



Princeton University Global Systemic Risk

Implications of Refugees within Uganda, Turkey, and Colombia

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Table of Contents

Cover Page	1
Table of Contents	2
Meet the Authors	3
Executive Summary	4
Defining Refugees	5 - 6
Migratory Flows	7 - 8
Implication of Migratory Flows	9 - 14
Policy Recommendations	15 - 17
Conclusion	18
References	19 - 20

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Executive Summary

Akaysha Palmer

The ongoing refugee crisis has led to the displacement of global citizens, hoping to find better opportunities wherever they arrive and seek asylum. Many nations have been receptive to these refugees, offering integration programs and policies. These attractive policies have drawn many migrants toward Uganda, Turkey, and Colombia, the top three refugee receptive nations in the world. Their geographical proximities to these neighboring nations have also led to their large influx and heavy concentrations of refugees. This system of fleeing violence or economic issues has given them a second chance; however, with their arrival comes risk and other implications. These host countries no longer have adequate funding, resources, job opportunities, or space to house and take care of these migrants, leading to displacement both within and outside of host nations. Governmental policies are forced to assist with the same issues that refugees have hoped to escape. The case study investigations are followed by policy recommendations in the security, economic, and social arenas.



Defining Refugees

Trina Pham



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Refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection.

United Nations High Commissioner

When families exhaust all options for survival, many escape their home country in search of a new beginning. These people are referred to as “refugees.” A more formal definition by the United Nations High Commissioner states, “refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection” (2016). While the rationale behind fleeing varies based on gender, age, and diversity characteristics, migratory flows are often systematic and can be categorized and studied. Within 2020, over 26.4 million refugees were forcibly displaced ([UNHCR]). Of those, 20.7 million were refugees under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' mandate ([UNHCR], 2020). The objective of refugee host countries should not be to prevent migratory flows but to implement stronger national security, smoother asylum application processes, and maintain social cohesion.

Defining Refugees

Trina Pham

Refugee host countries currently struggle to cope with the growing number of refugees with temporary protection regimes and refugee camps.



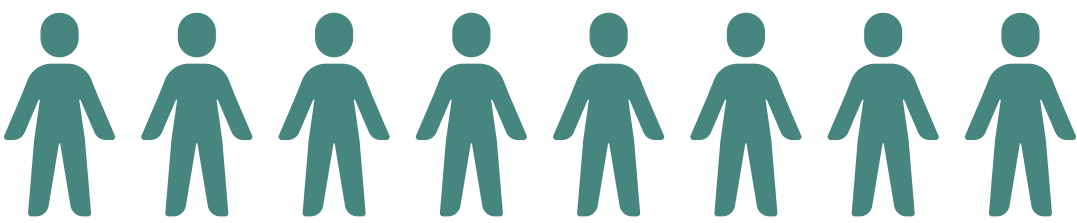
With inadequate policies in place, countries and refugees have suffered in the economic, political, and the social arenas. In 2020, Turkey, Colombia, and Uganda hosted over 3.7 million, 1.7 million, and 1.4 million refugees respectively. As part of the top three refugee host countries, these nation-states become particular subjects of interest due to their differing refugee policies and implications ([UNHCR], 2020).

Moreover, their distinct regulations and mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic require further study on their implications. In the month of March 2020, over 150 countries, territories, and areas implemented travel restrictions, limiting the entry of millions of refugees (International Organization for Migration, 2020). The stringent mandates further complicated the arduous migratory flows as countries began denying many in the face of a public-health crisis. As such, these public health measures have impacted migratory patterns and flows which requires in-depth investigation.

