

Cash Assistance for Resilience: An Impact Evaluation of the ADN Dignidad Program

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE EVIDENCE CYCLE

Activity Background

The Venezuelan humanitarian crisis is one of the largest displacement crises in the world and the largest in Latin America. There are more than 6 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees globally, and 2.8 million Venezuelans are living in neighboring Colombia. Since 2019, the ADN Dignidad program, implemented by Action Against Hunger, Danish Refugee Council, and Norwegian Refugee Council, responds to this crisis by providing cash assistance to over 356,000 affected individuals, supporting household consumption, and promoting social and economic integration in host communities. Specifically, the program targets vulnerable Venezuelan migrants and Colombian returnees in five urban and peri-urban host communities of Colombia.

The program aims to improve access to basic food, non-food items, and shelter, including providing multipurpose cash assistance, equivalent to 77 USD per month, to eligible households for up to 6 months. Additionally, the program provides participants with information on nutrition and food security, protection, household economy, livelihoods, and migration regularization. Since October 2022, ADN Dignidad also provides economic recovery activities (access to market-based employment, strengthening of small businesses, and financial inclusion) to support the socioeconomic integration of the affected population.

What Did We Find?

Beneficiaries report depending less on harmful strategies for coping with food insecurity in the short and long term.

The impact evaluation assesses food coping strategies using the reduced Coping Strategies Index (r-CSI), a tool that measures how people cope with food insecurity. It assesses various strategies individuals employ, such as eating cheaper or less preferred meals, receiving meals from family and friends, or sacrificing meals to feed others. By combining these factors into an index, the r-CSI provides a quantitative measure of food insecurity and the effectiveness of interventions in addressing it.

The analysis indicates that the ADN Dignidad program offers immediate relief: one to three months after the program's completion, participants experience a 0.36 standard deviation reduction in r-CSI, a large effect. The program's effect on food coping remains statistically significant after 18 months, but the magnitude of the effect declines.



Notable Results

The program's positive impact on food security persists for over a year after the program's completion. The program's beneficiaries show a significant, 16% reduction in their dependence on reduced meal sizes and fewer meals per day in the household. The effect on the Venezuelan population is higher, with a 22% reduction in the use of reduced meal sizes. Additionally, this population's dependence on cheaper meals is 11% lower.

The results show significant improvements in food security, yet the research found diminishing effects on income and employment over time. This suggests that cash assistance alone may not fully address long-term resilience and underscores the need for broader support mechanisms and complementary strategies to sustain positive outcomes for vulnerable populations.

all beneficiaries



16%
reduction

dependence on
reduced meal sizes and
few meals per day



11%
reduction

dependence on
cheaper meals

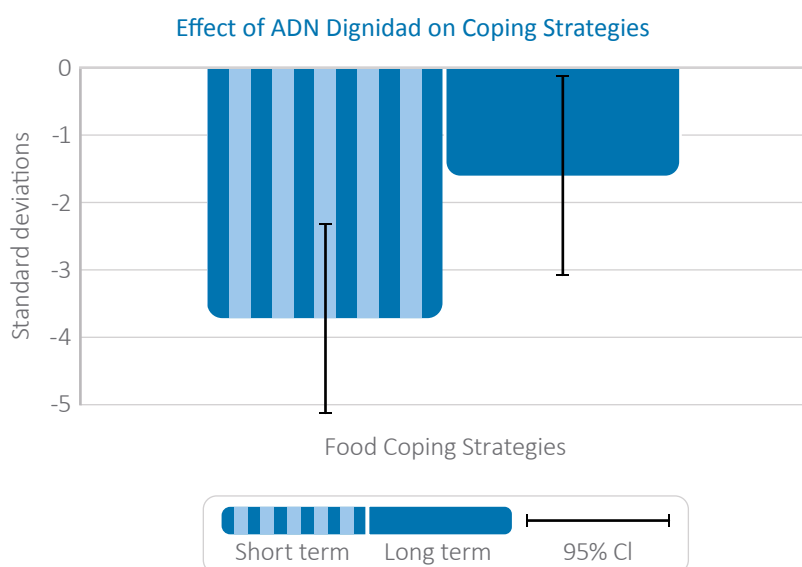
In the longer term, participants experience a reduction in food insecurity of 0.16 standard deviations (or 13.4%) relative to the comparison group. These reductions are mainly explained by a lower reliance on cheaper meals or smaller meal sizes, or by smaller amounts of food adults consume to provide more for children in the household.

