

# Specificities and challenges of responding to internal displacement in urban settings

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## Abstract

*The world is rapidly urbanizing, and so is internal displacement. However, knowledge about the specific situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in urban settings and how it differs from, and impacts on, their host communities is still limited, and responses continue to be inadequate. This article analyzes the particular needs of urban IDPs by taking into account how the various contexts and patterns of urban internal displacement contribute to shaping people's experience. It discusses*

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*three key challenges that humanitarian actors are faced with in developing effective responses: identifying and reaching IDPs in urban settings, addressing their urgent protection concerns, and supporting their local integration. It concludes by pointing out the need for methodological and operational guidance on how to bring together area-based approaches that account for the impact of displacement on entire urban communities, and tailored approaches addressing IDPs' specific needs in urban settings. The need for stocktaking exercises and more effective sharing of experiences among practitioners, municipal authorities and policy-makers is also underlined.*

**Keywords:** internal displacement, internally displaced persons, urban, armed conflict, urban violence, urban crises, urban displacement, cities, humanitarian, Colombia, Honduras, Central African Republic, El Salvador, Iraq, outreach, community-based, resilience, protection, local integration.



## Urban internal displacement: A growing and multifaceted phenomenon

Internal displacement is increasingly urban. This is in line with a global trend of rapid urbanization and reflects the fact that armed conflict and other situations of violence,<sup>1</sup> as well as disasters, often play out in cities.<sup>2</sup> A significant and growing proportion of internally displaced persons (IDPs) flee to, between or within

- 1 The term “other situations of violence” is used in this article to refer to situations of collective violence, perpetrated by one or several groups, which do not reach the threshold of an armed conflict but may have significant humanitarian consequences such as, notably, internal displacement. In the same sense, see International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), “The International Committee of the Red Cross’s (ICRC’s) Role in Situations of Violence below the Threshold of Armed Conflict”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 96, No. 893, 2014, available at: [www.icrc.org/en/international-review/article/international-committee-red-cross-icrcs-role-situations-violence-below](http://www.icrc.org/en/international-review/article/international-committee-red-cross-icrcs-role-situations-violence-below) (all internet references were accessed in January 2018).
- 2 The number of people living in cities worldwide grew from 746 million in 1950 to 3.9 billion in 2014, or from 30% to 54% of the global population. This figure is projected to reach 66% by 2050. See United Nations (UN) Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Urbanization Prospects, the 2014 Revision: Highlights*, 2014, available at: <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/publications/files/wup2014-highlights.pdf>. Africa and Asia are less urbanized than other regions, but are also urbanizing faster: see Paul Knox Clarke and Ben Ramalingam, *Meeting the Urban Challenges: Adapting Humanitarian Efforts to an Urban World*, Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) Meeting Paper, ALNAP and Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London, 2012, available at: [www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/meeting-paper-final-web-ok.pdf](http://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/meeting-paper-final-web-ok.pdf). Furthermore, it is estimated that almost 50 million people today are affected by conflict in urban areas: see ICRC, *Urban Services during Protracted Armed Conflict: A Call for a Better Approach to Assisting Affected People*, Geneva, 2015, available at: [www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-4249.pdf](http://www.icrc.org/eng/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-4249.pdf). In this article, the term “city” is used to refer to any urban settlement, regardless of its scale or population size. As such, the terms “cities”, “urban areas” and “urban settings” are used interchangeably. Distinct features of urban settings are examined in the section below.

urban areas,<sup>3</sup> where many of them live with host families or in other types of accommodation – such as private houses or damaged or unfinished buildings, sometimes in informal settlements – dispersed among the resident population, rather than in camps. They decide to settle in cities for various reasons, including the prospect of security, anonymity, better economic or educational opportunities and humanitarian assistance.<sup>4</sup> Oftentimes, however, these are war-torn cities or fragile cities in developing and middle-income countries<sup>5</sup> that fail to provide IDPs with safety and adequate access to livelihoods and reliable services. Instead, IDPs end up facing destitution, insecurity, chronic urban violence and the risk of secondary displacement.

Humanitarian responses to displacement situations have also needed to shift from rural and camp settings to urban areas. For humanitarian actors, this means working outside of their traditional comfort zone and having to adapt their mindset, toolbox and approaches to a different and more complex operating environment, where authorities tend to be more present and play a bigger role.<sup>6</sup> There is growing awareness among practitioners as well as governments and

- 3 Chaloka Beyani, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons*, UN Doc. A/HRC/19/54, 26 December 2011, p. 11, available at: [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session19/A-HRC-19-54\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session19/A-HRC-19-54_en.pdf). Although urban IDP situations are considered the new norm, the exact scale of urban internal displacement globally has not yet been quantified. On selected estimates for populations of urban IDPs, see Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Leaving No One Behind: Internal Displacement and the New Urban Agenda*, Geneva, 11 October 2016, pp. 3–4.
- 4 As per the internationally recognized definition contained in the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (Guiding Principles), IDPs are described as persons who are “forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border” (emphasis added), meaning that their movement is always of an involuntary nature. Within the framework of the compelling external circumstances causing their displacement, however, people have agency and still make choices regarding whether to stay or flee and where to go, based on a range of different considerations. Those who are displaced from the countryside sometimes move to urban areas in stages, as they settle first in the closest urban centre, which they may already know or where they may have relatives or friends, and later move on to larger cities. See María Aysa-Lastra, “Integration of Internally Displaced Persons in Urban Labour Markets: A Case Study of the IDP Population in Soacha, Colombia”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2011, pp. 280–282; Angela Consuelo Carrillo, “Internal Displacement in Colombia: Humanitarian, Economic and Social Consequences in Urban Settings and Current Challenges”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 91, No. 875, 2009, pp. 529–530. On the various considerations influencing IDPs’ choice to settle in cities, see also Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, *Under the Radar: Internally Displaced Persons in Non-Camp Settings*, Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, October 2013, p. 3; Jeff Crisp, Tim Morris and Hilde Refstie, “Displacement in Urban Areas: New Challenges, New Partnerships”, *Disasters*, Vol. 36, Supp. 1, 2012, p. 24.
- 5 Robert Muggah and Kevin Savage, “Urban Violence and Humanitarian Action: Engaging the Fragile City”, *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 19 January 2012, available at: [sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/1524](http://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/1524).
- 6 With a view to better analyzing and responding to crises in urban areas, many have voiced the need to overcome the “‘rural’ or ‘camp’ bias” – see Elizabeth Ferris and Sara Ferro-Ribeiro, “Protecting People in Cities: The Disturbing Case of Haiti”, *Disasters*, Vol. 36, Supp. 1, 2012, p. 542; to “think differently” – see Paul Currión, *Rapid Humanitarian Assessment in Urban Settings*, Assessment Capacities Project, Geneva, April 2015, p. 5, available at: [www.alnap.org/help-library/rapid-humanitarian-assessment-in-urban-settings](http://www.alnap.org/help-library/rapid-humanitarian-assessment-in-urban-settings); to “adapt policy and practice” – see Leah Campbell, *Stepping Back: Understanding Cities and their Systems*, ALNAP Working Paper, ALNAP and ODI, London, 2016, p. 8; and to develop “urban-specific operational strategies and tools” – see Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *IASC Strategy for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas*, 2010, p. 7.

academics that “urban problems require urban solutions”.<sup>7</sup> However, there is a paucity of best practices in this domain and significant gaps exist in dealing with humanitarian crises in cities.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly true when it comes to addressing urban internal displacement, as reliable data on the specific circumstances of IDPs in urban settings are lacking, and it remains difficult to properly define what constitutes an effective response.<sup>9</sup>

Urban internal displacement has a multifaceted nature. First, it occurs in different contexts, depending on whether cities are, alternatively or simultaneously, the scenes of armed conflict or other situations of violence or natural disaster, and/or sites where people seek refuge. For example, IDPs can be found in cities where hostilities are ongoing, in more stable cities in a country at war, or in cities affected by violence perpetrated by criminal groups (e.g. gangs, drug traffickers) in otherwise peaceful countries.<sup>10</sup> Second, urban internal displacement follows different patterns, as people move from rural to urban areas, between cities (inter-urban displacement) or between neighbourhoods of the same city (intra-urban displacement). There is a need to unpack the phenomenon

7 François Grünewald, “Aid in a City at War: The Case of Mogadishu, Somalia”, *Disasters*, Vol. 36, Supp. 1, 2012, p. 1.

8 In recognition of those gaps and the critical need to address the urban challenge, a number of initiatives have emerged in recent years: for instance, the launch of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit; the adoption of the New Urban Agenda at the Habitat III Conference in October 2016; the creation of the Urban Response Community of Practice and the Urban Humanitarian Response Portal, by ALNAP and UN-Habitat, to share knowledge and experiences about urban responses (see the Urban Humanitarian Response portal, available at: [www.urban-response.org/](http://www.urban-response.org/)); and the revision of the *Sphere Handbook* from an urban perspective (see Ben Mountfield, *Using the Sphere Standards in Urban Settings: Guidance for Humanitarian Practitioners*, Sphere Project, Geneva, 1 December 2016). The need for humanitarian actors to better adapt and refine assessment methodologies and tools traditionally used for rural settings is also widely underscored. The Stronger Cities Initiative (for more information, see International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), “Stronger Cities Initiative”, available at: [www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative](http://www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative)), a consortium of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and World Vision International, has developed context analysis and needs assessment tools for urban humanitarian response in armed conflict, displacement and disaster settings. See, for instance, Lili Mohiddin and Gabrielle Smith, *A Review of Needs Assessment Tools, Response Analysis Frameworks, and Targeting Guidance for Urban Humanitarian Response*, IIED Working Paper, London, November 2016, available at: [pubs.iied.org/10796IIED/?a=L+Mohiddin](http://pubs.iied.org/10796IIED/?a=L+Mohiddin). On the need for adapted tools and approaches, see also a recent study published by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), *The Urban Amplifier: Adapting to Urban Specificities: Report on Humanitarian Action in Urban Crises*, 1 January 2018, available at: [drive.google.com/file/d/1UZvPvtWC\\_wD7xjEr3Syo-lwRuwXi4zP/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UZvPvtWC_wD7xjEr3Syo-lwRuwXi4zP/view).

9 Internal displacement data classified as either urban or rural were available only in a small fraction of the countries covered by the IDMC for the period January to December 2016. See IDMC, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2017, pp. 78, 108–109. Elizabeth Ferris, *Ten Years after Humanitarian Reform: How Have IDPs Fared?*, Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, December 2014, p. 26, available at: [www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Introduction-to-final-report-IDP-Study-FINAL.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Introduction-to-final-report-IDP-Study-FINAL.pdf), highlights that the current lack of accurate data on IDPs’ numbers, needs and capacities, particularly in urban settings, undermines the ability to tailor adequate responses. On the tendency of urban internal displacement to be less visible, which partly explains current knowledge gaps, see below in this article.

10 On the phenomena of urban gangs, gang violence and organized crime, see, most recently, Ana Balcazar Moreno, Ximena Mercedes Galvez Lima, Julie Lambin and Lina Rodriguez, *The War Report 2017: Gang Violence in Colombia, Mexico and El Salvador*, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, Geneva, December 2017.

in order to better grasp the differences and commonalities in the situation of IDPs across the various contexts and patterns of urban internal displacement.<sup>11</sup>

This article aims to contribute to ongoing reflections about the specificities of urban displacement and how best to respond to it, with a focus on internal displacement induced by armed conflict and other situations of violence. It argues that the context and the pattern in which urban internal displacement occurs shape the interaction between displacement, vulnerability and resilience,<sup>12</sup> translating into specific needs, concerns and capacities of IDPs in urban areas. The distinct features of cities compared to rural settings also play a role in this process. After analyzing the ramifications of displacement for urban IDPs and their host communities, the article discusses three key challenges faced by humanitarian actors in their efforts to develop adequate responses: identifying and reaching IDPs in urban settings, addressing their urgent protection concerns, and supporting their local integration. In doing so, it presents some possible approaches to deal with these challenges, drawing particularly from the experiences of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The article focuses mainly on the situation of urban IDPs living outside camps, as less attention has been devoted to them and their merging within dispersed host communities poses particular challenges to an effective response to their needs.<sup>13</sup> Some of the concerns and challenges identified with regards to this group, however, may apply *mutatis mutandis* to urban IDPs in camps and camp-like settings.<sup>14</sup>

- 11 Existing literature on urban displacement mostly focuses on refugees, rather than IDPs. The literature that deals with IDPs often considers both populations together without clearly distinguishing the differences and similarities, or does not explore the full range of contexts and patterns of urban internal displacement. See, for instance, Sara Pantuliano, Victoria Metcalfe, Simone Haysom and Eleanor Davey, “Urban Vulnerability and Displacement: A Review of Current Issues”, *Disasters*, Vol. 36, Supp. 1, 2012; Amy Kirbyshire, Emily Wilkinson, Virginie Le Masson and Pandora Batra, *Mass Displacement and the Challenge for Urban Resilience*, ODI, London, 2017; J. Crisp, T. Morris and H. Refstie, above note 4; M. Aysa-Lastra, above note 4.
- 12 Various definitions have been given to the term “resilience” by humanitarian agencies, development institutions and donors: see, for example, UK Department for International Development (DFID), *Defining Disaster Resilience: A DFID Approach Paper*, November 2011, pp. 6–9; UN International Strategy on Disaster Reduction, *Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction*, Geneva, May 2009, p. 24; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), *The Road to Resilience: Bridging Relief and Development for a More Sustainable Future*, June 2012; European Commission, *The EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises*, COM (2012) 586, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Brussels, 3 October 2012, p. 5, available at: [ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com\\_2012\\_586\\_resilience\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/com_2012_586_resilience_en.pdf). In this article, “resilience” is meant to indicate the capacity of individuals and communities to resist and recover from the impact of threats and/or to deal with the consequences of shocks or stressful events. People are “resilient” when they are able to protect themselves from possible threats and to cope with stressful events by adopting coping strategies that are not harmful to themselves or their family members and do not impact negatively on their livelihoods. The resilience of a community is measured by its ability to preserve its members from harm.
- 13 On the need to study the situation of IDPs living outside of camps, in urban as well as rural settings, see C. Beyani, above note 3.
- 14 For example, the need to integrate the city, with its interconnected systems and wide range of stakeholders, into the way humanitarian responses are designed and implemented emerges both in camps and in non-camp situations.

