Project Inception Report

Impact Evaluation of the ADN Dignidad Program

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Submitted to

Action Against Hunger

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# Introduction

## Background and Context

This Inception Report presents the evaluation team’s approach to the impact evaluation of the ADN program. Its preparation represents the culmination of the inception phase.

The ADN Dignidad program is implemented by CUA Consortium led by Action Against Hunger in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council and Norwegian Refugee Council. The primary intervention to be evaluated is an unconditional multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) transferred to beneficiary households every month over a period of 6 months. The program also provides awareness sessions on nutrition, protection mainstreaming, and available services during enrolment events. Outcomes of interest include nutritional status, food security, and access to basic needs such as housing, productive investments, savings, and income.

## Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The impact evaluation of the ADN Dignidad Program seeks to measure the program’s effects on the well-being of immigrants from Venezuela and Colombian returnees that live in conditions of social vulnerability. To this purpose, a mixed-methods evaluation is designed to provide rigorous quantitative estimates of program impact along with qualitative evidence of potential mechanisms. The primary identification strategy proposed for the evaluation is a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD). To obtain a causal estimate of the effect of the cash assistance, the RDD exploits the eligibility rule of the program that assigns a score to each household based on the characteristics of the household at the time of application using a vulnerability assessment and Proxy Means Test. The program provides MPCA to eligible households with a vulnerability score above a minimum known threshold, and the RDD compares outcomes of individuals above and below this eligibility threshold.

The impact evaluation is led by a technical team of 3ie staff and consultants (evaluation team), and the evaluation is implemented in close collaboration and consultation with the CUA Consortium. The evaluation team will work closely with iSegoria on the activities and deliverables outlined in this document, including the development, adaptation, training, and quality assurance.

# Evaluation Framework and Methodology

## Evaluation Questions

In this evaluation, we ask whether unconditional multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) to immigrants from Venezuela, Colombian returnees, host communities, and internal migrants in Colombia that live in conditions of social vulnerability help to overcome short-term financial stress, food insecurity, emotional well-being , and outcomes related to health, nutrition and economic self-sustainability (e.g., entrepreneurship).

## Evaluation Design

Our main identification strategy is a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD). To obtain a causal estimate of the effect of the cash assistance, we exploit the eligibility rule of the program that assigns scores to each individual based on the characteristics of the families at the moment of application. Once each family’s vulnerability is assessed through a sociodemographic and economic characteristics survey, two scores are assigned to each applicant family. A threshold is defined and families that are above a threshold of vulnerability are eligible to receive the assistance. This design compares outcomes of individuals who are just above and below an eligibility threshold of both scores. Families do not know how the scores are computed and so are not able to manipulate variables in order to change it. Based on budget constraints, the program gives cash assistance to every family with a vulnerability score of 90 or above for one of the scores (Scorecard Model score) and estimated household expenses below 53,168 calculated using a Proxy Means Test. We restrict the analysis sample to individuals surveyed for their eligibility assessment between November 2021 and April 2022 in Nariño, Barranquilla and Bogota. This is because the program delivers the first cash transfer within the first month of defining the eligibility status of each individual. Given that the program lasts approximately 6 months since the first cash transfer, we can evaluate the outcomes of a cohort of participants between 1 and 3 months of graduation from the program.

The distribution of the scores across the full support of both assignment variables is shown in Panel A and Panel C – Figure 2 (see Annex). One potential problem of RD designs is that applicants may be able to alter the scores used to assign the program in their favor to become eligible for the benefits. The Figures show that at the threshold of 90 points of the Scorecard Model (SM) score and 53,168 in household expenses from the Proxy Means Test (PMT), there are no evident changes in the density of the scores. A formal test of this condition is shown in Panel B and Panel D- Figure 1, where we plot the density of individuals within bandwidths of the scores, together with confidence intervals. The Figures show no significant changes in the number of individuals in close vicinity at the left or right of the 90-points threshold nor at the 53,168-threshold for the SM score and the PMT, respectively. Taken together, these figures show evidence against manipulation of the scores by applicants. If there were manipulation, the strategy would fail to identify a causal effect as the internal validity of an RD design is sustained by the assumption that individuals that are just above and below the thresholds of the variables that determine their eligibility in the program are comparable in all dimensions; with the only difference being that those at the right of the threshold receive the benefit. Our main specification is estimated using the following linear regression:

where represents an outcome (such as food insecurity post assistance) for household *i*. is a vector of control variables specific to the household, such as sex and age of the household head. is a smooth function of the vector of running variables (i.e., the scores in this case) . **1** is an indicator function that takes the value 1 when the running variables are equal to or higher than their relevant threshold, that is, when the household becomes eligible for the program; is the error term of the regression. The coefficient of interest is , which can be interpreted as the average local effect of a household’s eligibility for the program.

