Urban Displacement from Different Perspectives

An Overview of Approaches to Urban Displacement

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GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR URBAN CRISES

Working Group 3 is led by

The **Institute of Development Studies** (IDS) is a global research and learning organisation for equitable and sustainable change. In partnership with the University of Sussex, IDS is ranked first in the world for development studies by the QS University Rankings, and has been working with partners to tackle complex development challenges since 1966.

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About the Global Alliance

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises (the 'Alliance') is a global, multi-disciplinary and collaborative community of practice. The Alliance acts as an inclusive platform bringing together local governments, built environment professionals, academics, humanitarian and development actors, working to arrive at systemic change in the way we enable cities and urban communities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to urban crisis.

Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the Alliance is guided by the Urban Crisis Charter, which outlines four main commitments made by its members: 1) Prioritize local municipal leadership in determining response to urban crisis that is aligned with development trajectories and promotes the active participation of affected people – with special attention to the participation of women – and other key urban stakeholders; 2) Adopt urban resilience as a common framework to align human rights, humanitarian and development goals; 3) Manage urban displacement as a combined human rights, development and humanitarian concern; and 4) Build partnerships between city, national, regional and global levels across disciplines and professions, as well as ensure the involvement of local government and professional associations.

About this Document

This document is part of a series of knowledge products produced through the Alliance Working Groups, with financial support from EU Humanitarian Aid. The series are key steps in driving an agenda of change, when it comes to: 1) developing a better shared understanding of the complexities of urban crises; 2) strengthening engagement between local governments and humanitarian and development actors in particular; 3) developing a systems approach to protracted urban displacement; and 4) building urban resilience in the face of crisis. In addition, the Alliance also supported the development of an Urban Competency Framework, an HPN Good Practice Review, and a case study on urban disaster response in the Philippines.

Members of all Alliance constituencies in different geographic regions and a broad range of experts, have been engaged through joint consultations, and directly informed and contributed to the content of the Knowledge Products. Visit www.urbancrises.org to access the entire series.

COVER PHOTO

A displaced woman overlooking her new city of residence, Yola, Nigeria. Cities in Northeast Nigeria have played host to IDPs for the past several years.

Photo: Elena Heatherwick, IRC

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Summary

In protracted urban crises, which may last decades, a variety of programming responses are employed by a diverse range of stakeholders to address basic needs, disaster risks, peace building and access to basic services. Key stakeholders, which include local authorities, international organizations, local civil society organizations and, where relevant, built environment professionals, have a critical role to play in the overall goal of integrating internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees into city life as quickly as possible. This is in recognition of the rights of refugees and IDPs to live in urban areas as "rights-holders, contributors and partners in the development of towns and cities"[1].

Where local authorities are unable, or unwilling, to fulfill their mandate, international agencies and local civil society organizations (CSOs) will often step into this role to fulfill these responsibilities, given uncertain timeframes and limited donor interest. However, the role of international agencies may be challenging to sustain (though there are exceptions, such as in the Gaza Strip). Many towns and cities hosting displaced populations often do so while grappling with rapid and unmanaged urbanization (often with substantial numbers living in poverty), climate change stresses, and increasing disaster risks.

This paper identifies the divergences and convergences of activities between the four stakeholders identified above in assisting refugees and IDPs living in urban areas. Towns and cities themselves are described using a systems approach*. Five systems are identified:

1. Economy – livelihoods, jobs and support
2. Social protection and accountability – safety nets, gender-based violence (GBV)
3. Access to essential services – health, education, food
4. Built environment – homes and infrastructure (water, electricity)
5. Ecology – environment, climate change, disaster risk reduction (DRR).

The paper is organized into three sections with one annex: Section One describes the stakeholders and urban systems and maps the main activities of the stakeholders to the systems, identifying the degree of their engagement over time. Section Two discusses the respective roles of the stakeholders according to the five urban systems. Section Three comprises concluding comments. Annex 1 summarizes the relevant themes, understandings and approaches gathered during this research.

* A systems approach creates categories that help crisis responders understand the inter-relations between key aspects of urban life. The categories, or systems, are represented by people (their social, cultural, political and economic processes) and the physical environment that is designed to serve them.

Tables of acronyms

CBO	Community-based organization
CSO	Civil society organization
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
GBP	British pound sterling
GBV	Gender-based violence
HLP	Housing, land and property
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RCRC	Red Cross Red Crescent
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Research approach

The purpose of this paper is to identify, analyze and present commonalities and differences between programming responses that international humanitarian actors, local authorities, civil society organizations and built environment professionals employ in protracted urban displacement settings. Of particular interest is how stakeholders effectively complement and align to one another, while retaining their unique advantages, and avoid duplication of effort.