## Some distinct features of urban settings

There is no single commonly agreed definition of “urban area”. Government definitions and academic classifications differ in terms of scale, population size, shape and other factors. Furthermore, distinguishing “urban” from “rural” areas is not always feasible: for instance, in many rapidly growing middle-sized to small cities, the borders between the two are often blurred.<sup>15</sup> That said, a number of characteristics have been identified as being typical of cities as opposed to rural settings.<sup>16</sup> This section focuses on three characteristics that play a part in shaping the specific experience of IDPs in cities and make cities a more challenging environment for humanitarian actors to work in.

The first characteristic is the density and diversity of the population. This offers better conditions for anonymity to those who seek to maintain a low profile because of security concerns, as opposed to rural areas where people usually know each other. However, it also increases the likelihood that the most vulnerable will fall under the radar screen of authorities and humanitarian organizations. Furthermore, integration into the city can be more difficult for newcomers, as social cohesion tends to be weaker than in rural areas.<sup>17</sup> Density amplifies the impact of hostilities or disasters occurring in cities, as more people can be affected at once, thus requiring a larger-scale response.<sup>18</sup> Diversity makes it harder for humanitarian actors to define the “community” to work with. In rural areas, a village can be approached as one community, given that the population tends to be more homogeneous. In cities, not only do people’s situations differ widely from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, but urban dwellers often identify with various social, ethnic, religious, professional or other groups. This leads to multiple communities coexisting in the same area (or to put it differently, to a fragmented community consisting of different sub-groups). As a result, identifying commonalities of needs and vulnerability for the purpose of defining the beneficiaries of humanitarian interventions becomes an intricate task.<sup>19</sup>

15 World Bank, *World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography*, Washington, DC, 2009, p. 51, available at: [openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/5991](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/5991). P. Knox Clarke and B. Ramalingam, above note 2, p. 4, emphasize that “cities differ in important ways from rural environments, but there is no ‘one size fits all’ definition of a city, and in most cases the boundary between urban and rural is porous and indistinct”. Within the context of its activities to support urban services, the ICRC has adopted a definition of the urban context as “the area within which civilians vulnerable to disruptions in essential services reside and the network of components supporting those services”. See ICRC, above note 2, p. 17. This definition conveys a distinction between urban and rural, but not along the traditional lines based on population density and/or a geographic area defined by municipal authorities. On the city and its relationship with the countryside, see also Marion Harroff-Tavel, “Violence and Humanitarian Action in Urban Areas: New Challenges, New Approaches”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 92, No. 878, 2010, pp. 331–332.

16 L. Campbell, above note 6, pp. 12–17; B. Mountfield, above note 8, pp. 6–8.

17 IFRC, *Integrating Climate Change and Urban Risks into the VCA*, Geneva, 2014, p. 52.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 49; IASC, above note 6, pp. 10–11 (emphasizing a related need for urban preparedness planning and strategies).

19 Elena Lucchi, *Humanitarian Interventions in Situations of Urban Violence*, ALNAP Lesson Paper, ALNAP and ODI, London, 2013, p. 7; L. Campbell, above note 6, pp. 6, 9–10; B. Mountfield, above note 8, p. 7.

The second characteristic common to urban areas is their reliance on cash-based economies and on complex and interconnected systems of public basic services (e.g. health care, water, sanitation and electricity).<sup>20</sup> This is different from rural areas, where there are more opportunities for production and self-consumption of food and other goods and people organize themselves around less sophisticated services. As a result, urban dwellers are highly vulnerable to the disruption of markets and services caused by armed conflict.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, if prior to the conflict access to public services was not equitably distributed across the urban landscape and in an inclusive way, resulting in varying degrees of service provision quality, it is highly probable as the crisis unfolds that this situation will continue and become exacerbated with time. Furthermore, life in cities is more expensive – commodity prices are usually higher, and people who come from the countryside have to buy food that some of them may have previously produced themselves, and pay for services that are provided by public or private companies.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, cities can offer more opportunities for income generation and employment, as well as education. However, people need to have adapted skills and valid documentation in order to take advantage of those opportunities – which is often not the case for IDPs.<sup>23</sup>

The third characteristic of urban settings is the presence of a wide range of governmental and non-governmental actors operating at various levels (municipal, district and national) and with different roles and responsibilities that may not always be clearly defined.<sup>24</sup> For humanitarian organizations, this increases opportunities to build collaboration and partnerships, but poses challenges in terms of coordination and engagement with multiple urban stakeholders.<sup>25</sup> It also implies that humanitarian organizations working in cities tend to be subject to more control and regulation by authorities, and have less freedom to manoeuvre

20 On cities as complex and multi-layered systems, see A. Kirbyshire *et al.*, above note 11, p. 11; P. Currión, above note 6, pp. 11–12; Lucy Earle, “Addressing Urban Crises: Bridging the Humanitarian–Development Divide”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 98, No. 901, 2016, p. 219.

21 On the multifaceted and interconnected nature of essential urban services, and the cumulative negative impact of protracted armed conflict on their quality and availability, see ICRC, above note 2.

22 B. Mountfield, above note 8, p. 8.

23 This is further discussed below when examining the obstacles to IDPs’ access to basic services and their access to livelihoods and employment.

24 Geographical distances, lack of infrastructure, insecurity and the presence of armed groups in rural areas, with related access challenges, are often among the factors that explain the concentration of authorities and other actors in urban centres. Furthermore, cities are typically characterized by vibrant networks of civil society organizations (e.g. non-governmental organizations, associations, unions, societies, clubs, faith groups) representing the various interests of the multiple communities coexisting in the same urban area. This is the case in most government-held areas, but might be different in urban areas held by non-State armed groups.

25 E. Ferris and S. Ferro-Ribeiro, above note 6, p. 47; B. Mountfield, above note 8, p. 8. The IRC, in its “Principles of Urban Humanitarian Response”, speaks of cities as being “shaped by a multitude of international, national and local actors from multiple sectors ... who possess valuable knowledge of and influence over how the city functions”, underscoring the need for humanitarian actors to “leverage” such networks in order “to inform effective and inclusive responses”. See IRC, *Violence in the City: A Systematic Review of the Drivers of Violence against Displaced Populations in Urban Crisis and Post-Crisis Settings*, January 2017, p. 6, available at: [www.rescue-uk.org/report/violence-city-systematic-review-drivers-violence-against-displaced-populations-urban-crisis](http://www.rescue-uk.org/report/violence-city-systematic-review-drivers-violence-against-displaced-populations-urban-crisis).

than in rural settings. They need to be conversant with existing institutional, normative and policy frameworks, including on complex issues of land tenure, tenancy, housing rights and property.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, those regulations can present a whole raft of bureaucratic obstacles for IDPs as they seek to access services and rebuild shattered lives.

## The specific needs of IDPs in urban settings

IDPs tend to have particular needs stemming from their displacement, which often exacerbates the difficulties people already experience as a result of armed conflict or other situations of violence. Those needs are multifaceted and often interconnected, and tend to evolve over time. Newly displaced persons often face physical insecurity, lack basic necessities and need emergency assistance to survive. Those in protracted internal displacement need to access livelihoods, health, education and adequate housing in order to regain some normality in their lives, recover their independence and make progress towards a durable solution.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, IDPs are not a homogeneous and faceless group: individual characteristics such as gender, age and disability influence the way people are affected by internal displacement and their capacity to cope with it.<sup>28</sup>

Although the situation of IDPs in cities may look similar to that of their non-displaced neighbours, internal displacement remains a key factor of

- 26 Marion Harroff-Tavel, “Humanitarian Response Toward Urban Violence”, in Pierre Apraxine, Anne Duquenne, Sabine Fetta and Damien Helly (eds), *Urban Violence and Humanitarian Challenges*, Joint Report from the Colloquium Organized by the ICRC and the European Union Institute for Security Studies, Brussels, 19 January 2012, p. 33; B. Mountfield, above note 8, p. 8; IDMC and MIT Displacement Research and Action Network (MIT DRAN), *Home Sweet Home: Housing Practices and Tools that Support Durable Solutions for Urban IDPs*, March 2015, p. 15.
- 27 On the notion of protracted internal displacement as a situation that is beyond the initial emergency phase and where no durable solution is in sight, see Gil Loescher and James Milner, “Understanding the Challenge”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 33, September 2009, p. 9, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/protracted/loescher-milner.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/protracted/loescher-milner.pdf); and, more recently, Walter Kälin and Hannah Entwisle Chapuisat, *Breaking the Impasse: Reducing Protracted Internal Displacement as a Collective Outcome*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), June 2017. The issue of durable solutions is addressed in Section V of the Guiding Principles, which recognize the “primary duty and responsibility” of the authorities “to establish conditions, as well as provide the means, which allow internally displaced persons to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country” (Principle 28, § 1). According to the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, a durable solution is achieved when IDPs no longer have any specific assistance or protection needs linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights in a non-discriminatory manner. The Framework identifies three routes to durable solutions – return and reintegration at the place of origin, local integration at the place of displacement, or relocation and settlement in another part of the country – and provides for criteria to evaluate progress toward achieving solutions. See Brookings Institution–University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*, Washington, DC, 2010, available at: [www.unhcr.org/50f94cd49.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/50f94cd49.pdf).
- 28 Jakob Kellenberger, “The ICRC’s Response to Internal Displacement: Strengths, Challenges and Constraints”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 91, No. 875, 2009, p. 476. See also Nina M. Birkeland, “Internal Displacement: Global Trends in Conflict-Induced Displacement”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 91, No. 875, 2009, pp. 501–504.



vulnerability for urban populations affected by armed conflict and violence.<sup>29</sup> This section explains why urban IDPs are often worse off than the resident population and examines their specific needs. Consideration is given to how different contexts and patterns of urban internal displacement shape people's experience.

## Concerns related to safety and security

IDPs in urban settings, just like those in rural areas, may have serious concerns for their safety and physical security. These concerns can be linked to the circumstances in which people flee or to the conditions they face in the new location. During armed conflict, displacement is often a survival mechanism. People leave their homes as they lose access to basic necessities in their place of residence, because they fear the approaching of military operations or after experiencing their destructive impact, notably as a consequence of violations of international humanitarian law (IHL).<sup>30</sup> When cities become battlefields, the effects of the hostilities on the civilian population and urban infrastructure and services can be devastating.<sup>31</sup> Yet, fleeing within or from a city at war is also dangerous. People risk being killed on the way by bombing and shelling, caught in crossfire or hit by sniper fire or landmines. They may face harassment by weapon-bearers or be arrested at checkpoints due to the perception that they support or are affiliated to an adverse party to the conflict. Additionally, because of rapidly changing conflict dynamics, those who managed to reach a more secure neighbourhood or another city relatively spared by the fighting may be confronted again with potential death and injury from military operations, and be uprooted for a second time.<sup>32</sup>

29 S. Pantuliano *et al.*, above note 11, p. 2; Anne Davies and Karen Jacobsen, "Profiling Urban IDPs", *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010, p. 13, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/davies-jacobsen.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/davies-jacobsen.pdf). On the particular needs of IDPs in urban settings, see C. Beyani, above note 3, pp. 11–13.

30 On the role of IHL as a critical legal framework, in situations of armed conflict, in preventing displacement from occurring in the first place and protecting IDPs during displacement, see, *inter alia*, ICRC Advisory Service, "Internally Displaced Persons and International Humanitarian Law – Factsheet", available at: [www.icrc.org/en/document/internally-displaced-persons-and-international-humanitarian-law-factsheet](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/internally-displaced-persons-and-international-humanitarian-law-factsheet). See also Veronika Talviste, Jamie A Williamson and Anne Zeidan, "The ICRC Approach in Situations of Pre-Displacement", *Forced Migration Review*, No. 41, December 2012, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/preventing/talviste-et-al.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/preventing/talviste-et-al.pdf) (both on violations of IHL as one of the main causes of displacement during armed conflict and on displacement as a self-protection strategy).

31 For a discussion of the challenges posed by the conduct of hostilities in urban areas, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure (i.e., compliance with IHL principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attacks and against the effects of attacks) and minimizing collateral damage, see several articles published in the thematic issue on "War in Cities" of the *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 98, No. 901, April 2016. See also InterAction and ICRC, *When War Moves to Cities: Protection of Civilians in Urban Areas*, Outcome Report of an ICRC and InterAction Roundtable, May 2017, available at: [www.interaction.org/article/new-interaction-and-international-committee-red-cross-and-report-examines-challenges](http://www.interaction.org/article/new-interaction-and-international-committee-red-cross-and-report-examines-challenges). For an example of the devastation produced by urban warfare, leading to mass displacement, see Chaloka Beyani, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons on His Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic*, UN Doc. A/HRC/32/35/Add.2, 5 April 2016, particularly p. 6, § 17, available at: [reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/report-special-rapporteur-human-rights-internally-displaced-persons-his](http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/report-special-rapporteur-human-rights-internally-displaced-persons-his).

32 ICRC, "I Saw My City Die": *Voices from the Front Lines of Urban Conflict in Iraq, Syria and Yemen*, Geneva, June 2017.

In Latin American cities affected by criminal violence, some people make the pre-emptive decision to leave because of the general insecurity and the erosion of the quality of life and livelihood opportunities generated by the violence, afraid of becoming the next victims and in search of better access to education, health care and/or employment.<sup>33</sup> Others, however, leave because they or their family members are under direct threat or have been victims of forced recruitment, sexual violence, extortion, murder or disappearance, perpetrated by gang members as a means of control.<sup>34</sup> Their displacement takes place in extreme circumstances and is accompanied by high vulnerability. They have acute protection concerns that often persist post-flight, as armed group members may seek to pursue them across the city or even between cities.<sup>35</sup> Despite restricting their own movements and remaining hidden to avoid detection,<sup>36</sup> they may face renewed threats and be forced to flee again.