This program stands out as one of the first to document long-term effects of temporary multipurpose cash transfers on reduced food coping strategies.

This result is especially relevant because the program's emphasis is on strengthening food security. During in-person enrollment sessions, the implementation team used pedagogical approaches to equip households with tools for nutrition-related coping strategies. For example, through the use of magnets, the program provides information on which foods available in Colombian markets can be classified as vegetables, proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. Participants are also coached on the proper proportion of each food type on a plate. Additionally, they show participants how to achieve this proportion with different budgets and which foods to choose according to the harvest calendar, along with related recipes. These in-person training sessions may have contributed to the significant long-term reduction in food coping strategies.



Photo Credit: Angela Ponce / Save the Children



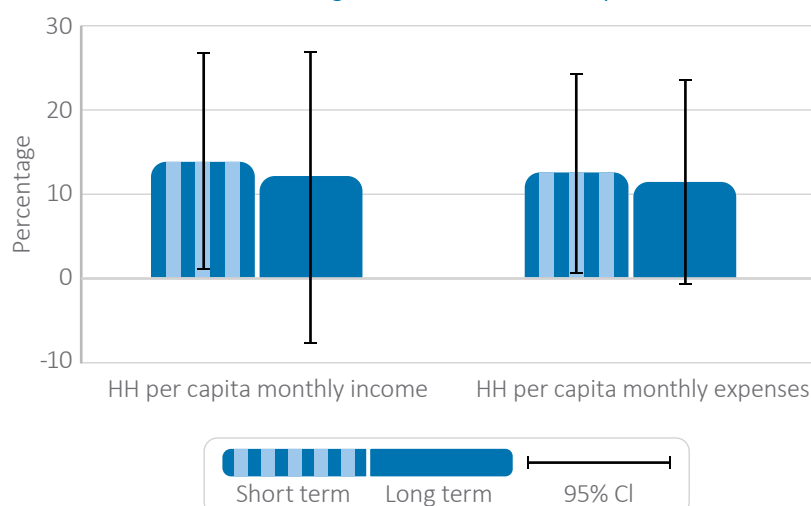
Participants experience reductions in short-term livelihood coping strategies, which are not sustained in the longer term.

In the short term, ADN Dignidad effectively decreased the likelihood of households resorting to negative survival strategies compared to the control group. This included a 12% reduction in family borrowing, a 17.6% decrease in dependence on savings, a 45.4% decline in child labor, and a 31.5% decrease in selling belongings. Additionally, there was a 17.5% reduction in the likelihood of selling household assets and an 11.1% decrease in working for food. When these outcomes were combined into a standardized index, the program generated an overall reduction of 10.1% in the use of negative survival strategies.

In the short term, program beneficiaries have a substantial impact on income and expenditures, although this effect diminishes in the long term.

In the short term, ADN Dignidad participants showed notable improvements in income and expenditures. They were 80% more likely to report stable household income than non-recipients, and they experienced a 14.1% increase in per capita household income despite a 39% lower likelihood of receiving remittances. Additionally, participants reported a 12.8% increase in expenditures compared to the comparison group. The effects on per capita income are positive but not significant in the long term, while effects on expenses remain marginally significant. The reduction in remittances received persisted, with a 45% decrease compared to the non-beneficiary group. Interestingly, the study observed a positive impact on remittance sending, with beneficiaries now being 37.6% more likely to send money to other households. This implies that beneficiaries could assist family or friends residing outside the household, even if they did not report higher incomes. Furthermore, participant households reported short-term positive impacts on having savings, with an increase of roughly 38%, but this result was not sustained over time. Although the program provides guidance on financial management, these results suggest that the effects are tenuous in the absence of transfers.

