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# Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability Final report

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## About the author

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# Acronyms

<b>BRAC</b>	Bangladesh Rural Cooperative
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>FATA</b>	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
<b>FGD</b>	focus group discussion
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>ICESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>IDMC</b>	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
<b>IDP</b>	internally displaced person
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>IVAP</b>	Internal Displaced Persons Vulnerability and Assessment Profiling project
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

While a number of studies in recent years have sought to analyse urban livelihoods and governance, little is known about how displaced people negotiate their way in the urban environment, their relationships with host communities and governance institutions and their specific vulnerabilities as compared with other urban residents. Likewise, there is poor documentation and analysis of the role of humanitarian and development actors in supporting these populations, and the best approaches and strategies to address the assistance and protection needs of displaced people in urban areas. This report collates the main findings of a two-year research project called ‘Sanctuary in the City’, which sought to answer these questions through seven in-depth case studies in urban centres. It also builds upon earlier research into urban displacement conducted by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) in collaboration with some of its partners.

HPG was commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark to conduct research to explore the phenomenon of displacement in the urban environment and the implications and challenges this poses for humanitarian action. Through field research in Amman, Damascus, the Gaza Strip, Kabul, Nairobi, Peshawar and Yei, South Sudan, the project considers the reality of life for displaced people, investigates the policy and operational challenges that confront national and international stakeholders when responding to their needs and offers recommendations for strengthening support to these groups.<sup>1</sup>

Establishing an evidence base to develop practical and operational guidance is crucial for improving policy and programming to support livelihoods, protect vulnerable groups and mitigate tensions with local communities. There is scant literature that empirically examines the impact of urban displacement on local populations and municipal authorities, and the opportunities and challenges presented by displacement and urbanisation processes. These studies aim to make a substantive contribution to this evidence base. Each provides a dense, informative snapshot of displacement in an urban area at a particular time, and this synthesis report does not aim to summarise all the findings of this research project. Rather, it aims to extract the key themes.

This report presents a rich but troubling picture of how the displaced navigate the urban environment and the policy and operational challenges that urban displacement poses. The implications call for a change in approach towards urban displacement. The studies have shown how, in numerous cities, the challenges facing the displaced derive from their

environment, which humanitarian actors cannot control, including a lack of urban development in informal areas, poor-quality services, scarce employment opportunities and poor transport. Along with other residents they face threats from criminals or the police and enjoy scant access to justice. The urban poor in general often have little influence over how or whether their needs are addressed, and the displaced also often suffer from legal and social discrimination.

These findings underscore how much larger the role of the host state itself will have to be in displacement responses. Displaced populations will largely be joining the ranks of the urban poor and will more obviously – and with clearer political consequences of failure – be a responsibility of the host state. They will be participating in urban economies, renting and buying urban housing and land, and in one way or another trying to make use of urban opportunities and services; in this way their presence will be relevant to other urban residents in a way that camp populations are not. Yet in rapidly urbanising countries urban administrations are overburdened. Needs are greater than resources, and even where there is money to invest corruption and vested interests often mean that the needs of the urban poor rarely feature as priorities. Displaced populations are often viewed as an expense and as a security threat.

Although fundamental, convincing host states to fulfil their existing responsibilities and take on new ones in regard to displaced populations is not going to be easy. Given this, there is a role to be played by the international community in ensuring that the needs of people fleeing conflict and disaster who have settled in urban areas are addressed and supporting the governments of cities and countries that accommodate large numbers of displaced people. Unfortunately, approaches for doing so are largely underdeveloped and the engagement of external assistance agencies with urban displacement is hesitant, inconsistent and often inappropriate. This is despite the fact that the urban displaced represent a *growing* majority of the global population of displaced people.

If populations in protracted displacement continue to be neglected, one could reasonably expect severe negative consequences. In several cities in these studies the refusal of municipal or central authorities to accept the long-term presence of displaced populations has presented a major challenge to their ability to integrate into the social and economic life of the city, and has entrenched patterns of underinvestment in city infrastructure, ultimately compromising urban development itself. Systematic marginalisation of certain populations also risks creating ghettos of frustrated people, posing obvious risks of civic conflict. On the other hand, displaced populations by and large profess a commitment to making their lives in the

<sup>1</sup> The studies and related material are available on the HPG website at <http://www.odi.org.uk/programmes/humanitarian-policy-group/displacement-migration-urbanisation>.

city. The opportunities this presents for developing the skills and assets of displaced populations should be recognised.

### 1.1 Methodology and terminology

The case study locations were chosen because they host large numbers of displaced people, there is an existing humanitarian response, even if not targeted specifically at the displaced, and security and other conditions were conducive to the study. Several studies were carried out with the collaboration of the International Rescue Committee, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council. Each case study involved a period of data collection in-country, except for Damascus, which was a desk study. These case studies cover both refugees and conflict- and disaster-induced internally displaced people (IDPs). In the case of Nairobi and Gaza this included some intra-urban displacement due to conflict and violence.

The conceptual underpinnings of the case studies were provided by the livelihoods framework used by the Feinstein International Center and adapted from UK Department for International Development (DFID)'s sustainable livelihoods framework (DFID, 1999) and the Collinson framework (Collinson, 2003). This framework determined the basic structure of each report, covering patterns of displacement, legal issues, protection threats, livelihoods issues, governance, access to services, land issues and the impact of international assistance on displaced populations. The methodology used for all the case studies combined secondary and primary data collection. For each city, secondary data was gathered through an in-depth literature review on patterns of urbanisation, displacement and vulnerability among rural and urban populations. Secondary data was also collected by each research team during the fieldwork, from state government departments and international and national humanitarian and development organisations. This included policy documents, other studies relating to urbanisation and qualitative and quantitative data on service provision. Primary data was collected through fieldwork in all case study locations (except Damascus) by a team of international and national researchers. More limited fieldwork was conducted in Amman due to restrictions on research activities and time constraints.

In each urban centre the fieldwork was carried out in a series of steps, as follows:

- A profile of the different quarters of the city was developed, including squatter areas, illegal settlements and refugee and IDP camps in the city outskirts, with input from local researchers, community groups and NGOs. Where possible these profiles also drew on disaggregated socio-economic data, though in general very little was available at the neighbourhood level. The profiles took into account when the area was settled and why, how affluent or impoverished the area was, the proportion of displaced people thought

to be living there and whether it was a formal or informal area. From this profiling exercise locations were selected for sampling for focus group discussions (FGDs). Areas were chosen to capture a range of trends, but with a focus on impoverished communities.

- FGDs were conducted in the sample locations, with participants recruited by 'snowballing' through the networks established by local researchers or NGOs, or random household sampling, depending on the location. Researchers sought to ensure equitable coverage of the different population groups – IDPs and non-displaced populations. Separate groups were organised, where possible, with men and women, and with adults and young people. In some locations FGDs were run with holy male or female 'elders' or community leaders. In Gaza and Kabul displaced groups and non-displaced residents were interviewed separately, though in other locations displacement status was determined in the course of the FGD. FGDs were run in the local language or, in multilingual environments, the most appropriate lingua franca. Moderators aimed to recruit groups of between ten and 12 participants, though groups were often considerably larger or smaller than this ideal. The number of total participants in the study varied between location; for example in Gaza 306 locals participated, evenly spread between displaced people and non-displaced, and in Nairobi 456 IDPs took part, along with 384 other urban residents. In Kabul the number was lower at 166 participants, both displaced and longer-term residents.
- In order to encourage a higher level of participation and frankness, all interviews were confidential and interviewees were advised that there would be no attribution in the reports. Researchers introduced the research project to all FGD participants and key informants, explaining the background and rationale for the study and its methodology and objectives. Both FGD participants and key informants were invited to participate in the studies freely, without expectation of financial remuneration or other support. Researchers explained that the resulting reports would be public and would be shared with a wide range of stakeholders. The FGDs were semi-structured, using a checklist of guiding questions covering issues relating to personal history, reasons for residence in the city, access to services, protection threats and access to justice, governance and land. Notes from these discussions were translated by the research team.
- In Gaza and Kabul a socio-economic survey was also administered. While not statistically representative the survey was used to develop a deeper understanding of the assets, skills and life histories of respondents.
- A stakeholder mapping exercise was carried out by the research team, first of formal institutions (e.g. government departments, the chamber of commerce) with responsibility for aspects of urbanisation such as urban planning, economic development and service provision; and second of informal and community-based institutions. These were mapped using local researchers and practitioners

to determine the relationships between and relevance of different actors. These maps were subsequently used to identify key informants for interviews.

- Key informant interviews, guided by a series of checklists, were conducted with a wide range of actors, including government officers, private sector organisations and entrepreneurs, and representatives of national and international agencies. Based on findings emerging from the FGDs, interviews were also conducted with local actors with a role in urban communities such as shopkeepers, police officers, health workers and educators, in order to corroborate findings. The number of interviews varied between locations, depending on security conditions, restrictions on conducting interviews, the availability of national authorities and the time available for fieldwork. Interviews ranged from 40 in Yei to 99 in Nairobi.

This report uses the definition of ‘internally displaced persons’ articulated in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (OCHA, 1994): ‘persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border’.

The definition of refugee is contained in the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, namely a person who ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’ (UNHCR, 2000). While there is no equivalent legal definition of ‘returnee’, this report uses the term to describe former IDPs and refugees who return voluntarily to their homes of origin, whether spontaneously or in an organised manner. This report sometimes makes specific reference to refugees and sometimes to IDPs. When referring to both groups collectively, the term ‘displaced’ is used.

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention excludes Palestinian refugees in the Near East (the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank), as the region was referred to at the time. These refugees fall under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). UNHCR is mandated to provide assistance and protection to refugees not under the care of another UN body or agency. While both agencies provide assistance to refugees under their respective mandates, only UNHCR is authorised to provide protection and facilitate the attainment of durable solutions.

This report follows UN-HABITAT’s definition of ‘slums’ and ‘informal settlements’. A slum is defined as ‘an area that combines, to various extents ... residents’ inadequate access to safe water; inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure; poor

structural quality of housing; overcrowding; and insecure residential status’ (UN-HABITAT, 2006). ‘Informal settlements’ are defined as ‘(i) residential areas where a group of housing units has been constructed on land to which the occupants have no legal claim, or which they occupy illegally; (ii) unplanned settlements and areas where housing is not in compliance with current planning and building regulations (unauthorised housing)’. In this report, both terms are used interchangeably.