In addition, we assess the validity of our design by comparing eligible to non-eligible individuals using data from application forms. We accessed data on the Household (HH) Consumption Index, HH per capita expenditures, HH per capita income, HH members to bedrooms ratio, number of months since arriving in Colombia, HH head age, sex, number of meals taken during the last week, number of HH members, number of HH members under 18 years old, number of HH members between 18 and 59 years old, number of HH members with primary education attained, and number of HH members without education. The results are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 in the Annex. We find that, before the initiation of the program, households that are just to the right of the cutoff rule of eligibility for each assignment variable, conditional on being eligible based on the threshold of the other assignment variable, are comparable in all dimensions measured to a household that is just to the left of the cutoff rule and hence do not receive the program. As such, this design guarantees that causal estimates can be obtained and estimated after gathering data for these same households after the program delivers aid to eligible families.

## Indicators

The indicators that we include in the survey are into the following categories:

### **Table 1**. Indicators

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education | - Maximum level of education of the applicant and minors in the household  - Current educational situation of the applicant and minors in the household |
| Health | - In the last 12 months, any member of the household was sick, attended a health center, and what was the reason |
| Employment and micro-businesses | - Employment status and income received from that job  - Any possible micro-businesses that members of the household may have  - Applicant’s work history |
| Immigration status | - Immigration status  - if an applicant is in transit and how long they plan to be in Colombia |
| food consumption | - Strategies used by the household to deal with the lack of food |
| housing | - Type, state of occupation, and value of the house  - Housing materials  - Basic housing services  - The size of the house |
| savings | - If there have been savings in the home and the methods of saving (formal and informal) |
| Credit (debt) | - If a loan has been requested and who granted it |
| Income and expenses | - Sources of income other than work (i.e. social programs, foundations, remittances)  - Expenses in basic services/products. (Food, water, electricity, education, transportation, health, etc.) |
| Survival (food insecurity) | - what survival activities have had to be carried out because there was not enough food or money to buy food |
| Insecurity and discrimination | - what types of violence have been experienced by members of the household  - if members of the household have suffered discrimination and the reasons for the discrimination |
| Emotional well-being | - The level of satisfaction with your life when applying to the program |

## Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The following data collection methods will be used:

**Telephone survey:** Households in the evaluation sample will be contacted by telephone and, if the contact is successful, interviewed through a telephone survey. A telephone survey will be considered complete if the household is contacted, consents to participation and completes the survey, refuses participation, or is not found after 7 or more attempted contacts. Contact attempts should take into account varied day times, as well as work and weekend days. A tracking survey will follow a sub-sample of households not reached by telephone. The duration of the survey is expected to be approximately 30 minutes per household, on average. The sample will consist of households that applied to ADN Dignidad in the geographic regions of Bogotá DC, Atlántico and Nariño. To minimize recall bias and sample attrition, initial contact with the respondents should ideally be within 1-3 months of receiving the final cash transfer. As such, data collection will be implemented on a “rolling” basis, contacting cohorts of households within 1-3 months of finalizing the program (or 7-9 months after applying in the case of ineligible households). With the objective of minimizing non-response and compensating subjects for their time, respondents will be offered an incentive equivalent to approximately USD $4.60.

**Face-to-face tracking survey for households not reached by telephone**: The purpose of the face-to-face interviews is to increase response rates and correct for any differential response to the telephone survey that may occur between eligible and ineligible households. If the number of households reporting information through the phone survey exceeds 2,876 completed responses, then the number of face-to-face surveys may be reduced. The tracking sample will be traced to their last known place of residence and, if found, interviewed in person by an experienced enumerator following strict COVID-19 survey protocols (masking, maintaining social distance, conducting the interview in an open-air space whenever feasible, etc). Reasonable efforts will be made to track households to new locations or to reach the household by telephone if updated contact information is obtained. A face-to-face tracking survey will be considered complete if the household is contacted, consents to participation and completes the survey, refuses participation, or is not found after 3 or more attempted contacts. Contact attempts should take into account varied day times, as well as work and weekend days. A detailed tracking protocol will be agreed upon between 3ie and the Consultant and outlined in the survey field manual.

