



Internal Displacement in Cities: Prevention, Protection and Solutions
GP20 Steering Group Meeting
Wednesday 17 June 2020, 15:00-17:30

Background

Internal displacement is an increasingly urban phenomenon. In 2018, across 12 countries where location data was available, it was estimated that 52 per cent of people internally displaced by conflict lived in cities.¹ As the world continues to rapidly urbanize, cities are ever more impacted by natural hazards. Conflict is also increasingly centered around urban areas. Conflict and disasters directly affecting cities force people to move within their cities and to other cities. And in some countries internal displacement is a major contributor to urbanization as people displaced from rural areas, due to conflict, violence, drought and other climate related impacts seek refuge in urban areas. The challenge then is to enable the urban system to protect, assist and enable durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) while contributing to the achievement of SDG 11 - making cities safe, resilient and sustainable.

IDPs face unique challenges in cities depending on the city and their ability to adapt.² They often arrive in the city with minimal assets, personal contacts and identification documents, and they may experience discrimination. This complicates their access to housing, services and jobs as does increased competition for work and low demand for skills of IDPs from rural areas. This raises the risk of exploitation and can foster harmful coping mechanisms. Their housing options tend to narrow over time as they deplete their assets, their income remains unreliable, and the cost of housing rises due to greater demand. Many join the ranks of the urban poor in informal settlements where they face inadequate housing, little or no access to services, health threats and risk of secondary displacement as a result of weak tenure security and vulnerability to natural hazards. Moreover, they simultaneously endure dispossession, impoverishment and loss of rights, which can diminish their sense of dignity and self-worth.³

At the same time, IDPs are a heterogeneous group with different needs, vulnerabilities, capacities, assets and coping strategies. As some other urban residents can face similar challenges, area-based interventions integrated into broader urban planning and growth strategies are required for inclusive development. By developing and implementing inclusive policies and strategies in urban areas informed by data on the various needs, vulnerabilities and protection concerns of IDPs and their host communities, cities can contribute to addressing displacement and support IDPs to regain access to their rights and resume a normal life in parallel with urban development. Displacement to cities can increase the labour market, inject human capital into the local economy and introduce new ideas, perspectives and ways of working, all of which can be leveraged for local development.

The primary responsibility to provide protection and assistance to IDPs lies with the State under whose jurisdiction they reside. Urban displacement places the onus on city leaders and local authorities to balance the needs of displaced populations and their host communities and coordinate responses while managing urban development and expansion. However, city leaders often lack prior experience, capacity and resources to prepare for, respond to and manage displacement situations, and in some cases have limited influence over services that are centrally or regionally managed and fall outside the responsibility of the municipality. Responding to displacement situations therefore requires vertical coordination between local and central authorities, and horizontal coordination amongst line ministries and service providers, including

¹ IDMC, 2019, Global Report on Internal Displacement, p. 63, available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>

² IDMC, 2019, Global Report on Internal Displacement, p. 89, available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>

³ ICRC, 2018, Displaced in Cities: Experiencing and Responding to Urban Internal Displacement Outside Camps, available at: https://shop.icrc.org/displaced-in-cities-experiencing-and-responding-to-urban-internal-displacement-outside-camps-2926.html?__store=default

non-government service providers. It also requires addressing short-term humanitarian needs and finding durable solutions as quickly as possible within a planning process that by its very nature can take years if not decades to achieve.

Displacement in cities has highlighted the importance that society plays in protecting and assisting affected populations. Host households are often first responders to displacement, hosting extended family members, and availing rooms that can be rented. Community-based organisations, local businesses and religious communities have also stepped up to support vulnerable populations, while local markets have adapted to increased demand for food and essential goods and local employers have made use of the increased labour force. Communities, while providing generous support, often struggle to assist displaced people in the long term, as their own resources and support from the government or others dwindle over time.