IDPs who have moved to cities outside the conflict zone, or in areas not controlled by gangs involved in organized crime, may also face specific challenges related to safety and security. These often emanate from the fact that authorities view them as having links with rebel, “terrorist” or otherwise criminal groups merely due to their ethnicity, religion, political beliefs or place of origin. Tensions with host communities for similar reasons, or because of competition over access to resources, jobs and services, are another possible source of violence against IDPs. For women displaced without their partners, being alone in unfamiliar urban surroundings can increase vulnerability to sexual violence, especially when combined with economic stress and overcrowded living spaces.<sup>37</sup> Additionally,

33 Sebastián Albuja, “Criminal Violence and Displacement in Mexico”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 45, February 2014, p. 29. On urban violence and its humanitarian consequences, see, *inter alia*, P. Apraxine *et al.* (eds), above note 26; Olivier Bangarter, “Territorial Gangs and Their Consequences for Humanitarian Players”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 92, No. 878, 2010, pp. 398–399; E. Lucchi, above note 19, pp. 5–6; Sarnata Reynolds, “It’s a Suicide Act to Leave or Stay”: *Internal Displacement in El Salvador*, Field Report, Refugees International, Washington, DC, 30 July 2015, p. 6.

34 In some cases, gangs order families out of their homes, which are situated in strategic locations, in order to be able to use the buildings as bases for their illegal activities. S. Reynolds, above note 33, p. 4.

35 This is especially the case when the victims are considered “traitors” or “enemies” by the group, for example, because they are accused of being informants, have reported a crime to the police or were previously associated with the group and left it without permission. For a detailed typology of forms and patterns of displacement generated by organized criminal violence in Central America’s Northern Triangle and Mexico, see David James Cantor, “The New Wave: Forced Displacement Caused by Organized Crime in Central America and Mexico”, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1 September 2014, pp. 45–46, available at: [academic.oup.com/rsq/article/33/3/34/2797909?searchresult=1](http://academic.oup.com/rsq/article/33/3/34/2797909?searchresult=1). Internal displacement originating from direct threats or acts of violence by armed groups involved in organized crime is also increasingly observed in some Colombian cities like Medellín and Cali, where these cases have been adding to, or replacing, those linked to the urbanization of the armed conflict. See Agnès De Geoffroy, “Fleeing War and Relocating to the Urban Fringe – Issues and Actors: The Cases of Khartoum and Bogotá”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 91, No. 875, 2009, pp. 519–520; ICRC, *Retos humanitarios 2017. Informe Colombia: Resultados y perspectivas*, Bogotá, March 2017, pp. 14–17.

36 This behaviour is referred to by some as “confinement”: Noah Bullock, “Towards a Response: Addressing Forced Displacement by Violence in El Salvador”, *Humanitarian Exchange*, No. 69, June 2017, p. 14, available at: <https://odihpn.org/magazine/towards-response-addressing-forced-displacement-violence-el-salvador/>.

37 IRC, above note 25, p. 20.

the lack of access to adequate shelter – a recurrent problem for urban IDPs<sup>38</sup> – means that internally displaced individuals and families end up living in precarious conditions in the outskirts of the city, often in poorly serviced and hazard-prone areas.<sup>39</sup> They build makeshift houses on “invaded” public or private land,<sup>40</sup> occupy abandoned houses, unfinished buildings or public buildings such as schools without permission, or rent private accommodation informally, oftentimes at inflated prices and with no security of tenure. This expose them to the risk of forced eviction and a host of other abusive behaviours, and they may be compelled to return to unsafe conditions as a result.<sup>41</sup>

In view of the foregoing risks for their safety and security, IDPs living in cities may fall into a vicious spiral of multiple displacements and increasing vulnerability. For some, internal displacement becomes the first step on an

- 38 For a thorough analysis of the housing needs of urban IDPs and a review of practical approaches that can be adopted to overcome the challenges to adequate housing in urban displacement situations, see IDMC and MIT DRAN, above note 26.
- 39 Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, above note 4, p. 7. For example, in Honduras, a profiling assessment conducted with support from the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) found that the situation of displaced households was more precarious in relation to access to housing than the rest of the population, with more families currently renting their homes with no rental contract or living in improvised houses, and finding themselves in, or near to, at-risk areas. See Inter-Agency Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence, *Characterization of Internal Displacement in Honduras*, November 2015 (Honduras Profile Assessment), pp. 53–55, available at: [www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1050/original\\_Profiling\\_ACNUR\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1050/original_Profiling_ACNUR_ENG.pdf).
- 40 Sebastián Albuja and Marcella Ceballos, “Urban Displacement and Migration in Colombia”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010.
- 41 For example, three profiling assessments carried out in Iraq’s Kurdistan region between December 2015 and June 2016 found significantly higher eviction rates among IDPs compared to the resident population, mainly linked to the inability to pay rent and the lack of written rental contracts. See Profiling Steering Committee for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (with support from JIPS), *Displacement as Challenge and Opportunity. Urban Profile: Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Host Community, Erbil Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, April 2016 (Erbil Urban Profile Assessment), pp. 21–22, available at: [www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1130/original\\_ErbilUrbanProfilingApril2016English.pdf](http://www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1130/original_ErbilUrbanProfilingApril2016English.pdf); *Displacement as Challenge and Opportunity. Urban Profile: Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Host Community, Sulaymaniyah Governorate and Garman Administration, Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, August 2016 (Sulaymaniyah Urban Profile Assessment), p. 20, available at: [www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1245/original\\_KRI-Sulaymaniyah-Urban-Profiling.pdf](http://www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1245/original_KRI-Sulaymaniyah-Urban-Profiling.pdf); *Displacement as Challenge and Opportunity. Urban Profile: Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Host Community, Duhok Governorate, Kurdistan Region of Iraq*, August 2016 (Duhok Urban Profile Assessment), p. 16, available at: [www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1243/original\\_KRI-Duhok-Urban-Profiling.pdf](http://www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1243/original_KRI-Duhok-Urban-Profiling.pdf). Another profiling assessment conducted in Mogadishu raised the lack of secure land and housing tenure for IDPs as a critical issue. Data showed a trend of moving from inner-city areas to settlements in the outskirts of the city as a result of evictions, which not only affected IDPs’ livelihood opportunities but was also an impediment to humanitarian and longer-term development interventions in the districts most affected by evictions. See Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Protection Cluster’s Profiling Working Group (with support from JIPS), *Internal Displacement Profiling in Mogadishu*, report, April 2016, available at: [www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1120/original\\_Mogadishu\\_Profiling\\_Report\\_2016.pdf](http://www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1120/original_Mogadishu_Profiling_Report_2016.pdf). On tenure insecurity and the risk of forced eviction affecting urban IDPs, see IDMC and MIT DRAN, above note 26, and NRC, *Security of Tenure in Urban Areas: Guidance Note for Humanitarian Practitioners*, IIED, London, 2017.

arduous journey as they end up crossing borders to seek safety, protection and durable solutions abroad, after failing to find them in their own country.<sup>42</sup>

### A limited access to basic services

IDPs living in urban areas and host communities often encounter similar problems in accessing basic services such as clean water and sanitation, electricity, housing, primary health care and education. Armed conflict in cities can cause the complex fabric of interconnected urban services to collapse, particularly when hostilities are protracted and characterized by siege warfare and the use of explosive weapons, notably those with a wide impact area, in densely populated areas. This has serious humanitarian consequences for the entire city's population, displaced people and residents alike.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, when IDPs settle in cities outside warzones, they tend to live next to the urban poor, in overcrowded and low-income suburbs, informal settlements and shanty towns, where service provision is typically weak. Their arrival often adds pressure on already limited services.<sup>44</sup> In contexts of urban violence, gang activities contribute to disrupting people's access to the (few) services that may exist in the neighbourhood, by imposing restrictions of movement on the population based on "invisible borders" or by causing the displacement of service provider staff (e.g. teachers, medical doctors, engineers).<sup>45</sup>

However, IDPs in cities often face specific obstacles preventing their access to public services that are available to their non-displaced neighbours. The most

42 For instance, a study conducted among Syrian refugees in Jordan revealed a pattern of multiple internal displacements owing to the effects of the armed conflict, with families moving inside Syria from two to twenty-five times before fleeing to Jordan: Handicap International, *Qasef: Escaping the Bombing. The Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas and Forced Displacement: Perspectives from Syrian Refugees*, September 2016, in particular pp. 23–24, available at: [www.hi-us.org/new\\_report\\_violent\\_attacks\\_forcing\\_millions\\_of\\_syrians\\_to\\_flee](http://www.hi-us.org/new_report_violent_attacks_forcing_millions_of_syrians_to_flee). C. Beyani, above note 31, p. 19, § 81, describes internal displacement in Syria as "a staging-post to a wider refugee crisis of immense proportions", as the lack of effective internal protection and durable solutions leads IDPs to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and Europe. Another study on migrants returned from the United States and Mexico to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras found that half of the interviewees had been displaced internally before deciding to leave their home country in search of protection: Center for Migration Studies and Cristosal, *Point of No Return: The Fear and Criminalization of Central American Refugees*, New York and San Salvador, June 2017, p. 14, available at: [cmsny.org/publications/cms-cristosal-report](http://cmsny.org/publications/cms-cristosal-report). Similarly, a report about female asylum-seekers coming from Central America to the United States concluded that more than two thirds of the interviewees had previously tried to find safety by fleeing elsewhere in their own country: UNHCR, *Women on the Run*, 2015, pp. 4, 41, available at: [www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/5630f24c6/women-run.html](http://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/5630f24c6/women-run.html). See also Giovanni Bassu, "Strengthening State and Regional Responses to Central America's Forced Displacement Crisis", *Humanitarian Exchange*, No. 69, June 2017, p. 21, available at: <https://odihpn.org/magazine/strengthening-state-regional-responses-central-americas-forced-displacement-crisis/>. In general, on the possible interrelation between internal displacement and cross-border movements, see IDMC, above note 9, pp. 49–67.

43 ICRC, *Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas: Humanitarian, Legal, Technical and Military Aspects*, Expert Meeting Report, Geneva, June 2015, available at: [www.icrc.org/en/document/explosive-weapons-populated-areas-humanitarian-legal-technical-and-military-aspects](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/explosive-weapons-populated-areas-humanitarian-legal-technical-and-military-aspects). See also Simon Bagshaw, "Driving Displacement: Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas", *Forced Migration Review*, No. 41, December 2012, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/preventing/bagshaw.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/preventing/bagshaw.pdf).

44 On this aspect, see more in the section below on the impact of urban internal displacement on host communities.

45 O. Bangarter, above note 33, pp. 398–399.

common are lack of information and lack of documentation. IDPs find themselves outside of their familiar environment and deprived of their community support networks. Newcomers with no relatives or friends in the city often know little of their new location and lack information regarding where to seek help or how to access housing or other social benefits for which they might qualify.<sup>46</sup> This is particularly true for people displaced from rural areas, who are not accustomed to life in cities and its bureaucratic hurdles and may have limited awareness of their rights. In some cases, they may be illiterate or may not speak the official language (for instance, if they belong to indigenous communities), so they may not understand the information available. Furthermore, IDPs tend to have difficulties obtaining official documents or replacing those lost during flight or those to which they no longer have access (e.g. passports, identity cards, birth and marriage certificates, school records), either because they are not aware of the procedure or because no such procedure exists.<sup>47</sup> Some of the procedures require IDPs to travel back to their places of origin to obtain new documentation. Such a requirement is oblivious to the fact that it is not safe for IDPs to go back to their places of origin and they may put themselves in danger by doing so.<sup>48</sup> Lack of documentation sometimes means that parents cannot enrol their children in school, and older and sick people cannot receive medical treatment.<sup>49</sup> Problems related to documentation can be more acute for IDPs originating from relatively remote rural areas. Some of them may simply not have had, or not have sought

46 See, for instance, M. Harroff-Tavel, above note 15, pp. 337–338.

47 See, for example, C. Beyani, above note 31, p. 9, §§ 32–34, highlighting the significant implications of the loss of their personal documents, in particular identification documents, for IDPs' access to services, as well as for their security, assistance and employment, and the problems faced by IDPs seeking to replace documents. It is worth noting that the Guiding Principles require authorities, based on every individual's right to recognition of legal personality, to facilitate the issuance of new documents or the replacement of documents lost in the course of displacement, in order for IDPs to be able to exercise their rights (Principle 20, § 2). In so doing, the Guiding Principles go beyond what is expressly provided under IHL (which only addresses certain aspects of the question of documentation, in particular with regard to children in occupied territories, and with respect to interned civilians in situations of international armed conflict) and human rights law (as only a few human rights treaties contain explicit provisions on the issue of identity documents). See Walter Kälin, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: Annotations*, revised ed., American Society of International Law and Brookings Institution, Studies in Transnational Legal Policy No. 38, Washington, DC, 2008, pp. 92–94.

48 See, for example, “End of Mission Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Mr. Chaloka Beyani, on His Visit to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan – 11 to 20 October 2016”, 20 October 2016, available at: [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20712&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20712&LangID=E).

49 The lack of official documents, particularly identity documents and birth certificates, can also lead to protection concerns such as the risk of being arbitrarily arrested and of becoming stateless. On the impact of the lack of documentations on IDPs' access to services, see W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, pp. 36–37. Particularly on contexts of urban violence, see Mesa de Sociedad Civil Contra el Desplazamiento Forzado por Violencia Generalizada y Crimen Organizado en El Salvador, *Informe sobre situación de desplazamiento forzado por violencia generalizada en El Salvador*, January 2016, p. 19; S. Reynolds, above note 33, p. 10. Reynolds reports that of all cases of IDPs documented or supported by civil society organizations in El Salvador between early 2014 and mid-2015, not one child was in school; she expressly mentions the lack of a school certificate from the child's previous school as a barrier.

to obtain, any identification or other official documents previously, but find themselves in need of such documents in order to be able to settle in the city.

Discrimination and security concerns can also play a role in limiting access to services for IDPs in cities.<sup>50</sup> For instance, internally displaced children in contexts of armed conflict may be excluded from education not only because schools are already overcrowded and there are not enough classrooms or teachers, but also based on ethnic or other differences. If they belong to a different ethnic group than the host population, they may also find it hard to access education which is culturally appropriate and in their own language.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in contexts of urban violence, internally displaced children and adolescents who are compelled to hide because of gang threats directed against them or their families are often unable to go to school and have to interrupt their education.<sup>52</sup>

### Lack of livelihood and employment opportunities

IDPs are often poorer than the rest of the urban population.<sup>53</sup> This is due partly to the fact that they arrive in their new location already with few or no possessions, and partly to their difficulty in accessing livelihoods and employment, which results in their becoming more destitute over time.<sup>54</sup> This is frequently the case for rural-to-urban IDPs, but those displaced from other urban areas can also be affected.

