High Commissioner's Dialogue
on Protection Challenges
Protection and solutions in urban settings

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BACKGROUND PAPER

I. **Introduction**

1. Urbanization is a defining global phenomenon: 55 per cent of the world's population live in urban areas and this is estimated to grow to two thirds of the global population by 2050.[1] In parallel, there has been an increase in the proportion of displaced people living in cities, with over 60 per cent of refugees and a majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) now living in urban environments.[2] Although many of the world's known stateless populations live in rural or semi-urban areas, stateless persons are also found in towns and cities around the world. The growing number of displaced[3] and stateless people living in urban settings has resulted in challenges and opportunities, and this has prompted a range of stakeholders to look critically at the particular protection concerns and needs of these populations, and at how best to respond.

2. Cities and local authorities have long played an important role in extending protection and solutions to displaced and stateless people, and are demonstrating a strong and growing interest in providing safety and services for displaced people, providing emergency assistance to people in need, and enabling communities to welcome and support them.

3. Global humanitarian and development frameworks recognize the need to find adequate responses to the challenges presented by forced displacement in urban contexts, and to include a focus on the role of cities and local authorities in this regard.[4]

4. With a view to improving responses to large refugee movements, the General Assembly in 2016[5] requested UNHCR to lead the development of a global compact on refugees. The compact builds on UNHCR's long-standing engagement in urban areas and identifies cities and city networks as stakeholders with an important role to play in comprehensive refugee responses.

5. This context has provided the impetus for the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in 2018 to look at "Protection and solutions in urban settings: engaging with cities". The Dialogue will focus on the role of cities and local authorities in protecting and assisting displaced and stateless populations. The Dialogue will also contribute to the reporting of progress on these efforts at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019.

Objectives of the Dialogue

6. The objectives of the Dialogue are to:
   - recognize the important role of cities, local authorities and communities, including individual citizens and other local actors and partners, in protecting and assisting refugees, returnees and internally displaced and stateless populations;
   - take stock of existing inter- and intra-city support measures and commitments, as well as best practices, guidance and tools that have been developed and that could be made available to all relevant stakeholders operating in urban environments;
   - explore the role of cities in contributing to achieving the objectives of the global compact on refugees;

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[1]   United Nations World Urbanisation Prospects, 2018.
[2]   Although the true scale of urban internal displacement is hard to assess due to lack of available data. See IDMC UnSettlement: Urban Displacement in the 21st Century, 2018.
[3]   In this paper, the term 'displaced populations' is used to refer to refugees, asylum- seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnee populations, noting that distinct protection needs and challenges exist, and different legal frameworks apply.
[4]   See for example the New Urban Agenda which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016.
[5]   New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1), Annex I, [19].

- identify areas for greater city and municipal engagement in the context of comprehensive responses, including in the areas of: i) reception and admission; ii) meeting needs and supporting displaced people and local communities; iii) identifying solutions for displaced people in urban areas; iv) mechanisms for burden- and responsibility-sharing; and v) preparing for, and responding to, future challenges and opportunities;

- support the enhancement of evidence-based, effective national and municipal-level policy-making and programming for urban areas hosting displaced and stateless people, including by exploring the application of participatory approaches, profiling of urban displacement situations, as well as sharing good practices and identifying possibilities for further collaboration; and

- explore strategies and approaches to improve the overall response for all urban residents, including displaced and stateless populations, during situations of armed conflict and violence.

II. Context

A. What does 'urban' mean?

7.   Defining an urban area often presents a challenge, involving multiple considerations. Since UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy was issued in 2009, the Office defines an urban area as "a built-up area that accommodates large numbers of people living in close proximity to each other, and where the majority of people sustain themselves by means of formal and informal employment and the provision of goods and services".[6] In the absence of a singular definition, the following list of characteristics may be helpful for identifying urban settings:[7]

- pre-existing infrastructure;

- concentrated and advanced services, including tertiary services such as hospitals and schools;

- presence of government structures;[8]

- functioning markets and diverse livelihoods and income opportunities;

- defined municipal/administrative boundaries;

- high population density;

- complex and interdependent social pressures; and,

- an expansive range of actors.

8.   Despite many common features, there are significant variations among cities, warranting a need to recognize this diversity and adapt approaches and tools in urban programming accordingly. Responses for displaced people in a city facing poverty, urban conflict or violence will be significantly different to those in a setting that enjoys peaceful conditions and high rates of development. In addition to differences among cities, there are often profound differences within cities.

9.   The term 'urban areas' covers megacities, small to medium cities and peri-urban areas. In looking at urban areas, it is helpful not only to consider the 'urban' against the 'rural' but also the interface and linkages between these different places.

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[6]   UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, 2009 p.2.
[7]   Adapted from ALNAP Stepping Back: Understanding Cities and their Systems, 2016; Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Current State and Trends 2005; World Vision Urban Guidance Notes 2013; IRC Social Network Analysis, 2015.
[8]   Including a legislative framework for local government and any national urban policies that might exist.