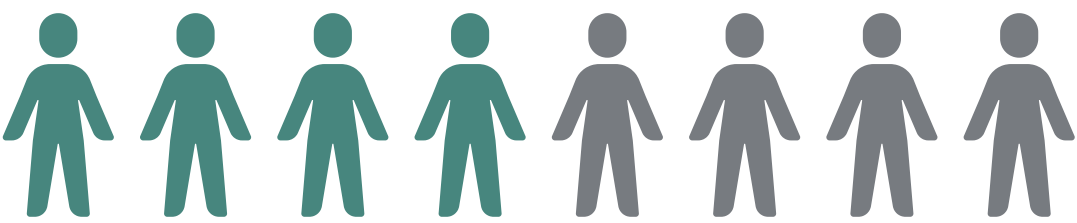


Number of Refugees Hosted in 2020

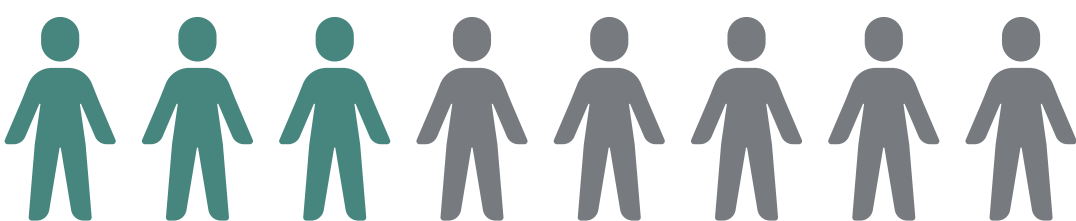
Turkey: 3.7 million



Colombia: 1.7 million



Uganda: 1.4 million



Migratory Flows

Akaysha Palmer

According to the UNHCR, Uganda, Turkey, and Colombia host the most refugees around the world, totaling about 6.8 million refugees combined (2020). These refugees have fled their home countries of South Sudan, Syria, and Venezuela, among others, due to violence, food insecurity, and economic instability.

Uganda

Currently, Uganda is the highest refugee receiving country in Africa and third highest in the world after welcoming over 1.4 million refugees ([UNHCR], 2020). According to Oxford International, South Sudan accounts for about 71% of the refugee population with about one million women and children who have fled (2017). Political conflict from the South Sudanese Civil War and the threat of famine have led to the displacement of many citizens and increased food shortages (Mercy Corps, 2019). Millions have escaped due to looting of aid and supplies, making it dangerous to reach families in need. This greatly affects the children in South Sudan as about 860,000 children are malnourished (Mercy Corps, 2019). The growing number of conflicts and issues within this region have led to the large streams of displaced refugees arriving in Uganda in need of opportunity.



Migratory Flows

Akaysha Palmer

There are approximately 3.2 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, following refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq (Refugee Solidarity Network, 2017). This makes Turkey the largest refugee receiving nation in the world. This influx of migrants began when President Bashar al-Assad's response to anti-regime demonstrations throughout Syria turned violent in 2011.

Turkey

The violence that plagues Syria has "documented 226,374 battle-related deaths, including 135,634 civilians, as of December 2020" (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2021). The destroyed hospitals and deaths of medical personnel have made it extremely difficult to heal the wounded, thus contributing to the growing death toll. Syrian citizens have also suffered economically as their country's currency has drastically declined while food prices have continued to rise (BBC, 2021). Syrian refugees were allowed to enter Turkey without a visa and be granted temporary protection status (Makovsy, 2019). Turkey has made efforts to integrate these refugees into society despite public disapproval, and pushed to close more refugee camps (Makovsy, 2019). Recognizing existing refugee support, citizens of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran fled to Turkey as a result of the lack of religious freedom, sexual and gender-based violence, increased turmoil, and sectarian issues (Refugee Solidarity Network, 2017). The hospitality within Turkey for refugees has created a safe haven, but they face new challenges upon arrival.



