



Cities Alliance and UN-Habitat organized a series of three events on forced urban migration, from different perspectives.

Session 1. Forced Migration and Cities

Over the last decade, the world has witnessed a rise in migration and displacement due to natural and human-made disasters and conflicts. 80% of internally displaced people and 60% of refugees seek safety and assistance in urban areas, resulting in a need for adequate urban responses globally – but cities also attract many migrants looking for livelihood opportunities and improved access to services. Well-planned and well-managed urban population growth has a positive impact on cities and communities. However, hosting and supporting a large number of people in vulnerable situations often puts a heavy burden on local authorities, specifically if resources and capacities are rare and policies and systems are not responsive to a rapid increase of population. In many contexts, displaced people in urban environments struggle with inadequate living conditions and limited access to services and livelihood opportunities. There is therefore a strong need for increased social and economic inclusion of forcibly displaced people in urban systems, and advocate for key urban actors, such as local authorities and civil society, to play a major role in creating enabling environments.

Session 1 was dedicated to showcasing the effects of forced migration in cities, sharing policies, strategies/approaches and experiences through partnerships and dialogues supporting local authorities at global and regional levels. The session introduced the overall thematic focus for the Urban Thinkers Campus and sought to underline the fundamental role of local authorities in the implementation of Global Compact for Migration, Global Compact on Refugees, contributing to the Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda and bridging the gap between humanitarian and development programming. 115 people registered to the first session.

Session 2. Cases: Refugees/Settlements

Today, large numbers of refugees seek shelter in urban areas, particularly in countries or situations where there are few or no camps, but also hoping for increased self-reliance. In urban areas, they are often confronted with a range of protection risks and vulnerabilities which are different from camp-like scenarios and often, refugees in vulnerable situations live amongst the urban poor in under-serviced and poorly planned areas. While refugees have specific rights due to their legal statuses, many have chosen to live in urban areas, where provision of support is often more complex and includes a wider range of local actors i.e. local community, local government and authorities, and other urban actors and partners. In some cases, urban refugee population groups face challenges due to tensions with other communities in vulnerable situations, when humanitarian aid is focusing on refugees instead of taking an integrated approach that improves the quality of life for all.

Session 2 was dedicated to sharing experiences and lessons learned in Kenya, Uganda and Bangladesh on sustainable and integrated solutions for refugee settlements and inclusion of refugees and host community responses in urban contexts. It introduced best practices and proposals from spatial, cross-sectoral data collection for sound decision making to social and economic inclusion of refugees in urban areas. 172 people registered to the second session.

Session 3. IDPs

At least 100 million people were forced to flee their homes in the last 10 years, seeking refuge within or outside country borders. Out of that number, over 41 million people are estimated to be internally displaced, lacking adequate shelter and housing, having limited or no access to basic services and being in extremely vulnerable conditions also regarding food security, health and livelihood generation. The rise in war, conflicts and terror, combined with climate-change induced hazards and environmental degradation have led to an increase in internal displacement worldwide. Even though IDPs have moved within their country, they often struggle with social/economic exclusion and discrimination and cannot access their rights. It is therefore of critical importance to advocate and develop more effective, integrated and human-rights based approaches for supporting IDPs in towns and cities around the world.

In the search for proactive and durable urban solutions to displacement, Session 3 concluded the UTC and presented case studies in Somalia, West Africa and Iraq, examples trying to address internal displacement and discusses the elements for future practice to bring about durable solutions and lasting change. The focus was on ensuring the gap between humanitarian and development efforts will reduce barriers to the social, economic and cultural inclusion of IDPs in urban areas and cities. 310 people registered to the third session.

Session 1 – Forced Migration in Cities: Close-up on Latin America



The first session focused on how Latin American cities are managing the impact of forced migration, with examples of policies and approaches that are working to integrate migrants into the social and economic fabric of the city.