Internal displacement often entails the loss of productive assets and patrimony, resulting in a major economic shock from which people may not recover. Additionally, for people displaced from rural to urban areas, this can

50 C. Beyani, above note 3, p. 16, § 47; A. C. Carrillo, above note 4, p. 538; W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, p. 48 (on discriminatory practices of local authorities).

51 More broadly on the barriers faced by IDPs in accessing education, see Elizabeth Ferris and Rebecca Winthrop, *Education and Displacement: Assessing Conditions for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Affected by Conflict*, paper commissioned for the Education for All (EFA) *Global Monitoring Report 2011: The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education*, 2010, available at: [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001907/190715e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001907/190715e.pdf); Sarah Dryden-Peterson, "Conflict, Education and Displacement", *Conflict & Education*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 2011, available at: [wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/sdryden-peterson\\_conflict\\_education\\_and\\_displacement.pdf](http://wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/sdryden-peterson_conflict_education_and_displacement.pdf); W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, p. 34.

52 S. Reynolds, above note 33, p. 8.

53 For example, in Colombia, according to a 2014 survey by the Administrative Department of National Statistics, 63.8% of IDPs, the large majority of whom lived in cities, were under the poverty line, while 33% of them lived in extreme poverty; those shares amounted to, respectively, 25% and 7.4% of the general population. See: [www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/EGED/Presentacion\\_EDGE\\_2013\\_14.pdf](http://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/EGED/Presentacion_EDGE_2013_14.pdf). See also ICRC and World Food Programme (WFP), *A Review of the Displaced Population in Eight Cities of Colombia: Local Institutional Response, Living Conditions and Recommendations for Their Assistance: Summary of Results, General Reflections and Recommendations*, Bogotá, November 2007, pp. 26–27. According to more recent figures, the percentage of IDPs in extreme poverty in Colombia is around 2.5 times higher than that of the general population: see W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, p. 35.

54 See, among others, Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, above note 4, p. 7; A. Davies and K. Jacobsen, above note 29, pp. 13–14; Karen Jacobsen, "Profiling Urban IDPs: How IDPs Differ from Their Non-IDP Neighbours in Three Cities", in Khalid Koser and Susan Martin (eds), *The Migration-Displacement Nexus: Patterns, Processes, and Policies*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2011, p. 92; Ana María Ibañez, *El desplazamiento forzoso en Colombia: Un camino sin retorno a la pobreza*, Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Economía, Bogotá, 2008.

be compounded by the fact that the human capital acquired prior to displacement is not easily transferrable for productive use into urban contexts. Urban displacement particularly affects them: they lose access to their land and livestock, which would often be their main source of food and income back home, and their farming skills are not applicable to secure other livelihood options in cities.<sup>55</sup> Besides lacking adapted skills, they often have a lower level of formal education than the urban resident population, are less familiar with the recruitment and job search system, and have no social ties.<sup>56</sup> These factors, sometimes combined with discriminatory hiring practices,<sup>57</sup> make it hard for them to find employment.<sup>58</sup> Even when IDPs possess skills that are relevant to secure employment or start a small business in their new urban location (e.g. carpentry, tailoring, cooking, selling/trading), they often lack official documents or accreditation, do not have sufficient means to acquire the necessary equipment and have only limited access to formal or informal credit.<sup>59</sup>

People who are displaced within the same city or between cities may be less affected insofar as they are more likely to keep their jobs or to access similar employment,<sup>60</sup> although this does not necessarily mean that they will not face economic problems.<sup>61</sup> Some may find it impossible to continue the same or similar employment due to security concerns related, for instance, to the risks of travelling regularly through checkpoints and across parts of a city at war, or the need to live in hiding to escape from direct death threats.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, some people who are displaced between urban areas multiple times (for example,

55 Similar challenges are faced, for example, by IDPs in Colombia, see A. C. Carrillo, above note 4, p. 538. To mention just another example, in Nigeria and Cameroon, small farmers and fishermen internally displaced by the conflict in the Lake Chad region struggle to find alternative means to make a living in urban areas.

56 See Carolien Jacobs and Antea Paviotti, *The Right to Work in a Context of Urban Displacement*, Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Society (VVI), University of Leiden and Groupe Jérémie, Policy Brief No. 2, 2017. Exploring some of the strategies used by urban IDPs in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, to find a job, the authors conclude that the lack of a social network is the prime barrier limiting IDPs' access to work.

57 A. De Geoffroy, above note 35, p. 517. Principle 22 of the Guiding Principles stipulates that IDPs shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of their "right to seek freely opportunities for employment and to participate in economic activities".

58 Women often find employment easier as they have abilities that are transferable to an urban environment, e.g. domestic work. However, this may imply a change of social roles within the family, especially for IDPs from rural areas, where men are traditionally the breadwinners. This in turn leads to tensions between partners, domestic violence and family breakdown. See A. C. Carrillo, above note 4, pp. 541–542, on the experience of IDP women in urban Colombia; and IRC, above note 25, pp. 15–16, mentioning examples of IDPs in Abidjan and Kampala, as well as Colombia.

59 W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, pp. 35, 46–47.

60 This is often an important consideration that influences the choice of IDPs to relocate within the same city or to another city. People with an urban profile who become internally displaced tend to prefer to settle in urban areas or to remain in large cities that they know, in order to maintain their family ties, their social networks and, when possible, their job. Chaloka Beyani, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons on His Mission to Honduras*, UN Doc. A/HRC/32/35/Add.4, 5 April 2016, p. 8, § 22, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1606868.pdf>.

61 For instance, if they are not staying with host families and need to pay rent in the new location, these IDPs may still see their economic situation worsen and may face difficulties in making ends meet.

62 See above note 36.

because of repeated threats from gangs) may find it increasingly difficult to restart their small business each time owing to the depletion of their resources.

As a result, unemployment can be significantly higher among economically active IDPs than urban residents.<sup>63</sup> Those who have a job tend to work in the informal sector, for example as daily workers, in less protected and more exploitative conditions.<sup>64</sup> They often perform casual activities with no guarantee of regular income. Because of the lack of adequate economic opportunities, in order to cover their most basic needs, IDPs have to rely on solidarity and the generous support of relatives and friends (if they are present and as long as they can help). They become dependent on humanitarian aid to the extent that this is provided. The inability to improve livelihoods over time may push some IDPs to adopt harmful coping strategies, such as child labour, prostitution, early marriage or criminality, in order to have sufficient income to cover the costs of food, accommodation and/or health care.<sup>65</sup> Particularly in contexts of urban violence, because of poverty, social exclusion and lack of opportunities, young IDPs become vulnerable to the influence of crime and are at risk of being lured into joining a gang, thereby contributing to a vicious cycle of violence and displacement.<sup>66</sup>

## Need for psychosocial support

Being forced to leave behind one's home, relationships, assets and work is a stressful experience. It is even more so when people have to flee unexpectedly, prompted by

63 A. Kirbyshire *et al.*, above note 11, pp. 15–16. The findings of a profiling assessment in Erbil Governorate in Iraq showed that IDP households had relatively lower employment rates and a higher number of people searching for jobs, compared to their non-displaced neighbours: see Erbil Urban Profile Assessment, above note 41, pp. 30–31. In Honduras, the unemployment rate among the displaced economically active population has been found to be greater than that of the resident population: see Honduras Profile Assessment, above note 39, pp. 58–60.

64 See M. Aysa Lastra, above note 4, for a comparative analysis of the labour adaptation of IDPs into formal and informal labour markets in Colombia. The analysis shows that IDPs are more likely than the rest of the population to be unemployed or, when they have a job, to be employed in the informal sector of the economy, and that their probability of employment in formal sectors decreases over time. On the case of Colombia, see also A. M. Ibañez, above note 54, p. 151; Rubén Darío Guevara Corral and Diego Andrés Guevara Flécher, “The Journey Towards Social Exclusion in Colombia”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/corral-fletcher.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/corral-fletcher.pdf); A. C. Carrillo, above note 4, p. 538. In Honduras, it has been found that IDPs hold more unstable and informal jobs than the resident population, and experience significant economic insecurity as a result. See Honduras Profile Assessment, above note 39, pp. 60–61.

65 A community-based protection workshop carried out by the ICRC with a group of internally displaced women in Maroua town, in the conflict-affected Far North region of Cameroon, in April 2017, showed that the women – many of them displaced with children and without their partners, and living in rented accommodation – had adopted desperate measures in order to survive, including prostitution and forced marriage. Workshop results on file with the author. IRC, above note 25, pp. 15, 21, identifies economic strain as a driver of violence and sexual exploitation against IDP women in urban areas, specifically mentioning a number of studies where poverty has emerged as factor leading to sex work/transactional sex (Colombia, Nairobi, Abidjan) and early/forced marriage (Afghanistan, Abidjan). On the risk of resorting to harmful coping mechanisms, see also W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, p. 36.

66 A. De Geoffroy, above note 35, p. 518, reports that internally displaced youths in Bogotá are the main “recruits for the local underworld”.



violent events, and the trauma of displacement compounds the suffering caused by the death or disappearance of a family member, or by other abuses that people endured or witnessed prior to flight.<sup>67</sup> If they continue to face insecurity and violence in their displacement location – for example, because they remain in the conflict zone, exposed to the effects of military operations, or due to direct threats against them – this can further undermine their mental well-being. The circumstances of those individuals and families forcibly displaced by gangs in contexts of urban violence, who remain concealed in constant fear for their personal safety, are of particular concern.

For those who are newly displaced, the fact of being in an unfamiliar environment, unable to satisfy their basic needs in a predictable way and facing an uncertain future, can be a source of constant worry. In protracted internal displacement situations, the lack of prospects for a durable solution perpetuates the uncertainty and can cause feelings of frustration.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, having to rely on external help to survive undermines people's self-esteem and sense of dignity, especially if they used to be economically independent before displacement. In turn, the psychological effects of displacement can hamper people's ability to adapt to the new situation and regain self-sufficiency.<sup>69</sup> This particularly affects IDPs with rural origins, for whom displacement to cities often implies abandoning their way of life, customs and culture – even more so if they are from indigenous communities.<sup>70</sup> The lack of strong social support networks is often part of the problem.<sup>71</sup> Stigma and discrimination can make things worse, as IDPs may find themselves marginalized and neglected in their efforts to rebuild their lives. This often happens because they belong to an ethnic or religious minority,<sup>72</sup> or because host communities and authorities view them as a burden

67 *Ibid.*, p. 517; S. Reynolds, above note 33, p. 10. On the psychological distress faced by urban IDPs due to conflict-related experiences of past violence, as well as the severe hardship of their present situation, see Paulina Wyrzykowski and Benard Okot Kasozi, *Violence, Exile and Transitional Justice: Perspectives of Urban IDPs in Kampala*, Refugee Law Project Briefing Note No. 3, August 2009, available at: [reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-violence-exile-and-transitional-justice-perspectives-urban-idps-kampala](http://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-violence-exile-and-transitional-justice-perspectives-urban-idps-kampala).

68 José Ramón Cossío Díaz, "Public Policy to Address Displacement in Mexico", *Forced Migration Review*, No. 48, November 2014, p. 79, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/faith/cossio.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/faith/cossio.pdf).

69 A. Kirbyshire *et al.*, above note 11, p. 13; W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, p. 48; World Bank Group, *Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and their Hosts*, 2017, pp. 61–62; IDMC and MIT DRAN, above note 26, p. 10.

70 Carlos Emilio Ibarra Montero, "De la inseguridad a la incertidumbre: El desplazamiento forzado interno en el noroeste de México", *Revista Trabajo Social*, No. 16, 2014.

71 On the importance of social support systems for the mental health, livelihoods and overall well-being of IDPs, and the weakness of these systems in urban internal displacement situations, see Namrita Singh and Courtland Robinson, "Support Systems among Urban IDPs in Georgia", *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/singh-robinson.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/singh-robinson.pdf).

72 On discrimination against IDPs by host communities, see, for example, IRC, above note 25, p. 18 (mentioning in particular the case of IDPs in Nairobi, facing prejudice and discrimination as a result of ethnic tensions following election violence in Kenya).

or a potential security threat.<sup>73</sup> In contexts of urban violence, due to the generalized climate of fear, IDPs may face distrust from the host community, particularly when they are from other gang-controlled neighbourhoods.<sup>74</sup>

## **The impact of urban internal displacement on host communities**

The impact of internal displacement normally extends well beyond the people who are directly affected by it. Other parts of the population, notably the families hosting IDPs and the wider communities within which they live, are also affected. This speaks to the importance of adopting a holistic approach in responding to internal displacement, informed by a comprehensive analysis of the population needs that includes host populations, as opposed to considering the needs of IDPs in isolation.<sup>75</sup> It is also a matter of recognizing the important part that the solidarity of host communities often plays in providing a critical life-support system for IDPs, notably in situations of urban displacement, where the government's response may be delayed or insufficient and humanitarian actors may tend to focus on assisting those displaced in camps or collective shelters.

As they settle within the host community in disadvantaged suburbs and slum neighbourhoods,<sup>76</sup> spreading the city's poverty belt, IDPs end up competing with the urban local population for limited resources and often already weak and overburdened services. This generates tensions between IDPs and their hosts, which can be exacerbated if humanitarian assistance and social programmes only benefit IDPs or are perceived as prioritizing their needs over those of residents.

73 For example, IDPs settling in Khartoum or Bogotá have been regarded as exporting the rebellion or facilitating the infiltration of armed groups and the proliferation of gangs in the capital: see A. De Geoffroy, above note 35, pp. 518–519. A similar pattern is observed in the context of the armed conflicts in Nigeria and Iraq, where IDPs are often viewed as having ties with the same armed groups of whom they are victims. This increases the risk of segregation and discriminatory measures against IDPs.

74 Information provided by civil society organizations during the author's mission to Honduras in March 2016. On file with the author.

75 On the need for comprehensive responses that also address the impact of urban displacement on host communities, see below, in the section on local integration of IDPs.

76 According to UN-Habitat, around 33% of the urban population in the developing world in 2012, or about 863 million people, lived in slums. See UN-Habitat, *State of the World's Cities Report 2012/2013: Prosperity of Cities*, Nairobi, 2012, available at: [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/745habitat.pdf](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/745habitat.pdf).

