

## Executive summary

Recent trends in displacement to urban areas as a result of conflict, natural hazards and other drivers show that half of world's internally displaced people (IDPs) now live in such settings. At the same time, protracted displacement is increasingly the norm. Most IDPs find themselves living in displacement for years or even decades, unable to achieve durable solutions and with ongoing needs related to their predicament.

Displacement to urban areas poses unique challenges for IDPs. The many who flee from rural areas are unlikely to have skills adapted to their new environment, and they may well have lost their social and economic networks. Urban housing costs are relatively high, and IDPs' access to livelihoods has a direct bearing on the quality of accommodation they are able to afford. Their housing options tend to narrow over time as they deplete their assets, leading many to join the ranks of the urban poor in slum-like conditions. Here they have little or no access to services, their health may be compromised and they are exposed to the risk of secondary displacement as a result of evictions and the impacts of natural hazards. Their chances of achieving durable solutions are also significantly reduced.

Displacement to urban areas also represents a challenge for humanitarians, who struggle to adapt programme models based on rural, camp-based responses and the provision of emergency shelter. Specific expertise is required to understand the regulatory framework applicable in urban areas, and building specifications and infrastructure requirements call for longer-term collaboration with the development sector and local government institutions. To facilitate IDPs' achievement of durable solutions, whether it be by local integration in urban areas, return to their place of origin or settlement elsewhere in the country, humanitarian and development initiatives need to be better coordinated and the gaps between them bridged.

The fact that urban IDPs tend to be widely dispersed is a further challenge for humanitarians, who tend to adopt a target-group approach. Given the difficulty they face in identifying and locating their beneficiaries, they struggle to design programmes to support them. Urban displacement also constitutes a significant challenge for authorities. Rapid urbanisation means that authorities are often already struggling to provide housing and services to the urban population. In this context, the influx of IDPs, the effect of conflict or disaster and the destruction of housing and infrastructure compound pre-existing housing shortage and affect the capacity of authorities to respond adequately.

There is a consensus on the challenges inherent in responding to urban IDPs' housing needs and rights, but knowledge of practices is limited. This report is a first step towards establishing analytical tools and practices that take into account the complexity of infrastructure and institutional, legal, political and policy frameworks which make urban areas far more difficult to work in than rural areas. It aims to guide and inform policymakers and practitioners when designing, funding and implementing housing policies and programmes that facilitate durable solutions for urban IDPs.

Not all practices may be replicable in all contexts, but they provide a variety of approaches that can be adapted. They offer examples of how national and international responders have succeeded in:

- Locating IDPs and identifying their specific needs through urban profiling and community enumeration and mapping
- Improving IDPs' tenure security through legal aid, incremental tenure, social housing, the regularisation of informal settlements, the upgrading of collective centres and the transfer of ownership
- Addressing urgent humanitarian shelter and longer-term housing needs in cooperation with authorities and affected communities, through a combination of cash assistance, tenure security measures and vocational training
- Adopting a multi-sectorial approach that corresponds to the aspects of the right to adequate housing beyond shelter, including access to basic and social services, income-generating activities, measures that make housing more affordable and improved resilience to natural hazards
- Improving the chances of evicted IDPs of obtaining compensation for their losses and allowing those threatened with eviction to assess potential losses using an eviction impact assessment tool
- Influencing authorities' practices and policies towards successful localised projects that have a broad impact

The report advocates for an area-based and inclusive approach to addressing the housing rights of urban IDPs and their host communities, because their needs are often similar. Such an approach should be combined with targeted approaches when IDPs' specific needs and vulnerabilities have been identified. It advocates for a human rights-based approach to housing programmes and policies across both humanitarian and development sectors, and among national and local responders.



Abandoned office building in Monrovia, hosting urban internally displaced persons. Photo: Christopher Herwig, June 2006

The criteria used to identify and analyse policies and practices are guided by human rights standards, in particular provisions and interpretations of the right to adequate housing in international law, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the UN basic principles and guidelines on development-based displacement and evictions and the IASC framework on durable solutions for IDPs (see annex). Through a matrix of 20 elements, the report identifies and reviews 18 housing approaches (practices and tools).

