

Urban displacement and development: moving the debate forward

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On 7 and 8 February 2013 humanitarian and development actors, scholars and donors met in Copenhagen for a conference hosted by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of DANIDA and the Overseas Development Institute's Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG). The purpose of the event was to present the findings of the [Sanctuary in the city](#) project, which benefitted from long-term support from DANIDA, and to discuss the implications of protracted urban displacement.

Overriding themes that emerged in the research and subsequent presentations and conversations over the two days included the need to improve cooperation and collaboration between development and humanitarian actors, develop innovative approaches to durable solutions and alternative perspectives on parallel structures and find ways to mainstream long-term, developmental, rights-based responses to urban displacement.

Welcome and Opening Address

Thomas Thomsen welcomed participants to the conference and commented on how the conference built on many years of debate within the humanitarian sector and longstanding involvement by Danida in the search for solutions to protracted displacement. This had led contributed to the decision to fund the ODI/HPG *Sanctuary in the City* project for the last three years.

Charlotte Slente (Under-Secretary for Global Development and Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark) opened the conference with remarks that affirmed that assistance to displaced people, with a strong focus on protection and durable solutions, is a key priority in Denmark's humanitarian strategy. This strategy focuses on addressing vulnerabilities as well as supporting the search for lasting solutions.

In recent years Denmark has focussed on providing assistance in protracted displacement situations. This support has involved funding activities in refugee camps and rural areas, and direct assistance to refugees in urban settings has so far been on a relatively modest scale. However, urban displacement became a key theme after the development of a new programme in support of return and reintegration in Afghanistan in 2009. This was in recognition that unsustainable return to rural areas had led returnees to quit their home areas once again, contributing to rapid urbanisation. This in turn had led to the growth of slums and increased vulnerabilities among displaced people and the urban poor. The analysis of the problem was clear but there was no consensus among NGOs and UN organisations about how to respond in a meaningful and efficient manner, with humanitarian actors arguing that an effective response was beyond their remit and development actors arguing that the problem stemmed from the 'illegal' settlement of IDPs and returnees outside of municipal plans.

This situation was not unique. Urban displacement was becoming a global phenomenon and several processes were initiated at that time by actors such as the UNHCR and IASC. The Danish decision to fund the HPG/ODI *Sanctuary in the City* project drew on the dilemmas faced in Kabul. It was taken in the interest of developing better approaches together with Danida's partners, and out of recognition

of the need to disseminate findings widely among institutions involved in dealing with urban displacement. The case studies had so far achieved these objectives and inspired dialogue with partners and in the humanitarian world as a whole.

One overriding conclusion from the research project has been that, while urban displacement raises a number of significant humanitarian needs, it should also be recognised as a development challenge. This finding had been validated by Denmark's experience in Kabul and Nairobi where, as in many places, displacement has ended up being protracted, with refugees blending into the urban fabric. This situation is complex – many displaced people in urban settings face particular vulnerabilities, but some also become important actors in the informal economy. Refugees often live in precarious circumstances but also possess resources and skills that can be of value to host communities. This complexity must be recognised from the outset and our approaches adapted accordingly.

Essentially this calls for new efforts to promote links between humanitarian and development actors. The need for this has been recognised in debates during the past 10–20 years at least. But experience also shows that achieving this linkage is difficult for reasons that have to do with systems, procedures, funding availability, funding sources and cultural and language differences.

Slente remarked that this seemed to call for a paradigm shift involving new ways of responding to vulnerabilities in urban areas, undertaken within a long-term development framework, but without losing sight of humanitarian principles. This raised crucial questions about working with host governments, supporting municipal authorities and engaging development partners in the search for lasting solutions to urban displacement.

Humanitarian staff in Danida have long argued for improved linkages between humanitarian and development assistance, and in recent years there has been some progress on this front, in particular because of a shared focus on fragile states, both politically and in terms of assistance and growing pressure for a whole-of-government approach.

This has led to changes in decision-making structures and programming procedures. As a result Danida is moving away from traditional sector support to developing country programmes that cover all funding instruments, in principle also including protracted humanitarian assistance. A process involving regular strategic reviews is intended to provide the necessary flexibility to adapt strategies to a rapidly changing context. In Mali, Denmark's entire assistance programme has moved into activities that support local resilience, and has recently focussed on initiatives that support stability and peace.

Internal and external challenges remain. Internally, humanitarian assistance is managed at the central level, whereas management of all development assistance has been decentralised to missions abroad. Critical discussions concerning the core objectives of our assistance programme still arise as it is sometimes difficult to reconcile the humanitarian focus on needs with political objectives regarding stability. External challenges include the need to build the capacity of host country governments rather than relying on parallel structures.