B.   Multi-stakeholder approach

10.   The comprehensive refugee response framework set out in Annex I of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants specifies that:

> *A comprehensive refugee response should involve a multi-stakeholder approach, including national and local authorities, international organizations, international financial institutions, regional organizations, regional coordination and partnership mechanisms, civil society partners, including faith-based organizations and academia, the private sector, media and the refugees themselves.[9]*

11.   The programme of action, which is part of the global compact on refugees, was designed to facilitate the application of a comprehensive response and identifies the multi-stakeholder approach as a key tool to achieve effective burden- and responsibility-sharing, complementary to State action. Such an approach becomes even more important in urban areas given the multiplicity of actors in this context and the challenges involved in reaching all.

12.   Often no single actor has the capacity, resources and expertise to address the complex challenges of displacement in urban settings effectively on its own. Bringing together government (at the national and local levels), civil society and the private sector is thus essential for crafting effective responses.

13.   For the purposes of this paper, four main groups of actors have been identified: (i) displaced and stateless persons; (ii) cities and urban communities; (iii) city networks; and (iv) other actors.

Displaced and stateless persons

14.   Cities present refugees and other forcibly displaced people with opportunities for protection, self-reliance and inclusion in local service delivery. The different dimensions of urban development – economic, social, cultural, spatial and environmental – shape the strategies that displaced people employ as they settle in cities.

15.   Diverse geographic conditions define the architectural form and building density of urban areas. The most affluent urban residents typically occupy the most desirable locations, while the poor may be relegated to the marginal areas of the city, often with poor-quality, high-density housing, which can also be disproportionately affected by the impact of disasters and environmental degradation. Options are further curtailed when cities are subject to armed conflict and violence.

16.   People displaced within and to urban areas often find themselves displaced multiple times in the search for safety, sustainable accommodation, and community. In some situations, displaced populations may be forced to travel significant distances between areas with affordable accommodation to areas where they can find work to meet their basic needs, where such freedom of movement is granted, or feasible. Given these realities, displaced people living in urban areas may be dispersed across large areas, are likely to be highly mobile, and/or may actively seek anonymity for safety reasons.

17.   While a greater level of homogeneity may exist between displaced populations and their host communities in rural and camp-like settings, social composition is typically more diverse in urban areas. With increased diversity – in age, attitudes, cultural perspectives, beliefs, ethnic background, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, health, social status, skill and other specific personal characteristics of people – comes diversity in needs.

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[9]   New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1), Annex I, [2].

18.   Displaced and stateless individuals in urban areas often lack the documentation required to access public services, and therefore have to rely on informal services to meet their basic needs, or simply go without. This increases protection concerns. For example, individuals without documentation may be forced to seek informal or shared accommodation arrangements, increasing risks of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, other forms of exploitation and forced eviction. Insecurity in urban settings puts displaced people at risk of intimidation, verbal and physical harassment, and assault. Women and girls may face particular dangers in this regard.

19.   While not inherently vulnerable, displaced people with disabilities could be more exposed to the risks of exclusion from education and work opportunities and inadequate access to essential health care, as well as violence, exploitation and abuse, including sexual and gender-based violence.

20.   Diverse needs of the urban displaced and their host communities are mirrored by the complexity of urban support systems, with a multitude of national and subnational authorities and service providers which can prove difficult to understand, access and navigate. However, once understood, and in the absence of other barriers to access, the advanced and often robust structures in urban areas present opportunities for effective responses to the needs of displaced people. These structures are increasingly supported by modern technologies that strengthen the provision of services, but can also help displaced people stay connected and foster inclusion.

21.   Where social networks and employment opportunities exist, and where land and property values are within reach, displaced populations are able to make a significant contribution to the city and urban community in which they live.

Cities and urban communities

22.   Displacement can have a significant impact on cities and their populations. Cities and local authorities, along with civil society, are frequently the first responders to humanitarian crisis situations.

23.   Some common factors that shape the opportunities and challenges for responding to urban displacement and/or the arrival of displaced people include: the size of the city, the number of displaced and their proportion to total urban populations, as well as their profile, the infrastructure of a city and its governance capacity. Variations across cities include:

- the physical characteristics of cities;

- the availability and quality of services;

- the range and capacity of institutions;

- the prevailing policy and legal environment affecting access to protection and assistance for persons of concern; and, specific housing, land and property issues; and

- the overall institutional response environment.

24.   The arrival of refugees and IDPs from rural areas in cities, combined with intra- and inter-urban displacement, can strain the response capacities of local authorities and place pressure on basic social services. Over-stressed systems can in turn exacerbate social tensions.

25.   While cities offer opportunities for access to protection, public services and livelihoods for displaced people, they can also be the source of specific protection risks, in particular in situations where growing urbanization is not adequately managed. This can result in increased exposure to crime, exploitation and violence, as well as fractured social and community networks.

26. Cities can be on the front line of armed conflicts or be impacted by urban violence, including by organized armed gangs. The costs of recovering from armed conflict and violence can be significant, and repairing damaged or destroyed urban infrastructure can place a substantial burden on local and national budgets.

