

*A snapshot of daily life in urban Goma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Goma has been a central point for the reception of displaced persons over the last 20 years of conflict in the country. Photo: NRC/Odette Asha, December 2013*

## BRIEFING PAPER

# LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

## Internal displacement and the New Urban Agenda

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Habitat III, the third UN conference on housing and sustainable urban development, will take place between 17 and 20 October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. The first Habitat conference was held in Vancouver in 1976, and the second in Istanbul in 1996. Following two years of global consultations and negotiations between civil society, academia, the private sector, international organisations and governments, a framework for the planning and management of cities over the next 20 years will be proposed for adoption at Habitat III. Preventing and addressing displacement is a sustainable development challenge of vital importance to its design and implementation. In line with the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, which has sustainable cities and settlements as one of its goals, the New Urban Agenda pledges to “leave no one behind”, and that includes internally displaced people (IDPs).

The New Urban Agenda contains several references to IDPs.<sup>1</sup> It recognises that particular attention is needed to address discrimination faced by IDPs, but also particular groups among them and people at risk of displacement such as indigenous peoples, informal settlement dwellers, homeless people, subsistence farmers and fishermen. It acknowledges

that displacement presents challenges in urban settings, but that IDPs can bring significant social, economic and cultural contributions to urban life. It offers support to governments to encourage participation from all segments of society, including IDPs. It commits to promote full, productive and decent work as well as livelihood opportunities with special attention to the needs of IDPs, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. It also seeks to improve access to affordable housing and tenure security to prevent forced evictions and displacement.

### Key messages

To ensure the inclusive implementation of the New Urban Agenda as it pertains to IDPs, member states will need to:

1. **Capitalise on the agenda to support IDPs’ local integration in urban areas:** In their efforts toward sustainable urban development, policymakers and those implementing programmes and projects should ensure that their plans address IDPs’ needs and rights to facilitate their local integration. To do so will also require attending to the needs of their non-displaced neighbours, with tenure security the first priority. Particular attention should be paid to those living in long-term internal displacement, and those who have been repeatedly displaced.

2. **Ensure that urban development work does not increase impoverishment and marginalisation by displacing people internally:** Decades of research have shown that people who are evicted from their homes and land to make way for development projects suffer impoverishment and marginalisation, and there is a risk that efforts to implement the New Urban Agenda may force people to relocate. Their protection should be prioritised to ensure that they benefit rather than suffer from development work.
3. **Address the structural factors that overlap, combine and accumulate to increase the risk of people being displaced to and within urban areas:** Rapid and poorly planned urbanisation is one of the main drivers of disaster risk and associated displacement. More evidence and knowledge about this and other displacement drivers, such as poverty and weak governance, is required to ensure development gains that arise as a result of the New Urban Agenda are reinforced.
4. **View urban IDPs as social and economic agents with capacities for urban development rather than a burden:** Cities already have a host of competing priorities to juggle when a crisis hits or there is an influx of IDPs. These may lead authorities to ignore or neglect IDPs, obstruct their integration and call for their return to their places of origin. Tapping into their capacities and resources instead as part of reconstruction and development efforts improves their self-reliance and helps to speed up urban recovery.
5. **Improve the collection and analysis of data on urban IDPs to ensure they are not left behind:** A global estimate of the number of IDPs in urban areas does not exist. Disaggregated data on IDPs in urban areas is required to ensure that their protection and assistance needs are integrated into the development work undertaken as part of the New Urban Agenda. Governments should invest adequate human and financial resources to make this a reality at both the national and local level, and ensure these efforts are not interrupted by elections or staff turnover. Global standards on urban displacement data collection should also be strengthened.

## Internal displacement in urban areas

An ever growing proportion of the world's population live in urban areas and cities which are increasingly the scene of evictions, disasters, violence and armed conflict.<sup>2</sup> Public and private sector developers worldwide have manipulated urban land use patterns, demolishing informal housing to make way for gentrification in the form of skyscrapers, luxury compounds and shopping malls.<sup>3</sup> Rapid and poorly planned urbanisation coupled with limited disaster and climate change mitigation measures, the lack of enforcement of building standards and land-use plans, and environmental degradation are driving displacement risk in cities by increasing people's exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards.<sup>4</sup> The proliferation of urban youth gangs, organised crime, drugs and small arms has also created dangerous areas in many if not all cities. In some, urban warfare and associated violations of international humanitarian law are on the increase.<sup>5</sup> These phenomena tend to overlap, combine and accumulate, setting up a vicious cycle of increasingly acute and chronic vulnerability.<sup>6</sup>