This is often difficult as governments in fragile states are often not inclined to focus on particularly vulnerable groups such as refugees and the internally displaced in urban settings. These groups

simply do not have political bargaining power and it is difficult to change this in any profound manner.

Slente noted that the opportunity for both humanitarian and development actors to discuss these important challenges together was itself a step in the right direction, and called for clear, constructive and forward-looking recommendations that would have a real bearing on vulnerable displaced people in urban settings.

Sanctuary in the city: a comparative examination of urban displacement in seven urban centres

Simone Haysom (HPG) and **Sean Loughna (HPG)** presented the findings of the [*Sanctuary in the city*](#) project, which consists of seven case studies in [Amman, Jordan](#); [Yei, South Sudan](#); [Damascus, Syria](#); [Nairobi, Kenya](#); [Kabul, Afghanistan](#); Peshawar, Pakistan; and several cities in the [Gaza Strip](#). In conducting the study the high level of complexity in these cities, and the need to develop a suitable research approach, immediately became clear. During the discussion, participants questioned the choices of cities and countries for the study. The case studies were selected in order to examine a variety of displacement experiences in both small and medium-sized urban areas and major cities. The analysis of the case studies also builds on past HPG work in this area, including research in South Sudan in 2010, a [special issue of the journal *Disasters*](#) and a contribution to the [World Disasters Report](#).

This work is intended to provide a body of evidence to help development actors, donors and humanitarians develop new approaches to urban displacement. Many humanitarian-run programmes in urban areas simply ‘tweak’ traditional camp-based or rural approaches, but do not develop new methodologies or recognise that urban displacement requires a fundamentally different approach.

The past few decades have seen large-scale urbanisation. Migration has many causes: many migrants arrive as a result of displacement due to conflict, violence, development projects or natural disasters, or through voluntary economic migration. The case studies conducted by HPG focus on forced displacement, particularly as a result of violence. Very little displacement resolves over the short term, and one of the challenges of urban displacement is recognising its protracted nature.

The urban areas studied are highly heterogeneous, and it was extremely difficult to identify and assess the specific needs of refugees and IDPs, not least because they did not always identify themselves as such. Some displaced people did not wish to be recognised and wanted to remain anonymous, and identifying others was difficult because of government restrictions on contact with these groups. Nevertheless, through a methodology relying on the careful selection of sampling sites and working through local networks, the studies produced rich findings about urban displacement.

Obligations under international or national law were found to have a mixed impact on how refugees and IDPs were treated by the authorities. Out of the seven countries studied, only Afghanistan and Kenya are signatories to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (although South Sudan intends to become

a signatory). Pakistan strongly rejects the implications of local integration, and many Middle Eastern countries have declined to accede to the convention. In all seven countries local and national politics and recent history are highly influential in determining how refugees and IDPs are treated. For example, although the Pakistani constitution guarantees rights to IDPs in theory, due to the security fears and political significance of the presence of displaced populations these rights are often not available to them in practice, such as through severe curtailment of their freedom of movement. Understanding how political context affects the adoption of and adherence to legislation is crucial to using normative rights frameworks to best effect.

Aside from displacement-specific legal instruments, it is also necessary to understand the frameworks that guide official responses to urban growth. The studies repeatedly found that plans or strategies for urbanisation were unrealistic, out-dated or ignored. Given the fast pace of urbanisation the result is usually unmanaged urban growth and informal settlements with low levels of access to services, leading to poor quality of life for migrants and displaced people alike. Local governments often lack capabilities, resources and support from central government and this can affect how they respond to displacement.

In many informal settlements formal governance actors do not exercise significant control or provide much regulation or assistance. In response to this absence, other powerbrokers and organisations fill the void. In limited cases these provided crucial moral and material assistance, organised collective action to secure services or political support (for instance to prevent evictions) or provided security functions. More commonly, however, people in informal settlements were beholden to gangs or other power-holders. Numerous protection threats were observed in the case study sites, often a result of harassment or discrimination based on legal status or ethnicity, and weak rule of law. Displaced women were often victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), although in the cities they often enjoyed significantly more rights and freedoms than in rural settings.

Integration into the urban economy is the most vital determinant of whether displaced people thrive in cities, and it is also one of the most contentious aspects of their presence. Yet remarkably little is known about how poor displaced people make ends meet in highly competitive and often viciously exploitative informal economies. People who arrive without skills suitable to the urban economy are desperate for vocational and other training, yet few such programmes are available. There is little support and often outright hostility towards refugees' attempts at self-employment, something also affecting IDPs and other urban residents in the informal sector. Few voices publicly refute unfounded claims that the displaced steal longer-standing residents' jobs, or emphasise the contributions displaced people make to the economy and society through their labour and enterprise.

