Special feature

Humanitarian response in urban areas

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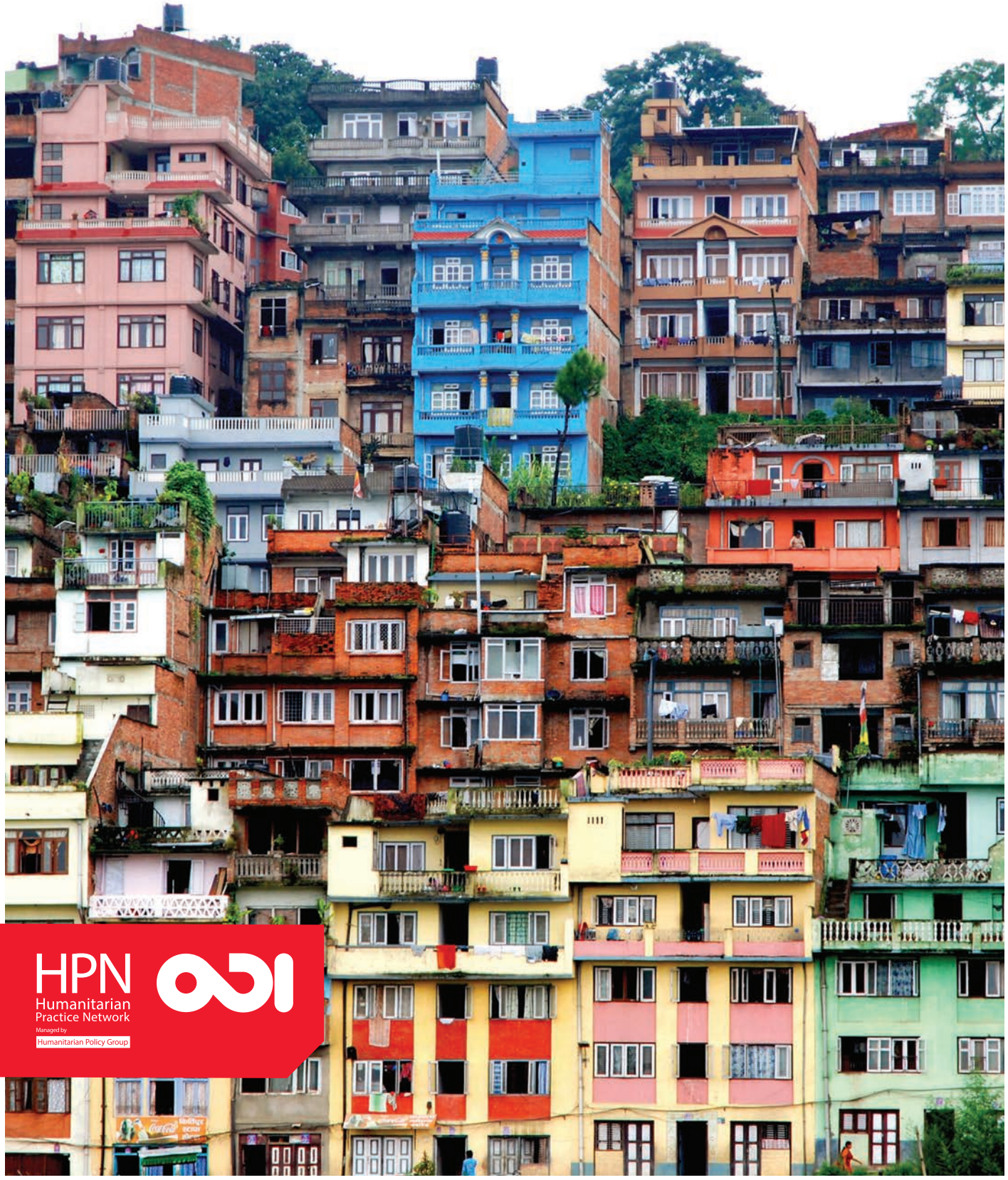
Humanitarian Exchange



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Cover photo: High-density houses in Kathmandu, Nepal

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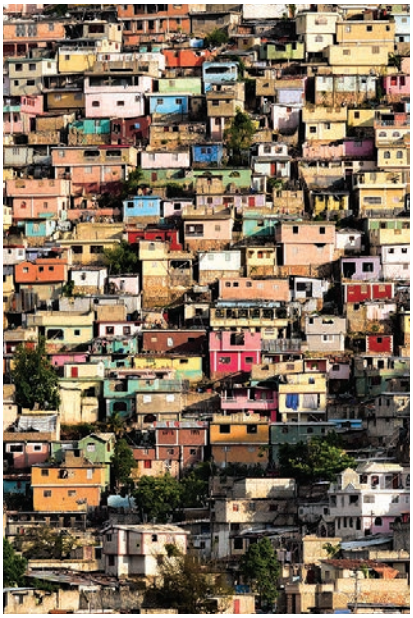

Humanitarian crises are increasingly affecting urban areas either directly, through civil conflict, hazards such as flooding or earthquakes, urban violence or outbreaks of disease, or indirectly, through hosting people fleeing these threats. The humanitarian sector has been slow to understand how the challenges and opportunities of working in urban spaces necessitate changes in how they operate. For agencies used to working in rural contexts, the dynamism of the city, with its reliance on markets, complex systems and intricate logistics, can be a daunting challenge. Huge, diverse and mobile populations complicate needs assessments, and close coordination with other, often unfamiliar, actors is necessary.

But what precisely is different about doing humanitarian assistance in urban settings? Alyoscia D'Onofrio reflects on this question in his lead article. John Twigg and Irina Mosel emphasise that engaging with and supporting informal actors is key to achieving greater accountability in urban areas, while Leah Campbell and Wale Osofisan both highlight the need for context-relevant responses. Samer Saliba describes the International Rescue Committee (IRC)'s experience in developing partnerships with municipalities, David Sanderson and Pamela Sitko outline ten principles for enacting area-based approaches in urban post-disaster recovery and Chris Pain and Hanne Vrebos discuss Concern's area-based programme in Port-au-Prince. Ruta Nimkar and Mathias Devi Nielsen look at a new programming approach in urban centres in Afghanistan to address the needs of the long-term displaced. Learning from an urban earthquake simulation exercise in Dhaka is the focus of articles by Charles Kelly and Herma Majoor and Larissa Pelham, who conclude that, to maximise the usefulness of such exercises, more advance training, engagement and preparation is needed. In their article, Jonathan Parkinson, Tim Forster and Esther Shaylor underscore the benefits of using market analysis to support humanitarian WASH programming in urban areas. The edition ends with an article by Estella Carpi and Camillo Boano analysing the potential unintended consequences of the increasing urbanisation of humanitarian response, focusing on border regions neighbouring Syria.

Editorial photos:
Left: Dense housing in Port au Prince, Haiti.
© Neil Palmer/CIAT

Top: Haitians set up impromptu tent cities through the capital after an earthquake rocked Port-au-Prince, 2010.
© United Nations Development Programme

Middle: Children playing at a child-friendly space at a DRC urban centre in Herat.
© Mathias Devi Nielsen and Shakib Heryazad

Bottom right: Turkish workers load bags of flour provided by the Turkish Red Crescent onto a truck bound for Syria at the border in Kilis, Turkey.
© Lynsey Addario/The New York Times

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Dense housing in Port au Prince, Haiti

© Neil Palmer/CIAT

Humanitarian response in urban areas

Different, but how? Better aid in the city

Alyoscia D'Onofrio

In recent years, there has been a significant drive to improve aid interventions in urban settings, with investments from donors and operational agencies in improved contextual analyses and programming interventions, and to a lesser extent in deploying urban experts and shifting attitudes and approaches to engagement in urban settings. There has also been a lot of talk as to what is different about doing humanitarian assistance in an urban setting, with conferences, workshops and side events dedicated to this theme. Despite this, there remains something a little elusive about the specificity of this difference. This article offers some personal reflections as to why this is the case, and how we can bring greater clarity and purpose to the delivery of aid in cities.

Why do we struggle to define what's different?

While there is a growing consensus that cities are an important locus of current and future humanitarian interventions, and that 'urban' is 'different', as a participant observer in many urban humanitarian conversations of late I've seen people struggle to articulate how the distinctiveness of urban settings should translate (or not) into different programming approaches and engagement strategies. I think there are two main reasons for this.

The rural delusion (and its companion, the camp delusion)

There are many accumulated bad habits from aid work in rural and camp settings, which might be summarised as a general blindness to local power dynamics, local authority structures and heterogeneity in community composition (social class, ethnicity, locality of origin, trajectory of migration, in addition to the more obvious, but nevertheless often neglected, characteristics of age, gender, disability and so on).

Viewed against this backdrop, 'urban' is held up as exhibiting all of the qualities that have been ignored and underplayed in rural or camp settings. Broad statements are then made about the importance of engaging with local authorities, understanding social schisms, etc. as if this was particular to or definitive of an urban environment. The problem here is that doing urban humanitarianism just becomes another way of saying you should do better aid, leaving us none the wiser about the specificity of urban settings and the approaches, attitudes and behaviours needed to navigate them.

A crowded aid reform agenda

There are a multitude of change agendas in aid work. The aspiration to improve and change appears to be a constant condition within the sector, even if the words used to describe reform processes themselves change every few years. Many of the aid innovations under way at the moment include initiatives which have developed in urban settings, such as the use of cash assistance or information provision through smartphones. Reflection on how to engage in an urban setting can rapidly be subsumed in discussions about the pros and cons of specific aid reforms, types of intervention and emergent best practices. For example, I've seen several discussions about cash transfers in urban settings rapidly get stuck on why cash is a good intervention modality and how it can be done more cost-efficiently, rather than thinking through the social and protection impact of issuing things that look like credit cards to refugees living in crowded informal settlements alongside existing, untargeted residents. Urban specificities often disappear under the weight of thematic reform discussions, perhaps unsurprisingly given the primacy accorded to sectors in the humanitarian architecture.

So what, then, is the case for paying attention to urban settings as distinct from other change initiatives and other contexts? I want to do three things in the remainder of this article, essentially outlining the case for an urban-focused humanitarianism, and helping to articulate what that actually means: first, briefly recap the importance of paying attention to urban settings for humanitarian work; second, examine what's distinctive about those urban contexts; and third, tease out the implications for changed operational behaviours and interventions.

Why care about urban settings for humanitarian aid?

It has become commonplace to preface any discussion of urban humanitarianism with a reference to the estimated proportion of refugees residing in urban areas (60% in 2016),[1] coupled with the global estimated number of forcibly displaced people (65.6 million at the end of 2016).[2] Analysis of trends in urbanisation

1 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*, http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34.pdf. Note that this figure is based on a sub-set of 14.2 million refugees for whom information was available.

2 Ibid.

in general, and the urbanisation of poverty in particular, suggests that cities are likely to increasingly be both a site of conflict and a haven for those fleeing from it. Add to this the protracted conflicts in cities in Syria and beyond, the impact of gang violence in urban Latin America and the increasing frequency of climate change-induced natural hazards in urban centres in Asia and the Americas, and there appears a very compelling case to pay attention to urban settings as a major locus for humanitarian action.

But if the future is likely to be very urban, this is only half the story of why understanding the distinctiveness of urban settings is important for humanitarian aid. The other side of the coin is the origins of past humanitarian interventions in rural and camp-based settings. These settings are remarkable not for the absence of power dynamics and heterogeneity, as mentioned above, so much as for the relative ease with which aid agencies can identify and serve individuals, households and specific groups of people. So we have aid intervention strategies (water points, latrines, distributions of various sorts, primary healthcare support, livelihoods support) that are predicated on a clear identification of target 'beneficiaries' confronting a world in which people are increasingly mixed together in larger numbers in complex urban environments.

