Social protection responses to forced displacement in Colombia

• María Cecilia Dedios
Qualitative research team

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Key questions: qualitative component

• IDPs receive more help than the non-displaced population. At the same time, coverage of Venezuelans in low.
  • What is participants’ experience of accessing assistance and social protection programmes?
• Assistance and social protection show a weak relationship with wellbeing measures.
  • How do participants understand wellbeing? And what is the connection between wellbeing and assistance/social protection from the perspective of participants?
• A lot of the assistance comes from Government, but international agencies and community organisations also contribute.
  • To what extent and in what ways have humanitarian assistance and social protection been linked? What benefits and drawbacks do stakeholders associate with these linkages?
Qualitative data

1. We did in-depth interviews (n=18) and focus groups (n=12) with Venezuelans, IDPs and the host population.

2. We did semi-structured key informant interviews (n=24) with government institutions, international agencies, NGOs, and civil society to have a comprehensive understanding of policy-making decisions on internal and international displacement.
**Qualitative sample**

**Table 2** Qualitative sample description

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<th>Venezuelans</th>
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<td>On the response at national level</td>
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Source: authors’ own elaboration
Access to assistance and social protection
Greatest social assistance coverage - IDPs

• IDPs knew the requirements and processes to access assistance and social protection (Sisben – the social registry)

• Particularly true for people in the RUV (the Registry for Victims of the Conflict, including IDPs)

Well these days they call it ‘compensation’. Each person gets compensated for being displaced, after a certain period of time. You fill in forms, afterwards you have to know how to bring a list with everything that happened to the person (Focus group, IDP, recipient, Cúcuta)
The main barriers relate to the requirements to be recognised as conflict victims and the delays in receiving help (cash transfers). We were displaced before. But when I was an adult and I had my children and my children’s father died, I started working for a company. I said ‘no, I’m not going to ask for help there’. I preferred to work than to go (ask for assistance) because that’s like begging them to recognise you (Interview, female recipient, Bogotá).
Least social assistance coverage – Venezuelans

- Venezuelans expressed confusion regarding the requirements and processes to access assistance programmes and social protection
- Variation in the experience of getting regular migration status and household configuration in terms of nationality

*Of course, one thing is to have a Colombian ID card and I don’t have it, with the Colombian ID card it’s different, but in the case of Venezuelans that only have a passport and the PEP (residence permit), well yes they could have it, I can’t say they wouldn’t, but really I don’t know anyone who has received assistance (Focus Group, Venezuelan, non-recipient, Bogotá)*
Least social assistance coverage – Venezuelans

• Access strategies: diversify options, contribute to a support network

Since I’m working all the time (...) I pay someone to look after her [my daughter]; and sometimes she brings her home to me because she lives near the school. And she says to me: “Imagine this, they’re giving out a subsidy”. And I say: “Oh really? How?”. “Yes, for 7 months, they’re giving out a subsidy.” And I say: “Oh, honey, I really just don’t have time. Or rather, I never have time.” I said to her. So she said to me “How can you say that? Speak to the school director.” And I said: “Okay”. And that day, they had virtual meeting with me and all that. They told me that the children that hadn’t received the subsidy, it was because they hadn’t registered; others, because they didn’t have the ID card; others because ... I don’t know, there’s a process. So, the teacher got my daughter in. (Interview, Venezuelan, recipient, Bogotá)
Least social assistance coverage – Venezuelans

• Barriers to receiving cash benefits:
  • Access to bank account
  • ID document
  • Access to a permanent telephone number
  • Fear of revealing migrant status and being stigmatised

• Migrants with assistance received help in-kind mainly and didn’t report major delays with the assistance received.
Relationship between assistance/social protection and household wellbeing
People that receive social assistance highlighted the importance of the assistance in the short term, especially in moments of crisis (across all sub-groups of participants)

A lot because we were going through a critical situation and when it arrived it was a blessing from God. Let’s say, we didn’t have [food] and suddenly the day we didn’t have, the food assistance arrived, it always helped us, thank God (Interview #3, Venezuelan, recipient, Cúcuta).
Association between social assistance and wellbeing

• For IDPs, social assistance is seen as a duty of the State to address their displacement situation. Difficulties accessing help and benefits (UARIV reparations) are perceived as new failures of the State to protect them.

• Venezuelans perceive social assistance as an act of charity by the State. The feeling that it creates is one of gratitude.
Association between social assistance and wellbeing

• Assistance doesn’t allow people to have economic and social agency in the medium to long term (across all subgroups)

• The relationship between social assistance and wellbeing:
  • **IDPs**: Those who have managed to get in the RUV (Victims’ Registry) are hoping/waiting for the single compensation payment as their opportunity to improve their life conditions or to have some start-up capital.
  • **Venezuelans**: to have the option to regularize their migration status to be able to work.
Focus groups in the time of Covid-19
Doing Focus Groups by Whatsapp

• Methodological innovation in response to quarantine/lockdown measures

• What worked?
  • We managed to get around the barrier of lack of availability. Participants could reply whenever they were free
  • They didn’t have to reply on the spot. Possibility to reply in their own time.
  • Forms of communication: voice notes, videos, text, emojis
  • Simplified process to prepare data for analysis
Doing Focus Groups by Whatsapp

- Changes to the logistics: informed consent process, guaranteeing internet access for a week, incentives.
- Changes to the moderation: tutorial videos, communication combining audio, images, texts, navigating confidentiality.
¿Cómo eliminar la información una vez culminen los grupos focales?

(SEE VIDEO IN EVENT RECORDING)
Doing Focus Groups by Whatsapp

• Lessons learned
  • Moderation of focus groups online requires constant attention during the implementation period.
  • Specific skills required for moderation.
  • Challenges, particularly among migrants, in accessing mobile phones and internet. Replicates the barriers participants faced accessing social protection services
Link between humanitarian assistance and social protection

Key informant interviews
Links between humanitarian assistance and social protection

• Internal displacement:
  • A broad legal and operational framework exists for assistance provision by the government.
  • Assistance is given principally at the national level. The international programming offered is focused on new displacements.
  • International provision is to a large extent integrated with government systems: it follows government policies, uses joint coordination mechanisms and administrative systems.
Links between humanitarian assistance and social protection

• Venezuelan response:
  • The government provides most of the assistance and services.
  • The growing international response is increasingly aligning (with the state). In ad hoc cases, it is fully integrating with state systems: joint coordination mechanisms, cases of integrated financing.
  • It still hasn’t been consolidated into a wider public policy framework.
Links between humanitarian assistance and social protection

• The links between national and international systems came about because of:
  • The urgency, magnitude and long term horizon of the displacement crisis
  • The government’s political will, and strong coordination role
  • Progressive policies towards IDPs and Venezuelans
  • Covid-19
Stakeholder perspectives: Benefits (of linkages)

• From the government’s perspective:
  • Less duplication in activities, better targeting of recipients, broader coverage and services, increased institutional capacity and securing of additional resources

• From international agencies’ perspective:
  • Optimisation of limited resources, expansion in coverage, better long-term approach, identification of gaps in programming, unmet needs and opportunities to improve
Stakeholder perspectives: Disadvantages (of linkages)

• Logistical and operational difficulties: particularly in the secure and responsible exchange of data
• Concerns about government commitments to displaced people being undermined by budgetary pressures
• Concern about social tensions that can result from perceptions that government assistance is being given to Venezuelans at the expense of help for vulnerable citizens.
Thank you!

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