This report takes the definition in General Comment 7, adopted by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, of the term ‘forced evictions’ as ‘the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection’ (OHCHR, 1997: para. 3).

## 1.2 Caveats

There are significant constraints on collecting data about displaced people in urban settings due to their lack of visibility as distinct from the wider host population. Indeed, this is apparently precisely what motivates many displaced people to relocate themselves in an urban setting. These difficulties are often exacerbated by the fact that there is usually little data about city residents more broadly. Researchers did their utmost to collect reliable statistics and to corroborate findings, but this analysis must be offered with the caveat that it cannot pretend to tell the whole story about how secretive communities, in often dangerous settings, negotiate their way in the cities in which they have settled.

Some of the case study locations have characteristics, or have undergone significant changes in recent years, which have a bearing on the research process. The research was conducted in Damascus prior to the armed uprising that began in March 2011, which has since given rise to massive internal displacement and has radically altered the threats facing the population in Damascus. The Gaza study also differs from the other case study locations in significant ways: it is an examination of several urban centres within the small densely populated Gaza Strip; given the drastic limitations on movement outside of Gaza, we have defined IDPs as people who have had their homes completely demolished in the last ten years.

The analysis in this report also draws on earlier research conducted by HPG related to urban displacement. This includes DFID-supported work on urban displacement in Sudan (‘City Limits: Urbanisation and Vulnerability in Sudan’), which involved four case studies in Juba, Khartoum, Port Sudan and Nyala, and a special edition of the journal *Disasters* published in 2012. A chapter in the IFRC’s *World Disasters Report* (2012) written by HPG researchers and entitled ‘Forced Migration in an Urban Context: Relocating the Humanitarian Agenda’, also fed into this study.



# Chapter 2

## Drivers of urban displacement

The scale of urban displacement is huge and growing; its root causes are manifold, complex and often overlapping. The number of displaced people in the world is currently estimated to be more than 72 million, including IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers (IFRC, 2012). While it is generally held that half of the world's refugees and IDPs are urban, the proportion is likely to be higher. Urban displacement raises two contradictory challenges: given its scale, it is impossible to ignore, but given its complexity, it is extremely difficult to address.

### 2.1 Triggers of flight

The principal drivers of urban displacement include armed conflict, violence, human rights abuses, dislocation due to development policies and projects, land grabbing and disasters. Other factors that may also influence decisions about when and if to migrate and the destination include the prospect of better economic opportunities, better access to basic services and ethnic, clan or family ties.

While refugees and asylum-seekers are spread across the world, low- and middle-income countries host a disproportionately high number, and are predominantly the sending countries. Many people flee weak states affected by conflict, only to find themselves in another unstable environment – Afghans in Pakistan, Iraqis in Syria and Somalis in Yemen, for instance. Some 50% of UNHCR's refugee caseload is in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia; almost 60% of the world's IDPs are in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan (UNHCR, 2012; IFRC, 2012).

A decision to flee at a given moment in time may be related to one or more triggering factors. These triggers or proximate causes may converge with or compound pre-existing structural factors leaning people towards flight, such as poverty and war, and may compel some people to move immediately. For example, displacement may be triggered by the deterioration of land and restricted access to food and other necessities caused by war, rather than by the military operations of war itself (Birkeland, 2003a; 2003b). This complexity makes it extremely difficult to judge whether migration is 'forced' or 'voluntary'; either way, people who migrate may be exposed to life-threatening dangers in transit (such as people-smuggling and trafficking) or exploitation and abuse once they have reached their destination (IFRC, 2012).

### 2.2 Pull factors to the city

The decision to settle in an urban area is often based on a perception that the city offers better economic opportunities,

#### Box 1: Urban displacement: understanding the figures

Figures on the number of displaced people in urban areas are hard to come by and are primarily based on estimates, in part because these populations are often unregistered, 'urban' is defined differently from country to country and independent verification of government figures is not always possible. Both UNHCR and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimate that half of the refugee and IDP population are in urban areas (IFRC, 2012). According to 2011 figures this would amount to 5.5m urban refugees, including asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2012), and 20.5m IDPs (IDMC, 2012; IDMC, 2012a). There are also 5.1m Palestine refugees under the mandate of UNRWA, who primarily reside in urban areas or in urbanised refugee camps. If one includes Palestinian refugees and people displaced by development projects it is likely that displacement is much more an urban phenomenon than a rural, camp-based one.

increased security, a degree of anonymity, greater access to services and closer proximity to powerbrokers. It might also be linked to the potential to access humanitarian or developmental assistance. However, with respect to the latter the reverse may also apply. For example, in recent years refugees in Kenya have been vacating refugee camps in increasing numbers or avoiding them altogether – despite losing out on food aid – in the belief that livelihood opportunities and security will be better in Nairobi. Settlement in an urban area may also be part of a family strategy whereby members settle in different countries or different locations within countries in order to maximise opportunities and access to assistance (e.g. camps as well as cities).

Not all of the urban displaced originate from rural areas. Some may have fled from one urban area to another, either within a country or from one country to another. Iraqis who left the country in 2005–2006 mainly fled urban areas in Iraq and moved to cities such as Amman, Beirut and Damascus. Displacement within cities such as Kabul and Nairobi occurs as a result of eviction by landlords or local authorities. Returning refugees are also gravitating to cities after becoming accustomed to urban life in refuge, and to circumvent barriers to accessing land and property in their rural areas of origin. Following the independence of South Sudan, most people in Sudan who originate from the south are choosing or being compelled by the Sudanese authorities to move back there, and are often returning to urban centres rather than the villages they originally fled.

### 2.3 Challenges to existing approaches to the urban displaced

The urban displaced are not a homogenous group. People bring very different levels of skills, education and assets with them; they may arrive wealthy or poor, and may know many people in the city or none. Understanding these characteristics can be very difficult for those who wish to assist them. They tend not to be as visible as displaced people in camps. The displaced also tend to settle in areas where existing populations live in chronic poverty and vulnerability, raising serious ethical and operational difficulties in targeting assistance to them, even if they can be neatly identified. While urban areas may provide a degree of welcome anonymity, this also makes it difficult for humanitarian and development actors to target them for assistance. The lack of visibility of displaced people in urban areas has contributed to the humanitarian and development sector's poor understanding of the extent of their vulnerability and how they manage their livelihoods.

Host governments tend to prefer refugees to be in camps, and national and local governments often call for refugees and

IDPs to return to their areas of origin. However, in most of the cities we looked at displaced groups by and large believed that they would remain for the long term or permanently, often even if security improved in their areas of origin. Young people are often less willing to return than the older generation (see Branch, forthcoming 2013; Pantuliano et al., 2011).

### 2.4 Conclusion

The global trend is for displacement to become protracted,<sup>2</sup> with almost 70% of the world's refugees in displacement for more than five years (Loescher and Milner, 2009). It is therefore reasonable to assume that the majority of displaced people currently in urban areas and those settling there in years to come will be participating in urban economies, placing demands on urban service infrastructure and contributing to the social life of cities and towns over long periods of time. How these trends are received (and perceived) at national and local level has serious implications for cities, urban societies and the aid system.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR defines protracted displacement as being when groups of 25,000 or more refugees have been in exile for more than five years. While in the early 1990s the average length of displacement was nine years, in recent years that average has reached almost 20 years in exile (Loescher and Milner, 2009).

# Chapter 3

## Legal frameworks and policy attitudes

There is a disjuncture between the role that legal frameworks governing displacement and urban growth are supposed to have, and the reality of their adoption and implementation. There is a body of international law and policy which is relevant to displacement, including human, cultural and economic rights treaties. In theory these instruments should guide the actions of international and national actors, provide model procedures and clarify responsibilities. Cities typically have legally endorsed planning documents designed to govern urban management and planning. The intention is generally to provide an overarching framework that means that growth is directed to suit the current and future needs of the city and ensure that all areas of settlement fall under the jurisdiction of relevant municipalities or other government entities. In reality, many countries have not signed up to or recognised relevant international law or guidance on displacement, or included their provisions in domestic legislation. They have also not updated planning legislation to reflect the current realities of their cities and towns. Urban growth and the settlement of displaced populations therefore often happen and intersect in a national policy vacuum. More importantly, whether the authorities nominally adhere to law or not, the actions taken towards displaced groups and urban growth owe as much or more to the prevailing political context and the historical legacy in which displacement and urban growth are understood than to legislation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial to using normative rights frameworks to best effect.

### 3.1 International legal instruments relevant to displacement

The 1951 UN Convention on the Rights of Refugees (the Refugee Convention) is the most significant international law pertaining to displacement. The Convention sets out

the obligations of states toward refugees and establishes international standards for their treatment, while an additional Protocol in 1967 ensures that the convention covers all refugees without time restrictions or geographical limitations.

Of the seven countries analysed in this series, only Kenya and Afghanistan are signatories to the Refugee Convention (see Table 1). The situation in South Sudan is less clear, but it is expected that the new state will ratify the convention and other relevant international treaties. Jordan and Syria have both declined to accede to the convention, a position that is widespread in the Middle East, where many countries assert that pan-Arab norms about asylum and internal policies are sufficient to guide their conduct. Pakistan has openly stated that the emphasis placed on local integration in international legislation is unacceptable and unrealistic. All three of these countries accommodate massive refugee caseloads amounting to almost a third of all refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2012).

Several human rights conventions have special relevance to displaced people. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. There is mixed adherence to these treaties. The ICESCR, for example, prohibits illegal and arbitrary forced evictions, yet even in countries that are signatories, such as Kenya and Afghanistan, our studies found frequent instances of forced evictions, with poor adherence to due process and often without redress (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012; Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011).