What is distinctive about urban settings?

There are many ways to answer this question. Here are five terms that I find useful in thinking about what's distinctive about the economy, government and governance, built environment, population, media and social agency in cities.

Quantity

As one of my urban-specialist colleagues likes to put it: 'There's just more. Of everything'. This applies to economic transactions, as it does to types of information flow and planning and coordination bodies. Line ministries coexist with local authorities, and in the capital with national governing bodies. Several types of informal authority can hold sway over particular areas or population groups. So we need to pay attention to the 'more of everything', and not settle upon first impressions or entry points and assume we've figured it all out.

Density

Not only are there more people, transactions and organisations, there is a proximity between them that is a fundamental characteristic of the urban environment: people living in close quarters to one another amplifies the spread of information (correct or otherwise), disease, panic, etc. Crises can play out very differently in an urban setting, and it pays to be attentive to how quickly density or proximity can change the dynamics of the operating environment. Identifying a single partner government or civil society agency may be simple in a rural setting (through limited choice, if nothing else), but in an urban setting density layered onto quantity can mean that engaging with one partner can easily create tensions with others in a way that hinders humanitarian interventions.

Diversity

There is a greater likelihood of diverse population characteristics across multiple axes: ethnicity, religion, wealth, income. Combined with density, diversity can be a conflict driver waiting for a proximate trigger, such as a sudden large influx of people or a disruption to the city infrastructure. But beyond the more obvious questions of population diversity, there are also likely to be more diverse political agendas, economic opportunities, points of view, types of infrastructure and patterns of movement. For those used to the relative consistency (again, exaggerated consistency due to poor contextual analysis) of rural or camp settings, it is all too easy to miss the importance of moving beyond first impressions and understanding how the multiple variations at play can fundamentally affect any humanitarian intervention.

Complexity

All of the above is driving towards a pretty obvious point: there is a complexity to the interrelatedness of urban systems, processes, organisations and institutions that cannot be ignored if a humanitarian agency is to function effectively in an urban context. We ignore complexity at our peril, both in terms of the efficacy of interventions and in terms of staff security and reputation. There are likely to be many unintended consequences from an intervention in an urban setting, and being alert and maintaining an adaptive attitude can serve us well under such conditions. Conversely, it also means that there are many more potential pathways to achieving desired outcomes, and wider scope for creative and innovative solutions to the problems people in urban settings face.

Capacity

Which brings us to another fundamental difference between urban and rural settings: the capacity and capability of individuals and organisations. Not only are there more and diverse forms of authority and agency, but they also tend to draw on better-educated, more experienced and more capable individuals and organisations. There are plans and systems, and creative, adaptive minds behind them. While a humanitarian crisis might be new, there are likely to be coping mechanisms and forms of resilience that are founded on these capabilities. Ignoring or marginalising these assets is a huge missed opportunity for better humanitarian response.

What are the implications for humanitarian work in urban settings?

The temptation, when faced with a list of how different urban settings are, is to pose a question like: how should cash programming/water provision/community healthcare/emergency education/child-friendly spaces be modified to be relevant in an urban setting? The temptation is to begin by taking what we know and asking how it should be applied in the city, possibly modifying it slightly in the process.

This is not a great starting point. Given the complexity and capacity issues referenced above, good urban humanitarian-

ism needs to start from understanding what existing responses are being mounted by local authorities, how well these are faring, what political support there is for them and how short-term interventions tie into the longer-term development plan for the city. In general, operating in an urban area you cannot afford to underinvest in understanding the context. While this is and should be true of any humanitarian intervention, it is exponentially so in an urban setting. There are shortcuts (or 'tools') to assist in this, but beyond formal reflection this is also about an attitude or mindset that is both more humble and more adaptive than the application of off-the-shelf humanitarian interventions. This is, to borrow a phrase, about problem-driven iterative adaptation:[3] working with the right constellation of organisations and individuals to solve the specific problems faced by the people you seek to help (and, in most cases, the people that are living around them).

Cash in the city? It might be there is a social safety net that you can tap into and support, expanding coverage to displaced people new to the city; parallel structures and duplication may not be (or in some cases might have to be) the best approach. Socio-political context is everything. So too with access to services and the quality of services: what is already there, what damage have shocks done, do shocks provide an opportunity to improve quality, and are there allies for such ambitions?

If all this seems nice in theory and difficult in practice, it's worth reflecting on what prevents us from operating in this way. Here are three commonly cited barriers that I've encountered, and what we can do to address them.

Time pressure

'It's an emergency and we have to act now. It slows us down to analyse the context and talk to people.' There are ways around this and the potential costs of *not* analysing the context are huge. If you have the resources you can deploy on parallel tracks, doing some simple life-saving interventions, while others carry out more detailed assessments. But more often than not, one of the best sources of local information is ignored or under-utilised: the clients of your life-saving interventions. There is a huge opportunity to learn that is rarely tapped in an open-ended way. Don't treat the affected population as an instrumental means to your donor-required needs assessment; instead, ask some open-ended questions and listen to the answers. Cross-check with your teams in a daily end of day debrief, and build up your knowledge base as you go.

Local capacity

Similarly, making time to build relationships with overburdened local authorities might seem like a luxury you can't afford, but without this you will only have a very partial picture of problems and potential solutions. If the local authorities seem unresponsive, ask yourself why: is it something to do with how you have presented your intentions? Has there been a sudden arrival of tens or hundreds of international aid agencies all trying to meet with the same handful of officials because they've read an article like this, or because their donor is obliging them to demonstrate local collaboration? Are there things that you can do as a collective of international agencies to reduce this pressure, while still learning and problem-solving collectively?

Donor constraints

When in doubt, blaming the donor is a favourite option: we'd like to do X but our donor log-frame requires us to do Y. Leaving aside that it was us that wrote the log-frame in the first place – with insufficient information due to the time pressures mentioned above – rare is the donor that is not flexible in responding to changing situations on the ground. Often it is our fear or pride that stands in the way of admitting that we made a mistake; that more information has come to light; that our commitment to adaptive programming means that we continue to carry out contextual analysis and that this has generated new insights. Most donors expect aid agencies to actively listen to their clients. Most donor agencies also expect effectiveness and efficiency in the interventions they fund. All of these are levers to do better, more context-adapted programming. There are of course transaction costs, but these pale into insignificance in relation to the human, opportunity, financial, reputational and sometimes security costs of not adapting to urban contexts.

For humanitarians, success in an urban setting begins with an attitude shift, with relationship-building and ongoing contextual analysis. From here all sorts of things are possible. Ask not what a city can do for your favourite humanitarian intervention, ask what you can do to support a city's response.

Alyoscia D'Onofrio is Senior Director, Governance at the International Rescue Committee.

3 M. Andrews et al., *Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action* (Oxford: OUP, 2017), https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/building-state-capability-evidence-analysis-action. This approach is similar to those advocated under headings such as Adaptive Management and Doing Development Differently. The label is less important than the approach.

Informality in urban crisis response

John Twigg and Irina Mosel

Disasters stimulate informal activity, often on a very large scale. Informal actors and activity can be a significant feature of urban crisis response, in disasters, conflict or violent urban settings. The term 'informality' is used in different ways, often implying a lack of political and legal status and recognition, in relation to actors, networks, social and organisational arrangements, settlements and economic practices, and relationships and transactions. It has been applied to many aspects of urban life, particularly planning systems and structures; housing construction and human settlement; economy, employment and livelihoods; forms of organisation or association; governance; regulatory systems; types of knowledge and practice; planning and the use of urban space; and supply of services and transport. The boundaries and relationships between 'formal' and 'informal' are not always clear-cut; they are often complementary or interconnected. It is generally accepted that aid providers should work with existing institutions, local structures and civil society, but international agencies are often unsure about who these local actors are and how they can contribute to humanitarian action. By understanding these actors and their activities better, humanitarian practitioners and policy-makers should be able to identify when and how to support them more effectively.

Urban contexts and actors

Recent urban disasters have drawn attention to humanitarian actors' limited understanding of urban contexts. Urban communities are usually far more complex than rural ones: often not neatly definable geographical entities, but more dispersed networks or groups. Vulnerability is diffused across a town or city, making it harder to identify those most in need and target interventions. Urban populations contain diverse social, economic, ethnic, religious, age and economic groups, with different histories, capacities, vulnerabilities and needs. Urban communities are more closely tied into the cash economy and markets; people may commute long distances daily to work or trade; and migration in and out of urban areas can make it difficult to measure population size and composition. Informal renting, hosting and sharing housing arrangements make displaced and marginalised people hard to locate. Official organisations' mandates, authority and legitimacy may not be acknowledged

Typhoon Yolanda flattened thousands of houses in the eastern city of Tacloban, Philippines, 2013.

© Ben White/CAFOD

by urban communities, who may instead look to local leaders, kinship networks and other associational structures for support. Where governance and leadership structures are unclear or in transition, competition can arise between formal and informal leaders, or parallel governance structures can emerge.

Social capital and emergent groups

In crises, social capital and networks provide mutual assistance and access to support and resources. After the 2015 earthquakes in Nepal, for example, urban Newar communities were active in search and rescue, setting up temporary shelters, bringing and sharing food, organising communal meals, distributing relief and running clean-up campaigns. Communities or neighbourhoods with strong social capital and networks recover from disasters more quickly and effectively, as shown by research in Kobe, Japan, after the 1995 earthquake; Gujarat following the 2001 earthquake; and New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Disaster-affected people generally join together in crises, and repeated disaster events may reinforce social capital and social organisation.

Disasters commonly stimulate spontaneous responses by self-organising, voluntary groups and individuals, helping with search and rescue, collecting, transporting and distributing relief supplies and providing food and drink to victims and emergency workers. Such emergent activity can take place on a huge scale, often involving thousands and sometimes hundreds of thousands of people. Pre-existing social relationships (family, neighbourhood, workplace) influence how these groups are created and organised. Involvement can also have a transformative effect on volunteers, stimulating greater and longer-term volunteering.

Informality, displacement and urban violence

More than half of the world's refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) live in urban areas, often in under-developed informal settlements without adequate access to basic services and infrastructure, and reliant on informal protection and governance arrangements, service providers and employment opportunities. Displaced people lacking legal status or permits are more prone to entering into insecure tenure agreements, leaving them open to exploitation and eviction by landlords seeking higher rents, or government upgrading schemes. These populations may lack visibility, or choose to be invisible for security and personal reasons, and thus are difficult for humanitarian actors to identify and target.

In the absence of more formal structures, informal mechanisms and service providers play important roles for displaced people, particularly in dispute resolution, community and security support and service provision. In Peshawar, communities rely on social and kinship networks for social and moral support. In Nairobi, community-based organisations, committees and groups provide essential services such as waste management and livelihood support. In Kabul, ethnic links to powerful actors provide communities with access to aid and protection against forced evictions.

In many contexts, 'formal' institutions such as the police are not considered legitimate or effective, and informal arrangements are put in place to address security concerns or resolve disputes. In Nairobi, criminal gangs provide de facto rule of law and security at the request of residents. In Juba, young, disenfranchised men join gangs for camaraderie and support as an alternative to a family unit, as well as for social and economic security. In urban conflict zones, engagement with informal local actors and security providers can be crucial for aid delivery, access and security: in Mogadishu, for example, informal actors, landlords or groups controlling public and private plots often act as 'gatekeepers' for aid delivery to IDP camps.