The virtual “Campus” featured speakers from local authorities representing São Paulo (Brazil), Cucuta, Colombia, and Cuenca, Ecuador as well as Cities Alliance, UN-Habitat, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Migration and displacement are at historic levels in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), resulting in pressure on land, housing, and services. In recent years, some 5.5 million Venezuelans have migrated to cities throughout Latin America, in addition to an equally dynamic migration flow through Central America and Mexico to and from the United States and, even though in lesser extents, rural-urban migration.

The COVID-19 pandemic is adding an additional layer of complexity, with closed borders across the region, increased demand in health services and declining economies. COVID-19 has also put a spotlight on existing inequalities, across the regions and countries, but also within cities and with vulnerability levels increasing, due to loss of livelihoods and job, many migrants are being pushed into homelessness and precarious living conditions.

Speakers agreed that migration can be a positive force for cities and an economic, cultural and social asset. Partnerships and dialogue between different government levels, sectors and stakeholders (including civil society and private sector) are critical, and so is the need to look beyond migration as a humanitarian issue. While cities have in many contexts taken the lead during the recent crisis, for including migrants in service provision, food distribution and housing/shelter solutions, cities need inclusive policy environments, tools and frameworks to integrate their migrant populations.

Ana Claudia Rossbach, Cities Alliance Regional Adviser for LAC, said that for cities to integrate migrants successfully, they need a national legal framework.

Migration can turn into an opportunity for cities, but we need to have an enabling environment. National laws need to recognize the rights of migrants to access social services, education services, economic opportunities, and housing. This is the main bottleneck we have in most of the countries in the Global South, Ms. Rossbach noted.

Elkin Velasquez, UN-Habitat Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, noted that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) already provide a framework for the socio-economic integration of migrants based on the right to the city. He stressed that interventions targeting migrants must be accompanied by support for the host communities to prevent xenophobia. This approach also speeds up impact:

Every time we see an integrated package of policy support to migrants in hosting communities with an area-based perspective, meaning focusing on neighbourhoods and specific areas of cities, the positive impact comes faster. That we have measured, and we know from evidence, Mr. Velasquez said.

He highlighted UN-Habitat’s ability to bring different urban actors together for changing urban systems that improve the living conditions for all and foster social inclusion, with city leaders playing a crucial role.

The city of Cucuta, Colombia is one example of a city on the frontline of migration. With high levels of poverty and unemployment, the city struggled to accommodate a large number of Venezuelans, who by now form around 18% of the city’s population. Juan Diego Peña, Deputy Social Development Officer for Cucuta, introduced the city’s development plan that incorporates migration with an emphasis on equity and social inclusion. Cucuta offers free courses and vocational training for both locals and migrants for enhancing self-reliance of people in vulnerable situations.

We have to change the narrative on migration. Migration can be seeds and we can harvest development, Mr Peña highlighted.

Fatima Fernandez, Project Officer at UCLG, noted that migration is a major item on the agendas for local governments, and as the representative of over 250,000 municipalities, UCLG is working to ensure that they have a voice in the global migration discussions, including global mechanisms such as the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD), the UN Migration Network or the Global Refugee Forum.

Local governments not only deserve to be there but when they are there, they do change the conversation, about the dynamics about migrants but also what is needed to govern human mobility for the benefit of everyone, Ms. Fernandez said.

The city of Cuenca, Ecuador has taken action to integrate migrants through municipal legislation and public policies designed to integrate to migrants. Sofia Arce B, Director-General of International Relations and Cooperation for Cuenca, shared how the city's Migrants House programme (Casa del Migrante) is linking migrants with care programmes and public-private entities to get them the needed services, even during COVID-19.