The methodology included primary and secondary data collection and analysis methods. An initial literature review was undertaken of reports, frameworks, evaluations, and case studies of the various types of responses to protracted displacement in urban settings from the perspective of key Alliance constituents (international humanitarian actors, local authorities, civil society organizations and built environment professionals), as well as the recently published Operational Practice Paper 4, *Vulnerabilities in Urban Protracted Displacement: Exploring the Roles of Space and Time*[2]. This was complemented with a series of eleven key informant interviews with recommended representatives from the four constituents. Initial findings and trends were presented to Alliance partners at two regional fora (Kampala, Uganda and Geneva, Switzerland) for review, ground-truthing and, where appropriate, amendment.

Acknowledgements

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Many Syrian refugees in Amman live in historically Palestinian neighborhoods, often straining the existing services and systems of these marginalized urban areas. Photo: Samer Saliba, IRC.

Stakeholders and urban systems

Stakeholders

Towns and cities are home to a wide range of constituents. This paper focuses on four key constituents identified by the Alliance*, namely:

Local authorities – those tasked with city management, including those ensuring the functioning of services such as water and electricity; the enactment of rules, regulations and by-laws (in accordance with national policies and laws); and formulating and enforcing policies that may either help or hinder the integration of refugees and IDPs into city life.

International humanitarian actors – including international NGOs (INGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, and the Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) movement bodies. While the mandate and roles of such organizations vary, two particular types of actors relevant to this study are:

- those engaged with acute emergencies, including the initial displacement of people by conflict, and those who provide emergency response
- those engaged in chronic poverty and in long-term issues and challenges.

Several organizations, in particular INGOs and the RCRC, are involved in both of these overlapping areas. Responses are, however, different: the first is largely concerned with the immediate meeting of basic needs (warmth, food, clothing), while the second is concerned with assistance towards building a life of dignity.

Civil society organizations – such as local NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and religious groups. These organizations are essential for engaging in both immediate needs and in building long-term support. Besides local authorities, these groups are arguably the most vital for providing assistance and support to forcibly displaced people living in urban areas.

Built environment professionals – taken here to mean planners, engineers, architects and builders. On one level it is hard to identify a role for such groups other than as general service providers, much as with other professionals, such as lawyers or doctors (who in a number of ways have a more specific and well-defined role to play). That said, there are activities specific to this group, which are identified in Table 1.

Urban systems

In urban crisis response, a fundamental consideration is the imperative to strengthen and enhance the capacities of what already exists on the ground. A systems approach creates categories that help crisis responders understand the inter-relationships between key aspects of urban life. The categories, or systems, are represented by people (their social, cultural, political and economic processes) and the physical environment that is designed to serve them.

A systems approach to protracted displacement recognizes displacement as a `wicked problem'. A wicked problem is complex, has no clear solution, involves social behavior change, and intervention often results in unforeseen consequences[3]. Thinking of displacement as a wicked problem can lead to more realistic, multi-dimensional responses to displacement, such as integrated programming.

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* As identified in the Terms of Reference for this research.

A systems approach can be used to inform both short and longer-term program responses. When displacement occurs, local and national authorities often treat population influxes as temporary or transient, responding with short-term program measures. However, in reality, many displacement situations turn out not to be short term in nature. They require heavy investment from a multiplicity of stakeholders, invariably with national and local government authorities at the forefront of these investment efforts, such as waste collection and the provision of water and energy. These long-term projects are as essential for addressing the immediate needs of both host and displaced populations, as they are for preventing or mitigating social tensions between both populations. Furthermore, in a worst-case scenario, failure by both government and supporting actors to take the long view, as well as related actions to provide sustainable living conditions in these areas, could result in a system collapse, leading to no provision of services altogether[4].

Based on the rationale above and the commitment to a systems approach to urban crises in the Alliance's charter, this paper puts forward five urban systems that can promote a better understanding of the convergences and divergences of different displacement response activities undertaken by stakeholders at different points. These are:

1. Economy – livelihoods, jobs and support
2. Social protection and accountability – safety nets, GBV
3. Access to essential services – health, education, food
4. Built environment – homes and infrastructure (water, electricity)
5. Ecology – environment, climate change, DRR.

Mapping main activities of key stakeholders to systems

Table 1 summarizes the main activities of the four key stakeholders to the five systems. Table 2 identifies the respective principle roles and activities of these stakeholders according to time (short, medium and long term), recognizing that, in a protracted crises situation, what is almost never known is how long IDPs and refugees will remain forcibly migrated; this can turn out to be months or even generations.