The other prominent international instruments of relevance here are the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (OCHA,

**Table 1: Presence of displaced populations and legal instruments relating to displacement**

City	Displaced groups at time of study	1951 Refugee Convention signatory	Domestic IDP policy
Kabul, Afghanistan	Afghan returnee refugees; conflict- and disaster-induced IDPs	Yes	In draft
Amman, Jordan	Palestine refugees (1948 & 1967); Iraqi refugees	No	No
Damascus, Syria	Circa 2010: Palestine refugees, Iraqi refugees, Golan Heights IDPs, drought-induced IDPs, stateless Kurds	No	No
Nairobi, Kenya	Somali, Ethiopian and other refugees; conflict-, disaster- and development-induced IDPs	Yes	Yes
Yei, South Sudan	IDPs, Congolese refugees, Ugandan refugees, South Sudanese returnees	n/a	n/a
Gaza Strip	Palestine refugees; conflict-induced IDPs	n/a	No
Peshawar, Pakistan	Afghan refugees; conflict- and disaster-induced IDPs	No	No

1998). While IDPs are theoretically entitled to the same rights as other citizens they are often in need of special protection, 'not least because the government responsible for protecting them is sometimes unwilling or unable to do so, or may itself be the cause of displacement' (Brun, 2005). The principles lay out the responsibilities of states in preventing displacement, and the specific responsibilities to their citizens that come into effect during and after displacement, but they are non-binding and international cooperation on international displacement is weak. Several countries have developed national IDP policies, though of the countries looked at in this study only Kenya has done so. The policy was drafted by a working group incorporating representatives from several branches of government and the Kenya National Human Rights and Equality Commission, and supported by a range of international actors including the UN Special Rapporteur for IDPs. The process also included consultation with a wide range of civil society actors, though it did not involve IDPs themselves. The policy closely follows the IDP definition established by the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. In addition to providing an overall framework to prevent, provide for and resolve issues of internal displacement, the policy aims to coordinate the national response to internal displacement and uphold the rights of IDPs throughout the various phases of displacement (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011).

By contrast Pakistan, a country with a large and protracted IDP crisis, does not recognise the Guiding Principles and the issue of the domestic rights of IDPs is highly politicised and contentious. While Pakistan's IDPs are guaranteed the rights available to all citizens under the constitution, including freedom of movement, equality under the law, the right to hold and acquire property in any part of Pakistan and the right to education, in practice many of these rights are withheld. For example, IDPs are denied freedom of movement in Sindh and Punjab (Mosel and Jackson, 2013). Furthermore, because the government does not regard fighting between the

Pakistani military and militants associated with the Taliban in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) as an internal conflict it does not officially recognise displaced people from FATA as IDPs. Eligibility for assistance is based on whether the area of origin is 'notified' as an insecure area by the government; people from 'de-notified' areas are taken off assistance databases and are expected to return to their area of origin (Mosel and Jackson, 2013).

This position highlights how displaced populations can acquire symbolic power as 'symptoms' of the failure of state policy, particularly security policy, leading governments either to try to resolve the problem by compelling displaced people to return home, or to deny that the problem exists at all. In Afghanistan, both the government and its international allies are uncomfortably aware that the arrival of IDPs into Kabul is a symptom of deteriorating security in the provinces and the failure of the state and its international partners to protect Afghan citizens.

### 3.2 Urban development frameworks

Urban development frameworks guide investment in housing and infrastructure by both the state and private entities so that these investments are integrated and contribute strategically to urban growth. In all the case study cities except Amman, urban planning frameworks are out-dated, non-existent or in the midst of a process of revision (see Table 2). Master plans are typically far out of step with the reality of what these cities have become, and are in any case frequently ignored by property developers and citizens alike. Their most concrete role is often to provide cover for inaction and neglect by the local authorities, for instance by delaying action on providing services until a new Master Plan is finalised, a process which typically takes years. This dearth of up-to-date urban planning instruments is often related to a lack of concerted national policies towards urbanisation in tandem with rapid urban growth.

**Table 2: Presence of displaced populations and legal instruments relating to displacement**

City	Population size	Scale of urban growth	Population in urban areas, national level (% of total)	Last Master Plan (date)
Kabul, Afghanistan	4–4.5m (2010)	2m (2001) → est. 6m by 2020	23%–30% (2005) → 36% (2030)*	1978
Amman, Jordan	2.2m (2011)	5,000 (1921) → 1m (1987) → 2.2m (2011)	72% (1990) → 78.5% (2010) → est. 82% (2030)	2005
Damascus, Syria	4–5m (2010)	423,000 (1955) → 3m (1980) → 4–5m (2010)	55% (2010) → est. 75% (2050)	1960
Nairobi, Kenya	3.1m (2009)	c. 300,000 (1960) → 3.1m (2009)	33% (1999) → est. 50% (2015) and 60% (2030)	1973
Yei, South Sudan	172,000 (2010)	39,470 (2005) → 172,000 (2010)	22% (2009)**	2010
Gaza Strip	1.6m (2007)	n/a	81% (2012)	n/a
Peshawar, Pakistan	3.3m	1.7m (1998) → 3.3m (2012)		Late 1990s

Note: Sources are as used for the case study reports with the exception of \* UN SPACE Habitat, <http://www.unhabitat.org/stats/Default.aspx>; and \*\* CIA, The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2212.html>. This figure refers to Sudan prior to the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Attitudes to urbanisation are especially negative where rural development is seen as key to national development. Such attitudes have been prominent in Africa over the past decades, often supported and encouraged by donors. The Kenyan government, for instance, has focused on the development of the agricultural sector since the 1970s despite the massive growth of Nairobi, a sprawling city that has expanded tenfold since the 1920s, from 77km<sup>2</sup> in 1927 to some 700km<sup>2</sup> today (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011, citing UNEP and UN Habitat, 2007). Despite this massive expansion, until 2008 the only operational plan approved for Nairobi was the 1948 Master Plan, created to cater for what was then a small colonial city (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011). In a similar vein, South Sudan has sought to 'de-urbanise' centres swollen by migration during the civil war under the rubric of 'Taking towns to the people' (Martin and Mosel, 2011).

### 3.3 Policy attitudes: the intersection of displacement, urban growth and politics

Assessing the legal frameworks, history and drivers of displacement, and attitudes towards urban planning and administration in each city, reveals the central importance of the political context in which urban growth is managed and displaced populations are received, and the links between the two. Having the right legislation in place may not be as important as positive acceptance of a population's presence and the proactive provision of services to meet urban growth. The history of displacement in a country, city or region is highly important in shaping attitudes and determining the political 'meaning' of displaced populations.

This interplay of political and historical factors can be seen in Kabul. Here the authorities for many years have refused to accept that IDP populations are going to remain in the city and should be included in urban development activities. In part this derives from the practical capacity and resource limitations of Kabul Municipality, which is understandably overwhelmed by Kabul's rapid growth from a city of 1m to 4.5m in ten years. The urban administration of Kabul was unprepared, low in capacity after years of neglect during Taliban rule and after the civil war, and did not have the resources or technical expertise to rapidly address the needs of this growing population. This has led to negative attitudes in general to urban growth, reinforced by the poor conditions in the newest informal areas (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012).

At the same time, however, there is prejudice about the ethnicity and rural background of incoming migrants, and a fear that Pashtun IDPs will bring insecurity to the city through links to the insurgency in the south and drug-smuggling networks. Respondents trying to provide services to displaced populations told the study that government attitudes were inconsistent and would change frequently, assigning 'displaced' status to certain populations one day and removing it and calling for their eviction the next (Metcalf and Haysom,

2012). In interviews Kabul government officials commented on the need to 'cleanse' IDPs from Kabul, because as the capital the city had to demonstrate the country's 'dignity and prestige' (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). The Kabul administration has sought to discourage permanent settlement by displaced groups, repeatedly asserting that they should return to their areas of origin (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012).

In the Middle Eastern case studies, the political resonance of contemporary displacement has historical roots in the Palestinian refugee crisis, amongst other historical refugee crises, and other cultural dynamics (Pavanello, 2012; Haysom and Pavanello, 2011). Damascus and Amman both host large populations of Palestine refugees, and registered Palestine refugees make up the majority of Gaza's population. In 1948 refugees from Palestine were made full citizens in Jordan and given extensive rights in Syria. The ongoing exile of Palestinian refugees and poor prospects for a political solution to the conflict in the short term, as well as the involvement of Palestinian refugees in events such as Black September in Jordan and in the Lebanese civil war, have coloured the way government sees hosting displaced populations, with fears of protracted exile and 'refugee warriors' (Leenders, 2010). Yet large numbers of Iraqi refugees have settled in Jordan and may in time come to enjoy de facto local integration (Pavanello, 2012). Cultural beliefs around providing 'hospitality' to guests and pan-Arab solidarity have led to lax migration controls between Jordan, Syria and neighbouring Arab states and tolerance of the presence of some displaced populations. Kagan (2010) has argued that this tolerance is also partly the result of a longstanding bargain whereby the UN provides parallel services for refugees over the long term. The Iraqi refugee crisis of 2005/6 was also accompanied by high levels of international funding, much of which went directly to Jordanian public services.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.4 Conclusion

Addressing urban vulnerability will require an understanding of the reasons why settlement, of migrants broadly and displaced populations in particular, is resisted or facilitated. Important questions remain as to what incentives and strategies resolve negative attitudes to the displaced and encourage host states to enable the displaced to enter local economies and use (ideally) public services. What were the key ingredients in the case of Iraqi refugees in Jordan? What encourages governments to embark upon developing structures and policies to guide their response, and what can help ensure that good policy can be turned into action on the ground? How should displacement policy relate to planning instruments? In addition to – and also parallel with – attempts to reform or implement legal frameworks, the international community will need to grapple with such key questions of political economy.

<sup>3</sup> In the current Syrian refugee crisis such funding has not been forthcoming and the Jordanian government is trying to confine Syrian refugees to camps (UN Situation Report, forthcoming).



# Chapter 4

## Governance actors and urban powerbrokers

The politics of displacement, urban growth and resource distribution is enacted through a dense network of governance actors. In theory, in cities and towns, local state authorities – rather than NGOs and UN agencies – are the primary providers of the services that the urban poor use, and have the most control in shaping urban growth. In practice, a wide range of actors outside of state governance structures have authority and influence over the lives of the urban poor and the displaced. Local urban politics is acutely relevant to the lives of the displaced, even if their own involvement is often passive.

### 4.1 Formal governance

All of the cities examined in this study have long histories of urban governance structures and administrations, though their development and sophistication have generally not kept pace with urban growth. Aid agencies, displaced people and host communities alike all complained about structural problems within national authorities and local service providers, including a lack of coordination between ministries and municipal departments, overlapping responsibilities between departments, leading to wasted resources, municipal duties split between departments, leading to gaps in services, and even the development of competing urban plans between different districts of the same city.