*Jennat (1.5) and her sister Lamiha (8) are Iraqi IDPs from Ramadi, Anbar. Together with their mother and 7 other siblings they had to flee their home. Lamiha did not attend school at the time. Photo: NRC/Karl Schembri, September 2015*

Displacement has long been recognised as a driver of urbanisation.<sup>7</sup> Its dynamics are complex and interconnected, and IDPs' flight path tends to be based on a number of factors, often in combination. They may flee to cities because relatives or friends living there can accommodate them and connect them to social networks.<sup>8</sup> They may also do so in search of income-generating opportunities, markets, healthcare and education services and relative safety.<sup>9</sup> Urban areas also offer a degree of anonymity for rebuilding lives that can be harder to find in rural areas, and the prospect of receiving aid may be a further pull factor.<sup>10</sup> Not all urban IDPs, however, have fled to cities. Urban areas can be scenes of calm and refuge, but also crisis and flight, and people are also displaced *within* them. Those who flee within urban areas tend to remain in the vicinity to keep watch on their property and maintain the access they have established to social networks, services and livelihoods. Some IDPs flee *from* urban areas and take up shelter in peri-urban or rural areas.<sup>11</sup>

Urban IDPs take up residence in a variety of locations and move within and outside cities to peri-urban and rural areas in their daily lives.<sup>12</sup> They tend to live in dispersed settings with relatives or friends, or in private accommodation that they own, rent or otherwise occupy.<sup>13</sup> Many reside in poorly serviced informal settlements on the outskirts of towns and cities, which can be unsafe and vulnerable to the impact of natural hazards.<sup>14</sup> Others live in formal or informal collective shelters, established on public or private land specifically to accommodate them.<sup>15</sup> High rents, the inability of hosts to continue accommodating them and safety concerns may force some to shift between different living arrangements, which can contribute to chronic vulnerability. IDPs' movement within cities may be restricted by disputed or divided control of urban areas, and fear of harassment, detention or eviction. Some choose not to return to their rural homes even when security seems to have improved or the impacts of a disaster have abated. They remain because they have adopted an urban way of life, in some cases meaning that camps and shelters set up to accommodate them morph into permanent settlements.<sup>16</sup>

Cities' role as a safe haven for IDPs can be eroded by a range of factors. When a city is in crisis, there are often civilian casualties, infrastructure is destroyed, basic services are

disrupted, landmines and checkpoints obstruct movement, the delivery of goods is limited and law and order undermined.<sup>17</sup> New influxes of people lead to overcrowding, less access to clean water and sanitation, an increased risk of public health emergencies and soil degradation.<sup>18</sup> Increased competition for scarce jobs, housing, land, resources and services can lead to tensions with local residents.<sup>19</sup> Local authorities tend to be ill prepared for the demographic, security and social challenges that internal displacement brings, which puts added stress on infrastructure, services and housing stock, which may already be inadequate. Significant funding, assistance and manpower is required to respond to urban needs in times of crisis, and to re-establish security or recover from the impacts of a disaster.<sup>20</sup> Some municipal governments have managed to help IDPs improve their capacity to cope with shocks and pressures, but others have simply ignored their presence.<sup>21</sup> Election cycles and high staff turnover as well as different interests and visions for reconstruction can also undermine long-term thinking and interrupt policy implementation.<sup>22</sup>

### Data on urban internal displacement

Numerous experts have reported that the majority of people internally displaced by conflict and violence around the world flee to urban areas, but there is no global dataset to support this estimate.<sup>23</sup> Knowledge about the scale of internal displacement to, from and within cities as a result of conflict and violence is neither comprehensive nor precise.<sup>24</sup> Nor are there reliable global estimates for the number of people displaced to,

from or within urban areas by disasters, development projects or business activities. What little data is available is not enough to assess the true scale of the phenomenon, IDPs' needs or the length of time they have been displaced for. This in turn impedes the development of policies and programmes to assist them. The quantity and quality of data also varies widely from country to country, making comparative analyses and the calculation of a global figure difficult if not impossible.<sup>25</sup>

Many urban IDPs are essentially "invisible", and identifying and registering them is difficult for a number of reasons:

- Some may simply not wish to be identified.
- The proportion of IDPs among the urban population is low, and they are dispersed over wide areas among the urban poor and economic migrants.<sup>26</sup>
- They tend to be highly mobile within and beyond the city, which means that location-level information is often not systematically collected. Lack of access because of insecurity can also be an issue.<sup>27</sup>
- Monitoring efforts rarely cover all types of residence and tend only to include IDPs living in urban camps and other collective settlements, leaving many out of the count and analysis.<sup>28</sup>
- Similarly, census data and maps are unlikely to include the informal settlements or host families where many urban IDPs live.<sup>29</sup>
- There are myriad definitions of both what constitutes an urban area and an IDP.<sup>30</sup> This hampers the collection of data that can be compared across cities and countries.



