

EVALUATION IN ACTION: Enhancing Emergency Assistance and Protection for Recently Displaced Persons in Colombia

HAEC-Funded Impact Evaluation



Photo Credit: Nadege Mazars / Save the Children

Background

In 2022, Colombia faced a substantial rise in forced displacements, with more than 250,000 people displaced due to armed conflict. The situation remains critical; the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan indicates that 7.7 million people in Colombia require humanitarian assistance.

To enhance emergency assistance and protection for those recently displaced, Blumont launched the Closing Gaps activity, funded by USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), in October 2022. The activity aims to improve food security through providing immediate food assistance and rental support to enable households to find work and support their families.

Evaluation Overview

While many organizations around the world have implemented similar activities around unconditional food assistance and shelter protection, the evidence for these programs has almost exclusively been gathered in the development contexts, not within the humanitarian sector. To address this knowledge gap, Blumont Colombia, in collaboration with Causal Design and funded by Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC), designed and implemented an impact evaluation to learn about the impact of the rental support on the self-reliance of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The primary research question for this evaluation is:

What is the marginal impact of **comprehensive rental support** on recently displaced household food security, subjective wellbeing, income, and ability to pay rent?

To answer this question, the research team conducted a quasi-experimental impact evaluation using matching design and propensity score matching techniques, specifically, Mahalanobis distance matching. This approach helps address the non-randomized treatment assignment by matching households receiving rental support with eligible households not offered treatment. This ensured both groups have similar characteristics and meet the eligibility criteria for the support.

Navigating Evaluation Constraints

As is common in conducting evaluations in humanitarian contexts, the team had to work to overcome low implementer bandwidth, especially around coordination and data sharing efforts. Implementers are highly bandwidth constrained due to the overwhelming nature of emergency response work, making it challenging to accommodate additional requests, including those for impact evaluations, which require coordination and data sharing efforts. Fortunately, the team was able to collect data for the impact evaluation that complemented the data they were already collecting for their monitoring and evaluation efforts. But more needed to be done.

Quick Facts

TITLE

Enhancing Emergency Assistance and Protection for Recently Displaced Persons in Colombia

TYPE OF EVALUATION

Impact Evaluation

EVALUATION METHODS

Statistical Matching

EVALUATION ARMS

1. Treatment Group 1:

Unconditional food assistance, WASH non-food items (NFIs), shelter, and psychosocial support

2. Treatment Group 2:

Unconditional food assistance, WASH non-food items (NFIs), shelter, and psychosocial support + comprehensive rental support

COUNTRY

Colombia

DONORS

USAID/BHA

PARTICIPANTS

13,205 IDPs (October 2022-September 2023); 4,695 IDPs (October 23-March 2024)

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Blumont

EVALUATION/RESEARCH PARTNERS

Causal Design, HAEC



To overcome this challenge, Blumont designated a global technical support role to function as **a point of contact between the research team and the implementation team**. This role is staffed by a person with strong communication skills coupled with a high level of impact evaluation literacy. This ensured strong communication between the research team and activity team.

Furthermore, Blumont and Causal Design realized early on that regular and efficient check-in calls were needed. The regular check-ins enabled the collaborating teams to adaptively manage the project and ensure it moves forward in a manner that minimizes the burden on the implementation team while not compromising the data quality. These efforts have resulted a smooth and clear research implementation process.



Evaluation Purpose & Audience

The main purpose of the impact evaluation is to provide evidence to inform policy decisions in the Colombia government. Specifically, the evaluation aims to promote rental support as an alternative to other mechanisms to provide humanitarian assistance and promote self-reliance of displaced persons. Furthermore, the evaluation finds will contribute to a growing evidence base within humanitarian assistance.

Context and What's Next

The research team began the impact evaluation in June 2023, collecting baseline information with both the treatment and control groups. The team then collected follow-up data while Blumont delivered rental support from June to August 2023, and conducted the second round from October to December 2023. Finally, the team will collect the third round of data after a year of rental support from January to March 2024. The study will be completed by June 2024 and the findings will be available thereafter.

For more information, contact Juan Pablo Franco Jiménez, Blumont Country Director at jfranco@blumont.org or visit the organizational website blumont.org with any questions.

Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle

This brief is brought to you by the [Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle \(HAEC\)](#) Associate Award. HAEC works to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency food security activities funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) by increasing the use of cost-effective and timely impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts.

HAEC is a three-year activity (2021-2024) funded by USAID/BHA and issued through the Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis, and Learning (IDEAL) activity. HAEC is implemented by [TANGO International](#), [Save the Children](#), [3ie](#), and [Causal Design](#).

This brief is part of HAEC's Evaluation in Action series highlighting ongoing impact evaluations from around the world. Do you have an ongoing impact evaluation in a humanitarian context that you want to share?



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