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June 20, 2024

Nil Simancas: Building Community Through Research

In celebration of World Refugee Day on June 20, 2024, IPA's Displaced Livelihood Initiative highlights the stories of refugees who are using research to respond to the unique challenges and opportunities that displaced populations face.



Nil Simancas is an enumerator with IPA Colombia. (Photo courtesy of Nil Simancas)

For Nil Simancas and many other Venezuelan refugees in Colombia, adapting to life in a new country was challenging. Navigating the many policies and programs that impact her ability to live, work, and participate in her community was at times isolating. Her love of learning and background in research led her to IPA Colombia, where becoming an enumerator offered more than just a job—it was also an opportunity to work with other Venezuelan migrants.

Working alongside her countrymen and women on research aimed at alleviating poverty for both displaced and host communities, Simancas feels that she is a part of something bigger.

She emphasizes that for herself and other migrants, this work has created a sense of community in their new home and allowed them to build connections and learn from the host community, in addition to feeling happier and increasing their self esteem.

She says, “Migrants arrive in other countries with a deep pain from great losses and difficult experiences. Working and being part of something, helps us form a better society, progress, and heal.

Simancas’s work showcases the power of research to bring host and displaced communities together to learn from each other and find collective solutions to the challenges they face.