



Working paper

# Adjusting social protection delivery to support displaced populations

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## Key messages

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Refugees and internally displaced people face barriers to accessing social protection, further to those already faced by the host population. Barriers may also be exacerbated by gender and other inequalities. Ensuring full accessibility for displaced people can help to improve social protection delivery for all.

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Governments, donors or partners looking to support refugees and internally displaced people through social protection systems should ensure that operational systems are appropriately modified at each phase of delivery before relying on such systems to assist displaced people.

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Successfully adjusting delivery systems for displaced people is facilitated by adequate legal frameworks, political will, financial resources, capacity and coordination. Where any of these factors is lacking, the likelihood of operational adjustments being effectively implemented is reduced.

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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.

This work is part of the programme ‘Building the Evidence on Protracted Forced Displacement: A Multi-Stakeholder Partnership’. The programme is funded by UK Aid from the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), it is managed by the World Bank Group (WBG) and was established in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The scope of the programme is to expand the global knowledge on forced displacement by funding quality research and disseminating results for the use of practitioners and policy-makers. This work does not necessarily reflect the views of FCDO, the WBG or UNHCR.

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# Acronyms

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|                |                                                                                     |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AMKA</b>    | social insurance number (Greece)                                                    |
| <b>ESI</b>     | Emergency Support Instrument (Greece)                                               |
| <b>ESTIA</b>   | Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (programme) (Greece)             |
| <b>EU</b>      | European Union                                                                      |
| <b>FGD</b>     | focus group discussion                                                              |
| <b>HELIOS</b>  | Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (Greece) |
| <b>IDA 18</b>  | 18th Replenishment of the International Development Association                     |
| <b>IDI</b>     | in-depth interview                                                                  |
| <b>IDP</b>     | internally displaced person                                                         |
| <b>IOM</b>     | International Organization for Migration (UN)                                       |
| <b>KII</b>     | key informant interview                                                             |
| <b>MINEPAT</b> | Ministry of Planning, Programming and Regional Development (Cameroon)               |
| <b>MIS</b>     | management information system                                                       |
| <b>NGO</b>     | non-government organisation                                                         |
| <b>OPEKA</b>   | Organisation for Welfare Benefits and Social Solidarity (Greece)                    |
| <b>PAAYPA</b>  | Provision Insurance and Healthcare Number for Foreigners (Greece)                   |
| <b>PEP</b>     | Special Stay Permit (Colombia)                                                      |
| <b>PFS</b>     | Social Safety Nets project (Cameroon)                                               |
| <b>PMT</b>     | proxy means test                                                                    |
| <b>SISBEN</b>  | System of Identification of Potential Beneficiaries of Social Programmes (Colombia) |
| <b>THIMO</b>   | Cash for Work scheme (Cameroon)                                                     |
| <b>TMO</b>     | Ordinary Cash Transfer scheme (Cameroon)                                            |
| <b>TMU</b>     | Emergency Cash Transfer scheme (Cameroon)                                           |
| <b>TMU-C</b>   | Emergency Cash Transfer scheme for Covid-19 (Cameroon)                              |
| <b>TSN</b>     | Transitional Safety Net (Cameroon)                                                  |
| <b>UNHCR</b>   | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                                       |
| <b>UARIV</b>   | Unit for Attention and Comprehensive Reparations to Victims (Colombia)              |
| <b>WFP</b>     | World Food Programme (UN)                                                           |

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# Executive summary

Worldwide, there are now 100 million displaced people, often living among host communities on a protracted basis. To respond to this growing and evolving challenge, there is increasing interest in the potential to link humanitarian assistance for displaced people with national social protection systems, or to serve displaced people directly through these systems. Yet the practical knowledge of how social protection can accommodate this inclusion is still only emerging.

This paper aims to help fill this knowledge gap by presenting empirical evidence on delivering social protection and humanitarian assistance to displaced (and host) populations. The paper draws on evidence from country case studies in Cameroon, Colombia and Greece, conducted as part of a wider project funded under the Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement partnership. The full country case studies are available in a series of three papers (Levine et al., 2022; Ham et al., 2022; Tramountanis et al., 2022).

## **Displaced populations' experience across the 'delivery chain'**

For social protection to adequately include and support refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), our findings suggest that various aspects of implementation need adapting across the delivery chain.

### **1) Outreach and communication**

Our findings show that awareness of state social protection programmes is particularly low among displaced populations when there are greater language barriers, lower familiarity with state systems, and less cultural and geographic integration with the host population, as for refugees in our Greece case study. Yet even when displaced populations are generally aware of the existence of state programmes, as for Venezuelans (as well as IDPs) in our Colombia case study, there can still be confusion about eligibility criteria and how to apply. The extent and effectiveness of official outreach strategies affects the level of awareness of schemes, and local community networks often play a strong mediating role. How information is accessed and received differs between men and women, and is shaped by specific contextual factors, including economic factors and social norms.

### **2) Intake, registration and assessment**

Displaced populations, particularly refugees, are more likely to face challenges accessing social protection because of *de jure* restrictions (laws and eligibility criteria). Yet even when they have access on paper, our research suggests that refugees and IDPs often face heightened barriers to accessing social protection in practice (*de facto* restrictions), including:

- difficulty in officially registering as displaced and thereby gaining the legal status required to apply for routine or displacement-specific social protection programmes
- inadequate registration in national socioeconomic information or data systems used to determine allocation of social protection provision
- complex or restrictive administrative and documentation requirements to submit scheme applications
- logistical (physical or digital) barriers hindering access to registration
- challenges navigating unfamiliar processes, in some cases compounded by a lack of targeted information and support (particularly for refugees)
- limited frequency or flexibility in the timing of programme registration, for example, infrequent enrolment drives for social assistance and long turnaround times in terms of responding to and/or approving applications.

### 3) Determination and notification of eligibility and support package

Our research finds that eligibility determination processes often disadvantage or explicitly exclude displaced households, and social protection programmes rarely address their specific needs. In Greece, eligibility for many schemes requires legal and permanent residence in the country for at least five years, which effectively excludes many refugees. In Cameroon, qualitative interviews indicated that the community-based selection phase for the social assistance programme may exclude displaced (as well as marginalised host) households if they are not known, liked or well-connected enough. And in Colombia, the reliance on the SISBEN (social registry) as the mechanism to determine eligibility for many social assistance programmes heightens the exclusion of displaced households unable to register – particularly Venezuelans with irregular status or those who faced challenges with SISBEN registration.

However, our findings also point to some positive examples. In Colombia, some aspects of social protection design and eligibility criteria have been set with a specific view to meeting IDPs' needs and prioritising their inclusion. In Cameroon, the social assistance programme is currently being geographically targeted according to both poverty and displacement in different regions.

### 4) Provision of benefits or services

In our research, experience of social protection payment or service delivery by displaced households was not necessarily worse than that of host populations, in the few cases where they were accessing the same schemes. However, when studying the broader range of programmes serving displaced households in the case studies (including hybrid UN–government and humanitarian schemes), some lessons and challenges emerged. These included the need to consider the cultural circumstances and diverse backgrounds of displaced populations in the delivery of complementary programmes, for example by improving the suitability of education materials in refugee integration courses in Greece and the availability of childcare facilities for mothers wishing to participate.

Our findings also suggests that social protection (and humanitarian assistance) can play a part in access to financial accounts. While displaced households were generally more likely to be financially excluded, mainly because of lack of money or documentation to open financial accounts, the majority of those surveyed who did have accounts had opened them to receive transfers.

## 5) Accountability, management and monitoring

Our research found that complaints processes and grievance mechanisms were not usually known or used, by either host or displaced populations. Programme participants rarely held programme providers to account or knew how to seek help formally when problems emerged. There were also some indicative gender differences in the use of complaints mechanisms, with female-headed households less likely to know who to contact with issues (for Venezuelans in Colombia and hosts in Greece) and less likely to feel their complaint was fairly addressed (for hosts in Colombia).

There was large variation across the case studies in relation to displaced households' inclusion and visibility in information management and monitoring systems, and in the extent to which social protection linked with other agencies' programmes and databases to enable case referrals, management and monitoring.

## Enablers and barriers to adjusting delivery systems

Our research also explored the factors that influence the operational inclusion of displaced populations in social protection delivery systems, identifying five key factors.

First, the extent to which displaced populations have access to national social protection programmes in practice is driven to a large extent by broader **legal frameworks**. Refugees are more likely than IDPs to be excluded from access to social protection because of their lack of permanent legal status. In Colombia, laws and policies to regularise the stay of Venezuelans have facilitated their integration into government systems. Moreover, a conducive legal and policy environment has also enabled humanitarian agencies to cooperate with the national social protection system by providing technical support and assistance (e.g., supporting data collection and registration). However, as clearly illustrated by the Greece case study, legal frameworks in themselves are insufficient to translate legal entitlements into practice.

Second, **political will** strongly influences the inclusion of displaced populations in national social assistance systems, from the legal and regulatory framework to the resources invested throughout the delivery chain. The Colombian case study illustrates an 'exceptional' case of political will to support the inclusion of the displaced Venezuelans. Despite this positive approach, there are also concerns that discontent, social tensions and potential political backlash could emerge from the provision of governmental support to displaced populations. Moreover, the Cameroon case study highlights that in some contexts social protection is not a political priority,

even for its citizens – there is no entitlement to social protection currently, or even planned for the immediate future. And in Greece, lack of political will in the central administration to make refugees an integral part of the system results in significant implementation and access barriers in practice.

Third, a country's available **financial resources** influence the inclusion of displaced populations in national social protection systems. The availability of resources (and political will) determines the capacity and coverage of a country's existing social protection system, and therefore its ability to absorb additional populations and adapt to their needs. While in Cameroon, the government has incorporated some refugees into a cash transfer programme by implementing it in areas with displaced populations as a result of international (IDA 18) funding for that programme, even in Colombia and Greece where there is more integration, there are concerns about fiscal space constraints, highlighting the continued need for international financing to support assistance provision in countries hosting large displaced populations.

Fourth, the **capacity of the existing social protection system** – to deliver timely benefits, to deliver at scale and/or to adapt in a crisis – is a key factor influencing the effectiveness of delivering social assistance to displaced populations. Where existing social protection systems or programmes are already unable to deliver timely and predicted benefits or are limited in scale, for example, as in Cameroon, it is highly unlikely that widespread provision for displaced populations will be prioritised. In other countries where social protection systems may be more mature but have not received sufficient or uniform investment, this can lead to a system with increasingly limited or inadequate programming for including displaced people in practice, as in Greece's social welfare system following a slew of austerity measures. Another important aspect of delivery capacity relates to the skills, resources and technical systems needed to identify and assess the needs of potentially large numbers of new recipients. Collecting, analysing and storing data on displaced populations was noted as a significant challenge in Cameroon, whereas in Colombia the increased availability of data on displaced populations was a key factor supporting their access to social protection programmes (although coverage of Venezuelans is still low in the national social assistance database, SISBEN).

Finally, all three country case studies highlight the importance of **coordination** in the effective delivery of social protection for displaced populations. In Colombia, the establishment and endorsement of clear coordination focal points aided integration between humanitarian assistance and social protection actors. Vertical coordination was also highlighted, with the Colombian case study showing the importance of local governments and their planning processes in implementing social protection to support displaced populations. In Cameroon, weak coordination both across and within sectors was identified as a key hindrance to considering integration.

## Policy lessons and recommendations

Our research suggests that displaced populations often face heightened or additional barriers to accessing social protection during each phase of delivery. These barriers may also be exacerbated by gender and other inequalities. National and local governments, donors or partners looking to support displaced populations through social protection systems should therefore ensure that delivery systems are appropriately modified before relying on such systems as a primary assistance model. Since displaced people are typically among the ‘hardest to reach’ in any population, strengthening delivery systems to ensure accessibility for them can help to improve social protection delivery for all.

For detailed and practical recommendations of the adjustments required at each phase of delivery, see Section 6 of this report or the associated toolkit (Holmes et al., 2022). Here, we present seven overarching recommendations:

1. **Consult displaced populations and marginalised sub-groups** within those populations to understand their needs, preferences and challenges with existing provisions, and tailor each phase of delivery accordingly.
2. **Address known barriers to access**, for example by: simplifying or adapting complex administrative, identification or documentation requirements; ensuring translated materials and sufficient interpreter capacity; and facilitating displaced populations’ access to financial accounts, identification, and digital information, registration and payment mechanisms (while ensuring manual approaches are also available for those with limited digital access).
3. **Proactively support displaced populations** to learn about, apply for, receive and provide feedback on social protection, including through formal partnerships with community-based actors, and – where appropriate and properly protected – data-sharing and referrals between governments and civil society organisations, humanitarian agencies and community leaders.
4. **Provide regular training and guidance** to staff, employers and partners on displaced people’s rights to social protection and operational adjustments needed to support them.
5. **Build flexibility into the social protection system to respond to crises**, including by allocating budgets and developing procedures to accommodate sudden new caseloads, enabling on-demand or more frequent registration, and facilitating the portability of benefits.
6. **Assess existing eligibility criteria and programme design** to understand whether they serve or disadvantage displaced households. Consider which new programmes need to be developed, or existing programmes adapted, to effectively support displaced households in a manner that is sensitive to social cohesion (see Commins et al., 2022, for practical guidance on cohesion considerations, and Hagen-Zanker et al., 2022 on designing programmes to meet basic needs).
7. **Recognise that effectively modifying delivery for displaced people requires adequate legal frameworks, political will, financial resources, capacity and coordination.** Carefully appraise each of these areas before relying on social protection systems to assist displaced people.

# 1 Introduction

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

The changing nature of displacement has required shifts in the response approach over time, away from traditional ‘care and maintenance’ models of humanitarian assistance, based on providing immediate relief for emergency needs, and towards longer-term, development-oriented approaches. Recent international commitments, for example, support engaging more closely with national social protection systems in the provision of assistance to displacement-affected populations, where feasible and appropriate.<sup>1</sup>

Humanitarian actors’ growing interest in integrating assistance for displaced populations into social protection systems coincides with a parallel drive among governments, social protection actors and development agencies in many countries to strengthen social protection systems and coverage, with specific efforts to reach traditionally marginalised groups. The first Sustainable Development Goal includes a target to implement ‘nationally appropriate social protection measures and systems for all ... and to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable by 2030’. Meanwhile, the multi-stakeholder Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (USP 2030)<sup>2</sup> highlights the need for universal access to social protection systems that are ‘rights-based, gender-sensitive and inclusive, leaving no one behind’. Displaced populations are recognised as being among the groups that require specific attention and inclusion efforts (UN, 2018).

There has thus been keen, and rising, interest in supporting displaced populations through social protection systems. Yet few national social protection programmes intentionally include displaced populations or are designed with displacement in mind. As such, barriers continue to hinder the access of internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugee populations to these systems.

Recent country and regional reviews have sought to shed light on these barriers and identify opportunities for entry points. For example, recent studies from sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America and Europe have highlighted the obstacles created by lack

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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.

2 Launched by the World Bank and International Labour Organization in 2016, USP 2030 has grown into a worldwide alliance bringing together governments, international and regional organisations, social partners and civil society organisations.

of comprehensive legal rights for refugees (or other internationally displaced populations) to work or access services, including social protection (UNHCR, 2021b; OECD/EBA, forthcoming; ILO, 2021; Sato, forthcoming; Andrade, Sato and Hammad, 2021; IPC-IG/UNICEF, 2020; UNHCR, 2021c; ILO, ISSA and ITC, 2021). But even where there are conducive legal frameworks in place, operational barriers such as restrictions on movement and type of work, unfamiliarity with national systems and/or complex administrative procedures, non-compliance and poor enforcement of regulations, lack of correct documentation, language and cultural barriers, and lack of awareness, can present obstacles hindering refugees and IDPs from accessing social protection in practice (ibid; Kool and Nimeh, 2021; Sabates-Wheeler, 2019; Sepúlveda Carmona, 2018).

Moreover, while the impacts of Covid-19 have prompted scaling up social protection coverage in many countries, including the use of innovative ways to reach those previously excluded, the extent to which national social protection programmes included displaced populations has remained low (Hagen-Zanker and Both, 2021; UNHCR, 2021b; 2020b).

Despite this recent increased attention to the inclusion of displaced populations in social protection systems, limited primary research has been conducted with displaced populations to analyse their experience of social protection delivery in practice,<sup>3</sup> including in relation to key operational phases. This paper considers how the delivery of social protection may need to be adjusted to ensure the effective inclusion of displaced populations, based on our primary research in Cameroon, Colombia and Greece.

After outlining our methodology (Section 2) and the main assistance programmes studied in each context (Section 3), we explore displaced populations' inclusion in relation to each phase of the social protection 'delivery chain' (Section 4). Within each phase, the primary focus is on affected populations' experiences of accessing state-led social assistance programmes. However, we also bring in relevant findings and lessons from humanitarian programme delivery (in boxes throughout Section 4), to highlight potential implications for considering closer linkages or even full integration of humanitarian assistance into state-led social protection systems. Having discussed potential modifications required to better support displaced populations through social protection systems, we then discuss the barriers and enablers that appear to influence whether such modifications are made (Section 5). Finally, we conclude with key lessons and recommendations (Section 6), for policy-makers and practitioners looking to serve IDPs and refugees effectively through social protection delivery systems, and for humanitarian agencies considering appropriate links with such systems when assisting displaced populations.

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3 There are, however, various exceptions, for example: Shamsuddin et al. (2021), which surveyed Venezuelans' access to social protection in Brazil; Mascall (2018), which included qualitative research with refugees in Greece assessing access to social welfare; and Bulakh (2014), which examined IDPs' experiences accessing social safety nets in Ukraine through in-depth interviews.

## 2 Methodology and approach

### 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. The case studies were chosen to provide variation in terms of geographies, income levels, maturity of social protection systems,<sup>4</sup> the presence of international non-government organisations (NGOs) and humanitarian agencies, type and duration of displacement situations and of models to assist both the host and the displaced communities, as well as the socioeconomic profiles and overlaps between the displaced and host populations.<sup>5</sup> The selected sites in three countries are as follows.

#### 1) Cameroon (lower-middle income)

In the **East Region**, we collected data from host communities and both in- and out-of-camp refugees from the Central African Republic, around 333,000 of whom have arrived since 2004 (although most of the refugees in our sample related to later arrivals, since 2015). In the **Far North Region**, we collected data from host communities and (primarily camp-based) Nigerian refugees and IDPs fleeing insecurity related to Boko Haram since 2015. Around 119,000 Nigerian refugees and 342,000 IDPs were estimated to reside in the Far North region, as of 2021.

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 at the time of our research.

#### 2) Colombia (upper-middle income)

We considered internal displacement caused by over six decades of internal conflict and violence, resulting in over 8 million IDPs, as well as the more recent influx of over 1.8 million Venezuelans displaced by the economic, political and humanitarian crisis that has escalated in Colombia's neighbouring country (particularly since 2017). We do not refer to Venezuelans as 'refugees' since the vast majority have not officially applied for asylum status, but the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) generally categorises them as an internationally displaced population,<sup>6</sup> so they are conceptually akin to refugees in our analysis. Our data was collected from displaced and host populations living in the border city of **Cúcuta** (a first port of entry for many Venezuelans, and

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4 For example, see O'Brien et al. (2018) for descriptions of maturity of social protection systems.

5 For more information on the case study contexts, see the main country papers (Levine et al., 2022; Ham et al., 2022; Tramountanis et al., 2022).

6 See e.g. UNHCR (2019) for details: [www.refworld.org/docid/5cd195of4.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5cd195of4.html).

currently home to around 11% of Venezuelans and 4% of IDPs in Colombia), and the capital city of **Bogotá** (a final destination for many displaced households, including 20% of Venezuelans in the country and 5% of IDPs).

Among the populations we studied, reported assistance was primarily from the state, both for IDPs (through preferential access to mainstream social protection and targeted assistance for conflict victims) and Venezuelans (through partial access to mainstream social protection, and various ad hoc assistance schemes).

### 3) Greece (high-income)

We collected data from asylum seekers and refugees fleeing violence and instability in Syria and elsewhere, over 120,000 of whom arrived since 2015. Our data was collected from displaced and host populations in the capital city of **Athens** and the much smaller north-western city of **Ioannina** (where a quarter and a third of refugees respectively in our survey sample resided in camps, along with around half of asylum seekers).

Greece has an established social protection system, with refugees in theory having the right to social welfare according to the terms applicable to Greek citizens. In practice, displaced populations have had limited access to social protection, and have relied on separate assistance programmes. As discussed in Section 3, the programmes available are generally different for refugees compared to asylum seekers ('asylum seekers' being those who have applied for refugee status but whose application is still pending). These programmes were still largely being funded and operated by international agencies at the time of our research. As such they are categorised as international humanitarian assistance rather than state social protection in our analysis (although programme delivery has since been transitioned to the state).

## 2.2 Data collection

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 government, humanitarian, donor and NGO representatives (see Appendix 1 for a summary of the primary data collected, or for more details on the methodology in each country, see Levine et al., 2022; Ham et al., 2022; Tramountanis et al., 2022).