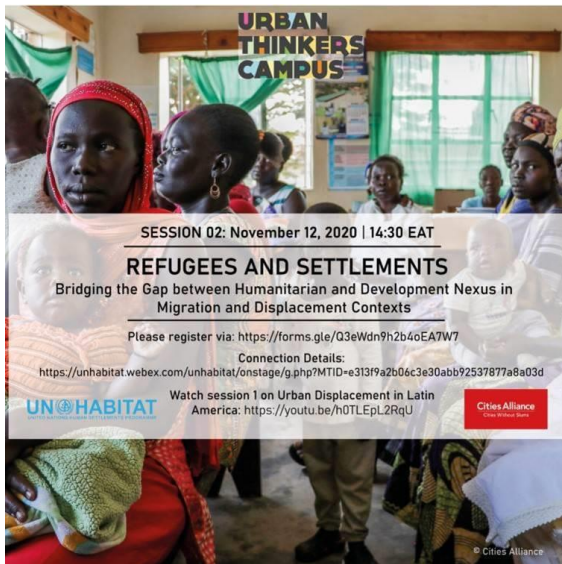
In the case of São Paulo, Brazil, local policy on migrants has helped shape a national policy. Patricia Dichtchekenian, Coordinator for the São Paulo Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship, said that São Paulo's Municipal Law of 2016 provides public services to all, regardless of immigration or documentary status, and it became the model for Brazil's National Migration Law of 2017. This is a good example of how local and national level laws influence each other and how to innovate local level solutions shape national legislation. The city has also established a municipal council for migrants to involve them in the political process, as migrants lack political rights.

Nina Astfalck, Deputy Director for Cooperation of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) in Honduras, shared the experiences of the Cities Alliance "[Cities and Migration Programme](#)" in Guatemala. In [Amatitlán](#), the programme is helping the city capitalize on growth by integrating labour migration into city planning. In [San Marcos](#), it focuses on channelling remittances into formal savings; so far, US \$700,000 in remittances have already been formalized out of a goal of US \$2 million, although COVID-19 is expected to impact remittances.

This intervention shows that an area-based approach often suggests that cities take a look at migrants as residents with equal rights on their territory, irrespective of the migration status. That does not mean that specific protections are not considered and addressed, but it brings the agency of the migrants to the forefront and stresses the potential of migration for sustainable development, Ms. Astfalck underlined.

The session concluded with Ms. Rosbach stressing how knowledge exchange through communities of practice can be a strong tool for cities; even during the webinar, participants were connecting and requesting more information about the experiences presented. UN-Habitat's focal point for migration and displacement, Stephanie Loose, who moderated the session underlined the importance of integrated approaches to the multi-layer challenges faced by cities for harnessing the positive impact on migration to urban areas.

Session 2 – Forced Migration in Cities: Refugees and Settlements



On 12 November 2020, Cities Alliance and UN-Habitat held a webinar on bridging the gap between humanitarian and development efforts in the context of refugees hosting contexts. It is the second in a series of three events on forced migration in cities co-hosted by the two organizations, under the Urban Thinkers Campus (UTC) model. The virtual event featured representatives from UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), AVSI Uganda, and the government of Turkana County in Kenya.

Today, most refugees (60 per cent) live in urban areas, and not in camps. This situation requires a greater connection between humanitarian and development efforts in order to meet both the short- and long-term needs of refugees and host communities in urban areas.

This humanitarian-development nexus is one of the issues that is being studied through the Cities Alliance Cities and Migration programme supported by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). Dr Brigitte Hoermann, the Senior Migration Specialist at Cities Alliance, introduced the programme, which explores how local governments can better manage forced migration and refugees in urban areas to promote social inclusion and economic growth. It also produces supporting knowledge and evidence.

Knowledge is a key point. In the past, research has focused on refugees in camps, and not urban areas. Dr. Lucy Earle, Principal Researcher for Human Settlements at IIED, shared a project to gather evidence on the protracted displacement of refugees and IDPs in urban areas. With the project, IIED is aiming to build an evidence base showing the potential of urban areas to “foster displaced people’s self-reliance and local integration, while benefiting host governments and communities”.

Displaced people are not just statistics. They should be given every opportunity to flourish.

Lucy Earle, Principal Researcher for Human Settlements at IIED

The case of Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh is an example of the challenges that humanitarian and development organizations face. Ms Nodoka Hasegawa, Senior Development Officer at UNHCR, noted that Cox’s Bazar has received a large influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar over the past three years, while Bangladesh has no national framework for dealing with refugees. The goal for UNHCR is to help create a road map for the refugees’ safe return to Myanmar. Ms Hasegawa highlighted the cooperation with UN-Habitat for introducing sustainable urban planning approaches into camp planning in Cox Bazaar, which considerably improved living conditions and livelihood opportunities for refugees.

