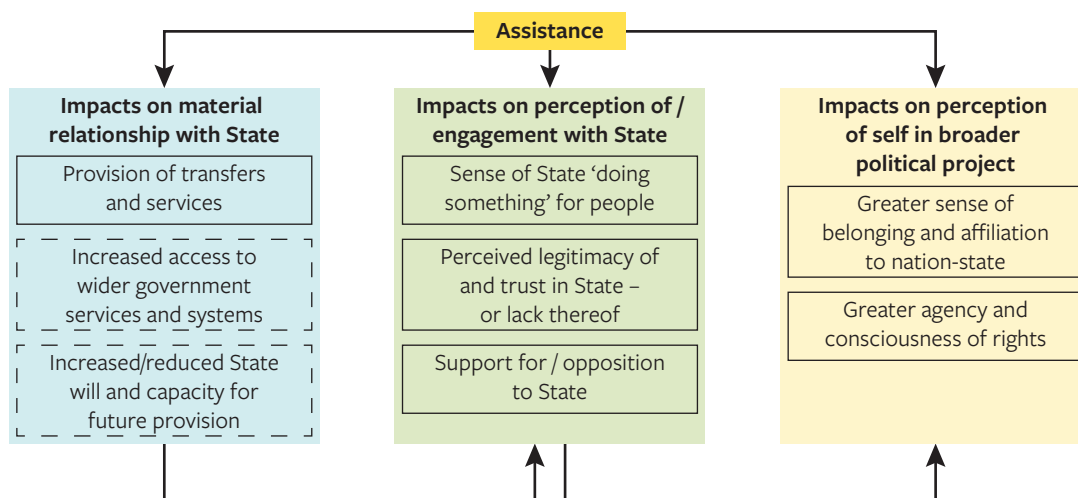
These include:

- direct redistributive effects, if the assistance to displacement-affected people entails the direct transfer of a good or service by the state (as is the case by definition for social protection programmes)
- indirect redistributive effects, if the assistance:
 - influences recipients’ registration in wider government services and systems, potentially expanding the government’s material provision to displacement-affected populations beyond the programme itself, or
 - influences the state’s capacity and will to improve future material provision to displacement-affected populations (an effect sometimes associated in general with donor-financed programmes, e.g. Svensson, 2000; Moss et al., 2006; Harvey and Lind, 2005; Harvey, 2009; Busse and Gröning, 2009; Cammett and MacLean, 2014; Campbell et al., 2019).

² Since there is limited literature specifically on the effects of assistance on vertical social cohesion among displaced and host populations, our background review studied broader evidence on vertical cohesion effects of assistance on marginalised populations more generally, as well as in fragile and conflict-affected states. The aim was to identify potential pathways through which assistance *might* affect displaced and host populations – which we could then interrogate in our primary research.

2. **Effects on the contractual relationship, or how people and the state perceive or engage with each other** ('contractual' effects). Depending on the state's association with the programme, assistance may affect people's perceptions of and interactions with the state by:
 - constituting a visible and tangible example of the state 'doing something' for displacement-affected populations (e.g. Funke and Bolkvadze, 2018; Ring et al., 2020)
 - influencing the perceived legitimacy of or trust in the state (Valli et al., 2019; Löwe et al., 2020)
 - influencing levels of support for or opposition to the governing party (e.g. Valters, 2015; Weintraub, 2016; Samuels et al., 2020).
3. **Effects on how people perceive themselves within the broader political settlement** ('re-constitutive' effects). These include effects on displacement-affected populations':
 - sense of belonging and affiliation to the nation-state (e.g. Ark-Yidirim and Smyrl, 2021)
 - agency in relation to the state and consciousness of their rights, including their ability to make demands of the state and to challenge it where it falls short (e.g. Ring et al., 2020).

Figure 2 Conceptual framework for effects of assistance on vertical cohesion



Source: Authors, based directly on Alik-Lagrange et al. (2021).

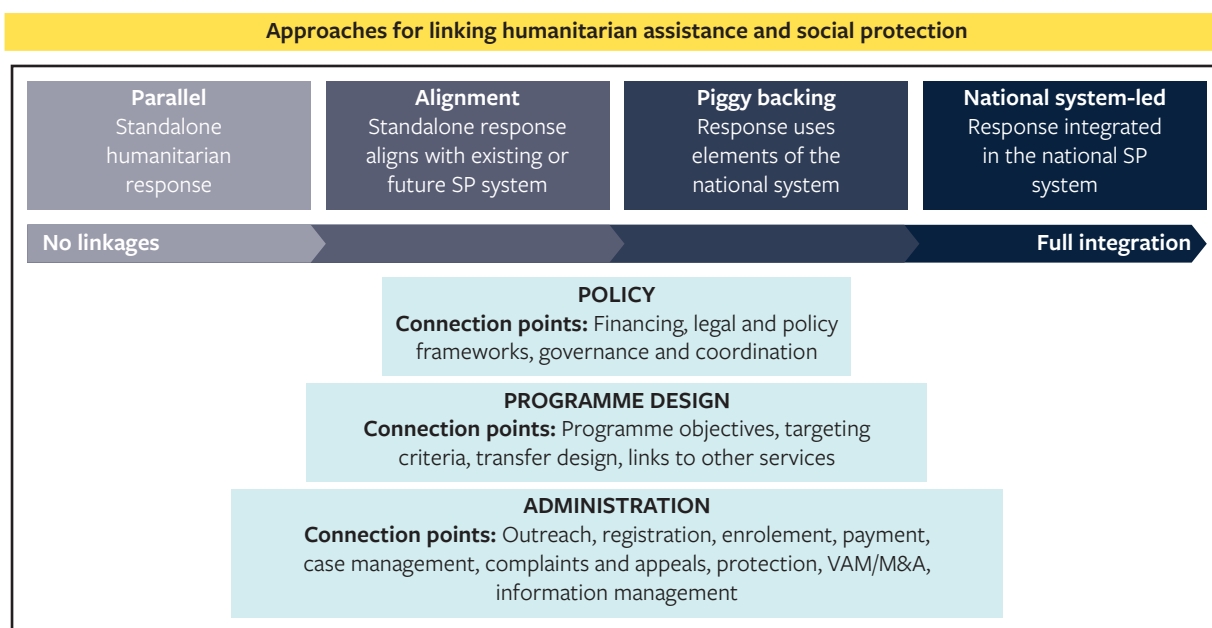
1.1.2 Conceptual framing for studying the effects of linking humanitarian assistance more closely with social protection

This paper – and our wider research project – studies the various ways in which humanitarian assistance can be linked with social protection using an existing conceptual framework we developed for this project (Lowe et al., 2022a), building on work by Barca (2019) and Seyfert et al. (2019) (Figure 3).

In this framework, humanitarian assistance to displacement-affected populations can be linked with state social protection to different degrees. The degree of linkages can be visualised on a spectrum from 'no linkages' at one extreme to 'full integration' at the other extreme, with

intermediary steps of ‘alignment’ (where humanitarian assistance mirrors the social protection system in some way but remains a standalone programme) and ‘piggybacking’ (where the humanitarian assistance programme uses elements of the national system but otherwise remains a standalone programme, or vice versa).

Figure 3 Approaches for linking humanitarian assistance and social protection



Source: Lowe et al. (2022a), based on Seyfert et al. (2019) and Barca (2019).

Linkages between humanitarian and social protection systems do not necessarily have to occur to the same degree for all aspects of assistance provision. Instead, there is potential to link the systems at specific points in the formulation, design and implementation of assistance provision. These potential ‘connection points’ are grouped at three levels:

1. **policy level**, relating to the key policy frameworks and mechanisms that underlie assistance provision
2. **programme design level**, relating to the specific design features of the assistance scheme
3. **administration level**, relating to the operational processes undertaken to deliver the assistance in practice.

Building on this framework, in this paper we highlight insights about where and how linkages at particular connection points within the three levels appear to have influenced the effects of that assistance programme on horizontal or vertical cohesion.

However, when studying social cohesion outcomes, the effects of a given assistance model relate strongly to people's *perceptions* of that assistance provision, and the intricacies of cross-provider linkages are unlikely to be evident to displacement-affected populations themselves. Therefore, at a basic level, it is also crucial to understand whether and how the cohesion effects of assistance provision may differ for assistance that is generally perceived to be associated with the government versus a non-government agency. This simplified mode of analysis is therefore also applied throughout the paper.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Case study selection

This paper brings together relevant findings from mixed-methods primary research conducted in 2020–2021 in six sites across three countries as part of our wider research project. These case studies were chosen to provide variation in terms of geographies, income levels, maturity of social protection systems, type and duration of displacement situations, and socioeconomic profiles and overlaps between the displaced and host populations.³

The selected sites and countries were:

1. **Cameroon (lower-middle income): the East and Far North regions.** We considered the refugee influx from CAR fleeing political instability which began in 2004 (although most of the refugees in our sample arrived since 2015), and the Nigerian refugee and IDP influx resulting from the conflict with Boko Haram since 2015. The vast majority of assistance available in these settings is from international humanitarian agencies, separate from state systems (and mainly to displaced rather than host populations). State social protection is nascent in Cameroon, with the recently established social safety net covering only a tiny fraction of the population.
2. **Colombia (upper-middle income): the capital city of Bogotá and border city of Cúcuta.** We considered internal displacement caused by over six decades of internal conflict and violence, as well as the more recent influx of Venezuelans displaced by the economic, political and humanitarian crisis that has escalated in Colombia's neighbouring country since 2015. Among the populations we studied, reported assistance was primarily from the state, for both IDPs and Venezuelans. Assistance was partly mainstream social protection (which is relatively advanced in Colombia and which expanded substantially in coverage during Covid-19) and partly targeted assistance schemes for IDPs or Venezuelans.
3. **Greece (high-income): the capital city of Athens and the much smaller north-western municipality of Ioannina.** We considered the situation of asylum seekers and refugees fleeing violence and instability in Syria and elsewhere, the majority of whom arrived since 2014. Greece

3 For more information on the case study contexts, see Appendix 2, or additional details in the main country papers (Levine et al., 2022; Ham et al., 2022; Tramountanis et al., 2022).

has an established social protection system, with *de jure* entitlements to social welfare for eligible citizens and long-term residents. In practice, displaced populations have had limited access to social protection, and have relied on separate assistance programmes. These humanitarian assistance programmes were initially run by international humanitarian agencies but have gradually been transitioned to the state.

In each country, the primary research combined data from a roughly 1,500-person survey, conducted in January–April 2021, focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with members of displaced and host populations, as well as key informant interviews (KIIs) with representatives of government, humanitarian, donor and non-government organisations. (Appendix 1 gives more details of the primary data collected.) Social cohesion was one of various topics on which data was collected, with the design of survey questions based on a review of studies exploring similar topics.⁴

The overall approach for this paper was to assess in each case study the current and potential effects of the assistance model, and of linking more closely with the social protection system in that context, and then to bring together these insights in the cross-country analysis. To do this, our qualitative analysis in this paper relies on the social-cohesion-related findings from the FGDs, IDIs and KIIs, as reported in the country papers (Levine et al., 2022; Ham et al., 2022; Tramountanis et al., 2022).