Urban violence

Many urban areas are affected by high – and sometimes endemic – levels of violence. In many cases, violence is not perpetrated by easily identifiable belligerents or official armies, but by a complex web of often informally assembled, interconnected groups and individuals with diverse backgrounds and agendas. Humanitarian actors operating in violent urban environments need to engage with many of these informal groups to gain access to vulnerable populations. While humanitarian organisations routinely engage with non-state armed groups in conflicts, they have been more reluctant to engage in contexts of criminal and other related violence. It may be more difficult for humanitarians to find entry-points and identify armed or criminal groups in such settings, but they can work with development counterparts and local organisations with deeper contextual knowledge to understand the drivers of violence, the make-up of the groups involved and their relationships with communities.

Informal economies

Urban economies are largely cash-based, with significant market activity. Urban markets may suffer short-term disruption in disasters, but can resume quickly and provide most of what local people need to recover. Urban areas also offer more options for transferring funds through local financial institutions. Poor and vulnerable people use a range of financial tools to manage cash flow, cope with emergencies and build up assets. Often, these are semi-formal or informal, such as rotating funds, savings clubs and loan groups, or loans from family and friends.

Informal material and financial support is important in many disasters. In one study in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, 40% of respondents received some form of informal assistance after the disaster, nearly always cash. In the aftermath of Typhoon Yolande in the Philippines in 2013, almost 40% of households surveyed received informal support from neighbours and the local community, including temporary lodging, food, cash

and help with rebuilding. Households with access to informal savings and lending from sources such as employers, shops and local moneylenders recovered faster and were more confident about coping with future shocks.

Diasporas, transnational social networks and foreign remittances support crisis response and recovery. Remittance inflows increase steeply after disasters, though this tends to be short-lived. Remittances can be delivered through formal channels (banks and money transfer agencies) and informally, via individuals travelling overseas and returning with money or goods as a favour for friends and family, or in return for a payment. These flows are hard to track – they are not monitored by central banks or other government authorities, and other forms of in-kind support from diasporas are largely invisible.

Humanitarian agencies are increasingly trying to align emergency responses with local market systems to protect livelihoods after a disaster. Market assessment tools look at the entire market system, including local market actors, market chains, infrastructure and support services, non-monetary forms of exchange, market access, formal policies and regulations and the informal social norms that guide the system, and which may exclude some groups from the market. They look at formal and informal stakeholders and their roles in the system as workers, producers, traders, consumers and regulators, and the economic and power relationships between them. They also consider the impacts of humanitarian interventions on markets.

Digital humanitarianism and informality

Recent advances in information and communications technologies are enabling new forms of informal, spontaneous and self-organised volunteerism. Crowdsourcing, volunteered geographic information tools and social media platforms are now widely used in disasters and crises to assess damage, identify needs and sources of assistance, mobilise informal responses and connect affected families with service providers and suppliers. Such technologies help to overcome the problem of identifying and reaching spatially dispersed, diverse and invisible urban communities. High population density and relatively high levels of mobile phone use and Internet connectivity in urban areas enable information to spread rapidly.

Crowdsourcing and social media encourage volunteerism and give a voice to disaster-affected people, empowering them as actors in response and recovery. This offers an opportunity to change the relationship between aid givers and recipients and support emergent activity. However, many formal agencies appear to see new media technologies and practices primarily as a means of obtaining or disseminating information more effectively, rather than a means of entering into dialogue with affected communities or transforming relationships with crisis-affected people.

Conclusions

Engaging with informality is key to achieving greater accountability to disaster-affected communities. Humanitarian actors need to work more closely with the full range of existing structures – informal as well as formal – that are crucial to the way urban dwellers, including displaced people, live their lives. It is important to enhance collaboration and synergies between formal and informal actors, networks and institutions through humanitarian interventions, rather than replacing or duplicating existing structures that work well or play important roles in people's lives and livelihoods.

There is a need for more comprehensive and systematic understanding of the wide variety of local and informal actors in urban contexts, their ways of organising, activities, legitimacy and accountability, and ways of engaging with them. Urban environments, with their diversity, dynamism and complexity, present many challenges to humanitarian assessments; traditional methods do not capture the interrelationships between formal and informal systems or the division of roles and responsibilities between formal and informal actors, and formal humanitarian actors often do not see informality or misunderstand it. As a result, there is a shortage of policy and practice guidance on how to identify and engage with informality.

Agencies are beginning to adapt their needs, context, vulnerability and stakeholder assessments and associated targeting tools to urban conditions. New assessment approaches and tools designed for urban contexts are appearing, including a group of new tools developed by the Stronger Cities Initiative. There is growing interest in area-based approaches (ABAs) that focus on whole communities in defined spatial contexts. ABAs are a way of overcoming sectoral divisions, looking at interrelated needs and basing interventions on local people, relationships, systems and capacities.

Humanitarian organisations should also consider ways of supporting informal actors and their actions directly, for example by engaging emergent groups and volunteers in response activities, or providing resources, facilities and technical assistance to community support groups and social networks involved in data-gathering and aid delivery. There is also scope for thinking of alternative ways of framing organisational responses to disasters and crises, and thinking differently about stakeholders in crisis response, less in terms of organisational form and more in terms of the different roles they can play.

John Twigg is a Principal Research Fellow with the Risk and Resilience Programme at ODI. **Irina Mosel** is a Senior Research Fellow in the Humanitarian Policy Group at ODI. This article draws on two longer papers by the authors: *Informality in Urban Crisis Response* (London: ODI, 2018) and 'Emergent Groups and Spontaneous Volunteers in Urban Disaster Response', *Environment & Urbanization* 29(2), 2017.

Understanding context to improve urban humanitarian response

Leah Campbell

Over the past several years, recognition of the need for humanitarian response to be 'context-relevant' has grown in prominence. It featured in conversations around the World Humanitarian Summit, comes up in discussions around coordination, accountability, localisation and effectiveness and is now broadly accepted as something humanitarian response should be striving towards. Context-relevant response has emerged particularly in initiatives to improve humanitarian action in urban areas, such as the Global Alliance for Urban Crises, and has been referenced in countless evaluations and evidence reviews.

Despite its prominence in discussion, there is little clarity about what context relevance looks like, or how it can be achieved. For urban humanitarian response, context relevance suggests a need to grapple with particularly complex, interconnected environments. Despite the increasing number of crises in urban areas over the past decade, urban humanitarian response is still criticised for a lack of context relevance, just as it was in Haiti in 2010. Drawing on research by ALNAP, this article explores the evidence base for using context tools, and practical challenges such as deciding scope, methodologies and outputs, roles and responsibilities and what organisational and individual attributes and resources are needed for context tools to effectively inform urban humanitarian response.

What is context?

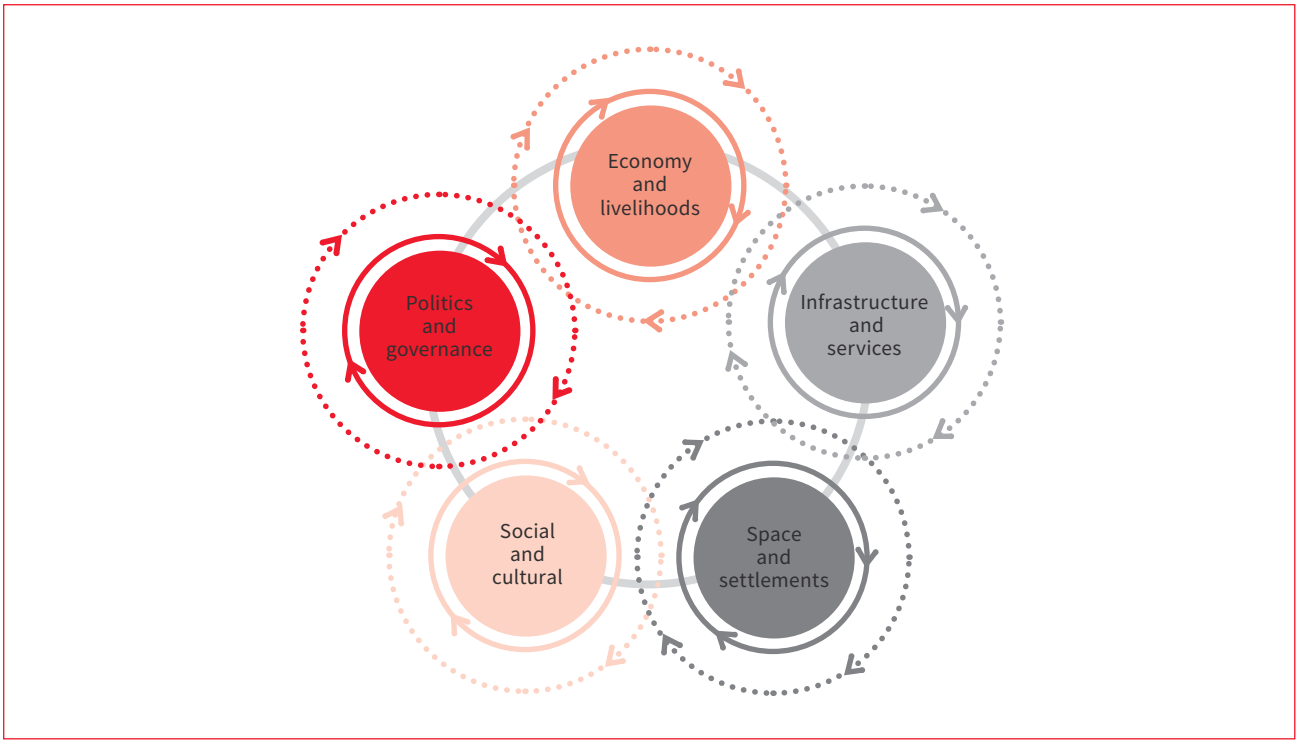
Before getting into why we need to understand context, it's important to make sure we're on the same page about what 'context' actually is. Despite what has become widespread discourse about the need for 'context-relevant' or 'context-sensitive' humanitarian response, there are surprisingly few definitions of what 'context' means in the humanitarian sector. 'Context' is used inconsistently to mean a variety of different things.

'Context' is the environment and circumstances within which something happens, and which can help to explain it. Often, 'context' is used to refer to a specific situation, but it is broader than any one incident, and longer-lasting than the experience of any individual or group. In urban environments, context includes politics and governance, economy and livelihoods, services and infrastructure, social and cultural space and settlements, as well as a wide range of stakeholders.

Do we need to improve our understanding of context?

Improving our understanding of context would enable us to respond better to crises in urban contexts in a number of ways, including:

Figure 1: A typology of urban systems



Source: Leah Campbell, *Stepping Back: Understanding Cities and Their Systems* (London: ALNAP, 2016), https://www.odi.org/publications/10580-stepping-back-understanding-cities-and-their-systems.

- Helping us design effective, evidence-based humanitarian programmes which are relevant to the context.
- Supporting ongoing development and planning within the city, and raising awareness of urban issues.
- Providing a holistic view of the situation in complex urban environments.
- Facilitating effective and appropriate engagement with urban stakeholders.
- Supporting flexibility and adaptiveness.
- Helping ensure we 'do no harm'.

The article by Wale Osofisan on page 14 explores in more depth how understanding these issues is important in urban humanitarian response.