Issues related to institutional structure and capacity are exacerbated by prejudice against the urban poor and the displaced. Hostility towards displaced groups was observed in the discourse of national structures, and in the statements and actions of local government officials and street-level emissaries of the bureaucracy, such as the police. In turn, displaced populations were almost universally cynical about their ability to use formal avenues to influence urban governance, and perceptions of governance actors among the urban poor were remarkably negative. Metcalfe and Pavanello (2011) argue that, in Nairobi:

*widespread corruption, a lack of consultation and the basic failure to deliver services in the slums has resulted in further exclusion and marginalisation. Corruption has effectively denied residents access to resources, opportunities and power. As a result, few feel any enthusiasm for participating in the political process* (p. 26).

Likewise in Kabul, our study found governance structures weak and fragmented, and heavily influenced by social, ethnic and clan ties; IDPs' confidence in formal governance actors was low (Metcalfe and Haysom, 2012). Even in

cities with better-organised municipalities, such as Amman, citizens' participation in urban governance and planning was minimal.

While the influence of citizens over urban planning and development, let alone political representation, is generally poor in many contexts, there are reasons to believe that displaced populations in protracted situations suffer systematic marginalisation, especially refugees, who usually do not have political rights. This may be evident in the reluctance of administrations to rein in abusive or corrupt police forces or invest in infrastructure in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of migrants.

### 4.2 Informal governance

The absence of formal channels to express grievances and make demands on state institutions means that many host communities and displaced groups turn to informal mechanisms to carry out governance functions such as dispute resolution, overseeing and enforcing transactions and providing services. These local powerbrokers include customary officials, community associations and local human rights and development organisations. In Yei, the army, the Church, local IDP leaders and community organisations have undertaken functions normally performed by formal actors, such as service provision, security, land administration and education (Martin and Sluga, 2011). In general, the studies found few examples of informal community organisations providing services or lobbying decisionmakers. The administrations in Damascus and Jordan were to different degrees repressive of NGOs, as was the Hamas administration in Gaza, though much civic life continues there nonetheless. In urban areas such as Yei and Kabul community organisations may fail to take root because of the high degree of movement in and out of these cities.

In several cases people have organised themselves through community and patronage structures. In slum neighbourhoods in Nairobi residents have established community-based organisations and committees to provide essential services such as waste management, security and livelihood support (Metcalfe and Pavanello, 2011). In Kabul, ethnic ties to powerful actors may allow some to gain access to aid, prevent forced evictions and secure the release from custody of relatives (Metcalfe and Haysom, 2012). Longstanding refugee communities in Gaza organised collective action through camp committees, such as protests against the transfer of water and sanitation responsibilities from UNRWA to the local authority in a reconstruction housing project (Haysom and el Sarraj, 2012).

While informal actors and structures can provide solutions to some of the challenges of urban life in the short term, they are no substitute for effective urban governance in the long run. Small-scale organisations and community-minded individuals do not have the capital or expertise to provide the complex services and infrastructure cities need. Moreover, communities are often only able to organise to the extent that they capture more of the scarce resources available in informal settlements, rather than successfully petitioning formal governance actors for more effective local institutions. Organisation along ethnic or kinship lines can also reinforce ethnic identities in conflict-prone societies, as it appears to have done in Kabul (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). Informal power structures can become perverse and predatory, extorting and abusing citizens as well as protecting them – as seen with gangs charging protection money in Nairobi.

### 4.3 Conclusion

Despite the presence of a plethora of formal officials and informal governance actors in the urban centres studied, power was rarely exerted with the aim of benefitting the poor or marginalised. External interventions will have to be mindful both of the formal and informal governance dynamics in informal settlements; and of the need to support the ability of the displaced and urban poor to influence governance decisions that fundamentally affect their opportunities and access to resources in the city. However, displaced groups will often remain marginalised and lacking in political bargaining power, a dynamic that will be difficult to change significantly. This raises the need for other actors to ensure their protection and raise the profile of their concerns.

# Chapter 5

## Access to services and security of tenure

The lack of influence urban residents have in planning and urban development decisions is evident in the problems that arise with access to services in most cities studied in the course of this research. Greater access to services, particularly health and education, is a key reason why displaced people move to cities in the first place, and many migrants acknowledged that services were better than in their areas of origin. Even so, in all of the cities studied displaced and resident populations alike face a daily struggle to secure an education for their children and access to healthcare and basic services such as water, sanitation and power. Likewise, although the urban poor and displaced populations attach great importance to security of tenure, in practice poverty, social marginalisation and a lack of alternatives force them to accept risky and precarious tenure conditions.

### 5.1 Urban growth and access to services

Levels of service provision vary considerably across the urban areas examined in this study. In the worst cases, the urban poor and displaced populations live alongside open sewers, with human effluent on the streets, no electricity and unsafe water. Informal areas in the Middle Eastern cities – Damascus, Gaza and Amman – generally have better service infrastructure than the African and Central Asian case studies, in part because urban growth had been slower and more proactively managed and levels of international support to displaced populations are relatively high, particularly in Gaza, where UNRWA provides basic services to large numbers of Palestinians. By comparison, in Nairobi, Yei and Kabul there has been far less international support for displaced populations and less national attention to urbanisation in general. State investment in public services in these cities is low, and residents struggle to gain an adequate education and access to healthcare.

Service provision can differ markedly between different areas in the same city. In Kabul access to services is worst in illegally settled sites, where the government refuses to allow the construction of permanent service infrastructure. Many residents have settled on very steep hillside slopes, where it is difficult to construct roads or extend piped water networks (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). In Nairobi, living conditions in the inner city are better than in peripheral informal slums (Pavanello et al., 2010; Metcalfe and Pavanello, 2011).

Informal areas may lack services for a variety of reasons; ownership of the land may be disputed, land may be earmarked for lucrative development, or it may be impractical or expensive to provide services. Services may also be deliberately withheld in an attempt to discourage in-migration

and limit urban growth. That said, official attitudes towards informal areas need not necessarily be entirely negative. At the time of the study, informal settlements in Damascus were being increasingly integrated into the city, with running water, electricity and telephone lines extended to these areas since the 1980s. Some 95% of informal housing areas in Damascus governorate have electricity, and 88% have sewerage infrastructure (Haysom and Pavanello, 2012). As of 2011 the authorities had by law committed to the recognition of informal areas as legitimate areas of urban growth and had introduced a policy of extending services to them and collecting taxes. Likewise in Jordan, the government has tried to improve living conditions in both refugee camps and informal areas.

In some instances displacement itself has led to a disruption in access to services. In Gaza there are indications that the extra burden of rental payments and loss of assets incurred following the destruction of homes by the Israeli military has put pressure on household budgets and made it more difficult for affected families to meet expenses such as education (Haysom and el Sarraj, 2012). For several years after the Iraqi refugee crisis in Amman and Damascus school enrolment of Iraqi children was low. While public primary education in both cities was free of charge, it is possible that the indirect costs (for transport, textbooks and stationery) were discouraging attendance. Iraqi children may also have found it difficult to adapt to a new curriculum (Pavanello, 2012; Haysom and Pavanello, 2011). In Nairobi IDPs' access to health, education and other services has been disrupted by displacement, which entailed time in re-establishing their entitlements, even within the same city, and increased poverty through loss of income or assets during displacement (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011).

Displaced people may also have more restricted access to mental health services than host communities. In all the urban areas examined mental health services are inadequate and mental health problems stigmatised, among both displaced and non-displaced urban residents. However, many displaced people have suffered trauma prior to and during displacement, such as torture by militias or state security forces, witnessing violent events or suffering abuse as the cause of their displacement or en route to safety. Aspects of their lives in displacement appear to exacerbate negative mental states, such as confinement in order to avoid detection by police, overcrowding, reduced status in their adopted society and chronic uncertainty about the future. In Gaza, whilst the population at large suffers acute stress due to the ongoing conflict, including frequent airstrikes and the effects of the Israeli blockade, 'parents of school-age children and young people reported that displacement had affected their

educational attainment, citing an inability to concentrate in overcrowded housing and a loss of motivation due to stress after traumatic events' (Haysom and el Sarraj, 2012).

## 5.2 Non-state provision: private, community and NGO/ UN providers

In the absence of state service provision private service providers often step in to fill the gap. In Kabul, Yei and Gaza residents in many areas buy water from private providers. In Nairobi, slum residents complained that the water was often foul-smelling and some suspected that it was taken from polluted sources (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011). In Kabul and Gaza, many residents use private pharmacies to make up for poor access to health services, and buy medicines without prescriptions or without consultations with doctors (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012; Haysom and el Sarraj, 2012). In Kibera in Nairobi, residents have tried to address the poor quality of schooling on offer by resorting to untrained teachers operating out of their homes for profit:

*At one end of this spectrum are the cheap, informal, privately run primary schools. Many of these charge around 100 KES (\$1.18) per month, much less than public schools, and are often run by unqualified teachers who live in the slums and provide classes in their own homes. In some of the worst instances encountered in this study, children of widely different ages (e.g. between two and seven years old) are taught in small, squalid and cramped rooms. Respondents reported that the owners of these schools are more interested in profit than in providing an education, and take advantage of the limited income of the poorest parents (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011).*

There were also several examples of communities banding together to arrange their own service provision; in one area in Kabul, for example, IDPs and host families contribute towards a shared generator, and in another they share the cost of a water pump (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). In the former case the area is ethnically homogenous with strong kinship ties between residents, which may have allowed greater scope for collective action; in the latter the population is not as homogenous but has been settled in the area for over a decade, perhaps allowing more time for bonds to develop to enable trust in such a community scheme.

International assistance has affected displaced people's access to services, most obviously through directly funding parallel services in cities, subsidising access to public services or making contributions to other areas of the host state budget in exchange for greater access to public services for the displaced. In Jordan, for instance, Iraqis accessed secondary health care services through Caritas and Jordanian Red Crescent-affiliated hospitals, and expensive

### Box 2: Iraqi refugees' psychological health problems in displacement

'The traumatic experiences many Iraqis have been exposed to, including beatings, torture, rape and murder, have had severe repercussions on their mental well-being. A number of representatives of I/NGOs working with Iraqi refugees in Amman noted that a significant proportion of their beneficiaries had been victims of violence, and said that affected children and adults suffered from a range of conditions including flashbacks, nightmares, insomnia, fatigue, panic attacks, anger, depression, post-traumatic stress disorders and suicidal thoughts. Marriages have reportedly come under strain and domestic violence has increased ... Mental problems are often exacerbated by anxiety surrounding residency status in Jordan, the significant decline in lifestyle and social status that some Iraqi refugees have experienced and uncertainty about the future ... Particularly for male heads of household difficulties in finding a job in Jordan constitute another important compounding factor. One mental health professional working for an NGO stressed that survivors of torture and violence are not only found among the poorest segments of the refugee population and registered UNHCR refugees, but also among the better-off segments of the Iraqi community. While mental health needs cut across income and social groups, reaching affected individuals and families in the upper classes remains a challenge as they are not registered with UNHCR and do not live in the poor neighbourhoods where international agencies mainly operate. Mental health provision in Jordan's public health facilities is inadequate. Primary health care workers do not receive mental health training, there is very limited interaction between primary care and mental health systems and the number of mental health professionals per capita is low and they are unequally distributed across the country' (Pavanello, 2012: 15).

tertiary services (such as cancer treatment and cardiovascular operations) were made available to registered Iraqi refugees through UNHCR and partner organisations (Pavanello, 2012). Iraqis were also granted access to public education and the health system in part due to international funding which helped to pay for the expansion of these services to larger populations. In Syria, health services were available to registered refugees through Syrian Arab Red Crescent clinics and at hospitals courtesy of UNHCR subsidies (Haysom and Pavanello, 2011).