Our quantitative analysis draws on the three survey datasets, running comparable regression analysis. We used logit regression models, given that the dependent variables of interest are perception-based responses to statements concerning different areas of social cohesion, with relevant variables to control for relevant individual and household-level socioeconomic differences.⁵ In order to analyse the effects of different assistance models, we analyse the effects on social cohesion of receiving regular transfers from the government or humanitarian agencies (with regular transfers being those received within the last six months and paid at least twice per year). This variable alone does not allow us to make clear statements about how potential linkages between humanitarian assistance and social protection transfers relate to social cohesion. However, alongside the case study context, qualitative analysis and descriptive statistics, it gives us indications of how closer linkages might affect social cohesion.

4 These included: Lehmann and Masterson (2014); Babajanian et al. (2014); Camacho (2014); UNDP (2015); World Bank (2016); UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP (2017); Harb (2017); REACH (2018); UNHCR and World Bank (2018); Valli et al. (2019); Quattrochi et al. (2019); Sudanese Government’s Joint Mechanism for Durable Solutions, et al. (2019); Kim et al. (2020); UNHCR (2020b).

5 The control variables include: region; camp vs non-camp residence; years since arrival; household size, composition, asset ownership, employment status, language and religion; and respondent age, gender and education level.

Limitations

A major limitation faced in this study⁶ was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the research in two important ways. First, it hindered data collection across the three countries, requiring adjustments to the research methodology that in some cases affected the range and quality of responses we could collect. Due to restrictions on in-person gathering in Greece and Colombia at the time the qualitative research was conducted, all key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted remotely by phone or video calls. In addition, in-person Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were replaced in Greece with additional individual in-depth interviews (IDIs), while in Colombia in-person FGDs and IDIs were instead conducted through phone/WhatsApp-based conversations. Where in-person research did go ahead, the Greek research team noted that interviews often had to be held outdoors, with participants standing up, leading to discomfort at times and potentially affecting interview quality.

Second, across all three countries, data was collected several months into the pandemic. This undoubtedly influenced many of the outcome areas under study (including social cohesion), and also increased the range of assistance programming in place, given the expansion of government and non-government assistance to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic. In relation to the former shift, it is impossible to determine how the survey or interview responses on specific outcome areas may have differed in the absence of the pandemic circumstances, meaning that the general picture on social cohesion should be taken to represent only the experience at this unique moment in time. In relation to the latter shift (the expansion of Covid-related assistance), efforts were made to address this by distinguishing in both the qualitative and quantitative research between assistance initiated solely due to the Covid-19 crisis and assistance that would have been available to displacement-affected populations in other circumstances.

Beyond these Covid-related constraints, the second set of key limitations relates to the quantitative research and its contribution to this specific thematic area within the study. The aim for the survey was to compare the responses of those receiving assistance with those not receiving assistance. This involved adjusting the otherwise-random sampling methodology to try

6 For more details on the methodological approach and limitations in each country, please see the separate case studies from Cameroon (Levine et al., 2022), Colombia (Ham et al., 2022) and Greece (Tramountanis et al., 2022).

to ensure a sufficient sample of assistance recipients in each case study site – meaning the sample is not designed to be fully representative overall of host and displaced populations in each site.⁷ However, this approach faced certain limitations.

As mentioned above, our ability to make direct causal claims is inherently limited given that the data was collected at only a single point in time. Where possible, approximate causal relationships are drawn on the relationship between assistance receipt and specific outcomes, by comparing outcomes of assistance recipients and non-recipients – controlling as far as possible for individual and household-level characteristics. However, assistance is often only a small driver of changes in outcomes, and there are likely to be large omitted variable biases, meaning caution is needed to avoid assuming causal claims. Furthermore, since assistance provision for displaced people tended to relate to *either* humanitarian assistance or state social protection (but usually not both, in the same site), it is not possible to use our survey data to conclusively determine counterfactuals of how cohesion may have varied with a change in the assistance model.

In relation to this paper on social cohesion in particular, the role of the quantitative research is smaller, due to the nature of the topic under study. First, unlike for other individual- or household-level outcomes in our survey (such as food consumption, or financial security), the effect of assistance on community-level cohesion outcomes may not be traced directly to whether an individual themselves receives assistance, but may instead also relate to assistance provision in their community (both actual and perceived levels or allocation of provision). Second, cohesion outcomes (such as perceptions of others or meaningfulness of social interaction) are highly nuanced topics often discussed more insightfully in in-depth qualitative research. Surveys tend to be more limited in their ability to capture the subjective dimensions of cohesion (such as attitudes and beliefs), and even for objective dimensions (such as the frequency or kind of interactions) must rely only on self-reported measures, which may or may not accurately reflect social dynamics in practice.

For these reasons, this paper draws most heavily on the qualitative research from each case study. But we do also include specific findings from the quantitative research where the analysis noted statistically significant correlations of relevance.⁸

7 In Colombia, the survey was conducted only in low-income neighbourhoods (and is at best representative of these neighbourhoods, meaning the host population is by definition more socioeconomically vulnerable than the average citizen of Colombia as a whole). Meanwhile, in Greece, the enumerators targeted low-income neighbourhoods in Athens for host interviews in order to over-sample households receiving some form of assistance, meaning the findings are not designed to be representative for the host population in Athens as a whole. In Cameroon, due to the extremely low rate of assistance provision for the host population, the survey team was not able to access a large sample of host assistance recipients, which sometimes makes it difficult to detect any statistically significant effect.

8 As noted in Section 1.1, analysis of assistance receipt controlled for relevant individual and household level socioeconomic differences. See Annex 1 for regression tables.

2 Horizontal cohesion

2.1 Direct effects of assistance model

2.1.1 Direct effects on attitudes – relating to the allocation of assistance

In general, our research suggested that concerns about unfair allocation of assistance principally led to resentment and frustration with the agencies responsible for assistance, more so than with the displaced or host community itself – affecting vertical more than horizontal cohesion. Nonetheless, there were indications in all three case studies that perceived unfairness in the allocation of assistance still sometimes influenced inter-community relations, mirroring earlier research findings that tensions often emerged when programmes were felt to favour one group's needs over another's (e.g. Zhou, 2020; Berg et al., 2013; Gureyeva-Aliyeva and Huseynov, 2011; Vidal Lopez et al., 2011; DSP, 2019; Ring et al., 2020).

In Cameroon, past research had already found that humanitarian assistance targeting displaced but not host populations caused some tensions between the two groups, given the poor socioeconomic conditions and limited government service provision in the refugee-hosting areas (Barbelet, 2017). While a recognition of this imbalance had prompted attempts to develop humanitarian programming that was more inclusive of host communities and more integrated with public services, our research suggests that cash and in-kind assistance to date continues to be overwhelmingly provided by humanitarian agencies, and delivered at much higher rates to the displaced than the host population.

Consequently, although host households in focus groups and in-depth interviews often observed that displaced populations had a high (and typically higher) degree of need, they also lamented the very limited provision for their own community, many of whom were also very poor. For their part, many displaced households were also concerned about the inadequate support for needy host community members. Refugees in particular often noted this imbalance. Compared to host survey respondents, refugees agreed that they received more support. They were less likely to state that vulnerable members of the other community received more support than their own vulnerable households. The likelihood of agreeing to that statement was lower still among refugees who received regular assistance compared to refugee non-recipients.⁹ So receiving refugees were more likely to be aware and highlight the fact that the vulnerable hosts did not receive transfers.

9 Regular assistance is defined as those who had received a state or humanitarian transfer within the last six months and who described this transfer as being regular (paid in intervals at least twice per year, although most transfers were reported to be monthly).

In Greece, resentment among some host respondents was also expressed regarding the extent of assistance that displaced households received relative to vulnerable host community members. One particular concern raised in the qualitative research was the full subsidisation of rent and utility bills for displaced people. This was felt by some to be unfair, given that there is no equivalent subsidy for unemployed citizens.

In Colombia, perceived unfairness in the allocation of assistance had a clear impact on inter-community relations, with Colombians often viewing Venezuelans as unfairly accessing support at the expense of needy citizens (whether IDPs or vulnerable host community households):

I am not interested in Venezuelans ... because of them I lost a spot in a good school I wanted for my son and because of those women the government did support them for food, education, everything, and we were left behind. (Focus group IDPs, recipient, Bogotá)

Tensions regarding the perceived unfairness of assistance allocation in Colombia seemed to relate overwhelmingly to provision for Venezuelans, with the qualitative research suggesting that hosts were more supportive of preferential treatment for IDPs, viewing them as a population in need of particular attention and support. This contrasts with some earlier research suggesting that certain communities hosting IDPs resented their preferential access to government social assistance (Vidal Lopez et al., 2011). While this may simply reflect changes in attitudes over time or between study populations, it is also possible that the Venezuelan influx shifted perspectives about the relative deservingness of assistance for displaced citizens, compared to newly arrived non-citizens.

Thus, there was evidence across all three case studies of some inter-community tensions arising from perceived unfairness in the distribution of assistance. However, it is important to note that our quantitative research generally did not find these perceptions about unfair provision to be driven by a person's own assistance status (as shown in the regression findings Annex 1). When asked whether vulnerable members of the other group should receive more support, there were no statistically significant differences between the responses of non-recipients and recipients of regular assistance for any of the population groups in Cameroon and Colombia. In Greece, those *not* receiving regular transfers appeared to be slightly more likely to believe that vulnerable members of the other community deserved more support, after controlling for respondents' individual and household-level socioeconomic characteristics.

In the same vein, we also found little evidence overall that displaced households receiving assistance bore the brunt of inter-community tensions at a higher rate than non-recipients. In all three case studies, displaced households who received regular transfers were no more likely to state that they experienced harassment or discrimination by the host community than those who did not. This is not necessarily surprising, since it often would not be common knowledge whether a specific individual or household was receiving assistance or not.

As a whole, then, our research suggests that tensions about unfair allocation of assistance between displaced and host populations seem to relate more to concerns about provision at the community level, rather than to individual grievances.

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

Policy level

In our case studies, tensions about the allocation of assistance were often grounded primarily in the inadequate availability of assistance overall, as well as the gaps in the distribution of the limited assistance available. Where community members perceived that they had been neglected, they tended to resent the inadequate provision for themselves more than they resented the adequate provision for displaced populations.