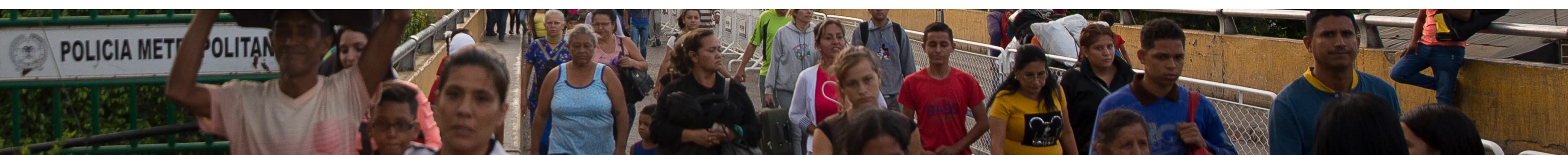
Migratory Flows

Akaysha Palmer

With millions of Venezuelans fleeing their country from worsening conditions such as violence, limited economic prospects, and inadequate resources, the migration has ranked as the second-largest global external displacement crisis, following Syria (Refugee Solidarity Network, 2017).

Colombia

Since 2013, the Venezuelan economy has diminished by 65% due to poor financial policies (Bahar, Dooley, 2019). The current economic state has led to limited access to medical treatment, shortages of water and electricity, and spurred violence among Venezuelans. Additionally, the Venezuelan government has posed challenges to obtain passports, and thus, citizens have fled to Colombia and neighboring countries as undocumented personnel. This makes the refugees more vulnerable to criminal groups, human trafficking, or deportation (Bahar, Dooley, 2019). Of the refugee population, women, children, and the elderly are more at risk of falling victim due to the lack of shelter, housing, employment, and educational opportunities. Of the 5.4 million Venezuelans that have fled their country in the past six years, about two million have settled in Colombia specifically because of its geographical proximity and hospitality (Otis, 2021).



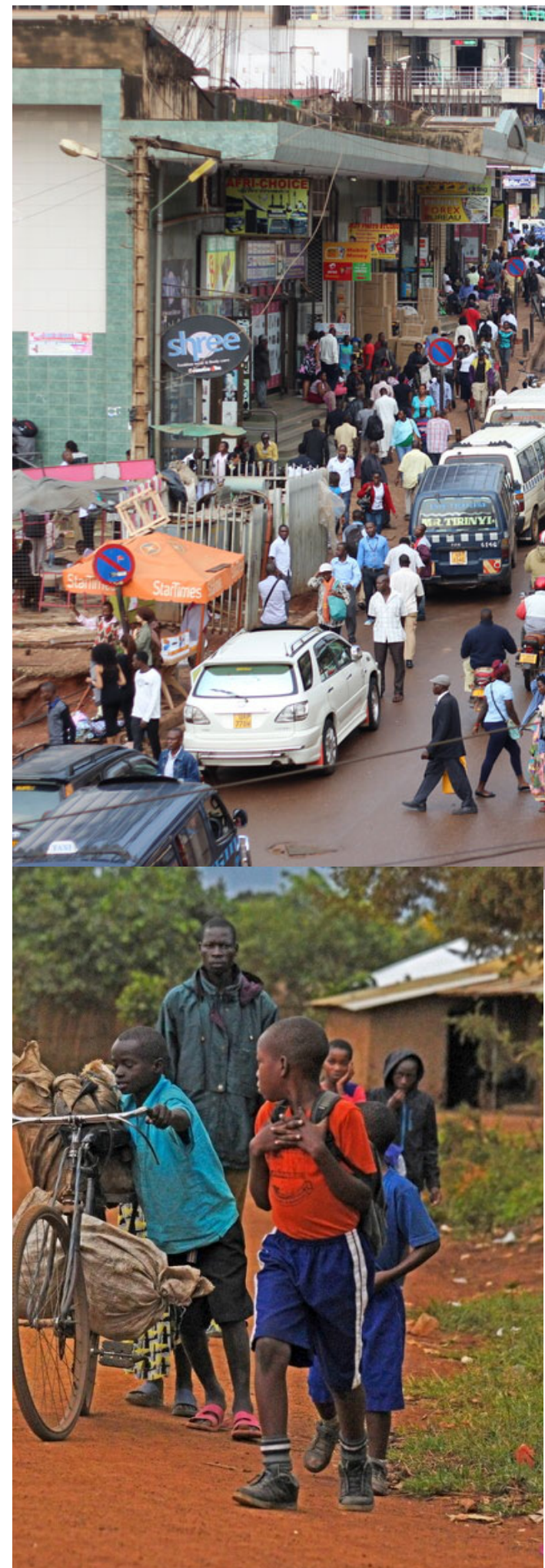
Implications of Migratory Flows: The Case of Uganda, Turkey and Colombia