27. At the same time, displaced populations can make important contributions to a city's labour force and culture. New knowledge and perspectives often lead to innovative practices from which cities and public service delivery can benefit.

28. Urban displacement and the arrival of displaced people nevertheless present spatial, social and economic challenges for cities. Large-scale population movements can put significant pressure on basic services, ranging from health, housing, civil documentation and justice to water and waste management. Expanding the capacity of these service-delivery mechanisms to respond to increased need will often necessitate additional technical competencies, skills and resources.

29. Cities, as places with a high concentration of people and assets, can be severely impacted when disasters strike, causing important damages, losses and triggering displacement. The humanitarian consequences of disasters include people having reduced access to shelter, water and sanitation services, nutrition, health, and lacking other basic needs.

30. The role of civil society, informal service providers and communities in protecting and responding to the basic needs of displaced people should not be underestimated. In moments of crisis and need, urban residents, civil society groups and local faith actors often become 'first responders', providing displaced people with accommodation, food and other basic items for their survival. With their resourcefulness and diversity, urban communities can help support government capacity and, of course, displaced people are also agents of recovery and resilience.

31. Resource mobilization for responses to displacement, including among a wide range of international financial institutions, can also contribute to meeting the goals of a city's development plan, and strengthen urban service delivery. Such efforts benefit both displaced populations and their host communities.

City networks

32. A growing number of city alliances and networks, at regional and global levels, have been working on refugee and migrant inclusion in recent years, recognizing the value of inclusive policies to their entire community and all populations. Most recently, the Global Parliament of Mayors adopted a declaration in which mayors commit to implement the global compact on refugees in their cities, while the 5th Global Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development (Global Mayoral Forum) in Marrakesh on 8 December 2018 was devoted to the role of cities in the implementation of both the global compact on refugees and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

33. Through their networks, cities are able to exchange knowledge and good practices toward economic, social and cultural inclusion. Networks facilitate the sharing of innovative responses to common challenges and formal and informal twinning arrangements, and they amplify the collective voice of cities acting in solidarity with refugees. Many of these city networks have also supported UNHCR's #WithRefugees Coalition.

34. UNHCR seeks to build on this momentum and strengthen the linkages between the recent work and events of city networks, its own work in this area and the global compact on refugees at this year's Dialogue. The Dialogue builds on a series of regional events that have taken place in 2018, and the outcomes will feed into initiatives and events organized by different stakeholders in 2019,

including those undertaken by the Global Parliament of Mayors, the United Cities and Local Governments network and the Global Mayoral Forum, as well as the first Global Refugee Forum.

Other actors

35.   Urban displacement and the data and analysis it requires cut across humanitarian sectors and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Therefore, effective responses require coordination and collaboration among a diverse range of actors in a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach.

36.   The need for this approach is reflected in the resources committed by a broad range of international organizations, such as the World Bank, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-Habitat, the International Organization for Migration, the International Committee for the Red Cross, as well as non-governmental and other civil society organizations, including local ones, to adapting their programming to urban-specific challenges.

37.   While legislation and policies governing responses to humanitarian crises are often national, these responses necessarily engage local authorities and actors. In consultation with national authorities, the international community can support local authorities to strengthen institutional capacities, infrastructure and accommodation. It can also include them in coordination structures and work to ensure that local development plans include and meet the needs of the displaced and stateless persons.

C.   Policy developments

38.   The 2009 High Commissioner's Dialogue on "Challenges for People of Concern to UNHCR in Urban Settings" focused on responding to the specific vulnerabilities experienced by populations of concern in urban settings and on better supporting local actors to respond to them. The Dialogue built on the Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, issued in 2009, which set out key principles for UNHCR's engagement with displaced populations in urban settings, updating the earlier policy on refugees in urban areas from 1997. Prior to the 2009 policy, the focus of protection of and assistance to refugees was often primarily on camp situations. The Dialogue led to the fine-tuning of the policy, the intensification of efforts in several "pilot cities", and the development of a repository of good practices in urban areas with a view to promoting these globally. The 2018 Dialogue will draw on the outcomes of the 2009 Dialogue and developments that have taken place at global, regional and local levels since then.

39.   In 2012, UNHCR created an Urban Refugee Steering Group to coordinate the agency's strategy for meeting the needs of refugees in urban areas. In the same year, it commissioned and published a review of its largest urban refugee operations.[10] It was a global analysis of the rate of implementation of the twelve protection strategies set forth in the 2009 policy, and built on a series of evaluations of urban refugee operations that UNHCR had begun in 2010. Four of the 2009 policy's objectives are linked to documentation and status determination and the 2012 review found that while legal barriers were a key obstacle to establishing livelihoods in urban areas, the lack of access to financial capital was in fact the biggest inhibitor.