IDP Elena Tekhova (24) and her daughter Lizi Tediashvili (1.5) live in Kindergarten #1, a former kindergarten used as a shelter for IDPs in the greater Tbilisi area. Originally from Zardiaantkari, a village close to the boundary line with South Ossetia, Elena has lived here since the 2008 conflict, in a single room dwelling with six members of her family. Photo: Daron D'Souza, 2011

Perhaps the greatest difficulty, however, lies in a lack of political will to make internal displacement a more visible phenomenon.

Figure 1 shows the 20 largest estimates for populations of urban IDPs that we have collected and calculated so far.\* “Urban locality” is used in this paper as a general term for the entire urban area in question, whether it is a city, town, city municipality, urban agglomeration or metropolitan district. We limited our review to disaggregated data for a town or city and its urban agglomeration area collected between 2006 and 2016, but in many cases the situations that triggered the displacements started earlier. We excluded broader or national aggregated figures because we did not have enough information to assign subpopulations of IDPs to different urban localities. Some first-level subnational figures are included because the corresponding geographical area is relatively small, and known through further research to be entirely urbanised. This was the case for Bamako district and Damascus governorate.

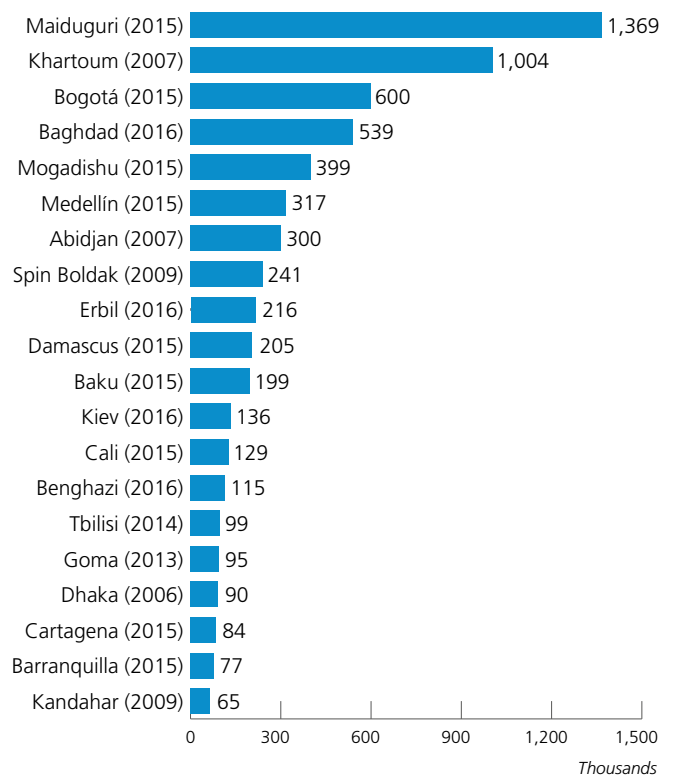
According to data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)’s displacement tracking matrix (DTM), of 63 urban localities for which estimates are available, the agglomeration area of Maiduguri in Nigeria has the highest number of IDPs at 1.37 million.<sup>31</sup> Estimates for Baghdad, Bamako, Benghazi, Kathmandu, Port-au-Prince, Taizz and Tripoli were also drawn from DTM data.<sup>32</sup> A methodology similar to the DTM’s was used to derive estimates for Spin Boldak and Kandahar city in southern Afghanistan.<sup>33</sup>

Khartoum’s lower bound estimate was calculated using a profiling methodology for urban IDPs. It is based on a two-stage sample survey and the 2003 population estimate.<sup>34</sup> Variants of this sample survey method were also used for Abidjan, Erbil, Santa Marta and 20 urban municipalities in Honduras.<sup>35</sup> The Mogadishu estimate is a full census or complete enumeration of all IDPs living in the city’s informal settlements.<sup>36</sup>