Effect of ADN Dignidad on Income and Expenses



Effect of ADN Dignidad on Remittances

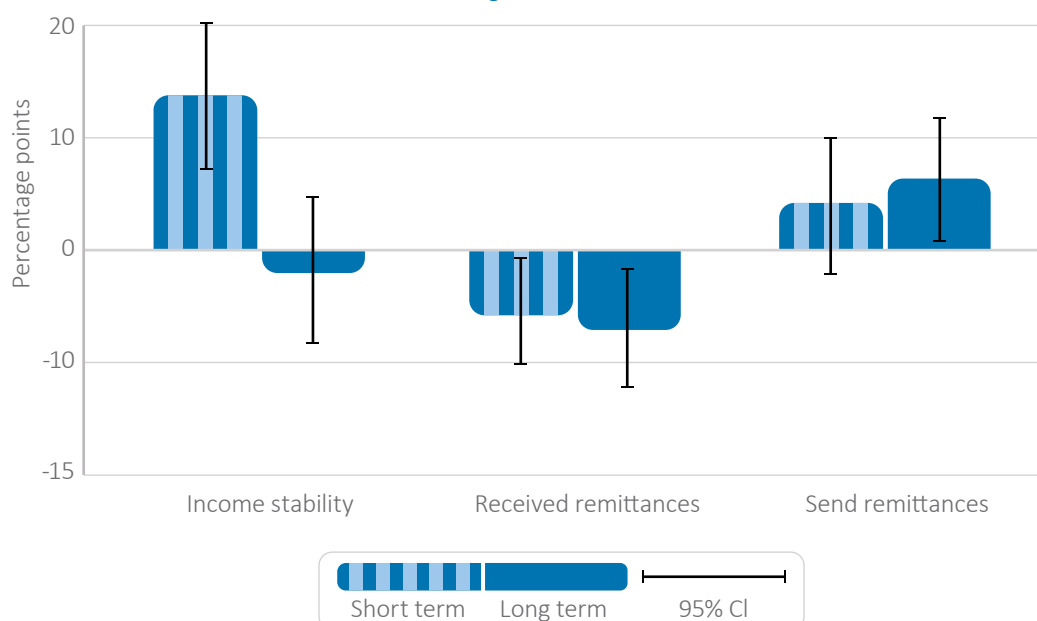




Photo Credit: Nadège Mazars / Save the Children

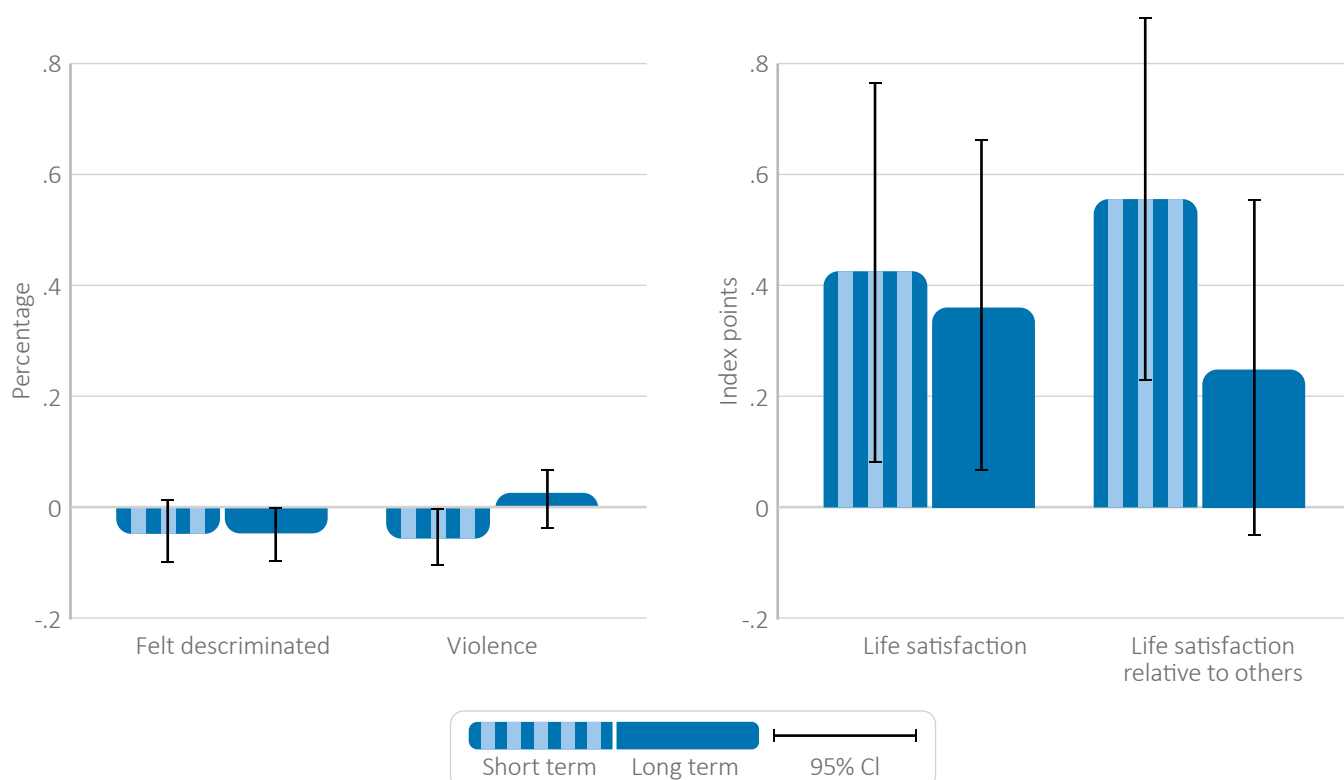
Participants continue to report higher levels of life satisfaction even one and a half years after receiving the last transfer.

The program created conditions for increased overall subjective life satisfaction among participants. On a scale of 1 to 10, participants reported a 7.9% higher level of life satisfaction with their own life than the control group, and an increment of 5.8% reported a higher level of life satisfaction in relation to others. After exiting the program, ADN

Dignidad also decreased the probability that any household member experienced violence or insecurity the month before the survey by 37.6% compared to the control group. The observed increase in life satisfaction likely reflects the aggregate improvements in well-being, including economic impacts discussed

earlier, and is consistent with improved perceptions of security, integration, and reduced discrimination. Longer-term effects are sustained, with participants reporting lower levels of discrimination and higher satisfaction with their own life compared. The sustained results in life satisfaction are more relevant for Venezuelan migrants and refugees than Colombian returnees.

Effect of ADN Dignidad on Insecurity and Subjective Well-being



While the program has positive effects on employment (working hours) in the short-term, longer-term effects appear to dissipate over time.

The impact evaluation finds notable short-term effects of the program on work, with an average increase of 3.8 weekly work hours. These effects were particularly pronounced among the Venezuelan population, who experienced an increase of 6.3 weekly work hours, corresponding to a 23.4% increase. Longer-term effects on hours worked remained positive but were no longer statistically significant.

The dissipating effect on employment suggests again that, although cash assistance is a valuable humanitarian aid instrument that generates significant short-term impacts, if it is not complemented with strategies that provide additional tools to face the challenges the population encounters, it is likely that the effects will not be sustained in the long term.

Participants tend to feel more socially included, although there are no differences in psychological integration in the long term.

To assess the impacts on integration, we focused on psychological and social integration. Psychological integration looks at how connected immigrants feel to their new country, whether they want to continue living there, and how much they feel like they belong. Social integration, on the other hand, examines immigrants' social connections and interactions with people from the host country, as well as their involvement in community organizations. The report found a 4% increase in the Social Integration Index among program participants compared to the control group, with a more significant impact among Venezuelan migrants. Effects on the psychological integration index were not significantly different from zero.

This long-term effect may be related to the opportunities for network-building provided to participants, whereby all enrollment processes are simultaneously carried out with both Venezuelan migrant and Colombian populations. Additionally, the central enrollment workshop generates other training sessions focused on participants' interests, which can help them feel connected with others and integrate into their host community.