Over the past decade or two reports and evaluations of urban humanitarian crises have consistently described humanitarians as having little understanding of context. The fact that we struggle to understand urban contexts is part of a broader trend within the humanitarian sector as a whole. There are a variety of reasons why we find it hard to understand context – our focus on individuals and households affected by crisis and siloed approaches dividing response into sectoral 'component parts' limits our ability to take in contextual issues. The humanitarian timeframe, too, can hold us back. In many cases, we don't have the time to think about being relevant to context, and haven't been using the right tools. While efforts in recent years have focused on adapting various humanitarian tools originally designed for urban contexts, most are sectoral or needs-based, rather than tools for understanding context.

What are 'context tools'? Can they help?

During the early phases of ALNAP's research it was not clear which, if any, tools could help humanitarians to understand the urban context. It took some time to find what we were looking for, in part due to a lack of consistent understanding about what 'context' is, and because, unlike more established tools such as needs assessments or market analysis, there are no consistent terms for what this article refers to as 'context tools'. Over time, the research identified more and more tools which, in whole or in part, could fall under the 'context tools' umbrella. As part of the research process, ALNAP organised a learning exchange in April 2017, inviting colleagues who had worked with several tools being explored in the study. Recognising differences in the scope, scale, methodologies, ownership and focus areas of each of their tools when compared to the others, participants at the learning exchange wondered whether they had anything in common at all. Could these tools all be grouped under the same umbrella?

This research identified a number of 'context' tools which, in whole or in part, all focus on context. Despite many differences, they can be identified as a group and can collectively be distinguished from other sorts of tools. They use a variety of names – including context analysis, situation analysis, urban profiles/profiling, governance analysis and stakeholder analysis. Twenty-five tools were studied for this research, sixteen of which were found to fit into the 'context tools' category. They include:

- City and Neighbourhood Profiles (UN Habitat).
- Urban Context Analysis (IRC – see the article by Osofisan for more information).
- City Wide Assessment (World Vision).
- Displacement Profiling (JIPS).
- City-Wide Risk Assessment: Do it Together Toolkit for Building Urban Community Resilience (American Red Cross).
- Local Authority Profiling Tool (Oxfam Italia).

Despite differences (in timeframe, methodology, depth, etc.), 'context tools' can be grouped together as they all:

- Focus on the context (rather than on a specific situation or vulnerability).
- Explore interconnectedness (rather than focusing on single or multiple sectors).
- Utilise a variety of approaches (rather than being one specific tool).
- Explore the neighbourhood/city scale (rather than individual/household scale).

For some, 'tool' is a problematic or loaded word. It can be interpreted in different ways. When some people think 'tool', they think only of a 300-page manual to add to the stack already gathering dust on the shelf. For others, a tool is anything that can be used to help achieve a goal – it could be a one-page spreadsheet, a software programme, a ladder or a bicycle, depending on the job. Other interviewees for the research warned that tools sometimes risk trying to be all things to all people. Tools themselves are just one possible solution to the problem of understanding context. Tools can be useful, but there are other ways to improve understanding of context and, as found in the research, just having the tool is not enough to make best use of the analysis.

The importance of continuous analysis

The argument for better understanding of context is really about a cultural shift throughout a response. There is no one moment when it would be most appropriate to use tools to understand the urban context. Several tools have guidance which suggests that analysis is reviewed 'when necessary', though this will depend on the context itself – how complex it is, how much it's changing over time and what depth of understanding may now be required and what resources have become available. There are, however, some common themes in the literature, and the tools reviewed for this paper, which suggest that context tools can/should be used:

- At key moments in the programme cycle (at the start of a response, part of M&E processes, etc.).

Haitians set up impromptu tent cities through the capital after an earthquake rocked Port-au-Prince, 2010.

© United Nations Development Programme

- Whenever there is a major event/change.
- To align with strategic and planning processes and with other analysis processes.
- To align with the context itself.
- In a modified way, on a continuous basis.
- Pre-crisis, as a preparedness activity.

In reality, analysis will be used at all or most of these moments. Understanding the context is not a one-off activity; tools are useful in helping us gather information at a point in time, but this analysis can quickly become out of date. For this reason, literature and guidance overwhelmingly support continuous analysis, which could also be described as context monitoring. Continuous analysis of context is important because both humanitarian and urban contexts change rapidly. Continuously monitoring the context also enables more flexible and iterative humanitarian programming. Where organisations are able to make programmatic decisions based on an understanding of context, and then monitor both changes to the context and the impact of their programming decisions, they can make choices that are more appropriate to the context, and that will have the most impact. Some form of continuous analysis also makes it possible for organisations to keep in mind the other timing considerations mentioned in this section, such as when major changes occur, and to align with planning processes and contextual realities.

What else is needed to make analysis effective?

No matter how much time or effort is put into any tool or process of analysis, other factors shape how effective this analysis can be. These include:

- Relationships between, and buy-in from, a diverse range of stakeholders.
- Institutional support in the form of leadership buy-in, adequate time and resources and a supportive environment that is flexible, promotes learning and self-reflection, is open to failure and seeks diverse perspectives.
- The ability of individuals to understand and embrace complexity, and employ their skills and capacities.
- Financial resources to carry out analysis, and a policy role for donors that changes incentives for organisations and promotes an understanding of context throughout the sector.

How else can humanitarians understand context?

Tools are just one way to understand urban contexts. Humanitarians are likely to pick up relevant contextual information

piece by piece over time, particularly where they spend time getting to know the people and institutions they interact with. Hiring and engaging with local staff and partners, crisis-affected people, authorities and civil society will also provide valuable insights. These longer-term opportunities in all likelihood can provide deeper knowledge and understanding of aspects of the context. However, this can take a significant amount of time, will not be gathered and evidenced in one place for practical use in response planning and is likely to be patchy. Both international and national staff interviewed for this research, many of whom had strong existing knowledge of the cities being analysed, found that using a tool both helped to confirm and evidence things that they knew, brought to the surface assumptions and ideas and provided new insights. Along these lines, guidance for one of the tools explains that it is 'not meant to replace the deep local knowledge that those who are working in the country concerned already have – it is only a method to help extract that knowledge so it can support policy implementation and programming in a structured manner'.[1]

Leah Campbell is a Senior Research Officer with ALNAP. In March 2018, ALNAP will publish a research paper exploring the use of context tools. For more information, see https://www.alnap.org/our-topics/urban-response.

1 C. Melim-McLeod, *Institutional and Context Analysis for the Sustainable Development Goals*, Guidance Note (New York: Strategic Policy Unit of the UNDP Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, 2017), p. 9.

The Urban Context Analysis Toolkit

Wale Osofisan

How can humanitarian actors better support the people they serve in complex and diverse urban settings? How can they transition from short-term emergency response to resilience-focused programming primarily driven and led by affected people and the legitimate municipal authorities? What is required to identify and build partnerships, support networks and nurture coalitions in an interconnected and interdependent urban setting? How can humanitarians better understand accountability and social relationships, and stakeholders' interests, motivations and incentives to make positive change happen? What does it take to design effective strategies and project interventions that take into account the political, economic, social and spatial relationships in an urban setting?

These are all legitimate and pertinent questions, and they implicitly confront humanitarian actors working in cities and urban areas affected by displacement crises. Needs assessment tools to support urban humanitarian response tell us what the current situation is, i.e. the visible effects of the problem, but their depth and analytical focus vary depending on the purpose for which they were designed. While these tools have intrinsic value in helping humanitarian actors identify needs, they are limited in their ability to produce information on the underlying political, economic, social and spatial factors that may limit the impact of interventions.

It is often the case in urban humanitarian responses for humanitarian actors to focus, and rightly so, on interventions tailored to supporting and getting relief to affected people. However, the results of many of these interventions are not sustainable. Humanitarian agencies often find themselves working on the same problems and issues year after year, with very little progress and few concrete outcomes. The failure to consider the central role of politics, economics, social relationships, spatial considerations and motivations and incentives is bound to lead to ineffective programme interventions.

To illustrate, consider two urban municipalities, both with strong capacities to deliver services but varying levels of accountability and motivation/incentive structures that affect the behaviour of their leaders. Municipality A is a city government with a democratically elected mayor, where people have access to information and their voices are heard, and leaders are monitored and kept accountable for promises made during election campaigns. Municipality B is a city government where the president and an elite minority determine who becomes mayor, and where people have little or no access to information regarding their rights and entitlements.

In Municipality A, it is very likely that the motivation/incentive for the re-election of the mayor will be aligned with voters' demands for policy changes or improved services. In Municipality B, the mayor's incentives to respond to people's needs, such as allocating adequate resources to health and education, are likely to be quite weak. It pays off politically to listen solely to the president and keep the handful of local urban elites happy through favourable local government contracts and subsidies and building patronage networks.

This misalignment between a leader's motivation/incentives to pursue good policies, provide services and be accountable, as opposed to serving the interests of a small elite, underscores the importance of understanding local political economies and social networks. This does not mean that humanitarian actors should get involved in municipal or city politics, the economy and social networks. Instead, it means that a stronger understanding of the urban context will enable more focused interventions that better serve the interests of the displaced and affected host communities, including the local authorities.

Urban Context Analysis Toolkit

Given the dearth of easy-to-use tools to help humanitarian actors quickly assess an urban area's pre-existing structures, systems and actors, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has developed an Urban Context Analysis Toolkit[1] to help us better understand these underlying factors. It was designed specifically to provide an assessment mechanism that is more user-friendly, quicker and more adaptable than the macro-level context analysis tools often used to inform policy reform or development projects. It is designed to enable user modification to specific contexts, and to connect community-level actions with city, state and national-level issues. It consists of ten user-friendly tools (Table 1).

Table 1 Complete urban context analysis toolkit

Tool 1	Workplan and budget
Tool 2	Desk review summary
Tool 3	Stakeholder analysis
Tool 4	Data collection plan
Tool 5a	FGD guide for displaced populations
Tool 5b	FGD guide for host communities
Tool 5c	KII guide for influential stakeholders
Tool 5d	KII guide for service provider stakeholders
Tool 5e	KII guide on labour and business climate
Tool 5f	KII guide for local government
Tool 5g	KII guide for NGO service providers
Tool 6	KII and FGD debrief template
Tool 7	Key findings
Tool 8	Programme implications
Tool 9	Urban analysis workshop
Tool 10	Urban context analysis final report outline

Table 2 Overview of context analysis process

Step 1 Launch context analysis	**Phase 1** Preparation
Step 2 Frame the context analysis	
Step 3 Select initial key context analysis questions	
Step 4 Collate secondary data	**Phase 2** Data collection
Step 5 Prepare to collect primary data	
Step 6 Carry out primary data collection	
Step 7 Analysis primary and secondary data	**Phase 3** Data analysis and documenting
Step 8 Validation workshop	
Step 9 Write final report	
Step 10 Communicate findings	

Methodology

The analysis has an area-based approach following ten steps in three consecutive phases (Table 2). The tools, particularly focus group discussion and interview guides, are meant to be adapted to each particular context based on relevance and local sensitivities. The analytical framework is based on the key areas of urban systems (see Figure 1 in Leah Campbell's article on page 11), with key themes to guide the analysis. These themes are:

1. Politics and governance: who holds power, influence and decision-making authority, and whether this corresponds to official policies, regulations and laws.
2. Social and cultural: the social structure, identities (e.g. language, ethnicity or religion) and individual factors that may support or hinder social relationships and cohesion.
3. Economic: income-generating opportunities, wage rates, commodity prices, issues that have a close connection to the opportunities and vulnerabilities of affected people.
4. Service delivery and infrastructure: access to quality services for affected people.
5. Space and settlements: the space in which the crisis is taking place (physical organisation, risks and access).