40.   Since the 2009 Dialogue, there have been a wide range of sectoral and cross-cutting policy updates. These include the Policy on Alternatives to Camps (2014), which added another dimension to UNHCR's commitment to strengthening its response in urban areas.[11] This policy recognizes that many refugees live outside camp environments, including in cities. It further recognizes that supporting refugees not living in camps affords them greater self-reliance and also offers host communities opportunities to benefit from the skills, productivity and experience displaced

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[10]   UNHCR The Implementation of UNHCR's Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, Global Survey 2012, 2012.
[11]   UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps, 2014.

populations bring. Another important update is UNHCR's policy on cash-based interventions in recognition of the fact that gender-sensitive cash-based assistance can help meet the needs and strengthen the self-reliance of displaced people in urban areas.[12] Further urban-specific guidance and tools have been developed in the sectors of health, nutrition, education and WASH.[13] Recognition of the role of **municipal authorities** for promoting protection and solutions for displaced populations has grown steadily since the 2009 policy was issued.

41.   Meeting the needs of displaced populations in urban areas requires a different approach than the traditional sectoral-based responses. In recognition of this, **multi-sectoral responses** are being developed that take an integrated approach to responding to the needs of populations of concern and the communities that host them. More recently, multi-sector responses have been complemented by a shift towards **area-based approaches** by UNHCR and partners. Area-based approaches look not just at the needs of the displaced but also those of host communities, with the objective of achieving tangible results for both populations in a defined geographical location. Building on existing service delivery mechanisms and governance structures in a given area, area-based programming seeks to promote the well-being of all residents and create development opportunities for all. They also reflect the need for close collaboration between humanitarian and development actors and local authorities.

42.   To pursue these urban approaches effectively, a robust evidence base and quality, comprehensive analysis are required. Through urban profiling practices, the multi-sectoral needs of displaced persons in urban areas can be understood and prioritized; area-based interventions can be informed by combining analysis at the population level with an urban systems approach. Responsible evidence gathering in urban areas also facilitates community-based approaches, providing a mechanism for collecting community perspectives and validating analysis through enhanced community engagement. The work of the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) has improved practice and expertise in this area.

43.   Underpinning multi-sectoral and area-based approaches are **community-based approaches**, which engage the displaced, stateless and other actors in responding to the protection concerns stemming from displacement and statelessness. A community-based approach builds on the knowledge, skills and capacities of people of concern and their communities, ensuring a better protection response to the challenges in cities. Traditional leaders in communities can play an important role in fostering social cohesion and integration between displaced populations and the host communities.

44.   Such approaches also take into account the specific age, gender and diversity considerations of affected people and promote social cohesion, contributing to the peaceful co-existence of different segments of society including displaced communities. These policies and practices recognize the importance of avoiding the creation of parallel response structures and of engaging with local authorities and communities, including local civil society organizations, to facilitate the inclusion of displaced people in urban areas.

45.   Inter-agency mechanisms have been established to further discussion and strengthen coordination, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas, in 2010, and sectoral working groups. Within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cluster system, these include the Global Shelter Cluster Working Group on Settlement Approaches in Urban Areas and the Working Group on the State of Humanitarian Shelter and Settlements. More recently, the Global Alliance for Urban Crises (GAUC) was established

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[12]   UNHCR Policy on Cash-Based Interventions, 2016.
[13]   UNHCR, Ensuring Access to Health Care: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas Reference, 2011; UNHCR Out-of-camp Standardised Expanded Nutrition Survey 2016; UNHCR Urban WASH Planning Guidance and Case Studies, 2017.

at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and it is now active in many areas to improve responses to urban crises and build a community of practice across various constituency groups.

46.   There has also been an increasing focus on the urban dimensions of development and crisis in international fora, including in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the World Humanitarian Summit, Habitat III, and most recently the World Urban Forum.

47.   In addition, <u>non-traditional</u> humanitarian actors and partners are becoming more involved. Private sector entities, including organizations and individuals engaged in the world of sports and business are exploring how they can engage meaningfully in the assistance and protection of displaced communities, contributing significant expertise and resources.

48.   Local authorities are often the first responders in situations of urban displacement and the arrival of displaced people. In this context, the chapter of the global compact on refugees on "meeting needs and supporting communities" is highly relevant to cities and local authorities as it recognizes that they deliver public services and that actors supporting comprehensive refugee responses need to work coherently within the framework of local and national development plans. Specifically, the global compact on refugees asks that the international community deliver assistance:

- in a way that benefits both refugees and host communities; and,
- through local and national service providers where possible.

III. **Thematic sessions**

A.   **Session 1: Meeting the needs of the displaced in urban areas**

49.   Meeting the needs of displaced people residing in urban areas requires a 'tailored approach', different from those used in rural, and often camp-like, settings in which humanitarian responses have traditionally evolved. Urban areas are characterized by diversity, density and complex inter-related social, economic and cultural conditions. The dynamism of this interplay varies greatly from large to small urban areas, and across regions and countries. Defining the specific drivers of these differences is complicated and responding appropriately to the needs of the displaced in urban areas is a challenging task.

50.   Displaced people in urban areas may move to where social networks, employment opportunities and land and property values meet their needs, but often they may be forced to travel significant distances between areas with affordable accommodation to areas where they can find work to meet basic needs.