### General recommendations:

- Humanitarian and development practitioners should base their responses on international human rights law, in particular the right to adequate housing, and on relevant guidelines such as the UN basic principles and guidelines on development-induced displacement and eviction.
- National, municipal and international entities involved in development activities should engage earlier during the humanitarian phase to ensure the continuity and coherence of short-term and longer-term interventions. These interventions should be integrated into broader urban planning and growth strategies.
- Governments should recognise displacement as a development issue for both IDPs and host commu-

nities. International organisations and agencies can help advocate for and shape national housing policies that service the needs of all vulnerable populations. Humanitarians' traditional focus on target groups such as IDPs needs to be complemented by broader development plans addressing these structural issues.

### Specific recommendations on key findings

1. Responses should be more inclusive and address not only the housing rights of IDPs, but also those of the urban poor and the wider community.
2. Development practitioners should include IDPs, particularly those living in protracted displacement, among their beneficiaries in order to address their specific needs.
3. Various forms of tenure, including informal, should be acknowledged and recognised, because they are key to the progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing.
4. More systematic legal and administrative interventions should be undertaken in land administration systems to ensure that multiple forms of tenure are understood and codified.

5. Adequate protections from forced eviction should be put in place in order to avoid renewed displacement and increased impoverishment.
6. National and international interventions should adopt a multi-sectorial approach to facilitate adequate housing and the achievement of durable solutions. This means addressing elements such as tenure security, affordability, habitability, disaster risk reduction, access to basic and social services and employment (see full list in matrix).
7. Programmes that aim to improve tenure security and housing conditions should ensure that their eligibility criteria do not exclude IDPs. Those that include the possession of personal documents, permanent residency, or a specific number of years spent in a given place may constitute factors of discrimination against IDPs, and flexibility should be envisaged in such cases.
8. Legal aid should be offered to urban IDPs to inform them about issues that affect their tenure security, such as lease agreements and protection from eviction, and to advise them on legal and informal routes to conflict resolution and obtaining documentation and building permits.
9. More attention should be paid to affordable rented housing in lieu of home ownership schemes, given that most urban residents rent, particularly the poorer and more marginalised among them and including IDPs.
10. All options for providing affordable housing should be considered. These include the opening up of serviced land, investment in infrastructure, provision of affordable credit, refurbishment of abandoned property, allowing extra floors on existing housing structures, re-zoning land for residential use, increasing population density by encouraging in-fill, and subsidies for the upgrading of vacant and dilapidated housing stock.
11. Humanitarian relief work should be integrated with follow-up interventions as is the case with the Graduation approach where cash-based assistance is combined with livelihood programmes that also include vocational training and small business loans.
12. IDPs should participate meaningfully in housing programmes and interventions should be community-owned.
13. Programming should consider and understand IDPs and displaced households as economic agents who apply their own calculations when prioritising needs such as housing, food, education and health.
14. IDPs should not be viewed as a homogenous group, given that their economic status and resource levels can vary dramatically.
15. The profiling of urban IDPs should be used more systematically to provide valuable socioeconomic data on displaced households and the community they live in, which in turn should be used to address IDPs specific needs and inform longer-term public policy.
16. The focus on displaced individuals and households should shift towards area-based interventions integrated into broader urban planning and growth strategies. Such a shift requires cooperation with municipal authorities, potentially leading to the institutionalisation of practices.
17. The cost-effectiveness of shifting to more area-based interventions should be analysed further, but involving the development sector earlier during the humanitarian phase can help share the costs of longer-term interventions.
18. Authorities and humanitarian organisations should continue to identify and meet IDPs' specific needs, particularly those of vulnerable individuals, if they cannot be addressed by general approaches. Targeted support to facilitate durable solutions is a case in point. As displacement becomes protracted, IDPs' less obvious needs, such as psychosocial support to deal with trauma, tend to be overlooked, making those affected more vulnerable over time.
19. The links between private infrastructure and service providers (i.e water, electricity, solid waste management), their regulation by the municipality and the way the international humanitarian and development communities can better support them should be studied further.
20. The extent to which interventions need to be adapted to address urban scale should be studied further to determine, for example, how supporting municipalities or working with commercial service providers in second and third-tier cities differs from doing so in capitals and megacities.