In this sense, any initiatives that improve overall availability of assistance or fill gaps in provision for neglected groups could have positive effects, suggesting potential benefits from better coordination of provision across humanitarian and social protection systems. In Colombia, improved coordination between humanitarian and social protection actors was perceived by policy-makers to be one of the benefits of closer system linkages (although such sentiments had not filtered through to perceptions of Venezuelan and IDP households themselves). Similarly, in Cameroon, some displaced and host respondents commented that greater alignment of humanitarian assistance with government systems in future might enable more needs to be met overall, thereby improving coverage levels (and in turn, potentially also relations) across the displaced and host populations. One displaced respondent believed that greater government involvement in assistance programming for displaced people would be accompanied by enhanced provision for the host population, thereby improving relations between the communities:

If the government came to help us, it couldn't only help us. It would also have to help those in the village. That would be good for relations between us. (Refugee, East)

However, the case studies also illustrated potential ways in which heavier reliance on the state might instead reduce the assistance available overall for displacement-affected populations (displaced and host), which could aggravate perceived competition between the respective groups over access to support. In Cameroon, many respondents felt that greater reliance on government systems for assisting either displaced or host populations (for example by channelling international financing through the state) would simply reduce the amount available overall, due to resource misuse. Meanwhile, in Colombia, international funding to meet Venezuelan needs has been far lower than for other crises, which may in part relate to the fact that the government has adopted a strong nationally led response from the outset. This appears to have heightened the perception that limited overall assistance has been allocated to Venezuelans at the expense of vulnerable citizens.

Programme design

There was nuanced evidence from our case studies about whether and how closer linkages between humanitarian and social protection programme design might influence inter-community concerns about the fairness of assistance allocation.

In relation to transfer design, respondents in Cameroon generally did not have any sense of how much support others were getting. Either because of this lack of knowledge or because of the general understanding that displaced households had higher needs than host community members (given their weaker access to housing and support networks), the specific value of assistance did not seem to be a notable source of tensions. This contradicts the often-made rationale for aligning humanitarian transfer values with government transfers for host communities to avoid straining relations.

Meanwhile, in Greece, the specific value of assistance *did* seem to be cause of some concern, with some host respondents perceiving that displaced people received more generous assistance than vulnerable Greek welfare recipients. These perceptions existed even though: (1) the value of cash assistance from the EU-funded Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) programme for asylum seekers has intentionally been aligned with the Greek welfare system's Minimum Guaranteed Income scheme (although asylum seekers do receive this cash alongside accommodation assistance); and (2) most refugees receive far less generous support than either Greek welfare recipients or asylum seekers, since the majority lose access to any cash or accommodation assistance shortly after gaining refugee status.

Combined, these findings suggest that aligning transfer values between humanitarian and social protection systems may not necessarily improve perceptions of fairness as readily as hoped. In some cases, differentiated levels of support may simply not be a matter of concern – whether because they are unknown or because it is accepted that displaced households have different and typically higher needs than host community members. In others, transfer values may indeed cause tensions, but these may be rooted in false assumptions about the generosity of provision (meaning the actual transfer value is somewhat irrelevant), or they may persist even where attempts to align transfer values of a particular scheme have already been made. In these cases, concerns about unfair assistance levels may potentially be more a pretext for resentment, rather than the real cause of resentment itself.

In relation to linking programme targeting criteria, there were indications from Greece that some host respondents accepted that displaced people would be specifically targeted for tailored and temporary assistance from the state (given the expectation that displaced people would soon move elsewhere). However, there was some clear resistance to the notion that mainstream social protection criteria (such as long-term residence requirements) might in any way be adapted to enable displaced residents to access general welfare assistance:

They do not need extra help when they have a house and food ... Let them find a job, we do the same, anyway they are here only for a little while, for this period the state helps them (Host community member, Greece).

It takes time for them to become Greek citizens and contribute to the country ... We cannot have equal [social protection] rights with refugees automatically. Legally this cannot be done ... They have to meet some criteria, like me, to receive the allowances (Host community member, Greece).

These perceptions suggest that it may sometimes be preferable from a cohesion perspective to maintain separate assistance programming for displaced populations with distinct targeting criteria, rather than to try to integrate assistance for them into mainstream social protection schemes – at least where this requires any modification to the existing eligibility criteria.

Implementation

Beyond the related concerns above, we did not find notable evidence in our case studies that more closely linking with social protection delivery systems would affect perceptions about the fairness of assistance allocation. Such concerns would presumably be most prominent if the social protection delivery systems were felt to be significantly less ‘fair’ than humanitarian alternatives. However, where such criticisms arose in our case studies, they tended to relate to both humanitarian and social protection systems. In Cameroon, for example, there were complaints from both displaced and host respondents in the qualitative research about nepotism and biases in the respective targeting systems used for humanitarian and government schemes.

2.1.2 Direct effects on attitudes – relating to the source of assistance

Across our case studies, there was variation in the extent to which the specific source of assistance seemed to matter for tensions over assistance programming.

In the Colombia case study (where most assistance in our sample was provided by government), this was clearly the case. IDPs and hosts were generally not opposed to Venezuelans receiving assistance from international actors – they simply did not want this assistance to divert government resources and attention away from citizens’ needs:

First, the government should finish the assistance for internally displaced people due to the armed conflict, and, only after doing that, [the government] can start looking at how they can help the migrants from neighbouring countries ... I don’t have anything against the migrants but first comes one thing and then the other. (Focus group IDPs, recipient, Bogotá)

Such perceptions are not surprising, given that support for Venezuelans in Colombia has indeed been heavily financed from the state budget, at a significant fiscal cost and with substantially less international financing than has been provided for equivalent displacement crises (Tribin et al., 2020; Bahar and Dooley, 2019; 2021).

In the Greece case study (where assistance to displaced people is predominantly EU-financed), related concerns about the domestic cost of assisting displaced populations were also evident but to a far lesser extent. There were some general concerns about the impact of displacement on the state budget, particularly in the context of growing host population needs, financial-crisis-induced austerity measures since 2010, and further fiscal pressures during pandemic. These tensions may be heightened by the misperception among some that humanitarian assistance for asylum seekers and refugees is government-funded (rather than internationally financed, which continues to be the case, even though the main assistance for displaced populations is now government-run).

By contrast, in the Cameroon case study (where assistance to displaced people is predominantly donor-financed), the source of transfers generally seemed to be of little relevance to community cohesion.

When asked in focus groups and interviews if it mattered whether assistance came from government or non-government agencies, host respondents did not indicate any strong sense that government resources should be restricted to host communities or citizens now or in future. Perceptions of unfairness were not expressed based on whether the programme was thought to be a government or a non-government scheme.

The lack of distinction may in part relate to the fact that displacement-affected communities in Cameroon were often unaware who was actually providing current schemes: 14% of IDPs and 5% of refugees receiving WFP's food assistance believed it was financed by the government, rather than international donors. In the qualitative research, host and displaced respondents indicated repeated uncertainty about who was responsible operationally or financially for different scheme provision – including both those receiving assistance and those not currently benefiting from any schemes.

Such findings coincide with earlier research indicating that assistance recipients are often not sure of the actual provider, in both government and non-government schemes (e.g. Qian, 2015; Nixon and Mallett, 2017; Maunder et al., 2018; Burchi and Roscioli, 2021). Furthermore, where people already have negative experiences of an entity, they may be less likely to attribute good service provision to it (as in South Africa, where historically marginalised government cash transfer recipients were less likely to attribute the programme to the state) (Plagerson et al., 2012, in Alik-Lagrange et al., 2021). That said, there is some evidence that effective information provision can lead to clearer attribution (Guiteras and Mobarak, 2014). Relatedly, there is also

evidence that branding assistance to host communities in a way that directly associates the provision with the displacement situation can improve their attitudes towards the displaced community (Baseler et al., 2021).

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

Our research suggests that inter-community tensions about assistance provision are, unsurprisingly, most likely to emerge where this assistance is – or is perceived to be – diverting government resources towards displaced people at the expense of vulnerable citizens. Colombia's experience suggests that these perceptions are likely to be strongest where the assistance is: (1) predominantly financed by the national government, and (2) more closely integrated with mainstream social protection, thereby appearing to provide support to displaced households directly in the place of vulnerable hosts.

Yet, even when assistance is internationally financed and run separately from the main welfare system (as in Greece), concerns about displaced people diverting government resources away from hosts may still emerge. The likelihood of this may be greater when an externally financed programme is somehow associated with the government, through links at the policy, programme design or implementation level.

However, our research also suggests several other factors that may determine whether or not the source of provision triggers tensions. Based on our analysis of the situation in Cameroon (where there was little sense that government resources should be reserved for host communities/citizens ahead of displaced/non-citizens) compared to Colombia and Greece (where such concerns were more evident), we assess that the likelihood of tensions is also determined by three further factors:

1. **Host communities' pre-existing expectations of government.** In Cameroon, host communities in the highly marginalised displacement-affected areas were receiving little from the government before the displacement influx. If anything, they associated the displaced population with bringing *more* assistance and attention to their plight:

They [displaced people] bring an advantage to the community – I believe that if we have received assistance, it's because of that [their presence]. (Host, Far North)

This sentiment would presumably be less common in contexts where host populations have higher expectations about the government's responsibilities towards them, particularly where they already also have concerns about the extent of government resources or willingness to meet these expectations (as in both Colombia and Greece).

2. **State reliance on international financing for routine social protection.** International financing plays a much larger role in funding both humanitarian assistance *and* the social safety net system in Cameroon than in Colombia and Greece. There may therefore be an assumption that, whether displaced people are assisted through a government scheme or a humanitarian agency, international donors would still ultimately finance the provision, making the concern about ‘draining government resources’ somewhat artificial in Cameroon.
3. **Wider public narratives about displaced people or immigrants.** Both the Greece and Colombia case studies noted the presence of anti-immigrant rhetoric in political and media discourse, fuelling tensions and hostility towards foreigners. This rhetoric portrayed the non-native population as being ‘un-deserving’ because of associations with criminality, laziness, or undercutting local people in access to services.

Ultimately, our research suggests that integrating assistance to displaced people more closely with the social protection system may well exacerbate inter-community tensions where the assistance is perceived to divert resources away from vulnerable citizens. But the assistance programme itself is unlikely to be the real cause of such tensions. Rather, where social discontent among the host community already exists, and where the government is perceived to be failing to address those concerns, the displaced population – and the assistance that they receive – may become a conduit for pent-up resentment, particularly when pointed in this direction by high-profile public or political influences.

2.1.3 Direct effects on interactions

Compared to the direct effects on inter-community attitudes, our case studies mostly did not highlight significant direct effects of assistance on the frequency or kind of inter-community interactions. This likely reflects the fact that the displaced and host communities in our study already interacted quite frequently and in diverse ways, rendering the assistance programmes less significant as a channel for new interactions.

The notable exception to this was Greece, where the humanitarian assistance model of supporting some displaced households in geographically isolated and poorly furnished camps or similar accommodation structures was associated with their marginalisation and ghettoisation. In our survey, asylum seekers and refugees living in camps were significantly more likely to report never interacting with the host population.

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

Regardless of whether the assistance was delivered as a standalone humanitarian programme or linked to the social protection system at the policy, programme design or implementation level, we generally did not find notable evidence that participation in an assistance programme directly altered the frequency or kinds of interactions between displaced and host populations in our study.