Addressing the problems experienced by the displaced will require changing the narrative of victimhood that accompanies displacement and recognising the resilience and ingenuity displaced people often display. Governments, donors and aid agencies must also abandon the assumption that migration (forced and voluntary) is necessarily bad for cities, that it is better for host states for the displaced to be in camps, and that the displaced in cities do not deserve attention.

The discussion focussed on how to achieve a coordinated response to situations of urban displacement. Rather than there being a relief to development 'continuum', participants emphasised the need for coexistence between development and humanitarian actors. Ongoing efforts to bridge the divide between development and humanitarian actors were also mentioned, as well as initiatives in UNHCR to develop an 'out of camp' model which works with line ministries and local authorities, and growing attention in the World Bank to the developmental challenges posed by protracted displacement.

Participants also raised the fact that international actors are mostly not the first responders to displacement crises – local communities and religious organisations usually play this role, and their activities need to be supported. The scale and impact of intra-city displacement was also noted. While laws promoting the rights of the displaced might not always be implemented, and these rights could be achieved without distinct legislation, laws are always crucial in setting the environment in which the displaced are able to be self-reliant and autonomous.

Urbanisation and displacement: development challenges, development opportunities

The following session of the conference comprised a trio of presentations focused on the challenges and opportunities of managing the development and urbanisation of cities.

Tom Goodfellow's (LSE) presentation emphasised the distinction between economic development and urbanisation and attempted to dispute the common perception that urbanisation follows naturally from economic development, and the former cannot exist without the latter. The presenter pointed out that there is a distinction between urban growth (increases in the population size of cities) and urbanisation, which reflects the relative percentage of a national population that lives in urban versus rural areas. Urbanisation can be caused by a variety of factors, for example a high birth-rate combined with migration to cities, and although quite high in African cities it is not necessarily any higher than rates seen elsewhere in the world in the past. Only about one-third of urban growth experienced in Africa is currently due to migration, although it is expected that environmental changes will increase this proportion.

Uniquely, Africa has been experiencing very low and in some cases negative economic growth in conjunction with urban growth. Elsewhere in the world urbanisation has been linked to economic growth and industrialisation, but recent research argues that improved health and better access to food are two of the main factors leading to urbanisation. Technologies developed in the twentieth century have led to a decrease in urban areas' traditionally high mortality rates; people have always moved to cities, but more people are now surviving that move. However, dire conditions in slums and competition in local economies in megacities mean that more migrants are now choosing small and medium-sized cities instead of economic and political capitals. The growth of cities, particularly without broad-based economic growth, has also been characterised by high levels of inequality.

LSE's research on cities in fragile states found three main types of conflict affecting cities: sovereign, civil and civic. Sovereign conflicts are the most traditional – conflict between warring states – and typically see the city become a prize to be won. Civil conflicts in Africa tend to take place in the

countryside, and the city becomes a place of refuge. The third type of conflict affecting cities is civic conflict, which can encompass gang and organised crime violence, sectarian riots and political protests. This research suggests that civic conflict is on the rise.

Several threads in the presentations and discussion drew on the implications of this for development and humanitarian actors. As mentioned during other presentations, many problems that affect migrants, refugees and IDPs also affect the general urban poor. Problems concerning security, livelihoods and vulnerability cut across all sectors, and must be addressed for everyone. Development actors and governments must accept that migration and displacement are long-term 'problems'; people are not returning to their places of origin, and urban displacement is protracted. Addressing these difficulties is a challenge made all the more difficult because there is insufficient data on urban vulnerability. Humanitarian assessment methods and indicators used in rural areas are no longer effective in urban situations. The conventional view is that people in urban areas have fewer needs than those in rural areas, but city-level data conceals huge inequalities. For example, people are much more vulnerable to certain diseases in the slums of Nairobi than they are in rural areas. Both UN-Habitat and Oxfam are working towards developing new sets of indicators to be able to better monitor humanitarian crises in cities.

The discussion then moved to the role of urban planners and local government. **David Gatimu (Government of Kenya)**, drawing on the experience of Nairobi, emphasised that local authorities are the key actors in urban areas, have the potential to represent the different and often conflicting interests in urban areas. They are also the best placed to coordinate the involvement of different stakeholders. Urban planning was described as being, not only the process of defining the physical shape of urban structures, but also the process of managing urban change. An ideal approach to urban planning was put forward as the management of urban growth and development needs in a way that it is socially just, economically efficient and environmentally sound. However, urban planners and local authorities do not always perform well, and in many places are beset by political, ethnic or other problems. Their ability to manage urban growth is also dependent on technical capacity and resource allocation. Urban planners need better tools and data on the needs of the urban poor in order to improve living standards and reduce urban conflict.