**The qualitative component of the impact evaluation.** Data collection for the qualitative component consists of implementing 8 focus group interviews and 40 key-informant interviews. The qualitative interviews will focus on two key areas of inquiry. First, on a sub-sample of participants in a savings group pilot implemented by ADN Dignidad. Second, qualitative interviews will be conducted to complement the findings of the quantitative impact analysis.

## Sampling

The results from the statistical power analysis show that the optimal bandwidths are approximately [-12; 7] points around the eligibility threshold for the Scorecard Model and [-3785; 3300] points around the threshold of the Proxy Mean Test score. In the data, we have 2,318 non-eligible applicants and 10,084 eligible applicants in this vicinity. We propose a sample size that will be able to detect at least a 0.3 SD difference on household consumption index, household per capita expenses, and household per capita income. With this assumption, we would need to gather a random sample, in this vicinity, of 2,060 non-eligible applicants and 1,393 eligible applicants. The computations were done using the command rdsampsi in Stata® provided by Cattaneo, Titiunik & Vazquez-Bare (2019)[[1]](#footnote-2). As noted below this is a feasible sample size given the possible contact rates in the field. All households will initially be contacted for a telephone survey, and a representative sample of households not reached by telephone will be followed up for a face-to-face survey. Assuming differential phone-survey re-contact rates of 60% and 40% in the treatment and control groups, respectively, and 70% re-contact rates in the face-to-face survey, the final target analytic sample is between approximately 1,300 and 1,600 households per intervention group, or 2,600 to 3,200 households total. The analytic sample will be powered to detect an effect size of at least 0.32 standard deviations on household consumption index, household per capital expenses, and household per capita income (power=80% and significance=5%).

### **Table 2**. Sample sizes within optimal bandwidth

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Phone Survey Sample  (N household) | Face-to-Face Tracking Survey  (N household)\* | Effective Analysis Sample  (N Households Pessimistic scenario) | Effective Analysis Sample  (N Households Optimistic scenario) |
| Sample – treatment group (eligible households) | 1879 | 282 | 1297 | 1654 |
| Sample – control group  (ineligible households) | 1467 | 587 | 2055 | 1712 |
| Total | 3346 | 869 | 3352 | 3366 |

\*The number of face-to-face surveys will be up to 1221 households not reached through the phone survey, though the distribution across treatment and control may vary.

## Saving Groups

In this study, we will also address the effect of implementing Savings Groups among beneficiaries of the ADN Cash Transfer program. Saving groups are promoted to address risk coping. Members of a saving group usually work in pooling savings together and work on loans to one another, allowing them to improve their situation of short-term financial stress.

The main randomization strategy focuses on individual randomization to encourage participation in savings groups within the most populated neighborhoods in the municipalities of Bogotá (department of Cundinamarca) and Barranquilla (department of Atlántico). Within each neighborhood, a random sample of 50% of active beneficiaries of the ADN Dignidad program are offered the possibility of entering the savings groups. In this way, active participation (having received the cash transfer) is a necessary condition for voluntary participation in the program. This random invitation must strictly follow the list of people that is given to allies. This strategy allows the allies to operate in a relatively low number of neighborhoods that are accessible in operational terms. In total, 24 savings groups will be implemented, with an average of 19 participants distributed equally among the three partner organizations in the program (Action Against Hunger, the Danish Council for Refugees, and the Norwegian Council for Refugees).

To implement randomization, the neighborhoods with the largest number of households projected to participate in the ADN Dignidad program between January and September 2022 are pre-selected. These neighborhoods must meet the following criteria for pre-selection: 1) be part of the municipalities where the joint eligibility rule is applied to participate in ADN Dignidad (eligibility thresholds of the Proxy Means Test and the Model Scorecard) and also be located in the neighborhoods where the partner organization for the implementation of savings groups operates; and 2) have a sufficient projected number of participating households so that at least 1 savings group can be formed under the assumption of an expected acceptance of 50% of the invitations.