Parallel services, wholly funded by external actors, have also been widely used in the Middle East. UNRWA provides a variety of services in Gaza, including primary schooling, primary healthcare, water and sanitation services in UNRWA camps and social protection assistance and other subsidies. A large majority of the population is entitled to this provision, as about 70% of the population are registered Palestine refugees (Haysom and el Sarraj, 2012). In Amman, approximately 50% of the population is of Palestinian descent and entitled to take advantage of UNRWA's services, but as Palestinian Jordanians are able to access public services or can afford private

services only a small proportion takes advantage of UNRWA's services (Pavanello, 2012).

### 5.3 Tenure security

In all of the case studies in this series, there is widespread informality of land development and tenure. The majority of Kabul is 'informal' in the sense that large parts of the city do not conform to any plan, and land transactions and construction in residential areas have not been recorded or sanctioned through official processes (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). In Damascus, one out of three dwellings has been built on unregularised land or without authorisation for construction, and half of all new physical expansion on the periphery of the city is informal (Haysom and Pavanello, 2011). In all of the studies land and rental prices are rising, putting pressure on the livelihoods of the urban poor and on land and rental markets, often driving people into overcrowded homes on the periphery of the city far from the main economic hubs, or forcing them to live on unsafe or marginal land.

Residents of informal areas enjoy varying degrees of security from eviction and rights as tenants or landholders, and land rights are in general extremely complicated. In Gaza and Kabul land laws are poorly understood, even by the local judiciary (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012; Haysom and el Sarraj, 2012). In both these cities, numerous changes in administration and decades of conflict have made it very difficult for lawyers and residents alike to make sense of the reality of ownership on the ground, and the rights established by often overlapping systems of law. In the slums of Nairobi agreements between tenants and landlords tend to be verbal rather than written, and landlords often do not themselves legally own the plots on which they have built. This makes their tenants highly vulnerable to forced evictions. Two principal types of forced eviction were in evidence in Nairobi's slums: those carried out by private landlords in relation to disputes over rent, sale or change of use of the property; and those carried out by government and parastatal entities to free up land for public infrastructure. Respondents repeatedly noted that evictions by private landlords were often fuelled by ethnic tensions, and many landlords have refused to rent property to people from rival ethnic groups (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011).

In Yei, the majority of respondents in our study reported being allocated land by a chief without receiving any documentation proving ownership. An estimated 70% of residents have no title to land or other legal documentation, and are therefore at risk of eviction without compensation (Martin and Sluga, 2011). In Kabul land ownership in informal areas may be informally sanctioned, but is not formalised through the required legal and administrative actions. In even more precarious positions are those residents who have 'customary deeds obtained from people who have illegally appropriated large tracts of land. These situations have continued to proliferate because confidence in formal mechanisms is

#### Box 3: Mass forced evictions in Nairobi

In Nairobi 'forced evictions by government and parastatal entities and private landlords ... are a regular occurrence in the slums. Evictions are often conducted with little prior warning and frequently take place at night ... with little or no consultation and few opportunities for redress. Respondents in Kibera, Mathare and Mukuru Kwa Njenga spoke of landlords using intimidation and violence to remove tenants, often at the hands of hired thugs or gangs. In several instances entire blocks of houses were reportedly set on fire' (Metcalf et al., 2012: 15).

low and because formal procedures are costly, corrupt and extremely complex' (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). Some people have settled on land with no customary deed or agreement with the landowner; this is considered illegally grabbed land (*zor'abad*), and is most vulnerable to eviction.

The specific relationship between displacement and security of tenure can take various forms. In some cases illegality of residence in the country makes it more likely that people will enter into insecure arrangements, and makes them more vulnerable to exploitation or abuse; in other cases the displaced have, through a combination of poverty and kinship ties, settled in particularly problematic locations. In Amman, Iraqi refugees reportedly entered into less secure arrangements and were charged higher rental prices when their status was illegal (Pavanello, 2012). In Kabul, it was largely IDPs, particularly very poor Pashtuns from the south, who settled on *zor'abad* land (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012).

Displacement most directly affects tenure where returning refugees seek to reclaim land, or people displaced within cities seek compensation or reconstruction. In Gaza, Palestinians whose homes had been destroyed were sometimes shocked to find that they could not prove ownership of their home or land with documents that had sufficed for other bureaucratic procedures, making them ineligible for reconstruction assistance (Haysom and el Sarraj, 2012). In Yei, there have been disputes over land between returning refugees and IDPs and soldiers. Soldiers and IDPs who had settled on the land in the late 1990s believed that their claims to land that had formerly belonged to the refugees was legitimate, particularly where they had invested in constructing homes, and where establishing rightful legal ownership was difficult (Martin and Sluga, 2011).

### 5.4 Conclusion

Acknowledging the scale of the challenges involved in providing basic services and secure tenure in urban areas can make addressing urban vulnerability seem a daunting task. Clearly, in many cities conditions in informal settlements will remain poor without large-scale investment in infrastructure, public services and governance. While there are some specific ways in which displacement affects access to services and

tenure security, especially under regimes hostile to refugees, by and large the displaced and host populations face very similar obstacles to living in clean and safe environments and using education and health services. Even so, the studies came across

examples of host states implementing policies and projects that embodied a progressive attitude to informal settlement. That such attitudes are rare underscores the need for expertise in housing, urban renewal, planning and tenure issues.

# Chapter 6

## Protection and access to justice

In the midst of chronic vulnerability, many urban residents – displaced and non-displaced alike – also face acute threats. The types and levels of threat vary considerably between the case studies. The degree of repression by the authorities, the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies and the attitude of the state towards displaced groups all influence the level of threat people face, as does their location within the city and their legal status, as well as issues of identity, such as gender, ethnicity and religion. In some cases displaced people faced specific risks, mostly related to lack of documentation or discrimination by the authorities or by other urban residents. They were also sometimes at heightened risk of suffering from gender-based violence or conscription into gangs.

### 6.1 Urban threats: repression, conflict and impunity

Urban environments are very dynamic and the balance of threat and safety changes, sometimes swiftly. At the time when the studies were conducted, Amman and Damascus were seemingly the safest cities in which displaced populations had settled. Crimes rates were very low, and protection threats largely related to past trauma, problems with legal status or exploitation in the informal sector. Amman had attracted refugees and other migrants in part precisely because of its reputation for stability and safety. Since the study, Damascus has slipped into a violent internal conflict, and some refugees have left Damascus to return to regions that they previously considered too dangerous, such as Baghdad and Gaza, illustrating how precarious – and relative – safe haven in cities can be.

Politically motivated violence is a source of danger in Nairobi, Gaza and Peshawar. Not just a place of refuge for Somalis, Ethiopians and other refugees, Nairobi has also seen intra-urban displacement during riots linked to elections in 2007. Gaza is subject to a low-level conflict punctuated by acute episodes of violence, airstrikes, demolitions, political violence and an economic blockade. The residents of Peshawar have suffered suicide bombings, targeted killings, kidnapping and other attacks on civilians by political groups. This violence has escalated in recent years; in 2011 alone, there were 120 such attacks in Peshawar. While not confined to any particular part of the city, the outskirts of the Town VI area, where most displaced and urban poor live, have borne the brunt of these attacks.

In Yei, Nairobi and Kabul there are neighbourhoods replete with danger. In Nairobi's slums, the overwhelming majority of respondents, displaced and non-displaced alike, claimed that criminal violence was the most significant threat they faced:

*A widespread feeling of insecurity was palpable during interviews with respondents in almost all the locations visited for this study. As one woman in Kibera put it: 'We never feel safe! Here we can all be robbed, killed, raped, injured ... men, women, children, everyone, anytime (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011: 13).*

Out of the seven cities studied, Nairobi's informal settlements present a particularly acute case where weak rule of law has compounded widespread unemployment and poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, gang culture and overcrowded living conditions to produce high levels of violence (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011). Similar conditions were observed in other cities, albeit on a smaller scale. In recent years, like Juba and other urban areas in South Sudan, Yei has seen an escalation in violence (Martin and Sluga, 2011). In Kabul residents in informal settlements, particularly in IDP camps which the police would not enter, complained about the prevalence of small arms and the presence of smuggler networks and drug abuse (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012).

### 6.2 Justice mechanisms and security forces

#### 6.2.1 Formal systems

In the face of these threats host communities and displaced groups often have few formal authorities to turn to. In many of the case studies states are essentially unable to provide security to their citizens. Civilian law enforcement agencies were regarded as ineffective and access to formal justice mechanisms was constrained by lack of financial means and discrimination.

Admittedly, the challenges facing urban authorities in violent cities are immense. For example, in Nairobi police have to work with insufficient resources and often feel overwhelmed. In the Mukuru Kwa Njenga settlement, an area with an estimated population of 500,000, just 13 officers are assigned to the local station. In Kibera, 60 police officers cover hundreds of thousands of residents. Poor living conditions for police officers in the slums damage morale and low salaries encourage corruption, and residents accused officers of extortion, harassment and arbitrary arrest (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011). This was echoed in Kabul, where the poorly paid and under-staffed police force is implicated in a range of illegal activities, from corruption to drug-smuggling and arms trafficking; respondents described how they were frequently required to pay officers bribes (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). By contrast, in Amman and Gaza crime rates are low, but law and order appears to be achieved at least in part by large, highly active and repressive security forces. Formal judicial

systems in Kabul and Gaza were felt to be ineffectual, corrupt, expensive and time-consuming.