The ability of planners to consider the full range of needs of the urban poor was explored in **Dolores Koenig's (American University)** presentation, which focussed on the experiences of urban populations forced out of central metropolitan areas by development projects. Communities are often broken up and moved to large and sometimes poorly constructed developments on the outskirts of the cities far from their jobs. Yet when livelihoods depend on social networks, forced movement can be very problematic. Livelihoods are often wrongly assumed to be less in need of attention in urban areas, and so development projects for the displaced in urban areas focus on housing projects. Women in particular suffer in relocation situations, as they were often previously employed as casual domestic workers in the adjacent wealthy neighbourhoods. Faced with the prospect of increased commuting costs, continuing this work often becomes illogical, and to replace this gap in household income children are often pulled out of school and put to work. This illustrates how fundamental it is to include a livelihoods analysis when considering both the impact of displacement and what assistance people will need in cities. Comments from the participants

underscored how, in urban areas, cash assistance and employment tends to be valued far more highly than material goods. Echoing comments on the importance of civic engagement in development processes in urban areas, a description was given of how citizens' groups often emerge to campaign for improvements to the project. Such groups have been successful in several cases in obstructing or significantly altering the original proposal.

Living for the city: rethinking responses to protracted displacement

Katy Long's (LSE) presentation of the conference aimed to address two key issues regarding protracted displacement in the city: the need for a more pragmatic approach focusing on the recognition of de facto processes of integration; and recognition of the importance of voluntary mobility for generating or sustaining livelihoods.

The starting point for this presentation was that traditional 'durable solutions' are not working. Urban refugee situations are mostly highly protracted. There are also increasing restrictions on the freedom of refugees during asylum, which in urban areas often means a precarious legal status. Displaced people in urban areas often live with uncertain status or are barely tolerated by host states. Governments are highly suspicious of any solution to displacement that may become permanent, which in part explains their preference for camps, which are inherently impermanent, and where the displaced are kept segregated from the local population. The international community also tends to assume that refugees in cities must be self-reliant, and so there is little livelihoods programming for refugees in cities.

When programming for the displaced in cities, there is an assumption that people in cities do not need livelihoods assistance. The international community's emphasis on permanent solutions does not help – responses must be flexible and political circumstances, as well of the situation of the displaced, are always liable to change. Instead of permanent solutions, what the displaced really need are freedom of movement, access to livelihoods, security, education and the possibility of a brighter future.

The idea of durable solutions is not necessarily helpful if such solutions are conceived as an unchanging state. In dynamic situations solutions have to be dynamic, and have to be able to change over time. Instead of focussing on permanent solutions, it was argued that solutions focussed on securing freedoms should be pursued. This would require establishing a meaningful relationship between the state and the displaced. It would involve security, access to livelihoods and the opportunity to aspire to something more, for instance through educating children in displacement. In essence solutions should seek to end the humanitarian crisis after displacement and start the development process for the displaced. Alongside this search for solutions, the quality of asylum needs to be improved.

The right to be an urban refugee needs to be upheld. Cities need to be at the centre of conversations about return because of the transformative experiences that refugees undergo through urban exile (e.g their changing skills and expectations). When considering return strategies, refugees should not be rushed. Small-scale movements tend to be less disruptive than large repatriations to the social

structure and livelihoods strategies of the displaced. However, the reality is that many refugees will be urban for very long periods or will never return voluntarily. The focus on resettlement in the solution discourse is also problematic as it has severe effects on the prospects for local integration. Resettlement opportunities lead to huge psychological, financial and emotional investments in the idea that resettlement might happen, yet only a tiny number of refugees ever get resettled.

Local integration, at least in the short term, seems the most viable option. About two-thirds of the long-term urban displaced generally acquire some form of papers through collusion with the local authorities, neighbours or their communities. Local politicians often recognise the benefits of aiding a constituency that will become beholden to them and so are happy to help in securing papers and measures of regularisation. De facto local integration is already happening in cities or towns of refuge. The local community often works alongside the displaced to manoeuvre around the formal barriers to local integration (though poor locals and poor refugees often experience a greater degree of exclusion from these processes). However the idea of integration in a stable community is problematic. In some informal settlements nearly everyone is a newcomer. Nevertheless, there needs to be more advocacy on the topic of local integration and 'incremental citizenship'.