CASE STUDY: UGANDA

SEKOU JABATEH

While migratory flows may present opportunities such as increased aggregate demand or greater inflow of remittances (World Economic Forum, 2016), they also come with possible risks to host countries. These could range from risks of social polarization to political and economic concerns.

In Uganda, the government's progressive policies toward refugees had long been praised by the international community. Central to Uganda's policies has been its model of "Self-Reliance," which supports refugees' integration by providing them with plots of land for subsistence and commercial farming. Although this system showcased the potential to spur economic growth, the unprecedented inflow of refugees over the last five years has significantly strained the country's limited resources and pressured the self-reliance model (Betts et al. 2014). As the country runs out of arable settlements due to increased flows, many incoming refugees now have to be assigned to surrounding parts of the settlement. The extension of the refugee accommodations has led to land disputes with Ugandans. These tensions have fueled grievances that led to two weeks of protest over land in 2017 (Omata 2020).



Implications of Migratory Flows: The Case of Uganda, Turkey and Colombia

CASE STUDY: TURKEY

SEKOU JABATEH

Similarly, in Turkey, The Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (2015) reported that the massive number of Syrian refugees has led to “increase in rental prices, inflation, and illegal hiring” and an ongoing belief amongst locals that their jobs are being stolen by refugees. “The most serious security threat is a risk of violent mass reaction, caused by the provocations capitalizing on anger towards Syrian refugees” (CMESS 2015)). As in the case of Uganda, such anger towards refugees could lead to riots that pose threats to regime stability. Bağır (2018) found that the primary movement of Syrian refugees towards Turkish borders had a statistically significant negative impact on low-skilled wages and employment in Turkey. Politically, Yuksel (2020) and Karacuka (2019) found a positive effect of refugee influx “on vote share of the main opposition party in local elections,” but a negative effect “on main opposition party’s vote share in general elections”. Yuksel and Karacuka’s results imply that economic growth and refugee integration instruments—in the case of Turkey, factors that might currently be influenced by the budgetary support of the European Union—lead refugees to vote for the incumbent party in general elections.

Whereas in local regions where such instruments have limited reach, political and ideological polarizations arise that swerve refugee support towards the opposition party.

Amidst high inflows into Turkey, the country could face major political and economic risks if, for example, support from the EU were to end while the government alone cannot meet the needs of refugees and its population. In the future, there could not only be major security threats but also the risk of state collapse which could then create even more refugee flows.