The exception to this was the Greek case; there, the policy of assisting many asylum seekers through a standalone system of camp-based assistance has clearly limited their interactions with the host community. However, the Greek case also illustrates that shifting from internationally led provision to a nationally led approach may not necessarily change the outcomes of the camp-based assistance model in relation to inter-community interactions. While the Greek government has long been responsible for the official management of the camps and is now also responsible for implementing wider assistance programming for asylum seekers, our research suggested that provision for asylum seekers would likely remain a (nationally managed) humanitarian programme, separate from the mainstream social protection system. The limited interaction between asylum seekers and the host population may therefore persist, even if camp-based assistance provision is now implemented through a nationally led system.

2.2 Indirect effects of assistance model

2.2.1 Indirect effects relating to greater access of displaced people to the local economy

We found some clear evidence of assistance provision indirectly impacting inter-community relations as a result of displaced populations' greater engagement with the local economy. The effects of this greater access appeared to be mixed, which coincides with the mixed findings relating to this area of impact in earlier research (e.g. UNHCR, 2019; Lehmann and Masterson, 2020; Samuels et al., 2020; Loewe et al., 2020; Verme and Schuettler, 2019).

On the one hand, host populations sometimes viewed displaced people – and assistance provision to them – more favourably because they recognised the benefits that accrued for the local economy. In the qualitative research in Cameroon, several hosts acknowledged the value to the local economy of money spent by displaced people, and some appreciated the availability of cheap food when displaced people sold humanitarian food relief. The Greece case study noted some similar benefits, since some host community households rent their apartments to asylum seekers under the ESTIA accommodation scheme, small local traders sell them their products and the ESTIA cash assistance programme generates income for the local community.

However, there were also some perceptions that assistance for displaced people in some way damaged or failed to contribute to the local economy. In Cameroon, a few local market vendors resented that the sale of their goods had been undercut by displaced households reselling food aid at below-market prices. Meanwhile in Greece, some host respondents argued that the economic benefits of assistance do not reach the host community because of refugees sending the cash allowances back to their countries as remittances. This contradicts the actual state of affairs indicated by our survey, in which less than 5% of refugees reported sending any remittances in the last year, compared to the 38% who reported receiving remittances (money which would often have been spent directly or indirectly in the Greek economy).

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

The effects of assistance on the local economy relate mainly to the modality and size of provision, rather than its source, with larger effects for higher-value transfers and for cash over in-kind modalities (Bailey and Pongracz, 2015; Taylor et al., 2016). Holding transfer design constant, the effect of an assistance programme would therefore in theory be the same whether delivered in a standalone fashion by a humanitarian agency, or partially or fully linked with the state social protection system.

In practice, though, the design of the transfer (modality and size) is likely to be substantially different depending on the system to which it relates. This is because: (1) humanitarian agencies have historically relied more on in-kind programming than cash modalities, and (2) humanitarian transfers have typically been of higher value than those dispensed through social protection systems (McLean et al., 2021).

This has clear implications for humanitarian agencies considering linking their programme design with social protection systems. While a greater reliance on cash programming will often have positive economic effects, the lower-value transfers associated with social protection programmes (compared to humanitarian assistance) may reduce the local economic benefits that host populations accrue from assistance to displaced people.

2.2.2 Indirect effects relating to greater access of displaced people to local service provision

The main evidence of this effect pathway in our research was found in Colombia, where there were some clear inter-community tensions relating to the perception that assistance to Venezuelans strained local service capacity. Although the quantitative research did not suggest that assistance recipients experienced host discrimination at notably higher rates, some Venezuelans in the qualitative research highlighted that they actively hide the assistance they receive because they believe it can spark tensions with host community members:

When we are going to use the voucher or the school subsidy that my son receives, we do not generally cash it here in the neighbourhood, we cash it in other places, and generally I try not to talk while waiting in line, knowing that yes, these vouchers usually generate controversies because it is no secret to anyone that we migrants did come to take a place, even steal a place that many Colombians need. (Focus group Venezuelans, recipient, Bogotá)

However, as illustrated in this quote, the assistance itself is not necessarily the cause of tensions surrounding shared service provision. Rather, assistance may become a focal point for resentment around a wider policy initiative to promote displaced people's access to local services without

expanding capacity enough to absorb this additional demand. This suggests that any negative effects of assistance on competition for service use could largely be mitigated by investing simultaneously and sufficiently in additional service capacity.

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

This Colombia example just described suggests that the indirect strain on service provision might in some cases be greater when assistance is more closely integrated with government provision (since the school subsidies mentioned relate to government initiatives to support Venezuelan children's enrolment in public schools).

However, the most relevant dimension is again likely to relate to the modality of the assistance, rather than the assistance provider. If assistance is provided in a way that visibly indicates that participants are accessing services only through an assistance scheme, it is this aspect of provision – rather than the source itself – that is most likely to drive this effect pathway. Conversely, if assistance is provided as an unconditional cash transfer by a social protection agency, its impacts would theoretically be similar to an equivalent unconditional cash transfer from a humanitarian agency operating a standalone humanitarian programme.

2.2.3 Indirect effects relating to the perceived role in the community of displaced people given their greater income security

As outlined in Lowe (2022), past literature has indicated some tentative ways in which the greater income security of displaced people receiving assistance can improve host perceptions of their activities in the community (e.g. in DRC, Lebanon and Turkey, as detailed in Quattrochi et al., 2019; Lehmann and Masterson, 2020; Samuels et al., 2020; Ring et al., 2020). While our research did not allow us to explore this in much detail, we did observe some positive indications from Cameroon, and less favourable indications from Greece on this topic (with no notable findings in either direction from Colombia).

In Cameroon, there were references in the qualitative research to displaced populations sharing the assistance they received with members of the host population (although this was not evident in the quantitative research, where no statistically significant association was detected between assistance receipt and the likelihood of either host or displaced households providing any kind of help to members of the displaced or host community respectively). The focus groups and interviews also highlighted cases of refugees being invited to and able to participate in informal community networks (such as informal loans and savings groups, for which their participation

would be facilitated by the assistance they receive). Similarly, some host respondents in the qualitative research noted that displaced people were less likely to beg or steal out of desperation when they received humanitarian assistance.¹⁰

By contrast, in Greece, our research found that the receipt of regular assistance was *not* associated with a perceived improvement in the role of displaced people in the wider community. In the quantitative research, asylum seekers who received regular assistance were substantially less likely to state that they have given help to host community members, even after controlling for respondents' individual and household characteristics. This was the only statistically significant correlation between assistance receipt and the likelihood of helping the other community in any of the countries and population groups we studied. Such a finding makes sense in the context of a society with low rates of extreme poverty within the host population, a reasonably advanced state welfare system and low levels of interaction between host and displaced communities. This is different from Cameroon, where widespread extreme poverty, limited state provision and high degrees of interaction all appear to have encouraged sharing of assistance by displaced recipients with deprived host households.

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

The above effects derive entirely from the income security that the transfer induces; the provider is therefore technically irrelevant. However, the value of the transfer is critical, with higher-value transfers having stronger positive effects. This may have implications for a humanitarian programme seeking to align or integrate with government social protection programmes in their programme design, since the latter typically have lower transfer values and are unlikely to be tailored to meeting displaced households' minimum expenditure needs.

10 As noted above, the quantitative research did not suggest in Cameroon – or in any of the countries we studied – that receiving regular assistance made a displaced household any less likely to have been discriminated against or harassed by the host community; however, it seems likely that improved perceptions of displaced people would translate to reduced discrimination against the community as a whole, rather than being observed at the individual level (since the other community is unlikely to know whether a specific displaced household is receiving assistance or not).

3 Vertical cohesion

3.1 Effects of assistance model on the material relationship between people and the state

There was large variation in our case studies regarding the role of the state in providing material assistance for displaced households in our sample. In Colombia, the vast majority of assistance for displaced and host populations alike came from the national government, although in the case of Venezuelans, almost all assistance was pandemic-related. By contrast, in Cameroon, government assistance for all (displaced and host) was negligible. In Greece, a hybrid system was in place. Asylum seekers are supported by EU-funded humanitarian assistance delivered by international organisations at the time of our research but delivery has now been transitioned to the state (although still with EU funding). A minority of recognised refugees have access to the EU-funded and Greek-government-supported Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS) project, implemented by the International Organization for Migration, which provides rent subsidies and integration and employability courses. Refugees also theoretically have the right to apply for some social protection benefits through the national system, but are de facto excluded by complex administrative requirements, meaning less than 1% of refugees in our sample were covered (Lowe et al., 2022b).

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

In terms of direct material effects, closer integration of humanitarian assistance with the government social protection system would theoretically be expected to strengthen the material relationship between people and the state (since it would expand the services or transfers that people receive directly from the state).

However, the Greece case study illustrates several nuances to this assumption.

First, integrating assistance to displaced people into state systems might not necessarily reflect a major shift in the material relationship between displaced people and the state, if the government-provided assistance continues to be internationally financed. This is the case for asylum seeker assistance, which is now being implemented by the government but continues to be funded by the EU, and is being maintained as separate (government-delivered) programming.

Second, even if displaced populations are integrated into the state social protection system, their material relationship with the state might remain unchanged or even deteriorate, if their de facto access to the social protection programmes is negligible. This is the case for most refugees in Greece; since virtually none have accessed the mainstream social protection programmes, the material provision that they receive in practice from the state is now even lower than for asylum seekers, who are at least nominally being served by a government programme (even if it is EU-funded).

In terms of indirect effects of different assistance models on the material relationship between people and the state, two key insights emerged. First, there were some indications that integration into even a single aspect of the social protection system can be beneficial in terms of extending displaced people's access to wider government services and programmes, thereby strengthening displaced populations' material relationship with the state much more broadly. In Colombia, vulnerable Venezuelan households who had previously registered in the SISBEN (the government's social registry), but were not receiving any routine government cash assistance, suddenly found themselves being considered for the new government cash transfer scheme created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (*Ingreso Solidario*). In many cases, these households had registered for the SISBEN principally to facilitate their access to subsidised health insurance; consequently, integration of displaced populations into one government social protection scheme had positive knock-on effects for their subsequent access to other government resources. This positive indirect effect has also been identified in the wider social protection literature, with transfer receipt (not necessarily among displaced people) sometimes subsequently improving access to wider services (such as ID cards, health, education and social care) (see e.g. Osofian, 2011; Kisurulia et al., 2015; Owusu-Addo et al., 2018; Alik-Lagrange et al., 2021; Schjødt, 2021; Bastagli et al., 2016; Owusu-Addo et al., 2018).

Second, the case studies provided some tentative indications that the specific assistance model may have an impact on state capacity and will to serve displaced populations in future. This is in line with earlier mixed research findings about the impacts of different assistance models on state capacity and will for future provision, as discussed in Lowe (2022).

In Greece, interviewees pointed to limited political will to consider the long-term integration of refugee populations, and suggested that the initial, internationally led humanitarian response had to some extent allowed the thorny question of long-term integration to be circumvented. Operational responsibilities for asylum-related assistance programmes have now transitioned from international agencies to the Greek government, but it is not yet clear whether this shift will significantly influence the state capacity and will to promote long-term refugee integration as a matter of greater priority. Indeed several civil society interviewees in our research doubted that the official transfer of responsibilities would enhance state capacity to serve displaced populations given the unfavourable political climate.