### 6.2.2 Customary mechanisms

In numerous contexts displaced and host communities seek justice and dispute resolution in customary systems. These are often considered fairer, faster and cheaper than formal mechanisms, and the emphasis they put on mediation and restorative justice is often valued. However, these mechanisms are generally only used for minor complaints; serious crimes still tend to be taken to the police. One of the main functions performed by customary judicial and dispute regulation mechanisms relates to land transactions and customary means of transferring land and property are widely used in Kabul, Gaza and Yei. However, while customary courts and dispute resolution play an often crucial role in regulating transactions and defusing conflict, human rights organisations complain that these systems discriminate against women and minorities, and displaced people, as ‘outsiders’, often do not have access to them. In South Sudan, host communities reported that minor complaints were usually dealt with by informal justice mechanisms, including Dinka courts, as well as the Catholic and Episcopal churches. However, Congolese refugees have no recourse to informal mechanisms and rely instead on the formal justice system (Martin and Sluga, 2011).

Another informal route to address protection threats involves establishing community patrols and guards. In several neighbourhoods in Peshawar volunteer youth organisations – *tanzeem-nowjawan* – provide security for residents. Some neighbourhoods also have committees providing financial and other support to IDPs, refugees or longer-term residents in the event of problems with the police or courts (Mosel and Jackson, 2013). Another response is to appeal to powerful local actors for protection. In Kabul, residents reported that several communities, both IDPs and longer-term residents, had patronage relationships with politicians or armed strongmen (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). Anecdotes from residents in Nairobi and Yei demonstrated the paradox of such protection: shop owners and residents in Kibera sometimes paid ‘protection money’ to local gangs, a service which was not always voluntary; residents in Yei accused the South Sudanese Army of preying on residents for economic gain or sexual violence, while acknowledging that their presence provided some deterrence to other aggressors (Martin and Sluga, 2011).

## 6.3 Protection threats and displacement

### 6.3.1 Identity: lack of documents, illegality and denial of socio-economic rights

One of the most consistent displacement-specific threats observed in these studies was being undocumented or having irregular status. It is often the case that people lose their documents in the course of displacement or, like stateless Kurds in Damascus and some Palestinian Jordanians, have been stripped of their nationality. However, in our studies

people most frequently were undocumented because they were not eligible for the status they needed in order to stay legally in the city. This has a range of obviously negative consequences in terms of access to a range of things – services, protection, socio-economic rights – that rely on having a status or bureaucratic identity acceptable to the city authorities.

Irregular status leads to fear of deportation, which in turn can lead to displaced people restricting their movements and reducing their visibility. Irregular status led Iraqi refugees to accept high rents and extortionate behaviour from landlords, as they felt unable to take complaints to the authorities. In Nairobi, undocumented refugees claimed that the police use irregular status as grounds for harassment and extortion (Pavanello et al., 2010). Even registered refugees may be denied core rights that would enable them to live safely in cities. The most obvious example of this is refugees who are often given leave to remain in a country but denied the right to work or full access to public services. In Amman and Damascus, Iraqi refugees were denied the right to work, as were refugees in Nairobi. Because in cities assistance to refugees is often inadequate or ill-matched to their needs, many do not register with UNHCR, particularly if they are not eligible for third-country resettlement. In Pakistan, IDPs face restrictions on their movement and residence in the city, and have to hide from the authorities periodically or forego state assistance (Mosel and Jackson, 2013). In Kabul, aid agencies complained that the authorities would ascribe IDP status to a population one day and remove it the next, affecting access to protection and assistance (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012).

### 6.3.2 Discrimination and ethnic profiling

In several cities, displaced populations suffer discrimination on the basis of their religious or ethnic identity. In Kabul tensions between displaced and non-displaced communities over land ownership and the use of water pumps, overlaid with ethnic hostility, has led to violent confrontations. Ethnic discrimination is most harmful when it is linked to security fears. For instance, poor and rural Pashtuns in Kabul, who are often internally displaced, are associated with the insurgency (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). In interviews Pashtuns claimed that this put them at a disadvantage when seeking casual daily labour. IDPs in Peshawar were also associated with the insurgency in FATA (Mosel and Jackson, 2013).

In situations where the political discourse is negative, even IDPs and refugees with the legal right to be in the city are highly vulnerable to discrimination and aggression, as seen with Afghan refugees in Peshawar and Somali refugees in Nairobi, as the governments in Pakistan and Kenya have raised the tenor of threats to expel refugees or confine them to camps (Refugees International, 2013). Increased harassment of refugees by police forces has been reported in both cities. Afghans living in camps on the outskirts of Peshawar report

that, in the aftermath of insurgent attacks, they are sometimes denied entry to the city and effectively confined to the camps (Mosel and Jackson, 2013).

### 6.3.3 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) was frequently reported as a problem in these studies. This often revolved around changing gender roles related to rural to urban migration, often with specific interactions with displacement. In urban areas, women tend to find paid work more easily than in rural areas, perhaps because cities have larger service economies, but this can put them at enhanced risk of sexual harassment from employers. Sexual harassment and violence against women in the workplace were frequently reported. Women working as domestic servants or in factories in Nairobi were particularly vulnerable to sexual, physical or verbal abuse by employers and supervisors. Widespread unemployment amongst the male members of Pashtun IDP households means that women and children are compelled to beg and are exposed to harassment by the police.

Men's disempowerment and loss of self-esteem after displacement may heighten the risk of domestic violence. Domestic violence has reportedly risen within Iraqi families in displacement. Informants linked this to a number of factors: the confinement of men to the home to avoid detection given their illegal status; unemployment and loss of traditional roles for men; and post-traumatic stress (Pavanello, 2012). There was also reportedly a rise in domestic violence following Afghan displacement to Peshawar, though it is not clear why (Mosel and Jackson, 2013). In Gaza, there is evidence of rising levels of domestic violence against women and children (PCBS, 2011). Although this was not raised in focus group discussions, key informants expressed the view that there was a causal link between domestic violence and overcrowding and the psychological effects of the conflict and blockade (Haysom and el Sarraj, 2012). In Yei gender-based violence is considered to be a widespread but under-reported problem.

Some of the characteristics of urban life – the population density of urban areas, generally more liberal attitudes to gender roles and the necessity of living amongst strangers rather than kin, for example – can interact with cultural norms to affect women's opportunities and the difficulties they face. For some women in Afghanistan and Pakistan this has led to greater restrictions on their movements, while for others it has brought more freedom, for instance to work (Mosel and Jackson, 2013; see Box 4). Such situations require a sophisticated understanding of gender sensitivities and specific interventions.

### 6.3.4 Criminal and gang violence

Gang violence is a notable feature of life in Nairobi, and in Khartoum and Juba, where HPG undertook studies on urban vulnerability in 2010. Key informants in Nairobi said

#### Box 4: Effects of displacement on gender roles in IDP households in Peshawar

'Some female IDPs reported seeing displacement as a blessing in disguise, allowing them better access to services and education and exposing them to a whole new lifestyle. Interviews indicate that attitudes towards the education of girls are beginning to change; more and more families reportedly enrol their girls in schools in Peshawar and allow them to work. However, this tends to be limited to the upper and middle classes. In Taliban-controlled regions, women's freedoms were severely restricted, including freedom of movement and education. The Taliban used violence to enforce their restrictive policies, including the bombing of girls' schools (Din, 2010). However, in areas of FATA where the Taliban hold minimal or no influence, women's freedom of movement and ability to work is less limited than in Peshawar. In several areas of the city, women IDPs from Kurram and Mohmand agencies reported that, at home, they were able to look after cattle and work in the fields as well as move freely between villages, whereas in Peshawar they are largely confined to the home. In their areas of origin people are often closely related and know one another, so more movement is permitted than is the case in a new – and strange – urban environment (HPG interviews). IDP women highlighted that, while Afghan and longer-term female residents worked and went to the market, often alone, they could not. Some IDP women reported not being able to visit hospitals alone (*ibid.*)' (Mosel and Jackson, 2013).

that young men were responsible for most of the crime in Nairobi's slums. Lack of jobs, poverty and alcohol and drug abuse were offered as key causes of the proliferation of youth crime. The presence of organised gangs such as the Mungiki, Sifau, Kamunji and Taliban in slum areas was also linked to high crime rates. These gangs often engage in 'protection' activities – providing patrols and guards for neighbourhoods to prevent muggings and robberies, and extorting money for these 'services' (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011). While victimisation by criminals and gangs is not obviously related to displacement, there may be specific reasons why displaced youth are more likely to join gangs, for instance as a way of gaining a sense of identity and belonging. In Juba 'for many young male IDPs, street gangs offered camaraderie and support, providing an important alternative to traditional family or clan networks in their areas of origin' (Martin and Mosel, 2011: 3).

## 6.4 Conclusion

A review of the range of protection threats in cities shows that many are beyond the control of citizens to contain or address, and host governments are often not able to provide security and may themselves be perpetrators of abuses. Another common thread running through the various protection threats that displaced and host populations alike face is impunity. Marginalised citizens frequently have no credible or effective institutions to turn to for justice or support. In some cities

the displaced faced heightened or specific threats, usually as a result of their legal status, discrimination, alienation from social support structures or past trauma. Addressing these challenges will require collaboration across governments and

between governments and non-governmental actors. It will also require more sophisticated techniques for investigating protection threats such as domestic violence, and for providing appropriate interventions.

# Chapter 7

## Economic issues and livelihoods

People accept the risks of city life for the opportunities cities offer – for better livelihoods and services and social mobility. Integration into the urban economy is the most vital determinant of whether displaced people thrive in cities or suffer penury, 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. This research suggests two main issues that need to be better understood. The first is centred around the displaced themselves, and essentially asks what their strategies are and how they can be supported. The second revolves around the concerns of the host government and populations about the impact of displaced people on the urban economy.

### 7.1 The urban economy

In all the urban centres studied, it was apparent that many displaced people faced extreme difficulties in securing sustainable livelihoods. However, displacement itself rarely put people at a greater disadvantage in the urban economy than other members of the urban poor. These urban economies are highly heterogeneous, as are displaced populations themselves, ranging from middle class, highly educated Iraqi refugees in Jordan to destitute peasants from the Afghan provinces.