The humanitarian system, traditionally implementing short-term sectoral responses to directly assist people affected by a crisis, has had to grapple with the complexity of urban settings. Over recent years, humanitarian and development organizations, affected communities, local authorities, civil society, and local businesses have formed promising coalitions to respond to the needs of the displaced and host communities,⁴ sustaining a whole-of-society approach. Such local forms of organization, participation, and collaboration are igniting a renewed interest in place-based solutions – an area-based approach with a consideration of the cultural dimension – and offer tangible evidence to guide the response to internal displacement in urban settings. To maximise the potential for urban systems to effectively assist and facilitate durable solutions for internally displaced populations, further integration of long-term place-based approaches and sectoral responses is required, as well as improved vertical and horizontal coordination, essential to a whole-of-society response.

Objectives

This meeting is co-organized by the GP20 initiative on internal displacement and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Joint IDP Profiling Service and UN-Habitat. The GP20 initiative seeks to facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons learned on internal displacement as well as promote strategic action to prevent, address and resolve internal displacement in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

The objective of GP20 Steering Group meetings is to showcase and learn from government and other efforts to prevent, address and resolve internal displacement. Government representatives share practices and lessons learned to stimulate an interactive exchange with other GP20 stakeholders, which include UN agencies, NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the World Bank.

The objectives of this GP20 Steering Group meeting are:

- To share effective practices and policies on how to prevent, address and resolve displacement in cities and strengthen the resilience of the displaced and host communities to displacement risk;
- To discuss the relevance, form and importance of IDP participation, data collection and analysis, laws and policies, and durable solutions to internal displacement in cities;
- To report on emerging technologies for decision-making support (data collection, analysis and mapping) and innovative approaches for facilitation and management (digital platforms, blockchain, smart contracts);
- To discuss how sectoral, multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder approaches can be effectively mobilized in cities to prevent and address internal displacement;

⁴ ICRC, 2018, Displaced in Cities: Experiencing and Responding to Urban Internal Displacement Outside Camps, available at: https://shop.icrc.org/displaced-in-cities-experiencing-and-responding-to-urban-internal-displacement-outside-camps-2926.html?__store=default

- To discuss key challenges to and gaps in current responses and identify opportunities to strengthen and expand actions that prevent and address internal displacement in cities; and,
- To formulate new ideas and recommendations that can inform the deliberations of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement.⁵

Key questions

Presenters are asked to address the following key questions:

Mobilizing actors on urban displacement

1. How are national and local authorities mobilized to address urban internal displacement? How is the budget and authority to make decisions distributed between national and local authorities? Which incentives are helpful for local residents and political representatives?
2. How can urban recovery plans link to the work of humanitarian, development, peace and disaster risk reduction actors to ensure that the internally displaced and people at risk of displacement are not left behind and all communities engage in these processes?
3. What capacities and tools are needed at the local level and how can these be networked for knowledge sharing?

Systematizing support for IDPs in cities

4. How have local governments assessed the location, needs and capacities of IDPs in their cities and assessed the functionality of service provision to meet these needs? How has this data been used in urban development?
5. How have local governments managed and financed responses to urban displacement and coordinated with service providers operating at national and regional levels?
6. How can urban planning and financing mechanisms help respond and adapt to displacement needs in the short-term, manage and leverage economic opportunities of displacement in the long-term, and strengthen social cohesion between host and displaced communities?
7. How can internal displacement be addressed as a critical theme in national urban policies, allowing both an alignment of national commitments to internal displacement agendas with national policy for investment for strategic development?
8. How can local governments establish grievance management systems that allow IDPs to assess their service provision?

Actions to support inclusion of IDPs in cities

9. What are some innovative examples of facilitating durable solutions for IDPs in cities?
10. What are the main challenges and gaps in current responses to urban internal displacement and what practices have been developed to address them?
11. What are some innovative examples of coordinated engagement of IDPs and host communities in the response to internal displacement in cities?

⁵ The High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement was established by the UN Secretary-General to focus on addressing protracted displacement and achieving durable solutions for internal displacement situations. Please see <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2019-10-23/secretary-generals-statement-announcing-the-establishment-of-high-level-panel-internal-displacement> and <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/personnel-appointments/2019-12-03/high-level-panel-internal-displacement>