Meanwhile, in Colombia, where there is far greater political will to discuss the long-term socioeconomic integration of Venezuelans, closer alignment of international humanitarian assistance and the government social protection system is certainly seen (by government and humanitarian agencies alike) as a way to increase the government's capacity to improve its overall response to the displacement influx, by identifying gaps in provision and better understanding and addressing the population's needs. This suggests that, in contexts where there is political will to strengthen social protection for displacement-affected programming, providing international

support (financial and/or operational) to complement the government's own provision might in some cases be an effective pathway for gradually expanding the state-system capacity to address increasing or evolving needs.

3.2 Effects of assistance model on the contractual relationship between people and the state

As well as influencing their material relationship, assistance provision may also contribute to the contractual relationship between people and the state, or to how they perceive and engage with one another. As discussed in Lowe (2022), earlier research suggests that assistance provision can have quite mixed impacts in this regard, in some cases enhancing and in other cases damaging state–society relations.¹¹ Impacts for recipients are often shaped by their prior interactions with the state, and the actual experience of the programme received, while impacts at the community level are typically mediated by wider public perceptions about the fairness, effectiveness and priorities of the programme. In both cases, impacts will also depend on whether the state is perceived to be involved in providing and financing the assistance, which is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the state's role in practice.

The quantitative research from our displacement contexts indicated that receipt of regular assistance was generally associated with higher institutional trust in government and international institutions among assistance recipients, except in the Greek case.

In Colombia, receipt of regular assistance was overall associated with a statistically significant increase in trust in the national government, mainly driven by a positive correlation with trust among IDPs receiving assistance. IDPs receiving assistance were also significantly more likely to report higher trust in local authorities (there was no significant effect for assistance recipients in aggregate, or for the other population groups). Interestingly, regular assistance recipients were also more likely to report higher trust in international organisations (again driven mainly by IDP recipients), even though the vast majority of assistance was from the state (national programmes with local authority involvement). This suggests that regular assistance receipt can sometimes increase displaced households' trust not only in the agency responsible for the support, but also in institutions more generally. Nonetheless, the fact that this increase was not statistically significant for the other population groups suggests that such positive effects should not be assumed across the board. That said, in the case of Venezuelans, the lack of statistically significant effects may be

11 See e.g. Willibald (2006); Harvey (2009); Holmes (2009); Ochieng (2010); HelpAge International (2011); Babajanian (2012); Taydas and Peksen (2012); Linos (2013); De La O (2013); Camacho (2014); Layton and Smith (2015); Kisuralia et al. (2015); Marschall et al. (2016); Crost et al. (2016); Drucza (2016); Jones et al. (2016); Weintraub (2016); Peña et al. (2017); Nixon and Mallett (2017); Schjødt (2018); Funke and Bolkvadze (2018); Brinkerhoff et al. (2018); Evans et al. (2018); Yörük et al. (2019); Valli et al. (2019); Loewe et al. (2019); Vidican and Loewe (2021); Loewe et al. (2020); McCullough et al. (2020); Sumarto (2020); Samuels et al. (2020); Ring et al. (2020); Alik-Lagrange et al. (2021); Mahmud and Sharpe (2021); Schjødt (2021); Koehler (2021).

more related to the relatively smaller sample receiving regular assistance, and their significantly higher trust levels in national, local and international agencies in general compared to IDP and host respondents.

In Cameroon, receipt of regular assistance was overall associated with large increases in trust in international organisations (who are typically responsible for the assistance provision). Assistance receipt was overall associated with significant increases in trust in local authorities (for assistance recipients in aggregate, as well as hosts specifically, some of whom were receiving government transfers), which makes sense given that these authorities may be associated with enabling scheme implementation at a local level. Trust appeared to increase for national government too, but this was not statistically significant overall or at the level of any specific sub-population.

By contrast, in Greece, receipt of regular assistance was in some cases associated with significant *reductions* in trust among our survey respondents. Host recipients of (government) assistance were less likely to trust the national government (or international organisations), even after adding individual and household controls. One potential explanation is that negative experiences accessing social protection may in some cases be linked to reduced rather than enhanced perceptions of the state. Refugee households (receiving a mix of non-government and quasi-government support in our survey) were also more likely to report reduced trust in the national and local government if they were receiving regular transfers. The other effects were more in line with the other case studies; refugees who received regular transfers were more likely to report higher trust in international organisations, as were asylum seekers (whose assistance came entirely from such organisations at the time of our study).

Alongside the impacts on assistance recipients themselves, there may also be important impacts on state–society relations at the community level, connected to general concerns about the availability and fairness of assistance provision. As discussed in Section 2.1, neglect in assistance programming can lead to substantial frustration among overlooked groups, which first and foremost is likely to be directed at the agencies perceived to be responsible for that provision.

In Cameroon, this was the case among host populations clearly frustrated with the limited access to support from either humanitarian or government agencies. It was also the case among displaced populations, who had seen reductions in the size and coverage of assistance available over the years. Overall, however, there was considerable understanding that cuts had been caused by factors beyond those agencies' control, namely the Covid-19 pandemic and the strain that this had put on donor countries.

Meanwhile, in Colombia, increased provision to Venezuelans was in some cases taken as evidence that the government was neglecting citizens', and especially IDPs', needs. While this suggests that the main tension is between citizens and non-citizens, earlier research suggested that host communities also resented the state's preferential treatment of IDPs, when vulnerable host community members were perceived to be equally in need (Vidal Lopez et al., 2011). Thus, while

the perceptions of the state may be somewhat weakened by perceptions of ‘excessive’ provision to displaced non-citizens, this may also apply to displaced citizens, if they are perceived to be no more deserving than vulnerable host households.

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

There were some tentative indications that the assistance model – and in particular the extent to which it is associated with the state – might have an impact on perceptions of the state. The survey evidence above suggests that those receiving assistance generally view the perceived provider in a more positive light. This implies that there may be potential benefits for state–society relations when assistance is associated with the state (which may arise from linkages at the policy, programme design or implementation level).

In the qualitative research too, there were some indications that displaced populations view assistance from the state as concrete evidence of the state’s concern for their situation. For example, in the Cameroon case study, some refugees voiced expectations on the social contract, arguing that assistance should come from government since the government had a responsibility to look after them. In the same vein, some IDPs’ comments suggested that the absence of state assistance for them to date was contributing to a wider sense of state neglect. When asked whether it would be preferable to receive assistance from the state or international agencies, one IDP noted: ‘I prefer that the NGOs help me, because it’s as if the Cameroonian government forgot me, I never receive their aid’ (IDP, Far North).

Yet, on the other hand, there were also several indications that closer integration of assistance into government systems might do little to alter state–society relations. In Cameroon, there was a recognition that government assistance had been more forthcoming following the displacement influx, but this step-up in government provision appeared to be directly attributed to international attention. Consequently, if the international response disappears or gets merged with the government systems, the government provision was also expected to diminish:

It’s better that [the government and humanitarian agencies] function separately ... It’s because of the NGOs that [the government] helps us. Even though the government is there since [NGOs] arrived, if you join them together, then the government will just disappear again – and then how will we manage? (Host, Far North)

This indicates such a void of trust that integrating assistance into government systems might be insufficient to have any significant effect on people’s contractual relationship with the state.

In Colombia, some IDPs also noted that despite IDPs’ priority access to assistance, some were reluctant to register as IDPs for fear of repercussions and subsequent attacks. Thus, while an official system is in place to support those displaced by the conflict, some do not have sufficient trust in the state’s ability to protect them to take advantage of this system.

Furthermore, as indicated above, there were also some suggestions that associating assistance provision more closely with the state might actually harm state–society relations, if the assistance is perceived to be poorly or unfairly designed or implemented. These negative impacts might emerge among those receiving assistance (as suggested by the survey findings above for Greek host community members receiving state welfare schemes). They might also be widespread among those who are – or who feel – neglected by state assistance (as in Colombia, where government assistance for Venezuelans appeared in some cases to be negatively affecting IDP and host communities’ perceptions of and relationship with the state). In Cameroon, the recently established state social safety schemes held negative connotations for some community members, due to concerns about perceived (mis)targeting or embezzlement of government assistance (although it is difficult to say whether perceived flaws in assistance delivery had actually increased mistrust or whether such trust was already lacking).

When thinking about the potential effects on state–society relations of shifting to an assistance model that is more closely linked with the state, a final consideration is that the effects of assistance provision will always be mediated by people’s perceptions about the source of provision, which may differ from the actual source. For example, around 17% of the IDPs and 7% of the host population being assisted by the largest routine government cash transfer scheme in Colombia (*Familias en Acción*) believed that these transfers were being financed by the United Nations, rather than the Colombian government. By contrast, in Cameroon, around 13% of IDPs and 5% of refugees being assisted by the largest humanitarian scheme (food assistance from the World Food Programme) believe that these transfers are being financed by the Cameroonian government, rather than international donors. Similarly, in Greece, there is sometimes a misperception that the Greek government finances the ESTIA and HELIOS programmes for displaced populations, despite the ongoing EU funding for these schemes. This misperception is held mainly within host communities who do not receive such schemes, although 14% of refugees receiving HELIOS accommodation in our sample similarly believed the scheme to be financed by the Greek government rather than the EU.

3.3 Effects of assistance model on people’s perceptions of themselves within the broader political project

As discussed in Lowe (2022), existing research on social protection in fragile and conflict-affected contexts and among marginalised populations more generally indicates that access to government programmes can in some cases notably influence people’s perceptions of *themselves* within the broader political project (e.g. Babajanian, 2012; Mahmud and Sharpe, 2021; Alik-Lagrange et al., 2021; Kidd et al., 2021; Schjødt, 2021).

While it was beyond the scope of our research to delve into this question in great depth, the study does provide a few tentative additional insights on this topic. Most of these insights relate to government provision (or lack thereof), and they are therefore relevant when considering the potential implications of linking humanitarian assistance with state social protection systems.

Insights on potential effects of linking more closely with social protection systems

First, the Greece case study offers some reflections on the potential effect of different assistance approaches on feelings of belonging and membership of the nation-state. Specifically, some key informants argue that assistance to displaced populations has intentionally been restricted to low levels and kept separate from the national welfare system, to deter asylum-seeking populations from becoming long-term residents in the country. According to these claims, the implicit strategy pursued by the Greek authorities has been to limit the numbers of refugees remaining in the country, with the underlying attitude that *'the less you give them, the more likely it is for them to leave'* (an approach which is by no means restricted to Greece, and has been increasingly prevalent in other European countries). Partly as a result of their lack of access to a stable income (mainly because of limited formal employment opportunities, as well as the minimal social welfare provision), many displaced people are themselves reluctant to attempt to integrate in Greek society and express repeated hopes of continuing their journey to other parts of Europe. This is particularly the case for Syrians, Iraqis and Iranians, who tend to have higher average education levels and travel more with their families, relative to Afghan and African refugees (Tramontanis et al., 2022).