Freedom of movement is essential to migrants' lives, though the humanitarian system neglects this and tends to focus on permanent and immediate solutions. Very often migration, local integration and repatriation may all be happening at the same time to the same family or the same individual. People who can pursue safe economic migration will do so: the international system needs to make sure that those who end up in need of humanitarian assistance can move through it to a stage of development and peace-building.

The reality for most practitioners is that they will be working on securing small incremental changes, which build towards the idea of a solution as building a life and securing freedoms, to have access to opportunity and development in exile, and establishing conditions which make asylum tolerable. Such incremental steps could include local language training and reducing transport costs for refugees to help them access the jobs and services they need. Besides securing rights, there is a need for increased public relations outreach with local host populations to dispel popular myths and help local integration along. At the very least, self-reliant refugees should be allowed a more secure legal status, entitling them to the rights of permanent residents.

Discussion after the presentation brought up the fact that states are already obligated to provide for many rights under international treaties, but are simply not doing so. An incremental approach, or one that promotes freedom of movement, is not in contradiction to existing legal instruments. Participants also cautioned that local authorities are often unaware of their human rights obligations, especially in relation to foreigners. It was also noted that repatriation had often failed due to lack of follow up assistance from the humanitarian or governments once refugees had returned, and that a downside of frequent movement was a lack of rootedness in political and social systems in any one place.

Urban displacement in Afghanistan and the potential scope of national instruments to deliver policy solutions

This break out session focussed on the development of a national internal displacement policy in Afghanistan. **Dan Tyler (NRC)** described how mass repatriations and the Land Allocation Scheme (LAS) have largely not been successful in achieving sustainable solutions for the large numbers of displaced people returned to Afghanistan, and many have subsequently settled in informal areas of Kabul and other major cities. Former refugees who had been repatriated have also now joined the ranks of the displaced. The Afghan Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) is almost powerless, and has a very limited budget; the LAS was its only project for which it had implementation responsibility.

Humanitarians seized upon the negative media coverage of the humanitarian crisis in the winter of 2010/11 and supported the government's decision to initiate a process to develop its own IDP policy. The policy process, from the outset, was meant to be nationally owned and led, and was intended to raise the profile of displacement issues more broadly across the other Afghan line ministries. An extensive consultation process, led by MoRR, has since been held. Pakistan and Iran both showed interest when the policy was launched, in the hopes that a solution to Afghanistan's displacement crisis would help stem the flow of refugees across their borders. Unfortunately the policy process has faced a number of obstacles as its development has continued, owing to the weak technical capacity within the MoRR, the challenges attached to maintaining broader political interest and the challenges of accessing and engaging IDP communities in the process.

While Afghanistan continues to face ongoing insecurity and enters an uncertain transition period, meaningful durable solutions to the current high levels of internal displacement seem a long way off, yet the policy process has succeeded in opening up discussion space for the issue and raising awareness around the specific protection challenges attached to being an IDP in Afghanistan. A future policy will likely not resolve individual cases of displacement nor necessarily create automatic solutions, but may instead pave the way for a framework in national law that can be used to achieve this, as well as ensure the rights of IDPs are afforded greater priority across government. It is hoped that, once a draft policy is presented, the process will be reinvigorated and other government ministries reengaged. The Ministry of Defence, for example, is key as it owns a significant amount of land that could possibly be used to provide tenure to the displaced.

During discussion questions were asked about how IDPs should be identified, especially in a country like Afghanistan that has experienced many years of conflict, instability and violence. In attempting to distinguish one group from another for programmatic or assessment purposes, is the international community forcing upon these people an identity which has no meaning for them? There were no real answers to these questions, although the general consensus was that communities should be taken as a whole when programming – urban poor, IDPs and migrants together – as they often share many of the same needs. Displacement-affected communities encompass a much wider segment of Afghan population, including urban poor host communities in the case of Kabul's large IDP population. It was a point of discussion whether an IDP policy or a comprehensive strategy for urban areas would be more appropriate in situations of large-scale urban internal displacement, with the conclusion that this would depend on the context.

The case of Kenya came up, as it is one of the few other countries to have gone through a similar process of policy creation. The process in Kenya saw a significantly more robust consultation process and buy-in. The discussion also mentioned the experiences of other countries with large IDP populations. In Burundi, an even larger percentage (80%) of IDPs preferred local integration, but halfway through the consultation the Burundian government began soliciting funds from development donors to support a villagisation process that ignores the displaced who are already, essentially, living in villages.