Degrees of engagement of key stakeholders over time

As noted earlier, the timeframe for those forcibly migrated is almost never known – people forcibly migrated may live a lifetime in their new locations, or just a few months. To these ends, a goal for humanitarian action should be that IDPs and refugees become fully integrated into the life of urban areas and are not identified as refugees or IDPs, but as equal urban citizens, as quickly as possible.

Figure 1 illustrates the preferred degrees of engagement with displaced populations over time. Local authorities, as urban managers of services, have a responsibility for service delivery – their engagement is high while refugees and IDPs are living in their urban area. In the early stages of a response, international actors will often invest high amounts of time, effort and resources, providing essential services – but ideally for the short term only, handing over any activities to authorities and or civil society organizations. Civil society organizations may initially invest high to medium levels of time, effort and engagement, and, as IDPs and refugees integrate, their services will also start to be called upon less. However, this may evolve over time depending on need, as shown by the undulating line in the figure. Built environment professionals are not represented in the figure due to the fact that, as service providers, they may be hired by one or more of the other groups represented.

Table 1.

Mapping main activities of key stakeholder to urban systems

Key stakeholders	Urban systems				
	Economy – livelihoods, jobs and support	**Social protection and accountability – safety nets, GBV**	**Access to essential services – health, education, food**	**Built environment – homes and infrastructure (water, electricity)**	**Ecology – environment, climate challenge, DRR**
Local authorities	Implement economic policies that embrace refugees' and IDPs' rights to work; vocational centers; job seeker centers; integrate IDPs and refugees into existing services	Enact protection policies; GBV awareness campaigns; safety net schemes (e.g. school feeding); integration of IDPs and refugees into services; promoting neighborhood cohesion; ensure access to state benefits; ensure police do not discriminate; campaigns to support the presence of refugees and IDPs	Integrate IDPs and refugees into services, e.g. school access for children; enrollment into local health provider schemes	Provide and maintain basic services, e.g. street lighting, sewage, water supplies, electricity; ensure affordability	Ensure policies for long-term environment, e.g. city growth plans; pollution emissions
International humanitarian actors (INGOs, UN, RCRC movement)	Cash transfer programs; assist in accessing affordable loans; support for finding work (documentation needs, training, linking employees to those needing jobs)	Raise awareness of GBV and how to combat it; promote neighborhood cohesion; advocate for infrastructure improvement, e.g. street lighting; provide help in reporting GBV to authorities	Advocate for access where needed; find out rules and address any hindrance to access; help in payments and in contractual needs	Support in renting properties; property repair and maintenance; link landlords with those needing homes; provide legal help in contracts and assisting complaints against landlords	Promote DRR and resilience policies; advocate for SDGs and enacting Paris Agreement
Civil society organizations – local NGOs, CBOs, religious groups	Same as above. Also, link people to employers, offer vocational training	Same as above. Also support for women who may feel vulnerable (drop in centers, building social cohesion, offering friendship)	Same as above. Also ensure access/ provide emergency food banks	Same as above. Also access to emergency shelter and household basics needed on first arrival (such as school halls for large numbers of arrivals)	Same as above
Built environment professionals	Advocate for fair wages for IDPs and refugees working in construction	Retrofitting and repurposing of existing infrastructure, e.g. community centers	N/A	Repurposing of existing buildings, e.g. halls, factories for living; advocate for improved services; retrofitting housing to a higher standard	Planning for ecologically-sound urban growth

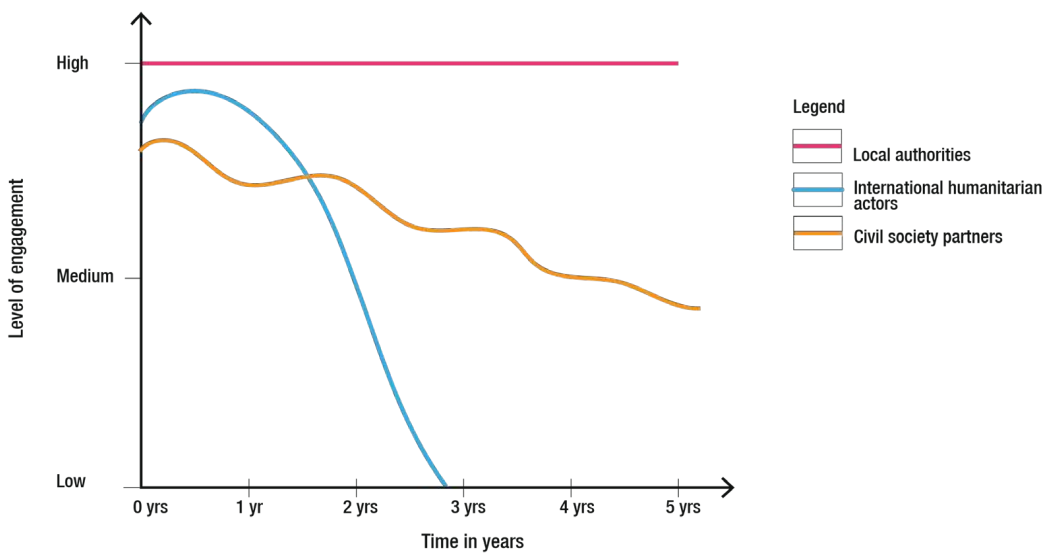
Table 2.