51.   Stateless persons may appear well integrated within the national communities, but are nonetheless often excluded from accessing the same basic services that are available to citizens. For example, stateless individuals may be able to access emergency care in hospitals, but will be required to pay higher fees demanded of foreigners, often putting such care out of reach. Service providers need to be sensitized to the 'invisibility' of stateless communities and service provision needs to be more proactive in reaching those who might otherwise be left behind. Equally, efforts need to be made to educate stateless communities of their rights to services, which they may not realize they are entitled to because of generations of discrimination and exclusion.

52.   Displacement to urban areas increases pressure on available basic social services from health and housing to water and waste management. Expanding the capacity of these services to respond to the increased and specific needs of displaced people, including girls and boys, may necessitate specialized technical competencies, skills and resources. Further, gender and age norms among host

communities can be experienced as obstacles by children and youth, particularly adolescent girls, in accessing social services such as education and health. Additional gender-related barriers include the lack of safety and security and the restriction of free movement, particularly for women and girls. Exclusionary national policies and practices can also impede displaced and stateless populations' attempts to access services, as do language barriers and challenges in obtaining reliable information.

53.   With increased competition for resources in urban areas comes the propensity for conflict between displaced populations and other residents. These problems can be most acutely witnessed in contexts of urban poverty characterized, *inter alia,* by vast informal settlements. In these areas, urgent needs are not limited to those fleeing conflict and persecution, but also the nearly 1 billion people living in informal settlements globally, who have suffered decades of poverty and under-development. In impoverished urban areas, needs are not sector-specific, but instead are interdependent and shaped by local systems, practices and capacities.

54.   The panellists will be asked to propose and discuss strategies and approaches that can be used by cities and municipalities, with the support of humanitarian and development actors, to effectively meet the basic needs of displaced people living in urban areas with an emphasis on:

- Multi-sectoral, evidence-based and area-based responses in support of improved access to services and systems for all urban residents, including displaced and stateless populations;

- Inclusion of displaced and stateless people in existing social basic services and systems;

- The role of civil society, and informal actors, in identifying and responding to the needs of the most marginalised urban residents, including displaced and stateless people.

Guiding questions

  i.   How have multi-sectoral and area-based approaches been applied to design and deliver effective, gender-sensitive responses to the basic needs of displaced and stateless people residing in urban areas?

  ii.   How can local municipalities and cities, with the support of humanitarian and development actors, ensure inclusive access to quality social basic services, with an emphasis on access for the most impoverished and displaced and stateless communities?

  iii. How can local municipalities and humanitarian actors engage civil society, and urban residents, in efforts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized people living in cities, including displaced and stateless people?

B.   Session 2: Urban conflict and violence

55.   Urban areas increasingly provide refuge for people fleeing violence, persecution and armed conflict. However, in contemporary armed conflicts, cities and towns not only act as "safe havens"; they may also be part of the battleground, as armed conflicts and other forms of violence increasingly play out in densely populated areas, including in Iraq, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. More than 50 million people are currently affected by armed conflict in urban areas, a number that is likely to increase as urbanization continues and parties to conflicts take advantage of the urban environment to alter the balance of power, including by strategically integrating civilian populations and flight movements into battle tactics, and complicating efforts to protect civilians.

56.   In armed conflicts, the protection needs of urban populations are heightened by active hostilities, often conducted with disregard for basic principles of international humanitarian law, including the recurrent use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas. Armed conflicts have also, in many countries, caused the weakening or collapse of State authority, resulting in a

proliferation of non-State actors, failing infrastructure and public services, chronic hardship and poverty, rising crime and the absence of the rule of law. Within those contexts, the intentional use of sexual violence and human trafficking by armed groups and forces poses particular risks for the protection of women and girls.

57. In addition, violence related to organized gangs, as well as among different groups in society, is severely affecting the lives and well-being of urban populations. In Central America, as recent profiling exercises in Honduras and El Salvador have shown, gang violence is causing acute protection needs due to forced recruitment, extortion, robbery, murder, kidnapping, gender-based violence, smuggling and trafficking in persons, especially sexual slavery and exploitation, drugs and arms.[14] While entire urban communities are dominated by gangs and gang culture, youth and children are at particular risk. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons and other minority groups are also subject to targeted violence by gangs, often with impunity.

58. Armed conflict and violence in cities often lead to displacement, including within and between cities themselves. Municipal authorities act as front-line responders, not only in creating a protective environment for all residents, including displaced populations, but also by strengthening the resilience of cities to the negative impact of violence and conflict. Such efforts must be supported to ensure that humanitarian interventions more effectively identify, assist and protect affected urban populations, including particularly vulnerable groups. This work should be done in close cooperation with development actors, ensuring an integrated approach to urban areas affected by conflict and violence from the very beginning.

59. The destruction of buildings and the disruption of services associated with urban warfare are also important obstacles to returns. Many displaced populations in cities have fled conflict areas and ongoing conflict, as well as destroyed infrastructure, is an important barrier to return.

60. The thematic session seeks to highlight the specific challenges in protecting and assisting persons displaced within cities on the front-line of armed conflict and violence, and mitigating the impact of hostilities and violence on urban populations more broadly.