Such tensions can translate into protection problems for IDPs and undermine their social integration.<sup>77</sup>

Although competition for resources and services may also characterize the relationship between IDPs and host communities in rural areas, the strong reliance on public services that is typical of urban dwellers makes this feature more prevalent in situations of urban internal displacement. The arrival of large numbers of IDPs in “dysfunctional” cities that are already struggling to cope with the impacts of protracted armed conflict or rapid growth and are suffering from inadequate housing, insufficient and/or poorly maintained basic services, weak institutions and insecurity “adds an extra layer of stress to an already fragile system”, stretching it to breaking point.<sup>78</sup> The more urban services and infrastructure (e.g. water supply, electricity, waste management, hospitals and schools) have been deteriorated by the direct and/or indirect impacts of the ongoing violence, the higher the pressure exerted by the influx of IDPs is, and the more likely tensions are to arise.<sup>79</sup> The length of displacement also plays a part – the generosity of host families, who are often at the forefront of the response, can fade over time, as resources tend to get

77 For example, a profiling assessment conducted in the urban areas of Sulaymaniyah Governorate of Iraq’s Kurdistan region in June 2016 showed that the host community had developed negative feelings toward IDPs, whose arrival was associated with the deterioration of public services and increased competition for housing and employment, as well as much-feared demographic change. There was also a prevalent perception of unfairness whereby IDPs were regarded as more privileged than residents. This led the host community to evoke drastic measures such as imposing restrictions on the movement and rights of IDPs. See Sulaymaniyah Urban Profile Assessment, above note 41, pp. 19–28. Another profiling assessment conducted in December 2015 in Erbil Governorate found a similar situation: see Erbil Urban Profile Assessment, above note 41, pp. 26–29. See also IRC, above note 25, p. 19, referring to the situation in Kabul, where the influx of IDPs led to conflicts over land and water resources. A study conducted in 2011 in two urban neighbourhoods of Bogotá also showed the existence of tensions between IDPs and host communities due to perceptions that IDPs received preferential treatment in a context of pervasive urban poverty: see Clara Inés Atehortúa Arredondo, Jorge Salcedo and Roberto Carlos Vidal Lopez, *The Effects of Internal Displacement on Host Communities: A Case Study of Suba and Ciudad Bolívar Localities in Bogotá*, Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement and ICRC, Colombia, 2011.

78 A. Kirbyshire *et al.*, above note 11, p. 10. See also, for a concrete example, Chaloka Beyani, *Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons: Situation of Internally Displaced Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic*, UN Doc. A/67/931, 15 July 2013, p. 7, §15, highlighting that the influx of IDPs into urban centres in Syria “has overstretched life-sustaining urban services to the point of potential or actual collapse, raising risks for the entire local population”.

79 On the indirect impact of a large influx of people displaced by conflict on essential urban services and the potential for both social tensions and mounting grievances toward the local or national authorities responsible for providing those services, see ICRC, above note 2, pp. 30–31. See also Roger Zetter and George Deikun, “Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010, p. 4, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/zetter-deikun.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/zetter-deikun.pdf); in explaining the deterioration of already precarious existing conditions in urban areas receiving large population influxes, the authors note that displacement “places extra stress on urban services and resources with forced migrants and existing urban dwellers sharing densely populated and poorly serviced environments”. Specifically on Colombia, see C. I. A. Arredondo, J. Salcedo and A. Lopez, above note 77.

more strained and the burden of hosting IDPs becomes heavier.<sup>80</sup> Fatigue and resentment may develop among the local population upon the realization that IDPs are not temporary and will not return home in the near future, particularly if their presence is believed to be the cause of worsening living conditions and insecurity.<sup>81</sup>

Displacement into an urban area can create a strong pressure on the rental market, particularly where IDPs tend to become tenants as opposed to being hosted by others. This translates into higher rent for all households living in neighbourhoods where the influx of IDPs is larger.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, the arrival of IDPs from rural areas increases the offer of unqualified workforce in the urban labour market, particularly in the informal sector, which may cause an increase in unemployment in those specific labour niches and a stagnation or, in some cases, a drop in wages. This may affect the resident poor, who compete with IDPs for fewer and/or lower-paying manual jobs.<sup>83</sup> In addition to contributing to rapid urban expansion, displacement can also change existing demographic balances, notably when newcomers are of different ethnic origin than the majority of the host community.<sup>84</sup> This can cause further tensions, as residents may feel

80 Host families are often poor themselves and are also affected by the surrounding armed conflict/violence. As such, they may see their economic conditions further worsen as a result of supporting IDPs, particularly as they rarely receive assistance themselves: see W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, p. 38. In some cases, newly displaced people are hosted by or among IDPs who had arrived previously and are already struggling economically: in this respect, see Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, above note 4, p. 12. Thus, tensions may arise with time if hosted IDPs are unable to contribute to housing and food costs: see IDMC and MIT DRAN, above note 26, p. 17. On identifying the need to share resources and the length of stay as factors shaping the hosting experience and as a possible source of tension, see also Cynthia Caron, “Hosting the Displaced – and Being Hosted”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 55, June 2017, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/shelter/caron.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/shelter/caron.pdf). On hosting arrangements for urban IDPs in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, see Carolien Jacobs and Antea Paviotti, *The Right to Decent Housing in a Context of Urban Displacement and Fragility*, VVI, University of Leiden and Groupe Jérémie, Policy Brief No. 3, 2017.

81 For example, the results of three profiling assessments conducted in Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, showed that the increase in the urban population caused by the influx of IDPs across the three governorates had led to increasing competition over resources and distrust and tensions between host communities and the displaced populations: see JIPS, *At a Glance: The Use of Profiling in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah*, Geneva, 2016, p. 16, available at: [www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1320/original\\_JIPS-Iraq-KRI-AtaGlance-web.pdf](http://www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/1320/original_JIPS-Iraq-KRI-AtaGlance-web.pdf). For reference to the three reports, see above note 41. According to the ICRC, the degree of acceptance of IDPs by host communities is influenced by the quality of services prior to, immediately after and long after the influx of IDPs into the city: see ICRC, above note 2, p. 31. On the relationship between IDPs and host communities, see C. Beyani, above note 3, pp. 13–14, §§ 37–40.

82 For example, see the findings of the profiling assessments conducted in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil governorates in Iraq: Sulaymaniyah Urban Profile Assessment, above note 41, p. 25; Erbil Urban Profile Assessment, above note 41, pp. 14–20. While inflationary effects created by IDPs’ presence have a negative impact on urban low-income residents, a portion of the host community financially benefits from this situation by gaining an income from renting property. Some members of the host community may in fact move out of their apartments in order to rent it for above market value to IDPs. See IDMC and MIT DRAN, above note 26, p. 17.

83 A. M. Ibañez, above note 54.

84 J. Crisp, T. Morris and H. Refstie, above note 4, p. 28.

threatened by IDPs bringing a different language, religion or culture into their communities.<sup>85</sup> The perception that IDPs cause insecurity and a raise in criminality can aggravate hostility toward them.<sup>86</sup>

## Challenges in responding to urban internal displacement

This section examines three challenges faced by humanitarian actors as they strive to provide effective responses to IDPs in cities: identifying and engaging with IDPs dispersed in urban areas; addressing their protection needs during flight and in the early phase of displacement; and helping IDPs to establish a life in the new location through comprehensive strategies that factor in host communities, build upon local partnerships and maximize coordination and complementarity with development actors. These challenges emanate from the need to tailor humanitarian approaches and interventions to urban contexts as well as to the specific characteristics of the internally displaced populations.

### Reaching out to the invisible

Urban internal displacement can be difficult to identify and monitor as it tends to be an “invisible” phenomenon. IDPs are, in many cases, widely scattered across urban areas, rather than clustered in camps. They are merged within host communities, as opposed to being physically separated from the resident population. As a result, they are often “lost in the urban multitude and dissolved into the surrounding poverty”.<sup>87</sup> This is compounded by the fact that some IDPs keep a low profile due to concerns for their personal safety. Either because they view the authorities (who may have contributed to their displacement) as a threat or because they are pursued by armed actors, they avoid registration, conceal their situation and sometimes are even obliged to hide in secrecy.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, particularly in contexts of urban violence, internal displacement tends to occur in a gradual and

85 For example, A. De Geoffroy, above note 35, p. 518, calls Khartoum a “besieged city” to illustrate the feelings of its residents vis-à-vis the tens of thousands of IDPs whose arrival transformed the ethnic composition of the capital.

86 A. Kirbyshire *et al.*, above note 11, p. 16. For example, a profiling assessment in Erbil identified that residents associated the arrival of IDPs in their neighbourhoods with a perceived increase in insecurity and tension: see Erbil Urban Profile Assessment, above note 41, p. 26. In Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, research found that the influx of IDPs into the city has impacted the residents’ perception of security, with IDPs being often the first ones to be suspected of theft and banditry: see Carolien Jacobs and Antea Paviotti, *Social Integration of Internally Displaced People in Urban Settings*, VVI, University of Leiden and Groupe Jérémie, Policy Brief No. 4, 2017, p. 6.

87 A. De Geoffroy, above note 35, p. 510.

88 A. Davies and K. Jacobsen, above note 29, p. 13; N. Bullock, above note 36, p. 11. On the “invisibility” of internal displacement in the Northern Triangle of Central America, and the related need to improve identification of IDPs and their protection needs, particularly in Honduras, see also, more recently, Suzanna Nelson-Pollard, “Criminal Violence in Honduras as a Driver of Displacement”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 56, October 2017, pp. 15–16, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/latinamerica-caribbean/nelsonpollard.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/latinamerica-caribbean/nelsonpollard.pdf).

less obvious fashion.<sup>89</sup> The lack of official recognition of the phenomenon may further contribute to its low visibility.<sup>90</sup> Intra-urban displacement can go even more unnoticed as it is frequently perceived as voluntary movement. The shorter the physical distance between people's place of habitual residence and their displacement location, the more it can be misreported as ordinary movement from one place to another within the same city, except when it occurs on a large scale.<sup>91</sup>

One of the main challenges for humanitarian actors, therefore, is to be able to identify and reach IDPs for the purpose of assessing their needs, in comparison to those of the host populations, and engaging with them to ensure their participation

- 89 In the Northern Triangle of Central America, *gota-a-gota* (person-by-person) displacements tend to be more common than mass displacements: see David James Cantor and Malte Plewa, "Forced Displacement and Violent Crime: A Humanitarian Crisis in Central America?", *Humanitarian Exchange*, No. 69, 2017, p. 14, available at: <https://odihpn.org/magazine/forced-displacement-violent-crime/>. See also the findings of the profiling exercise conducted in Honduras with support from JIPS, in Honduras Profile Assessment, above note 39, p. 22. In Mexico, according to, J. R. Cossio Diaz, above note 68, p. 80, internal displacement is a "slow, silent and incremental" phenomenon. According to the IDMC, there is much less data on people who flee organized criminal violence than on those internally displaced by armed conflict, which means that there are probably many more people affected globally by this phenomenon than the current figures reflect: IDMC, above note 9, p. 21.
- 90 In Colombia, people internally displaced by the criminal groups known as *bandas criminales emergentes* – which have emerged since 2005, following the demobilization of paramilitary forces – were initially not recognized as falling within the scope of Law 1448 (the Victim Law). It was only through a ruling of the Constitutional Court that they started to be considered as entitled to compensation and assistance from the government under the law. See Constitutional Court, Sentencia C-280/13: Medidas de Atención, Asistencia y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas del Conflicto Armado Interno, 15 May 2013, available at: [www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/relatoria/2013/C-280-13.htm](http://www.corteconstitucional.gov.co/relatoria/2013/C-280-13.htm). In Central America, where internal displacement related to organized criminal violence is thought to be on the rise, only the Honduran government has officially acknowledged the phenomenon. Because of the lack of recognition in other countries in the region, there is no official register of IDPs, little or no accurate census data, and no comprehensive institutional response by the authorities. See Mesa de Sociedad Civil Contra el Desplazamiento Forzado, above note 49, p. 17.
- 91 In Colombia, for example, intra-urban displacement was not considered as giving entitlement to being registered as a victim within the framework of the Victim Law. People who were forced to move within the same city by armed actors were granted assistance by the government only if they could report having been directly affected by other violent acts (e.g. sexual violence, homicide or disappearance of a close family member). Although the Constitutional Court later recognized the obligation of the State to assist people affected by intra-urban displacement, there remain cases where legal recognition is not accorded and others where people are simply too afraid of taking their plight to court and remain unattended. Luz Amparo Sánchez Medina, "Displacement within the City: Colombia", *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010. For a study on intra-urban displacement in Colombia, see Gabriel Rojas Andrade, Marcos Fabián Oyaga Moncada, Ingrid Paola Hurtado Sánchez and Juan Sebastián Silva, *Desplazamiento forzado intraurbano y soluciones duraderas: Una aproximación desde los casos de Buenaventura, Tumaco y Soacha*, Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES), Bogotá, 2012; Gabriel Rojas Andrade, Marcos Fabián Oyaga Moncada, Ingrid Paola Hurtado Sánchez and Ida Hennestad, *Desplazamiento forzado intraurbano y soluciones duraderas*, Vol. 2: Bogotá, Cúcuta y Quibdó, CODHES, Bogotá, 2014. Intra-urban displacement has been found to be a recurrent pattern in Honduras, where over 80% of IDPs in the Central District (Tegucigalpa) and San Pedro (which together host the majority of the displaced population in the country) have moved within the same town: see Honduras Profile Assessment, above note 39, pp. 40–44.

in the design and implementation of responses.<sup>92</sup> Part of the challenge remains ensuring that the safety of the IDPs, as well as the security of the staff who work with them, is not undermined throughout the process. This is especially the case in urban contexts, where IDPs face individual threats to their security and count on dispersion into host communities and anonymity as a self-protection strategy. It requires mainstreaming protection considerations in any mechanism that is established to engage with IDPs and host communities and taking all possible precautions to avoid putting them in danger (“do no harm”).<sup>93</sup>

Being able to count on reliable local partners as entry points to identifying and engaging with IDPs is often crucial.<sup>94</sup> The ICRC, for example, works in partnership with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), which have their roots and members in the affected communities and possess a keen understanding of local dynamics. This has allowed the ICRC, in places like Maiduguri, Nigeria, to monitor the arrival of newcomers into urban communities outside of camps, at the earlier stages of the displacement crisis, with a view to reaching them with emergency humanitarian assistance through the network of Red Cross volunteers. In contexts of urban violence in Latin America, the ICRC jointly with National Societies implements community-based projects aimed at mitigating some of the humanitarian consequences of the violence on the population in highly affected neighbourhoods.<sup>95</sup> The potential of these projects in terms of engaging with IDPs who are hosted in the community and who have specific protection concerns is being explored in some of those

92 E. Ferris, above note 9, p. 26. On the importance of effective consultation and meaningful participation of IDPs in all aspects of programmes and decision-making processes that affect them, see Roberta Cohen, *Listening to the Voices of the Displaced: Lessons Learned*, Brookings–Bern Project on Internal Displacement, September 2008; Brookings–Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Moving Beyond Rhetoric: Consultation and Participation with Populations Displaced by Conflict or Natural Disasters*, October 2008, available at: [www.brookings.edu/research/moving-beyond-rhetoric-consultation-and-participation-with-populations-displaced-by-conflict-or-natural-disasters/](http://www.brookings.edu/research/moving-beyond-rhetoric-consultation-and-participation-with-populations-displaced-by-conflict-or-natural-disasters/); Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons*, UN Doc. A/72/202, 24 July 2017. On the ICRC’s experience with community-based protection approaches to engaging with IDPs and ensuring that humanitarian interventions are built upon their capacities and resilience, see Angela Cotroneo and Marta Pawlak, “Community-Based Protection: The ICRC Approach”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 53, October 2016, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/community-protection/cotroneo-pawlak.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/community-protection/cotroneo-pawlak.pdf).

