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Rental Support for Internally Displaced and Migrant Women in Colombia

Submitted By: Blumont



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Blumont

Organization Type: Civil society

Website: www.blumont.org

Practice Details

Country(ies): Colombia

City(ies): Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Cúcuta, Cartagena, Santa Marta, Montería, Sincelejo, Popayán, Florencia

Start Year: 2021 **Ongoing:** Yes **End Year:** N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

Rental Housing

Housing Rights & Social Inclusion

Housing in Crisis & Displacement Contexts

Relevant SDGs:



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Problem & Context

Colombia hosts 12 million (M) displaced people, including 10M internally displaced persons and 2.8M Venezuelans. Internally displaced and migrant women face severe housing insecurity due to poverty, gender-based violence, and exclusion from formal rental markets. In 2023, 400,000 internally displaced persons had extreme shelter needs, with 80% citing rent costs as the main barrier. Blumont data shows only 4.9% can afford rent right after displacement and many lived in homes with no sanitation (32.3%), 56.8% felt unsafe, and 89.2% earned below extreme poverty. Migrant women from Venezuela face similar risks: 77% lack adequate housing, 30% live in overcrowded spaces, and 75% cite high rent as a barrier. Despite functioning rental markets, Colombia's housing policy focuses on ownership and excludes migrants. Humanitarian actors prioritize livelihoods over housing, assuming income leads to shelter—yet evidence shows displaced women remain without safe, dignified housing.

Solution Developed

Since 2021, Blumont has supported over 15,500 displaced persons—mostly women-led families—with rental support to access safe, adequate housing. Beneficiaries were selected using a vulnerability pre-eligibility scoring system based on characteristics of household members, protection risks, and poor living conditions. Women identified rental units meeting strict criteria verified by Blumont staff: written agreements, no overcrowding, access to water, sanitation, and energy, privacy, ventilation, no risk of natural disaster, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Blumont verified housing, paid landlords directly via bank transfers, and conducted regular visits to ensure compliance. If landlords violated agreements, women could relocate. Families were also connected to social protection services: internally displaced women accessed health insurance, vaccinations, school enrollment, and nutrition programs; migrant women received support for migration regularization, health insurance, and education. Impact evaluations show women can sustain adequate housing and they improve income, wellbeing, and self-reliance toward durable solutions and social integration.

Implementation

Since 2021, Blumont has implemented eight rounds of rental support across 23 cities, benefiting over 15,000 displaced persons. Under the Acogida program (PRM-funded), rental support was provided in 2021 – 2025 to migrant women for nine months in high-poverty neighborhoods of host communities with poor access to services in 21 cities. In 2023 - 2024, Closing Gaps (USAID-funded) expanded rental support to recently displaced women for six months in six cities, integrating shelter, WASH, food, psychosocial aid, and social protection. In 2022 – 2024, an IOM-funded project provided short term support (3, 4, and 5 months) for less vulnerable migrant families for economic integration. Variations on targeting, duration, and goals across eight rounds, maintained core features like pre-eligibility scoring, housing verification, written contracts, service referrals, and ongoing monitoring.

Blumont worked with the Victims' Unit and Ministry of Housing to promote rental support as a scalable policy tool. Municipal governments helped select families and provide services. Community action boards and migrants' organizations supported planning, outreach, and accountability. Blumont coordinated with the HCT and GIFMM, Shelter and Multisector Cluster to align efforts, share data, avoid duplication, and complement services. Each round refined targeting, duration, and evaluation tools, improving impact, sustainability, and policy relevance.

Enablers & Obstacles

Displaced women were the main enablers, meeting all rental support conditions, securing housing, engaging with services, and contributing to evaluations. Landlords responded positively to upfront payments, enabling written contracts and stable agreements. Host communities, especially through community action boards, supported outreach and social integration. Local rental markets offered sufficient, affordable housing options. Social protection systems and migration regularization pathways enhanced stability. Donor funding enabled eight rounds of rental support, though sudden award termination in 2025 disrupted support for 648 families. Obstacles included skepticism from institutions viewing housing as a development issue, short-term rental models, and competition from income-focused programs. Evidence shows adequate housing drives income and self-reliance, challenging traditional assumptions and positioning rental support as a cost-effective path to durable solutions and integration.

Results & Impact

Rental support benefited over 15,000 internally displaced persons and migrants. The most rigorous results come from two impact evaluations finished in 2024 for internally displaced women, and in 2025 for migrant women. In partnership with Causal Design, the USAID-funded impact evaluation for internally displaced women, showed 60% sustained adequate housing one year after support, triple the rate of the control group. Safety rose from 40% to 80%, and income increased 2.4 times, with extreme poverty falling from 89% to 27%. However, incomes were the same as the control group so the mechanism triggering changes was peace of mind—an idea from Scarcity Theory—which helped women recover their capacities: 75% felt they had peace of mind, enabling better agency (77%) and wellbeing (58%). In partnership with Washington University in Saint Louis and Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative, the evaluation showed 90% of migrant women sustained adequate housing six months after support, with 66% staying in the same home. Income doubled to $442, 20% higher than the control group, with 60% out of poverty. Peace of mind reached 88%, agency 94%, and wellbeing 73%. Self-Reliance Index scores rose 34%, with 62% scoring ≥4. Social integration improved as 93% felt they belonged and 88% had adequate social capital. Rental support proved transformative, enabling displaced women to recover capacities, improve income, and achieve durable solutions through the peace of mind that comes from adequate housing.

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Replication & Scale Up

Rental support began as a prototype in 2021 for 1,795 migrant women and scaled to eight rounds in 23 cities for 15,450 beneficiaries. Enablers included sustained support from PRM and USAID, rigorous impact evaluations, continuous data analysis, learning from behavioral economics and the Self-Reliance Index, and global feedback from UN-HABITAT, IOM, UNHCR, UNDP, Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, Special Rapporteur on human rights of IDPs, shelter clusters, and development banks. This evidence-driven approach enabled replication with diverse targeting, duration, and goals

This housing practice can be scaled across Colombia and Latin America, and adapted globally. Key enablers include functioning rental markets, access to social protection systems, and capacity to follow up with families. Blumont aims to institutionalize rental support through partnerships with national and local governments, building on efforts in Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali. Continuous data analysis, donor engagement, and evidence-based design make it adaptable to diverse displacement contexts and policy frameworks.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

Blumont's rental support work for displaced women informed the Government of Colombia's draft policy on durable solutions, which now authorizes funding for rental assistance as an alternative to ownership-based housing. This shift addresses gaps in durable solutions for IDPs. However, similar progress hasn't occurred for migrant women. Current efforts focus on rent subsidy pilots by the IDB and World Bank, with no public policy changes yet to improve migrant access to these instruments.

Lessons & Takeaways

Rental support is used very broadly grouping very different interventions creating confusion in donors mistaking its potential. 1-month support for employment or protection is different from 6-months for durable solutions or 9-months for integration. An area-based program could support both internally displaced and migrant women in shared urban spaces. A 12-month iteration may show if longer support yields deeper impact or marginal returns. Finally, A/B testing comparing housing vs. livelihoods interventions could rigorously identify the most cost-effective solution for displaced women.