Preferred degrees of engagement of key stakeholders over time

Key stakeholders	Preferred degrees of engagement within timeframe		
	Short term (first 2 years)	**Medium term (2-5 years)**	**Long term (5+ years)**
Local authorities	High as primary service providers	High as primary service providers	High as primary service providers
International humanitarian actors (INGOs, UN, RCRC movement)	High, becoming as low as possible as quickly as possible (to prevent dependency and unrealistic INGO engagement)	Low if at all (as refugees and IDPs should be integrated into urban life)	Ideally not at all (as refugees and IDPs should be integrated into urban life)
Civil society organizations – local NGOs, CBOs, religious groups	High to medium, recognizing the positive benefits of local civil society to the lives of local people	High to medium, depending on the relationship, where IDPs and refugees are equal citizens rather than recipients of assistance	High to medium, depending on the relationship, where IDPs and refugees are equal citizens rather than recipients of assistance
Built environment professionals	High to low, depending on services offered (see previous table)	Ideally not at all (as refugees and IDPs should be integrated into city life)	Ideally not at all (as refugees and IDPs should be integrated into city life)

Figure 1.

Preferred levels of engagement with urban IDPs and refugees over time



Preferred degrees of engagement with IDPs and refugees over time

Activities of stakeholders according to systems

This section discusses the respective role of stakeholders according to the systems identified, and in so doing expands on the summary presented in Table 1. It also outlines the main challenges and opportunities.

Economy

Economic systems include policies and activities around economic inclusion, such as the right to work, decent work and livelihood training. Economic systems also help generate an understanding of market efficiency in terms of labor, goods and housing. On an overall system level, the economic resilience of refugees, IDPs and the host population depends on promoting and analyzing local economic diversity and fiscal stability, understanding labor dynamics, and, where necessary, taking proactive and responsive measures to build economic growth (such as encouraging investment) and development.

To the extent possible, it is within local authorities' interests to galvanize the capacities and efforts of all local inhabitants to engage in local industry and livelihoods. Policies around the right to work and decent work for refugees and IDPs should be thoughtfully formed and evidence-based. Creating an enabling environment can include activities such as vocational and skills training, provision of seed funding for small and medium enterprises, the development of markets, the creation of export opportunities, as well as challenging discriminatory policy and practice.

In regard to economic inclusion, international agencies have a role to play in supporting local authorities to promote a positive environment for livelihood development in the community. These organizations have decades of collective experience in small enterprise development training, market expansion and micro-finance opportunities. Civil society's role in this respect is to inform and shape the design of livelihood activities being developed by aid agencies and local authorities. Civil society can also play an active role in lobbying municipal governments for the economic representation and opportunities of under-served and vulnerable segments of the population who would otherwise be unable to establish and claim their rights to the participation in and benefits of such services.

Regarding market efficiency, a role for local authorities and agencies alike is to ensure, at least early on in a crisis, that food and goods are affordable and accessible. International institutions, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), monitor formal and informal market contexts and the functionality of supply chain dynamics, and should be seen as potential partners for crisis responders engaging in economic support. Humanitarians also have tools for assessing markets (both labor and goods), but on a much smaller scale. Depending on the crisis, humanitarian aid can range from nominal to substantive economic impact. For example, in Syria, the United States government spent US$8 billion on humanitarian assistance while Great Britain committed approximately US$3.6 billion (GBP2.7)[5].

In recent years, humanitarian organizations have become more engaged with housing, land and property rights (HLP) issues. These organizations are in a position to share global learning about land and conflict in urban areas[6], security of tenure in relation to the different types of tenure arrangements that exist (including in rental markets and informal settlements)[7], the diversity of HLP contexts in urban areas of Syria[8], and the barriers Muslim women face around securing tenure rights[9].