The framework also incorporates 'Do No Harm' and gender equality. 'Do No Harm' analysis helps to ensure that programmes do not increase tension or undermine existing local systems (e.g. existing service providers or local government support). Gender equality refers to the disparities between women and men as a result of the responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources and decision-making opportunities. These cross-cutting themes are integrated throughout the toolkit, including in the questionnaires and analysis steps. The output is a report containing a stakeholder analysis; key contextual findings by theme; entry-points and risk mitigation strategies for programming; and opportunities for strengthening existing or future programming. Depending on the context, this can either be a longer narrative document or simply filled in Excel and Word templates in the toolkit focusing on the findings for programmatic decision-making. This can be shared with internal and external stakeholders, though in some political or conflict contexts external sharing can be limited.

1 The development of the toolkit was supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID)-funded Urban Crises Learning Fund and the European Union (ECHO)-funded Improving Humanitarian Actors' Capacity to Respond to Urban Crises.

A view of Beirut, Lebanon, home to 300,000 Syrian refugees.

© Jacob Russell/IRC

Utilisation

The tool has been piloted and utilised in Bangkok, Dar es Salaam, Maiduguri, Juba, Amman, Kampala, Arua and Yola. It has enabled IRC to identify entry-points for collaboration, as well as adopt new approaches to programming. For instance, the Maiduguri pilot, which took place between November and December 2016, helped to inform IRC Nigeria's transition from emergency response to recovery activities working with local authorities, including the state Ministry of Health. The pilot in Amman in February–March 2017 was also used to design an assessment on behalf of the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) Resilient Amman Team, which fed into the Amman Resilience Strategy.

Limitations

As with most programmatic tools, the toolkit has limitations. First, there is the inherent trade-off and challenge in striking a balance between being specific and concrete enough to be useful, while remaining general enough that it can be applied in varied contexts. The toolkit is based on standard project and qualitative research tools, with the expectation that it will be adapted by users to the specifics of the urban context being examined, and according to the rationale behind the analysis. In addition to adapting the tools for specific contexts, the toolkit encourages users to periodically update the analysis as the dynamics of the context evolve – new governments take office; new policies are enacted; there are new waves of displacement.

Second, the toolkit is not designed to provide a prescriptive guide to programme design. Rather, the analysis constructs a backdrop of key cross-cutting issues such as political economy and potential conflict tensions, and other risk factors that should be taken into consideration when developing a strategy or programmes/projects.

Third, the toolkit and the steps outlined above describe a qualitative exercise. If users have the time and resources, they may also want to consider quantitative research, for instance a household or individual survey, and the toolkit could certainly complement these efforts. This may include either turning qualitative data into quantitative data or employing counting methods in focus group discussions to yield data that can be turned into charts and graphs, to analyse trends numerically.

Merely conducting an urban context analysis is not a magic bullet. It cannot provide quick fixes or ready-made answers to what are complex humanitarian and development problems, but it does provide better insights on what influences the types of decisions made by local authorities, bureaucrats and frontline service providers (state and non-state), and how displaced populations may affect their perspectives and decision-making. It also helps identify practical and realistic entry-points when

designing interventions that contribute to an effective response, while remaining true to humanitarian principles and values.

Uptake

We are increasingly seeing calls for proposals expecting humanitarian agencies to design interventions, including in urban settings, that explicitly consider contextual dynamics. However, bureaucratic and organisational incentives – external and internal – can hinder uptake and reduce the ability to invest in such analysis.

First, pressures to secure funding within a very short turn-round between calls for proposals and submission often restrict humanitarian actors' ability to better understand the context beforehand. The short time-frame within which donors expect implementing agencies to deliver ambitious outcomes creates another set of constraints. This promotes a narrow concern for quick and visible results that do not always provide the foundations to engage with contextual realities on the ground, and instead tends to encourage a focus on short-term outputs that are least likely to be transformational or substantive.

Second, the prescriptive nature of many donor requests for proposals, with predetermined outputs and outcomes that neither rely on adequate understanding of the context nor are informed by social theory, reinforce the internal constraints humanitarian agencies face in conducting a nuanced urban context analysis.

Third, contextual understanding may exist in one part of a humanitarian organisation, particularly among national staff, but may not be systematically documented and linked to ground-level operations. Alternatively, individual staff and partners at field level may have a very good understanding of the context in which they are working, but this is not shared within the wider organisation, and is therefore easily overlooked and not documented amid rapid mobility and staff turnover.

Despite the above, there is increasing interest and an acknowledgement within the sector that we must have a better understanding of the context in the cities where we work. Humanitarian actors should work in genuine and equal partnership with municipal/city authorities, local civil society and, most importantly, the people we serve, who themselves have greater local knowledge than we as outsiders do. Understanding the hidden causes of problems, as opposed to limiting ourselves to their visible effects, will help us gain insights to improve our responses to urban humanitarian crises.

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Say hello to your local municipality: lessons from Amman for humanitarians in the city

Samer Saliba

'Humanitarians manage a crisis in a city; municipalities manage a city in crisis.' In the two years since I first heard this quote, attributed to a UN Habitat representative during a conference on urban humanitarian response in 2015, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has tried to make urban humanitarian response a collaborative effort. Our best partners in this have proven to be municipalities.

There are two primary reasons why. First, while national governments must grapple with the legal and political differences between labels such as 'citizen', 'asylum-seeker' or 'refugee', municipalities are typically concerned with only one label: 'resident'. In stable contexts overseen by legitimate governments, municipalities often prove willing partners looking for expertise or support to manage an influx of new residents while maintaining continuity of public services. While there are counter-examples, including restrictive national policies or harmful and/or inappropriate municipal partners, in the majority of cities where the IRC works the lack of meaningful partnerships with municipalities (beyond simply registering or receiving programme approval) is not due to restraint on the part of the municipality, but on the part of the NGO.

Second, municipalities are primarily concerned with developmental endeavours. Cities differ from rural areas in many ways, but one of the clearest distinctions is that cities are constantly changing. This is particularly true of large and growing cities such as Amman and Kampala. The main remit of effective municipalities is to steer this change in a positive direction. This is never easy, and so engaged partners who can help them achieve their vision for all of their residents are often welcome and sometimes even necessary. In this way, humanitarians can help local municipalities improve their understanding of the needs and preferences of displaced residents in relation to the overall population, and use this understanding to ensure the inclusion of displaced and marginalised residents in municipal services.

Take Amman for example. Jordan is one of the top ten refugee hosting countries in the world and has the second highest ratio of refugees to host population.[1] The Jordanian government estimates that there are more than 220,000 Iraqi

1 UNHCR, *Mid-Year Trends*, February 2017, http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/58aa8f247/mid-year-trends-june-2016.html.

refugees, some 1.7 million Palestinian refugees and over 1.2m Syrian refugees, in addition to smaller communities of other nationalities including Sudanese and Somalis. Over 80% of the more than 685,000 Syrian refugees officially registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are living in urban areas, while the remaining are in Za'atari, Azraq and other smaller refugee camps.[2] Given that some Syrian refugees have been displaced for over seven years, many families have exhausted their savings. Currently, over 85% of Syrian households live under the Jordanian poverty line.[3]

An estimated 28% of Syrian refugees are living within the Amman metropolitan area.[4] While the international response has long been concentrated in the northern cities of Mafraq, Irbid and Ramtha and nearby refugee camps and settlements, recent data and assessments show the growing need to expand programming in the central cities of Amman and Zarqa. UNHCR estimates that over 185,000 persons of concern are living in Amman Governorate, though the general consensus is that the actual number is significantly higher.[5]

Since opening Za'atari camp, the Jordanian government has generally screened and transferred refugees from Syria directly there, and later to Azraq camp. Despite that, many refugees have chosen to leave the camps and settle in urban areas and host communities. Many cite feelings of indignity around life in the camps as a reason for leaving, while believing that they will have more opportunities to earn a living and reach some measure of normal life in cities such as Amman.[6] This has resulted in the heavy concentration of refugees in the capital, often in the low-income neighbourhoods in the east of the city, where they may live alongside neighbours of similar economic or cultural backgrounds, and share the challenges faced by all residents of these areas, including limited access to public and municipal services, higher living costs and crowded and/or unsafe living conditions.

While the response to the refugee crisis within Jordan is now unified by the Jordan Response Plan and the Jordan Compact – with varying levels of success[7] – this has not translated to the city level in Amman, particularly when it comes to coordinated service delivery and the establishment of a common database on the demographics and characteristics of refugees, including their mobility patterns or place of residence. The 2018–2020 version of the Jordan Response Plan highlights some successes at the municipal level, but at the time of writing was still in draft form.

As a member of 100 Resilient Cities (100RC), pioneered by The Rockefeller Foundation, the Greater Amman Municipality was responsible for its own City Resilience Strategy, which is meant to outline how it will address shocks and stresses, including unemployment, earthquakes, aging infrastructure and refugee influxes. The IRC is a 100RC platform partner supporting cities taking in displaced people with better integrated assistance and policies to strengthen overall resilience. As such, Amman's Chief Resilience Officer (who reports to the Mayor) solicited IRC's input on how to include the needs of displaced and marginalised people in the Resilience Strategy. In partnership with the Chief Resilience Officer and his team, the IRC, using the new Urban Context Analysis Toolkit,[8] worked with municipal social workers and others to conduct an assessment of how best to meet the needs of Amman's displaced and marginalised residents. The goal was to hear from as many key stakeholders and community members as possible, while focusing on the city's main concerns of youth unemployment and community engagement. The result was the development of specific actions for the Greater Amman Municipality to include in the Resilience Strategy, as well as potential areas for further collaboration around implementation. Examples include:

- Ensure that 10% of business and social sector startups promoted through Amman's entrepreneurship programmes are refugee-owned and registered businesses, particularly those run by women, and promote the presence of refugee-owned businesses in non-refugee areas to encourage integration and social cohesion.
- Work with civil society organisations to identify and support women-run businesses in marginalised neighbourhoods and invite them to utilise daycare centres, while providing safe transport services for them and their children.
- Solicit partnerships with civil society organisations in meeting the needs of vulnerable youth and supporting the safe and equal participation of women and girls in municipal youth centres.

With the support and input of Amman's officials and stakeholders, the IRC worked to include actions on inclusivity, human rights and the empowerment of displaced and marginalised communities in the Resilience Strategy. The strategy, launched by the Mayor at a press conference on 18 May 2017, serves as a roadmap for the next ten-plus years,

2 UNHCR Jordan country page, http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2549.

3 Ibid.

4 Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107.

5 UNHCR Inter-agency information sharing portal. Information updated as of 16 November 2017, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/region.php?country=107&id=75.

6 CARE Jordan baseline assessment of community identified vulnerabilities among Syrian refugees living in Amman. 2012, http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=1177.

7 See, for example, IRC, *In Search of Work – Finding Jobs for Syrian Refugees: A Case Study on the Jordan Compact*, February 2017, https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/1343/insearchofworkweb.pdf.

8 The Urban Context Analysis Toolkit analyses the underlying political, social, economic, service delivery and spatial dynamics for displaced people and host communities in Amman and Kampala. The toolkit follows a ten-step process and includes a desk review, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with both refugee and host communities. It is available at http://pubs.iied.org/10819IIED/.

A vendor in a low-income Palestinian neighborhood of East Amman shows his 'key' to his home in Palestine. Many Palestinian refugees keep a symbolic key to their homeland despite having resided in Jordan for decades.

and will receive a significant portion of the city's annual budget. It informs what projects the city will pursue, how it will solicit funding for those projects and who it hopes to partner with on implementation.