93 See E. Lucchi, above note 19, p. 8; Chaloka Beyani, Natalia Krynsky Baal and Martina Caterina, “Conceptual Challenges and Practical Solutions in Situations of Internal Displacement”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 52, May 2016, p. 42, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/solutions/beyani-baal-caterina.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/solutions/beyani-baal-caterina.pdf), emphasizing the “ethical challenges related to invisible populations and the protection concerns of urban IDPs”; and P. Currión, above, note 6, p. 15, on the need to develop alternative strategies for accessing specific vulnerable groups in urban contexts.

94 Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, above note 4, p. 8.

95 These projects seek to facilitate safer access to basic services for the community, to contribute to reducing social risk factors and marginalization of youths, and to promote responsible participation of community members in the life of their neighbourhood. They include activities such as vocational training, health, education or other social activities (e.g. promoting life skills and safe behaviours) and psychosocial support. Civil society organizations, local service providers and local authorities are often partners in such endeavours. On the ICRC’s work in situations of urban violence, see ICRC, “Urban Violence and the ICRC’s Humanitarian Response”, 14 October 2016, available at: [www.icrc.org/en/document/urban-violence-and-icrc-humanitarian-response](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/urban-violence-and-icrc-humanitarian-response).

contexts. Referral of cases of vulnerable IDPs by civil society and community-based organizations provides another means for outreach.

Similarly, collaborative approaches for profiling IDP situations (such as the collaborative work of the inter-agency Joint Internal Displacement Profiling Service (JIPS)) in urban settings capitalize on collaboration with local partners (e.g. national institutes of statistics) to design and tailor methodologies to the local contexts in order to identify where IDPs are located and what their main characteristics and specificities are, compared to the host population, through qualitative and quantitative methods (including household surveys). The different tools for profiling, including qualitative and quantitative questionnaires used for the profiling exercise, are also elaborated jointly with those partners. This ensures that questions are formulated and data are collected in a protection-sensitive manner, taking into account the specificities of the context and the potential threats to which IDPs might be exposed. This approach has proven effective for enhancing the ability to identify IDPs in multiple settings, including urban violence settings, where the involvement of local actors who not only know the communities but are also known and trusted by them helps to mitigate protection risks and to encourage people to reveal their current situation. Data analysis is also done collaboratively with the purpose of validating the findings and ensuring the use of the information by all the partners involved.<sup>96</sup>

People in urban areas normally have easy access to information and communication technologies. This creates opportunities to establish multiple channels for sharing and receiving information, with a view to reaching the maximum number of people.<sup>97</sup> Mobile phones and electronic media, as well as broadcast media, can be used to disseminate information on legal rights and humanitarian services available for IDPs or to convey life-saving messages (e.g. on safe behaviour to reduce risk exposure related to the presence of mines and unexploded ordnances in areas to which people may be moving or returning). Mobile phones can also help to collect real-time information on needs, monitor population movements (through geo-referenced phone call data) or receive feedback and complaints on programmes that have been carried out, when direct access to internally displaced communities is not, or is no longer, possible, or

96 For more information on urban profiling, including on methodological aspects, see Karen Jacobsen and Ivan Cardona, *Guidance for Profiling Urban Displacement Situations: Challenges and Solutions*, JIPS, Geneva, June 2014, available at: [www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/818/original\\_GuidanceUrbanProfiling\\_JIPS.pdf](http://www.jips.org/system/cms/attachments/818/original_GuidanceUrbanProfiling_JIPS.pdf). For some recent examples of collaborative urban profiling assessments supported by JIPS, see Honduras Profile Assessment, above note 39, and the three reports on Iraq's Kurdistan region cited in above note 41. For detailed explanations on the collaborative profiling process, see: [jet.jips.org/](http://jet.jips.org/); and for more information on the work carried out by JIPS, see: [www.jips.org/en/about/about-jips](http://www.jips.org/en/about/about-jips).

97 The wider use of information communications technology to reach people displaced in urban areas has been proposed, for instance, in IRC, *Using ICT to Facilitate Access to Information and Accountability to Affected Populations in Urban Areas*, 28 June 2017, available at: [www.rescue.org/report/using-ict-facilitate-access-information-and-accountability-affected-populations-urban-areas](http://www.rescue.org/report/using-ict-facilitate-access-information-and-accountability-affected-populations-urban-areas).



when physically locating them is problematic.<sup>98</sup> The ICRC uses telephone hotlines to help families re-establish contact with separated family members or as part of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of its economic security programmes on behalf of conflict-affected people, including IDPs. It has been testing the establishment of “multi-programme” hotlines to channel all types of requests from actual or potential beneficiaries and use them to establish a first contact with IDPs and other people in need of support, including on protection matters.<sup>99</sup>

Churches, mosques and other public spaces, such as hospitals or schools, in neighbourhoods of a city where IDPs may be present can be used as points for information dissemination, e.g. through posters, leaflets, public announcements or information sessions. Establishing safe places where IDPs can meet with service providers in relative security and receive specialized support is also crucial.<sup>100</sup> In Colombia, for example, the ICRC helped the government set up units tasked with providing comprehensive support and orientation to the internally displaced population. These units, whose offices are present in various cities of the country, bring together in one place the full range of public services available for internally displaced individuals and families. They allow IDPs to engage with staff from various public entities in a protected environment, where they can find help to deal with their specific situation (e.g. possibility to apply for inclusion in the official register, information about social benefits, legal advice and psychological support).<sup>101</sup> This limits the need for IDPs to move around the city in order to reach different offices for orientation and support, which involves transportation costs, can be time-consuming and is even considered dangerous by

98 A volatile security situation and the high mobility of IDPs in urban areas, particularly in contexts of ongoing armed conflict, may reduce access to some communities or impede direct contact with beneficiaries in some stages of the project cycle. On connectivity and how it can be used to support assessments and improve accountability, see P. Currion, above note 6, p. 14. For a practitioner’s guide on community engagement through social media in times of armed conflict and disasters (although not specific to urban settings), see Timo Lüge, *How to Use Social Media to Better Engage People Affected by Crisis: A Brief Guide for Those Using Social Media in Humanitarian Organizations*, ICRC, IFRC and OCHA, September 2017. On using telephone and other communications and social media technology as a means for engaging with IDPs living outside camps in urban areas, see in particular C. Jimenez-Damary, above note 92, pp. 19–20, §§ 69–74.

99 For example, the ICRC has set up a telephone hotline to receive feedback and complaints on its cash assistance programme for IDPs in Ukraine. UNHCR has also used hotlines, operated by implementing partners (such as in Ukraine and Iraq), to enable displaced individuals and communities to share their concerns and feedback. The creation of hotlines as a first means of interaction between IDPs and authorities was part of the recommendations addressed to the Government of Honduras by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs following his mission to the country in 2015 (C. Beyani, above note 60, p. 20, § 91).

100 N. Bullock, above note 36, p. 12.

101 Originally established as UAOs (*Unidades de Atención y Orientación a Población Desplazada*, Assistance and Orientation Units for the Displaced Population), they became UARIVs (*Unidades de Atención y Reparación a las Víctimas*, Assistance and Reparation Units for Victims) with the adoption of the Victim Law. However, their function has not substantially changed, as 98% of the persons that are registered in the central registry for victims in the country to date are internally displaced. The ICRC’s support has consisted of capacity-building of staff and provision of technical advice and some equipment (e.g. computers) to these units, as well as feedback to the authorities on their effective functioning.

some people. In some situations, humanitarian actors will have to find suitable places where they can hold meetings with IDPs in a way that ensures safety and confidentiality, especially for discussions about protection issues.<sup>102</sup>

## Addressing urgent protection needs

The flight and the early phase of displacement upon people's arrival in a new locality can be life-threatening in cities devastated by warfare or grappling with criminal violence. Addressing people's urgent protection concerns in these situations is therefore particularly challenging. In a war-torn city, it requires engaging with all parties to the conflict to ensure that, while doing everything possible to protect and spare the civilian population and prevent forced displacement in violation of IHL,<sup>103</sup> they also allow civilians who run for their lives to leave the zone of active hostilities.<sup>104</sup> For instance, on the eve of the battle for Iraq's second-largest city Mosul, and when military operations were intensifying inside the city, the ICRC

102 IFRC, above note 17, p. 56; P. Currian, above, note 6, p. 15.

103 In both international and non-international armed conflicts, IHL prohibits the forced displacement of civilians for reasons related to the conflict. Exceptionally, parties to the conflict may temporarily evacuate the civilian population if this is required for the security of the civilians involved or for imperative military reasons (e.g. for clearing a combat zone). In cases of displacement, all possible measures must be taken so that the civilians concerned are received under satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health, safety and nutrition, and so that members of the same family are not separated. See Geneva Convention IV, Arts 49, 147; Additional Protocol I, Art. 85(4)(a); Additional Protocol II, Art. 17; ICRC, Customary IHL Database, Rules 129–131, available at: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1>. The Guiding Principles contain the prohibition on “arbitrary” displacement of persons, which is defined as also including displacement in situations of armed conflict, “unless the security of civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand” (Principle 6, § 2). Violations of the rule prohibiting the forced displacement of the civilian population are war crimes under the Statute of the International Criminal Court in both international and non-international armed conflicts (see Article 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(e)(viii)). In addition to the express prohibition against forced displacement, respect for other rules of IHL, in particular those which aim to spare civilians from the effects of hostilities, is key to preventing displacement, as it is often violations of these rules which trigger displacement: see ICRC Advisory Service, above note 30. Accordingly, parties to the armed conflict have a duty to prevent displacement caused by their own acts, at least those acts which are prohibited in and of themselves (e.g. terrorizing the civilian population or carrying out indiscriminate attacks). See Jean-Marie Henckaerts and Louise Doswald-Beck (eds), *Customary International Humanitarian Law*, Vol. 1: *Rules*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, Commentary to Rule 129, p. 461. Under Principle 5 of the Guiding Principles, “[a]ll authorities and international actors shall respect and ensure respect for their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, in all circumstances, so as to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to displacement of persons”.

104 IHL does not contain a general right to freedom of movement, and the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols are silent concerning a right to leave one's place of residence or to move to another part of the country. Yet, allowing people to flee combat zones is essential for their protection. A “right to flee” to seek safety in another part of the country can be seen as implicit in the right to freedom of movement as recognized by international human rights law (e.g. Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), which is applicable to IDPs and entails “the right and ability to move and choose one's residence freely and in safety within the territory of the State, regardless of the purpose of the move”: see Global Protection Cluster, *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*, June 2010, p. 195, available at: [www.refworld.org/docid/4790cbc02.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/4790cbc02.html). In the same sense, see C. Beyani, above note 31, p. 14, § 58, stressing that “[i]t is a fundamental right of civilians to seek safety and to flee conflict zones without restriction”.

repeatedly called on all parties to the conflict to do their utmost to protect civilians and to allow them safe passage out of the area.<sup>105</sup> The ICRC also monitored the conditions of those fleeing Mosul who were screened, questioned or detained by the Iraqi authorities for possible links with the Islamic State, with the aim of preventing ill-treatment and disappearances and ensuring that family members stayed in contact.<sup>106</sup> Efforts by humanitarian organizations to ensure that people fleeing conflict can move safely and reach more stable locations may also include securing a humanitarian corridor to facilitate people's movement and carrying out their evacuation from a besieged city, with the agreement of all parties involved.<sup>107</sup> Such efforts can be hampered by access and security issues, the fragmented nature of armed groups, ongoing military operations and the presence of mines, improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance. Becoming involved in the evacuation of parts of the civilian population is, furthermore, a complex decision for humanitarian actors. It entails carefully evaluating the possible threats to the safety and well-being of both the evacuees and the people who may stay behind, as well as the risks of being instrumentalized to support the implementation of harmful policies (as would be the case, for instance, if the attacks from which civilians needed to be evacuated were intended to cleanse them out of an area, and evacuations might thus facilitate that objective).<sup>108</sup>

The situation faced by individuals and families directly targeted by armed actors is sometimes so critical that they may require immediate help to leave and find refuge elsewhere. In Colombia, for example, the ICRC has assisted victims of repeated threats and abuses by armed group members with transportation costs and some emergency provisions, so that they could move to another part of the country where they could be safer. Some of them were already displaced, having been compelled to leave the countryside or another city because of the same or similar threats, and found themselves again at great risk.<sup>109</sup> Likewise, in Honduras, the ICRC, jointly with the Honduran Red Cross and in coordination

105 See, for example, ICRC, "Mosul: People Have the Right to Flee", video, 17 October 2016, available at: [www.icrc.org/en/document/mosul-iraq-people-have-right-flee-and-seek-safety](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/mosul-iraq-people-have-right-flee-and-seek-safety); ICRC, "Mosul: Civilians Fleeing the Fighting Must be Protected", *Storify*, 2017, available at: [storify.com/ICRC/mosul](http://storify.com/ICRC/mosul).