We have to align expectations and perceptions between humanitarian and development actors.

Nodoka Hasegawa, Senior Development Officer, UNHCR Bangladesh

An example from Kakuma-Kalobeyei, Turkana County, Kenya shows how humanitarian aid can be leveraged to promote local development. Ms Yuka Terada of UN-Habitat coordinates the Sustainable Economic Development Along Turkana West Development Corridor Through Enhanced Connectivity project, supported by the Cities Alliance Cities and Migration Programme. In line UN-Habitat’s advisory Support to Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Programme (KISED), she noted that projects need to look at refugee contexts more holistically and create space and opportunities for the future of both hosts and refugees.

Technical expertise on urban planning and implementation, normative documentation, plus capacity building programs, improve the lives of refugees, prevent further crises, and prepare the local host communities for the future.

Yuka Terada, Programme Management Officer at UN-Habitat

The governor of Turkana County, Josphat Koli Nanok, provided a more in-depth look at the activities in Kakuma-Kalobeyei, which has hosted a refugee camp since 1992. Turkana County has begun a 15-year programme to integrate humanitarian and development efforts to build sustainable opportunities for both

refugees and host communities. This planning includes developing the Kalobeyei Corridor as an economic hub and applying for a new municipality status based on a population that includes refugees.

Better planning of the municipality is going to accrue benefits for refugees and hosts. We hope at the end of this that we will be building communities, skills for refugees to benefit them when they return home.

Josphat Koli Nanok, Governor of Turkana County, Kenya

Arua, Uganda is another example of a city that is working hard to integrate refugees, coming from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Mr John Makoha, Country Representative for AVSI Uganda, discussed how AVSI – with the support of SDC and Cities Alliance – is working with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics to enumerate refugees in the city. The data will help the municipal government plan better and allocate resources more appropriately. Arua also benefits from Uganda's pragmatic approach that allows refugees to live, work, start businesses and own land, not only in camps but also in cities.

“For us, this project is very important. It's one of the first projects that let us do a census in secondary cities,” Mr Makoha noted. “[Uganda] has a very good national policy, but sometimes these policies have cracks which are to assume that refugees are all in camps,” he added.

Panellists agreed that it is possible to achieve a humanitarian-development nexus. The case studies show that integrated planning, legislative support, cooperation, and strong leadership can help make that happen. It is also important for humanitarian and development actors to “break out of their silos,” as Dr Hoermann noted, and “to work together”.

Session 3 – Forced Migration in Cities: Internally Displaced People (IDPs)



The experience of IDPs is often a protracted issue that needs both humanitarian and development interventions. With most IDPs migrating to urban areas, cities are at the forefront of the response. The webinar explored how cities and their partners – from both humanitarian and development side - are taking practical and policy-oriented actions to integrate their IDP populations.

Hosted by UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance, the session featured speakers from international migration organizations (such as IDMC, JIPS and IOM), UN-Habitat, the UN Secretariat of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, the city of Dhaka, and Oxford University's Refugee Centre.

Several key messages emerged from the presentations. IDPs must be viewed as citizens, and securing Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights for them is crucial. There is also a significant need for evidence on the specific needs of urban displaced and have different vulnerabilities than host populations in vulnerable situations, to better tailor and inform suitable responses. And the question remains how to leverage short-term humanitarian successes for long-term sustainable development.

Scott Lloyd of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) shared how IDMC is building an evidence base on internal displacement. The IDMC uses data from different sources – including local partners, social media companies, and mobile phones – to get an accurate idea of people's mobility. The local efforts to monitor and analyze information on displacement provides a much-needed perspective.

This localized work is counteracting the global picture on internal displacement so we can get really informed and inclusive local policies.