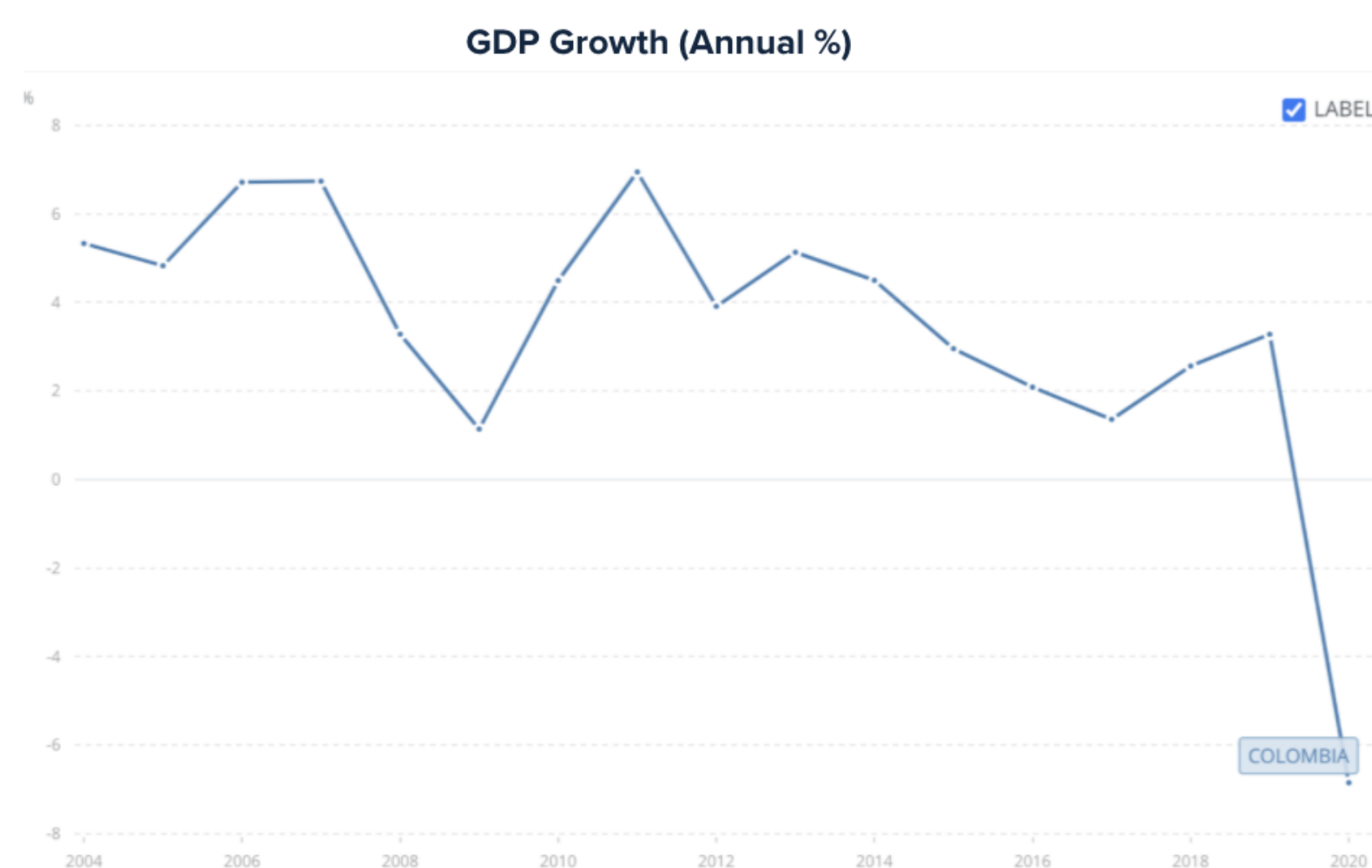


Implications of Migratory Flows: The Case of Uganda, Turkey and Colombia

CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA

ISABELLA MARTINEZ

Colombia's government has a complex migration history that has brought very little international attention, leaving the country in a grave humanitarian crisis while reconciling their domestic disputes. After signing a peace accord to conclude the 52-year armed conflict between Colombia's government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the influx of Venezuelan migrants poses an added political and social threat to the country. The precarious refugee crisis has strained Colombia's institutions and has created economic turmoil, ranging from increased inflation to heightened unemployment. Years prior to the arrival of refugees, the unemployment rate has steadily declined, only averaging 8.5%; however, as they entered, the rate coincided with a dramatic increase to 15.6% as of April 2021 (Trading Economics, 2021). According to *The World Bank* Fig. (1), from 2016-2019, the annual GDP growth only increased by 1.2% and a dramatic decline of 6.8% in 2020, which is an indicator of economic downturn, and hence resulting in the worst recession in Colombia's history (*GDP Growth (Annual %) - Colombia | Data, 2020*).