61. The panellists will be asked to propose and discuss strategies and approaches to improve the overall response for all urban residents, including displaced populations, and to elaborate on the role that can be played by cities and municipalities in situations of armed conflict and violence, with the support of humanitarian and development actors.

Guiding questions

i. What are the strategies that have been applied by municipalities to mitigate the negative impact of conflict and other forms of violence on the civilian population (including those who have been displaced) within urban areas?

ii. How can local municipalities and cities contribute to a more protective environment for all residents, including displaced and stateless populations?

iii. How can humanitarian and development actors more effectively support these efforts, and what are the approaches that can be applied to ensure a more effective response in urban areas affected by ongoing conflict or violence (including besieged areas)?

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[14] Both government-led profiling exercises were supported by UNHCR and JIPS. See Characterization of Internal Displacement in Honduras, Comisión Interinstitucional Para la Protección de Personas Desplazadas Por La Violencia, 2015; Caracterización de la Movilidad Interna a Causa de la Violencia en El Salvador, Ministerio de Justicia y Seguridad Publica del Gobierno de El Salvador, March 2018.

iv.   How can humanitarian actors engage with displaced communities, civil society and other urban residents to enhance their resilience and means of self-protection during ongoing conflict and violence?

C.   Session 3: The global compact on refugees and the role of cities and municipalities

62.   Cities and local governments play a fundamental role in welcoming and including refugees into their communities. In this context, the global compact on refugees expressly recognizes their vital role in protecting and assisting refugees in urban settings. This session will look at how stakeholders can engage with cities in the framework of comprehensive refugee responses, and specifically support cities' efforts to include refugees within their communities. It will address why and how we should work with cities and what support and engagement is envisioned in this context.

63.   This session will recognize and explore the role of cities within the global compact on refugees, and develop a shared understanding of cities' key priorities in this regard. It will consider how other actors can support efforts by cities and city networks to implement the global compact, including through, for example, a platform for exchange on good practices for refugee inclusion and integration, and the Global Refugee Forum.

64.   The Dialogue will feed into initiatives and events organized by different stakeholders in 2019, including efforts undertaken by the Global Parliament of Mayors, the United Cities and Local Governments network (one of the largest umbrella organizations for cities worldwide) and the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Guiding questions

   i.   How are local authorities and mayors concretely working on inclusion within their cities?
   ii.   What policies and practices have been effective in receiving, welcoming and including refugees, economically, socially and culturally?
   iii.   What tools and resources exist to support cities in their efforts? What else would be helpful?
   iv.   How can cities and local authorities best be included as partners in the implementation of the global compact on refugees?
   v.   Specifically, what arrangements will allow cities and local actors to feed into the outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum and the tracking of progress?
   vi.   How can communication between national and municipal authorities be strengthened so as to ensure the diverse realities of urban displacement situations are sufficiently reflected in national refugee response plans and policies?
   vii.   What role can cities and municipalities play in reducing disaster risks and providing guidance and support for measures to address protection and humanitarian challenges, including those forcibly displaced by natural hazards?

D.   Session 4: Supporting self-reliance in urban areas: economic inclusion and access to livelihoods and the role of the private sector

65.   Extensive efforts are underway by cities, local actors, international institutions and the private sector to promote the self-reliance of displaced people and facilitate their inclusion in local markets and economies. There are both opportunities and challenges around economic inclusion and efforts to enhance the role of the private sector in working with city authorities to respond to influxes of displaced populations and emerging needs in receiving communities and markets. This session will allow for the sharing of experiences that explain how forcibly displaced people can more effectively use their skills and abilities to improve their livelihoods while contributing to the economic

development of their host countries. Attention will be given to the particular experience of women in this regard and the importance of strengthening their economic empowerment.

66.   Cities can make it easier and more appealing for companies and other private sector entities, such as sports associations, teams and federations, to engage with displaced and stateless populations, encouraging them to use their 'core business' to facilitate skills development and access to employment. The broad array of private sector entities found in urban areas – not only multinationals but also small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and businesses set up by refugees – can partner with cities and third sector actors to understand protection needs, and design appropriate training, inclusion and integration programmes. These private sector organizations can be employers, buyers of refugee-made products, service providers, advocates, and investors. Local and national third sector actors (including non-governmental organizations) can play an important role in facilitating engagement between local governments and businesses, while academic institutions can assist in providing training opportunities to strengthen displaced and stateless populations' prospects for employment.

67.   Both cities and the different private sector organizations that can be found in cities have a role to play in including refugees in providing services and generating opportunities for self-reliance. It is in the best interest of cities and businesses to collaborate and put such measures into place – measures that are context-specific, gender-responsive and innovative. Allowing displaced populations to be economically active as soon as possible in their host area is for the benefit of all as it increases their purchasing power, creates a new market for local private companies and income tax sources, as well as employment opportunities for the local population in the long-term.