A reparations framework for urban forced evictions: cases from the Middle East and North Africa

This break out session, led by **Joseph Schechla (Housing & Land Rights Network/Habitat International Coalition)** focused on displacement within cities, and specifically how to address forced evictions through a reparations framework. International treaty law guarantees the human right to adequate housing, which is defined as meeting basic criteria such as affordability, habitability?, suitable?, accessibility and cultural appropriateness and ensuring access to tenure security, and public and environmental goods and services. The right to housing is also subject to “process” rights that ensure access to information, participation and security of person. States bear an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil this human right. Since 1993, international legal and political bodies have further defined the practice of forced eviction as a gross violation of human rights. Persons and communities affected by eviction are entitled to legal remedies and safeguards, such as rights to appeal, legal aid, alternative housing and protection from resulting homelessness. Persons and communities subject to forced evictions without these conditions are entitled to reparations, legally defined to include restitution (return, resettlement and rehabilitation), compensation for losses and values that cannot be restored, guarantees of non-repetition, and satisfaction of justice served.

Housing rights defenders have developed Eviction Impact Assessment (EViA) tools, based on a “loss matrix,” that apply this human rights framework to identify the costs and losses before, during and after a forced eviction. These quantification tools expose the full cost of development projects to serve the reparations process and deter the habitual practice of forced evictions with impunity.

Schechla demonstrated how applying the EvIA tool in two case studies can serve remedies and ensure states and local authorities uphold their human rights obligations. In the case of Muthurwa Estates, a 100-year-old central Nairobi community, has undergone violent forced eviction since 2009, where the railroad authority owned the land and sought to transform the area into a commercial development. To prevent further deprivation and dispossession, the community petitioned the Nairobi High Court and, in February 2011, sought remedy under article 43 of the Kenyan Constitution guaranteeing the right to housing. The court ruled that the evicting authorities desist from further eviction, reconnect water and sewerage services to houses that had not been destroyed, and provide “such other relief as this honourable court may deem fit to grant.” As adjudication continued, lawyers supported by local NGOs applied the EvIA tool to help demonstrate to the court the full extent of loss of wellbeing, financial costs and lost access to housing and facilities. That also provided the basis for a remedy that would compensate displaced family in the event of their resettlement.

The second case study is the Maspero Triangle in central Cairo, where a 200-year-old formal but poorly served historic center faces eviction as part of a wider Cairo-2050 development scheme to remove impoverished communities in favour of grandiose “urban renewal.” The authorities have enforced an unofficial ban on repair and maintenance to houses, making them increasingly dilapidated and their residents subject to physical hazards, condemnation of their homes and coercion to accept precarious resettlement in planned settlements in the desert periphery of Cairo. Evictions have begun under these conditions, as well as the denial of formal tenure security and silent investors’ counterclaims to land title. Residents cannot access information about development plans; lack legal support to maintain their legally grounded rights to tenure and to remain. An EvIA has been designed in consultation with local residents to address the principle human rights violations (by commission and omission), help identify the probable costs of evictions and displacement, and serve as a basis for the community to articulate its rights and development visions by asserting an alternative plan.

It is intended that the use of the EvIA methods will deter governments by formally presenting the true costs of current designs that overcome urban planning dilemmas by eliminating residents through forced evictions without remedy in violation of international human rights norms and corresponding state obligations.

The discussion following this presentation focused on the combination of monitoring (e.g., quantification) techniques and legal processes to stem or mitigate victimization from harm resulting from development projects that generate displacement. The feasibility and level of difficulty to use these techniques depend heavily on local capabilities and legal systems. It was argued that some cases of eviction may be justified, if the property is in a state of serious disrepair or landowners wish to use land that has been forcibly invaded and illegally occupied. However, even in these cases of displacement from legal eviction, it is still necessary to observe human rights, provide safeguards and consider reparations (not mere cash compensation) to avoid further violations and deepening impoverishment.

Urban displacement in the Middle East and the ‘responsibility shift’ from the state to the UN

Michael Kagan’s (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) session looked at the emergence of parallel structures, whereby states in the south agree to allow large numbers of refugees into their territorial space, but services and bureaucratic processes are administered by UN agencies, using funding from states in the global north. This system has been criticised as essentially neo-colonial in nature. The humanitarian system is opposed to parallel structures in principle, which run counter to UNHCR’s urban refugee policy, and UNHCR aims for host states to take over these responsibilities themselves. Yet in practice there are parallel structures providing services for refugees all over the Middle East through both UNRWA and UNHCR. While greater host state responsibility is desirable in many ways, the outcomes of parallel structures are often relatively good for refugees, who would probably otherwise suffer neglect and exclusion.

