

Breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and trauma in conflict-affected settings

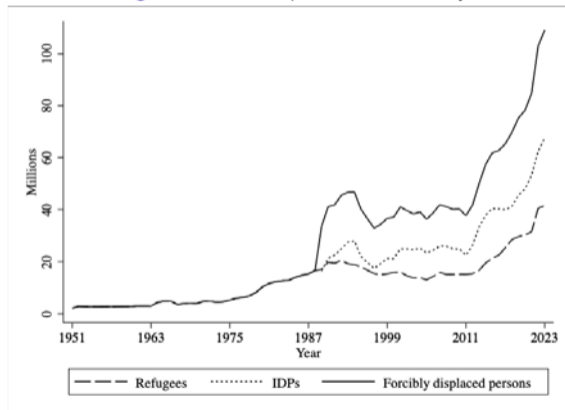
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Universidad de los Andes

Behavioral Economics and Beyond:
Insights to Improve Programming for Rural Development

October, 2024

Conflict and forced displacement are on the rise

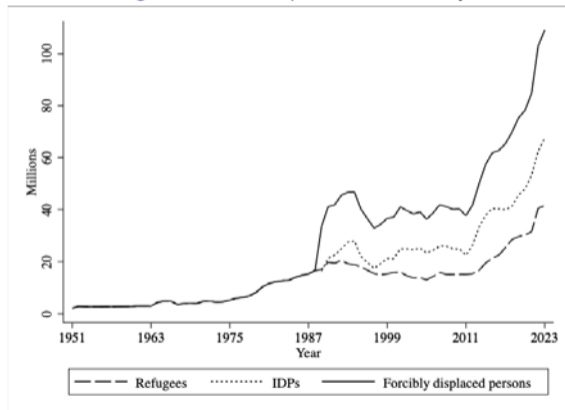
Figure: Forced Displacement Globally



- 115 million displaced persons.
- 2 billion people in conflict-affected settings.

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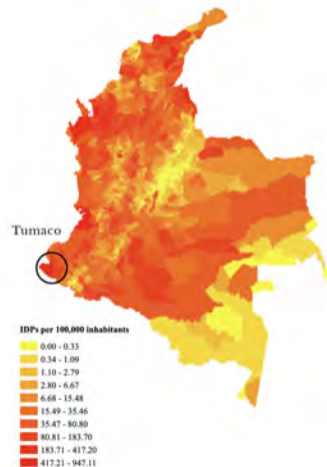


- 115 million displaced persons.
- 2 billion people in conflict-affected settings.
- Long-lasting consequences:
 - Chronic poverty;
 - Mental health;
 - Early childhood development.

Setting: conflict and forced displacement in Colombia

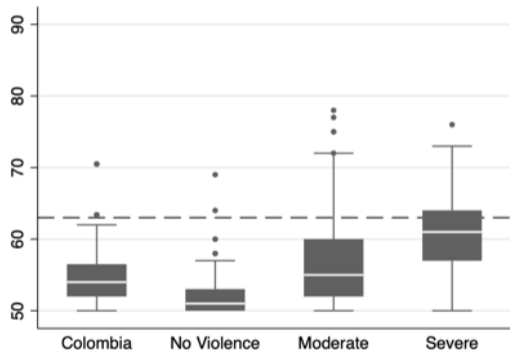
Figure: Displacement (1997-2018)

- IDPs + Refugees \approx 20% of population
 - 8.6m IDPs \approx 19% of IDPs worldwide
 - 2.9 million Venezuelan 'refugees'
- 60% of IDPs are poor despite comprehensive legal and policy frameworks.



Mental Health and Poverty

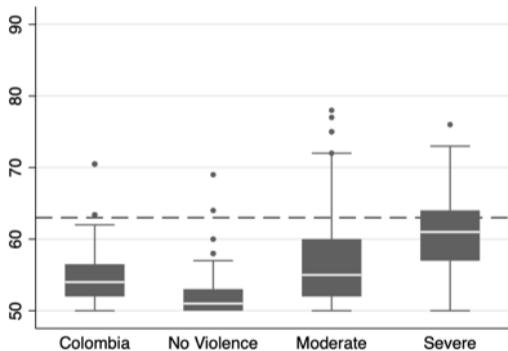
Figure: Anxiety: Dose-Response Relationship



In Colombia, 27 and 35% of IDPs are at risk of developing Anxiety and Depression.

Mental Health and Poverty

Figure: Anxiety: Dose-Response Relationship



In Colombia, 27 and 35% of IDPs are at risk of developing Anxiety and Depression.

Effects of psychological constraints:

- Risk aversion (Moya 2018);
- Expectations of upward socioeconomic mobility (Moya and Carter 2019);
- Employment and income trajectories (Moya et al 2022).