## 2.3 Data analysis

For the quantitative analysis, we draw on descriptive statistics from the survey in each country. The overall approach is to assess in each case study the responses to survey questions on experience of programme delivery, and then to bring these insights together in the cross-country analysis (see Annex 1 for results tables). Where possible, gender-disaggregated data was analysed.

Since almost all the delivery-related questions were asked at the household level,<sup>7</sup> this gender analysis was largely conducted based on the gender of the household head. However, some questions asked only about the experience of the respondent (not the household), requiring analysis based on respondent gender. These cases are specified when reporting the results.

For all questions, the difference in the mean response rate between each group (i.e. between host and the respective displaced population, and between male and female respondents or household heads) was tested for statistical significance. Only significant differences (with a p-value of 0.10 or lower) are reported.

For the qualitative analysis, we draw on the programme-delivery-related findings from the FGDs, IDIs and KIs, as reported in the country papers (Levine et al., 2022; Ham et al., 2022; Tramountanis et al., 2022).

## 2.4 Limitations

In Cameroon and Greece, displaced populations did not have access to state social protection in practice, relying instead on humanitarian programmes. We therefore cannot directly compare displaced populations' experience of accessing state social protection compared to the host population. Instead, we look at:

- a. displaced populations' responses to other questions that did not relate to current programme receipt, but did explore awareness of social protection programmes, and reasons for not accessing such schemes.
- b. host populations' experience of accessing social protection schemes to see if there are any current or potential barriers or good practices that might need to be considered to effectively serve displaced populations through the social protection system in future.
- c. humanitarian programme delivery, and displaced populations' experience of accessing these programmes, to explore the feasibility of and potential lessons for serving that humanitarian caseload effectively through state social protection systems in future.

The aim was to get a sufficient sample of assistance recipients within each population to robustly analyse the experience and outcomes of assistance receipt. To achieve this, the sampling strategy involved oversampling certain population groups where needed to ensure sufficient numbers of assistance recipients. This sampling bias was required to achieve sufficient numbers of assistance recipients in the sites studied in Cameroon and Greece. As a result, the Cameroonian and Greek survey samples are principally useful in analysing experiences of assistance receipt in the areas studied, and cannot be viewed as representative of the general host or displaced situation in those locations. Therefore, responses to questions unrelated to experience of assistance receipt

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7 For example, 'Have you or anyone in your household received Transfer X?' or 'Do you or does someone in the household know who to contact if you have any problems with Transfer X?'

are not representative. Caution is required when discussing and/or interpreting findings on these questions (e.g. access to mobile money and bank accounts) since they are highly likely to have been influenced by the large proportion of assistance recipients in our sample.

Even with this sampling strategy, we were still unable to find a sufficiently large sample receiving assistance within certain population groups to be able to analyse the data, as for the host population in the Cameroon survey. For Cameroon, we can only examine the experience of humanitarian assistance receipt among displaced people in the quantitative research, although the qualitative research did delve into experiences of accessing social protection for the small number of host respondents (and also a few displaced respondents) who had accessed such schemes.

Our objective was to explore the experience of specific sub-groups within the displaced/host population, notably by gender, since past research indicates that the experience of programme receipt may vary significantly between male and female applicants and recipients (e.g. Holmes and Jones, 2010; Ulrichs, 2016). We used respondent gender quotas to ensure sufficient proportions of women and men for respondent gender analysis. However, given the household profile of recipients in our sample, we find that some of the sub-group samples become too small for robust analysis. For example, there are very few female-headed refugee households receiving transfers. Therefore, it is not possible to explore the experiences of assistance receipt between male- and female-headed households in all cases.

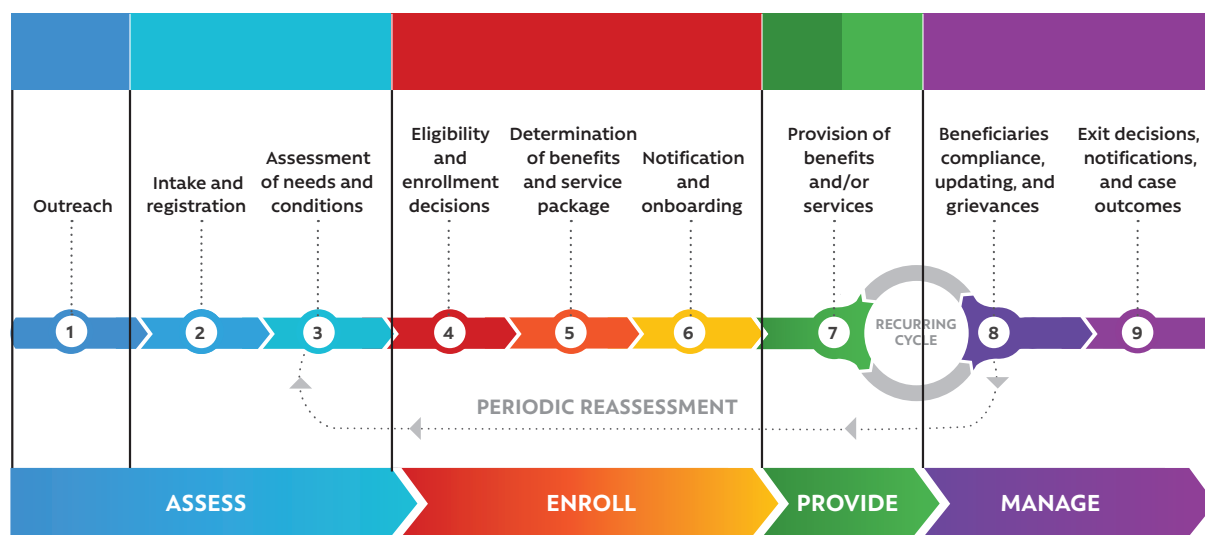
The final limitation concerns the time of data collection, several months into the Covid-19 pandemic. From a logistical perspective, Covid concerns and restrictions made it harder to collect data from certain populations (e.g. hindering our access to island-based populations in Greece). It required qualitative data to be collected remotely in many cases (in Colombia, and in Greece for the host population), which may have affected data quality in some cases. Furthermore, from an analytical perspective, the programmes in place, their operational characteristics, and recipients' experiences of accessing the schemes may have been different from pre-Covid. Attempts were made to distinguish between schemes and operational arrangements established only for the pandemic response, and schemes that preceded the pandemic. However, in other ways, it is difficult to identify and control for the impacts of Covid on respondents' answers. Yet, this peculiar time frame also represented an opportunity to explore whether and which assistance arrangements designed in the wake of Covid might be made permanent, and the potential implications for displaced households.

## **2.5 Conceptual framing**

We explore experience of programme receipt along the social protection 'delivery chain' (Lindert et al., 2020), as shown in Figure 1. This includes exploring displaced and host populations'

experience of: (1) outreach and communication; (2) intake, registration and assessment; (3) determination and notification of eligibility and support; (4) provision of benefits and/or services; (5) ongoing accountability, management and monitoring.

**Figure 1** Social protection delivery chain



Source: Lindert et al. (2020).

The aim was to explore how each phase is implemented, analyse the experience of displaced relative to host populations in accessing this phase, and consider any modifications that may be needed to better serve displaced populations. We primarily focus on social protection programmes, but also consider the findings and potential lessons from humanitarian schemes where displaced populations were not accessing social protection systems.

### 3 Overview of main assistance programmes studied

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the main forms of assistance studied in Cameroon, Colombia, and Greece, as described in the country case studies (Levine et al. 2022; Ham et al., 2022; Tramountanis et al., 2022).

**Table 1** Overview of social protection coverage and expenditure

| Country  | Effective coverage of social protection -excluding health care (% of national population) | Public expenditure on social protection– excluding health care (as % of GDP) |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cameroon | 7.1                                                                                       | 0.8                                                                          |
| Colombia | 52.5                                                                                      | 9.0                                                                          |
| Greece   | 64                                                                                        | 19.0                                                                         |

Source: ILO (2022).

#### 3.1 Cameroon

##### Social protection

As indicated by the low coverage and expenditure data shown in Table 1, formal social protection in Cameroon is at an extremely early stage. The first national strategy on social protection was developed only in 2013. This was followed by the first comprehensive policy in 2017, which does explicitly include IDPs and refugees as priority recipients (although the policy has still not been fully approved) (Levine et al., 2022).

Since 2013, the World Bank has been funding the rollout of a Social Safety Nets project (PFS, for its acronym in French), in partnership with the Ministry of Planning, Programming and Regional Development (MINEPAT). Following initial pilot schemes, this project now entails the gradual expansion of an unconditional ‘ordinary cash transfer’ scheme (with monthly transfers provided for a two-year period, alongside an annual lump-sum livelihoods grant) and a ‘cash for work’ (labour-intensive public works) scheme, as well as an emergency cash transfer scheme to respond to short-term shocks (e.g. displacement or Covid-19). The PFS project also includes efforts to develop institutional capacity, an effective targeting system and an electronic information system. Payments are mostly cash in hand, although the Covid-related emergency cash transfers experimented with mobile money for the first time.

The PFS programmes officially included refugees as of 2021 (a requirement of the renewed International Development Association (IDA) 18 funding), and theoretically have always included IDPs. However, some IDPs in camps have reportedly been excluded because of receiving international assistance instead. Coverage of refugees, IDPs and host households alike was extremely low at the time of our survey due to the nascent rollout of the scheme. PFS coverage has been gradually expanding since its inception, and the current phase is eventually expected to reach 200,000 households. Yet, this figure would represent less than 10% of those living below the poverty line nationally (Levine et al., 2022). As a result, a negligible fraction of our survey respondents reported receipt of PFS transfers, meaning the sample is insufficient to conduct quantitative analysis on experience of social protection receipt for any of the populations in Cameroon.

Alongside the World Bank/MINEPAT-led PFS project, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has also been working with the Cameroon Ministry of Social Affairs to develop community social centres providing various services for particularly vulnerable individuals (such as older people and people with disabilities). While these pre-date the PFS, they have not been systematically established and are run by a ministry with relatively weaker budget and implementation capacity. Since the arrangements are somewhat ad hoc and were not raised by qualitative research participants, experiences of accessing this form of social assistance were not a central focus of our case study. In terms of broader social protection, social insurance coverage is negligible (around 3%), given that virtually all employment (90%) is informal (ILO, 2018).

## Humanitarian assistance

In general, international humanitarian agencies, rather than government, have had the principal responsibility for assisting refugee or IDP populations. Initially, humanitarian agencies aimed to provide direct food assistance to all refugees from the Central African Republic but, since 2016, there have been progressive cuts to food rations (partly because Cameroon's Humanitarian Response Plan has been one of the most underfunded internationally for multiple years). Even so, in the areas sampled in our survey in the Far North and East Regions, humanitarian food assistance, provided principally by the World Food Programme (WFP), was widespread for refugees, and covered a large share of IDPs, while the majority of host respondents were excluded. Much of it is still provided in-kind or through vouchers. Given the limited state of the social protection system, most humanitarian assistance to displaced populations has been delivered entirely separately.

Alongside the humanitarian and social protection programmes mentioned above, UNHCR is piloting a 'transitional safety net' (TSN) that aims to serve as a stopgap measure complementing the PFS while it increases its coverage. It provides a transfer of approximately the same value and duration as the government's PFS cash transfer programme and also uses the same data for targeting that is used in government provision for refugees (i.e. UNHCR's refugee registration

database). The TSN targets refugees slightly above the vulnerability threshold for WFP's food assistance with mobile money transfers. This was not a focus of our case study, however, since fewer than 1% of households in the areas we sampled stated that they received it.

## 3.2 Colombia

### Social protection

The origins of Colombia's social protection system can be traced to the 1950s. From the late 1970s, significant changes were introduced and then consolidated in the 1991 Constitution, which guarantees the right to social security for all residents (citizens and non-citizens). This is achieved through both contributory social protection (i.e. social insurance financed by payroll contributions) and non-contributory social protection (social assistance, financed through the general government budget). In practice, though, contributory social protection is limited (to around 11% of the population), since 62% of employment is informal (ILO, 2022).

Social assistance is primarily targeted through a proxy means-tested system known as the System of Identification of Potential Beneficiaries of Social Programmes (SISBEN, for its acronym in Spanish). This registry covers over 75% of the national population. Many of the main schemes for low-income or vulnerable populations are run by the Department of Social Prosperity and are provided in the form of cash transfers, such as *Familias en Acción* (for low-income or vulnerable families), *Colombia Mayor* (a non-contributory pension for low-income or vulnerable older people) and *Jóvenes en Acción* (support for low-income or vulnerable young people to attend university).

The pandemic saw an expansion in the social assistance available, with top-up payments to existing scheme recipients, as well the establishment of new schemes. The largest of these, *Ingreso Solidario*, targets 3 million vulnerable households who were registered in the SISBEN but were not covered by any of the routine cash transfers mentioned above. Initially designed as temporary, it has continued through the pandemic and is expected to remain as a permanent scheme in some form. In total, 62% of the host population were receiving cash or in-kind transfers in the low-income neighbourhoods we surveyed in Bogotá and Cúcuta; 22% of these were receiving *Ingreso Solidario*, highlighting the role of the Covid-19 response in expanding coverage.

IDPs registered in the government's 'Victims' Registry' have preferential access to these social assistance schemes, under the 2011 Victims' Law and associated policy framework. Under this law, IDPs may also have access to a government humanitarian assistance scheme (*Atención Humanitaria*) run by the Victims' Unit (UARIV) immediately after their displacement. They are also entitled to longer-term reparations, notably a lump-sum cash compensation, although the rollout of this component has been slow. At the time of our survey, only 1.1 million victims had received reparations, out of 7.3 million actively covered by the Victims' Law. Across all cash or in-kind assistance programmes, we found relatively high rates of coverage, with 76% of IDPs receiving

transfers in the low-income neighbourhoods we surveyed in Bogotá and Cúcuta; 21% were receiving *Ingreso Solidario*, indicating that they were not served by any routine cash transfers before the pandemic.

Access to social protection has been expanding for Venezuelans in the years since the initial arrivals. Venezuelan children have had access to the National School Feeding Programme, and Early Childhood Development programmes of the Colombian Institute of Family Wellbeing (ICBF, for its acronym in Spanish). Venezuelans in formal employment are also entitled to contributory social protection (although few have accessed it, due to high rates of informal employment). Since January 2020, there has been a notable push to increase Venezuelan coverage in the national social health insurance system, including through registration in the SISBEN social registry and subsequent access to subsidised health insurance.

In relation to the main cash transfer programmes, Venezuelans' access to pre-pandemic schemes was limited because budgetary constraints prevented new programme enrolment in recent years. However, some were still accessing such schemes due to living in mixed-nationality households (with Colombian household members). Furthermore, those who were registered in the SISBEN and otherwise met eligibility criteria were able to qualify for the new *Ingreso Solidario* scheme established during the pandemic. Through these cash transfers, or through mainstream or targeted in-kind assistance, 48% of the Venezuelans in our sample were accessing assistance, predominantly from the government (and around half in cash, and half in-kind). In nearly all cases, the assistance received had only begun during the pandemic.

## Humanitarian assistance

In the low-income neighbourhoods we surveyed in Bogotá and Cúcuta, the vast majority of assistance provision to displaced and host households alike came from government.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the main focus of this case study is on households' experience of accessing these state-led assistance schemes. However, there is also a growing international humanitarian response to the Venezuelan population, and some remnants of the previously substantial international humanitarian response to the IDP situation. While we are unable to study households' experience of accessing these non-governmental schemes in our survey data, we did discuss these extensively

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8 Among those receiving assistance, 93% of the host population, 94% of IDPs, and 78% of Venezuelans reported being assisted by a specific programme of the Colombian government. Very few assistance recipients reported benefiting from a specific non-governmental or humanitarian programme (2% of host recipients, 3% of IDP recipients, 8% of Venezuelan recipients), and somewhat larger proportions reported being assisted by an unidentified source (10% of host recipients, 9% of IDP recipients, 23% of Venezuelan recipients). In some cases, the latter appeared to correspond to private or community-based support, but at other times it seemed to relate to an unnamed scheme of a government or non-governmental agency. Given the difficulties precisely allocating this minority, our social protection analysis throughout this paper looks at households' experiences of accessing identified government transfers only.

during in-depth interviews with NGO, UN and government representatives. The operational findings and lessons from these discussions of humanitarian programmes are included throughout this paper.

### 3.3 Greece

#### Social protection

Although the expenditure and coverage of the Greek system of social protection is the highest of the three case study countries, it has long been characterised by ‘inadequacy, lack of uniformity and inefficiency in the benefits provided’ (Symeonidou, 1996). Contributory social protection is substantially more prominent than in the earlier two case studies, since two-thirds of employment is formal (ILO, 2018). For social assistance, there are some long-standing social assistance programmes (notably the means-tested Child Benefit scheme) but others are quite recent, with the means-tested Guaranteed Minimum Income scheme and rental subsidy only being rolled out nationally in 2016 and 2019, respectively. However, the coverage and adequacy of these social assistance schemes have been criticised, with the Guaranteed Minimum Income scheme reported to cover only households living in extreme poverty, with benefit levels that hardly ensure a dignified standard of living (Ziomas et al., 2017).

According to the main Greek asylum law (the International Protection Act, issued in 2019), refugees should have the right to social assistance on the same terms applicable to Greek citizens. However, programme-specific eligibility requirements and administrative barriers (discussed in Section 4.4) hinder their access in practice, meaning that fewer than 1% of refugees in our sample had access to any state benefits.

#### Humanitarian assistance

The majority of cash and housing assistance for displaced people is provided by programming funded by the European Union (EU).<sup>9</sup> 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-governmental partners, but the operational responsibilities have now been transitioned to the Greek government, although financing is still provided by the EU.

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9 Even though the EU is one of the main donors of humanitarian aid, this was traditionally conceived as a policy only for non-EU countries. It was with the establishment of the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI) in 2016 that it became possible for the first time to carry out long-term EU-financed humanitarian aid operations within the EU (Dittmer and Lorenz, 2021). Around 70% of ESI funding was delivered to UN agencies, such as UNHCR (57%, €369 million) and IOM (9%, €56 million), which delivered both in-kind and cash assistance (Tramountanis et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, for those recognised as refugees, the main assistance available comes from the EU-funded Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS) programme. This is implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and partners, with the support of the Greek government. It provides up to one year of rental subsidies, along with integration and employability support. However, its coverage of refugees is limited (in part due to delays accessing required legal documentation), meaning only one out of seven newly recognised refugees in total accessed HELIOS rental subsidies between 2018 and 2020. (In our sample, HELIOS accommodation support covered around 11% of refugees.) In practice, this gap in access leaves many refugees 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).

Already at this stage it is possible to draw some comparisons between Colombia and Greece: both countries have a developed social protection system but, while the Colombian one covers hosts, IDPs and to some extent Venezuelans, the Greek one is de facto limited to hosts, while heavily relying on non-governmental and UN agencies (and international funding) to support displaced populations.

### 3.4 Summary of the main programmes studied

A summary of the main programmes studied in this paper across the case studies is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** Summary of the main programmes studied

| Country                                              | Programme(s) of focus in case study                                                                                                                                                                               | Administrative arrangements                                                                                                       | Eligibility for displaced populations                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cameroon</b><br>Social protection (primary focus) | Social Safety Nets Project (PFS):<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ordinary cash transfer (TMO)</li> <li>• Cash for work scheme (THIMO)</li> <li>• Emergency cash transfers (TMU and TMU-C)</li> </ul> | Funded by World Bank, implemented by Government of Cameroon, Ministry of Planning, Programming and Regional Development (MINEPAT) | Eligibility includes IDPs, and refugees (the latter since 2021 in practice) |
| Humanitarian assistance (secondary focus)            | Food assistance programme                                                                                                                                                                                         | WFP                                                                                                                               | Covers refugees and IDPs, largely excludes host populations                 |

| Country                                              | Programme(s) of focus in case study                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Administrative arrangements                                                                | Eligibility for displaced populations                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Colombia</b><br>Social protection (primary focus) | Routine cash transfers pre-dating Covid-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Familias en Acción</i></li> <li>• <i>Colombia Mayor</i></li> <li>• <i>Jovenes en Acción</i></li> </ul>                                               | Government of Colombia, Department of Social Prosperity                                    | IDPs have preferential access; Venezuelans in theory had access but in practice were not enrolled unless living with Colombian household members as enrolment closed in recent years |
|                                                      | New cash transfers established during Covid-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ingreso Solidario</i></li> <li>• <i>Devolución IVA</i></li> </ul>                                                                                | Government of Colombia, Department of Social Prosperity                                    | Venezuelans and IDPs eligible if they meet general programme criteria                                                                                                                |
|                                                      | • <i>Atención Humanitaria</i> (state-led humanitarian assistance)                                                                                                                                                                            | Government of Colombia, UARIV (Victim's Unit)                                              | Specific humanitarian assistance for IDPs and other victims of the internal conflict                                                                                                 |
|                                                      | Ad hoc in-kind assistance                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Government of Colombia (various)                                                           | Includes and sometimes specifically targets IDPs and Venezuelans                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Greece</b><br>Social protection (primary focus)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child benefit</li> <li>• Guaranteed minimum income scheme</li> <li>• Unemployment benefit</li> <li>• Disability (welfare) benefit</li> <li>• Rent subsidy</li> <li>• Child birth benefit</li> </ul> | Government of Greece, Organisation for Welfare Benefits and Social Solidarity (OPEKA)      | Refugees eligible in theory if they meet general programme criteria, but these are administratively challenging to meet in practice                                                  |
| Humanitarian assistance (secondary focus)            | Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) Cash Assistance                                                                                                                                                                   | EU-financed, UNHCR-implemented at the time of the research                                 | Covers asylum seekers (largely excludes refugees, and fully excludes host communities)                                                                                               |
|                                                      | Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS)                                                                                                                                                          | EU-financed, IOM-implemented at the time of the research, with support of Greek government | Refugees who meet specific eligibility criteria (asylum seekers and host communities not eligible)                                                                                   |

Source: authors' compilation, based on country case studies by Levine et al. (2022), Ham et al. (2022), Tramountanis et al. (2022).