To compute the sample size needed for the evaluation we assume an 80% of statistical power, a 50% of compliance rate, and a 95% confidence interval. We would need to invite approximately 1,000 individuals to obtain 500 treated observations, assuming that 50% of these invitations will be successful. We will construct a sample of 1,000 beneficiaries for the control group. With these parameters we would be able to detect a minimum treatment effect of 0.262 standard deviations on the means of variables.

The following descriptive statistics and statistical balance estimates are analyzed based on the total number of participants in the ADN Dignidad program located in all the neighborhoods prioritized for the implementation of the savings groups. In total, there were 2,029 households that comprise the sample used in the analysis presented in this document; however, only a subgroup of these households will finally comprise the study sample, since the total number of treatment and control households will be determined based on the participants that are part of the 24 savings groups (between 400 and 500 participants). Tables 3 and 4 in the Annex show descriptive statistics and balance test for a sample selected to participate in the savings group. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of variables and indicators in administative recods of ADn Dignidad. In general, the participating population is comprised by 78% of women and 22% men, a figure similar to the population distribution of ADN Dignidad participants in the departments under study ( 77.4% men). The same happens with the proportion of Venezuelan migrants that are 80% of the sample. In terms of family vulnerability indicators, the weekly income and per capita expenses of households located in the study neighborhoods reach a value of COP 37,573 and COP 87,151, respectively. In addition, the average values of the Scorecard Model Score and Proxy Means Test of the participants in neighborhoods selected for the Savings Groups experiment indicate a level of vulnerability similar to that of the population of participants, having a difference of only 3%.

## Limitations of the Evaluation

The main limitaions of the evaluation proposed are canonical to every RD design. First, there could be manipulation of scores by applicant families that could invalidate the estimation and assumptions of comparability around a vicinity of thresholds that determine eligibility. However, as we showed before there is no evidence that applicant families are manipulating variables to get scores that would made them eligible at the margin of the eligibility threshold. Moreover, estimates obtained from this analysis are valid for applicants that are close to the threshold of eligibility. That is, the RD design gives an estimate of the effect of the intervention that is interpreted as a local treatment effect.

An additional limitation of the study relates to the possibility of contacting families that applied for the program but were not selected to receive the transfer. If the transfer has an effect on the probability of migrating then we could expect that non recipients are less likely to be contacted by the survey team. This could lead to selective attrition. The research team will handle this by using different statistical weighting methods to adjust for potential selective attrition.

Finally, for the saving groups analysis, the main limitation relates to the likelihood of forming groups using personalized invitations. We work under the assumption that 50% of those beneficiaries invited will eventually form a group. If the success rate is lower the design demands a larger sample to improve statistical power. We will conduct a pilot to address this success rate and calibrate the statistical power analysis. In addition, there is potential contamination of the program, some control group beneficiaries that would like to participate in a savings group, may look to participate and also look for alternative programs as they find out that some beneficiaries are being invited by ADN to form groups. To reduce this potential statistical threat, we work with ADN to design responses to beneficiaries not selected in this Saving Groups intervention that ADN but want to participate. We will also work in large neighborhoods so that contamination through information to beneficiaries that are not invited is minimized.

# Work Plan

## Timeline

The project was submitted to Action Against Hunger by 3ie on February 18, 2022, and the funding was approved by March 30, 2022. The grant agreement was then signed between Action Against Hunger and 3ie on March 31, 2022. The contract has a duration of nine months, starting on April 1, 2022, and ending on December 31, 2022.

On April 7, the launch meeting of the project took place between 3ie and CUA Consortium, where there was an introduction of the point of contacts from each institution, a discussion of the selection of cohorts and households for the evaluation sample, contents for the questionnaire, the ethical approval process, the schedule of activities and products and the design and implementation of the savings group experiment.