Second, the case studies provide some very preliminary – and mixed – insights on the role of government assistance provision in shaping recipients' voice, rights-consciousness, and ability to hold government to account. In Greece, refugees had very low awareness of their rights and the potential benefits available to them, suggesting that legal eligibility for government assistance may on its own have little effect on refugees' sense of agency and ability to claim their rights from the state. Specifically, apart from the unemployment benefit (of which 8% of refugees in our sample were aware), less than 2% of surveyed refugees had heard of any of the major government benefit schemes, including the Minimum Guaranteed Income (the main scheme to which refugees are legally and practically entitled, even without meeting a five-year residence requirement).

At the other extreme, in Colombia, 99% of IDPs in our low-income sample had heard of at least one government assistance scheme, and their access to government social protection was the highest of any of the host or displaced populations we studied, with three-quarters benefiting from at least one cash or in-kind transfer (almost entirely from government, although the proportion benefiting from routine transfers before the pandemic was likely closer to half). This relatively high coverage rate suggests that enshrining IDPs' access to government assistance in the 2011 Victims' Law has played some part in enabling IDPs to claim these entitlements. Similarly, Venezuelans were far more likely to be aware of and access government assistance than the refugees in the Greek case study, with 89% being aware of at least one government scheme. While much of this may also be attributed to the lower linguistic and cultural barriers hindering displaced populations in Colombia relative to Greece, these examples also suggest that it may be easier for displaced populations to claim their rights to assistance in practice when there are more comprehensive and progressive legal and policy frameworks in place (which has historically been the case for IDPs, and has increasingly been established for the Venezuelan response).

Nonetheless, while the Colombian case compares favourably to the other contexts we studied, substantial gaps in access were still noted among displaced (and host) populations in this context. These gaps include negligible routine assistance for Venezuelans, and confusion about navigating access to assistance among the array of programmes, and major barriers for IDPs attempting to access their lump-sum reparation payments. This indicates that the existence of formalised or legally enshrined government provision for displaced people by no means guarantees their ability to access all their rights. Furthermore, we do not have sufficient evidence to consider whether or how government assistance may have influenced people's rights-consciousness or ability to hold the state to account more broadly, or to quantify how far this might have differed if assistance were delivered by non-government actors, separate from government systems.

4 Emerging lessons and policy implications

This paper has considered the relationship between the provision of various types of assistance to displaced populations and social cohesion in Cameroon, Colombia and Greece. It described the effects of assistance provision on horizontal and vertical social cohesion and considered to what extent, and in what ways, these impacts differ if the assistance is linked in some ways, or even fully integrated, with the state's social protection system, as opposed to being delivered entirely separately by independent humanitarian agencies.

We conclude that, overall, assistance provision is unlikely to be the main determinant of social cohesion, which is instead most heavily shaped by the government's broader policies towards displaced people and host populations, the wider economic and political climate, and historic relations and sociocultural overlap between the displaced and host populations. Where tensions exist around assistance provision to displaced people, these are unlikely to be caused by the assistance itself. Tensions are more likely to be a symptom of existing social discontent and pent-up resentment among the host community. Furthermore, the actual assistance arrangements hold only limited relevance, since impacts on cohesion are based on people's perceptions of what assistance is being provided, to whom, and from which source – which often do not accurately reflect reality.

Keeping these overarching points in mind, our study did identify several ways in which assistance provision – and the extent to which it was linked with the national social protection system – appeared to shape aspects of horizontal and vertical social cohesion, as described in the executive summary. These findings highlight many factors likely to complicate the often underlying assumption that more nationally led social protection provision will help enhance horizontal and vertical social cohesion.

In the rest of this section, we consider key lessons and policy implications for national governments and the international community. The lessons and recommendations are grouped according to policy level, programme design and administration.

4.1 Lessons and implications at policy level

4.1.1 Lessons on assistance provision in general

1. **Social cohesion is influenced by many factors beyond assistance.** The provision of assistance, and how and by whom it is provided, is unlikely ever to be the main determinant of overall cohesion dynamics. Successful efforts to improve relations, either between displaced and host communities, or between affected communities and the state, will need to consider

and address the broader range of issues shaping those relationships. The areas hosting displaced populations often have a long legacy of weak socioeconomic development and high deprivation, which is why the provision of humanitarian assistance that is merely adequate for meeting displaced populations' needs can seem unfair to neglected host populations. Meanwhile, displaced populations have often experienced discrimination and rights violations, whether by government or other community members. Strengthening relations among communities in displacement-affected regions, and between those communities and the state, therefore requires comprehensive policy responses to meet the needs of displaced and host populations, drawing on international support where feasible and necessary.

Recommendations for host governments and international actors concerned with assistance policies:

- Invest in the broad socioeconomic development of displacement-affected regions, through a long-term, cross-sectoral strategy that enhances services and opportunities for both host and displaced communities, in collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including local and national government, civil society, the private sector, affected communities, and across international humanitarian, development and peace-building actors.
 - Develop policies to ensure that both host and displaced populations have legal and effective access to their wide-ranging social, economic and political rights, such as access to documentation, freedom of movement, decent livelihoods and land on reasonable terms, financial services, justice and legal protection.
2. **Overall inadequacy of provision is a major underlying problem.** Social tensions relating to assistance provision are often grounded primarily in the overall inadequacy of programming in displacement-affected regions, which may have led to pronounced gaps in social protection coverage of host populations. These gaps can lead host populations to resent displaced populations, particularly where government was already falling short of citizens' expectations and/or where displaced populations have been positioned by influential public or political figures as a scapegoat for wider social discontent. However, in most cases, the frustration will be directed first and foremost towards the institutions felt to be responsible for inadequate provision. A long-term strategy to enhance provision so that it meets the needs of both displaced and host populations is therefore essential.

Recommendations for host governments and international actors concerned with assistance policies:

- Develop a comprehensive social protection strategy to adequately meet displaced and host populations' needs, by expanding existing programmes, developing new government-led schemes, or working in collaboration with international, national or local partners to facilitate non-government provision. Recognise that assistance programming is only one component of effective social protection, alongside employment rights, social security and labour protections, and access to broader social services.

- In designing this strategy, it is vital to ‘step up’ provision (drawing on international support where feasible and necessary), rather than to divert funding away from other vulnerable communities. Ensure that long-term responses to displacement do not – and are not publicly perceived to – come at the cost of other vulnerable groups’ needs, and are pursued alongside strategies to meet those wider needs. Clear communication of the existing and additional strategies underway to support vulnerable citizens is essential in this regard.
- Counter misinformation about displaced populations and promote host community solidarity, including by highlighting the benefits that displaced households can bring, and the reasons why it is not only morally important but also socioeconomically advantageous to assist displaced households.
- International actors should ensure that sufficient, long-term international financing is provided to enable programming for vulnerable citizens to be scaled up at the same time as covering newly displaced people, in line with global commitments to ease pressure on host countries.

4.1.2 Lessons on linking humanitarian and social protection systems at the policy level

3. **Linking international with national financing can have advantages and disadvantages.**

Creating linkages on financing can be beneficial if it means more people overall can be supported. Conversely, it may have a net negative impact if it reduces the amount of funding that actually reaches displacement-affected populations (e.g. because funds originally earmarked for the displacement response are officially or unofficially diverted). Furthermore, channelling international funds through the state budget may not be understood by the general population, and will often lead to the assumption that the programme is nationally funded. While this may help improve the relationship between the state and the recipient population, it may also generate tensions among those not served by the programme, particularly if they feel they are losing assistance because of an increase in support provided to the other community (whether or not this is true).

Recommendations for actors considering humanitarian–social protection links:

- Ensure that linked financing results in a net increase in the adequacy of provision reaching populations in need. Assess provider agencies’ operational and financial management systems to determine which channel(s) will expand assistance for affected populations most effectively in practice.
- If there is social discontent about the domestic fiscal cost of hosting displaced people, consider keeping the provision for displaced populations separate from mainstream social assistance and/or engaging a non-government/international agency in the (visible) implementation of the programme, in cases where the government is involved. In such cases, clearly communicate wherever programming has been financed with international contributions.

4. **Linking coordination across systems is a necessary first step.** Linking social protection and humanitarian coordination mechanisms is likely to be beneficial if it leads to maximisation of resources overall and more harmonious allocation of assistance available. Even if other system linkages are not pursued, it is still important to ensure that different actors are aware of each other's activities, and connecting coordination mechanisms may form a foundation for other collaboration in future.

Recommendations for actors considering humanitarian–social protection links:

- Work to improve coordination both within the respective humanitarian and social protection systems, and across these two systems.
- If considering full integration into a single coordination mechanism, ensure that this mechanism is strong enough to facilitate effective and reliable coordination between all actors such that the overarching goal of maximising and harmonising provision can be achieved.

5. **Linking legal and policy frameworks will be useful only if carried through into delivery.**

Linking assistance to displaced people into a comprehensive, nationally led legal and policy framework may help enhance vertical cohesion by strengthening the ability of displaced people to claim those entitlements, and potentially enhancing their perceptions of the state, or the state's capacity to serve them more extensively in future (where there is genuine political will to do so). However, embedding assistance to displaced people into national laws or policies on paper should not be assumed to signify improved provision in practice – or any of the vertical cohesion benefits associated with stronger provision. Legal provisions may do more to harm than to strengthen state–society relations if not backed up with effective delivery in practice.

In relation to horizontal cohesion, linking assistance to displaced people into national frameworks may have mixed effects. It may improve inter-community relations if it enables better-coordinated delivery across government and non-government actors, but may also provoke host resentment if the policies are designed in a way that increases the perceptions that government attention is being diverted to displaced populations at the expense of vulnerable host communities.

Recommendations for actors considering humanitarian–social protection links:

- Promote a comprehensive nationally led legal/policy framework for displacement response, and link assistance with that framework.
- Do not assume that laws or policies on paper equate to strong provision in practice. Work to strengthen access to legal provisions, including by engaging national and local governments to improve delivery and civil society and affected populations to improve awareness and uptake.

- Distinguish between policy linkages and financial linkages. Even if international assistance for displaced people is integrated within national policy frameworks, international financing will typically still be required (in line with commitments to share global responsibility for displaced populations). The availability of international financing should be clearly communicated, to reassure both the state and citizens about the cost of policy implementation.
- Ensure the assistance to displaced people is designed and advertised to be complementary to assistance policies for vulnerable host populations, rather than taking away existing support from those populations.

4.2 Lessons and recommendations at the programme design level

4.2.1 Lessons on assistance provision in general

6. **Programme design can shape cohesion impacts.** Specific aspects of programme design may influence whether host populations perceive assistance for displaced people as beneficial or damaging for the local economy and community. Although meeting the needs and protecting the rights of displaced households should be the primary goal of any assistance to them, programmes should also be designed as far as possible to maximise gains and minimise negative effects for host communities.