## 4 Social protection delivery for displaced populations

In this section, we discuss the implementation experiences of the programmes studied in our three country case studies. We look across the key components of the delivery chain (outreach; registration and assessment; determination and notification of eligibility and support package; provision of benefits and services; and accountability, management and monitoring), as presented in the conceptual framework above (Section 2.5). This section draws heavily on the quantitative and qualitative analysis presented in the country case studies, undertaken by the country research teams (Ham et al., 2022, for Colombia; Levine et al., 2022, for Cameroon; Tramountanis et al., 2022, for Greece).

### 4.1 Outreach and communication

This phase informs people about social protection programmes – their existence, eligibility criteria, programme objectives and rules. Programme implementers are responsible for ensuring that the eligible population receives relevant and correct information about a programme. This awareness is vital to facilitate registration, to promote understanding and compliance with programme rules, to mitigate the spread of false information and associated anxiety or tensions, and to make it easier for people to hold the government to account for their entitlements.

**We found very mixed levels of awareness of social protection among displaced populations in our three case studies.** Awareness among our survey samples was virtually non-existent in Greece, low and moderate for refugees and IDPs respectively in Cameroon, and relatively high among Venezuelans to almost universal familiarity among IDPs in Colombia:

- In Greece, the awareness rate among refugees and asylum seekers in our survey sample was 2% or less for all government programmes, except the unemployment benefit, where 8% of refugees (particularly male refugees<sup>10</sup>) and 5% of asylum seekers were at least aware of it. By contrast, awareness of at least one major government scheme was almost universal among hosts in our sample, with some gender differences in the specific schemes that they knew.<sup>11</sup>

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10 Gender differences for other schemes were not evident for displaced respondents, likely in part because awareness rates were too low across the board to demonstrate statistically significant differences.

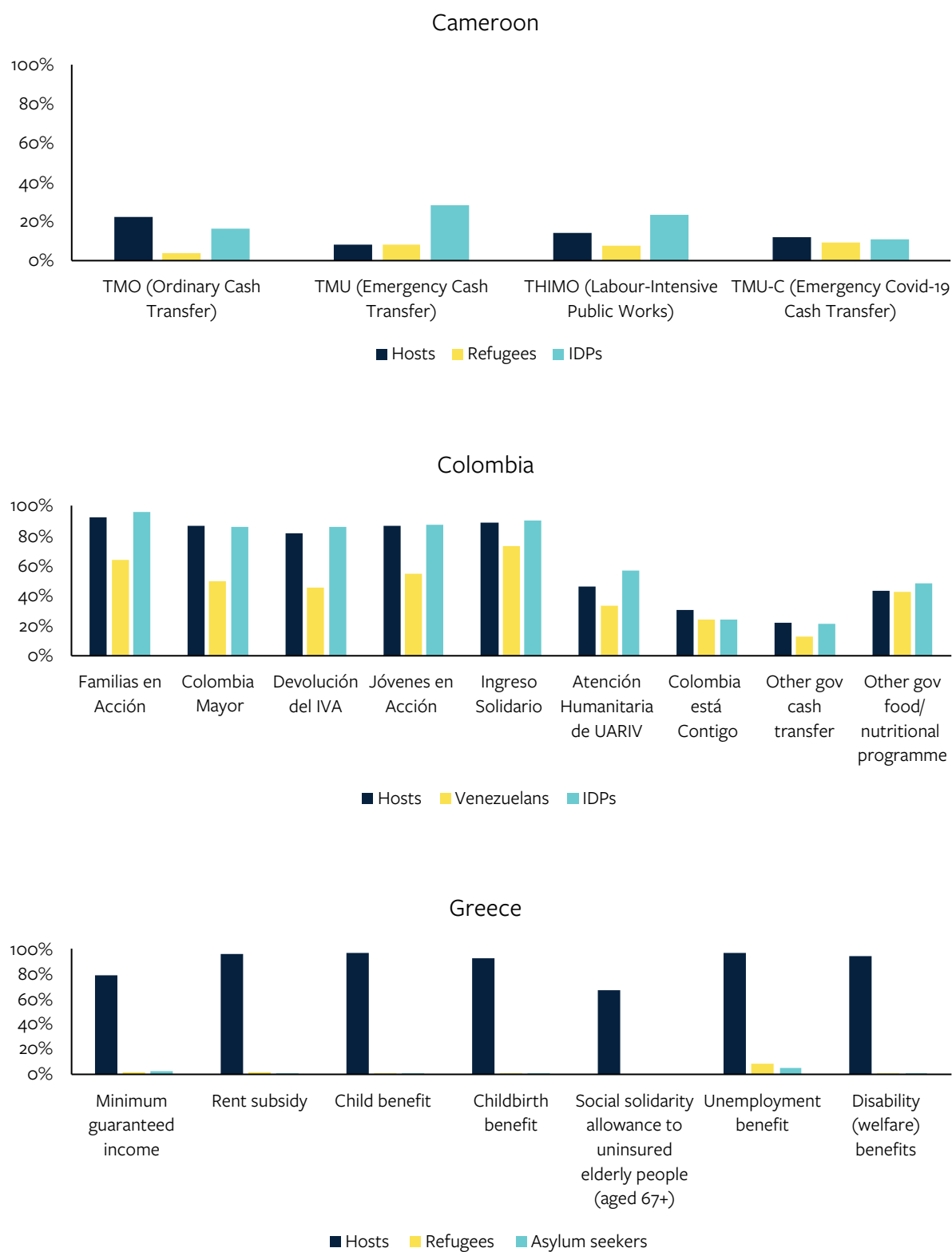
11 For example, 93% or more of host respondents to our survey were aware of the child benefit, rent subsidy, unemployment benefit and disability benefits. Female host respondents were more likely to be aware of the child benefit (98% vs 95%) and rent subsidy (97% vs 94%) and male host respondents more likely to be aware of the guaranteed minimum income scheme (83% vs 76%).

The low level of awareness among displaced people may in part reflect the fact that no asylum seekers and few refugees can actually meet the eligibility criteria for most welfare schemes (as discussed in Section 4.2). However, even for schemes that could cover them (such as the Guaranteed Minimum Income, for refugees), awareness was negligible (2%).

- In Cameroon, 19% of refugees in our sample said that they had heard of a government social safety net scheme, compared to 32% of hosts and 48% of IDPs.<sup>12</sup> The only statistically significant gender difference related to the host population, with female host respondents more likely than their male counterparts *not* to have heard of any transfer (governmental or non-governmental).
- In contrast, in Colombia, the vast majority of IDPs and a high proportion of Venezuelans in our sample were familiar with government social protection at the time of our research (which may have been influenced by the extensive ongoing need for and use of social protection programmes in response to the Covid-19 crisis). Of IDPs and hosts, 99% and 98% respectively reported knowing about at least one governmental social assistance programme, compared to a significantly lower – but still impressive – awareness level of 89% among Venezuelans. The majority of IDPs had heard of the government humanitarian assistance scheme designed to support internal conflict victims (UARIV’s *Atención Humanitaria* scheme), but awareness of this was clearly lower than for mainstream social assistance (57% awareness rate among IDPs and 46% among hosts). Knowledge of social protection was even between men and women among the Colombian host population. For IDPs, women were significantly more aware of certain social protection transfers than men (*Jóvenes en Acción* and *Ingreso Solidario*), while for Venezuelans, women were more aware of *Familias en Acción*.

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12 Given that these programmes began to be rolled out (in pilot form) only five years before the survey, with refugees becoming eligible only when the survey was conducted, this level of awareness is actually somewhat higher than might be expected – and may in part reflect the fact that our sample was biased towards assistance recipients (although most of these were receiving humanitarian assistance rather than any of the social safety net schemes). That said, in the qualitative research, we noted ample confusion about what programmes were provided where and by whom. It is therefore possible that the actual rate of awareness for the specific schemes in question is somewhat lower than the figures above, not least because several of the programmes have quite generic names (e.g. ‘Ordinary Cash Transfer’ and ‘Emergency Cash Transfer’) so some respondents may therefore have been affirming that they recognised the concept, rather than the specific government scheme.

**Figure 2** Awareness rates for government schemes, among survey respondents

Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from early 2021 (see Methodology for sample details)

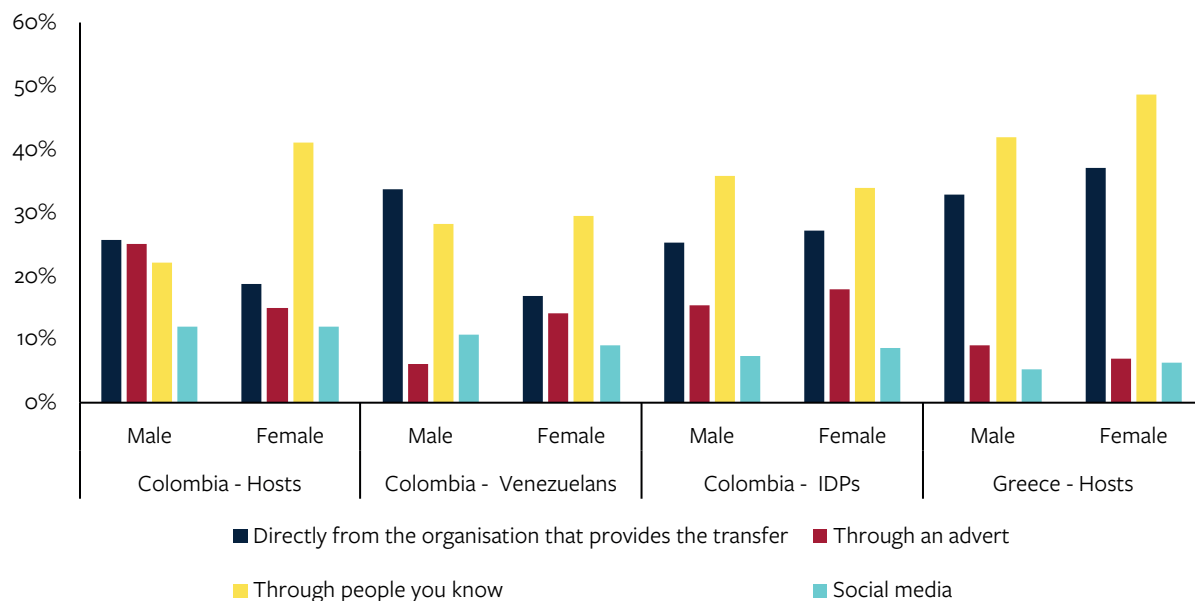
**However, even where displaced populations were aware of the existence of government programmes, there was often confusion about which programmes they were eligible for and how to apply:**

- In Colombia, there was a sense among Venezuelan participants in the qualitative research that access routes and eligibility requirements were often unclear and that it was hard to find reliable and complete information about programmes and how to access them.
- In Cameroon, IDPs in the qualitative research noted some confusion, including among programme officials, about whether IDPs were eligible to receive social protection, particularly for camp-based IDPs who receive assistance through other channels.

**These contrasting findings across our country case studies suggest that awareness is influenced by displaced populations' level of linguistic fluency, familiarity with state systems and cultural and geographic integration with host populations,** resulting in the lowest awareness levels among asylum seekers in Greece (who tend to reside, or have resided, principally in isolated camps or accommodation structures) and highest levels among IDPs in Colombia.

**Differing awareness levels between our case studies also seemed to result from differences in the extent or effectiveness of official outreach strategies,** which appeared to be relatively extensive in Colombia but more limited in Greece:

- Since refugees were not aware of or accessing social protection schemes in Greece, we were unable to assess the channels through which they were informed about such schemes. However, looking at the responses from Greek host-population recipients of social protection, we find a strong reliance on personal networks, with the majority (nearly half) hearing about schemes through people they knew rather than official outreach channels.
- In Colombia, when social assistance recipients were asked how they had heard about the scheme, the most common response was that they were informed by the organisation providing the scheme, either directly or via an advert. There were some notable population and gender differences:
  - Venezuelan recipients were significantly less likely than Colombians to be informed through an advert; instead, Venezuelans were significantly more likely to be informed through a school.
  - Venezuelan men were more likely than women to have heard about the scheme directly from the organisation, while women were more likely than men to have been informed by an advert.
  - By contrast, among host recipients, men were significantly more likely than women to have been informed by an advert while women were significantly more likely than men to have been informed by people they knew.

**Figure 3** For government transfer recipients<sup>13</sup> – how did you first get to know about it?

Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from early 2021 (see Methodology for sample details)

**In Greece, outreach gaps seemed in part to reflect a lack of skills, capacity or will of government agencies.** In the qualitative research in Greece, respondents reported a significant lack of information and appropriate way of communicating with displaced people (including language barriers). In particular, there was inadequate communication about the changes in rights and provisions as people move from asylum seeker status to becoming recognised refugees (which opens up new entitlements to state systems, but also triggers the cessation of most humanitarian provisions). This communication gap has become even more pronounced since the process of recognising refugee status has recently been accelerated, as explained in one key informant interview:

Now that the recognition process is faster, we have people being awarded the same rights and obligations as the native population, but they don't speak the language, they are not informed about their rights and responsibilities, they do not understand the system, and the system treats them as if they owe something or as if they do not possess any skills. As a result, we see disruption, high levels of unemployment, while civil servants are often not educated about how to deal with the displaced and develop a superiority complex which produces defensive and aggressive behaviours, which in turn lead to discrimination and stereotyping. (KII, Greece)

<sup>13</sup> Figures are only shown for Colombia and for hosts in Greece, since the sample size of government scheme recipients in the other population groups was insufficient to conduct robust analysis.

Key informants felt that the situation could be improved by greater effort on the part of the authorities to reach out to displaced communities and the organisations working with them, combined with further digitalisation and the expanded digital offer of state agencies for geographically remote displaced households.

### Box 1 Outreach in humanitarian schemes from our case studies

In comparison with social protection recipients, those receiving assistance from humanitarian agencies in our case studies often seemed to hear about these schemes directly from the agency providing the assistance:

- In Cameroon, when recipients of humanitarian food assistance were asked how they had found out about the scheme, 95% of refugee and 96% of IDP respondents indicated they had learnt about it directly from the organisation providing it. A substantial minority (4–14%) also mentioned hearing about it from people they knew (with no significant differences between IDPs and refugees, or between male and female respondents).
- In Greece, around half of asylum seekers (particularly women) receiving UNHCR ESTIA cash assistance (47%) were informed about it directly by UNHCR while the other half (particularly men) became aware of it through their personal network. Although refugees were not the main audience for the ESTIA scheme, some were continuing to receive it because of heightened vulnerabilities or having very recently been transitioned to refugee status. Interestingly, a significantly higher proportion of these refugee recipients (86%) than their asylum-seeker counterparts heard about the UNHCR ESTIA cash transfer directly from UNHCR.

Although the differing experience of asylum seekers versus refugees in Greece suggests a lower level of direct outreach for newer arrivals, the general trend from across the case studies nevertheless suggests a stronger level of direct outreach in humanitarian than in social protection provision. However, even for humanitarian agencies, outreach to certain groups was perceived to be lacking. In particular, humanitarian agencies noted difficulties reaching displaced people who are not housed in camps or humanitarian-provided accommodation.

**The heavy reliance on community networks over direct agency outreach in the advertisement of social protection schemes has various implications.** Reliance on community dissemination may work well where people have strong community networks, where those networks are well-informed about provisions, and where people can easily find further information from agencies after the initial suggestion from a personal contact. This may be more likely for displaced Venezuelans in Colombia than refugees in Greece, given that Venezuelans

have fewer language barriers, relatively high (although by no means universal) access to digital information, and greater geographic and cultural integration with the host population (e.g. around half of the Venezuelans we surveyed were living in households with Colombian members).

However, for those with poor links to community networks and low digital or functional literacy, the reliance on personal networks is likely to leave them further marginalised. Moreover, where community networks themselves lack an accurate understanding of rights and provisions, this can exacerbate awareness gaps; in Greece, several interviewees highlighted that displaced populations often fall victim to misinformation dispersed from various sources, including from their own communities.

## 4.2 Intake, registration and assessment

‘Intake, registration, and assessment’ refers to the processes that gather and record people’s information to register (and assess eligibility) for social protection programmes. These processes vary by programme.

### Registration requirements

**For contributory social protection, registration in all three countries is contingent on securing formal employment**, which is itself contingent both on having the legal right to work in the country and on accessing this right in practice (which was rare in all three cases):

- In Colombia, IDPs and Venezuelans with regular legal status have the right to formal employment (although most are informally employed, with only 5% of employed Venezuelans and 38% of employed IDPs having a job with social security in our survey sample). Undocumented Venezuelans (more than half of the caseload at the time of our research) do not have this right and were therefore immediately barred from contributory schemes.
- In Cameroon, both IDPs and refugees theoretically have the right to formal employment, but informality rates are high (90% nationwide, even for the host population, and higher still in the Far North and East Regions). Almost universal informality hinders registration into contributory social protection schemes among the displaced (and host) populations we studied.
- In Greece, refugees have the right to formal employment, as do asylum seekers six months after their application is submitted. However, both have limited access to formal jobs in practice (Bagavos et al., 2021; Kapsalis et al., 2021; Skleparis, 2018), again resulting in little coverage by contributory schemes. Consequently, the bulk of our research focused on displaced populations’ experience of accessing non-contributory social protection programmes.

**Refugees and IDPs are able to register for non-contributory social protection (social assistance) dependent on the programme's eligibility criteria:**

- In Greece, recognised refugees and household members with subsidiary protection can in theory register online or in person for a range of social assistance programmes (dependent on fulfilling additional criteria). In practice, registration is hindered by a range of factors as discussed throughout this section.
- In Cameroon, registration into PFS social assistance is nascent and at the time of the research included only hosts and IDPs (although refugees also started to be registered soon after our survey). Registration for the main cash transfer programme, run by the Ministry of Planning, Programming and Regional Development (MINEPAT), is based on community-based selection of priority households, validated by proxy means testing, with pre-determined quotas of recipients in an administrative area.
- Registration for social assistance programmes in Colombia is typically dependent on an individual or household first being registered in one of the wider government databases that are used to assess poverty or vulnerability:
  - The largest general database used for this purpose is the SISBEN. Covering over three-quarters of the population, registration into the SISBEN occurs through a two-pronged strategy of administrator-driven registration (where local authorities conduct census sweeps every few years, to register and assess households' socioeconomic status, with a particular focus on low-income neighbourhoods) and on-demand registration (where people can ask to be assessed on an ad hoc basis or update information that has changed since they were last registered).
  - Both citizens (host populations or IDPs) and non-citizens with regular migration status may be registered in this database. IDPs may also gain access to mainstream social assistance or to IDP-specific provisions by registering in the Victims' Registry, which is a national database run by the Victims' Unit, based on data collected when IDPs (or other conflict victims) present themselves at local municipal offices.
  - After registering in either the SISBEN or the Victims' Registry, individuals may then be invited to apply for, or be automatically offered, certain assistance. Applications for the largest social assistance programmes run by the Department of Social Prosperity can be processed only when there is budget to add new participants, meaning new registration into programmes such as *Familias en Acción* had not occurred for several years before the pandemic.

**Registration challenges**

**The registration processes above presented numerous challenges for the displaced households in our study**, due to: (1) difficulties with their initial registration for displacement (and therefore legal) status; (2) lack of representation of displaced populations in the socioeconomic information systems used to determine social protection provision; (3)

administrative and documentation obstacles; (4) logistical constraints; (5) linguistic, cultural and information barriers encountered when applying for specific schemes; and (6) challenges with the timing and timeliness of programme registration.

### 1) Challenges in officially registering as displaced, and thereby gaining the legal status required to apply for mainstream or displacement-specific provisions

In Colombia, although impressive new measures have since been put in place to regularise the status of virtually all Venezuelans (notably the Temporary Protection Status for Migrants<sup>14</sup>), around half of Venezuelans did not have **regular legal status** at the time of our survey. This rendered them ineligible for formal employment-based contributory social protection and significantly reduced their likelihood of accessing government social assistance. Of Special Stay Permit (PEP) visa holders in our survey sample, 51% were accessing identified government schemes, compared to 35% without the PEP visa. When asked if their household had tried to apply to a programme in the past five years without success, Venezuelans were less likely to report trying and failing to access a programme (28%), compared to hosts (41%) and IDPs (46%). But unsuccessful Venezuelan applicants were significantly more likely to attribute this to not having the right documentation (which the qualitative research suggests mostly related to documentation of their legal status).<sup>15</sup>

However, it is worth noting that a few social assistance provisions can be accessed by Venezuelans without regular status, for example subsidised school meals. Furthermore, the high presence of mixed-nationality households in our study (nearly half of the Venezuelan respondents surveyed) meant that some Venezuelans with irregular status were still able to access social protection that they themselves would not personally qualify for, because of the access of Colombian household members.