This suggests that it is important to create spaces for recognition, especially in programs that offer aid to migrants and host communities. This allows them to find people with similar stories or interests and facilitates their social integration process.

The program has no significant long-term effects on participants' migration status and intention to migrate.

In the long term, the report did not find significant effects on participants' migratory status or their intention to migrate. Thus, participating in the program does not yield significant effects on initiating a regularization process or achieving a successful regularization outcome when completed, or on participants' wishes or plans to migrate in the next 6 months.

How Will We Use the Evidence?

Taken together, these findings offer insights that support the sustainability and inform the design of temporary cash assistance as an effective approach to support vulnerable migrants and refugees. The findings are relevant for both donors who support humanitarian assistance programs and organizations that design and implement cash assistance programs in humanitarian contexts.

In the context of the ADN Dignidad program in Colombia, participants experienced sustained impacts on reduced use of food coping strategies, increased household expenditures, and improved life satisfaction, suggesting that the program left households better equipped to face adverse conditions well after the end of benefits. The patterns observed in the data between the short- and longer term observations suggest that the magnitude of effects for many key outcomes declines over time and that the conditions of the treatment and comparison groups may eventually converge. Nevertheless, effects are sustained at least 18 months post-intervention, and a cost-benefit analysis suggests that the economic gains participating households accrue outweigh the costs by a factor of 1.14 to 3.35, depending on the duration of impacts and assumed discount rate.

These findings support the continued investment in temporary cash assistance as an effective tool to support vulnerable mixed migrants.



Photo Credit: Angela Ponce / Save the Children



↓ Food coping strategies

↑ Household expenditures

↑ Life satisfaction

An important consideration for the present study is the nature of the impact estimates from an RDD, which reflect the effects of the program on the segment of ADN Dignidad participants with the lowest vulnerability scores. If impacts increase with vulnerability, the results presented here represent lower bound estimates of the average effects on the full population of ADN beneficiaries. Moreover, with significant and sustained effects at the eligibility threshold, these results suggest that the program could continue to be expanded to even less vulnerable populations and likely remain effective. Thus, the findings arguably support increased allocation of resources to expand the program's eligibility criteria and coverage.

The findings from this study offer valuable insights for the design of temporary cash assistance programs by informing the design and testing of complementary interventions that have the potential to boost long-term effectiveness. An important set of findings from the short-term impact analysis was related to the positive impacts on savings and reduction in debt. However, these effects accrued only through informal mechanisms, reflecting irregular migrants' limited access to the formal financial system. As a result, the ADN Dignidad program is testing complementary financial inclusion interventions that grant participants transfers through the formal banking system and promote savings and financial management. Given the dissipating employment effects over time, a second promising area for innovation involves interventions to boost formal and informal labor market participation, which have the potential to further boost long-term financial security and social integration. Such approaches are under consideration for testing in future iterations of the program.

The findings from this study offer valuable insights for the design of temporary cash assistance programs by informing the design and testing of complementary interventions that have the potential to boost long-term effectiveness.

Why Conduct this Impact Evaluation?

This evaluation, funded by the Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC) and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) and conducted by 3ie, seeks to provide insights into the long-term effectiveness of temporary cash assistance in humanitarian programs. The findings will assist decision-making among program partners and offer valuable evidence to the broader humanitarian community to help determine whether providing cash assistance to vulnerable migrant populations can have lasting effects on their food security, economic well-being, and social integration.

Specifically, Action Against Hunger will use the results of this analysis to evaluate the continuity of their activities, based on the activities' long-term effects. Understanding these results will guide future program design, including identifying whether extending eligibility would be beneficial and how to strengthen support systems to sustain improvements in food security. By addressing these critical knowledge gaps, the present study strives to enhance the evidence base for humanitarian efforts to make sure they effectively increase access to essential resources and achieve their objectives of helping vulnerable populations amidst challenging circumstances.

Furthermore, the evaluation explores an expanded range of outcomes, from resilience and social networks to social cohesion and inclusion, thus providing a comprehensive understanding of how the program affects migrant households in the longer term. By identifying areas for improvement, the program can better address the most urgent needs and facilitate the integration of migrant populations into both the economy and society.