Population registers and administrative data are also useful sources. The Colombian government’s Unit for the Integral Reparation and Assistance of Victims (UARIV), Georgia’s ministry for IDPs,<sup>37</sup> and Ukraine’s ministry of social policy maintain their countries’ internal displacement registries with data disaggregated geographically. Aggregating the figures for all areas of Tbilisi yields an estimate of 99,000 urban IDPs in the city as of September 2014.<sup>38</sup> A similar exercise for Kiev produces a figure of 136,000.<sup>39</sup>

\* For more details and analysis of this and additional data on urban IDPs collected for this study, please see <https://goo.gl/vaVc70>. Estimates of the number of IDPs in the following urban localities were included in our study: **Afghanistan:** Helmand, Herat, Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Spin Boldak; **Azerbaijan:** Baku; **Bangladesh:** Dhaka; **Central African Republic:** Bangui; **Colombia:** Barranquilla, Bogotá, Cali, Cartagena, Medellín, Santa Marta; **Democratic Republic of Congo:** Goma; **Côte d’Ivoire:** Abidjan; **Georgia:** Tbilisi; **Haiti:** Port-au-Prince; **Honduras:** San Pedro Sula, Choloma, Puerto Cortés, La Ceiba, Tela, El Progreso, Olanchito, Yoro, Tocoa, Trujillo, La Esperanza, Intibucá, Marcala, Santa Bárbara, Distrito Central, Juticalpa, Catacamas, Comayagua, Siguatepeque, Danlí; **Iraq:** Erbil, Baghdad; **Kenya:** Nairobi; **Libya:** Benghazi, Tripoli; **Mali:** Bamako; **Myanmar:** Myitkyina town, Waingmaw town, Bhamo town, Hpakant town, Lwegel town, Namhkan town; **Nepal:** Kathmandu; **Nigeria:** Maiduguri; **Pakistan:** Peshawar; **Palestine:** Gaza city; **Philippines:** Zamboanga city; **Somalia:** Mogadishu, Hargeisa; **South Sudan:** Yei; **Sudan:** Khartoum; **Syria:** Damascus; **Ukraine:** Kiev; **Yemen:** Taizz city

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF URBAN IDPS BY LOCALITY



Figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000. If the estimate is part of a numeric range, the lower bound figure is used. The year in brackets refers to the last date when data was collected

The estimates for the urban municipalities of Barranquilla, Cali, Cartagena and Medellín in Colombia were derived from UARIV’s register.<sup>40</sup> The figure for Bogotá of 600,000 is based on interviews with officials from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and includes municipalities in the Bogotá metropolitan area such as Soacha.<sup>41</sup> By comparison, the UARIV estimate for Bogotá municipality alone is 321,000.<sup>42</sup>

Azerbaijan’s state committee for refugees and IDPs collects statistics but does not publicly issue current data disaggregated by location, so we relied instead on unpublished UNHCR data for our Baku and Damascus estimates.<sup>43</sup> In other cases, we used one-off case studies as data sources. Our Dhaka estimate is based on a local NGO study of “Urdu-speaking” IDPs living in the city’s informal settlements, and our Goma figure on a Norwegian Refugee Council report on the living conditions of IDPs and host communities in the city.<sup>44</sup>

Data on urban IDPs displaced by disasters is extremely sparse, particularly for those living in protracted situations.<sup>45</sup> Internal displacement associated with disasters tends only to be monitored for relatively short periods of time. IOM’s DTM for Haiti and Nepal, however, has tracked the phenomenon since 2010 and yields a figure of 57,000 IDPs in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince and 8,000 in the urban agglomeration of Kathmandu Valley.<sup>46</sup> Data on internal displacement associated with development projects and business activities in urban areas is scarcer still, though some local NGOs, such as the Housing and Land Rights Network in Delhi, maintain databases on evictions.

Overall, the limited data available on urban and peri-urban IDPs impedes comprehensive understanding of displacement in urban environments, and hampers the formulation of policies and programmes to address the phenomenon. The inability to compare urban IDPs' situations like-for-like across different cities and countries, and to contrast them with those of their rural counterparts makes it difficult to assess which needs and vulnerabilities are truly "urban-specific". Data collection should also cover host communities and others living in the same vicinity as IDPs when assessing local needs and issues.