Most of the opportunities for urban actors to support the economic systems IDPs and refugees use in the medium and long term fall within a development framework. Key potential areas of

complementarity between government, the private sector and humanitarian and development agencies include: capacity building in relation to municipal budget and asset management; gender responsive planning and budgeting; developing cost-sharing mechanisms for municipal service delivery; legal incentives for cooperation, planning and development agencies; coordinated tax agreements; and pooled financing. Equally important is support for performance monitoring and transparent budgeting. Civil society's role is to inform policies and activities around economic inclusion and market efficiency through participatory data collection, program design and monitoring. Here, in particular, exists an opportunity for academia to produce evidence, case studies, tools and guidance for shaping economic systems to better serve people in crisis.

Social protection

Social protection and social safety nets vary widely and often may not adequately address the needs of refugees and IDPs. Social protection includes social assistance for poorer people through mechanisms such as cash transfers, food aid and school feeding, in addition to social insurance that protects livelihoods through unemployment or disability support, maternity benefits, or support for the elderly[10].

National authorities are normally responsible for the funding and management of social protection safety nets and related programs, whereas local authorities often implement these programs. Consideration should be given to designing social outreach services and communications that pay special attention to people without documentation, seasonal migration, women, the elderly, people living with disabilities, and the working poor who are often not adequately accounted for.

The key challenge with providing social protection to displaced people is that social protection benefits do not always easily transfer across cities. For refugees, a challenge may be around a lack of eligibility as non-nationals of a host country[11]. National governments rarely have the capacity and processes in place to provide social protection in response to mass displacement[12]. Moreover, evidence suggests that social protection is in its infancy in urban contexts and requires adaptation to better connect with spatial and social systems[13]. UNHCR suggests that government and aid agencies diverge the most in their social safety net approaches in terms of the duration of service provision, political requirements, objectives and conditions, all of which can make alignment between stakeholder groups challenging[14].

Having noted the challenges, opportunities do exist for urban actors to work towards convergence between their activities within urban social protection systems. These can be identified across three broad areas. Firstly, humanitarian action can align its cash transfer approaches with existing national and urban social protection systems and aim to trigger the development of nascent safety nets[15]. UNHCR's mapping of opportunities and challenges of social safety nets for displaced populations[16] indicates that humanitarians can contribute to making social protection more inclusive and protection-sensitive by providing technical assistance to governments, particularly with regard to the social welfare services required by displaced persons. They can also offer support for data protection based on lessons learned within humanitarian action, and support capacity strengthening to governments through training, staffing, infrastructure development and system monitoring. Finally, crisis preparedness can occur through building humanitarian mechanisms into national social safety nets that can be scaled up to support displaced and host families when future shocks occur[17]. The European Union notes that for humanitarians, social protection can also be a potential exit strategy, as development actors are well-placed to take over the management of "chronic humanitarian caseloads"[18].

Secondly, social protection can be seen as a potential opportunity to foster social cohesion between refugees and displaced populations[19]. The INGO World Vision notes that social cohesion is a strategic priority for the Lebanese government, whereas for the Jordan government,

The Mayor of a local arrondissement in Bangui welcomes international actors to support to the displacement crisis in the city, 2014. Photo: Simoné Giovetti, UCLG.

social cohesion is treated as a cross-cutting theme in social protection, among other sectoral activities[20]. Civil society has a comparative advantage to support local authorities to organize and mobilize vulnerable communities and households, to ensure that all sectors of the population benefit fully from programs. Civil society organizations should also be key collaborators in the design and identification of social service provision in order to develop appropriate, relevant systems.

Thirdly, the European Commission recommends that in situations of forced displacement, particularly when it is protracted, social protection should become a "cornerstone of any strategy"[21]. Strategies around social protection and safety nets should be led by local authorities who are responsible for social assistance and social insurance related to basic services and livelihoods. They should be guided by international targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals[22] (SDGs), the New Urban Agenda[23], the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework[24] and reforms brought about by the World Humanitarian Summit's Grand Bargain[25]. Health coverage should include regular and emergency services, and link with disease surveillance and monitoring systems. Social care, including specialized protection services for highly vulnerable individuals, should be accessible to all, regardless of status, and should be well funded.

Essential services

Waves of displaced populations place pressure on an urban area's essential services that are often already inadequate, inefficient and in need of maintenance or replacement. The expectation that towns and cities will provide access to essential services that are acutely lacking in rural areas can be a pull factor for IDPs or refugees, as witnessed in Kabul, Afghanistan, for example[26]. The reality however, is that the supply of affordable, accessible essential services that provide energy, water, solid waste and telecommunications lags well behind the demand in urban areas as well. More specifically, over an extended period of time, the scale of pressure exerted by a large

IDP or refugee population on an already over-burdened service delivery system infrastructure may result in a breakdown, or even destruction of that system[27]. This in turn could lead to community tensions or secondary displacement.