68.   Studies have shown that refugee inclusion requires:

- increasing the availability of information on the recognition of foreign qualifications;

- promoting access for refugees to the most efficient active labour market programs and the development of specific, flexible measures to that end;

- putting refugees more directly in contact with employers; and,

- providing language training adapted to refugees' skills.[15]

69.   Issues concerning the economic exclusion of stateless persons include identifying and eliminating systemic and practical barriers, such as the inability of stateless individuals to achieve formal qualifications because of a lack of documentation, or their inability to travel freely in search of work.

70.   People displaced internally from rural to urban areas also often face difficulties adapting to the urban labour market where their rural skills may not be relevant, hence the need for specific training and plans to support them until they can find an income-generating activity. Fragmented social networks can also affect the ability to secure an income, particularly in areas where relationships play a crucial role in the labour market.

71.   Numerous examples exist of mechanisms that work and can be leveraged in support of refugee and IDP inclusion. In some contexts, municipalities compensate employers with wage subsidies, as well as offering job coaching.

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[15] UNHCR and OECD Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees, 2018.

72.   The global compact on refugees envisages an essential role for the private sector in comprehensive response. The private sector's creativity, innovation, expertise and reach are needed to build displaced people's skills, to develop and roll out those products and services that will assist displaced people, and to invest in host communities in a way that is beneficial to all.

Guiding questions

   i.   How can we turn the multi-stakeholder approach of the global compact on refugees into meaningful partnerships with the private sector, while safeguarding the specific rights of displaced and stateless populations?

   ii.   In consultation with national authorities, what support can be provided to local communities to strengthen capacity to build self-reliance for refugees, including recognition of qualifications, provision of appropriate documentation, language and vocational training?

   iii.   How can good practices and innovative approaches in relation to refugee self-reliance best be shared among cities and municipalities?

   iv.   How can twinning arrangements support refugee self-reliance?

E.   Session 5: Harnessing community support for solutions

73.   As the numbers of forcibly displaced and stateless populations seeking protection in cities and urban centres increase, local communities, including individual citizens, civil society groups and other local actors, play an important role in welcoming, receiving and supporting them. Local communities are also essential in welcoming back and supporting the reintegration of those who return to their places of origin. Despite the economic and social strains caused by urbanization and displacement, ensuring adequate resources and support is made available to local communities is imperative. Individual citizens across the globe continue to be crucial in providing a welcoming and enabling protection environment to those fleeing violence and persecution.

74.   Local communities in urban settings have supported displaced and stateless populations in various ways. Families have taken internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers, refugees and returnees into their homes, provided support and protection, and shared scarce resources. Communities, through sports and recreation activities, have worked to ensure that displaced individuals and families have opportunities for participation and inclusion. Direct citizen engagement can also have a transformative effect on the local communities themselves. By coming together to support people affected by displacement, citizens can build stronger bonds amongst themselves and deepen their sense of community.

75.   At the same time, pressures on local resources caused by the large-scale arrival of refugees and IDPs can result in tensions between receiving communities and the displaced. It is therefore important to ensure that approaches seeking to address the needs of the displaced are sensitive to, and can help meet, the needs of both. Young people often play an important role in shifting mind sets and attitudes, which can contribute meaningfully to peace-building processes and to the recovery of communities. They can bring a distinct set of capacities which are useful for inclusion, including entrepreneurism, technological skills and the ability to organize themselves.

76.   Leveraging citizen and local community engagement in supporting and welcoming displaced and stateless populations can help to counter xenophobia and discrimination. In particular, faith-based groups can play a powerful role in promoting inclusivity and cohesion amongst refugee, stateless and host communities. In other contexts, the support of faith-based actors has been pivotal through, for example, encouraging families to register the births of their children at important religious milestones in a child's life, such as baptism or during naming ceremonies.

77.   At the global level, community-based sponsorship programmes for refugees are a powerful example of how private individuals and local communities can mobilize their own resources to help welcome and support resettled refugees. In addition to helping expand refugee resettlement opportunities, experience from community-based sponsorship programmes, such as Canada's long-standing private sponsorship programme, has shown that they can also increase positive perceptions locally and foster public support for refugees. In other parts of the world, local communities, particularly private citizens, are successfully mobilizing to identify and facilitate third country solutions for refugees.

78.   Sport is also proving to be a positive tool for inclusion of displaced communities, with a burgeoning awareness across Europe and amongst international sports organizations of the potential it offers. The ASPIRE initiative[16] has provided opportunities for sports and community organizations to engage on inclusion of integration of refugees through sport. UEFA and football federations from across Europe are working to understand how football can become a tool for social inclusion of refugees. Globally, the International Olympic Committee, together with UNHCR and Terre des Hommes, have developed a Sport for Protection toolkit that focuses on social inclusion and cohesion, and they support sports organizations to understand the challenges that displaced communities face, whilst programming through the vehicle of sport.

79.   There are many instances in which joint efforts help solve common problems and support the most vulnerable groups within the community. An example is the work carried out by local organizations of people with disabilities in Uganda to remove barriers to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities from both communities. Other examples include joint efforts on education, as seen in Lebanon, community security watch groups and other community-based protection monitoring mechanisms, including on sexual and gender-based violence, involving refugees as well. In Germany, as part of a pilot project, refugees are trained as mental health counsellors to offer psychological support to asylum-seekers with similar backgrounds.