The activities and processes completed to date in the run-up to the pilot in the field, enumerator training and implementation of the data collection are mentioned below:

### **Table 3.** Activities completed to date

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activities | Date | Outcome/Decision |
| Research assistance recruitment and hiring | April 1 – April 11 | Three research assistants were shortlisted and hired to support the project. |
| Project launch meeting | April 7 | Initial discussion on the evaluation design, questionnaire, ethical approval and saving groups experiment. |
| Draft of evaluation design, sampling, and qualitative study design | April 11 – May 2 | Drafted an initial version of the evaluation design to submit it to the IRB approval |
| Draft questionnaire design | April 15 – May 15 | Drafted an initial version questionnaire to submit it to the IRB approval |
| transfer questionnaire to an electronic version | May 16 – June 1 | Questionnaire was programmed in the CS Pro software |
| Preparation for the documentation for the IRB | April 11 – May 2 | Collected documents from the IRB checklist requirements |
| Submitted study proposal to the IRB of the Universidad del Rosario (Colombia) | May 2 | The protocol was not admitted, and the revision was declined due to an internal process of defining rates. |
| Meetings with action Against Hunger to discuss the evaluation design of the saving groups | April 28, May 3, May 12 | Held various meetings to refine the evaluation design of the saving groups |
| Submitted study proposal to the IRB of the Universidad Catolica (Chile) | May 13 | Approved on June 7. |
| Began planning the travel logistics for the field trip to Colombia | May 17 |  |
| Requested database for the ADN Dignidad impact assessment | May 24 | Action Against Hunger sent a sample of the format of the database they use to collect the participants' information |
| Sent to Action Against Hunger a list of savings groups and neighborhood groups | May 26 | Received May 31 feedback from Action Against Hunger and questions |
| Request to Action Against Hunger the exact date of the first disbursement to participants | May 26 | Received on June 13, the latest update of the date of payments made by Action Against Hunger |
| Sent to Action Against Hunger a revised list of saving groups and neighborhood groups and answers to questions | June 2 | Addressed the questions and adjustments suggested by Action Against Hunger |
| Requested to Action Against Hunger a Protocol for Adversed Events requested by the U. Catolica, Chile | June 3 | Did not receive any protocol from Action Against Hunger, but iSegoria provided one |
| signed contract between 3ie and isegoria | June 6 | Made the first payment due on the date the grant became effective |
| Development of the interviewers’ manual | May 19 – June 10 | Various iterations of revision of the interviewers manual |
| Developed an agenda for the interviewers training | June 7 | Prepared an agenda for the interviewers' training who will use the questionnaire |
| Sent to Action Against Hunger the revised questionnaire | June 13 | Addressed the questions and adjustments suggested by Action Against Hunger |
| Pre-tested of questionnaire | June 15 |  |
| Finalized the questionnaire in CAPI for the pilot | June 15 |  |

In the Annex ii we have added the Gantt chart for the remaining activities of the project.

# Logistics and Support

In coordination with the Colombian consulting firm iSegoria, we will implement the following activities:

Phone survey: iSegoria is responsible for all aspects of the survey, including pre-testing of the questionnaire, programming of the CATI data collection survey, recruiting and training of enumerators, monitoring and supervising the quality of surveys and enumerators, payment of the incentives to respondents, compiling databases of completed surveys and compliance with data security guidelines given by 3ie evaluation team. iSegoria should attend regular data quality control meetings and define a protocol for data quality supervision and assurance with the 3ie evaluation team.

Similar to the telephone survey, iSegoria is responsible for all aspects of the face-to-face survey, including pre-testing of the questionnaire, programming of the CAPI data collection survey, recruiting and training of enumerators, monitoring and supervising the quality of surveys and enumerators, organization and logistical support for enumerators and supervisors, payment of the incentives to respondents, compiling databases of completed surveys and compliance with data security guidelines given by 3ie evaluation team. iSegoria should attend regular data quality control meetings and define a protocol for data quality supervision and assurance with the 3ie evaluation team.

Furthermore, iSegoria will lead the protocol development, fieldwork, transcription, analysis, reporting and all other aspects of the qualitative component of the impact evaluation.

Additional support from iSegoria will be the acquisition of permissions, insurances, review board clearances, and other formalities required under Colombian Law.iSegoria is responsible for acquiring all permissions necessary for conducting the surveys. This may include relevant permissions from national and/or local authorities when required. iSegoria is also responsible for adhering to local formalities and obtaining any required permits related to the survey implementation, as well as survey team health and accident insurance, salary, taxes, and others as necessary.

# Supporting documents

This inception report is accompanied by supporting documents that have been prepared in the initial phase of the project. The evaluation team have prepared and included in the Deliverable 1 of the project the following: training materials, field manual, CATI program, feasibility report, basal analysis for saving groups and pre-registration in RIDIE and the Social Science Registry.