Recommendations for host governments and international actors engaged in programme design:

- Consult with affected communities from the outset and throughout programme design and implementation to explore existing and evolving cohesion dynamics and to understand communities' perspectives about fair and effective programme design.
- When assistance entails or promotes shared use of community facilities or services, ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet this additional need (e.g. adequate staffing or capacity at registration and payment points, as well as expanded local service capacity if assistance to displaced people may stimulate sudden increases in demand for services such as school or health facilities).
- Pay assistance in cash where feasible. Measure and communicate the economic benefits that are derived to the wider community.
- Provide transfer amounts that adequately meet recipients' needs (see below on linking social protection and humanitarian transfer design).
- Where additional programming is provided for host communities in response to the displacement influx, use programme messaging and content to encourage positive attitudes towards displaced people (e.g. by highlighting where more resources are being provided to help host communities affected by the displacement influx, and carefully designing inter-community activities to promote positive host–displaced interactions if the scheme involves any kind of joint participation).

7. **Attention to programming framing is key.** Social tensions regarding assistance to displaced people typically arise when host communities believe resources and attention are being diverted away from non-displaced citizens' needs – a sentiment often incited by high-profile public and political figures.

Recommendations for national governments and international actors engaged in programme design:

- Clearly communicate that assistance to displaced people is not taking places away from existing social protection recipients. Consider maintaining a visible distinction between existing provision and new programming developed in response to the displacement influx. Highlight where funding has been secured from external sources, to reduce concerns about resources being unfairly diverted within the national budget.

4.2.2 Lessons on linking humanitarian and social protection programme design

8. **Transfer values should aim to meet needs rather than being uniform.** Aligning transfer values between humanitarian and social protection systems may not necessarily improve perceptions of fairness as readily as hoped. In some cases, differentiated levels of support may simply not be a matter of concern – whether because they are unknown or because it is accepted that displaced households have different and typically higher needs than host community members (due to their lower access to land/housing, employment and community networks). In other cases, transfer values may indeed cause tensions, but these may be rooted in false assumptions about the generosity of provision (meaning the actual transfer value may be insignificant), or they may persist even where attempts to align transfer values of a particular scheme have already been made.

Recommendations for actors considering humanitarian–social protection links:

- Do not pursue the alignment of transfer values or integration of programme design as an objective in itself. Aim instead to provide assistance at a level that adequately meets recipients' needs. If needs between host and displaced recipients are similar, it may be appropriate to provide similar support. But in many cases, displaced households have higher needs, and providing larger transfers adjusted to their needs will enable them to contribute more meaningfully to the local community and economy (bringing benefits that are often recognised by the host population).
9. **Adjustments to targeting criteria should be approached with care.** Certain eligibility requirements for existing social protection programmes may be prohibitive for displaced households (e.g. if they relate to long-term residence or citizenship). Integrating assistance for displaced people into those programmes would therefore require some criteria adjustment. However, making these practical adjustments may generate some resistance, in cases where the host population knows and endorses the existing criteria, and is not in favour of programme inclusion.

Recommendations for actors considering humanitarian–social protection links:

- Do not link with social protection targeting criteria unless displaced residents can meet these criteria. Criteria adjustments may be required to enable displaced access in practice. Consult with host communities to determine potential cohesion impacts of such adjustments, and communicate any changes in a way that clearly explains the rationale.
- In some cases, it may be better to maintain a separate programme or assistance caseload for displaced households, to minimise perceptions that displaced households are taking existing places away from hosts on wholly different terms.

4.3 Lessons and recommendations at the administration level

4.3.1 Lessons on assistance provision in general

10. **Effective and transparent administration is essential to promote cohesion.** Poorly implemented programmes can contribute to social instability, aggravating tensions between communities and damaging perceptions of the agencies responsible for provision. Effective and transparent programme administration is therefore important for promoting both horizontal and vertical cohesion.

Recommendations for host governments and international actors involved in administering programmes for displacement-affected populations:

- Develop transparent selection processes, clear communication strategies, and legal and policy frameworks outlining entitlements. Ensure registration and delivery mechanisms are reliable and accessible. Create and advertise effective channels for identifying and resolving complaints and appeals. Proactively refine programmes based on continuous monitoring and feedback. Pay particular attention to the barriers that may prevent particular vulnerable groups from accessing administrative systems in practice.

4.3.2 Lessons on linking humanitarian and social protection administration

11. **People often assume that the agency delivering assistance is also funding it.** People are more likely to assume that assistance administered (fully or partly) through government systems is in some way financed by the state. This may have negative repercussions if it generates tensions with host communities. It may also have positive impacts on displaced recipients' relationship with the state by enhancing their perception of governing institutions and potentially linking them more effectively with other state systems and services. However, positive effects are only likely to accrue if the administrative systems used are perceived to be fair, effective, capable and appropriate given displaced populations' unique protection risks.

Recommendations for actors considering humanitarian–social protection links:

- If there is substantial resistance to the idea of national budget being spent on displaced people, clearly communicate where financing has come from international sources. However, it may also make sense to keep registration, payment and case management in some way separate from mainstream social protection, even if assistance to displaced people is internationally financed.
- Do not channel additional assistance through systems that are perceived to be unfair, ineffective or unable to absorb additional caseload.
- Recognise that displaced households may have had negative past experiences of government institutions, and may be fearful of accessing assistance through state systems. Administrative systems should not be linked without considering and properly addressing these protection concerns.

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Appendix 1 Primary data sample description

Table 1 Summary of primary data collected

	Quantitative data from c. 1,500 households per country	Qualitative data
Cameroon	<p>497 refugees (split evenly between in- and out-of-camp) in the East Region</p> <p>218 refugees (principally in-camp) in the Far North Region</p> <p>269 IDPs (principally in-camp) in the Far North Region</p> <p>493 host population households (roughly half each in the East and Far North Regions)</p>	<p>Focus group discussions: 12 in the East Region and 18 in the Far North Region (with both hosts, and in- and out-of-camp displaced populations)</p> <p>In-depth interviews: 40 in the East Region and 36 in the Far North Region (with both hosts, and in- and out-of-camp displaced populations)</p> <p>Key informant interviews: 18</p>
Colombia	<p>509 Venezuelan respondents (all out-of-camp)</p> <p>512 IDP respondents (all out-of-camp)</p> <p>511 host community respondents (equally split between Bogotá and Cúcuta)</p>	<p>Focus group discussions: 12, split evenly between Venezuelans, IDPs and host community, and between Bogotá and Cúcuta</p> <p>In-depth interviews: 18, split evenly between Venezuelans; IDPs and host community, and between Bogotá and Cúcuta</p> <p>Key informant interviews: 24</p>
Greece	<p>312 refugee respondents (58% in Athens; 41% in Ioannina)</p> <p>432 asylum seeker respondents (45% in Athens; 55% in Ioannina)</p> <p>752 host population respondents (equally split between Athens and Ioannina)</p>	<p>In-depth interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 28 with displaced respondents in Athens ● 33 with displaced respondents in Ioannina ● 5 with host respondents in Athens <p>Key informant interviews: 30</p>

Appendix 2 Further case study context

Here, we provide background information for each case study, summarising the country context, displacement situation and assistance provision. We also provide a summary of the general social cohesion picture in each country. For sources and further details, please see the individual country case studies: Levine et al. (2022) for Cameroon; Ham et al. (2022) for Colombia; and Tramountanis et al. (2022) for Greece.

Cameroon

Background context

Cameroon is a lower-middle-income country with persistently high rates of poverty and inequality, and low investment in social service provision, despite rich natural resources and steady macroeconomic growth. Ruled by President Biya since 1982, governance has been a recurrent challenge, with the country ranking 149th of 180 in the Transparency International corruption perceptions index. In recent years, it has faced three simultaneous displacement situations, two of which are the focus of our research.¹

The first influx studied is the relatively long-standing presence of refugees fleeing insecurity and conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) since 2004. The CAR refugee population now numbers around 333,000, the majority of whom live in the East Region (where they equate to around 20% of the host population, one of the highest refugee-per-capita rates in the world). Around a quarter of CAR refugees live in camps, but the vast majority live among rural host communities, with whom many share a common language, culture and even family ties.

The second displacement influx is located in the Far North Region (by far the poorest region in the country), and relates to the wave of IDPs and Nigerian refugees displaced since 2014 by insecurity related to Boko Haram. A little over half of the 119,000 registered Nigerian refugees there are camp-based, with the remainder living in isolated rural areas. Many of the 342,000 known IDPs also live in camps; others stay close to their location of origin, often with extended family.

Cameroon was initially acclaimed for offering a welcoming host environment for CAR refugees, but public and political attitudes notably hardened following a large wave of arrivals in 2013. By

1 The third crisis has seen massive internal displacement of over 700,000 people in the North-West and South-West Regions, as calls for greater autonomy among Anglophone populations escalated into a civil war and secessionist movement. This was not a focus of our research due to the inappropriateness of exploring the integration of international assistance into nationally led provision in a context where the state has such an active role in the conflict.

contrast, the government's response to the displacement situation in the Far North region has been stricter and more security-oriented from the outset, with instances of forced expulsions of Nigerian refugees and violations of IDPs' rights arising from the government's military offensive against Boko Haram in the region.

In general, international humanitarian agencies, rather than government, have had the principal responsibility for assisting refugee or IDP populations, although Cameroon's humanitarian response plans have been one of the most underfunded internationally. Initially, humanitarian agencies aimed to provide direct service delivery and food assistance to all CAR refugees but, since 2016, there have been progressive cuts to food rations. Even so, in the areas sampled in our survey in the Far North and East Regions, humanitarian food assistance was widespread for refugees, and covered a large share of IDPs, while the majority of host respondents were excluded.

Formal social protection in the country is in an extremely nascent stage, with most of the minimal expenditure on social protection going towards civil service pensions. Since 2013, however, the World Bank has been funding the rollout of a Social Safety Nets project (PFS, for its acronym in French), starting with unconditional cash transfers and a short-term 'cash for work' scheme. These programmes officially included refugees as of 2021, but coverage of refugees and host households alike is still extremely low. Most humanitarian assistance to displaced populations has been delivered entirely separately from this nascent social protection system.

General social cohesion picture

In Cameroon, we found social cohesion to be positive overall between the displaced and host communities in the Far North and especially East Regions. The vast majority of displaced and host respondents reported good relations in the survey. The two populations had regular contact; almost all displaced people reported having regular social contacts with members of the host communities, and the vast majority of hosts also reported having regular contact with displaced people (two-thirds in the Far North and 90% in the East).

We did identify friction between communities over resources including water, livestock and land. In the Far North (but not so much the East), perceptions of economic competition were widespread (reported by a little under half of the host population, slightly over half of IDPs and nearly three-quarters of refugees). A minority of displaced respondents reported experiencing discrimination (a third of refugees in the Far North, less than 10% of CAR refugees in the East). A few respondents in the qualitative research mentioned stories of being insulted by someone from the host community (CAR refugees in the East) or that the host population was suspicious of or distant with them (Nigerian refugees in the Far North).

