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**Timeline**

2024-2026

**Study Status**

In Progress

**Study Type**

Randomized Evaluation

**Sample Size**

3,600 Nicaraguan refugees

**Research Implemented by IPA**

No

# Unconditional Cash Transfers and Access to State Services to Increase Refugee Integration in Costa Rica

**Funded by IPA's Displaced Livelihoods Initiative and in collaboration with UNHCR, researchers are conducting a randomized evaluation in Costa Rica to measure whether unconditional cash transfers and information about state social and public services improve refugees' and asylum seekers' long-term economic and social integration.**

In Costa Rica, most refugees and asylum seekers are from Nicaragua, who have increasingly sought asylum in the country since 2018.<sup>1</sup> Nicaraguans have significantly higher rates of poverty and lower rates of receiving transfers or accessing state services compared to Costa Ricans in vulnerable socioeconomic conditions, making their economic and social integration more difficult. As financial assistance, UNHCR distributes unconditional cash transfers for three months to vulnerable Nicaraguan households. Although cash transfers can provide relief for refugees, research suggests that the benefits are short-term.<sup>2</sup> This underscores the need to enhance knowledge and access to state programs and services to foster integration and well-being.

Funded by IPA's Displaced Livelihoods Initiative and in collaboration with UNHCR, researchers are conducting a randomized evaluation to measure whether unconditional cash transfers

and information about accessing state social and public services improve Nicaraguan refugees' long-term economic and social integration in Costa Rica. A total of 3,600 Nicaraguan refugees will be randomly divided into the following groups:

1. No information + No cash transfer (Comparison)
2. Information + No cash transfer
3. Information + 3 month unconditional cash transfer
4. No information + 3 month unconditional cash transfer
5. Information + 6 month unconditional cash transfer
6. No information + 6 month unconditional cash transfer

Results will be available in 2026.

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> Boris Cheshirkov, "Number of displaced Nicaraguans in Costa Rica doubles in less than a year," UNHCR, March 25, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/briefing-notes/number-displaced-nicaraguans-costa-rica-doubles-less-year>

<sup>2</sup> Altındağ, Onur, and Stephen D. O'Connell. "The short-lived effects of unconditional cash transfers to refugees." *Journal of Development Economics* 160 (2023): 102942.  
Moussa, Wael, Nisreen Salti, Alexandra Irani, Rima Al Mokdad, Zeina Jamaluddine, Jad Chaaban, and Hala Ghattas. "The impact of cash transfers on Syrian refugee children in Lebanon." *World Development* 150 (2022): 105711.

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## Implementing Partner



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

**UNHCR**