When IDPs in Colombia were asked whether they had to go through a registration process to access assistance, they were more likely than hosts and Venezuelans in our survey to report the need for registration, which is consistent with the fact that access to certain government provisions requires IDPs to also be registered in the Victims' Registry. IDPs in the qualitative research noted two main challenges with this registration process.

14 This residence status applies for 10 years and is granted to individuals who fall into one of four categories: those with regular migratory status, with a valid permit; those with safe passage documentation that confirms them as asylum seekers; those with irregular migratory status but proof of arrival in Colombia before 31 January 2021; and all Venezuelans who enter two years from the starting date of the decree, subject to fulfilling specified legal requirements. These individuals are eligible to begin the regularisation process allowing them to be hired legally and providing the broadest entitlements in terms of rights and services.

15 Relatedly, among those who had not applied for and are not receiving any assistance, 19% of Venezuelans explained that this was because they do not have the right documentation, a significantly higher proportion than hosts and IDPs (4%).

First, some of the participants in the qualitative research highlighted IDPs' potential reluctance to identify themselves as such for **fear of retribution**:

I also think that there are people who don't do it [register for help] out of fear, because they feel they will continue to be victims and people will attack them. (IDP recipient, Bogotá)

Second, both the quantitative and qualitative research highlighted **delays** in the processing of IDP registration, particularly as it relates to the lump-sum cash subsidy to which IDPs are entitled:

These processes are very slow and delayed. You know that here the recognition [as victims] can take a while, even years ... And from there until they give a subsidy or a response. From the national level, it can take a considerable amount of time. (KII IDP response, non-governmental agency, Cúcuta)

Likewise, in Greece, many respondents noted **difficulties and delays in the asylum application process** as being a key initial barrier to accessing social protection schemes, since legal refugee status is a pre-requisite to apply for state benefits. Challenges include complex asylum procedures, lack of information about the application requirements, lack of government interpreters, limited access to legal or language support (especially during Covid-19 lockdowns, when NGOs were less able to provide assistance), poor communication from the authorities about the status of applications, poor digital connections and non-functioning telephone lines, and long delays in getting asylum interviews. An amendment to speed up asylum procedures has raised concerns as it increases the number of applications that can be rejected.

Even for those who were successfully awarded refugee status, issues arose relating to the **failure to notify and promptly issue legal documentation of refugee status**. In several cases, people received no notification of their change in status, and realised that they had been recognised as refugees only when they stopped receiving asylum-seeker accommodation and cash benefits.

Within a month of their asylum application being granted, recognised refugees have to vacate their ESTIA (humanitarian-provided) apartments. But in many cases, it takes six months to a year before they receive their legal documents (ID card, tax registration number, social insurance number), which are required to apply for the HELIOS refugee integration programme, as well as for mainstream social protection. As the refugees in our study repeatedly expressed, they cannot organise their lives and stand on their feet in the community in just one month, nor can they find a job and a house and meet all their basic needs. This **inadequate transition period** is viewed as the most important and insurmountable barrier to recognised refugees entering the Greek social protection system. It is also viewed to be a key cause of poverty, marginalisation and homelessness of many newly recognised refugees.

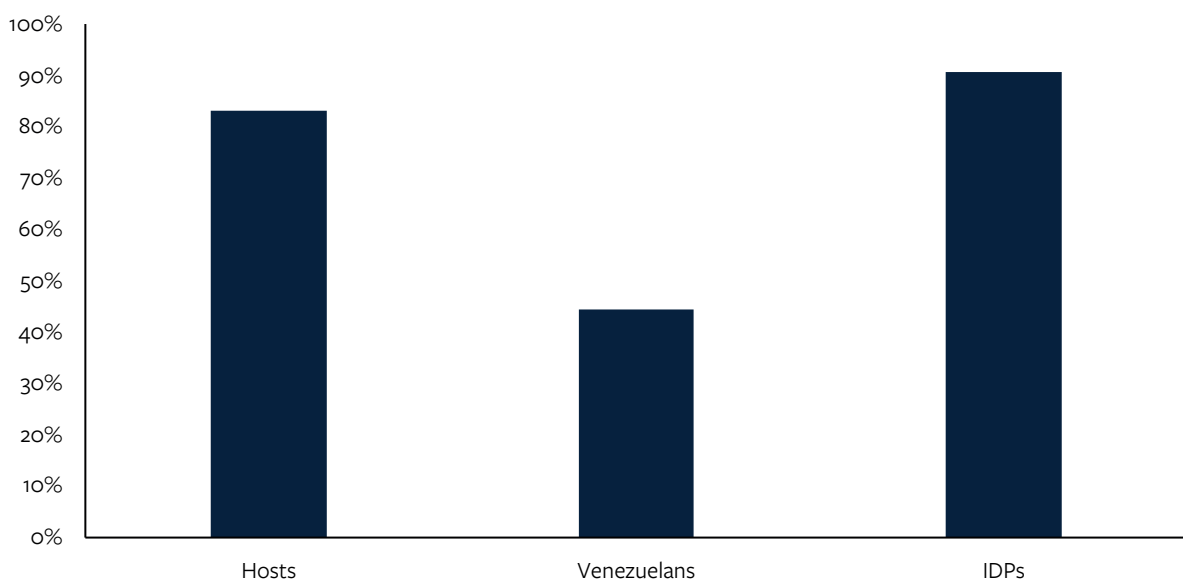
In Cameroon, challenges were noted by refugees in relation to recognition and documentation of refugee status. Registration and renewal of refugee cards has been constrained by **Covid-19**.

UNHCR has also faced difficulties in continuing site registration during the pandemic, and so a large number of **documents have expired**, which in turns reduces refugees' access to services (as well as their freedom of movement, as discussed further below).

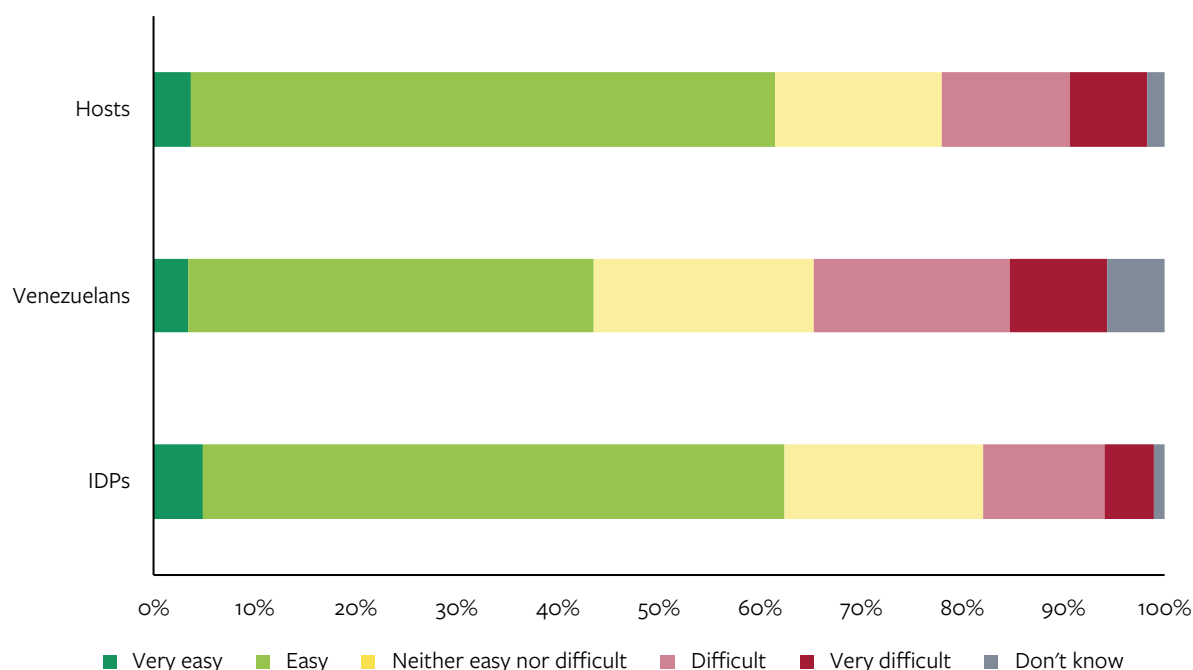
## 2) Challenges in being registered in the socio-economic information systems, databases or lists used to assess vulnerability

In Colombia, Venezuelans faced greater challenges than Colombian citizens in accessing the **SISBEN social registry**. Venezuelans in our survey sample were significantly less likely to have applied for or been registered in the SISBEN: 44% were registered, compared to 83% of hosts and 91% of IDPs. Of those not registered, only 13% had applied, compared to 41% of hosts and 51% of IDPs. Venezuelans who had applied for the SISBEN were significantly more likely to report difficulty with registration (29%) than host (21%) or IDP households (17%).

**Figure 4** Proportion of households registered in the SISBEN, in our survey sample



Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta (Jan-Feb 2021)

**Figure 5** Ease of registration in the SISBEN, in our sample

Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta (Jan-Feb 2021)

However, the Colombia case study also offers two positive findings related to displaced registration in socioeconomic databases. First, although lower than that of citizens, the proportion of SISBEN-registered Venezuelans in our survey sample was nonetheless substantial: nearly half of Venezuelan respondents. This can likely be explained by three factors:

- the high prevalence of mixed (Colombian–Venezuelan) households in our study, which accounted for around half of the Venezuelans who were SISBEN-registered
- the high overall coverage of the SISBEN, which covered more than three-quarters of the national population, and even higher percentages in the low-income areas we surveyed
- the Colombian government had already begun an initiative to ensure Venezuelans' registration in the SISBEN, to enable their access to subsidised health insurance (which became even more urgent during the Covid-19 pandemic). Outreach was undertaken in partnership with humanitarian agencies (e.g. WFP) and official guidance was provided to enable Venezuelans to register more easily with their PEP visa, thereby overcoming one of the administrative bottlenecks that previously hindered the registration process for some.

Second, when comparing displaced to non-displaced citizens, we found that IDPs were significantly *more* likely to be registered in the SISBEN than hosts (91% compared to 83%), and were also significantly less likely to have had difficulties with the SISBEN application process (17%, compared to 21% for hosts). This is encouraging, as it suggests that IDPs' access to the social assistance system is being effectively facilitated, as required by the 2011 Victims' Law.

In Cameroon, we noted two potential concerns with displaced populations' inclusion in the socioeconomic data being used to inform social protection provision:

- At the policy level, refugees are poorly represented in nationwide socioeconomic data being collected to inform social policy. For example, they were excluded from the Fifth **National Household Survey** undertaken in 2021, which aims to provide a picture of the population's living standards and to inform policies relating to regional development and poverty reduction.
- At the administration level, refugees and IDPs may also be excluded from **community-based targeting lists**, if they are not well known or well viewed by the local community members involved in drawing up household rankings, or if selection is influenced by bribes or connections. Several host community respondents in the qualitative research reported that the cash transfer targeting process was influenced by favouritism and nepotism. Few displaced respondents could comment on the targeting of the PFS, but one (out-of-camp) IDP made an accusation of corruption in accessing the cash-for-work scheme:

Sometimes, it's down to foul play, sometimes it's corruption. There are people who say, 'I'll put you down for work, and at the end you'll give me something'; that's how they choose people. (IDP, Far North)

In Greece, displaced populations' challenges in accessing the **social insurance database** have hindered their access to social assistance, as well as to employment, contributory social protection, and wider government services (such as education and healthcare). The abolition of the social insurance number (AMKA) for asylum seekers in July 2019 created serious problems for the displaced population. A new Provision Insurance and Healthcare Number for Foreigners (PAAYPA) was introduced after several months' delay, and is meant to transition into an AMKA upon granting of refugee status. However, severe delays in acquiring a PAAYPA are still recorded, and as explained by one respondent: 'It is a constant fight to have AMKA' (in-depth interview, refugee, Greece).

### 3) Challenges in meeting additional administrative and documentation requirements to apply for social assistance schemes

Even when displaced populations are officially registered as displaced and included in the correct databases, they often lack documents required to apply for social assistance schemes.

In Greece, refugees were often practically excluded by social assistance registration processes because they could not provide certain administrative documents, such as **tax documents, bank account statements or a lease in their name**:

- Most mainstream social assistance schemes require five years' residence, automatically excluding many recently arrived refugees. However, even when refugees can meet this criterion,

they often struggle to provide the tax declaration certifying five years of permanent residence status. Furthermore, even for schemes that do not have the long-term residence requirement (i.e. the Guaranteed Minimum Income scheme), a lease is required as proof of permanent address. This excludes many refugees given the high monthly costs and the requirement by many landlords to pay the full rent in advance.

- To apply for the IOM-implemented, Greek-government-supported HELIOS scheme for recently recognised refugees, a personal bank account in Greece and a tax registration number are required, which are difficult for many refugees to obtain.<sup>16</sup>

In Colombia, as noted above, lack of required documents was the most common reason that Venezuelans gave for being unable to access schemes to which they had unsuccessfully applied.

#### 4) Logistical challenges in registering for social assistance, due to physical or digital barriers

Displaced populations in some cases faced additional physical barriers accessing assistance due to remote locations of residence, legal restrictions on movement, or security concerns:

- In Cameroon, refugees in principle enjoy full freedom of movement, but this can be made more difficult by the need to acquire letters of permission or **permits for movement**, without which they can face harassment from the police. Some refugees in the Far North noted that they are regularly stopped by the police on suspicion of being Boko Haram and are sometimes detained if they do not have all the right papers to hand. **Physical insecurity** in the region is high, with intense fighting between Boko Haram and government forces, and frequent attacks on civilians, all of which can hinder people's mobility and access to services.
- In Colombia, for displaced populations who had tried to access a scheme but were not currently receiving it, travel to offices was not a key barrier. However, among current assistance recipients, displaced households who struggled with the registration process quite frequently selected 'office too far away' as the main reason for their difficulty (selected by 14% of IDPs responding to this question). The **time and travel costs** of accessing assistance were also mentioned as a barrier to accessing assistance by respondents from all three population groups in the qualitative research.

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16 Of the 41 refugees in our survey who indicated that they had applied for the HELIOS accommodation scheme but were not currently receiving it, the second most common response was that they lacked the right documents (the most common being 'awaiting approval', as discussed further in Section 4.3). The sample of female-headed households who had tried to access the HELIOS scheme but were not currently receiving it was too small to allow for gender comparisons.

- Furthermore, the Colombia case study also highlighted barriers that arise from the *higher* levels of mobility of some displaced populations, who often **lack a stable residence** and therefore move more frequently than host populations. This posed challenges for officials' attempts to enrol Venezuelans in their programmes – when they tried to contact them with the phone numbers and addresses that were listed in the SISBEN social registry, they often found that these contact details were no longer valid.
- In Greece, the bulk of the government agencies responsible for social assistance are concentrated in large urban centres (mainly in Athens and Thessaloniki), making access difficult for refugees **located in rural areas or on the islands**.

Consequently, some key informants, particularly in the Greece research, suggested that applications for social welfare might be facilitated by better digital access and more inclusive web registration options for displaced populations. However, others noted that **reliance on digital mechanisms can create problems for digitally disconnected households (particularly female-headed households)**:

- In Greece, for example, it was noted that displaced households often faced challenges accessing reliable internet connections.
- In Colombia, Venezuelans who were receiving transfers and reported difficulty in the registration process were significantly more likely to cite a lack of access to technological devices as the barrier (34% of Venezuelan respondents, compared to 10% of hosts and 13% of IDPs). Moreover, when looking at those who had tried to access a programme in the past five years but not been successful, 10%–14% of all three population groups attributed their lack of success to the fact that the application was online and they did not have access to a laptop or smartphone. There were no significant differences between host and displaced populations, but female-headed host households were significantly more likely to select this response than their male counterparts.

### **5) Challenges in navigating unfamiliar processes, in some cases compounded by a lack of targeted information and support**

As indicated in the 'Outreach' section (4.1) above, displaced people often lack information about the processes required to access assistance. This is particularly the case if they are **unfamiliar with the systems, language and culture in the area**, implying greater challenges for refugees in Greece, compared to Venezuelans or especially IDPs in Colombia.

The Greek and Colombian contexts also provide useful contrasts in terms of the **existence and effectiveness of strategies to inform displaced populations about social assistance and to help them access such schemes**. In Greece, the lack of proactive support to facilitate refugees' access to social assistance was stark. Although migrant information centres have officially been created to advise refugees about their rights and to help connect them to entitlements, these offices were described by interviewees as not being adequately staffed or properly functioning at the time of the research. This is a particular challenge since 30% of host population recipients of

social assistance in our survey reported relying on support to access those transfers, and the need for help is likely to be even greater among refugees given language barriers and lack of familiarity with state systems. As a result, out of 310 refugees interviewed in Attiki and Ioannina regions, only 2 were receiving any form of state benefit (in their case, both were receiving unemployment benefits). Even for the transition-style HELIOS scheme specifically aimed at newly recognised refugees, only a minority had accessed accommodation through the scheme (around one in seven in our sample), and 60% of successful applicants reported that the registration process was somewhat or very difficult, principally due to language barriers.

By contrast, in Colombia, there was evidence that displaced populations were being actively supported to navigate access to schemes, which may explain the much higher rates of scheme awareness and access. Venezuelan recipients were significantly *less* likely than hosts and IDPs to report that the registration process was very difficult (and significantly *more* likely than IDPs to report that it was somewhat easy). This was mainly driven by ease of registration for government in-kind schemes, and may relate to the active search strategies to find and support this group. When comparing experiences of participants of the same cash transfer scheme (*Familias en Acción*), registration was significantly easier for IDPs than host households in our survey sample to navigate, again suggesting that active efforts are being made to facilitate displaced populations' access, in line with the requirements of the 2011 Victims' Law.

However, while, in some cases in Colombia, this support may have been provided through government initiatives and collaborations, in many other cases it was accessed through **informal networks**. Venezuelans (particularly female-headed households) were more likely than Colombians to report receiving help from others to access transfers. The qualitative research highlighted that this support often came from friends, relatives and community networks.

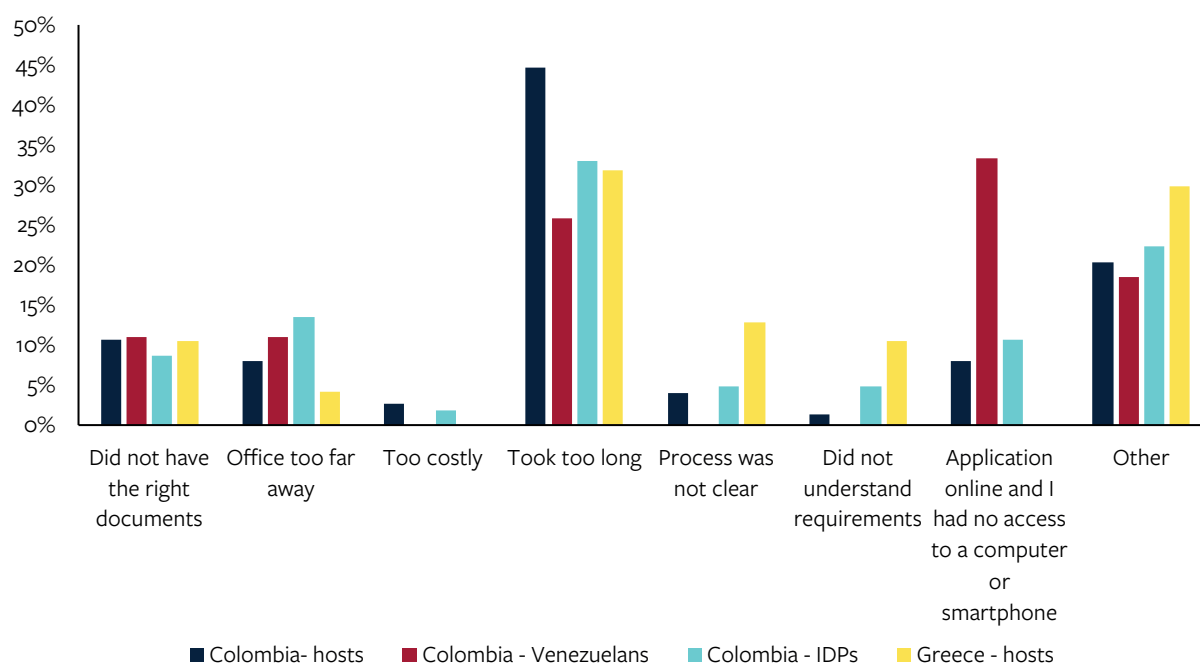
## 6) Challenges with the timing and timeliness of programme registration

Having suffered a sudden and significant change in circumstance, displaced populations need to be able to access assistance in a prompt manner, at the time when their lives and livelihoods have been disrupted. As illustrated by our Colombia case study, this often is not possible due to **infrequent enrolment drives** for social assistance programmes, and **long turnaround times** on social assistance applications:

- New registration for the major routine cash transfer schemes had not occurred for several years before the pandemic, due to budget constraints. Since most Venezuelans had only recently arrived in the country, key informants from the government suggested that it was this factor rather than explicit ineligibility that left them excluded from such schemes.