Our assessment found that displaced and marginalised people were not accessing existing services, either because they were unaware of them or were unwilling to use them. The IRC also found considerable coordination problems among actors working on this issue, including government agencies and international NGOs maintaining community centres in the same neighbourhood. To promote better collaboration, the IRC hosted a workshop in Amman bringing together aid agencies, the UN, local organisations and members of the national government to discuss the refugee crisis and the different ways in which stakeholders can work together to integrate refugee and displaced populations in the city. In part due to the strength and unique nature of this partnership, the IRC has secured funding to deliver humanitarian programmes through the municipality's social centres in Amman. One example is a livelihoods programme giving refugees and vulnerable youth from the host community support to help them generate a reliable income and contribute to the local economy through financial training and grant funding. The programme is aimed at supporting the financial independence and entrepreneurship of refugees and Jordanians in low-income neighbourhoods.

I'm often asked how the IRC has managed to develop successful partnerships with so many municipalities dealing with urban displacement, including Kampala, Athens and Amman. The question surprises me. While toolkits and prescriptive approaches are useful and should be used when the time is right, the IRC has found success by simply following this process: find out who the best person to talk to is (hint: it's probably not the Mayor), say hello, start a conversation and see if there is mutual benefit to a partnership. This approach has helped the IRC start municipal partnerships in places like Lesvos, where at one point 81 NGOs were responding to the refugee influx, only a handful of which were registered with the municipality. Just as importantly, it has helped us identify unhelpful or conflict-complicit municipalities in conflict-affected areas of West and East Africa, and how best to navigate these urban governance structures. In these cities, taking time to understand the local context and engage in dialogue with local municipalities helped us conclude that a partnership was inappropriate and would not help us better serve the needs of displaced residents.

In Kampala, dialogue with the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) has improved our understanding of the city's development goals and how to link our programmes to their existing service delivery channels. Despite hosting over 100,000 refugees, KCCA had no plans or programmes specifically addressing their needs, but welcomed further

insight on how to tailor their plans to make them more inclusive of displaced residents. As in Amman, following exposure to the humanitarian sector the KCCA is taking the lead in coordinating humanitarian services, the inclusion of displaced and marginalised residents in city plans and actions and the achievement of UNHCR's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework for Uganda.

You do not need a toolkit to say hello to your local municipality, yet surprisingly few humanitarian NGOs are willing to reach out, often assuming that municipalities are unsuitable partners. This is a tremendous missed opportunity to link humanitarian response to long-term city plans. At a time when the humanitarian–development nexus is endlessly discussed and debated, this is a simple, practical approach of practicing what we preach:

1. Engage in dialogue with the local municipal authority or authorities, where appropriate, to determine if there are any opportunities for meaningful collaboration around shared outcome areas.
2. Determine whether the city or town in which you work has a pre-existing master plan or documented development goals, and determine whether these goals are in line with programmatic outcomes.
3. Strive to better understand the interests and incentives of local authorities and stakeholders. While some interests may diverge, there will almost always be ways to approach and engage potential partners that are aligned with both humanitarian and local stakeholders' interests.
4. Share information with other response actors and local authorities in order to ensure that all actors are operating based on the same information and may coordinate or collaborate accordingly. Support municipal authorities to coordinate responses and support local actors less familiar with humanitarian and human rights-based approaches, but which are still able and willing to provide services to displaced populations.
5. Strive to achieve effective coordination among the diversity of urban stakeholders, including local authorities, NGOs, community- and faith-based organisations and the private sector. Effective coordination between local, international and state actors is key, particularly in ensuring the effective implementation of international/national frameworks at the local level.
6. Take every opportunity to link humanitarian interventions with on-going development goals to invest in long-term sustainable change and progress towards the lasting outcomes of health, education, economic wellbeing, safety and empowerment.

Urban displacement cuts across city and humanitarian sectors. As such, governments, NGOs and private and public stakeholders must rethink their roles in addressing displacement, and their relationships with one another. For humanitarian actors, relationship-building and providing technical assistance to local authorities can create pathways for more inclusive community engagement, systems strengthening and city planning through a humanitarian lens. In Amman, the approach led to a more inclusive resilience strategy that gives humanitarians a role in realising the city's vision of becoming a 'welcoming, young, and diverse city [that promotes] a culture of sharing and inclusivity, pioneering regional change'.

Samer Saliba is Urban Technical Specialist at the International Rescue Committee (IRC). This article is adapted from the report *From Response to Resilience: Working with Cities and City Plans to Address Urban Displacement*, published by the author for the IRC in February 2018. The report is available at: https://www.rescue.org/report/response-resilience-working-cities-and-city-plans-address-urban-displacement.

Ten principles for area-based approaches in urban post-disaster recovery

David Sanderson and Pamela Sitko

Area-based approaches (ABAs) to urban post-disaster recovery have attracted increasing attention in recent years. ABAs – defined as actions that 'support people after a disaster in a specific location to transition effectively from relief to recovery' – have been used in some recent disaster recovery operations to good effect, and a number of organisations have backed the approach. The Global Alliance for Urban Crises (GAUC)'s submission to HABITAT III in October 2016 advocated the need to '[a]dopt area-based approaches to programming and coordination' in recognition of the scale, nature and complexity of urban crises (GAUC, 2016). The US Agency for International Development (USAID) (2011) argues that ABAs help to improve clarity and understanding in programming by providing a clear location and set of actors to engage with. USAID's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance has promoted the idea of shelter and settlements, arguing that it is necessary to consider the wider spatial needs of 'settlement-based assistance' and a 'neighbourhood approach' to engaging with communities, as opposed to being driven by sectoral priorities such as shelter (USAID/OFDA, 2013). A World Bank review of ABAs following the 2010 Haiti earthquake concludes that 'area-based interventions led by local authorities or communities can have wide-ranging benefits, and should be encouraged' (IRC, 2015).

This article presents ten principles for area-based recovery programmes following disasters in urban areas. The principles are drawn from research undertaken as part of the Stronger Cities Initiative (https://www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative) involving World Vision, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee and the University of New South Wales (Sydney). It was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and administered by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). The principles first appeared in the guidance note 'Urban area-based approaches in post-disaster contexts', available at http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/10825IIED.pdf.

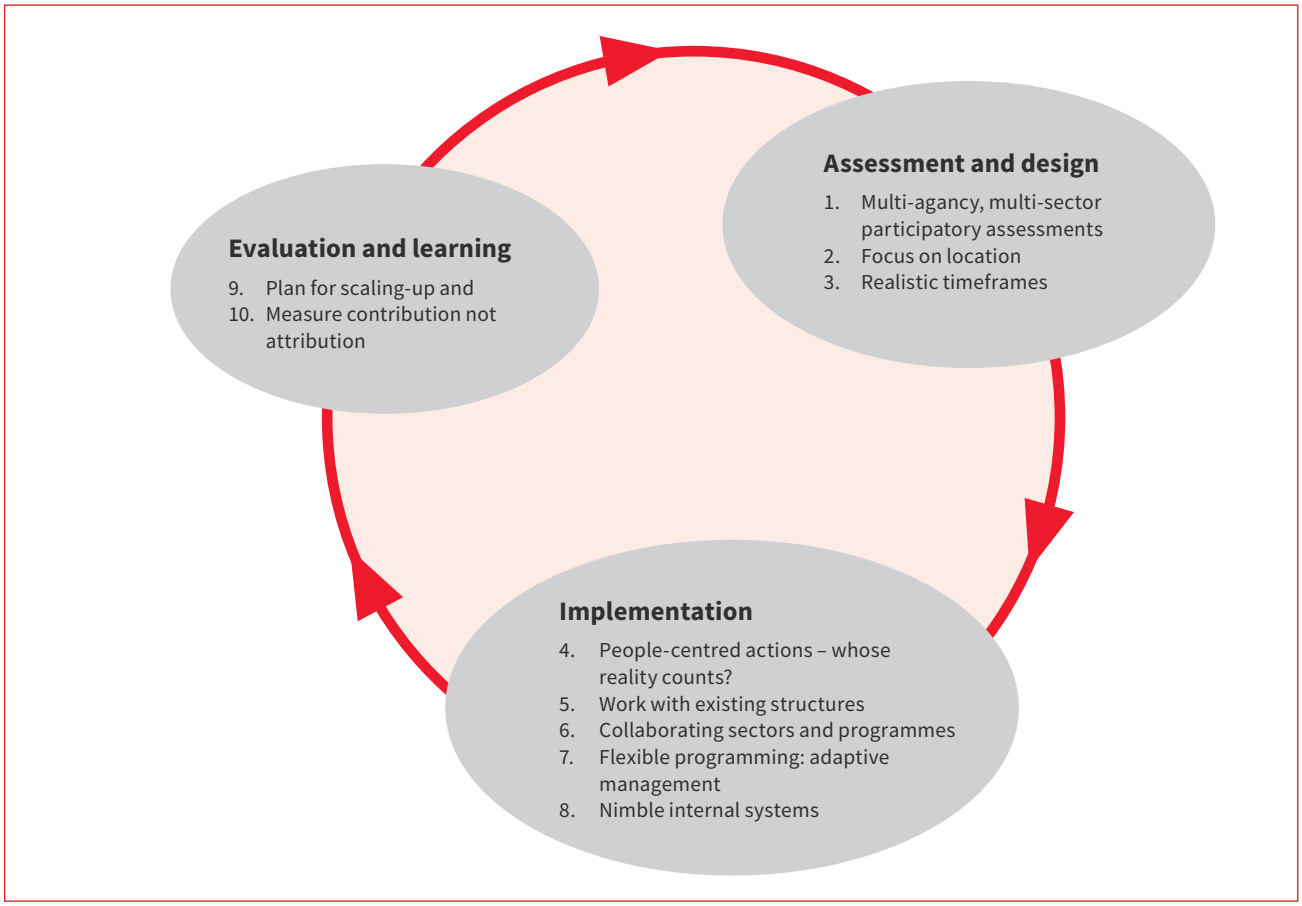
Ten principles

Findings from the research used for the basis of this paper[1] were organised into ten principles, according to the project cycle. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

Principle One, concerning multi-agency and multi-sector assessments, draws on recent literature reviews, not least Patel et al.'s 2017 systematic review of urban targeting approaches, which recommends taking a multi-sectoral approach rather than 'sector-based vulnerability analyses and targeting approaches' which are 'ill-suited to complex urban crises, where needs are interrelated. A population's needs for shelter, WASH, health, food security, and livelihoods do not exist in isolation from one another. Rather, needs interact to shape vulnerability, and must thus be met with a multi-sectoral approach to guide targeting'.[2] Concerning participatory assessment, the study found that 'community participation can range in format, and integrating community insights – even for complex vulnerability assessments – is critical'.

The next two principles focus on location (Principle Two) and timeframes (Principle Three). One study looking at people's experiences of humanitarian assistance found that what they needed was less speed and more consideration: 'many feel that "too much" is given "too fast"'. The study found that 'very few people call for more aid: virtually everyone says they want "smarter aid"'.[3] A similar point is made by IMPACT and United Cities and Local Governments, which note that 'The current

Figure 1: Ten principles for urban ABAs



1 Comprising a literature review of development and emergency literature, key informant interviews with 11 experienced practitioners and one focus group discussion.

2 R. Patel et al., *What Are the Practices to Identify and Prioritize Vulnerable Populations Affected by Urban Humanitarian Emergencies? Systematic Review*, Humanitarian Evidence Programme, Tufts University, 2017, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rr-identifyprioritize-vulnerable-populations-urban-170217-en.pdf.