For states in Africa and the Middle East, emphasizing the high number of refugees on their territory has become important to keeping the stream of international aid flowing. Whilst government ministers in Europe boast about how few refugees they are letting into their countries, ministers in MENA inflate the numbers. Despite the drawbacks of the system, refugee populations often claim to prefer reliance on the UN to host governments, and there is probably a better relative standard of service in some situations if UNHCR is responsible for evaluating refugee claims and administering benefits. Unfortunately this system has also created an economy of vulnerability, whereby it benefits the host state to keep the refugee population vulnerable and marginalised, and therefore in need of donor funding.

In the current model as envisioned in UNHCR's urban refugee policy, actors must now choose between two main options: attempt to shift responsibility to the state or embrace the surrogate state model and let the government do what it can while the UN continues to fill the gaps. There are five key routes of action.

First, donor support is too targeted towards certain populations, such as Syrians or Iraqis in Egypt, and often sidelines other refugees as crises rise or fall in political significance. More flexible structures are needed that would include all kinds of refugees, with resource allocations made on the basis of need rather than political imperative. Second, development projects should be fast-tracked to help with local integration: large-scale projects can help provide the infrastructure necessary to host a population while also keeping wages up and minimising conflict between host and refugee populations. Third, there should be increased emphasis on aiding host communities, who require aid and support in providing homes to relatives and acquaintances. Fourth, development partners should be involved in projects from the beginning, especially as displacement is often a long-term situation. Coordination from the outset can help ensure continuation and avoid duplication. Finally, the private sector should be brought into the process, as it is the source of the overwhelming majority (82%) of development aid in some countries.

Two suggestions for how parallel services could be avoided were put forward. In the first, clinics funded by the international community would provide services for both host and refugee populations in areas where there is high density of refugee settlement. Over time, these would be incorporated into the national health system and refugees would retain access. The other example is a system such as that in Iran, where Afghan refugees can buy into the national insurance system directly.

Roles and responsibilities for development and humanitarian actors in urban displacement

The final session of the conference consisted of a trio of presentations which looked at ways in which development and humanitarian actors could cooperate.

David Gatimu (Government of Kenya) discussed the example of an industrial accident in an informal settlement in Nairobi, which killed over 70 people and displaced 200. The recovery effort highlighted the need for stronger resilience programming and opportunities for cooperation between the private sector, civil society and international actors. It was noted that civil society organisations strengthen people's ability to help themselves, but more importantly open channels of dialogue that cut across the different interests at play and hold formal actors to account. The third key group are the international actors that support local actors with funding and capacity-building, and integrate local responses into global strategies for helping the displaced.

George Deikun (UN Habitat) examined the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) strategy for meeting humanitarian challenges in urban areas, and the conclusions that could be drawn from it in designing policies and responses. One of the overall lessons is to avoid interim solutions to infrastructure problems and attempt to initiate processes of inclusion in public services and permanent reconstruction immediately. An important question in response is the 'locational preference' of displaced respondents, and it was argued that it was important to consult with the affected community as early as possible over whether they prefer resettlement, integration or return as a long-term solution.

Coordination emerged as a crucial issue. Development actors should be present from the start of a response. The recent focus on resilience may provide common ground for humanitarians and development actors to collaborate. The long-term nature of displacement means that the skills and technical abilities of development actors (which humanitarians lack) are needed when addressing displacement. The government should have a large role in coordinating a response, and the input of the affected community is vital in finding a solution that is sustainable.

Other actors are also important in the recovery and development process. The private sector can be a powerful collaborator; it has, for example, developed mixed-income housing for Iraqi returnees. The state must be reminded of its obligation to protect the displaced from violence and exploitation. There is a need to develop a better methodology for identifying hot spots where there is likely to be displacement and to build partnerships with community organisations and government authorities as early as possible, either before a crisis or during one. However, past experience makes clear that a clarification of UN, government and NGO roles and responsibilities in emergency response situations is crucial in achieving positive outcomes and avoiding duplication or sidelining existing capacity.

An overall strategy should be considered for the community as a whole, in place of the current piecemeal approach. Responses should move away from identifying individual beneficiaries towards community-based approaches, which are critical to avoid exacerbating tensions with the host community. Assistance provided to host families should also be seen as a contribution to the relief effort. Stopgap projects are often a waste of resources, and projects providing interim solutions often detract from funding and reduce the political will to address long-term problems. Individual

investments in response need to add up to an impact on the community which is greater than the sum of its parts. Sustainable shelter and livelihoods solutions should be identified and pursued from the start, even if these take longer to establish. It is also important to focus on livelihoods and develop jobs as a part of durable solutions for IDPs as early as possible.