## Challenges for IDPs in urban areas

IDPs have varying interests, needs, capacities and vulnerabilities. Some are absorbed into the urban fabric, effectively becoming hidden in their host city, while others remain part of the visible urban poor and face many of the same challenges.<sup>47</sup> These may include lack of secure tenure, overcrowded and insalubrious living conditions, unemployment, insecurity, poor health and lack of access to basic services.<sup>48</sup> Displacement is a key indicator of vulnerability for poor urban populations, but it can be difficult to distinguish between the specific needs of the most vulnerable IDPs and other poor and marginalised communities, particularly when their displacement becomes protracted.<sup>49</sup> That said, many urban IDPs do have needs and vulnerabilities distinct from the broader development challenges related to urban poverty.<sup>50</sup> However, to date, only a small number of studies have made the comparison. These include the following:

- In Abidjan, Khartoum and Santa Marta, IDPs displaced by conflict and violence were poorer, and experienced more insecurity than their non-displaced counterparts.<sup>51</sup> They were already impoverished and traumatised when they arrived in their host cities, having lost their land, crops, documents and other assets. Without support networks, urban skills or knowledge of the local language they struggled to establish livelihoods. They were also more likely to be victims of looting, intimidation and extortion by militia and criminal groups.<sup>52</sup>
- In Somalia, IDPs in Mogadishu displaced by conflict and violence were also more vulnerable than their host communities and economic migrants, and had a lower standard of living. They particularly struggled to secure land and housing tenure.<sup>53</sup> Those in Hargeisa generally shared the same needs and low standard of living as other urban poor, but some were worse off in terms of food security, livelihoods, healthcare, education and documentation.<sup>54</sup>
- Urban IDPs displaced by violence and crime in Honduras are more likely than their non-displaced counterparts to live in overcrowded housing and have insecure tenure, poor health and economic insecurity.<sup>55</sup> A significant portion of their low income goes toward rent for housing, which is more often located in or near at-risk areas compared to the non-displaced.
- Four years after the earthquake in Port-au-Prince, IDPs struggled more to meet their basic needs and access services, felt less safe, and were twice as likely to live in worse housing conditions compared to before the earthquake. IDPs typically faced worse housing conditions even before the earthquake, highlighting inadequate housing as a source of displacement risk.<sup>56</sup>



*At the height of the displacement crisis in Zamboanga, Philippines, around 44,000 people were concentrated in the city's main sports stadium. Photo: IDMC/Frederik Kok, June 2014*

Multiple displacement is a reality or a risk for many urban IDPs. Their lack of secure tenure makes their housing situations precarious and leaves them vulnerable to forced eviction and homelessness, with female urban IDPs at particular risk.<sup>57</sup> Forced evictions are highly disruptive to IDPs' efforts to strengthen their resilience to future shocks as they tend to increase their poverty and vulnerability. Those affected usually lose everything, and they rarely have access to alternative housing, adequate compensation or legal remedies. They often end up in areas that are more insecure and exposed to hazards.<sup>58</sup> In some cases, urban IDPs are forced to flee again by conflict or disasters. Their lack of tenure and documentation makes it difficult if not impossible for them to access support such as temporary shelter and permanent housing solutions.<sup>59</sup>

Municipal authorities may resist helping IDPs for fear of encouraging further influxes and putting additional pressure on already overburdened public services.<sup>60</sup> If, however, urban IDPs' specific needs are understood and used as the basis for programmes to reduce their vulnerability, they can be incorporated into their host cities as productive residents. Such programmes should also benefit other urban residents with similar needs to strengthen social cohesion. Failure to do so contributes to uncontrolled urban sprawl, greater competition for limited resources such as land and water, and heightened social tension and discrimination. It also increases the risk of violence, conflict, disasters and crime.<sup>61</sup> All of these factors put unnecessary and avoidable burdens and strain on cities and their inhabitants. Urbanisation is a man-made phenomenon. With adequate planning and resources based on a comprehensive understanding of residents' needs, it can be a force for sustainable development for all.

## ENDNOTES

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## CONTACT

Nadine Walicki  
Senior Strategic Advisor  
on Development  
+41 22 552 36 35  
nadine.walicki@idmc.ch

Cheng Boon Ong  
Monitoring Expert  
+41 22 552 36 53  
cheng.ong@idmc.ch

IDMC  
NRC, 3 rue de Varembe  
1202 Geneva, Switzerland  
www.internal-displacement.org  
+41 22 552 3600  
info@idmc.ch



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