- Among those who faced difficulties with registration, the length of the process was among the top two reasons for difficulty, for host and displaced populations alike<sup>17</sup>. Among those who had tried unsuccessfully to access a scheme in the past five years, long delays in the process were also a common barrier (without significant differences between populations, but with male-headed households in the host population more likely to select this response than their female counterparts).

**Figure 6** Main challenge experienced, among government scheme recipients who found registration difficult



Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from early 2021 (see Methodology for sample details)

While the Colombia case study highlights the potential challenges of expanding mainstream social protection to accommodate newly displaced populations, the Cameroon case study reflects a potential lesson in relation to the adjustment of social assistance timelines in response to displacement shocks. Specifically, the PFS programme has a shock-responsive component (and budget) that allowed it to provide emergency cash transfers to populations affected by a sudden crisis, including IDPs and subsequently refugees. Furthermore, the regions chosen for new registration into the ordinary cash transfer scheme were also selected based partly on their displacement profile.

<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, where host recipients of social welfare in Greece had struggled with the registration process, the dominant reason (given by one-third of respondents) was that the process took too long, indicating similar problems with timeliness as in the Colombian case.

**Designing programmes with displacement shocks in mind, and allocating budgets to enable programmes to expand to accommodate sudden new caseloads, may therefore be a useful mechanism** to help address the challenges that infrequent or long-delayed programme registration processes can otherwise present.

## Box 2 Registration in humanitarian schemes from our case studies

Our case studies illustrate that, even for humanitarian schemes, displaced populations often face challenges in the registration process.

In Greece:

- When asked how difficult they had found the application for the UNHCR ESTIA transfer to be, two-fifths of asylum seekers receiving the transfer in our survey sample said it was somewhat or very difficult. One-fifth said it was somewhat or very easy. When asked the reason for difficulty, around 40% said that the process was not clear and an additional 40% said it took too long.
- Since assistance for registered asylum seekers depends on them having initiated the asylum process, ESTIA registration is delayed by the above challenges relating to the Greek authorities' registration of asylum cases, as illustrated by one asylum seeker interviewee:

we could communicate only with one employee, we could not understand each other, he didn't answer my questions and we could not visit any office to ask about the system. And the time lapsed and therefore I only received the cash allowance for eight months, because by then I was recognised as a refugee.

Confusion and delays were also compounded during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

- Additionally, individuals who entered the country from the Evros land border with Turkey and then made their way to the mainland (without first registering at an official Reception and Identification Centre) have trouble in applying for asylum, and therefore in receiving humanitarian cash assistance, having not gone through the standard procedure of registration and identification. Similarly, those who leave the accommodation sites on their own initiative because of long delays in the process are also left out.

In Cameroon:

- When asked how difficult they had found the application for humanitarian food assistance to be, a striking 36% of refugee recipients described it as somewhat or very difficult. However, half of refugee recipients (50%) did describe it as somewhat or very easy.

- IDPs found the registration experience significantly easier than refugees. Only 16% of recipients described it as somewhat or very difficult, while three-quarters described it as somewhat or very easy.
- Significant gender differences were not evident for either refugees or IDPs.

**There were mixed findings on the extent to which those registering for humanitarian programmes rely on additional support (beyond that provided by the humanitarian agency staff) to access assistance:**

- In Greece, the vast majority of both refugee (75%) and asylum-seeker households (83%) receiving the UNHCR ESTIA cash assistance reported they did not receive any help from others in their application process (although female-headed asylum seekers were more likely to report having received support than their male counterparts).
- In Cameroon, nearly half of refugee (48%) and IDP (45%) households receiving humanitarian food assistance reported receiving help from others (local people, helplines, civil society organisations) in their application process. This aligns with the qualitative research in Cameroon, where several people noted the role of ‘relais’ intermediaries who help NGOs to identify and register participants (as discussed further in Box 3 in Section 4.3). Male-headed refugee households were more likely than female-headed refugee households to report that they had *not* received support from others (the gender differences were not significant for IDPs).

### 4.3 Determination and notification of eligibility and support package

This stage of the delivery chain relates to determining and communicating which registrants will be eligible for a programme, and what benefits and services they will receive.

#### Determination and notification of eligibility

**In our case studies, we saw some evidence of displaced households being proactively considered during eligibility determination processes:**

- In line with the 2011 Victims’ Law in Colombia, IDPs are actively prioritised for assistance, in two ways. First, there are some provisions specifically designed for them (as in the case of UARIV’s *Atención Humanitaria*). Second, the eligibility determination processes of mainstream social assistance schemes have been designed with IDPs in mind, and being an IDP is one of various criteria that can qualify an applicant for assistance. Consequently, IDPs in our sample were significantly more likely than host populations to be receiving both mainstream and specialised social assistance.

- In Cameroon, the initial phase of geographic targeting for the PFS social assistance schemes was based on both poverty and displacement in different regions. Although not yet in effect at the time of our research, refugee households are now intended to constitute a fixed proportion of the PFS caseload, based on conditions set by the World Bank (which is contributing to the financing of that government scheme).

**There were also examples of social protection eligibility criteria being set in a way that reduces exclusion of displaced non-citizens, notably from Colombia:**

- Colombia's newest cash transfer scheme, *Ingreso Solidario*, was designed to support households clearly vulnerable (based on their prior ranking in the SISBEN social registry) but not yet receiving any form of routine cash assistance. The scheme was not specifically designed with Venezuelans in mind, but it also avoided inserting any nationality requirement when specifying scheme eligibility. It therefore included Venezuelans who otherwise met the criteria to qualify, meaning 13% of Venezuelans in our sample were receiving this new transfer. This was possible only because Venezuelans with regular status had previously been allowed to register in the SISBEN social registry, and some Venezuelans had succeeded in completing this registration.
- Likewise, several of the wider social protection programmes in Colombia are provided on the basis of need, without restrictions on nationality, potentially qualifying Venezuelans for those schemes.

**Despite these positive examples, the general trend in our case studies was for eligibility determination processes to disadvantage or outright exclude displaced households. In Greece:**

- A precondition to qualify for many social assistance schemes is **legal and permanent residence in the country for at least five years**. This by design excluded almost all beneficiaries of international protection from the 2015–2016 period. The five-year threshold is lower for refugees than for other non-citizens; however, at the time of the research, it was nonetheless sufficient to exclude most refugees. As discussed in Section 4.2, even those surpassing the five-year timeline often struggle to get the legal documents proving the five-year residence.
- Meanwhile, for the Greek Unemployment Benefit, one of the criteria is that applicants must be registered at the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) and must have worked at least 125 days during the 14 months preceding job loss. These criteria are clearly problematic since many refugees are jobless but unable to qualify due to a **lack of prior registered employment** in the country.

In Cameroon:

- Eligibility for PFS social assistance is determined in three stages. While the first stage (geographic targeting) is sensitive to displacement concerns, the latter two stages may intentionally disadvantage or exclude displaced households.
- As discussed in Section 4.2, the community-based selection phase for the cash transfer programme may be problematic for displaced households, if they are **not known, liked or connected well enough** to be selected by community representatives. Several host community members in the qualitative research reported that favouritism and corruption often influenced community-based selection in the PFS:

When there is a project like that, it is good for you to come directly to the location instead of using intermediaries, because they will choose their friends and list their names ... Many people have requested [assistance] and you know that this is Cameroon, there are diversions ... As I said, when one wants to distribute here, it's up to the chief and they give the list of people who are going to benefit, but most often it's their friends and the people who they get on well with. (Host Community Member, Far North)

- Meanwhile, the subsequent proxy means test assesses people's assets and living conditions, and on the basis of that, **poverty scores are fixed and the quota of commune recipients is filled** for the two-year cash transfer programme. This leaves little room for consideration of households with newly emerging or volatile needs and living circumstances, which may be the case for many displaced households (particularly those who are re-displaced on multiple occasions, or who newly arrive in an area after the qualifying caseload has been determined).
- Displaced households may also be **poorly identified through traditional proxy means tests** because the test indicators used to estimate vulnerability in the general population may not account for the unique circumstances of displaced people (for example, housing quality be used to estimate the household's wealth but this would not be appropriate where displaced households have been temporarily housed by state or non-governmental agencies).
- Furthermore, for the PFS cash-for-work programme, local officials ultimately decide who can work on these projects. According to key informants, these work opportunities had not been extended to IDPs living in camps 'because they are receiving international assistance instead'. **Unofficial eligibility determination policies based on officials' beliefs about deservingness of assistance** may therefore exclude IDPs in practice, even if they are officially allowed to participate.

In Colombia:

- The process of relying on SISBEN as the eligibility determination mechanism for many social assistance programmes was advantageous for displaced households registered in that database, but **de facto exclusionary for those who had not been able to access the social registry**. As discussed above, Venezuelans with irregular status are prohibited from registering in the

SISBEN, and even those with regular status face greater registration challenges than hosts or IDP households. This means that the eligibility determination process for *Ingreso Solidario* and other cash transfer schemes was in some ways exclusionary in practice of Venezuelan households (although citizens who were not properly registered in the SISBEN were also automatically excluded too, so this barrier is heightened for, but not restricted to, displaced non-citizens).

- Furthermore, as mentioned above, even for those registered in the SISBEN, enrolment into routine programmes has been infrequent, and eligibility is in practice **determined by budgets, rather than on need**. This disadvantages households whose need for social assistance is based on a recent change in circumstance, rather than a situation of chronic poverty.

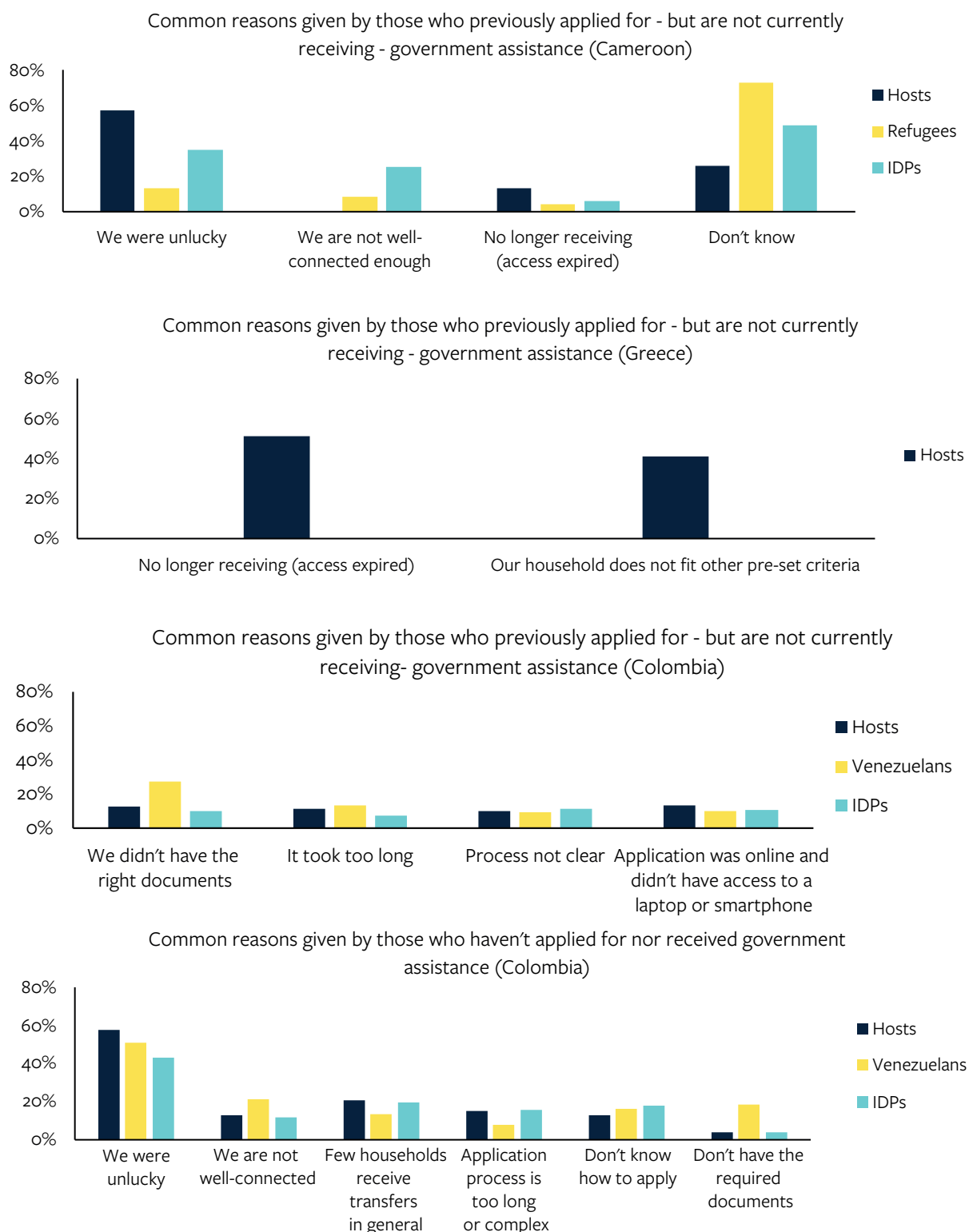
**In two of the case studies, trust in the eligibility determination process and communication of eligibility determination decisions often seemed to be weak even for host populations, meaning that large proportions of those who were not currently receiving government schemes either did not know or did not trust the reasons for their exclusion.**

In Cameroon:

- Where host households had applied for government assistance but were not currently receiving it, in the majority of cases (57%), they indicated that the reason for non-receipt was that they ‘were unlucky’, while in 26% of cases, they ‘do not know’ the reason.
- For displaced populations, these responses were flipped; in the majority of cases, refugees and IDPs (particularly female-headed households) did not know why they were not receiving the government scheme that they had previously tried to access (with a significantly higher rate for refugees, who selected this option in 73% of cases, than IDPs, 49%). The second most common reason was that they ‘were unlucky’ – significantly more common among IDP respondents than refugees (35% and 13% of cases respectively). Another common reason among IDPs was that they were ‘not well-connected enough’ – reported significantly more often by IDPs (25%) than hosts (0%) or refugees (8%).
- These perceptions are not surprising in Cameroon, given two concerns with the PFS targeting process. First, there were multiple accounts of nepotism, favouritism and ‘diversion’ of social protection transfers by community chiefs or government officials involved in household selection. Second, the proxy means test (PMT) validation process was not well understood by households, meaning final decisions on who was included or not were relatively opaque to households.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Those working on PFS told us that they felt that the use of PMT in targeting, although designed to ensure objectivity and fairness, actually served to reduce trust because people could not see how the lists of those eligible produced locally were reduced to a final list of actual recipients. In a context of generalised poverty, there may be few obvious differences between those who scored just above the PMT threshold and those who scored just below – and the threshold might not in any case correlate with local perceptions of need or poverty. This could easily lead to a belief that the process had been corrupted, even if it has in fact been carried out in an exemplary way.

**Figure 7** Common reasons for non-receipt, as reported by survey respondents<sup>19</sup>

Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from early 2021 (see Methodology for sample details)

<sup>19</sup> 'Common reasons' refers to those that were reported in at least 10% of cases, for a given population group. Results are only shown for population groups with sufficient sample size for robust analysis.

In Colombia, among those who had neither received nor applied for a scheme, the majority of respondents among all three population groups said that they did not receive any assistance because they ‘were unlucky’, suggesting a lack of understanding or trust in the ways that assistance is allocated. Lack of connections, programme coverage, patience and understanding of the application process also featured for all (without significant differences between the groups).

**However, this was not the case across the board, at least in relation to host populations in Greece** (we could not ask displaced populations about their experience since so few had heard of government schemes or tried to access them):

- When Greek households had applied for a government transfer but were not currently receiving it, in 51% of cases, they reported that the reason for non-receipt was that their access had expired. Yet among the other response options, the most common answer (selected by 41% of host respondents, without significant gender differences, was that their household did not fit the pre-set criteria.
- Other responses relating to lack of luck, connections or understanding of the reasons for non-receipt were not selected, indicating that host households in this context do understand and largely accept the eligibility determination process.

### Box 3 Eligibility determination processes in humanitarian schemes – perceptions from respondents

Since the bulk of provision for displaced households in our Greece and Cameroon case studies was from humanitarian (rather than social protection) schemes, we explored perceptions of humanitarian agencies’ eligibility determination processes among displaced respondents. **In some cases, these illustrated similar experiences to those for social protection enrolment, with lack of knowledge or trust in the basis of eligibility criteria being reported in Cameroon but not in Greece:**

- In Cameroon, displaced households who reported applying for humanitarian food assistance but not currently receiving it were asked about the reasons for this. The vast majority of refugees (69% of those responding to this question) explained that their non-receipt was because their access to the programme had expired (they were previously receiving it, but no longer). Yet for IDPs, a relatively high proportion felt that they were not receiving it because they ‘were unlucky’ (45% of IDP respondents, significantly higher than the 12% of refugee respondents). This suggests that low knowledge of or trust in the basis of eligibility determination is not restricted to social protection provision in Cameroon, and also extends to some humanitarian programmes, at least for IDPs.

- In Greece, refugee households who reported trying to access HELIOS or ESTIA, but were not currently receiving it, principally attributed this to practical constraints (awaiting approval, not having the right documents, length of process, lack of places on the scheme or expired access).

However, there were also some notable differences from perceptions of social protection enrolment, with humanitarian-scheme enrolment seemingly being better-known and less influenced by ‘who you know’ in Cameroon (although the same trends were not evident in Greece):

- Unlike for social protection schemes, no refugees or IDPs in the Cameroonian survey said they were not receiving humanitarian food assistance because they were not well-connected enough. This suggests that connections are perceived to be much less important for accessing humanitarian assistance than social protection in Cameroon (although in the qualitative research, there were occasional accounts of humanitarian programme lists being influenced by the preferences of NGO intermediaries who served as ‘relais’, helping agencies to identify households or individuals in need).
- Moreover, a much smaller proportion of Cameroon respondents who had not succeeded in accessing humanitarian food assistance gave ‘don’t know’ as their response, compared to social protection schemes. This was selected by 28% of refugees responding to this question and 23% of IDP respondents.
- Meanwhile, in Greece, a non-trivial minority of displaced respondents who had tried to access ESTIA or HELIOS but were not currently receiving this assistance attributed their non-receipt to lack of luck (15% of asylum-seeker cases for ESTIA) or connections (20% of refugee cases for HELIOS), indicating concerns that had not been raised by the host population in relation to social assistance enrolment.

## Determination and notification of benefits and services

Our case studies explored whether the design of government social assistance transfers (the type and level of benefits and services provided) respond to displaced populations’ needs. The effects of current transfer design are explored in further detail in an accompanying paper in this series, on adequacy of transfers for meeting displaced populations’ needs (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2022). In the present paper, we instead focus on the *process* of designing transfers, and the extent to which displaced populations’ needs are considered and addressed by this process. This varied greatly across the case studies.

**On a positive note, there was occasional evidence of social protection transfer design being particularly responsive to displaced populations' needs:**

- For IDPs in Colombia, this had been considered to a substantial degree, with the Victims' Law outlining that assistance to displaced populations should be **multi-faceted** and designed to meet their multi-dimensional needs over time. For example, emergency housing and food assistance is intended to be allocated through the UARIV's *Atención Humanitaria* in the immediate aftermath of displacement, support for day-to-day expenditure as well as investments in health and education provided through access to mainstream social assistance (such as routine conditional cash transfer schemes), and longer-term assistance compensating for their victimisation and loss of livelihoods through the lump-sum cash transfer in the reparations scheme.
- In Cameroon, social assistance was provided predominantly through cash transfers, in some cases complemented by a lump-sum annual grant. Many displaced respondents in the qualitative research found **cash a better modality** to assist them than food rations. Thus, although the modality choice was not based on displaced populations' preferences, the PFS social assistance programmes might in this aspect be considered more responsive to displaced populations' preferences than humanitarian programming, which continues to rely predominantly on in-kind rations in this context.