80.   Local governments have played an essential role in providing an enabling environment for such initiatives to develop and grow. In many countries, municipalities have effectively included displaced and stateless populations into existing community service programmes.

Guiding questions

    i.   What are some of the strategies and approaches that have been applied to engage local communities in supporting displaced and stateless populations to access protection and solutions?

    ii.   How can local municipalities and cities encourage, facilitate, and support communities' efforts to welcome, integrate and reintegrate displaced and stateless populations?

    iii.   Beyond contributing to access to protection and solutions, how can community engagement be used to enhance social cohesion and create a transformative effect on local community members?

    iv.   What are some of the successful approaches to engage local communities in supporting displaced individuals from diverse groups, including persons with disabilities to access protection and solutions? What role can civil society play to support these approaches?

    v.   How can displaced and stateless individuals contribute to their local communities and facilitate a two-way integration process?

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[16]   https://www.aspiresport.eu/.

F. Session 6: The 'cities of solidarity' initiative: the experience of the Americas

81.   The Cities of Solidarity concept, which originated in the 2004 Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action[17], has since been applied in the region and was reinforced by the 2014 Brazil Plan of Action.[18] It recognizes the central role of cities in welcoming refugees, enabling them to enjoy social, economic and cultural rights, and facilitating their inclusion and integration through the implementation of public policies.

82.   The application of the Cities of Solidarity concept in the Americas region over the past 14 years has yielded a wealth of good practices and lessons from which cities and other relevant actors may learn. These lessons are complemented by the outcomes of regional and global policy dialogues on the role of cities and local governments, when looking at the prospects for local integration of asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless and internally displaced people.

83.   At the same time, the Cities #WithRefugees campaign was launched on World Refugee Day 2018. This initiative invited cities and local authorities all over the world who are working to promote inclusion, support refugees and bring communities together to sign a statement of solidarity #WithRefugees. To date, more than 90 cities from around the globe have signed the statement and cities continue to sign onto the document with the aim of sending a strong message of global grass roots solidarity for families forced to flee.

84.   Against this backdrop, the session will explore challenges and successes in the local integration of refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless and internally displaced people and the key role of cities and municipalities in this regard. The session will also introduce elements of a framework that UNHCR has been developing over the past year in consultation with a range of cities and other stakeholders, in the Americas region and beyond, building on their experiences. The Cities of Solidarity framework aims at strengthening UNHCR's engagement with municipalities and communities, as well as recognizing local efforts to provide protection and enhance the integration prospects of displaced people.

85.   The session will focus on economic, legal and civil-political, and socio-cultural inclusion. It will identify effective mechanisms for creating links between cities hosting refugees and other displaced people that facilitate peer to peer exchange, technical assistance and/or mentoring between cities, and that facilitate the exchange of information on social awareness, cultural diversity, and the fight against xenophobia, racism and sexism.

Guiding questions

   i.   What are the key challenges and successes in the local integration of refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless and internally displaced in the Americas, and the key role of cities and municipalities in these efforts?

   ii.   Based on a presentation of the outcome of the Cities #WithRefugees campaign, what is the best way forward?

   iii.   How and where can the Cities of Solidarity Framework be further used as a means of raising awareness and building solidarity with displaced persons?

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[17]   Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action to Strengthen the International Protection of Refugees in Latin America Mexico City, 16 November 2004. Chapter 3, Paragraph 1.

[18]   Brazil Plan of Action – Brasilia, 3 December 2014. Chapter 3, "Local Integration Program".

IV. Possible outcomes

86.   Consistent with the approach set out in the global compact on refugees, the eleventh High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges will focus on how best to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas among cities and city networks on the particular challenges and opportunities presented by urban displacement and statelessness.

87.   The Dialogue will serve to inform how best to ensure protection and solutions for displaced and stateless populations in urban settings at the global level. In addition, the Dialogue will inform UNHCR and other humanitarian and development actors how they can best work alongside and support cities and municipal authorities in meeting the needs of the displaced at a local level.

88.   The following are possible outcomes from the Dialogue:

- **showcasing and exchange of good practices through:**
  - the creation of a **digital platform**, which will be established as part of the implementation of the global compact on refugees, including in collaboration with partners (cities and city networks, OECD, World Bank, others), and that could include a dedicated space within it for exchange between local authorities and other actors;
  - contributions to the establishment of the academic network, also to emerge from the global compact on refugees;
  - targeted dissemination of information;

- **building on the Cities of Solidarity initiative** of the Americas by reviewing, with cities, city networks and other relevant organizations, the existing tools that support local actors working on inclusion, with a view to strengthening these and addressing any gaps;

- **contributing to the outcomes of the first Global Refugee Forum** in December 2019;

- **urban shelter and settlement guidelines**, which are being jointly developed by UN-Habitat and UNHCR;

- informing a review and **update of UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy** from 2009; and

- development and enhancement of **guidance, training and other relevant materials** for UNHCR and partners, including on topics such as urban profiling, area-based approaches and economic inclusion.

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UNHCR
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