In informal settlements and rapidly growing cities, especially those which have grown without accompanying industrialisation or the growth of service industries, unemployment rates are generally high. For the majority of respondents in our studies, finding a job was a major challenge and a daily pursuit. People without skills tended to work in the informal economy, often only finding casual manual labour at a daily rate, which was both unpredictable and rife with exploitation. In Kabul men go to a central square and wait to be selected by prospective employers looking for manual labourers for construction work (Metcalf and Haysom, 2012). In Nairobi unskilled labourers compete on a daily basis, often incurring considerable transport expenses in their search for work (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011). When secured, jobs in the informal sector tend to be very badly paid, carry no labour benefits and entail long working hours. Even in the formal sector wages can be unsustainably low, even for key public sector workers such as teachers and the police. A key challenge to securing livelihoods is the necessity for networks or contacts through family, ethnic or social ties – contacts which can be hard for newcomers, outsiders or chronically marginalised people to attain.

Many respondents in our studies only had access to informal credit, often leading to high levels of indebtedness with neighbours, friends and local shopkeepers. In some cases

the possession of a lease or ownership of land or a house is a requirement, which recent arrivals and foreigners are unlikely to have. For example, to be considered for a loan from the Bangladesh Rural Cooperative (BRAC) in Yei, applicants needed to own a house and the plot of land on which it stands, and to have been resident in Yei town for at least three years (Martin and Sluga, 2011). In general, respondents struggled to invest in improving their situation, for instance by paying for education for their children and saving for future expenses. In some cases parents removed their children from school to work. Ultimately, most families had few if any working members and relied on a combination of sources of income – remittances, daily wages and income from petty trade – to make ends meet. Even so, greater access to livelihoods was consistently cited as an incentive for moving to urban areas, and a reason why people wished to remain there.

### 7.2 Displacement and livelihood strategies

In all the cities studied there is wide variation between and within groups in the livelihood strategies people employed, as one would expect in diverse urban economies into which people integrate with greater or lesser ease. Unsurprisingly, displaced people who are educated, bring capital with them and have lived and worked in cities before fare the best. In our studies this characterised refugee populations far more than IDPs, even within poor areas. By far the largest group of concern are people who are poorly educated and lack skills marketable in the urban economy, as is almost always the case for IDPs who had fled rural areas. That said, not all educated and skilled refugees have been able to gain an economic foothold. In Amman and Damascus, many Iraqis struggled to become economically self-sufficient. Many were living off dwindling savings, facing imminent poverty and unable to provide the same investment in their children's future as they had done in Iraq.

Displaced people often face essentially the same challenges in finding a livelihood in urban areas as do the non-displaced. In certain cases displacement did specifically become an obstacle over and above these common challenges. In several cities studied refugees – or certain categories of refugees – were formally barred from employment. Some were however able to evade this restriction through loopholes in legislation or because it was laxly enforced. In many cities, refugees have established successful businesses through direct and indirect means, such as through partnerships with citizens. Businesses set up by the displaced often directly capitalise on links to the country of origin or on the custom of displaced residents. In other cases, illegal status and movement restrictions on the displaced can severely limit their employment opportunities.

For example, Somalis with recognised and regular status in Nairobi are subject to harassment and extortion by the police, affecting their ability to work as traders.

There was mixed evidence about whether self-sufficiency and economic integration improved over time. In Peshawar, lack of a stable income and rising rent and food prices seem to be increasing vulnerability over time, depleting assets and forcing displaced people to move frequently within the city; by contrast, Afghan refugees tend to be better established and have more stable livelihoods (Mosel and Jackson, 2013). Even this summary is, however, more complex upon scrutiny, as the spectrum of Afghan success in Peshawar ranges from wealthy, elite status refugees to those who struggle to meet their most basic needs, even after more than a decade in the city. More research on the processes by which displaced people in cities become self-sufficient is required in order to produce the kind of fine-grained understanding which will be needed in order to programme effectively to support self-sufficiency.

### 7.3 Displacement and economic integration

In many parts of the world migrants are seen as a threat to local jobs and a strain on services. In several of the case study cities the displaced are blamed for the challenges host populations experience in finding work or affordable housing. IDPs in Kabul have been accused of ‘pretending’ to be displaced in order to get assistance from national and international actors; ‘rich’ Iraqi refugees in Amman were accused of inflating house and rental prices; and refugee (and migrant) labourers from Uganda were charged with undercutting local labour in Yei.

Our studies specifically looked for evidence that the displaced put pressure on services and local economies, but we could find no instances where this was obviously the case bar the strain that migration at large had had on already woefully inadequate education services and serviced land in Kabul. In some cases the displaced seemed to be scapegoats for changes unrelated to their arrival. In Jordan, the scaling back of state subsidies and rising inflation was said to be

the real cause of increasing house prices. Yei was already suffering economic decline as aid agencies were shutting down their operations there. In many cases, it was clear that, together with the wider population of urban poor, displaced people often provide a source of cheap, unskilled, casual labour. They also often provide income to locals in the form of rent, purchasing from local businesses and buying land. In Peshawar Afghans work for less than the local population, but in low-status jobs that locals are unwilling to fill. During our research many locals acknowledged that certain industries relied on the labour of Afghan refugees to function. Displaced people who have established themselves in business often inject economic dynamism into local economies; in Nairobi, for example, the rise of the suburb of Eastleigh as an economic hub is attributed to the activities of Somali traders. Many of the displaced are self-employed, involved in cross-border trade or in business which relies on displaced customers. The presence of displaced populations undoubtedly does affect the local economy – through their role as customers, business owners and labourers and their use of local services and resources – but this effect is by no means necessarily negative. These dynamics need to be better understood by host states, communities and humanitarian agencies alike.

### 7.4 Conclusion

The right to safe work and inclusion in the urban economy is central to displaced populations becoming self-sufficient and making a contribution to the cities in which they have taken refuge. People who arrive with no skills suitable to the urban economy are desperate for vocational and other training, yet few such programmes are available. There is also little support and often outright hostility towards the attempts of refugees and IDPs at self-employment, and few voices publicly refute unfounded claims that the displaced ‘steal’ longer-standing residents’ jobs, or emphasise the contribution displaced people make to the economy and society through their labour and enterprise. These are areas in which external intervention could have a useful role.

# Chapter 8

## International assistance

Of key concern to the humanitarian sector is the role it can – or should – play in addressing the needs of the urban displaced, and how this fits within broader strategies of assistance to the urban poor. This section will provide some examples of how actors have intervened, demonstrating that the humanitarian sector's track record in urban areas is longer and more substantial than it is often given credit for. Nonetheless, there are some significant deficiencies in humanitarian programming in urban areas. Addressing the challenges of protracted urban displacement in particular will require a different approach by a range of actors.

### 8.1 The urban track record: past and present

Urban responses are often presented as new and unfamiliar to the humanitarian sector. This may be the case for large NGOs and UN agencies that have primarily worked in camps, but it is not true of humanitarian action or refugee responses generally. UNRWA has been delivering services to Palestine refugees in several locations across the Middle East since 1949, and this population and the camps that they were originally housed in have urbanised over time. Combined with politically favourable attitudes towards Palestine refugees in most host countries and territories, including the award of full and partial citizenship rights in Jordan and Syria to 1948 refugees, services provided by UNRWA have generally been considered to be of good quality, though standards have deteriorated in the last decade as the agency has faced a prolonged funding crisis.

The important part UNRWA services play in the lives of millions of people in the Middle East and the success of the multi-agency and NGO-led Iraqi refugee response in 2006–2012 highlight the positive role that international assistance can have in meeting the needs of the urban displaced. It is not clear how to replicate this success. In both Damascus and Amman unique circumstances prevailed. The Iraqi refugee crisis was unusually well-funded and the Jordanian government was generally tolerant of the Iraqis' presence and supportive of efforts to provide assistance to them. Neither generous funding nor governments friendly to displaced populations are common features of urban displacement. Many of UNRWA's activities are far from being emergency relief services, and much more closely resemble public services and social protection, both of which its unique mandate and ability to plan for years ahead allow. For organisations seeking humanitarian funding, long-term programming is not feasible due to the short length of grant contracts. Some of the lessons are also uncomfortable: UNRWA's successes have been achieved by providing parallel services, a modality criticised for failing to develop state institutions, diminishing state responsibility and eroding sovereignty.

In the last ten years there have been developments in both policy and practice. At a global level two key policy developments recognise the challenges of urban displacement and its importance to the humanitarian sector. The first is UNHCR's 2009 policy on urban refugees, which recognised urban areas as legitimate places for refugees to settle and called for the organisation to provide assistance to them there, as well as in camps. Secondly, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas released a strategy in 2010 which sets out a list of priorities for humanitarian actors in adapting their operations to deal with natural disasters, reconstruction and displacement in urban areas. The recommendations cover most of the fundamental challenges urban response poses to humanitarian actors. However, uptake in the field has been very poor. On the ground, many of the largest humanitarian NGOs have run numerous projects in urban areas. Many have dealt with reconstruction, chronic poverty or violence rather than displacement per se, but even so they have to grapple with some of the same issues. While these experiences have only recently begun to be documented and disseminated, they have produced tools for conducting needs assessments and profiling in urban areas, amongst other methodologies (see BRC, 2013; MSF, 2012; ALNAP, 2012; WRC, 2012).

### 8.2 Persistent problems in urban response

Despite UNRWA's long experience and more recent developments in this area, responses to urban displacement remain generally ad hoc and inadequate. In Yei, Kabul, Nairobi and Peshawar, residents, state officials and humanitarian actors themselves all criticised the response of the humanitarian community for its short-term results, the lack of continuity imposed by short-term funding contracts, the lack of alignment with government programmes and problems in providing assistance to displaced groups in the midst of high levels of vulnerability in the general population. Humanitarian and development actors were often highly cautious or limited in their advocacy against negative attitudes on the part of host country governments towards displaced populations. This included directly or tacitly supporting schemes predicated on unrealistic assumptions about refugees or IDPs returning to the areas they had fled, even though these areas were still violent or drastically underdeveloped. In general the response of the system at large to urban displacement is uneven between cities, and between vulnerable groups within those cities. This raises questions around the extent to which the international system can really be said to be responding to the needs of people affected by conflict and disaster.