106 Stephanie Nebehay, "Up to One Million People could Flee Battle for Iraq's Mosul: ICRC", *Reuters*, 29 July 2016, available at: [www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-redcross-idUSKCN1090TL?il=0](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-redcross-idUSKCN1090TL?il=0).

107 Commenting about plans to create humanitarian corridors around Aleppo, Syria, the ICRC took the position that, although they may serve to alleviate the suffering of the conflict-affected civilian population, humanitarian corridors are not an ideal solution insofar as their geographical scope is limited by definition. A humanitarian pause in all areas of the city affected by the armed conflict was invoked by the ICRC as an urgently needed measure. The ICRC also reminded that in all circumstances, those involved in the hostilities must ensure that all necessary measures and precautions are taken to protect civilians, regardless of whether they decide to leave their homes or to stay, and humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach all those in need. See ICRC, "'This Has to Stop' – ICRC Says Indiscriminate Fighting in Syria's Aleppo Taking Heavy Toll on Civilians", *Intercross Blog*, 4 August 2016, available at: [intercrossblog.icrc.org/blog/this-has-to-stop-icrc-says-indiscriminate-fighting-in-syrias-aleppo-taking-heavy-toll-on-civilians](http://intercrossblog.icrc.org/blog/this-has-to-stop-icrc-says-indiscriminate-fighting-in-syrias-aleppo-taking-heavy-toll-on-civilians).

108 On the stakes and dilemmas that are likely to be confronted when carrying out evacuations, see NRC, *Considerations for Planning Mass Evacuations of Civilians in Conflict Settings*, 2016, available at: [www.nrc.no/resources/reports/planning-mass-evacuations-in-conflict-settings/](http://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/planning-mass-evacuations-in-conflict-settings/).

109 ICRC, *Annual Report 2016*, Geneva, 2017, p. 279.

with the authorities and other actors, helps highly vulnerable returnees from Mexico who cannot go back to their homes and become IDPs because of critical protection concerns related to the violence, to relocate elsewhere within the country. Besides transport, the ICRC provides them with emergency assistance to cover their basic necessities when no other actor is in a position to do so.<sup>110</sup> The ICRC is currently strengthening its outreach in order to be able to offer similar support to people at high risk who flee from their places of residence and move within Honduras. At the same time, the ICRC works in close coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and local civil society organizations, within the framework of Honduras's Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence, to support the authorities in adopting a legal framework and establishing a comprehensive protocol on victim support and assistance, including special protection measures for IDPs at risk.<sup>111</sup>

As the example of Honduras suggests, ensuring an adequate State response to the acute protection needs of persons internally displaced by criminal violence requires multiple coordinated and complementary efforts. Obtaining recognition of arbitrary displacement as a crime and of the related responsibility of the authorities to protect and assist victims is just one step,<sup>112</sup> once the problem has been publicly acknowledged. Support from humanitarian actors is needed for the adoption of specialized legislation and specific protection programmes targeting IDPs, and for their implementation. Protective measures must be tailored to the needs of IDPs and must avoid exposing them to added risk. Witness protection programmes are usually not sufficient, notably as IDPs tend not to report crimes against them due

110 The ICRC and the Honduran Red Cross jointly provide a range of services – e.g. free phone calls to re-establish contact with relatives, water, food and hygiene kits – to all newly returned migrants who pass through the centre for returned migrants established by the authorities in Omoa, on the Honduran side of the border with Guatemala, for basic processing and assessment. Many of the returnees have experienced deportation before, and some were internally displaced prior to embarking on a journey across the region to Mexico or the United States. In Omoa, the ICRC and the Honduran Red Cross have come across cases of particularly vulnerable returnees who are afraid of returning to their places of origin – on account of ongoing serious threats to their life and physical and mental integrity – and who seek help to relocate elsewhere in Honduras. These cases are followed up by the ICRC. On the support provided by National Societies and the ICRC at centres for returnee migrants in Central America, including Honduras, see ICRC, “Migration: Our Work in the Americas”, factsheet, Geneva, December 2017, p. 2, available at: [www.icrc.org/en/document/migration-our-work-americas](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/migration-our-work-americas).

111 For more information on the work of the Commission, notably regarding the support provided by the ICRC and other organizations on the elaboration of a national law on internal displacement, see: [www.cippd.gob.hn/la-comision/](http://www.cippd.gob.hn/la-comision/) and [www.cippd.gob.hn/construccion-de-una-ley-para-prevenir-atender-y-protoger-a-las-personas-desplazadas-internamente/](http://www.cippd.gob.hn/construccion-de-una-ley-para-prevenir-atender-y-protoger-a-las-personas-desplazadas-internamente/).

112 In 2015, Honduras's Inter-Institutional Commission, in coordination with different public prosecutors, made progress in defining the crime of forced displacement with a view to including it in a new criminal code: see Honduras Profile Assessment, above note 39, p. 22; see also: [www.cippd.gob.hn/category/la-comision/antecedentes/](http://www.cippd.gob.hn/category/la-comision/antecedentes/). A recommendation in this regard was also addressed to the authorities by the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs: see C. Beyani, above note 60, p. 20, § 90. On States' obligations related to the prosecution and punishment of forced displacement as a violation of IHL, see ICRC Advisory Service, above note 30.

to fear of retribution and lack of faith in the police and the justice system.<sup>113</sup> In parallel to the legislative and institutional strengthening process, support to civil society organization networks can serve to provide IDPs with more immediate protection options (while building local capacity for a sustainable response).<sup>114</sup> Particular efforts are required in this regard to identify relocation sites and develop safe shelter options. These can consist of suitable hotels, private apartments or safe houses established for the purpose of hosting IDPs facing a high level of risks – depending on available options and on considerations related to the particular situation of the persons concerned, including the likelihood (which may be higher in cases of intra-urban displacement) that their persecutors manage to find them and that they find themselves again in danger.<sup>115</sup> Temporary safe shelters should be places where internally displaced individuals and families can find humanitarian assistance, psychosocial support and legal counselling as they take the time to reflect on their next steps, to help them make an informed decision concerning their future despite the dire circumstances.<sup>116</sup> Options should be made available for members of the same family to be accommodated together in the same shelter.<sup>117</sup>

## Supporting integration in urban areas

Although return tends to be the preferred durable solution for many in a large number of internal displacement situations, IDPs in relatively stable urban areas often prefer to stay and integrate locally.<sup>118</sup> As a result of the complex interplay between urbanization and displacement, people displaced from rural to urban areas are more likely to choose not to go back home even when security seems to

113 Considerations on the inadequacy of witness protection programmes as a general framework for IDP protection are made by D. J. Cantor, above note 35, p. 29. Specifically on El Salvador's Victims and Witnesses Law, see "Statement on the Conclusion of the Visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, to El Salvador – 14 to 18 August 2017", available at: [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21984&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21984&LangID=E).

114 G. Bassu, above note 42, p. 14.

115 G. Rojas Andrade *et al.*, above note 91, p. 152. In small countries like El Salvador, both intra-urban and inter-urban displacement may become ineffective as self-protection mechanisms, so some people may have to opt for moving across borders in search for safety in the absence of other protection options.

116 S. Reynolds, above note 33, pp. 7–9. For some IDPs, temporary shelters will become places where they wait for the necessary papers to be ready in order to relocate and resettle in another country.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 8 (discussing the situation in El Salvador, where there are no government shelters for internally displaced families and the latter have to split up, as existing women's shelters do not accept boys over the age of 12 and children's shelters are not meant to accommodate children with parents or caretakers).

118 On durable solutions to internal displacement, see above note 27. Specifically on the challenge of achieving durable solutions for IDPs in urban settings, see Chaloka Beyani, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced People to the UN General Assembly*, UN. Doc. A/69/295, 11 April 2014, available at: [ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/69/295](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/69/295). This report focuses particularly on local integration, acknowledging that "[t]he very nature of urban displacement ... tends to lend weight to local integration as the viable choice preferred by internally displaced persons in urban areas." *Ibid.*, p. 19, § 61.

have improved, or may decide to relocate to another, larger city.<sup>119</sup> Women often prefer to stay in cities as they feel that their family and community status and their income-generating ability are better there. Young people tend overwhelmingly to prefer urban life.<sup>120</sup> In general, the longer displacement lasts, the more return becomes a remote option.<sup>121</sup> Even when return remains someone's desired objective, supporting their social and economic integration in the place of displacement is crucial to enabling them to establish as normal a life as possible, while waiting for conditions at the place of origin to become conducive to their safe and sustainable return. It avoids their prolonged dependence on humanitarian assistance and allows IDPs to progressively reduce their displacement-related needs and vulnerabilities.<sup>122</sup>

Whether it amounts to a durable solution in itself or to a temporary solution until return or relocation elsewhere are possible, promoting IDPs' self-reliance and their access to basic services is a key part of the pathway to local integration into cities. Enhancing income-generating opportunities for IDPs entails helping them to gain appropriate urban livelihood skills (if they originate from rural areas) in order to find a job, and/or helping them to start a business, while also ensuring their inclusion in public programmes and development plans

119 A. Kirbyshire *et al.*, above note 11, p. 18; J. Crisp, T. Morris and H. Refstie, above note 4, p. 25. Internal displacement from rural to urban areas often becomes "urbanization under duress", and once individuals and families are urbanized, return to rural areas becomes less feasible. C. Beyani, N. Krynsky Baal and M. Caterina, above note 93, p. 40. Internal displacement to cities contributes dynamically to their growth, but rapid urbanization, when poorly planned and uncontrolled, can result in more poverty, exclusion, social inequality and fragmentation, which in turn can lead to crime, violence and displacement. Rapid and poorly planned urbanization is also driving disaster risk and associated displacement. On internal displacement as a driver of urbanization and *vice versa*, see IDMC, above note 3, p. 2.

120 For example, research has found that in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, younger IDPs are more inclined to stay in the city than older people, as for them "the city represents a new world with more opportunities than the rural area has to offer": see C. Jacobs and A. Paviotti, above note 86, p. 5.

121 Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, above note 4, p. 20. In Colombia, for example, according to a national survey conducted in 2015, 93% of IDPs, many of whom were once rural dwellers and currently live in cities, have very little or no interest in returning home: see "'Tres de cada diez desplazados están en pobreza extrema': Contraloría", *El Tiempo*, 16 February 2015, available at: [www.eltiempo.com/politica/justicia/porcentaje-de-desplazados-que-son-pobres-/15255916](http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/justicia/porcentaje-de-desplazados-que-son-pobres-/15255916). This includes an entire generation of IDPs who have fully adapted to urban lifestyles and who consider the lack of opportunities (especially for the children) back home as an important factor in the decision to stay or return.

122 W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, pp. 17–20, advocate for the need to take measures to improve IDPs' living conditions and enhance their self-sufficiency in the place where they are staying, as quickly as possible and pending achievable, durable solutions for those who plan to return, as the most effective way to prevent and address protracted internal displacement. The authors define protracted internal displacement "as a situation where the process towards durable solutions is stalled, as IDPs are prevented from reducing, or are unable to progressively reduce, their displacement-induced vulnerabilities, impoverishment and marginalization": *ibid.*, p. 11.

aimed at boosting employment and reducing poverty.<sup>123</sup> Facilitating IDPs' access to urban services such as housing, water, health care and education involves, at a minimum, providing them with information on how these services are delivered (this is particularly useful for people displaced from rural areas, who may not be familiar with the relevant procedures) and helping them obtain the necessary documents (for example, by removing existing legal or administrative obstacles). In cities affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence, where inadequate infrastructure and overstretched services are further strained by the presence of IDPs, it requires first of all improving infrastructure and services for the entire population in host areas, while ensuring that IDPs can benefit from those on par with their non-displaced neighbours, based on a comprehensive analysis of the impact of displacement on IDPs and urban service provision at the city and sub-city levels.<sup>124</sup> The inclusion of IDPs into city-wide urban and development planning is key in this regard.<sup>125</sup>

This underscores the need for integrated approaches combining blanket, area-based interventions in order to respond to the structural challenges that internal displacement typically poses to cities, with tailored measures to address the specific needs of urban IDPs in terms of access to employment, documentation, housing, awareness of rights and legal counselling (e.g. for eviction cases), as well as their protection concerns.<sup>126</sup> Implementing such approaches demands complementary and coordinated efforts by humanitarian and development actors in support of the authorities at the central and local levels, the latter having the primary responsibility for protection of and assistance

123 M. Aysa-Lastra, above note 4, p. 300. The author emphasizes that the participation of IDPs in the urban labour market is not only instrumental to their local integration, but also prevents them from incorporating into illicit activities. More generally on the need to move from a model of humanitarian assistance focused on aid and maintenance to one that encourages self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods for displaced people, with a view to their positive economic integration, see Nicholas Crawford, John Cosgrave, Simone Haysom and Nadine Walicki, *Protracted Displacement: Uncertain Paths to Self-Reliance in Exile*, Humanitarian Policy Group and ODI, London, September 2015.

124 A. Davies and K. Jacobsen, above note 29, p. 14.

125 On the critical importance of more flexible and comprehensive urban planning informed by internal displacement dynamics in order to achieve durable solutions for IDPs in urban settings, see C. Beyani, above note 118, p. 10, § 33, and related recommendations, pp. 18–21. Acknowledging the intersection between urbanization and displacement, the Global Alliance for Urban Crises has also called for “inclusive models of urbanization” that plan for and manage displacement in towns and cities. See the Alliance’s report *Forced Displacement: What Needs to Be Done*, October 2016, available at: [www.rescue.org/report/forced-displacement-urban-areas-what-needs-be-done](http://www.rescue.org/report/forced-displacement-urban-areas-what-needs-be-done). See also: [unhabitat.org/.../Global-Alliance-for-Urban-Crises-Overview-25-March-2016.pdf](http://unhabitat.org/.../Global-Alliance-for-Urban-Crises-Overview-25-March-2016.pdf).