In most towns and cities, convergences within essential service provision are focused on active and well-established collaboration between private sector service providers and local authorities. Regulatory oversight is provided by national governments. Municipal authorities primarily work with local built environment professionals and the private sector to plan, implement and monitor access to, and ensure the functioning of basic infrastructure. Humanitarian and development agencies can support governments to plan strategically to ensure that displaced populations enjoy inclusive access and functional links to health and hygiene services, have opportunities for building social cohesion at a local community level, and are included in participatory approaches to local-level management and maintenance of infrastructure.

Convergences also exist between local authorities, civil society, humanitarian and development agencies, and built environment professionals. In the immediate days and weeks after a population influx to an urban environment, humanitarians can support local governments by coordinating the provision of clean drinking and bathing water as well as temporary sanitation solutions, such as portable latrines. At later stages in a response, possibilities for convergence exist with regard to integrated city sanitation planning, pro-poor market-based approaches to fecal sludge management, improved solid waste management, as well as water and sanitation service delivery models. Another possibility could include collaboration on safe water supply related activities, with community engagement and hygiene promotion. In a protracted crisis, strengthening local government bodies' ability to undertake these activities is critical.

Divergence of vision and effort may however exist between government authorities and humanitarian and civil society organizations when, for example, the interests of vulnerable groups located in informal settlements, are not prioritized, or even expressly prohibited by the authorities. In situations such as these, there is a need for robust and timely advocacy efforts on the part of non-governmental partners to raise concerns and lobby for the rights of these groups.

Having said this, support by the aid community to strengthen the scale, capacity and resilience of energy, water, solid waste and telecommunications services may include identification of disconnected areas and population groups, an integrated context or profiling analysis that informs decisions about where investment is needed, as well as the facilitation of partnerships between relevant institutes, private sector partners and civil society groups. At the root of the challenge of access to essential services is a weakness in institutional capacity, and policy and planning approaches[28]. Moreover, humanitarian aid designed to support displaced persons where governments are unwilling or unable to, is unfamiliar, and often incompatible, with essential service support in towns and cities[29]. Finally, improving basic infrastructure tends to be slow, complex, expensive, and often political.

Built environment

Displaced people in urban areas face a multitude of problems related to the built environment, in particular a lack of access to adequate housing and tenure. When seeking to understand the built environment it may be helpful to think of it as two parts. Firstly, urban form, which is the overall form or shape of a town or city based on its parts. For example, urban form includes the layout of roads and streets and the location, size and shape of open spaces designed for purposes such as rainwater catchment or recreational parks. Urban form influences access to jobs, basic needs and general well-being. The quality of roads, the affordability of public transport services and the safety of services directly links to the degree with which people are able to travel for economic or social purposes. Moreover, formal and informal governance mechanisms regulate mobility. For instance, in Lebanon, checkpoints in some towns act as a mobility deterrent for Syrians lacking legal permission to stay due to a perceived fear of arrest, detention or harassment[30].

Secondly, land tenure, which addresses systems of land rights, ownership, use and security, should be considered closely in relation to adequate and affordable housing. In a crisis, humanitarians often refer to HLP rights in the understanding that collectively they refer to "having a home, free from the fear of forced eviction and a place that offers shelter, safety and the ability to secure a livelihood"[31]. The challenge to find affordable housing and land often leads people to live in precarious conditions in poorly serviced and hazard-prone areas on the outskirts of an urban area. It is common to find displaced people living in makeshift houses on public or private land, occupying abandoned homes or unfinished buildings, sheltering in public buildings, such as schools or community centers without permission, or renting at inflated prices with no security of tenure[32].

As is the pattern for most of the systems discussed in this paper, local authorities (via planning departments, for instance) are primarily responsible for regulating the development of larger-scale urban form, including roads, public spaces, such as parks, and public buildings, such as schools or hospitals. It is also responsible for tenure administration, building codes and regulations that guide construction and regulation of the built environment. Other actors aim to support and strengthen a number of activities related to the design, construction and maintenance of the built environment. Additionally, prior to a crisis, built environments are often already under significant stress, a pattern that often repeats itself in other systems, such as essential services, as discussed earlier.

Convergences in the built environment system include the desire to understand how to alleviate pressure on housing markets, the development of profiling approaches, assessments or context analysis methods that adequately assess density (in high-rise dwellings, host families and other forms of multiple occupancy living), the desire to increase adequate and affordable housing stock, as well as work across a spectrum of tenure security arrangements. Broadly speaking, there is acknowledgement that the humanitarian objective of shelter is not only to address shelter needs but also to support "protection, privacy, dignity and household/community coping strategies" in addition to sustainable livelihoods[33].

