HPG Policy Brief

Crisis in Kenya: land, displacement and the search for ‘durable solutions’

Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI
Background: land, conflict and humanitarian action

- HPG research on land tenure in conflict and post-conflict situations
- Key findings:
  - Lack of understanding amongst the humanitarian community
  - Land is often a driving force in complex humanitarian emergencies
  - Policy favours the return of displaced populations and the restitution of their land and property
- Important lessons for the humanitarian response to Kenya’s post-election displacement crisis
Kenya’s post-election displacement crisis

- Main trends and the humanitarian response

- Crisis not an anomaly but part of a sequence of recurrent displacement

- Land and displacement in historical perspective
  - British colonial rule: dispossession and undermining customary mechanisms of land tenure
  - Post-colonial policies: ethnic politics, patronage and multiparty-elections
The search for ‘durable solutions’

- IASC framework: Return, Relocation and Local Integration as durable solutions
- Government recovery strategy: return people home as quickly as possible
- Concerns:
  - Timeframe
  - It is more than just about going home: protection and sustainability
  - Relocating IDPs to their ‘ancestral homelands’ is dangerous
  - An increase in urbanisation?
Humanitarian agencies

- Must be better informed of the underlying causes of displacement including land issues
- Ensure the protection needs of the displaced are met
- The return to areas affected by land grievances should be promoted as a temporary measure
- Relocating to ‘ancestral homelands’ can support ethnic cleansing and further divide Kenya’s communities
Recommendations (II)

- Prepare for a potential influx of IDPs in urban areas
- Include previous IDPs in their programming and ensure adequate data is collected
- Include civil society organisations

• **Donors** should ensure that support to the Kenyan government is contingent on adequate conditions for return, including progress on resolving the land issue