3 M. Anderson, D. Brown and J. Isabella, *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid*, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012.

humanitarian architecture is built around sector-specific planning and short-term funding and programme cycles. This is not appropriate in the highly complex and dynamic environments witnessed in urban crises, where humanitarian best practices point instead to holistic, longer-term action and higher levels of engagement with sub-national actors'.[4] Relief and recovery should not be rushed – a conclusion that runs counter to the tight timeframes that aid organisations, donors and sometimes national governments may impose, and which may be at odds with the actual pace of recovery.

The need to be people-centred is a central theme throughout the principles, and is embodied in Principle Four, which poses Robert Chambers' seminal developmental question, 'whose reality counts?' – is it the needs of aid agencies and donors, or rather of affected populations?[5] Another key point, adapting Chambers' question, is to ask 'whose disaster is it?', meaning that recovery works best when it works through and strengthens existing structures. Recognising the complex realities agencies engage in, Principle Five argues that activities must engage with existing structures, even if they are weak. Leadership needs to be local, and at a variety of levels, with international actors playing a supporting role. As an example, following the 2015 Nepal earthquakes 'local government structures provided a strong lead (in the early relief stages) … in coordinating the response efforts of local and international NGOs, through regular meetings with senior government officials, as well at local level'.[6]

A common criticism of humanitarian response and recovery programming is the creation of parallel structures. For instance, setting up medical services that ignore existing structures may undermine pre-existing health care supply services.[7] The role of agencies therefore is to support local structures and approaches, even if this takes longer and is, in some instances, more difficult. This view is shared in the Sphere Project's recently revised urban guidelines: 'Depending on the capacity of the local authorities, the humanitarians' role may be more about facilitation and enabling than direct service provision'.[8]

Several of the principles challenge traditional project management tools and approaches. Principle Seven, concerning flexible programming, provides tools and approaches to

Neighbourhood meeting, Bang Bua Canal, Bangkok.

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fit this, including the correct use of logframes and new approaches such as adaptive management, 'a programming approach that combines appropriate analysis, structured flexibility, and iterative improvements in the face of contextual and causal complexity'.[9] In a pilot by IRC and Mercy Corps applying adaptive management across six locations in Africa and Asia, the key components were dynamic and collaborative teams; agile and integrated operations; appropriate data and reflective analysis; trusting and flexible partnerships; and responsive decision-making and action.

Principle Seven also refers to action planning, a set of approaches and tools for engaging neighbourhood-level decision-making in slum upgrading projects.[10] Derived from urban development, approaches include being 'problem based and opportunity driven'; 'embracing serendipity'; 'being non-reliant on complete information'; and 'focusing on starting points, rather than end states'. While such an approach may seem at odds with traditional methods of project implementation, the research on which this paper is based concludes that these are the kinds of approaches that are required if ABAs are to be successful.

Principle Eight, on using nimble internal systems, argues that effective ABAs require organisations themselves, and their systems, to align with the complexities of the task at hand. For example, concerning finance, one key informant stressed the need to ensure that 'the finance manager is not a book keeper, but rather understands what the [programme's] intent is'. Recommendations include engaging human resource functions

4 IMPACT and UCLG, 'Consultation on Humanitarian Responses in Urban Areas: Perspectives from Cities in Crisis', 2016, http://www.impact-initiatives.org/agora or https://issuu.com/uclgcglu/docs/cities_in_crisis.

5 R. Chambers, 'Poverty and Livelihoods: Whose Reality Counts?', *Environment and Urbanization*, 7(1), 1995.

6 D. Sanderson et al., *Nepal Earthquake Emergency Response Review*, Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) and Humanitarian Coalition (HC), 2015.

7 C. Clermont et al., *Urban Disasters: Lessons from Haiti. Study of Member Agencies' Responses to the Earthquake in Port au Prince, Haiti, January 2010*, DEC, 2011.

8 B. Mountfield, 'Using the Sphere Standards in Urban Settings', Sphere Project, 2016, http://www.sphereproject.org/silo/files/using-the-sphere-standards-in-urban-settings.pdf.

9 R. Chambers and B. Ramalingam, *Adapting Aid: Lessons from Six Case Studies*, IRC and Mercy Corps, 2016, http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Mercy_Corps_ADAPT_Adapting_aid_report_with_case_studies.7.21.16.pdf.

10 N. Hamdi and R. Goethert, *Action Planning for Cities: A Guide to Community Practice* (Rugby: IT Publications, 1997).

as early as possible and developing open-ended and flexible job descriptions. The need for organisations to consider the complexity of ABAs was underscored by a number of interviewees. As one stated, 'the humanitarian aid system likes simplicity … urban life however is not [simple]!'. Another said, 'If there was a simpler approach we'd be doing it!'. Principle Nine emphasises the importance of planning for scaling up, without which ABAs risk becoming isolated projects with little strategic intent to assist other, affected neighbourhoods. One key informant interviewed for the research on which this paper is based called this 'the area problem', where, for example, 'the issue may be a rich agency in one area, and a poorer one leading another'.

Finally, Principle Ten, concerning evaluation and learning, is intended to overcome the fixation with short-term individual project outputs, which can act against the intent of an ABA approach. The principle refers to the publication *Contribution to Change*,[11] which provides the steps for implementing this approach, and notes how this can overcome the challenge that 'Existing impact evaluations often focus on outputs achieved … they tend not to look at the contribution of interventions towards the overall process of recovery'.

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11 R. Few at al., Contribution to Change. *An Approach to Evaluating the Role of Intervention in Disaster Recovery* (Rugby: IT Publications, 2014), www.opml.co.uk/sites/default/files/bk-contribution-change-intervention-disaster-recovery-221113-en_0.pdf.

The evolution of an area-based programme: Concern Worldwide's experience in Port-au-Prince

Chris Pain and Hanne Vrebos

Suggestions for integrated approaches, particularly in a rural development context, have been with us for many years – stretching back to at least the late 1970s. Similar thinking in an urban humanitarian context is more recent. In 2010, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) highlighted the complex challenges urban areas pose for humanitarian action, demanding a deeper understanding of the spatial and social structures of cities and the need for a 'paradigm shift in humanitarian assistance in urban areas based on a district or community-based, rather than, individual beneficiary based, approach' with the intention of forging partnerships with actors on the ground. In their comprehensive review of area-based approaches in urban humanitarian work, Parker and Maynard highlight that the concept has been promoted by various agencies at a global level, including the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) and the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC).[1] They go on to identify three defining characteristics of an ABA in an urban context:

- They are geographically targeted, with two different ways of defining the area – through an existing government administrative area or through the physical features of the urban environment, which in turn can foster a sense of social or community identity.
- They adopt a multi-sectoral approach to address a variety of needs, embracing a range of social, economic and physical development objectives.
- They take a participatory approach, with a strong emphasis on community and wider stakeholder engagement to identify potential solutions, and where the active involvement of local authorities is also critical.

This article shows how Concern Worldwide's intervention in Grande Ravine in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, has attempted to address each of these aspects, highlighting some of the challenges along the way as the programme evolved in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, and balancing individual and community needs, keeping the most vulnerable at the centre of the intervention.

Geographical targeting

Concern has had a presence in Port-au-Prince since 1994, and in response to the earthquake of 12 January 2010 worked both in camps and directly with earthquake-affected communities, to help them return to their old neighbourhoods and try to restore their old lives. Growing from these interventions, the organisation undertook a comprehensive contextual analysis in Grand Ravine, one of the oldest slums in Martissant, in 2012. This helped to identify the extreme poor, the reasons they were poor and the major challenges they faced. These included the lack of the most basic infrastructure and services, with the area prone to regular flooding and a high risk of landslides during the rainy season. Informal settlements had been built with-

1 Elizabeth Parker and Victoria Maynard, *Humanitarian Response to Urban Crises: A Review of Area-based Approaches*, IIED Working Paper, 2015, http://pubs.iied.org/10742IIED.

out adherence to construction standards or laws, leaving little space for domestic traffic and other infrastructure. Ongoing threats of violence between competing gangs paralysed the development of the neighbourhood. The Integrated Reconstruction and Development Programme for Grand Ravine was designed to contribute to sustainable improvements in the living environment of neighbourhoods in the area.[2] Implementation began in February 2013 and ran until December 2017, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the local community.

Multi-sectoral intervention

Interventions addressed the broad living environment and individual poverty, while working closely with the local authority to develop a plan for the area, and with the community, to increase community cohesion. Community-level infrastructure was constructed, including reinforcing the ravine with the installation of gabions, planting trees upstream and soil retention works, construction of canals, the development of the entrance to Grand Ravine to open up the neighbourhood, the improvement of public spaces, the construction of 48 apartments and a bridge over the ravine to maintain access during heavy rainfall. The community claims that these interventions mitigated the effects of seasonal rains and seem to have limited the impact of Cyclone Matthew in 2016. The provision of 248 street lights reduced insecurity in Grand Ravine and surrounding neighbourhoods, extending the length of the working day for small businesses and allowing children to study in the evening and community members to socialise in the cooler evening hours. However, undertaking such large-scale infrastructure work required different skills to those that normally exist within a Concern programme, such as managing large construction companies and undertaking national tenders for their selection. For this reason, Concern Worldwide collaborated with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in implementing these major projects.

Individual livelihoods

In parallel, the programme aimed to build individual livelihoods. This included support for establishing a bakery for 39 young women, training almost 40 people in construction work and the provision of temporary jobs for 2,104 construction workers. While there was some success in creating short-term jobs in the construction sector, providing an injection of capital, it has been challenging to help young people into long-term, sustainable employment. One of the clear lessons from the intervention is the need to ensure that programme participants are interested in the particular subject area, and to ensure enough links so that participants can find appropriate employment. A second lesson has been the need to undertake a comprehensive market assessment to make sure that there is demand for the skills being generated. There is also a need to spend time with participants before training starts, and provide them with information on the different training options and the type of future employment they can expect after the training.

Participatory approach

The community was at the centre of the Grand Ravine intervention. Of particular importance was the establishment and strengthening of a community platform (*Plateforme Communautaire*, PC) including a secretariat and three commissions dealing with sanitation, infrastructure and economic development. The PC comprised 29 members (seven of them women) from 11 sectors, including schools, trade, women, youth and artists, the *vodou*, churches, civil protection, peace committees, community leaders, community-based organisations and representatives of the local armed gang. A series of workshops in 2015 focused on the platform's role, function, vision and mission, and (in 2014) on group facilitation, hygiene promotion, conflict management, community sensitisation and protection. This has contributed to the development of social assets in the area, and leadership training for community leaders has an indirect, but strong, impact on the extreme poor. People who received training to build leadership capacity highlighted the benefits in their work with the community and in their dialogue with community members. Issues around the sustainability of these community structures need to be considered from the start of the process to make sure they can survive without support from Concern.

A key element of community participation in the intervention has been the Complaints Response Mechanism (CRM) implemented as part of the intervention. One of the surprising lessons has been that community members would much rather speak directly with field agents or prefer to present their grievances in community meetings than pass them on over the phone.

A third key element was that much of the construction and maintenance work has been done by community members. In total, 148 skilled workers were trained in various aspects of construction, and local technicians were trained in the maintenance of the streetlights. The programme also underlined the need to include elements of community outreach, citizenship and the role of citizens in the proper use of and respect for public property. Management committees have been established and accompanied, for instance to help people living near the streetlights to implement small maintenance works.

