

Briefing

Urban; Policy and planning

Keywords:

Forced displacement, refugees, urban crises, cities, city governance



Protracted
displacement
in an urban
world



Mayors Migration Council



Issue date

April 2024

Policy pointers

Establish a reliable

baseline. Data on displaced peoples' access to city services was shared as a launch point for conversations between city leaders, displaced people, and humanitarian and development actors.

Encourage cities to act

on durable solutions. Participatory Forums allowed communities to bring solutions to the cities' attention, and encouraged the cities to acknowledge their role in responding to the needs of displaced communities.

Create momentum for

Participatory Forums to continue. Through the cities' engagement with national authorities, civil society, United Nations and non-governmental organisations, Participatory Forums are continuing, allowing for a sustained and more focused collaboration.

Address city resourcing

gaps at a time of need. While data opened the scope for city discussions, city resourcing remains a gap to be filled across all locations.

Inclusive urban solutions: city actors engaging with displaced communities

Most of the world's displaced people live in cities, yet there is little evidence on how to build lasting partnerships with city governments to support urban displaced communities. The Protracted Displacement in an Urban World (PDUW) project explored participatory planning and decision-making processes, bringing together city governments and representatives of displaced communities in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Jordan and Kenya. Four cities benefitted from increased dialogue on the needs of displaced people. Yet, it remains difficult to translate this awareness into sustained city-led coordination without filling city resourcing gaps. This briefing presents the key lessons learned from the project to inform city-led, multi-stakeholder responses to urban displacement.

An estimated 60%¹ of the world's 110 million² displaced people live in urban areas. Displaced people should be involved in the planning and processes of the cities that host them (see Box 1).³ But efforts to improve participation are often short-lived and tokenistic, limiting the sustainability of positive outcomes for displaced people and host cities.

The international, multi-partner PDUW research project compared the wellbeing, self-reliance and livelihoods of displaced people in four cities — Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Amman (Jordan), Jalalabad (Afghanistan) and Nairobi (Kenya) with their counterparts in camps in the same countries. The project, led by IIED, also initiated Participatory Forums (PFs) with key stakeholders in each of the four cities. Drawing on the experiences of the project, this briefing suggests four ways in which international humanitarian and development actors can

promote and sustain city-led, multi-stakeholder responses to urban displacement.

Working at the city level for inclusion

Numerous studies highlight the importance of city government leadership on solutions to urban displacement.⁵ Municipal authorities and mayors are often 'key gatekeepers' of refugee politics;⁶ they implement central government policy on displacement, and are directly affected by their outcomes. City leaders are often well connected — to service providers across municipal departments or third parties, to national governments, and to international actors.

A 2016 study on livelihoods programming found that leveraging partnerships of city, community-based and private sector actors "often leads to improved programming, not only

Discussion with displaced communities in times of crisis is essential

for individuals facing high levels of vulnerability but entire communities as well".⁷ Similarly, a study of refugee-hosting cities in Turkey and Lebanon found that mayoral connections to international humanitarian organisations enabled more progressive policies and programmatic outcomes for refugees. For example, the mayor of Zahle in Lebanon acquired international funds to support Syrian refugees and chose not to enforce the

restrictive refugee curfews set out by central government, demonstrating the capacity of local leaders to "...shape not only local policies, but also the creation and implementation of national (and international) policies."⁸

Discussion with displaced communities in times of crisis is essential; this has proved to be the case in Jalalabad, a city that has seen a decline in basic services for all residents since 2021.⁹ Dialogue is also essential when national policies allow refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) to settle in cities without ensuring access to other rights. Our data shows that more than three-quarters of refugee respondents in Addis had benefitted from Ethiopia's Out of Camp Policy, granting them urban residency rights. However, only one in five refugees received an income from work, as a result of restrictions on work, indicating a significant gap between the potential of urban refugees and their integration into the labour market.¹⁰

One of the PDUW partners, the Mayors Migration Council (MMC), has a separate initiative to channel international funding to city governments and local actors directly. It has underscored the positive impacts of working through city governments on service delivery to displaced communities and the larger policy implications.¹¹ Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees (GCF) projects show that

authorities can work directly with displaced residents to pass legislation and establish institutional norms that guarantee service provisions. Similarly, although refugees and asylum seekers' right to work is often dictated at the national level, city governments have a vested interest in their urban population's right to a livelihood, with 21 out of 27 GCF city grantees using funding to target economic inclusion initiatives.¹² The GCF has shown that collaboration between city governments, displaced communities and international actors can create more inclusive policies and programmes. Missing from this evidence is how to build lasting partnerships that reinforce the role of city governments in ensuring displaced communities can achieve long-term wellbeing.

Through the PFs, and with our partners, we sought to bridge divides between government authorities, humanitarian and development actors, academia, and displaced communities. The PFs aimed to provide a space where displaced groups could identify basic service needs and collaborate with broader stakeholders to co-develop inclusive and practical solutions.