However, incidents of friction were generally understood to reflect issues with individuals rather than broader tensions between host and displaced communities. It was more common to hear displaced people speaking of receiving help and support from the local population – with housing, access to land and employment opportunities. Host communities were happy to employ displaced people in their fields, although there was evidence that this was motivated by a sense that displaced people worked harder than people from host communities (and it was unclear whether they were paid less for the same work).

In relation to vertical cohesion, we heard repeated indications of distrust in government and widespread perceptions that government officials were corrupt among both host and displaced respondents in the qualitative research. However, somewhat surprisingly given the high levels of corruption in Cameroon and general public perceptions of corruption, a large majority of both host and displaced survey respondents expressed high levels of trust in both their government and local administration, with even higher levels among displaced than host households (especially for refugees). It is difficult to confirm whether this was influenced by perceived concerns about criticising the government through a blanket rejection of its authority when asked for an outright assessment of trustworthiness by survey enumerators.

Colombia

Background context

Colombia is an upper-middle-income country, with around 40% of the population living under the national poverty line, and one of the highest inequality rates in the world (2019 Gini Index of 51.3). It has a moderately mature social protection system including several social assistance schemes that are primarily targeted through a proxy means-tested system known as the SISBEN. The Covid-19 pandemic saw a large increase in the proportion of the population covered by social assistance. The largest scheme – *Ingreso Solidario*, or ‘Solidarity Income’ – targets 3 million vulnerable households who were registered in the SISBEN but not covered by any routine cash transfers. Initially designed as temporary, it has continued through the pandemic and is expected to remain as a permanent scheme in some form.

Colombia has experienced over half a century of armed conflict and violence over land use, resulting in one of the largest IDP populations in the world (surpassing 8 million, with conflict-related displacement continuing despite the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the largest armed opposition group, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*). IDPs often live among host communities in slums and shanty towns and in areas with high crime and violence, leading to frequent secondary displacement. The government has been lauded for developing arguably ‘the world’s most comprehensive legal system for IDPs’ (Ferris, 2015). Based on the 2011 Victims and Land Restitution Law, the government is responsible for providing humanitarian assistance in the first phase of displacement, priority access to social assistance in the longer term, and lump-sum reparations. Even so, poverty, unemployment and informality rates among IDPs remain high.

Since 2014, Colombia has also hosted the lion’s share of those fleeing one of the world’s largest current international displacement crises. Due to political, economic and humanitarian turmoil in neighbouring Venezuela, over 1.7 million Venezuelans (as well as 800,000 Colombian expatriates) have relocated to Colombia (99% of whom live there as migrants rather than officially applying for refugee status, although UNHCR considers the vast majority to be forcibly displaced). The overall government response has been exceptionally hospitable, seemingly motivated by a combination of drivers including solidarity, shared experience of displacement, cultural and linguistic proximity, international relations, and recognition of the potential economic benefits of integration. Particularly for Venezuelans with regularised status (44% in total as of mid-2021, and 40% of those in our sample), wide-ranging rights and service access have been provided. This includes

eligibility for some forms of social protection, such as subsidised health insurance, school feeding schemes, and some pandemic-related assistance (e.g. *Ingreso Solidario*, for those who met the eligibility criteria specified in the SISBEN).

In our representative sample from low-income neighbourhoods in the capital city of Bogotá (where displaced households tend to settle long-term) and the border city of Cúcuta (the first port of entry for many Venezuelans, and a poorer city), 76% of IDPs, 62% of host households and 48% of Venezuelans were receiving cash or in-kind assistance. The bulk came from government, in line with the finding that the responses to both the IDP and Venezuelan influx in Colombia have been primarily nationally led. However, almost all the government transfers received by Venezuelans were initiated during the pandemic (this was also true for a large proportion of hosts and, to a much lesser extent, IDPs).

General social cohesion picture

In Colombia, over two-thirds of Venezuelan survey respondents stated that Venezuelans and Colombians got along well, and in focus groups, Venezuelans reported a good relationship and a sense of gratitude towards the local population – both IDPs and host communities. Venezuelans were significantly more likely than IDPs to report receiving support from a person from the host population (29% versus 8%). Consistent with this, the host population reports providing more help to Venezuelans (40%) than help to IDPs (28%). A higher frequency of interaction was reported between Venezuelans and hosts than between IDPs and the host population (although this may also reflect the fact that Venezuelans' dialect make them more readily identifiable than IDPs). An important trait to note in our research is the high number of Venezuelan–Colombian households; slightly over half (55%) of our Venezuelan survey respondents lived in mixed-nationality households (with both Venezuelan and Colombian members).

However, there are also many signs of tensions between the Colombian and Venezuelan communities. Venezuelans were significantly more likely than IDPs to report having values different from those of the local population (62% relative to 54%), and high competition with them for jobs (72% relative to 44%) and for public services (53% relative to 41%). Surveyed Venezuelans also reported experiencing discrimination at a significantly higher rate than IDPs (44% of Venezuelans, compared to 18% of IDPs). During in-depth interviews, Venezuelans (in both Cúcuta and Bogotá) shared personal experiences of discrimination, exclusion and xenophobia.

Strains in the relationship were highlighted even more strongly by Colombians, with only around one-third (of both IDPs and hosts) feeling that Venezuelans and Colombians get along well. Some IDPs resented Venezuelans for taking resources away from them, and hosts had mixed views, seeing some Venezuelans as hard-working and honest, while associating others with illegal behaviours. Overall, there were clear signs of growing hostility, correlating with previous research indicating that hostility has increased over time since many Colombians consider the large influx of Venezuelan migrants to have increased demand for public services, and led to competition over jobs and access to the labour market, greater crime and insecurity, and higher levels of poverty (despite a body of evidence showing that these perceptions are generally unfounded). Negative

perceptions have been exacerbated by the perceived role of Venezuelans in spreading Covid-19 during the pandemic and in the looting and vandalism that accompanied protests against the government in 2019.

In comparison with Colombian–Venezuelan relations, the relations between hosts and IDPs were more favourable. Hosts have a more positive overall perception of IDPs than of Venezuelans, and see them as a greater priority for state support. However, there are still some indications of tensions in IDP–host relations; only 53% of IDPs and 45% of host respondents agree that IDPs and the host population get along well. Furthermore, although less so than Venezuelans, IDPs do still report reasonably high rates of differences in values with the host population (54%), competition with them for jobs (44%) and public services (41%), and discrimination by local people based on their IDP status (18%).

In terms of vertical cohesion, Venezuelan survey respondents reported significantly higher average levels of trust in national government, local government and international organisations than IDPs and host communities. IDPs reported significantly lower trust than host respondents in the local government, but there was no difference between these two groups in terms of trust in national government or international organisations.

Greece

Background context

Although a high-income country and a founding member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Greece has been one of the European countries worst hit by the 2008/9 financial crisis, leading to major economic challenges in recent years. The country has a functioning social protection system, but it is characterised by relatively low coverage and adequacy levels, high rates of bureaucracy and inefficiency, and extensive recent reform as a result of financial-crisis-related fiscal adjustment programmes. Several of the social assistance programmes are quite recent, with the means-tested minimum income scheme and housing benefit being rolled out nationally only in 2016 and 2019, respectively.

Positioned on the edge of the EU, Greece has been the main entry point for asylum seekers entering Europe from the Eastern Mediterranean throughout the so-called European ‘refugee crisis’ since 2015. During 2015 and 2016, more than a million refugees and asylum seekers travelled from Turkey to Greece, many then continuing via the western Balkan route to other European countries. Following the ‘EU–Turkey deal’ in 2016, the number of new arrivals has greatly reduced but not stopped altogether. As of January 2021, there were around 120,000 refugees and migrants in Greece, of those who arrived and remained in the country since the 2015–16 flow.

Political will to include displaced people in Greece’s national social protection system is lacking, in part because inclusion is considered a ‘pull factor’ that would attract foreigners to come to or remain in the country on a permanent basis. According to the main Greek asylum law (the International Protection Act, issued in 2019), refugees should have access to social assistance on the same terms as Greek citizens. However, bureaucratic barriers hinder their access in practice

(e.g. requirements to have a lease in their name, five years' legal permanent residence, a Greek bank account, a tax registration number and/or a social insurance number), meaning that fewer than 1% of refugees in our sample had access to any state benefits.

As a result, the majority of cash and housing assistance for displaced people is provided by EU-funded programming. For asylum seekers, this principally comes from the EU-funded 'Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation' (ESTIA) programme. This was implemented until 2021 by UNHCR, in collaboration with non-government partners, but the operational responsibilities have now been transitioned to the Greek government, although financing is still provided by the EU. Meanwhile, the main assistance for vulnerable, newly recognised refugees comes from the EU-funded Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS) project, implemented by IOM and its partners, with the support of the Greek government, providing up to one year of rental subsidies, along with integration and employability courses. However, its coverage of displaced people is incomplete (in part due to delays accessing required legal documentation), meaning only one in seven newly recognised refugees in total accessed HELIOS rental subsidies between 2018 and 2020 (in our sample, this was around 15%). In practice, this gap in access leaves many displaced people homeless, since a recent amendment to legislation requires newly recognised refugees to leave asylum-related accommodation facilities almost immediately after being granted refugee status (within 30 days of being notified).

General social cohesion picture

In Greece, relations between displaced and host communities were rather mixed. About half of displaced and host respondents agreed that the two communities had good relations, although a substantial minority outright disagreed with this statement (26% of the host community, 18% of refugees and 21% of asylum seekers). Interactions between displaced and host communities were notably limited. Two-fifths of refugees never interact with members of the host community, indicating their potential marginalisation and exclusion, particularly for those living in camps. For their part, host community respondents also report that a large share of the host population either never interacts with the displaced population (44%), or that they have only limited social interaction (39%).

Other negative aspects of relations include relatively high levels of discrimination, reported by around half of refugees and asylum seekers overall, driven by particularly high rates among Afghans (72%) compared to Syrians (18%). Perceived competition over resources was also high, with 46% of the host community (and 53% of refugees and 62% of asylum seekers) reporting a lot of competition for public services between host and displaced community members. This is in line with earlier evidence suggesting growing anger and resentment towards the displaced population, leading to decreasing public support for helping refugees (although, importantly, the proportion of Greeks stating that the country should help refugees in 2020 was still above the European average).

On a more positive note, almost one in three (31%) of the host community (particularly in Ioannina) had provided help to someone from the displaced community in the past six months, and the vast majority of both host and displaced respondents (over three-quarters) felt that

vulnerable members of the other community should receive support. Participants did not suggest there were widespread tensions with the refugees, except for some incidents which mostly took place at the peak of the xenophobic rhetoric and activism of the (now dissolved) ultra-right Golden Dawn party.

Considering vertical cohesion, trust in national government was similar between hosts, refugees and asylum seekers, and was lower in all three cases than trust in either local government or international organisations. Trust in local government was significantly higher for refugees than host respondents. Meanwhile, trust in international organisations was by far the highest among asylum seekers, although also significantly higher for refugees than host respondents.