126 C. Beyani, above note 3, p. 12, § 33 (emphasizing that “a combined approach, which includes community-based approaches and punctual IDP specific interventions, is necessary in most contexts”); Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, above note 4, p. 24 (recommending that support systems to host communities to enhance their absorption capacity and resilience be combined with targeted IDP-specific interventions); IDMC and MIT DRAN, above note 26, pp. 64–67; W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, p. 58. On “area-based approaches”, see, for example, B. Mountfield, above note 8, pp. 11–12.

to IDPs.<sup>127</sup> There is also a need for strategies that leverage the opportunities offered by existing urban capacities and response networks through developing partnerships and making constructive linkages between the diversity of actors and the diversity of needs.<sup>128</sup>

The ICRC's programme on facilitating access to official employment for IDPs in various cities of Colombia, through partnerships with private and semi-private companies, is an example of how humanitarian actors, by providing tailored support to IDPs in finding sustainable livelihood options in the city, are able to integrate longer-term considerations related to recovery, resilience and

127 Under Principle 3 of the Guiding Principles, “[n]ational authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction”. Such responsibility is a reflection of States’ sovereignty. In order to be able to fulfil their obligations toward IDPs and manage internal displacement effectively, governments need to develop adequate legal, policy and institutional frameworks as a basis for their response and to foresee the necessary resources for their implementation. International actors often have a vital role to play in this regard, through persuasion/advocacy and technical, legal and/or financial support in the adoption and operationalization of those frameworks. Local authorities are on the forefront of the response, yet they may be left without the necessary institutional recognition, capacity or resources to cope with the situation. International actors can assist local authorities in carrying out their crucial role, including by raising awareness of the importance of, and facilitating, effective coordination between the different levels of the State response to IDPs. On the role of local authorities in the protection, assistance and provision of durable solutions to IDPs, notably in urban areas, see Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, above note 4, pp. 16–21; E. Ferris, above note 9, pp. 15–16 (highlighting the “need to work much more intentionally with governmental authorities at the sub-national levels”). On the gaps that may exist between how responses are planned at the central level and their implementation at the local level, focusing on Colombia’s experience, see Elizabeth Ferris, “The Role of Municipal Authorities”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010, p. 39, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/ferris.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/ferris.pdf).

128 On the importance of tapping into local capacities and resources and developing local partnerships to address the needs of urban IDPs and their host communities, see Anna Tibajuka, “Adapting to Urban Displacement”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010, p. 4, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/tibajuka.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/tibajuka.pdf); R. Zetter and G. Deikun, above note 79, p. 6; J. Crisp, T. Morris and H. Refstie, above note 4, pp. 26, 39; Elena Lucchi, “Moving from the ‘Why’ to the ‘How’: Reflections on Humanitarian Response in Urban Settings”, *Disasters*, Vol. 36, Supp. 1, July 2012, pp. 95–96; A. Kirbyshire *et al.*, above note 11, p. 20; L. Earle, above note 20, pp. 219–221; Robert Muggah, “A Humanitarian Response to Central America’s Fragile Cities”, *Humanitarian Exchange*, No. 69, June 2017, p. 20, available at: <https://odihpn.org/magazine/humanitarian-response-central-americas-fragile-cities/> speaks about the need to invest in partnerships to deal with the humanitarian consequences of urban violence, including displacement. The IASC Strategy for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas recommends that humanitarian organizations be able to use the potential for partnerships with municipal and national governments, civil society and communities – which is stronger in urban settings compared to rural areas (IASC, above note 6, pp. 2, 4–5). See also, most recently, IRC, *Public Service Delivery in Contexts of Urban Displacement. A Discussion Paper on the Importance of Strengthening Public Service Delivery in Urban Humanitarian Contexts*, December 2017, available at: [www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/2334/publicservicedeliveryincontextsofurbandisplacementweb.pdf](http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/2334/publicservicedeliveryincontextsofurbandisplacementweb.pdf).



local integration into their response.<sup>129</sup> In doing so, humanitarian actors can complement the efforts of development actors, who are better placed to work with public authorities on broader and structural issues of unemployment and poverty reduction, but are usually not in a position to address specific vulnerabilities at the individual and household levels.<sup>130</sup> The programme also speaks to the value of working in partnership with the private sector, in an enabling policy environment and within an established formal labour market, to increase employment opportunities for urban IDPs, while also raising the awareness of industry in terms of social responsibility towards IDPs.<sup>131</sup>

In various countries, the ICRC has increasingly been involved in the rehabilitation, upgrading and/or construction of essential water or other public infrastructure (e.g. sanitation and electrical installations, primary health-care centres, hospitals and schools) in urban areas affected by protracted armed conflict and internal displacement. The urban services approach implemented by the ICRC consists of building sustainable strategies into emergency responses. It is based on a shift from a solely “reactive” mode to one that bridges short-term (emergency “quick-fix”) measures with more medium- to long-term structural responses. It is about incorporating existing city systems from the outset by working with local actors in order to support those systems, so that they can cope with increased demand now and in the future. In doing so, responses take into account the impact of internal displacement on the city as a whole and assist host communities and IDPs in tandem. This approach strives to prevent development

129 Within the framework of the Access to Employment programme, the ICRC identifies candidates for final selection by participating companies and helps them to acquire vocational training, including on “soft skills” to enable them to function in employment (e.g. how to interact with a superior, the importance of complying with working schedules, the need to justify absences). The ICRC also covers a portion of the beneficiaries’ salaries for the agreed minimum duration of their contract (six months), ensures that they are registered in the national social security system, and ensures that they receive a labour certificate at the end of their contract. Since starting the programme in 2013, the ICRC has signed agreements with more than 120 companies working in a wide range of sectors (e.g. restaurants and hospitality, construction, textiles and packaging) in eleven cities of Colombia. For information on the programme, see ICRC, *ECOSEC Executive Brief. Colombia: Access to Employment Programme 2013*, 14 May 2014; ICRC, “How Does the Corporate Sector Contribute to Humanitarian Activities in Colombia? The Access to Employment Example”, *ICRC Blog*, 24 August 2016, available at: <http://blogs.icrc.org/gphi2/2016/08/24/corporate-sector-contribute-humanitarian-activities-colombia-access-employment-example/>.

130 On the need to include development perspectives in humanitarian responses and to align “the imperative to save lives ... with the fast-tracking of recovery and strengthening of resilience”, see L. Earle, above note 20, p. 221. According to the former Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, “cooperation between humanitarian and development actors is necessary since the earliest phase of displacement, to ensure relief to development continuity and favour resilience building and self-reliance, which are essential elements of durable solutions”: see Chaloka Beyani, *Progress and Challenges Relating to the Human Rights of IDPs. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons*, UN Doc. A/HRC/32/35, 29 April 2016, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1608880.pdf>. The need for authorities in Colombia to shift the focus from purely humanitarian assistance to promoting IDPs’ economic stability is highlighted in W. Kälin and H. Entwisle Chapuisat, above note 27, pp. 94–96 (also mentioning the ICRC’s Access to Employment programme).

131 The findings of a joint ICRC–WFP study conducted between 2004 and 2007 highlighted the need and potential for income-generation initiatives in support of IDPs in Colombia, and the importance of involving private industry. See ICRC and WFP, above note 53, pp. 18–19, 64–65.

reversals by keeping alive critical infrastructure, but also paves the ground for further development interventions.<sup>132</sup> To give just one example, in the Central African Republic, after setting up an emergency response to supply water (by water-trucking) to the large IDP camp near Bangui airport, the ICRC undertook the rehabilitation of the city's water distribution network, in partnership with the local water provider. This allowed the ICRC and other actors to respond in a more sustainable manner to the needs of both internally displaced and resident populations.<sup>133</sup>

In supporting local integration into cities, working closely and more effectively with municipal authorities and urban service providers is crucial to ensure local ownership and a more sustainable response, informed by the solid knowledge of the urban context that local actors can bring, as well as to promote the integration of IDPs into urban planning.<sup>134</sup> However, it becomes a delicate issue, in view of principled action, if the authorities are associated with a party to the conflict or local actors are involved in urban violence or are pursuing a political agenda. Another difficulty arises when municipal authorities do not see their hosting role as permanent and are reluctant to allow IDPs to integrate into the city, for example, because they fear this may attract new arrivals or because they perceive IDPs as a security threat. Other factors, such as concerns about possible changes in voting patterns if IDPs stay, can also influence how municipal authorities (as well as national authorities) see local integration.<sup>135</sup>

## Conclusion

There is a critical knowledge gap on the phenomenon of urban internal displacement. Not only are its real proportions globally unknown, but also documentation of the specific experience of IDPs in urban settings and how their situation differs from and impacts that of their non-displaced neighbours is still lacking. This article has therefore attempted to provide a more nuanced analysis of the particular needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of urban IDPs, one that takes into account how the context (city at war, city affected by urban violence or more stable city) and the pattern (rural-to-urban, inter-urban and intra-urban) in

132 On the approach, its long-term benefits and its related challenges, see “The ICRC’s Approach to Urban Services during Protracted Armed Conflict: Q & A with Evaristo de Pinho Oliveira”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 98, No. 901, 2016, pp. 206–209, available at; [www.icrc.org/en/international-review/article/icrcs-approach-urban-services-during-protracted-armed-conflict-q](http://www.icrc.org/en/international-review/article/icrcs-approach-urban-services-during-protracted-armed-conflict-q); ICRC, above note 2.

133 Information on file with author.

134 See above note 125.

135 On the challenges of collaborating with municipalities and other local governance institutions, see C. Beyani, above note 3, p. 16, § 48 (specifically mentioning the fact that authorities may adopt an “informal ‘policy’ of non-assistance” based on political, demographic or ethnic factors that influence their attitude towards newcomers); Brookings–LSE Project on Internal Displacement, above note 4, pp. 17–19; R. Zetter and G. Deikun, above note 79, pp. 6–7; E. Lucchi, above note 19, p. 11; J. Crisp, T. Morris and H. Refstie, above note 4, p. 26 (speaking of “head-in-the-sand policies” whereby municipal authorities and national governments tend to neglect the situation of IDPs and refuse to help them integrate locally).

which urban internal displacement occurs contribute to shaping people's experience. It has highlighted that the context has an influence on the needs and protection profile of urban IDPs, while the pattern of displacement affects their resilience.

Urban IDPs tend to disappear into the larger population of the city, a phenomenon that increasingly represents the norm of urban displacement. Often physically accessible but difficult to identify and reach, they are at risk of falling through the protection and assistance nets.<sup>136</sup> It is more than just a case of being “out of sight, out of mind”, as urban IDPs who stay within the host community, with relatives or in rented accommodation, are often assumed to be less in need of support than people in camps, which is not necessarily the case. Their being melded together with host communities is frequently mistaken as them having already achieved local integration.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, because IDPs in cities share similar problems with the resident poor, their specific concerns may become overlooked if responses are limited to development and poverty reduction interventions – or *vice versa*, responses may fail to consider the broader impact of internal displacement on host communities and the city as a whole if they are focused exclusively on internally displaced individuals and households.

People displaced to or within cities at war are often at risk of coming under attack, either directly or as a consequence of the use of indiscriminate means or methods of warfare, and remain vulnerable to the disruption of essential services caused by the armed conflict. In cities affected by urban violence, IDPs may be pursued by armed groups who directly threaten them, and may be obliged to live in hiding. IDPs who manage to reach more stable cities may be relatively safe, but often find themselves without adequate access to housing, water and sanitation, employment, health care or education, and are obliged to resort to harmful coping mechanisms to survive. Furthermore, being displaced from rural to urban settings compounds the difficulties that IDPs typically face as part of being uprooted from their homes and placed in unfamiliar environments, lacking social and protective networks. It makes it harder for people to cope with the situation, notably as they have difficulty adapting their livelihood strategies and recovering their independence. More research is needed to sharpen our understanding of the similarities and differences in the situation of IDPs in various possible scenarios, the specificities of rural-to-urban displacement

136 See, among others, IDMC and MIT DRAN, above note 26, p. 10; Hilde Refstie, Chris Dolan and Moses Chrispus Okello, “Urban IDPs in Uganda: Victims of Institutional Convenience”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010, p. 32, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/refstie-dolan-okello.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/refstie-dolan-okello.pdf) (in which the authors identify the lack of registration and information about urban IDPs and the difficulty in distinguishing them from economic migrants as some of the main obstacles to their identification); Elisabetta Brumat, “The Poor and the Displaced in Khartoum”, *Forced Migration Review*, No. 34, February 2010, available at: [www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/brumat.pdf](http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/brumat.pdf).

137 H. Refstie, C. Dolan and M. C. Okello, above note 136, pp. 32–33. The authors also argue that humanitarian actors' choice of focusing on IDPs in camps is dictated by “institutional convenience”, as working with the latter poses relatively fewer challenges and provides more visibility than working with urban IDPs outside of camps.

compared to inter-urban and intra-urban displacement, and the range of experiences, needs and capacities of IDPs compared to their host families and host communities in urban settings. Profiling of urban displacement situations can be a useful tool for this, as it allows for area-based, comparative analyses between the different population groups living in one city.

When multifaceted displacement dynamics intersect with the complexity of the city, the result is a unique set of challenges confronting authorities, humanitarian actors and other actors seeking to provide protection, assistance and solutions to those affected. Today it is widely acknowledged that these unique challenges cannot be addressed by simply replicating what works in rural settings. Rather, specific multi-sector approaches are required that meet the needs of IDPs and their hosts by aligning humanitarian and development work, capitalizing on local partnerships and resources, and effectively engaging with communities. However, there is still a need to develop methodologies that bring together area-based approaches and diversity in urban settings, as well as operational guidance on how best to articulate the two levels of the response – i.e., blanket interventions addressing the developmental needs of entire urban communities and targeted measures addressing IDPs' specific needs and vulnerabilities – in order to ensure the continuity and coherence of short- and long-term efforts, as well as a protection-oriented response to IDPs. There is also limited knowledge, both within and across the different organizations, of lessons learned and good operational practices as regards responding to IDPs and host communities in urban settings. This is a domain where stocktaking exercises and more effective sharing of experiences among practitioners, municipal authorities and policy-makers would be particularly beneficial.<sup>138</sup>

138 In the same sense, see J. Crisp, T. Morris and H. Refstie, above note 4, p. 39. Recommendations with regard to the need for documenting and analyzing good practices in responding to IDPs outside of camps, including in urban areas and particularly in situations of intra-city displacement, were made by the former Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs: see C. Beyani, above note 3, p. 20, under points C and D.