While a first round of PFs has come to an end, the stakeholders involved are finding ways to establish longer-term collaboration mechanisms between city authorities and displaced residents. The Forums in Addis Ababa informed recommendations for an Urban Refugee Multi-Sectorial Coordination Platform, currently being designed by the national Government Refugee and Returnee Service. In Nairobi, the County has requested support from PDUW partners in the development of a new urban refugee integration strategy. In Jalalabad and Addis Ababa, new funding will help keep PFs going, providing a city-led space to support discussions on inclusive urban solutions. In Jalalabad, this is done in partnership between Samuel Hall and UNHCR, and expanded to new cities beyond Jalalabad.

However, changing leadership¹³ and priorities of city governments and international actors, cyclical, restricted, and often short-term international donor funding, and limited city government capacity and resourcing all make collective action difficult to maintain.

Building city leadership

Establish a reliable baseline

Sustained collaboration can't rely on goodwill; it must be underpinned by quantitative and qualitative evidence, which is often missing from censuses (when these are available) but available

Box 1. Benefits of regular dialogue between displaced people and city actors

Meeting needs and realising efficiencies. Evidence on co-production across the global South⁴ suggests that basic service delivery could be more efficient with contributions from residents, including the displaced, particularly where state resources are unavailable.

Prioritising people's agency. In the four project countries, displaced people in urban areas were more likely than their counterparts in camps to feel they had some choice in their destination; they moved to cities largely because they expected better opportunities. It is important to protect and promote this agency by enabling them to contribute to city-level policy and programming discussions.

from academic, UN and NGO-led research. In our project's PFs, data provided a starting point for discussion. It helped city leaders and displaced groups identify shared needs and priorities.

PDUW's qualitative and quantitative research has contributed to the evidence base on the experience of displaced people living in cities, stimulating discussions on access to services, livelihood opportunities and overall wellbeing of urban refugees. The evidence presented in PFs highlighted service provisions that remain broadly unavailable to urban refugees and IDPs. PDUW research also exposed opportunities that are less accessible to camp-based refugees and IDPs. We presented this data to the forums to inspire collective action, with each forum discussion beginning with a presentation of the data.

Our sample was limited to one neighbourhood in each city, so does not provide a full view of all population groups or all areas within that city. In Jalalabad, for example, it was crucial to have a dialogue after the data was presented, offering the opportunity for participants to immediately discuss their reactions to the data. They helped establish a sense that the forums were open spaces for stakeholders to present and share information, agree and disagree on findings, and zoom in on where consensus could be reached. Certain data was prioritised as the basis for a common vision for collective action while other data was put aside to return to after areas of agreement and prioritisation were reached.

Encourage cities to lead

The PFs were a first step to encourage city actors to lead on local solutions, with the support of a range of stakeholders, including representatives of communities impacted by displacement. They met regularly, alongside line ministries, civil society, private sector actors and other supporting organisations. This required community representatives to go beyond their own community needs to plan for the needs of other residents. In Jalalabad, this led in later iterations to discussions on participatory budgeting with civil society and displaced community representatives.

In Addis Ababa, PFs have the potential to be particularly important, given the large number of new arrivals after the national government closed refugee camps, notably in Tigray. Recognising the serious shortage of services for urban refugees, the Addis forum participants used it as a platform to voice their needs and plan for services. In Jalalabad, conversations between female IDP representatives and city actors had broken down after the administration changed in August 2021 and threatened forced evictions.

The PFs provided the only space where female representatives could meet with city actors. During five PFs, all municipal stakeholders listened to women's voices, and the city representatives were encouraged to take women's needs into account. This allowed participants to build a dialogue led by cities, with contributions of all. Together, they shaped priorities and reached a consensus.¹⁴

Creating momentum for Forums

City service providers and partners can be numerous, formal and informal. Informal service providers are often embedded in urban service provision for low-income communities, including displaced people. As trusted community leaders and partners, local NGOs and refugee-led organisations can also play a significant role in bridging gaps between basic urban services and marginalised communities. However, displaced groups, even when organised (as in the case of refugee-led organisations), need mechanisms through which they can provide input into city decision-making processes that lead to systemic changes and policy reform.

In Nairobi, facilitated by Slum Dwellers International Kenya, PFs have evolved as a space where multiple organisations can dialogue with local government. The forums' positive momentum reinforced growing recognition by Nairobi County of its important role in service delivery for displaced people. Nairobi County is developing an urban refugee integration strategy, with the promise of a sustained dialogue between local authorities and refugee communities.

City-level collaboration can be used strategically to encourage partnerships that may be blocked at a national level. In Afghanistan, where the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan is not an entity recognised by the international community, the informality of the state poses a challenge and offers an opportunity to act at a local level. In Jalalabad, the PFs convened stakeholders who would otherwise not meet to identify shared concerns such as preventing further displacement, fostering environmentally sustainable urban development, and making safe recreational spaces accessible to everyone. While the national government's formal solution is that all IDPs return to their place of origin, local conversations have opened bilateral initiatives to sustain inclusion within city spaces. The city will continue these conversations, with the facilitation of Samuel Hall, and additional funding secured from UNHCR. They will also extend the model to the capital, Kabul, where alternatives to forced evictions and returns are needed.