At all phases of a crisis, local authorities and humanitarians can benefit from engaging with built environment professionals, such as architects, planners, surveyors, engineers, and urban designers, in order to work with technical experts, to seek financial opportunities and archive lessons learned for addressing future shocks and stresses[34]. Convergence can also be evidenced in municipal and aid sector support for global frameworks that influence laws, policies and the construction of the built environment, such as the Sendai Framework, the New Urban Agenda and the United Nations' Agenda 2030 for the achievement of the SDGs. All of these frameworks have built environment components that offer guidance on the prevention of new risks, hazard impact reduction, managing urbanization, and poverty alleviation.

Key informant interviews indicated that divergences between urban actors within the built environment stem largely from a lack of understanding about the role various actors play. Findings in the literature confirm this, pointing specifically to uncertainty from humanitarians about how and when to engage with built environment professionals and associated financial costs[35]. Local authorities of course play a central role in contract management for reconstruction or retrofits of public buildings, as was the case for IDPs in conflict affected eastern Ukraine[36]. Humanitarians may be able to support local government in brokering multi-stakeholder consensus related to HLP, convening fora for participatory settlement planning, or taking on advocacy and information dissemination roles on HLP issues[37]. Municipalities may not always be involved with urban planning and development in relation to displacement and may have very little contact with institutions that would support them with the required skills and knowledge[38]. Local built environment professionals can provide input into plans and strategies that outline how buildings are designed and built to withstand shocks where they are located. Local lawyers can assist with negotiation of legal aspects of tenure on behalf of governments and aid agencies.

Ecology

Understanding the links between the environment and the potential for worsening or for secondary crises within a protracted urban setting is critical. The ecological footprint of a town or city is based on the production and consumption of natural resources such as water and food. Urban biodiversity – the policies and activities that take place to protect all aspects of the environment that humans rely on to survive and thrive – is essential to providing for future generations, which is a relevant concern in places such as Lebanon, that have been hosting refugees for decades.

Key areas of convergence within ecology include disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation efforts by local authorities, civil society and aid agencies. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring local environmental codes and regulations are adhered to; and when necessary, to take action against those who violate these rules. They are also responsible for addressing the linkages between urban and rural spaces by keeping the urban footprint as clean and appropriate as possible. Impact felt `downstream' in rural areas may circle back to towns and cities in the form of polluted water and food systems, or the reduced ability to remove carbon dioxide from the air due to traffic pollution. Humanitarian and development agencies are well equipped to support the design and implementation of climate change, disaster risk reduction and environmental protection programs in neighborhoods. Civil society is optimally placed to provide leadership on the design, implementation and monitoring of such programs in close consultation with local authorities and technical experts from the built environment, such as planners, engineers and architects.

Divergence of efforts and planning priorities that do not consider the environment can create secondary impacts, such as deforestation or watershed pollution to downstream communities. For example, the rapid influx of over 700,000 Rohingya refugees into the areas surrounding Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh resulted in several square miles of hilly, unstable land being clear cut and converted into sprawling tented urban camps. Moreover, within months of arrival, vast tracts of community forest had been completely removed due to a high demand for firewood, construction materials and shelter supplies[39]. This led to increasing tensions between the host community and the refugee population[40].

In addition, there appears to be a gap around addressing the quality of the urban environment in order to improve mental health outcomes. Anxiety and other mental disorders are known to be exacerbated by noise, overcrowding, poverty and a lack of green spaces, such as parks[41]. There is also perhaps a gap in connection with built environment professionals who could place more emphasis on taking low carbon approaches to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by investing in new technologies instead of promoting environmentally costly approaches[42].

Concluding comments

In order to improve the ways in which actors respond to protracted urban crises, a number of actions are required by the respective constituencies. First and foremost, all efforts need to be towards integrating IDPs and refugees into urban life as quickly as possible. To achieve this, the affected communities (host and displaced populations) need to be at the center of the consultation, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation stages of all programs, from short-term interventions to long-term development operations.

International organizations have a role to play in supporting local organizations. This includes aligning efforts to support local authorities. It also means focusing on local civil society organizations who are often overlooked, but who in reality provide on-the-ground, day-to-day support to IDPs and refugees.

Concerning timeframes, long-term development strategies and approaches should be introduced and mainstreamed into humanitarian and recovery interventions as early as possible in order to ensure the smoothest transition to sustainable, locally owned and managed programs. Humanitarian and development organizations, civil society organizations and others need to continue identifying areas of convergence with local authorities in order to complement their activities, support their mandate, and reinforce their responsibilities towards displaced populations within their jurisdiction.