**Yet the general trend in our case studies was for mainstream social protection programmes not to consider displacement-specific needs** when determining the type or level of benefit or service provision, particularly in relation to the adequacy of transfer amounts (the value or duration of transfers provided). This reduces such programmes' ability to meet the higher levels of needs that displaced populations typically face as a result of their lack of access to land/housing, and reduced access to work opportunities, family and community support:

- In Cameroon, the main PFS social assistance transfer (the Ordinary Cash Transfer programme) is principally designed to lift chronically poor households out of poverty. It provides 15,000 FCFA per month to participating households for two years, alongside health, nutrition, education and skills accompanying assistance, complemented by an annual lump-sum grant of 80,000 FCFA for them to invest in building their livelihoods. While significantly more generous than earlier versions of the scheme, the value of this transfer is still 20% lower than even the dramatically reduced value of food assistance currently provided to displaced populations through the humanitarian system (which itself is complemented by free accommodation for those living in camps). Furthermore, while there is a specific PFS programme designed to provide emergency cash transfers to crisis-affected populations (such as in the event of a displacement shock), this programme is of even lower value than the Ordinary Cash Transfer since it does not include the annual lump-sum grant.
- In Greece, mainstream social assistance has not been designed with displaced populations in mind. The assumption seems to be that refugees require tailored assistance for only the initial year after they gain refugee status, during which they are theoretically eligible for 6–12-month

rent subsidies, an integration course, job-search support, and community sensitisation through the HELIOS programme (which was EU-financed and IOM-implemented at the time of the research, under the oversight of the Greek government). However, only a minority of refugees are able to access this programme (one in seven accessed HELIOS rental subsidies, in our survey sample and in earlier nationwide data). Furthermore, one year is unlikely to be sufficient for refugees to overcome all the disadvantages that they face finding employment, securing housing, learning the local language and customs, and establishing community and social support networks.

- Unlike for IDPs, who could access more wide-ranging assistance and therefore used transfers for medium-term needs, assistance for Venezuelans in Colombia was limited and generally sufficient only to meet urgent day-to-day needs (and sometimes not even that). Even for Venezuelans who were fortunate enough to access mainstream social assistance programmes, these were designed to subsidise the income of households in chronic poverty, rather than address additional displacement-related needs (for example, for Venezuelans who are newly arrived in the country). Although some targeted assistance programmes have been developed for Venezuelans, the assistance package is not yet comprehensively outlined in legal and policy frameworks in the same way as for IDPs.
- Yet even for IDPs in Colombia, assistance often proved inadequate to meet their longer-term socioeconomic needs. This was evidenced by the fact that IDPs in our survey sample had significantly higher levels of food insecurity than either hosts or Venezuelans, despite having higher assistance coverage. Furthermore, in the qualitative research, IDPs – like Venezuelans and hosts – repeatedly noted that assistance was insufficient to overcome the entrenched adversity they face. While the lump-sum cash transfer that they are entitled to as reparations would help fulfil this goal, the majority had not received this at the time of the research.

**This clearly indicates a need to ensure that the processes for social protection eligibility determination and transfer design better consider and address displaced populations' needs. However, our research on social cohesion also indicates the need for caution in the process of modifying programme criteria** (Lowe et al., 2022). We found that host populations often appreciate displaced populations' need for support (and sometimes recognise displaced households' need for higher levels of support given their unique circumstances). But tensions tend to emerge if this support is perceived to be being provided at the expense of vulnerable host populations. Modifying eligibility criteria in a way that seems to favour displaced populations over vulnerable hosts, or providing 'superior' support to displaced populations in a programme that host populations also access, may therefore heighten resentment. Such concerns are high in any cases where locals question the deservedness or affordability of support to displaced populations, but are particularly likely where provision relates to displaced non-citizens (i.e. refugees).

**This means that where existing programme criteria are modified to support displaced populations, clear communication and careful framing is needed** to indicate that the newly eligible displaced populations will be served through additional places rather than by re-allocating places that would otherwise have gone to local people. Similarly, there may be benefits to

providing support to displaced households through a visibly separate programme, rather than appearing to provide host programme recipients with inferior provision through a mainstream scheme. Finally, there may be benefits to carefully advertising where international or non-traditional financing has been secured to assist displaced populations, to alleviate concerns that new displacement-related programming has directly reduced social protection provision for vulnerable hosts.

#### 4.4 Provision of benefits or services

This delivery phase focuses on the practical delivery and distribution of transfers. **Various mechanisms were used to deliver social protection transfers across our case studies**, as illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3** Mechanisms for transfer delivery

| Country  | Programme(s)                                                                               | Mechanisms                                                           |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cameroon | PFS TMO, THIMO, TMU                                                                        | Cash-in-hand                                                         |
|          | PFS TMU-C                                                                                  | Mobile money<br>Cash-in-hand                                         |
| Colombia | <i>Familias en Acción</i>                                                                  | Cash-in-hand                                                         |
|          | <i>Jóvenes en Acción</i>                                                                   | Bank transfers                                                       |
|          | <i>Colombia Mayor</i>                                                                      |                                                                      |
|          | <i>Ingreso Solidario</i>                                                                   | Mobile payments <sup>20</sup>                                        |
|          | <i>Devolución IVA</i>                                                                      | Bank transfers<br>Cash-in-hand                                       |
|          | <i>UARIV Atención Humanitaria</i>                                                          | Mix of in-kind assistance (in-person collection) and cash assistance |
|          | <i>Colombia Está Contigo</i>                                                               | In-kind, in-person provision                                         |
|          | Other in-kind assistance (e.g. Grocery Baskets; Early Childhood Programmes; School Meals)  | In-kind, in-person provision                                         |
| Greece   | Social welfare benefits (Child Benefit, Disability Benefit, Guaranteed Minimum Income etc) | Bank transfers                                                       |

Source: authors' elaboration, based on country case studies (Levine et al., 2022; Ham et al., 2022; Tramountanis et al., 2022)

<sup>20</sup> We asked recipients of any government cash transfer how they received this payment. In-person collection was the most common modality for all, although hosts were significantly more likely to collect in-person than IDPs and Venezuelans. Interestingly, the electronic payment modalities (bank transfers or mobile transfers) were reported to be more common among Venezuelans than Colombians in our sample. This likely reflects the fact that Venezuelans often received assistance for Covid-related programmes (which relied more heavily on digital transfers, including mobile money payments).

**While, in some cases, displaced households' experience of delivery seemed to be on a par with host populations', in other cases, specific challenges were raised, for example relating to longer delays (particularly in relation to displacement-specific programmes), culturally insensitive provision, and high time, transport and protection costs for displaced people to travel to collect transfers.**

In Colombia, Venezuelans in our survey reported roughly equal experiences of transfer timeliness and accuracy to host populations, while IDPs often reported worse delivery than hosts and Venezuelans alike. Such differences may reflect challenges faced by IDPs based on their displacement status. However, they likely also reflect differences in the programmes received; Venezuelans were more likely to be receiving pandemic-related programmes, sometimes specifically aimed at them, whereas IDPs were more likely to be receiving either routine cash transfers or mixed-modality UARIV programming for conflict victims, which was fraught with delays (particularly in the delivery of lump-sum reparations transfers):

- IDPs were significantly less likely (55%) than Venezuelans (63%) to report that transfers were always on time (hosts' response rate of 59% did not significantly differ from either displaced group). Among those who had not received transfers on time, IDPs were more likely than hosts to experience delays of more than three months.
- Regarding the accuracy of transfer amounts, IDP households were significantly less likely to report that they always received the correct amount (61%), compared to hosts (73%) or Venezuelan households (74%), and significantly more likely to say that the amount was regularly or always less than it should have been (although the total amount reporting this was less than 10% of recipients, across all population groups). Relatively high proportions of all groups and especially IDPs reported that the amounts seemed to vary a lot, but this in part may be because routine scheme transfer values varied a lot during the pandemic (as they were sometimes combined with Covid-related top-up payments), meaning some respondents may have been unsure how much they were actually supposed to receive.
- There were some notable gender differences: male-headed households in the IDP population were more likely to report consistent on-time delivery of transfers than their female counterparts, but were also more likely to always receive less than expected. In the host population, female-headed households were more likely than male-headed households to report that the transfer amounts varied a lot – potentially this may reflect their higher inclusion in routine cash transfer schemes where the amounts had temporarily increased during the pandemic<sup>21</sup>.

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21 Alongside the gender analysis presented above, we also found that Venezuelan female-headed households were significantly more likely than male-headed households to report delays of over three months when transfers were late, and to report always receiving less than the expected amount. However, the sample size was very small (less than 12 households per category selecting each response so these results are not reported here.

## Box 4 Provision of benefits or services by humanitarian agencies in our case studies

In our case studies, humanitarian agencies tended to provide displaced populations with a mix of in-kind and cash transfers, sometimes with differences in modality between distinct displaced population groups:

- In Cameroon, WFP's food assistance is mostly in-kind (83% of caseload, according to administrative data). Of the remaining 17%, roughly half receive cash through Western Union and the rest receive an e-voucher by mobile phone. Vouchers can be redeemed for only a restricted list of commodities and at a restricted number of approved suppliers. UNHCR's TSN is paid by mobile money.
  - In our survey, refugees were more likely to collect the assistance in person (60%) than over the phone (31%). By contrast, IDPs were significantly more likely to receive WFP humanitarian assistance transfers over the phone (75%) than at the organisation's office (18%). Interestingly, mobile phone receipt was significantly more common among female- than male-headed IDP households (85%, compared to 69%), and in-person collection less common (9%, compared to 22%).
- In Greece, UNHCR ESTIA cash assistance for asylum seekers was paid into bank accounts for all respondents in our sample. The HELIOS programme for refugees consisted of a mix of cash subsidies for rent (received via bank transfers) and in-kind assistance (through integration courses and employability support).
- In Colombia, humanitarian agencies have made use of both cash and in-kind transfers, although this humanitarian system provision was not the focus of the case study.

When looking at the experience of receiving the major humanitarian assistance schemes, we find wide variation between **more reliable delivery in Greece and inconsistent delivery in Cameroon (particularly for refugees)**.

In Greece:

- Although the percentage of recipients stating their transfer always came on time is high for both asylum seekers and refugees, asylum-seeker households are more likely (96.5%) than refugee ones (86.5%) to state that the UNCHR ESTIA transfers always come on time, but this might be related to them being the target group of this transfer. Regarding the transfer amount, asylum-seeker households are more likely (20%) than refugee ones (3%) to state they have regularly received too low an amount for the ESTIA cash assistance.

- Within the asylum-seeker category, male-headed households are more likely (78%) than female ones to always receive the correct amount for their ESTIA transfer (58%).<sup>22</sup>

By contrast, in Cameroon:

- Punctuality of provision was an issue, particularly for male-headed households in our sample:
  - The majority of refugees receiving WFP food assistance (68%) reported that transfers did not always come on time (with a significantly higher rate among male- compared to female-headed households). IDPs reported significantly more timely receipt: 50% reported that transfers always come on time, although 35% still reported delays.
  - Where WFP transfers were delayed, they were typically delayed for between one and three months (for half of refugees and IDPs reporting late receipt). But among IDPs reporting late receipt, one in four (27%) experienced delays of more than three months.
- The accuracy of the transfer amount also varied significantly, especially for refugees, although in part this might be explained by the fact that food assistance has officially been reduced in size at various points due to budget constraints.<sup>23</sup>
- In the qualitative research, displaced households commented that cash and vouchers were usually easy to redeem, but that time was lost in queueing for food aid distributions. This was a particular complaint among IDPs in the Far North. A day wasted in the queue every month represents a hidden ‘tax’ estimated to be worth 5% on the total potential earnings of recipients. This highlights the importance of delivering benefits or services in the mode preferred by displaced communities.

22 For HELIOS too, male-headed refugee households are more likely (75%) to report that the amount they received was always correct than were their female-headed counterparts (42%), and less likely to report that the amount they received was regularly too low (17% versus 25%). However, the sample size was small, consisting of 36 male-headed and 12 female-headed households.

23 When asked if the transfer amount was always correct, refugees were evenly split between saying the amount was ‘always correct’, ‘a few times too low’, ‘highly variable’ and ‘regularly or always too low’ (without significant gender differences). IDPs were significantly more likely than refugees to say the amount was always correct.

In Cameroon, the sample size of displaced (and host) households receiving PFS assistance was too small to analyse in the survey. However, in the qualitative research, experiences of programme delivery were discussed with the small number of recipients. During these discussions:

- Relatively few accessibility concerns were raised. However, some did raise concerns about the distances they had to travel to receive their money; transport often cost 300 FCFA, and in some cases as much as 2,000 FCFA (more than 5% of the bi-monthly Regular Cash Transfer value). This also took time, up to a whole day. (A few reported occasionally having to stay overnight.) The cost of one day every two months represents an additional ‘tax’ of over 2% on potential total earnings.
- A few people in the Far North region also spoke of a fear of being attacked when they went to collect money. Furthermore, some of the displaced households in this region noted general challenges with limitations in their freedom of movement as they are regularly stopped by the police on suspicion of being Boko Haram and sometimes detained if they do not have all the right papers to hand. While the latter concerns were not raised in relation to PFS collection specifically, they are considerations to take into account if displaced populations are expected to be served increasingly through the PFS in future.

In Greece, displaced households were not receiving social assistance, so it was not possible to analyse their experience of social protection delivery. However, qualitative research on the hybrid (IOM-implemented, government-supported) HELIOS scheme did highlight certain concerns regarding the need for delivery to be carefully designed for the needs of displaced households. In particular, there was concern that the delivery of HELIOS integration courses overlooked the cultural circumstances and diverse backgrounds of displaced populations. Some of the shortcomings of the programme highlighted by our interlocutors relate to the lumping together of students in the same class, regardless of their educational level, the unsuitability of the educational material and the non-availability of childcare facilities for mothers wishing to attend the courses.

Given the varying use of bank and mobile money payments across social protection and humanitarian programmes in our case studies, a particular focus was needed to understand whether or how access to financial accounts might influence displaced people’s access to transfers, and vice versa. **Our case studies illustrated the frequent financial exclusion of displaced (and often also host) populations, but also illustrated the role of social protection and humanitarian transfers in stimulating access to financial accounts.**

In Colombia, Venezuelans were significantly less likely than Colombians to have access to a bank account but in the low-income neighbourhoods we surveyed, assistance played a notable role in promoting ownership of accounts, for both displaced and host populations:

- Only 26% of Venezuelan respondents had a bank account, compared to around half of IDPs and hosts (with no significant differences between the latter two groups).
- A very high proportion of financial account owners reported that they opened the account specifically to receive a transfer (nearly three-quarters of IDPs and hosts with a bank account, and around two-thirds of Venezuelans with a bank account, in the low-income neighbourhoods we surveyed).
- Where Venezuelans were receiving cash transfers, they were more likely than host or IDP populations to receive these by digital means (likely in part reflecting their higher access to Covid-related assistance which relied more heavily on digital distribution).

In Cameroon, very few people had bank accounts, but mobile money access was more widespread, in part stimulated by aid transfers (although our sample was biased towards assistance recipients so should not be seen as representative of all displaced households):

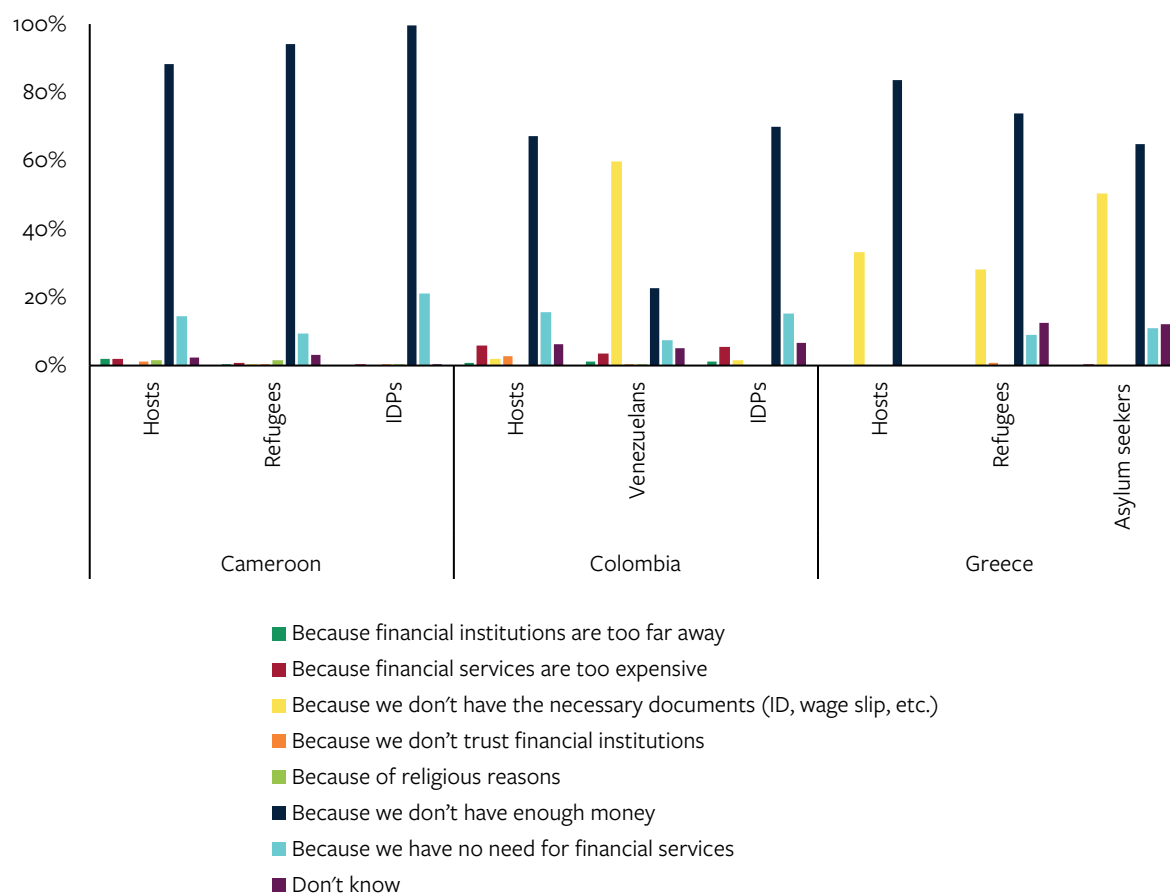
- The formal banking system has very limited presence in the rural areas studied, and just 5% of the host population in our sample – and significantly fewer displaced households, less than 0.5% – had a bank account.
- This is partly due to access constraints, but the vast majority spoke of not opening a bank account because of ‘not having enough money’. This was true for host-community households (especially female-headed ones), but was even more common for displaced households, with 99% of unbanked IDP households and 94% of refugee households indicating that they do not have enough money to open a bank account. The only other common reason was not having a need for financial services (particularly for hosts and IDPs, at 14% and 21% respectively; less so for refugees).
- Access to mobile money wallets was much more widespread. Where households did not have mobile money accounts, the reasons and proportions were almost identical to the reasons above for not having a traditional bank account.
- Assistance appeared to have a pronounced impact on displaced populations’ mobile money account access. While very few Nigerian refugees (5%) had mobile wallets, half of IDPs (51%) and 10% of refugees in the East region reported having set these up specifically to receive an aid transfer. Among IDPs, female-headed households were significantly more likely than male-headed households to have these mobile accounts, and to have set them up to receive assistance.

In Greece, traditional bank accounts were much more widespread than in Cameroon, among refugees, and to a lesser extent among asylum seekers, again stimulated by receipt of aid transfers (although again, our sample was biased towards assistance recipients so should not be seen as representative of all displaced households):

- Refugee households were less likely (68%) than hosts (99%) to have a bank account but more likely than asylum seekers (31%). Where displaced respondents had accounts, these had almost exclusively been opened for transfer receipt.
- Where displaced households lacked accounts, refugees were less likely (28%) than asylum seekers (50%) to give lack of documents as the reason. Within the asylum-seeker category, not having enough money and not having the right documents were the most common reasons for both genders, but were significantly higher for male-headed asylum-seeker households than for their female counterparts (with the latter being more likely to say they didn't know the reason for lacking an account).

Collectively, this highlights the potential role of social protection and humanitarian assistance in stimulating financial account access. However, in Cameroon and Colombia, it was reported that **many of those who opened accounts to receive transfers did not use them for wider financial transactions**, and cashed out transfers immediately. Higher rates of account ownership in the case studies therefore do not necessarily signal financial inclusion in the true sense of stimulating further access to financial services.

**Figure 8** Reasons for not having a bank account, among respondents without an account



Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from early 2021 (see Methodology for sample details)

**Figure 9** Access to accounts and role of transfer in stimulating account-opening within survey sample (non-representative)



Note: : In Cameroon and Greece, these figures are illustrative rather than representative since assistance recipients were over-sampled for the purposes of the wider study. In Colombia, the sample is representative of low-income neighbourhoods in Bogotá and Cúcuta.

Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from early 2021 (see Methodology for sample details)

In addition, the case studies highlighted financial exclusion **challenges faced by unregistered displaced households or those lacking access** to identification, and those who lack access to digital devices or who are functionally or digitally non-literate. While certain challenges may have a practical solution (such as distribution of mobile phones or SIM cards), others are more structural and may be insurmountable for certain highly vulnerable households. Caution is therefore needed in relying too heavily on financial account-based social protection mechanisms for entire caseloads of vulnerable displaced populations.