Addressing city resourcing gaps

The biggest obstacle to including displaced communities in city services is resourcing. The World Humanitarian Summit's 2016 Grand Bargain set a target of directing 25% of humanitarian funding towards local actors by 2020, but in 2022, only 1.2% of international funding went directly to local and national actors.¹⁵

Data on the nature and scale of displacement can help cities make the case nationally and internationally for increased resources to meet the needs of an expanded population.

The evidence presented in the PFs was used to discuss ideas for how to turn evidence into action, depending on the city context, its actors, its existing and planned policy frameworks, as well as its willingness to reach consensus. PDUW data was also corroborated with other data sources, for example when international organisations and government departments brought their own data to the forums. Bringing these together to identify common trends and priorities and making the connection between evidence, programmes and policies can help promote and address the needs of displaced communities.

The conclusion in Jalalabad, was to move towards attempts to discuss city budgeting more openly, and make joint decisions over the use of limited resources. Participatory budgeting to

address distributional inequalities in access to services and rights becomes the priority. How much is the city spending on initiatives that can foster local integration? When does budgeting become a co-produced exercise, inclusive of displaced groups? Future PFs will need to centre more closely on these questions.

Conclusion

To sustain inclusive engagement on urban displacement, we believe that cities should lead, that a range of stakeholders must be included, and that evidence needs to be introduced and acted upon. For cities to lead, evidence needs to be at the centre, and conversations should be geared towards consensus and priorities. As accountability and transparency are achieved, one more conversation remains pending: defining the necessary budgets for local integration, and making public budgets more participatory, through collectively selected projects. This can provide a roadmap for refugees and IDPs to be involved as city residents and contributors to the city.

Nassim Majidi, Samer Saliba and Helen Elizabeth Yu

Nassim Majidi is the co-founder and executive director of Samuel Hall. Samer Saliba is director of city practice at the Mayors Migration Council. Helen Elizabeth Yu is city practice lead at the Mayors Migration Council.



Knowledge Products

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges.

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research, evaluates programmes and designs policies in contexts of migration and displacement.

Mayors Migration Council is a coalition founded by mayors for mayors to accelerate ambitious global action on migration and create a world where urban migrants, displaced people, and receiving communities can thrive.

Contact

Boel McAteer
boel.mcateer@iied.org

Nassim Majidi
nassim.majidi@samuelhall.org

44 Southampton Buildings
London, WC2A 1AP
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399
www.iied.org

IIED welcomes feedback via: @IIED and
www.facebook.com/theiied

ISBN 978-1-83759-082-7

Notes

¹ Migration Data Portal (2022) Urbanization and migration. Migration data portal. / ² UNHCR Refugee Data Finder. www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics / ³ Saliba, S, Majidi, N and Walnycki, A (2022) City planning with displaced communities: the benefits of inclusion. IIED, London. www.iied.org/21271iied / ⁴ Ostrom, E (1996) Crossing the great divide: Coproduction, synergy, and development. *World Development* 24(6) 1073–1087. / ⁵ International Rescue Committee (2018) From Response to Resilience Working with Cities and City Plans to Address Urban Displacement: Lessons from Amman and Kampala. www.rescue.org/report/response-resilience-working-cities-and-city-plans-address-urban-displacement / ⁶ Landau, LB and Amit, R (2014) (2014) Wither Policy? Southern African Perspectives on Understanding Law, 'Refugee' Policy and Protection. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 27(4), 534–552. / ⁷ Saliba, S (2016) Finding Economic Opportunity in the City: Lessons from the IRC's Cash and Livelihoods Programmes in Cities within Lebanon and Jordan. www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/916/findingeconomicopportunityinthecityircweb.pdf / ⁸ Betts, A, Memisoglu, F and Ali, A (2020) What difference do mayors make? The role of municipal authorities in Turkey and Lebanon's response to Syrian refugees. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34(1), 491–519. / ⁹ Barratt, S, Majidi, N, Trigo da Roza, M, Garcia Amado, P and McAteer, B (2024) Afghanistan's unfolding crisis: wellbeing and livelihoods of displaced people before and after the regime change. IIED, London. www.iied.org/22276iied / ¹⁰ Samuel Hall (2024) City Note Addis Ababa. www.samuelhall.org/publications/iied-city-note-urban-solutions-for-local-integration-in-addis-ababa-ethiopia / ¹¹ Mayors Migration Council (2023) Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees: Progress Report. <https://mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/news/gcf-progress-report-2023> / ¹² See GCF Progress Report descriptions of Accra, Barranquilla, and Freetown for robust examples. / ¹³ Darling, J (2021) Refugee urbanism: seeing asylum "like a city". *Urban Geography*, 42(7), 894–914. / ¹⁴ Samuel Hall (2023) City Note Jalalabad. www.samuelhall.org/publications/participatory-forum-on-protracted-displacement-in-an-urban-world / ¹⁵ Obrecht, A, Swithern, S and Doherty, J (2022) The State of the Humanitarian System. ALNAP/ODI, London. <https://sohs.alnap.org/2022-the-state-of-the-humanitarian-system-sohs-%E2%80%93-full-report>

Protracted displacement in an Urban World was funded by UK Research and Innovation through the Global Challenges Research Fund programme, the Ikea Foundation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