Source: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

Figure 1

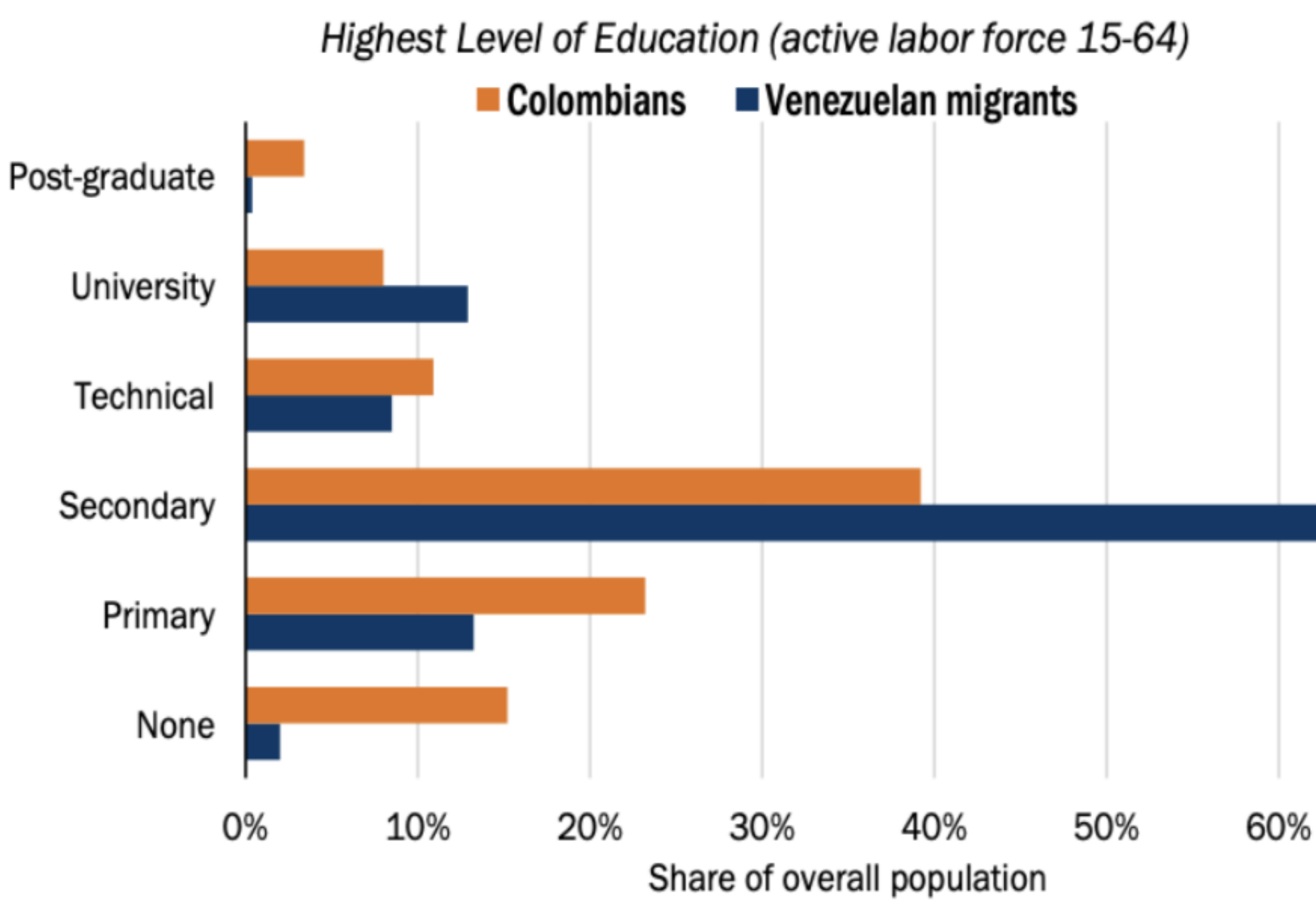
Implications of Migratory Flows: The Case of Uganda, Turkey and Colombia

CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA

ISABELLA MARTINEZ

Many Columbians are struggling under economic pressure, heightened political strife, poverty, and shortages of resources centering their immediate frustration on refugees. This has fueled rampant xenophobia as 69% of Colombians claim Venezuelans are removing economic prospects and draining social resources (Vacía, 2021). Further, Venezuelans are having challenges with economic inclusion despite their educational background, according to Fig. (2) (Bahar, D., Dooley, M., & Huang, C. (2018).

With their higher educational attainment ranging from high school to university degrees, refugees are eventually observed in informal sectors due to a combination of fiscal, legal, and discriminatory barriers. Specifically, they are seen in food services, manufacturing, wholesale, construction, and transportation. “60% of Venezuelan migrants struggle to find employment, often competing against and underbidding locals—including Colombian internally displaced persons (IDPs)—to eke out a meagre living in the informal economy” (Espinel, Chaskel, Berg, Florez, Gaviria, Bernal, Et.Al, 2020). Despite challenging participation in the workforce, migrants are unable to access social services, leaving them particularly vulnerable.



Source: RAMV, DANE, and authors' calculation.

Figure 2

Implications of Migratory Flows: The Case of Uganda, Turkey and Colombia

CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA

ISABELLA MARTINEZ

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to threaten the country, in March 2020, President Iván Duque Márquez closed the country's borders and placed a mandatory stay-at-home order while implementing measures to respond to the crisis. Although this is held as a standard public health response, it can have a devastating impact on displaced refugees -- particularly those with no support networks or limited humanitarian aid. The pandemic has affected refugees in the immediate context, forcing them to face widespread unemployment, eviction, homelessness, food insecurity, and illnesses. The government recognized their shortcomings and began to address the public health crisis by including refugees. Thus, they created policies and a detailed plan incorporating healthcare access, addressing xenophobia, temporary protection status, economic integration, accelerated medical degrees for Venezuelans, and management of impacted communities (*El Futuro es de todos*, 2020).

Similar to the policies implemented by the Colombian government, it's imperative to address Uganda's continuing sustainability, Turkey's security concerns, and Colombia's economic turbulence with an inclusive, empathetic, and systemic risk approach. Bearing this in mind, social and economic mobility is feasible for refugees by implementing the following recommendations.



Policy Recommendations

UGANDA

TRINA PHAM

While economic integration models, such as Uganda's Self-Reliance approach, offer an alternative to traditional refugee camps, they entrench refugees into a dependency on social and welfare programs while toeing the verge of the social collapse of the nation.

Uganda must develop policies to culminate into a long-term sustainable model for its citizens and refugees. The nation should develop vocational training programs outside of the agricultural sector, so refugees can transition from the Self Reliance model to more formal work. In doing so, the country would increase its off-farm income as well as allow incoming refugees to start their new beginning on the already established land. Moreover, Uganda could tap into its bountiful unemployment pool after providing the necessary resources and tools to secure work. 72% of its refugees are jobless, which may be due to nine out of ten refugees having never participated in a skills or job training program (Informing the Refugee Policy Response in Uganda, 2019). The country could also assist in promoting labor demand in the non-agriculture industry, such as mining, construction, and manufacturing.

In February 2018, an audit of a refugee program revealed Uganda inflated its refugee numbers, and “funds raised during the 2017 Solidarity Summit were unaccounted for implicated both UNHCR and government officials” (Coggio, 2018). This produced several sponsors for Ugandan refugee programs to withdraw their support and pressure the UNHCR to allocate funds elsewhere. Thus, Uganda should invest in a better tracking program of its refugees to accurately determine the allocations of the Self Reliance model. Uganda must prevent more corruption scandals by obtaining better detailed and complete records of its welfare programs for refugees. In doing so, Uganda would regain the trust of international partners to continue funding. As a leader in refugee hospitality, Uganda must refine its policies in employment and refugee tracking, so it can remain a safe haven to those in need.