## 4.5 Accountability, management and monitoring

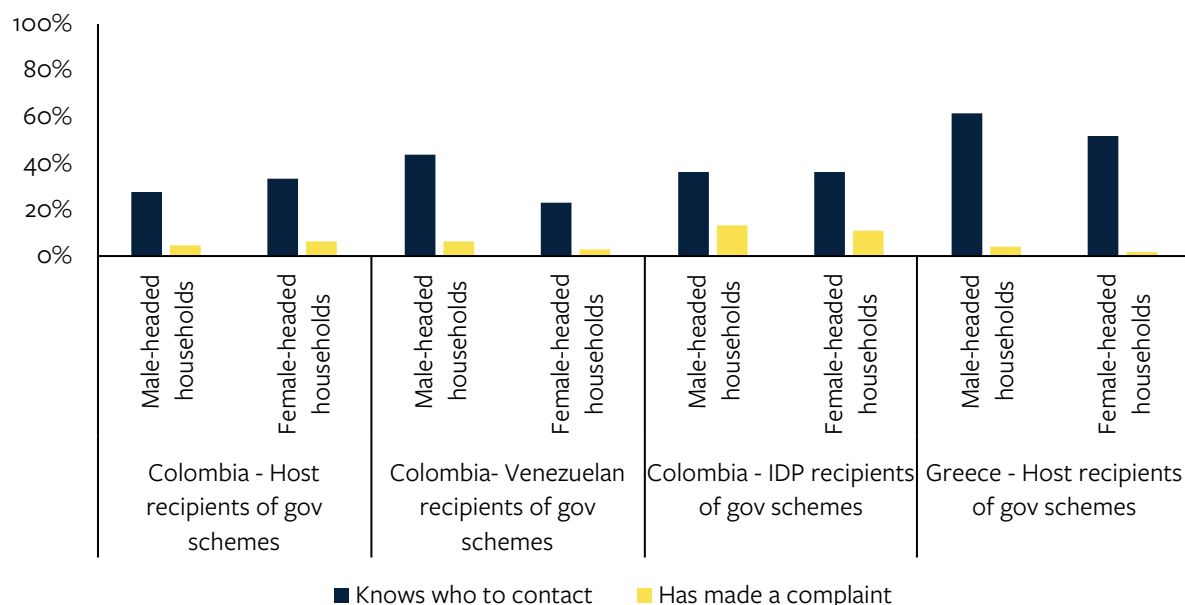
This delivery phase refers to the ongoing management of the programme, including accountability mechanisms, and management and monitoring processes at the individual, programme and system levels.

### Accountability mechanisms

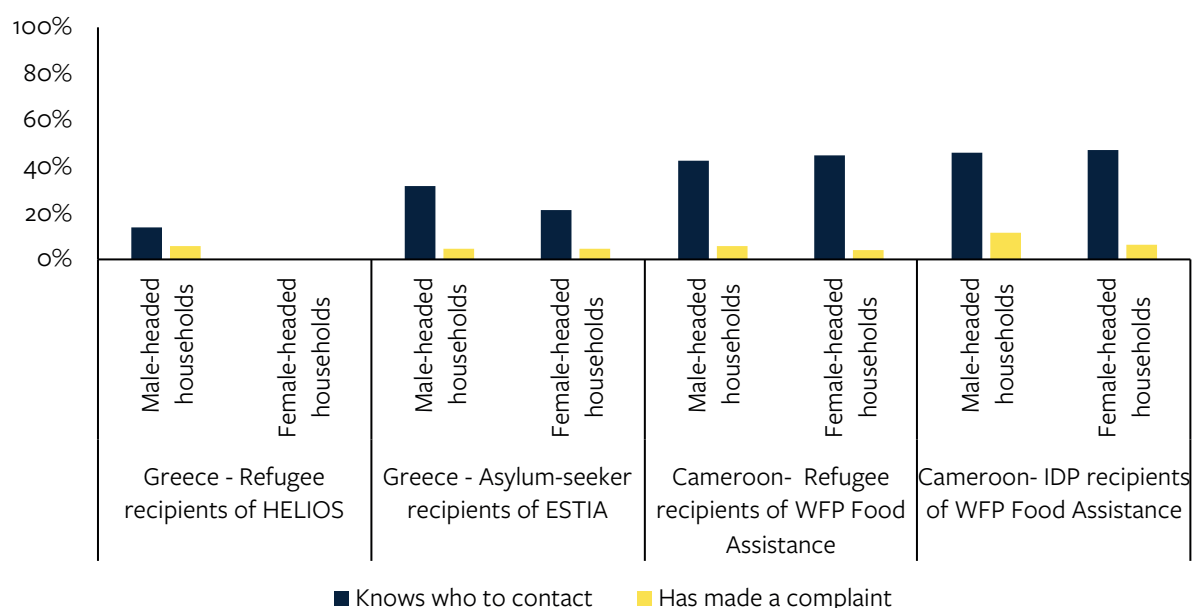
Our focus here was on participants' ability to hold programme providers to account and to seek help when problems emerged, through complaints processes and grievance mechanisms. **Across the case studies, complaints processes and grievance mechanisms were rarely known or used, even by host populations. There were also indications of gender differences, with female-headed households appearing to be less familiar with and successful in navigating complaints systems.**

In Colombia (the only case study where displaced and host populations were largely assisted by the same provider), knowledge of and access to accountability mechanisms was low for displaced populations, but not any worse than for hosts:

- When asked if they knew whom to contact for a complaint, two-thirds of host, Venezuelan and IDP recipients alike said they did not know. There were few gender differences for IDPs and hosts. But for Venezuelans, female-headed households were much less likely to know who to contact regarding programme issues (only 23% of female-headed recipients, compared to 44% of male-headed household recipients).
- Significantly more IDP recipients than Venezuelan and host recipients had raised an official complaint.
- Among hosts who submitted complaints, there was a roughly even split between the proportion who agreed versus disagreed that the complaint had been fairly dealt with. But encouragingly, displaced households were more likely to report fair treatment of the complaint (four-fifths of Venezuelan recipients who had submitted a complaint, and slightly over half of IDPs) than unfair treatment (less than one-fifth of Venezuelans, less than a third of IDPs).
- Concerningly, though, the proportion of female-headed households who felt their complaint was fairly dealt with was lower than for male-headed households; among host households the difference was statistically significant, although the samples were small for all.

**Figure 10** Awareness and use of complaints mechanisms for government schemes

Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from early 2021 (see Methodology for sample details)

**Figure 11** Awareness and use of complaints mechanisms for humanitarian schemes

Note: small sample sizes mean that caution should be used when interpreting the figures in Greece, since few refugees and female-headed asylum-seeker households were receiving assistance, and fewer still were aware of or using complaints mechanisms

Source: authors' elaboration, based on survey data from early 2021 (see Methodology for sample details)

But in Cameroon, it was noted that displaced respondents may sometimes be less able to raise issues due to their more precarious position within the community:

- Of the handful of people reporting experience of PFS delivery, the majority of host-population respondents knew who to contact if they had a complaint, but this was not true for refugees or IDPs (the sample size was too small in all cases for robust calculations).
- However, the qualitative research generally indicated that few people felt comfortable using complaints and appeals mechanisms. One interviewee highlighted particular challenges of raising complaints as a refugee:

Since you're a foreigner, and you don't understand French, you don't know what problems you can make for yourself [if you complain] ... If you complain about someone ... they're going to believe him, and then he can create more problems for you. The two of them will chat with each other in French, and you don't understand a word, so you can't defend yourself ... So you just let it go, you just live with it.' (Nigerian refugee, Far North)

### Box 5 Accountability mechanisms in humanitarian programmes in our case studies

Awareness and use of complaints channels appeared to be no higher for humanitarian programmes than for social protection in our case studies.

In Cameroon's main humanitarian assistance programme (WFP food assistance):

- Just over half of displaced recipients said that they and their household members did not know who to contact if they had a problem (without significant differences between IDPs and refugees, and male- and female-headed households).
- Only 5% of refugee recipients and 9% of IDP recipients said that anyone in their household had raised an issue formally (without significant gender differences).

In Greece's main humanitarian assistance programme (UNHCR ESTIA cash assistance, for asylum seekers):

- Refugees were more likely (48%) than asylum seekers (29%) to know who to contact if they had any problems with the ESTIA transfer.<sup>24</sup> This might be related to the longer time (in comparison to asylum seekers) they had already spent in the humanitarian system.
- Within the asylum-seekers category, male-headed households were more likely (32%) to know who to contact than their female counterparts (21%).

24 The refugee sample was small, counting only 29 households.

In Greece, the host population was generally aware of social protection complaints channels but had not used them:<sup>25</sup>

- Three-fifths of host population recipients (58%) said that they or someone in the household knew who to contact if they had problems with the scheme. Male-headed households were significantly more likely to know who to contact (62%) than female-headed households (51%).
- Nonetheless, host recipients only reported ten cases of actually making an official complaint.

## Management and monitoring

At the case level, this phase refers to the process of monitoring participants' experience and compliance with programme conditions, referring them to other services and updating their entries or transitioning them out of the programme when appropriate. At the programme and system levels, this refers to the collection and analysis of data to assess service providers' performance against target outputs and outcomes. In relation to displaced populations, two key issues arose.

**First, our key informant interviews indicated large variation in the case studies regarding displaced households' inclusion and visibility in the information systems underlying social protection system/programme management.** This may in turn influence the ability to identify their needs, to connect them with other programmes and services, and to monitor (and thereby improve) their experience.

In Colombia:

- Venezuelans and IDPs can both be included in the SISBEN social protection information system, albeit with certain barriers to access for Venezuelans, as discussed in Section 4.2. This inclusion was important not only in facilitating displaced populations' access to existing programmes (for example, through a substantial drive to register Venezuelans in the social health insurance system) but also in ensuring they were linked with new programmes and services that might be relevant to them, such as new Covid-19 programming.
- However, challenges were noted keeping SISBEN entries up to date – for all populations, but especially for displaced households who may move around more than the host population. For this reason, humanitarian agencies have worked with the government in Colombia to help update the SISBEN entries of the Venezuelans they have served in their programming.

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25 Displaced populations in Greece were largely not aware of or accessing social protection programmes to begin with, so were not asked about their knowledge of complaints processes.

- IDPs also have a special registry indicating their displacement status, which has some interoperability with the SISBEN and may be used independently or in conjunction to refer IDPs to social assistance programmes or wider services. The comprehensiveness and interoperability of information systems for Venezuelans is less advanced, but the government has been working to develop this database, building on the Administrative Registry of Venezuelan Migrants (the RAMV).

In Cameroon:

- Information systems for social protection are fledgling, with the programme management information system (MIS) for the PFS only recently being established. World-Bank-published documents show disaggregated refugee figures; however, government interviewees did not seem to be aware of any disaggregated data when specifically asked about information on displaced populations in the MIS.
- Furthermore, IDP-disaggregated figures are not presented in the World Bank documents, and the government suggested that data identifying IDPs is not visible in this MIS. While in some cases there may be good reasons for not identifying IDPs in certain information systems, this does create challenges in providing additional support and attention to the IDP caseload.
- The social affairs ministry is also working to set up a separate ‘unified social registry’ of everyone classed as ‘vulnerable’. This will reportedly include displaced people (although it is not yet clear whether this means that the vulnerable among displaced people will be included, or whether displacement in itself is sufficient grounds for inclusion). Either way, it should help improve the visibility of vulnerable displaced households for social protection programming, but it was not yet operational at the time of the research.

In Greece, displaced households are generally not accessing social protection programmes, so their visibility in programme databases was not discussed in depth in the case study. Instead, there was more discussion of links between humanitarian agencies and government databases, as explored further below.

**The second issue related to the extent of coordination or integration between social protection and humanitarian agencies’ programmes and information systems**, which was necessary to facilitate case referrals. This again varied greatly, with Colombia providing a more positive example and Cameroon and Greece illustrating more challenges in this regard.

In Colombia:

- There was evidence of relatively advanced case management of vulnerable Venezuelan and IDP populations, with **humanitarian agencies and government agencies referring from and to each other’s programmes**:

When there are cases of rental assistance, we exchange databases with them, and they support us. So, the framework of coordination on that is the Local Coordination Team. (KII IDP response, governmental agency, Cúcuta)

At a local level what we do is that we receive referrals. As the government doesn't have a cash transfer programme as such, we receive referrals of cases from the local mayors for those who need monetary support and housing support. (KII Venezuelan response, non-governmental agency, Bogotá)

- There have also been instances of the **government sharing databases (such as the SISBEN) with humanitarian agencies** to enable those agencies to provide additional support to registered populations (as in the case of a WFP-led pilot in Arauca).
- Finally, Colombia offers an example of a higher degree of joint government-humanitarian agency collaboration in the development and monitoring of strategies and programmes to assist displaced populations. On the humanitarian side, activities are outlined in the Colombia chapter of the Regional Response Plans for Refugees and Migrants. These plans were jointly formulated by humanitarian agencies and the government, and progress is regularly reported back to government:

Based on those plans, during the year the response is monitored monthly by GIFMM [the coordination group for the Venezuelan response], and that process is sent back to the government. In this way, the evolution of the response is documented and, simultaneously, there is an identification of new needs and improvement opportunities through coordinated actions. (KII Venezuelan response, international agency Cúcuta)

On the government side, activities are outlined under and monitored within national policy frameworks and local development and integrated migration management plans, which humanitarian agencies have supported with technical assistance.

In Greece:

- There were **weak channels for referring and transitioning** displaced populations between humanitarian and social protection systems. Asylum seekers stop receiving humanitarian cash assistance as soon as the state responds to their asylum case and they lose access to humanitarian accommodation within a month of being granted asylum. Support for these newly recognised refugees to access the HELIOS programme or state social assistance schemes is not working effectively, as illustrated by their very low to virtually non-existent coverage in these programmes. This arrangement leaves the population in an extremely vulnerable position, particularly affecting single mothers with infants, pregnant women or individuals with disabilities, health and mobility problems.

- Limited coordination between humanitarian and government agencies is well illustrated by the **historic disconnect between humanitarian and state databases**. Until 2021, UNHCR used a different database for the ESTIA cash assistance scheme from the one established by the Greek authorities, whereas key informants noted that a unified database would have greatly facilitated the operation of the system.

In Cameroon, many interviewees highlighted **challenges with coordination among and between government and humanitarian actors**, to the detriment of displaced populations:

- The government effects little governance or coordination of humanitarian assistance for displaced people. It is largely absent from humanitarian coordination structures, and government officials said they meet ‘rarely and irregularly’ with humanitarian actors.
- Part of the problem lies in a lack of coordination within the government itself. In principle, refugee policy is decided by MINREX (the Ministry for Foreign Relations); emergency assistance, including to displaced people, is managed by the Direction de la Protection Civile in MINAT (Ministry of Territorial Administration); and PFS sits within MINEPAT (Ministry of Planning, Programming and Regional Development). Within the social protection sector, there is also a perceived lack of coordination between the Ministry of Social Affairs, which operates various social services for vulnerable individuals, often in partnership with UNICEF, and MINEPAT, which works with the World Bank on the rollout of the PFS.

## 5 Enablers and barriers to adjusting delivery

As well as exploring the effectiveness of social protection delivery for displaced populations, our research also aimed to explore the factors that influence the operational inclusion of displaced populations in social protection delivery systems. Drawing on evidence from the three country case studies, there are five key factors that stand out as particularly important: legal frameworks; political will; financing arrangements; capacity; and coordination.

### 5.1 Legal frameworks

**The extent to which displaced populations have access to national social protection programmes in practice is driven to a large extent by broader legal frameworks.** Refugees are more likely to be excluded from access to social protection than IDPs because of their lack of permanent legal status. They are also more likely to face limitations with regard to other social and economic rights, including their right to work (Gray Meral and Both, 2021). As such, specific legal frameworks need to be put explicitly in place in order to entitle refugees to services provided by the state. A recent example of this can be seen in the context of the Ukraine crisis, where the EU has provided temporary legal status to Ukrainian refugees fleeing the conflict, allowing them to stay in European countries and to work without immigration papers, through the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) (Gentilini et al., 2022).

Reforms to legal frameworks are highly contextual and driven by political will, public perceptions and fiscal space (Sato, forthcoming). In Colombia, laws and policies to regularise the stay of Venezuelans in Colombia, such as the Special Stay Permit and subsequently the Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelans, are seen to have facilitated the integration of Venezuelans into government systems. A conducive legal and policy environment has also enabled humanitarian agencies to cooperate with the national social protection system by providing their technical support and assistance (e.g., supporting data collection and registration) (Ham et al., 2022).

However, as clearly illustrated by the Greece case study, legal frameworks in themselves are insufficient to translate legal entitlements into practice. While refugees are in theory entitled to access the national social protection system, several difficult challenges must first be overcome to access benefits in practice. It takes several months for recognised refugees to receive their legal documents, during which time they are left without access to humanitarian or state assistance. At the same time, strict eligibility criteria (such as a permanent address) often exclude them in practice from accessing assistance.

## 5.2 Political will

**Political will strongly influences the inclusion of displaced populations in national social assistance systems, from the legal and regulatory framework to the resources invested throughout the delivery chain.** Gray Meral and Both (2021) highlight that refugees' access to non-contributory social assistance can be more heavily politicised than access to other forms of state social service provision. While some countries might provide broader legal rights to state social services including health and education, restrictions may be explicitly placed on certain forms of social protection.

In Colombia, the nature and extent of political will to take in and support displaced Venezuelans shown by the Colombian government has been characterised as 'exceptional' compared to other governments globally (UNHCR-IOM, 2021). There are several reasons behind this. The official rationale, as stated in the government strategy document for the Venezuelan response (CONPES 3950), cites the potential economic benefits of well-managed migration, highlighting that receiving Venezuelan migrants could have positive effects on Colombia's economic productivity, labour market, consumption and investment levels. As discussed in Ham et al. (2022), there are also other factors likely to have influenced the government's willingness to support Venezuelans through government systems. These include the long history of mobility and complex political relations between both countries as well as their cultural and linguistic similarities. Yet our case study does also illustrate concerns. For instance, there is apprehension that discontent, social tensions and potential political backlash could emerge from the provision of governmental support to Venezuelans, based on the public's belief that non-citizens should receive support from their countries of origin and from international organisations instead of from the Colombian government (Ham et al., 2022).

Whereas Colombia provides an example of exceptional political commitment to the integration of displaced populations in national social protection systems, Cameroon and Greece illustrate contexts with more limited political will. In Cameroon, the provision of social protection is not a political priority even for its citizens – there is no entitlement to social protection currently, or even planned for the immediate future.

In Greece, despite recognised refugees' entitlement to access the national social protection system, lack of political will in the central administration to make refugees an integral part of the system results in barriers in practice. These challenges occur at the policy level, for example where asylum law has recently delayed the timeline during which asylum seekers can work (applicants for international protection have the right to work after six months from the date of submission of their application). At the implementation level, lack of political will has resulted in complex processes required to access the national welfare system for non-nationals, the opacity and inconsistency of the system, and the limited allocation of human, administrative and financial resources to improve social assistance despite adequate funds provided internationally (Tramountanis et al., 2022). There are clear political drivers that explain this. Greek authorities

do not want to create ‘pull factors’ to Greece (or to stay in Greece), therefore the government agenda aims to keep the numbers of new arrivals as low as possible by making Greece a less attractive destination for asylum seekers (Tramountanis et al., 2022).

## 5.3 Funding

**A country’s available financial resources influence the inclusion of displaced populations in national social protection systems.** The availability of resources (and political will) determines the capacity and coverage of a country’s existing social protection system, and therefore its ability to absorb additional populations and adapt to their needs (Gentilini et al., 2018; Sato, forthcoming). Gray Meral and Both’s (2021) global review found that few low- and middle-income countries include refugees in state programmes; rather, the majority of examples of inclusion of refugees in social assistance programmes were those with funding from the World Bank’s IDA 18 Refugee Sub-Window, and where inclusion of refugees in state social protection was a specific component of that support. For many of these countries, refugees were not included in state programmes before the IDA 18 (ibid.). This has also been the case in Cameroon – where the government has incorporated some refugees into the PFS cash transfer programme by implementing it in areas with displaced populations, as a result of IDA 18 funding for that programme (Levine et al., 2022).

As discussed in existing literature on social protection, constrained domestic resources limit a state’s ability to deliver effective, adequate and inclusive social protection. In some contexts, despite the existence of political will, governments have been unable to include refugees in national systems using domestic resources (see, for example, Ecuador and Iraq) (Gray Meral and Both, 2021). And even in countries where there is more integration, there are fears of fiscal space constraints. In Greece, for example, eligibility criteria for nationals are also complex (as is the case for recognised refugees) due to limited state financial resources and the increasing number of people in need of social protection over time (Tramountanis et al., 2022). Even in Colombia, which has significant political will for integration, there are concerns that commitments to integrate assistance into government systems will not materialise in practice given increasing budgetary pressures (Ham et al., 2022).

International finance therefore is needed to continue supporting governments to provide assistance to refugees. This is also important even if the decision is taken to channel assistance increasingly through host government systems. Even when assistance is more nationally led, international financial support is still required to respond to the scale of the displacement crises, in line with international commitments to share the responsibility fairly for global displacement (as outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees).

## 5.4 Capacity

**The capacity of the existing social protection system to deliver timely benefits, to deliver at scale and/or to adapt in a crisis is a key factor influencing the effectiveness of delivering social assistance to displaced populations.** Where existing social protection systems or programmes are already unable to deliver timely and predicted benefits or are limited in scale, for example, as is the case in Cameroon, it is highly unlikely that the integration of displaced populations will be prioritised. In the Cameroon country case study, Levine et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of sequencing, noting that the first precondition for social assistance that can also include displaced populations is comprehensive coverage and meeting the needs of the populations where it operates (which would have to include the areas hosting displaced people).