Scott Lloyd, IDMC

Turning to policy, Greta Zeender, a member of the secretariat of the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Internal Displacement discussed the Panel's work on how to prevent displacement and support durable solutions. The High-Level Panel is consulting with urban actors, IDPs, and cities to develop formal

recommendations on IDPs for the UN Secretary General. One consultation was conducted with actors from the city of Adama in Ethiopia, which in partnership with the Adama University of Science and Technology is undertaking a pilot initiative to integrate its IDPs with support from Cities Alliance.

It is clear that cities really are at the forefront as they are the face of the government when it comes to responding to internal displacement, and cities can lead the way to responding and finding practical solutions to responding to displacement.

Greta Zeender, UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

The experience of Adama was also mentioned by Dr. Evan Easton-Calabria, Senior Research Officer for the Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre. She noted that Adama led a coordinated cultural, social, and governmental response that successfully met the needs of IDPs in the emergency phase. The issue now is how to leverage that initial assistance effort and build on what worked for longer-term development.

IDPs talked with us about increasing the platforms for connection and dialogue, extending some of the saving groups to IDPs, or asking that the municipal government offered formal platforms for discussions and exchanges between IDPs and host communities.

Dr. Evan Easton-Calabria, Senior Research Officer, Oxford University Refugee Studies Centre

For a local perspective, Mohammad Sirajul Islam, Chief Urban Planner for Dhaka South, Bangladesh, shared how his city is responding to large numbers of climate migrants. The city has various initiatives to integrate them, notably a city-funded shelter that provides housing, medical services, childcare, and other services to help climate migrants transition into life in Dhaka. But more is needed as flooding and other impacts of climate change will continuously increase migration and displacement in coming years.

We need to invest new and additional funds to lessen the impact of climate change on our people.

Mohammad Sirajul Islam, Chief Urban Planner for Dhaka South

Ibere Lopes, IOM's HLP Advisor to the Global Shelter Cluster, stressed the importance of addressing land and property issues early in programming while providing humanitarian aid, especially in conflict contexts. The time to deal with land property issues is when the conflict is beginning to subside, when land values increase and IDPs are thinking about returning or integrating locally.

One of the interventions that can be done in the humanitarian context is recording possession, gathering available records, working with multiple informal sources to document occupancy, and mapping to provide a route to eventual validation.

Ibere Lopes, HLP Advisor to the Global Shelter Cluster

Dr. Isis Nuñez Ferrera, Head of Field Support and Capacity Building for the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS), discussed how JIPS uses urban profiling to learn how humanitarian assistance is supporting IDPs towards durable solutions. In Darfur, a pilot program assessed the impact of 15 years of protracted displacement on IDPs and host communities, which, in cooperation with UN-Habitat, led to evidence-based recommendations for further interventions. The profiling revealed that displaced people in peri-urban areas were more vulnerable than people in the camps, which benefited from humanitarian assistance.

Urban profiling is a powerful tool to inform joint action, for but it needs to involve all relevant stakeholders from the very beginning for the data to be actionable. Communities, both displaced and host, are not sufficiently involved in key discussions and decisions. Participatory processes such as urban profiling can be used to capture the voices and knowledge of all urban stakeholders, including displaced communities.

Dr. Isis Nuñez Ferrera, Head of Field Support and Capacity Building, JIPS

Muslim Qazimi, HLP Rights Sub-Cluster Coordinator and Program Manager for UN-Habitat Iraq, shared how UN-Habitat is documenting land rights in Sinjar, Iraq, where many Yazidis were forcibly evicted. UN-Habitat used tools such as the Secure Tenure Domain Model (STDM) to document and register property claims on behalf of both husbands and wives – a first in Iraq. It has also designed an advocacy component to help the initiative survive political changes.

Through the UN-Habitat HLP program, Yazidis' HLP claims and rights are registered, mapped and they receive their land occupancy documents for the first time in their lives.

Muslim Qazimi, HLP Rights Sub-Cluster Coordinator and Program Manager for UN-Habitat Iraq

It is clear from the rich variety of experiences presented in the webinar that cities and communities are already working on integrating IDPs. It will be important for development partners to work with cities to build on what they are already doing and strengthen these responses for durable solutions.