Policy Recommendations

TURKEY

TRINA PHAM

Culture clashes have led to an increase of refugee-related violent crimes within Turkey; the majority going unreported out of fear of deportation. Turkey must implement initiatives to defuse such tensions and resolve security concerns.

Due to the heightened competition for employment, social friction between citizens and refugees has emerged, preventing the integration of the two groups. Turkey should employ local officials to implement grassroots efforts to overcome the public perception of Syrian refugees associated with criminal behavior and stealing employment from citizens. For instance, the nation could first employ more police officers to prevent such violence against refugees. In December 2017, the Turkish government fired over 22,987 police officers as a result of their affiliations with the Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation, FETÖ (Security General Director Selami Altınok, 2017). The lack of police officers demonstrating empathy towards refugees feeds into public hostility. Thus, the nation should employ more police officers to prevent such violence against refugees.

Turkey must also transition away from unconditional humanitarian aid for its refugees to develop sustainable livelihoods. Currently, refugees receive aid from the European Union's Emergency Social Safety Net, not state assistance, which is a common misconception amongst citizens. The unconditional cash assistance must be phased out so refugees can become more self-sustaining. Turkey would implement this transition by providing incentives and training for formal job opportunities for its refugees and citizens. In part, Turkey must eliminate the bureaucratic barriers which have previously discouraged refugees from formal employment. To overcome this challenge, the country should implement a new streamlined process for refugees to gain a work permit.

Policy Recommendations

COLOMBIA

TRINA PHAM

To remediate and preserve its economy, the Colombian government must achieve true economic inclusion for its refugees. Colombia must enforce the idea of economic inclusion, “the attainment of decent work and income commensurate with [one’s] skills” through its policies (Graham & Dempster, 2020).

Foremost, the Colombian government should alleviate the formal employment barrier for its refugees. About 42.8% of refugees hold a Special Stay Permit, which regularizes their status and allows them to find formal employment ([UNHCR], 2020). Of those with a permit, 14% are engaged in this sector. By removing all impediments, refugees would contribute approximately \$1 billion annually to Colombia's GDP (Graham & Dempster, 2020). What would be particularly beneficial is if the government would reinvigorate entrepreneurship by trimming the bureaucracy and taxes for small businesses. Additionally, with refugees obtaining legal rights for employment, Colombian citizens would then have more opportunities within the informal sector as the competition reduces.

With working refugees, the government would also see positive spillover effects on its revenue and social security programs. To prevent resentment and xenophobia, citizens must also be supportive of such refugee aid programs. Colombia would have to implement “cash and in-kind programmes designed to support migrants include vulnerable host communities and that investment programmes contribute to developing public services and infrastructure to deal with rapid population increases” (Anuña - Alfaro & Khoudour, 2020). However, this proposal is not possible until Colombia can supply such resources to its refugees. Until then, the Colombian economic faith will rely upon the international community for aid.



CONCLUSION

TRINA PHAM

While the polarized debates on the support or lack thereof for immigration across the world have hindered the progress of implementing public policies, refugee host countries should continue to propose evolving ideas and solutions. Refugee host countries must enact stronger national security protocols, develop a smoother asylum application process, and employ local officials to enforce a harmonious society between citizens and refugees. In doing so, they will not only foster a culture of diversity and inclusivity but improve the livelihood of all its citizens. Migratory flows of refugees will persist regardless of public health crises, regime changes, and fluctuating economies. How host countries respond to their current threats will affect the future of the nation's hospitality towards incoming refugees. The world will keep a watchful eye on Turkey, Colombia, and Uganda to see whether or not they make substantial progress in the public policy and refugee sectors.



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