Indeed, in other countries where social protection systems may be more mature but have not received adequate investment, this can lead to a system with limited provision and inadequate programmes in which displaced people can be included (Gray Meral and Both, 2021). For example, in Greece, the social protection system has historically focused on the contributory system, yet as Tramountanis et al. (2022) highlight, as a result of austerity measures in place, the national social assistance and health systems have weakened in recent years, meaning that existing provisions, and any adaptations needed to support access for displaced populations, are limited in reality. For example, asylum seekers are listed as one of the vulnerable social groups eligible for access to public health services and pharmaceutical treatment for persons without social insurance, and access is provided via the Provisional Insurance and Healthcare Number for Foreigners (PAAYPA). However, in practice access to these services has been hindered by a lack of capacity, including inadequate staffing and the lack of interpreters and cultural mediators (Tramountanis et al., 2022).

Another important part of delivery capacity is related to data, enrolment and registration. Capacity in terms of skills, resources and technical systems is needed to adequately identify and assess the needs of potentially large numbers of new recipients (Gray Meral and Both, 2021; Seyfert et al., 2019). In Cameroon, for instance, the logistical difficulties to collect data on displaced populations was noted as a significant challenge, citing the example that the 2021 Fifth National Household Survey was taking six months to survey 13,000 households, a small percentage of the over 1 million households living below the poverty line in Cameroon (Levine et al., 2022). Moreover, the Survey did not cover refugees, nor did it include any questions on displacement status. Conversely, in Colombia, increased availability of data on displaced populations has supported the identification of displaced populations for access to social protection programmes (although coverage of refugees is still low in the national social assistance database, SISBEN) (Ham et al., 2022).

## 5.5 Coordination

**All three country case studies highlight the importance of coordination in the effective delivery of social protection for displaced populations.** In the case of Greece, despite the

challenges discussed above, several actions have attempted to improve the organisation and coordination of social assistance in recent years. Greece carried out a significant overhaul of the social welfare system triggered by Fiscal Adjustment Programmes – one of the outcomes of this was the establishment of the new Organisation for Welfare Benefits and Social Solidarity (OPEKA) to act as a single public payment authority responsible for all welfare benefits. Moreover, the state also recently took over the management of assistance to asylum seekers and refugees from international organisations in order to avoid fragmentation of services – this has meant that the state is building capacity to implement the programme while still receiving external technical assistance (Tramontanis et al., 2022).

In Colombia, a key lesson learned in relation to the integration between humanitarian assistance and social protection has been the establishment and endorsement of a clear coordination focal point. With respect to IDPs, for example, the Unit for Attention and Comprehensive Reparations to Victims leads and coordinates actions to serve the victims of the conflict, including facilitating relationships between governmental and non-governmental organisations in preventing and assisting in humanitarian emergencies (Ham et al., 2022). With respect to the Venezuelan refugee response, reports indicate that the Colombian government plays the central role, with other agencies supporting and complementing the state through a coordinated response system (Ham et al., 2022).

The Colombian case study also highlights the importance of vertical coordination too, particularly the importance of local governments and their planning processes in implementing social protection to support displaced populations. Increased efforts by local governments to include goals related to supporting Venezuelans in their local development plans are seen by some as a critical factor to facilitate the integration of Venezuelans into the social protection system in practice. They also support the integration between the humanitarian response and social protection, by facilitating the allocation of public resources to meet the goals formulated in the plans (Ham et al., 2022).

In the case of Cameroon, however, weak coordination across and within sectors is a key hindrance to considering integration. Coordination is limited between the different actors involved in social protection, between displacement and social protection actors, and between government and humanitarian systems. While the elaboration of a unified social registry for future social protection assistance, which would potentially include displaced people, could be a tool for increased coordination, Levine et al. (2022) also highlight the challenges around data-sharing which involve complex processes not always feasible in practice. These include extensive administrative processes, identification of confidentiality terms and limitations, formulation and approval of confidentiality agreements, meeting software and equipment requirements, and the need to maintain continuous communication between the agencies sharing and receiving the data.

## 6 Conclusions and recommendations

This paper has shown that, for social protection to adequately include and respond to displaced populations' needs, many aspects of implementation are likely to need adapting. While the inclusion of displaced populations in social protection programmes is country-specific and eligibility is highly dependent on the enabling environment (policy frameworks, financing, political will, existing capacity and coordination), a number of practical experiences from the Cameroon, Colombia and Greece case studies illustrate where particular consideration may be needed across the delivery chain. This section summarises the key findings for each component of delivery and provides policy recommendations to improve the implementation of social protection for displaced populations. Further practical details and recommendations can also be found in the accompanying delivery toolkit (Holmes et al., 2022).

### 6.1 Outreach and communication

**Awareness of state social protection programmes is often low among displaced populations.** In Greece, awareness was virtually non-existent among asylum seekers and refugees, compared to almost universal awareness among hosts. In Cameroon, refugees had lower awareness levels than hosts and IDPs. In contrast, however, in Colombia, both Venezuelans and IDPs had high levels of awareness of programmes. Yet even where displaced populations are aware of the existence of state programmes, the Colombian case indicated that there is often still confusion over eligibility criteria and how to apply.

**Levels of awareness are influenced by various factors,** such as language barriers, lower familiarity with state systems, and less cultural and geographic integration with the host population (including because of residing, or having resided, principally in isolated camps or accommodation structures). The extent or effectiveness of official outreach strategies also affect the level of awareness of schemes. While in Colombia, most recipients heard about assistance from the organisation providing the scheme (either directly or via adverts), local community networks often also play a strong role in mediating information and channelling information to displaced populations.

How information is accessed and received may also be different among men and women. In Cameroon, for example, female host respondents were less likely to have heard of any type of transfer available (governmental or non-governmental). In Colombia, Venezuelan women were more likely than men to hear about programmes via an advert rather than directly from the organisation, while among host recipients, women were more likely to hear about programmes through their personal networks.

To serve displaced populations, the state must therefore invest in carrying out proactive outreach through diverse approaches, working in partnership with non-governmental and community organisations and ensuring approaches adequately address the needs of different individuals and households within the displaced population.

### Outreach and communication recommendations

- **Understand the communication needs and preferences of displaced populations and of marginalised sub-groups *within* those populations**, by consulting with individuals and households directly to understand their requirements. For example, attention is needed to understand the barriers, preferences, and access to different information channels and community networks for both women and men, as well as those speaking minority languages, with lower levels of literacy, or facing physical, geographic or digital barriers to accessing information through standard channels.
- **Use the information above to design appropriate strategies and conduct targeted and tailored outreach through diverse channels**, informing displaced and host populations about entitlements, opportunities and expectations relating to programme delivery. This should include formal partnerships with relevant community and civil society organisations, as well as the provision of information through various other channels in formats accessible to all (for example combining mass awareness campaigns, ‘one-stop shop’ offices, and digital platforms). It should also carefully consider how information should be framed (see Holmes et al., 2022 for further guidance on this).
- **Proactively provide information and guidance to government officials, community leaders and civil society organisations, employers and trade unions**, to make them aware of displaced populations’ rights to social protection and to support them to facilitate access to provisions..

## 6.2 Intake, registration and assessment

**Access to social protection is determined by a mix of both *de jure* requirements (laws and eligibility criteria) and *de facto* considerations (practical enablers or constraints).**

Contributory social protection programmes are typically contingent on being in formal employment, which is itself determined by having the legal right to work in the country. Across all three countries, IDPs and refugees (with legal status), as well as certain asylum seekers in Greece, have the right to formal employment. But informal work remains the predominant form of employment and thus access to contributory social protection remains limited.

Access to non-contributory social protection depends initially on the programme's eligibility criteria. Yet even where displaced populations are eligible in theory, as is the case with several social assistance programmes in Greece (for recognised refugees) and Colombia (for non-citizens with regular migration status and IDPs registered in the Victim's Registry), the registration process is often complex.

The three case studies discussed in this paper highlighted the following key challenges:

- **Difficulty officially registering as displaced (mainly for refugees), and thereby gaining the legal status and documentation required to apply for certain social assistance or displacement-specific provisions.** Registration processes themselves can be challenging, including because of: delays (as reported for IDPs in Colombia and asylum seekers in Greece); fear of retribution (in the case of IDPs registered in the Victims' Registry in Colombia); implementation challenges due to Covid-19 (in the case of registration in Cameroon and Greece); and complex procedures, limited information, poor digital connections and lack of support (as experienced by asylum seekers applying for refugee status in Greece). For refugees in Greece, slow receipt of documentation of refugee status was a major barrier to their entry into the Greek social protection system.
- **Refugees' inadequate registration in the socioeconomic information systems or national databases (to subsequently qualify for eligibility).** In Colombia, for example, Venezuelans were significantly less likely to be registered in the SISBEN compared to hosts and IDPs, although the proportion of those registered in our sample was substantial. However, importantly, IDPs were *more* likely to be registered in the SISBEN (which may in part reflect the emphasis placed on ensuring IDPs' access to the social protection system in the 2011 Victims' Law, demonstrating the important role of the legislation in facilitating access). In Cameroon, refugees are poorly represented in nation-wide socioeconomic data, and both refugees and IDPs may be excluded from community-based targeting lists if they are not well-known or well-viewed by local community members involved in targeting decisions.
- **Ability of refugees to meet additional administrative and documentation requirements to apply for social assistance schemes,** as is the case in Colombia and Greece.
- **Logistical challenges faced in registering for social assistance by displaced (and also host populations), due to physical or digital barriers.** Security concerns which increase the need to carry letters of permission or permits were identified as a challenge for refugees in Cameroon, while time and travel costs of accessing assistance in Colombia was mentioned by hosts, IDPs and Venezuelans. In addition, *higher* mobility of refugees in Colombia was reported as a challenge for officials to enrol Venezuelans in their programmes when contact details were out of date. While digital mechanisms can be a way to overcome these physical constraints, access to and use of technology is varied. In Colombia, for example, Venezuelans who were receiving transfers but reported difficulties in the registration process were more likely to report lack of access to technology as a barrier than hosts and IDPs.

- **Navigating unfamiliar processes, in some cases compounded by a lack of targeted information and support to facilitate refugees' access.** Refugees in particular seem to face greater challenges in accessing the information required to navigate complex registration requirements, particularly when they are unfamiliar with the systems, language and culture, and where there is little proactive official support. This was particularly the case for refugees in Greece.
- **Limited frequency or flexibility in the timing of programme registration.** For example, infrequent enrolment drives for social assistance and long turnaround times on social assistance applications were reported in Colombia, for host and displaced populations alike.

There are several practical steps that could help to ease the registration process for displaced populations.

### Intake, registration and assessment recommendations

- **Invest in active support to help displaced populations to access social assistance.** For example, develop formal partnerships with relevant civil society organisations, humanitarian agencies and community leaders, to identify displaced populations who might need support and to help them to complete the registration process for social protection schemes. In some cases, this might mean collaborating with non-governmental agencies to take direct referrals of displaced households who had previously registered for their programming and who have requested and given consent to be referred to the government system and added to the social protection database.
- **Invest in additional capacity in government offices** responsible for registering displaced populations, including appropriate translator and interpreter capacity.
- **Consider the use of different types of ID to access social protection and/or ensure displaced populations have access to up-to-date identification and civil registration** documents through targeted interventions which can support access to such documentation.
- **Simplify or adapt administrative requirements** to enrol in social registries and social protection schemes, to ensure that they are not prohibitive to displaced populations (e.g. allowing a 'grace period' where not all documents need to be provided to apply; waiving requirements to provide proof of long-term residence or tax returns).
- **Make registration in social protection databases and schemes more dynamic processes,** to ensure newly displaced households can request assistance 'on-demand', rather than relying on infrequent enrolment phases.

- **Enable portability of benefits** so that IDPs can either automatically access their benefit in their new location (for example by making the IDP and social protection databases interoperable such that changes in residence are automatically flagged in the system when an IDP is officially registered in the new location), or alternatively by ensuring that IDPs can easily update their residence information in government records (for example by providing information in person or via a government website or app that promptly processes the update request).
- **Allocate budgets and develop shock-responsive provisions to enable programmes to expand significantly to accommodate sudden new caseloads** in a timely way. This can help address the challenges that infrequent or long-delayed programme registration processes can otherwise present.
- **Consider facilitating digital access and more inclusive web registration for displaced populations.** However, caution is needed here for context-specific approaches as digital mechanisms can also create problems for digitally disconnected households (which may also particularly affect women and/or female-headed households).

### 6.3 Determination and notification of eligibility and support

**The overall evidence emerging from the three country case studies was that eligibility determination processes disadvantaged or explicitly excluded displaced households, and social assistance programmes rarely address their specific needs.** There were some exceptions to this: in Colombia, there are a few examples of social protection design and eligibility criteria being set in a way that meets the needs of IDPs and reduces exclusion of displaced households; and in Cameroon the intention is to geographically target the social assistance programme on both the poverty and displacement situations in different regions. However, the general trend across the case studies was for social protection programmes to not consider displacement-specific needs when determining the type or level of benefit or service provision.

In Greece, for instance, the eligibility criteria for many social assistance schemes includes the requirement of legal and permanent residence in the country for at least five years, which effectively excludes many refugees. Qualitative interviews in Cameroon indicated that the community-based selection phase for the PFS social assistance programme may exclude displaced households if they are not sufficiently known, liked or well-connected. In Colombia, reliance on the SISBEN as the mechanism to determine eligibility for many social assistance programmes heightens the exclusion of displaced households unable to register – particularly Venezuelans with irregular status or those who faced registration challenges.

Both the Cameroon and Colombia case studies also highlighted the importance of trust in the eligibility-determination process and the need for clear communication around eligibility

decisions for displaced and host communities alike. In Cameroon, refugees were less likely than hosts and IDPs to know why they were not receiving the government scheme they had tried to access, while IDPs were more likely than any other group to attribute their exclusion to a lack of connections. Feelings of being ‘unlucky’ were also common, primarily among hosts but also IDPs in Cameroon, and for host and displaced populations who had neither received nor applied for schemes in Colombia.

There is therefore a need to ensure that the processes for social protection eligibility determination and transfer design better consider and address displaced populations’ needs (see accompanying papers Lowe et al. (2022) and Hagen-Zanker et al. (2022) for further consideration of social protection supporting social cohesion and basic needs, respectively).

### Determination and notification of eligibility and support recommendations

- **Assess existing eligibility criteria and transfer design of social protection programmes** to understand to what extent these criteria serve or disadvantage displaced households.
- **Consider which new programmes need to be developed, or existing programmes adapted**, to effectively serve displaced households.
- **Ensure clear communication and careful framing**, where existing programme design is modified to support displaced populations, to highlight that the new support will be achieved through additional programme capacity, rather than by re-allocating places or resources that would otherwise have gone to local people.
- **Consider how additional financing should be advertised**, where international or non-traditional financing has been secured to assist displaced populations, to alleviate concerns that new displacement-related programming has directly reduced social protection provision for vulnerable hosts.

## 6.4 Provision of benefits or services

**When studying the timeliness and accuracy of transfer provision, displaced households’ experience of programme delivery was not necessarily worse than host populations in the few cases where they were both accessing government assistance. However, certain challenges were raised, sometimes related to the specific programmes they were receiving.** For example, in Colombia, while experiences of programme delivery to Venezuelan households appeared to be relatively effective compared to hosts, IDPs’ experiences tended to be less consistent. This may relate to IDP-specific challenges, but may also reflect the fact that hosts and especially Venezuelans were more likely to be receiving pandemic-related programmes

(which were often delivered more rapidly and at standard amounts over a short-term basis) compared to routine schemes (that varied more in the transfer amount and timing, particularly given changes to the payment schedule and intended amounts during the pandemic).

In the Greece case study, while displaced households were not receiving social assistance, qualitative research on the HELIOS scheme highlighted some key issues, including the need to consider the cultural circumstances and diverse backgrounds of displaced populations in the delivery of complementary programmes, notably the suitability of the education materials for the integration courses and the need for childcare facilities for mothers wishing to attend.

**Displaced households were generally more likely to be financially excluded**, mainly driven by a lack of money or documentation to open financial accounts. In our survey sample, the majority of households with such accounts had opened them to receive transfers. This suggests a valuable role for social protection and humanitarian assistance in stimulating access to financial accounts, although it was noted that further steps would be needed to secure true financial inclusion since many recipients simply cashed out their transfers.

These findings suggest that programme implementation needs to carefully consider the potentially different challenges facing displaced populations.

### Provision of benefits and services recommendations

- **Invest in the capacity of programme implementers to provide tailored and culturally sensitive delivery in displacement-affected areas**, including providing training on the rights and needs of displaced populations, hiring sufficient numbers (and range) of translators and interpreters, and ensuring that financial service providers have enough agents or ATMs to distribute money in affected areas.
- **Design transfer mechanisms that give choice to recipients, enabling them to choose an option that reduces the time, distance or security concerns when accessing the transfers**. For example, include options to deliver transfers directly to displaced communities or to collect in or close to locations where large displaced populations reside.
- **Support displaced recipients to open accounts to receive transfers**, where they wish to do so. This may involve working with financial service providers to adapt standard ‘know your customer’ requirements so that displaced populations can still open accounts and access transfers, even if they lack national ID cards or have lost original documents during their displacement; as well as providing specific support to open bank accounts (e.g. financial literacy training and information).
- **Promote referrals to other relevant programmes and services that are especially important for displaced people**, such as language classes, integration courses, employability activities, re-training.

## 6.5 Accountability, management and monitoring

**Evidence from across the three cases studies showed that complaints processes and grievance mechanisms were not usually known or used, by host or displaced populations alike.** Programme participants rarely held programme providers to account or knew how to formally seek help when problems emerged. In Colombia and Greece, there were some indicative gender differences; among Venezuelans in Colombia and host respondents in Greece, female-headed households were less likely to know who to contact if they experienced problems with a government scheme than their male counterparts. In Colombia, when host households reported submitting a complaint, female-headed households were also less likely to feel it was fairly addressed than male-headed households. Meanwhile in Cameroon, it was noted through the qualitative research that refugee respondents may sometimes feel less able to raise issues about government schemes due to their more precarious position within the community.

There was also large variation across the case studies in relation to displaced households' inclusion and visibility in the information systems underlying social protection management and monitoring. Colombia illustrates the more progressive example. Venezuelans and IDPs can be included in the SISBEN social protection information system, and, despite the barriers to their inclusion noted above, there have been efforts to increase and update Venezuelans' SISBEN entries, including in partnership with humanitarian agencies. In addition, IDPs have a specific registry which has some interoperability with the SISBEN. But aside from Colombia, there was generally limited coordination or integration between social protection and humanitarian agencies' programmes and information systems to facilitate case referrals, management and monitoring.

### Management, accountability and monitoring recommendations

- **Develop accountability mechanisms that are accessible and secure for displaced populations, and ensure that recipients and community members know how to access these and can access them in practice:**
  - Raise awareness about the mechanisms in place (including ensuring that both men and women are informed of the processes).
  - Put in place specific modifications as needed to ensure that all populations feel comfortable using the complaints mechanisms. Establish and maintain strong data protection and confidentiality arrangements, to ensure that issues are either dealt with fully anonymously or that the collection and sharing of information is kept to an absolute minimum to enable the issue to be resolved with no impact on the individual's privacy, security or displacement status.
  - Offer multiple access channels (including to ensure that women and men can equally access these).

- **Improve data collection on displaced populations' needs, access to and outcomes from social protection.** Include displaced populations in government data collection efforts, such as regular national household surveys, and enhance context analyses on displaced and host situations. This data should be routinely collected and analysed by gender at a minimum, to inform appropriate programme design and implementation.
- **Promote the inclusion of displaced people in information management systems, adhering to data protection protocols.** For example, consider whether or how it is appropriate or feasible to make social protection information systems integrated or interoperable with databases containing information on displacement status (e.g. state/humanitarian agencies' refugee databases or IDP databases), as well as with other relevant administrative databases that can be used to capture information on the vulnerability of displaced populations in sectors such as health and education.

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# Appendix 1 Primary data sample description

**Table A1** 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 (split roughly evenly between the East and Far North Regions)</p> | <p><b>Focus group discussions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 in the East Region and 18 in the Far North Region (with both hosts, and in- and out-of-camp displaced populations)</li> </ul> <p><b>In-depth interviews:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 in the East Region and 36 in the Far North Region (with both hosts, and in- and out-of-camp displaced populations)</li> </ul> <p><b>Key informant interviews:</b> 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 (split evenly between Bogotá and Cúcuta)</p>                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>Focus group discussions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12, split evenly between Venezuelans; IDPs and host community, and between Bogotá and Cúcuta</li> </ul> <p><b>In-depth interviews:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18, split evenly between Venezuelans; IDPs and host community, and between Bogotá and Cúcuta</li> </ul> <p><b>Key informant interviews:</b> 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 (split evenly between Athens and Ioannina)</p>                                                                                               | <p><b>In-depth interviews:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 with displaced respondents in Athens</li> <li>• 33 with displaced respondents in Ioannina</li> <li>• 5 with host respondents in Athens</li> </ul> <p><b>Key informant interviews:</b> 30</p>                                                                                                                                                                                              |