# Annexes

## Figures and Tables

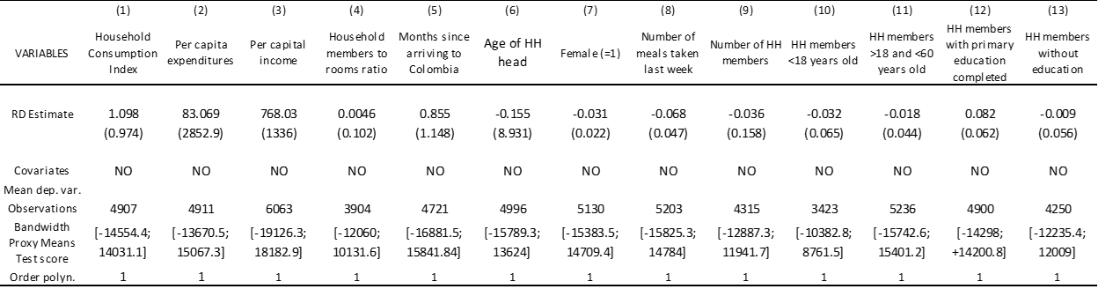
**Figures**

### **Figure 1:** Graphical representation of non-manipulation of the vulnerability score that assigns program benefits for the sample

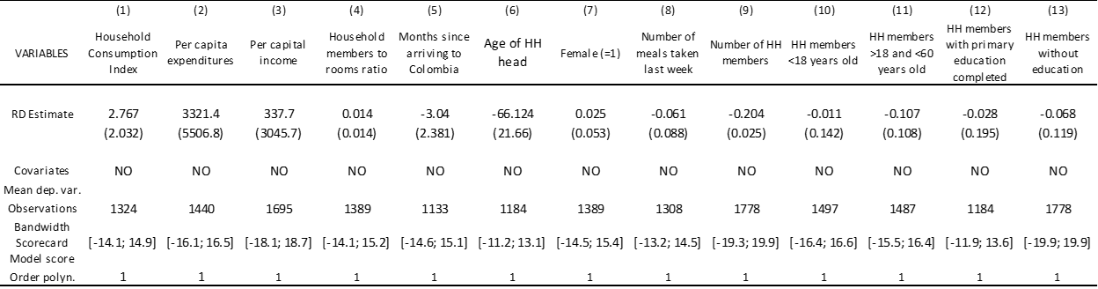
|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Panel A: Scorecard Model score - Distribution | Panel B: Scorecard Model score - Manipulation Test using Applicant’s Data |
|  |  |
| Panel C: Proxy Means Test score - Distribution | Panel D: Proxy Means Test score - Manipulation Test using Applicant’s Data |
|  |  |