Lastly, **Niels Harild (World Bank)** talked about urban displacement from a development perspective and the experiences, challenges, and recommended way forward. Despite the fact that most displacement is protracted, and the major needs of the displaced are primarily developmental, governments, donors, and other international actors often view displacement as predominantly a humanitarian concern. However, the current approach is not working and a paradigm shift towards an alternate long-term strategy is needed. This requires a shift in government and development policymakers' thinking to overcome unawareness, stigma, myths and the default reaction to see forced displacement as a short-term issue. The challenge is political and developmental – more than technical.

Three examples were put forward, where the World Bank has been involved in projects addressing the developmental needs of the displaced: (i) In Azerbaijan, a \$50 million lending operation provided funds for housing and livelihood support to IDPs, supporting improved self-reliance and reduction in cash transfers; (ii) a programme has also been initiated in South Sudan to establish a social safety net, and provide employment for youth in urban settings with high prevalence of displacement ; (iii) technical advice is also being provided to the Colombian government as it implements a reparations policy for victims of the conflict there, most of whom are IDPs in urban settings.

Going forward, it is important for governments, when appropriate, to recognize the protracted and long-term nature of displacement. Recognizing this, governments could include the issue in city and national development plans. This, in turn, would set the stage for international development actors to support the government's priorities. The involvement of development actors is normally predicated on requests from governments.

It is important to find ways to engage governments; for example, by offering development assistance to both the host- and displaced community in an area. In general, the focus should be on what governments want and can do, rather than on what humanitarian actors or other international actors can achieve. There needs to be recognition of the fact that displacement has both negative and positive consequences for affected states, and policies should be designed to mitigate negative outcomes and support positive results. In this way, locals may be able to see the presence of displaced populations not only as a negative, but also as a benefit.

Conclusion

Sara Pantuliano (HPG/ODI) provided closing remarks on the recurring themes of the conference and participants responded with several practical proposals. As a starting point there was consensus that in order for responses to protracted urban displacement to be successful and comprehensive, there need to be roles for humanitarian, human rights and development actors. Fundamentally, protracted urban displacement necessitates recasting displacement as part of a broader urban

challenge. As part of this realignment the narrative of the victimhood and impermanence of displaced people would have to change to a discourse that casts them as productive members of society who contribute positively to the economy and social fabric of a city.

The predominant role of the state in facilitating or preventing self-reliance and social inclusion for the displaced underscores the need to understand the incentives for states to recognise the development potential of the displaced in their cities, and to move beyond the use of parallel structures. Convincing states to take more responsibility will also require recognising the vested interest of the state in keeping parallel structures, and changing the basic burden-sharing bargain established through them. The international system needs to develop other means of persuading states to integrate the displaced, including through the use of development cooperation as a form of burden sharing. Governments should also be supported to develop methods to include the presence of displaced populations in their local and national planning.

We need to recognise from the beginning of a displacement crisis that it has the potential to become protracted. Protracted situations will inevitably lead to questions of how to achieve greater integration into the host society. This is a politically difficult issue but progress can perhaps be fruitfully made through incremental steps towards greater freedoms and rights. Opportunities to advance this agenda will differ from context to context. While a step away from traditional approaches to 'durable solutions', this approach is in fact sanctioned by law, and advocates should continue to use existing international human rights and other legal instruments in their discourse even if these frameworks do not have much traction on the ground at present. Human-rights based development was put forward as an approach that triggers accountability mechanisms, requires the actual measurement and implementation of reparations for victims of violations, and engages stakeholders in important resolution and transitional-justice processes that address protracted crises. An effective response to urban displacement requires an alliance of concerned actors, including the private sector, civil society groups and national organisations. For humanitarian organisations this will mean working more closely with government and civil society groups, and for development actors it will mean engaging at a more local level. The choices and participation of affected communities must be a central part of these processes, and strengthening the ability of communities to determine their own future in the city could also be an objective of interventions.

Whilst the role of the state and local organisations is paramount, international development, humanitarian and human rights actors could improve their own response by informing each other's work, working together and training and employing expertise suited to the issues that urban displacement raises. There is a clear need for long-term strategies from the beginning, particularly looking at livelihoods issues. The skills and abilities that displaced populations do or do not have need to be identified and there must be recognition of their potential to contribute to urban economies.

It is critical to take the debate about urban displacement, especially protracted urban displacement, out of the humanitarian forum – the discussion needs to happen in development and government forums. It also needs to step out of headquarters and happen at field level.