**What does it mean to be
born and raised in
conflict-affected settings?**

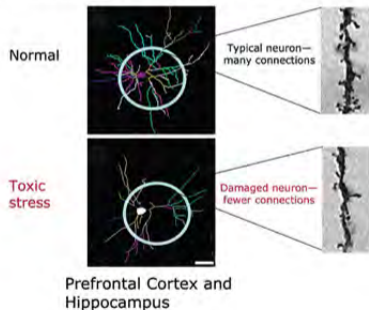
Early childhood is a unique stage in our life

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- Foundations for physical and mental health and skill acquisition;

Early childhood is a unique stage in our life

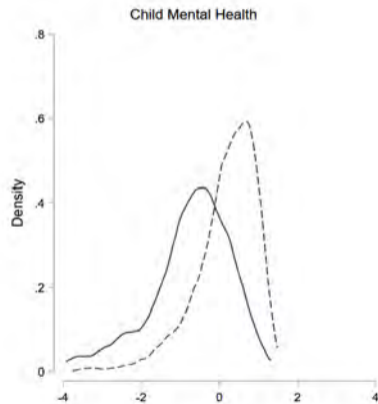
- Rapid brain development: one million new neuronal connections per second;
- Foundations for physical and mental health and skill acquisition;
- But also the period most sensitive to stress and adversities.

Persistent Stress Changes Brain Architecture



A missing link:

Caregiver's mental health problems \Rightarrow more stressful relationships and worse child outcomes



— Above Risk Threshold

- - - Below Risk Threshold

Breaking the intergenerational transmission of trauma and poverty



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Psychosocial program for caregivers of young children in conflict-affected settings

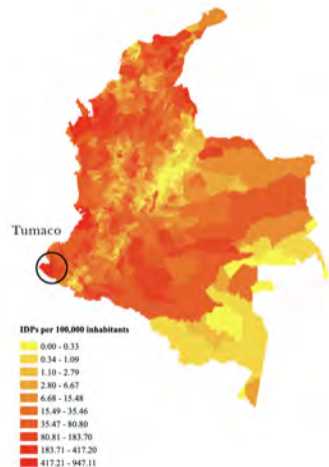
- **Objective:** Promote maternal mental health as outcome & vehicle to foster healthy child-parent relationships and early childhood development.
- **Group Setting:** 15-weekly group-based sessions of 15/20 caregivers
- **Community model:** Led by community facilitators (para-professionals).



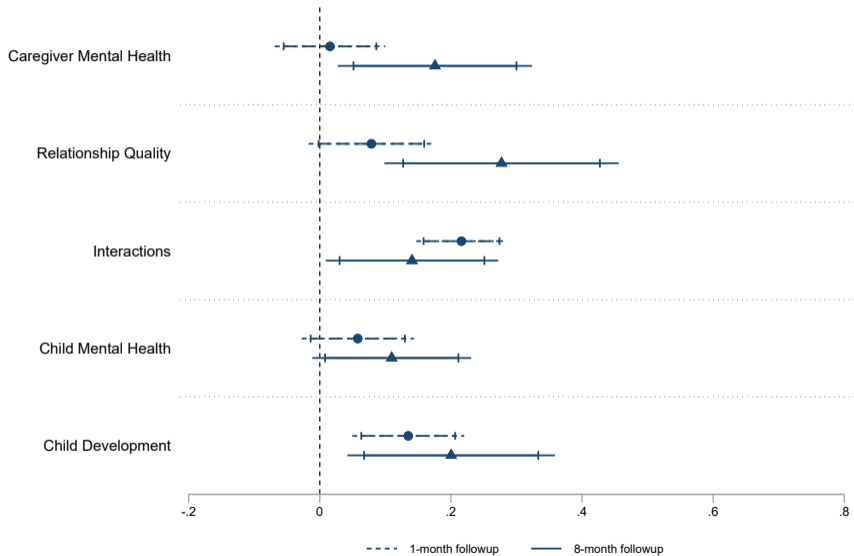
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Impact Evaluation - Tumaco, Colombia (2018-2020)

- Sample 1,400 caregivers of young children served by public childcare centers.
- Vulnerable caregivers:
 - 82% victims of violence;
 - 57% IDPs;
 - 27 & 16% had at-risk symptoms of depression and anxiety.



Results



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- Addressing psychological and socioeconomic constraints
 - Stronger impacts for caregivers at-risk of mental health problems
 - Smaller impacts for extreme poor families
- Cost-effectiveness:
 - Cost per capita: US\$435 vs US\$600 of similar govt program.
 - ROI: 370% without considering impacts on children
- Scalability
 - 2022: implementation science evaluation of an at-scale pilot
 - 2023-2025: scaling up to reach 15 municipalities, 15,000 caregivers

Discussion

- Results speak to the urgency of considering psychological constraint to promote movements out of poverty.
- Mental health underlies many dimensions and processes for human capital accumulation and socioeconomic trajectories.
- Lessons not limited to this context:
 - Rising forced displacement worldwide & increasing refugee flows to the Global North.
 - 970 million people globally were living with a mental health problem in 2019.

Thank you!



   
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