Annex 1. Relevant themes, understandings and approaches

The literature review and key informant interviews undertaken for this study endeavored to explore and understand the spectrum of approaches that the Alliance's stakeholders used to respond to protracted urban displacement environments. The authors identified a diversity of methods that spanned the focus of attention on the individual (i.e. IDP or refugee) to a more geographical focus (such as place-based approaches), to other approaches guided by regional or international normative frameworks. To these ends, this annex presents some of the key approaches, themes and understandings the research found that are currently in use in urban areas, all of which engage key stakeholders to varying degrees.

People-centered approaches.
People-centered approaches take a refugee's and IDP's gender, age and other relevant characteristics into consideration and recognize that these factors can have a major impact on how they experience emergencies and whether they are able, or not, to receive assistance. By ensuring the substantive participation of affected populations, and those that surround them, this approach guarantees that all stages of the program management cycle will be sensitive to the needs and priorities of the populations they aim to serve. In this way, assistance is tailored to a diversity of needs which minimizes losses and unintended negative results that may increase vulnerability or, at worst, cause unintended harm. Refugees' and IDPs' capacities and strategies to live their lives with dignity, and develop cohesive relations with their surrounding communities, by becoming central to the design of the humanitarian response, can also reduce their economic and psychological dependency on external assistance[43], while strengthening their confidence and self-sufficiency going forward.

Place-based approaches.
Place-based approaches consider the geographical factors and needs relevant to the community, whether host or displaced, as well as livelihood-related needs. Related approaches include settlement-based approaches, neighborhood-assistance interventions and area-based approaches (ABAs) that seek collaboration across a wide range of urban actors within the development and humanitarian sectors[44].

Resilience.
esilience-oriented ways of thinking encourage planners to address humanitarian and development responses simultaneously, identifying acute emergency and relief needs (such as saving lives and relieving suffering) and shifting to addressing longer-term, chronic stresses faced by host communities and displaced populations. Development approaches in protracted crises often employ an integrated approach to urban service provision, a focus on social cohesion, solutions for integrating displaced and host populations to livelihood promotion, vocational training, labor markets, and good governance programs[45].

Links to global priorities, standards, and frameworks.
These priorities, operating principles and standards have been internationally negotiated and adopted when identifying both humanitarian and development solutions for protracted urban displacement situations. The instruments include: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Management; the New Urban Agenda; the Grand Bargain resulting from the World Humanitarian Summit; the SDGs; and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Interventions that address urbanization management, climate change, and disaster risk reduction.
Urbanization management and climate change approaches often take a systems-based approach and are essential to protecting displaced populations from the negative effects of external – often meteorological – shocks and stresses. Notable frameworks include: the Urban Climate Resilience Framework by the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET)[46]; UN-Habitat's City Resilience Profiling Tool[47]; and the Rockefeller's City Resilience Framework[48].

Sensitivity to durable solutions.
These options include supporting voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement options. Voluntary repatriation is supported when refugees have reliable information upon which to make a free and un-pressured decision to return home. Local integration of refugees occurs when they settle permanently in the country that granted them asylum. Resettlement of refugees to a third country is facilitated and supported by UN agencies, international organizations and the international community to reduce the pressure on host governments with large refugee populations. Durable solutions also refer to short-, medium- and long-term recovery activities, such as livelihood promotion, vocational training or property and land rights promotion.

Reflective of the 2008 IASC Guidance on IDP Profiling.
By collecting accurate information about IDPs, stakeholders will be able to better understand, plan and respond to the needs of displaced populations. The guidance provides advice on selecting optimal methods for gathering core data such as the number of IDPs, disaggregated by age and sex, location, causes of displacement, patterns of displacement, protection concerns, humanitarian needs, and potential solutions for the group[49]. By adhering to the IASC guidance, a holistic overview of the location of IDPs relative to their surrounding community, can be gained, as well as how to accurately estimate protection, advocacy and programming requirements for IDPs' safe and dignified existence[50].

Attentiveness to the principles of an 'out-of-camp' approach.
The out-of-camp approach was largely developed by UNHCR in recognition that the rights of displaced individuals must be protected regardless of location, and that large numbers of refugees and IDPs seek refuge in urban areas in an attempt to better integrate socially and economically[51]. Therefore, when an organization is thinking about responding to displacement, these elements should be the key touch-points with which to start and take into consideration when designing and developing an intervention.

Finally, a systems approach to responding to protracted urban displacement takes into consideration all these dimensions. Based on this rationale, a systems approach helps to facilitate and comprehend the intrinsic complexity, interconnectivity and interdependence of short and long-term responses to a wide range of shocks, stresses and hazards in urban displacement contexts.

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Urban displacement in Paris, France.
Photo: Samer Saliba, IRC.

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