The [first impact evaluation of the program](#), which measured impacts one to three months after the program's completion, found that participants experienced notable improvements—reduced food insecurity, increased engagement in productive activities, higher levels of informal savings, decreased debt, and enhanced workforce participation—that led to sustained income growth. Additionally, households reported reduced reliance on detrimental coping mechanisms for food security, accompanied by a notable increase in overall life satisfaction.



Photo Credit: Nadège Mazars / Save the Children

This long-term impact evaluation measures the extent to which positive effects observed in the short term are sustained over time, specifically 18 months after the program's completion, and whether any new effects emerged after the initial intervention. This analysis provides valuable insights into the program's long-term viability and its ability to adapt to evolving needs and challenges.



The specific research question addressed is whether providing unconditional multi-purpose cash assistance to immigrants from Venezuela and Colombian returnees who live in conditions of social vulnerability helps them overcome longer term financial stress (e.g., food security), among other livelihoods indicators. These include whether participation in ADN Dignidad:

- **Changes the probability of receiving other humanitarian assistance**
- **Increases income and expenses**
- **Increases employment and financial outcomes, including savings, debt, and productive investments**
- **Improves security and subjective well-being**
- **Affects ongoing migration status and decisions**
- **Improves social and psychological integration**
- **Improves children's enrollment in formal education**

Finally, the report presents a cost-effectiveness analysis of ADN Dignidad in terms of its long-term effects on food security and benefit-to cost ratio using impacts on income and expenditure.

Research Methods

This impact evaluation focuses on individuals who were on the cusp of eligibility for assistance.¹ The program employs a scoring system based on household characteristics to determine eligibility, selecting participants whose scores surpass a predefined threshold. This impact evaluation compares individuals just above the threshold (the treatment group, receiving support) to households just below the threshold (the control group, not receiving support), using a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD). This methodology ensures individuals close to the threshold cutoff point are similar in observable and unobservable characteristics, so any differences found between groups are attributed to the program's effect.

This impact evaluation complements the results of the initial [short-term impact evaluation](#), which looked at impacts measured one to three months after the program's completion. The information used in this case corresponds to 2,163 household surveys collected approximately 18 months after the same sample of beneficiaries stopped receiving the aid.

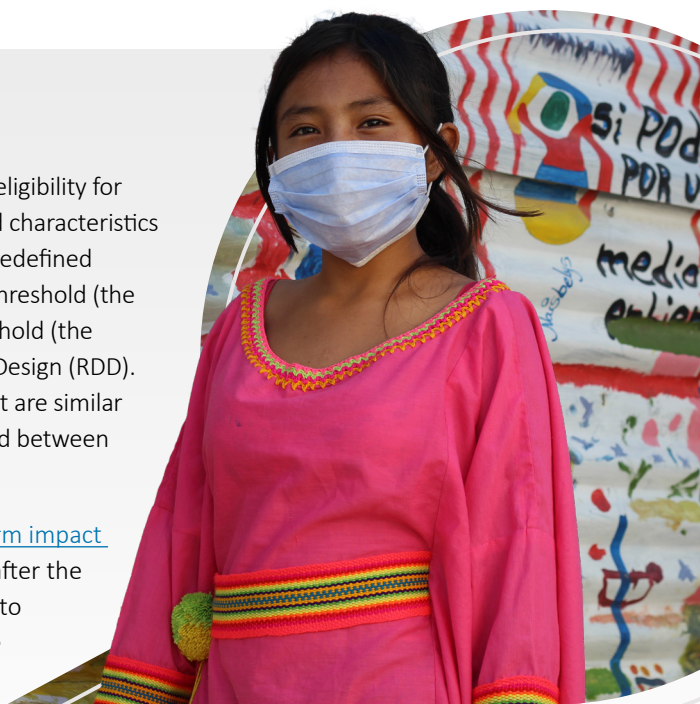


Photo Credit: Save the Children

1 Celhay, P., and S. Martinez. 2024. "ADN Dignidad Long-Term Impact Evaluation."