**Tables**

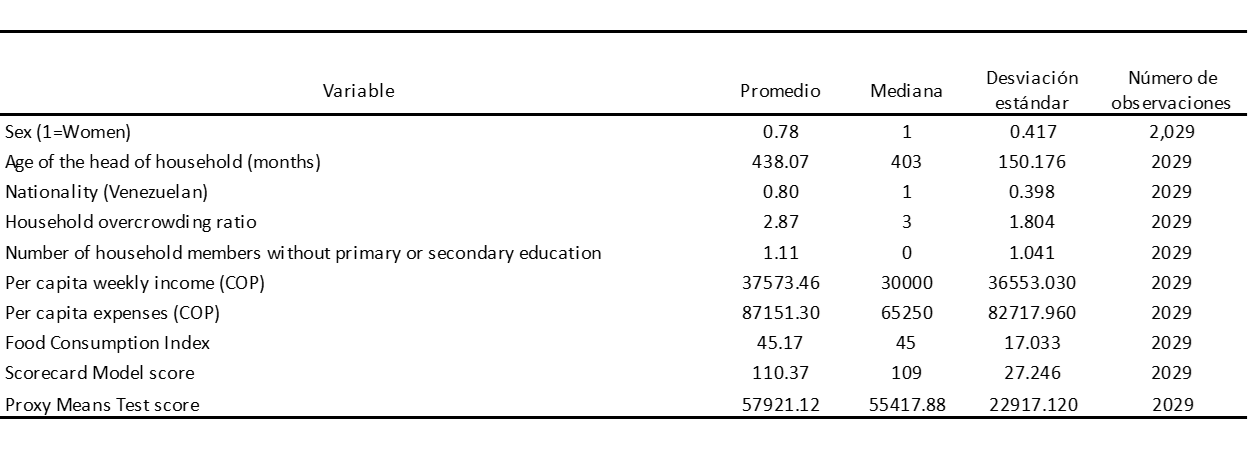
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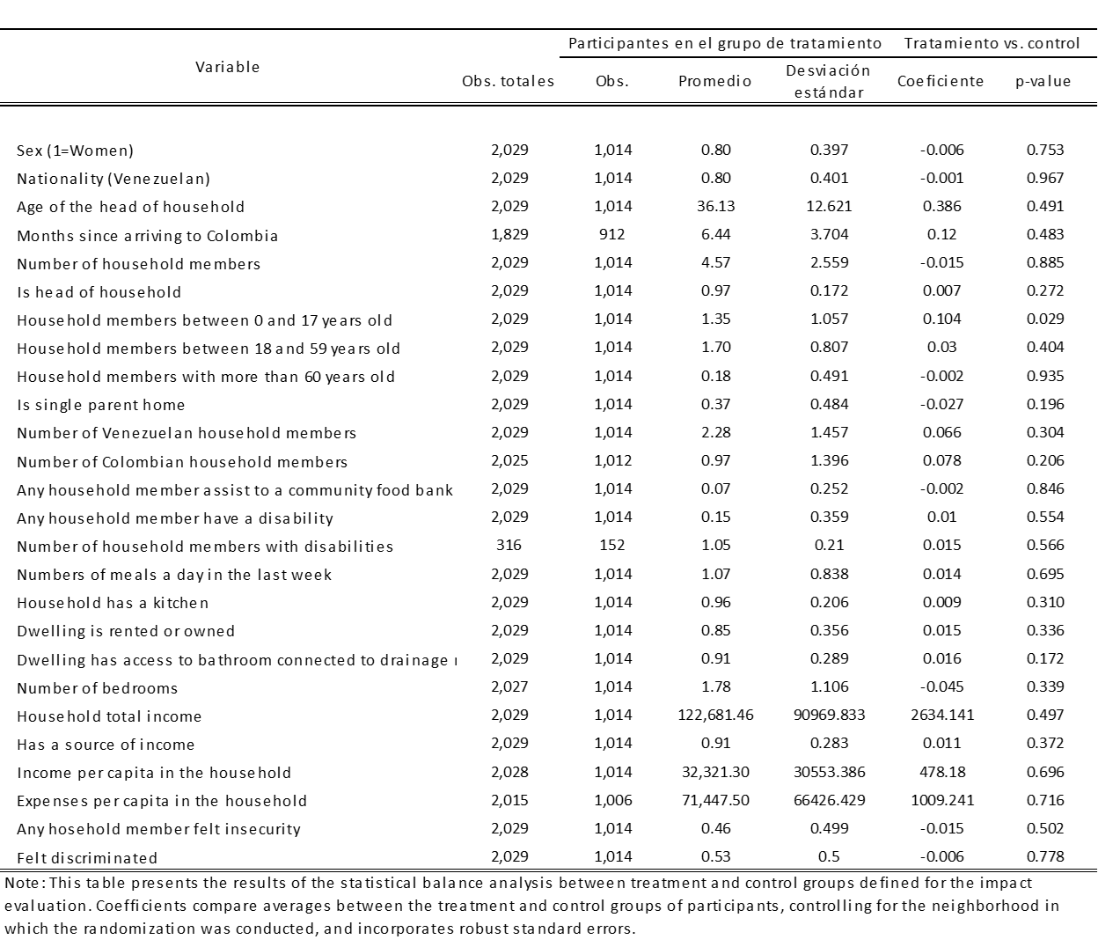
### **Table 5**: RD estimates of differences between eligible and non-eligible applicants with Scorecard Model scores around the cutoff (restricted to participants with Proxy Means Test scores below the threshold)



### **Table 6.** Descriptive statistics of active beneficiaries ADN Dignidad in neighborhoods where the experiment of savings groups will be carried out



### **Table 7.** Statistical balance test between participants of savings groups assigned to the control and treatment group



## Gantt Chart



1. See Cattaneo, M. D., Titiunik, R., & Vazquez-Bare, G. (2019). Power calculations for regression-discontinuity designs. *The Stata Journal*, *19*(1), 210-245. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)