Perhaps the most fundamental problem that humanitarians have encountered in urban areas has been the shift from ‘wholesale’ service provision in camps, where all residents are potential beneficiaries, to operating in contexts where it is not possible or necessarily ethical to identify beneficiaries by displacement status. Recent responses to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon exhibit all the familiar failings of a resolutely ‘camp-based’ mindset in programming: sidelining of the local response, insufficient attention to host families and community responses and a focus on wholesale provision, as well as, in Jordan at least, disproportionate attention to camp populations despite the fact that the self-settled urban population is very much larger. Many organisations have still not resolved the problem of targeting displaced populations dispersed in the midst of an equally or even poorer host population. Although strong arguments against ‘status-based’ programming in urban areas have been put forward, including in this study, this still remains the default approach for some organisations. The difficulties that can arise were evident in Jordan during the Iraqi refugee crisis. Some projects in Amman tried to resolve the problem by including quotas for host community beneficiaries, but quotas of 10–30% were insufficient to meet demand:

*when this (low) quota of non-Iraqis has been reached, needy members of host communities approaching I/NGOs for assistance are simply turned away. While there were no reports of overt violence towards Iraqi refugees as a result, it is not difficult to see how this approach has generated resentment, both towards Iraqi refugees and I/NGOs. As one respondent working for a local NGO admitted, ‘the [host] community now hates us’ (Pavanello and Haysom, 2011: 19).*

Community-based approaches seem to have much to offer, but it is not always possible to identify a coherent ‘community’ given high rates of intra-city movement, circular migration to and from rural areas and low levels of social cohesion in many urban areas. Area-based programmes, with sites chosen on the basis of high proportions of displaced residents (even if precise figures are unknown) likewise get around the issue of distinction, but are more useful for some services than others and can suffer from being small-scale and, where there is no leadership from local government, fragmented. Both approaches need to be developed for use at scale, and experiences should be collected and disseminated to aid future programming.

For the displaced in protracted situations, livelihoods and protection are crucial areas for intervention, but neither was a prominent focus in humanitarian projects. In many sites we found a huge demand for skills training, but few programmes were providing this. Cash for work programmes were often run as essentially conditional cash transfers. While these programmes could be useful in supporting family income in the short term, without the development of new skills and

### Box 5: Humanitarian coordination in urban responses

The study found some examples of effective coordination amongst humanitarian agencies, but coordinated urban responses are still rare and limited in the actors they involve. In Nairobi, a coordination mechanism established by UN-Habitat and OCHA in 2010 brings together a wide range of stakeholders to develop policy and programming to guide humanitarian responses in informal settlements; establish a monitoring tool on urban vulnerability; strengthen the coordination of interventions addressing urban vulnerability, with local authorities playing a central role; and develop an advocacy strategy to raise awareness of the situation in the slums and encourage action (Metcalf and Pavanello, 2011). In Peshawar, the interagency Internal Displaced Persons Vulnerability and Assessment Profiling project (IVAP) has significantly raised the profile of urban IDPs and generated donor interest in supporting off-camp populations. IVAP data is used by humanitarian actors and cluster leads to improve the targeting and design of interventions in host communities with high IDP concentrations. IVAP has also succeeded in challenging the registration process used by the government, and was instrumental in convincing UNHCR and the government to include a further 13,500 previously unregistered IDP families in their database for assistance (IVAP, 2012).

assets they are unlikely to have much longer-term impact. Most IDPs and refugees interviewed did not have access to skills training programmes, vocational training or loans to set up their own business. There were few efforts to find out what skills displaced residents had, or how these skills could be used to create employment opportunities. Likewise, while the displaced faced many protection threats there were few attempts to document or report them, or to pursue advocacy on crimes against the displaced, gender-based violence or police harassment. One notable exception was Gaza, where monitoring and advocacy are carried out by humanitarian and human rights actors on a range of issues affecting civilians.

At a strategic level, there are no clear or consistent triggers for humanitarian intervention in response to urban vulnerability, and once a response begins it is unclear who sets priorities or determines the strategy for a coordinated response. This concerns both priority setting amid a range of needs and the division of responsibility between different parts of the international system, including humanitarian, development and human rights actors. There is no established practice for determining whether coordination of all the various national, international and civil society actors should come from an international agency or a government ministry, a calculation which will at least partly depend on contextual factors such as the strength of indigenous capacity.

### 8.3 New approaches, new narratives

The previous section has highlighted some of the deficiencies in the humanitarian sector itself, but there are questions to ask

about the role of other actors in the international system. Here a distinction should perhaps be made in policy and research between acute urban displacement and protracted situations. In acute phases displaced populations are likely to arrive destitute and shell-shocked and will require an immediate set of interventions to address vulnerabilities generated by the events that triggered displacement, or that arose during movement to countries of asylum. With protracted displacement the issue of meaningfully distinguishing their needs from those of the host population and issues around access to the economy and public services will become crucial. Different modalities and priorities in the response will be necessary in these two situations, though a large proportion of displacement crises become protracted and this should be recognised at the outset. For humanitarian actors, this means understanding when to shift resources from short-term assistance to measures more suited to displaced populations' long-term presence. In general, long-term displacement in urban areas entails more of a focus on the 'protection' aspect of the humanitarian mandate – rights-based actions aimed at expanding safety and dignity – rather than the provision of material assistance. Given that funding is limited for most crises this shift is likely to involve trade-offs and concerted institutional priority-setting.

Responding to the full range of challenges facing the urban displaced in protracted situations is beyond the scope of any one actor or sector. There are roles for humanitarian, development, political and human-rights actors, at international, national and very local levels. Making use of their different capacities will require a collaborative effort. Past experience shows that, if development actors are to become engaged after the immediate relief phase, they need to be involved in assessments of the needs of populations from the start. Yet to date the development community and urban specialists have not really engaged with the displaced. There is little collaboration between development specialists and displacement researchers and practitioners. This extends to donors, who tend to channel funding for displaced populations through humanitarian departments.

It is not clear how to build relationships between development, human rights and humanitarian actors where these do not

exist, particularly as similar initiatives – such as that around 'early recovery' or other variations of the 'bridging the relief to development' divide – have repeatedly failed (Deschamps and Lohse, 2013). It may be that more collaboration can be galvanised at a local level on urban displacement responses, if humanitarians are able to convince other actors of the relevance of urban displacement to their mandates. As a starting point, humanitarians could work on translating their analysis into the 'language' of other sectors, for instance engaging with the discourse around 'inclusive' or 'sustainable' cities, which is current in the development sphere, and expanding on how displacement fits into these objectives.

This point applies equally to engagement with host states. The humanitarian sector tends to focus on narratives of vulnerability and victimhood when dealing with urban displacement. For governments and host communities concerned that the displaced are a burden on public resources, these narratives are unlikely to succeed in generating support for long-term settlement. Evidence-based and strategic communication about the character and implications of influxes of displaced populations will be critical in managing how the displaced are received in society. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) argues that 'accurately informing relevant stakeholders and the wider public about migration may be the single most important policy tool in all societies faced with increasing diversity' (2011: xiii). In general, messaging on displacement could give more credit to the resilience, ingenuity and fortitude displaced populations typically display, acknowledge the opportunities for safety and self-sufficiency that urban areas represent and highlight the contribution that the displaced can make to the societies in which they have taken refuge.

The humanitarian sector's adaption to urban displacement is not just about new tools, but about changing approaches too. The agenda at issue is larger than the concerns of humanitarians alone, spanning human rights, development and political action. Likewise, the condition of urban displacement is not just about vulnerability, but also about opportunity, inclusion and participation. Achieving this orientation may be one of the sternest tests of whether the international community is equal to the challenge that urbanisation presents.



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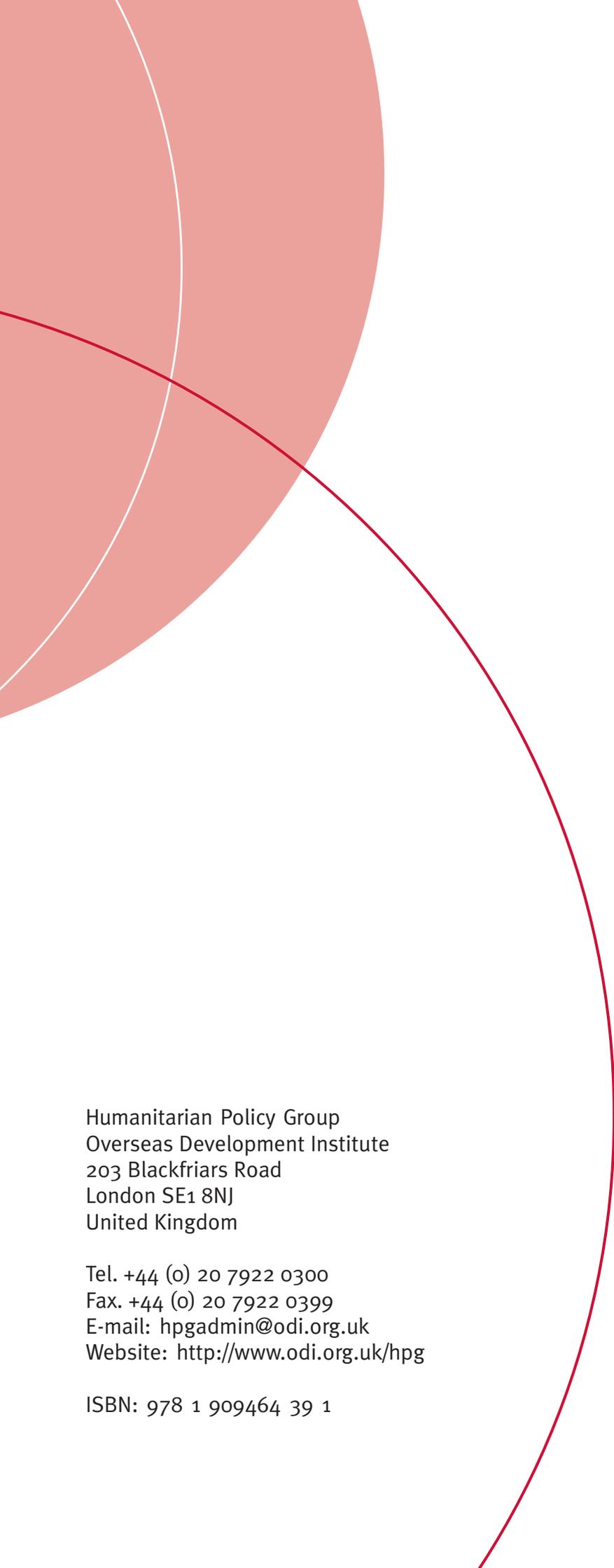
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