Engaging local authorities

In addition to work with the community, another element that contributed to the success of the programme was the close working relationship with the local authorities. This culminated in the production of the Grand Ravine Urban Development Plan by partner Architecture for Humanity. The plan was developed in collaboration with and approved by both the community itself and the government (under the Comité Interministériel

2 The project is part of the European Union (EU)-funded Programme d'appui à la reconstruction et à l'aménagement de Quartiers – Haïti (PARAQ) 2011–2016.

Women participating in rebuilding their neighbourhood in Port-au-Prince.

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d'Aménagement du Territoire, or CIAT) in 2014, and was clearly in line with government policies. It included a development vision for the neighbourhood in the short (three years), mid- (ten years) and long (30 years) term. One of the main goals of the plan is to provide basic services and improve living conditions, while at the same time discouraging the further urbanisation of Morne l'Hôpital, a large chain of mountains that encircles the capital on its southern and eastern sides.

Further successes in the area have centred on developing a dialogue with the Town Hall, the MTPTC (Ministère des Travaux Publics, Transport et Communication), DINEPA (Direction Nationale de l'Eau Potable et de l'Assainissement) and the Office of the Cadastre to share information, coordinate responses, discuss possibilities for collaboration and support needs, as well as strengthening links between state bodies and the community. The programme has also developed links with other service providers, with much of the work on vocational training delivered by the Centre Polyvalent de Formation Professionnelle de Carrefour (CPFP-C) and the Institut de la Reussite de la Formation Professionnelle.

Accountability and management

Communicating the results of the programme has served to improve negative images of Grand Ravine. This has included photography and videos focused on the physical transformation of the neighbourhood and the impacts on the community. The programme also undertook a consultation process on urban development as a contribution to the 2016 Habitat III Conference in Quito.

Conclusion

Our experience in implementing the Grand Ravine programme suggests four clear lessons.

1. Individual versus community focus

When working in complex urban areas, impact is increased by focusing simultaneously on a neighbourhood or area approach and targeting individuals. The establishment of bodies and structures such as the PC helped to catalyse local change, and their clear link to the community increased community confidence. Community meetings have strengthened the links between the Concern team and local people, as well as making it easier for beneficiaries to give feedback on the programme. It also provides an opportunity to explain any delays. For this to work, communities and community leaders need to be involved from the start, and be at the forefront.

2. Long-term presence and response

Programmes that link humanitarian reconstruction and resilience-building take a long time – a function of building trust and addressing community divisions. Some of the initial barriers can be broken down through the delivery of short-

term interventions and projects to motivate participants. In this particular case, the street lights were a huge success and benefited the community immediately. Sequencing interventions is important, starting with 'easier' infrastructure work before moving on to more challenging community-building activities. Our experience suggests that area-based humanitarian interventions require a continued presence on the ground.

3. Costs and resources

Undertaking interventions such as the one described here costs a lot of money, in this case almost €7 million; this requires a funding plan to address the challenges identified by the community, targeted at a variety of local and international organisations and donors. Additional challenges relate to physical accessibility and the reputation of the neighbourhood, which can complicate logistics.

4. Partnerships and advocacy

Finally, it is clear that no one agency can do this alone. The relationship with CRS (which took on much of the supervision of the construction work), the local authority (the Mairie) and Architecture for Humanity in the development of the community plan, local service providers and specific government agencies, as well as smaller community-based organisations such as ACHKO, are essential to making this work. Partnerships require continued effort to develop capacities, and advocacy efforts to ensure that other agencies take responsibility in the implementation of this type of urban programme.

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Piloting urban responses to long-term displacement in Afghanistan

Ruta Nimkar and Mathias Devi Nielsen

Conflict has been a key driver of displacement in Afghanistan for more than 35 years. By the end of 2016, there were more than 1.5 million displaced people in the country.[1] In recent years, displacement dynamics have evolved in response to rapid urbanisation, intensifying conflict, resulting in increased rural–urban movement, and regional political changes, which have seen the large-scale return of Afghans from Pakistan, many of whom have settled in urban areas. This article reflects on the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)'s experience of piloting a new approach to responding to humanitarian needs in urban settings in Afghanistan, focusing on successes, challenges and lessons for future urban programmes, in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

DRC's urban response in Afghanistan

Urban areas of Afghanistan have changed enormously in recent years. In Kabul, the population grew by 4.5% annually between 2010 and 2015.[2] While much of this increase, both in Kabul and in other urban areas, has been attributed to natural growth, there has also been a steady influx of people from rural areas, due in part to conflict. This expansion has put pressure on urban infrastructure and employment, prompting a significant outflow of wealthier, more educated Afghans.

Humanitarian actors have not fully adapted to these changes. OCHA's Humanitarian Response Plan explicitly recognises the urban nature of displacement in Afghanistan,[3] but few tailored approaches have been developed to better meet the needs of the urban displaced. The current response modality consists primarily of outreach – teams go to communities of displaced people and provide assistance and awareness-raising classes on rights and national laws. This approach leaves two critical gaps: those who arrive in a displaced community after assistance has been provided do not receive services; and immediately upon arrival, or in times of crisis, displaced people have nowhere to turn apart from family or ethnic networks.

To address these issues, DRC developed an urban programming approach consisting of a network of community centres. The 'hub' site is located close to the office of the Ministry/Department of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR). DRC currently runs four hub sites: Herat and Kabul opened in January 2017, and Jalalabad and Kandahar the following August. All displaced people and returnees need to register with the DoRR to access assistance, documentation and public services. DRC uses this opportunity to establish contact, either through direct physical presence at the DoRR office or through referrals by the DoRR to the DRC hub. In coordination with IOM, DRC provides cash support to undocumented returnees, as well as legal and psychosocial services, child-friendly spaces and job centres supporting business startups, work placements and links to markets. Services are available to any Afghan who walks in, assuming they meet the eligibility criteria for the particular assistance they seek.

1 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Global Report*, Table 1 (Geneva: IDMC, 2017), http://internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/pdfs/2017-GRID-global-figures.pdf.

2 Peter Ellis and Mark Roberts, *Leveraging Urbanisation in South Asia: Managing Spatial Transformation for Prosperity and Livability* (Washington DC: World Bank Group, 2016), https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/22549/9781464806629.pdf?sequence=17&isAllowed=y.

3 OCHA Afghanistan, *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017* (Geneva: OCHA, 2017), p. 14, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afg_2017_hno_english.pdf.

Box 1 How to access a hub

1. Walk-ins and referrals come to a reception area.
2. The Afghan receptionist registers each case and conducts a basic screening to determine the most relevant service.
3. The client is given a unique visitor number and referred to the appropriate counsellor/service.
4. An Afghan counsellor provides the first session, identifies the need for follow-ups, and agrees on a work plan with the client.
5. Counselling continues typically for 6–8 sessions.
6. The case is marked as resolved or unresolved depending on how the client and counsellor agree to go forward. The counsellor can refer the client for additional services.
7. Data on case management is registered in a confidential database at the hub; data is protected according to DRC global and national standards.
8. The client can access the hub for additional services, using the same client number.

In addition to the 'hub' centres, 'spoke' sites act as community centres in areas of high displacement, offering support including legal advice, psychosocial counselling and vocational and business training. There are two spoke sites in Herat and two in Kabul, with additional sites scheduled to open in Jalalabad and Kandahar in early 2018.

Successes and challenges

The pilot phase for the Kabul and Herat hub centres ran from 1 January to 10 May 2017. This pilot phase was 'lean', in that the centres offered only legal advice, psychosocial counselling and child-friendly spaces, not cash and livelihoods support. Data collected during the pilot phase was intended to inform the location of the spoke sites.

Successes

Demand was high: during the seven-month pilot period, an average of 208 case files a month were opened in the Kabul hub, and 233 in Herat. There was unexpectedly heavy demand for psychosocial support, accounting for 81% of the services provided in Kabul in May and June, and 48% in Herat. Demand for child-friendly spaces was also very high: in Herat, 47% of hub clients either requested recreational services for children or were supporting children in receiving targeted psychosocial counselling. Women used child-friendly spaces at the hub for childcare, enabling them to run errands and do household chores.

The centres also helped people to transition into programmes they may not otherwise have accessed. Some adults requested legal counselling services on their first visit, and psychosocial support on their second. Children needing psychosocial support were identified through the child-friendly spaces, and parents were also open to their children receiving this support as they had gained trust in the hubs and the services provided through them.

Challenges

The vast majority (over 80%) of visitors to the hub sites were from host communities. Although the hubs were located close to DoRR offices in order to provide displaced people with immediate assistance upon registration, the link between the DoRR and the hubs was weak, and there were few direct referrals. Displaced people were aware of the hubs through DRC's community mobilisers, but accessing them proved challenging as many returnees and IDPs live in peri-urban areas, and the cost of transport to the centre of town is significant. The project did not originally intend to target host communities, but the high level of interest from this group indicates a serious gap in the provision of legal and psychosocial services in urban areas in Afghanistan. DRC attempted to reach out to displaced communities by setting up a shuttle service to the hubs, while the spoke sites, which provide direct access to communities, were established in community locations identified through the hubs.

In order to strengthen links with the MoRR/DoRR, DRC signed MoUs before establishing the hubs. DRC intended this collaboration to create a strong referral mechanism from the MoRR/DoRR to DRC, and between DRC and other service providers. However, this has not materialised. Government engagement is complicated by issues to do with decentralisation, lack of resources and lack of understanding among government officials about the services that the hubs can provide, leading to inappropriate referrals. DRC is working to engage more with government actors to make them aware of services at the hubs.

Community centres are common in the Syria displacement response, operated by DRC and other agencies, and UNHCR and the CCCM cluster have conducted desk reviews specifically about the use of community centres in urban response. This material has not been adapted to other contexts, or rolled out to other urban areas. As such, DRC missed opportunities to build on best practices, and to learn from previous experience. Much organisational learning takes place within a particular region or geographic context, and there is often limited scope for sharing between regions in a way that allows for appropriate contextualisation.

Finally, given the combination of walk-in services available to everybody and services where stricter eligibility criteria are enforced, it is essential to provide very clear communication about the availability of hub services. While anyone is eligible for psychosocial counselling, not everybody can walk in and receive a small business grant. Although anyone can access all protection activities (legal support, psychosocial services

Kabul at dawn.
Matt Brown/Unsplash

and child-friendly spaces), eligibility criteria are strict for cash and livelihoods support. For cash, beneficiaries need to undergo a standardised assessment, aligned with IOM and OCHA's HEAT assessment, and have a 'Poor' food consumption score, in order to receive assistance. For livelihoods support, tailored beneficiary selection criteria, standardised throughout DRC's Afghanistan programming, are used. For small business grants, the criteria assess the viability of the business concept, the degree to which the applicant is able to co-invest, the ability of the business to employ displaced people in the future, the business skills of the applicant and other relevant criteria. This requires a high degree of coordination and training of DRC community mobilisers, as well as training for the government officials expected to refer beneficiaries to the hub.

Lessons learned

DRC has learned several lessons from the pilot phase which will inform future programming in urban areas with large numbers of people living in protracted displacement.

First, the importance of contextualisation. The hubs DRC opened in Kabul and Herat were tailored to the local context; this included the physical layout of the hub, in which men and women shared a waiting room and conference areas. However, when opening centres in Jalalabad and Kandahar, DRC found that the model that had previously been used needed significant adjustment. Cultural norms in Jalalabad and Kandahar concerning women are much stricter and more conservative, and the physical layout of the hub therefore needed to be adjusted. Gender-segregated conference rooms were necessary in both Jalalabad and Kandahar. In Jalalabad, even waiting rooms needed to be segregated in order to gain community acceptance. The services that attract people to the hubs are also likely to be different in the four locations. In initial operations, DRC has found that there is less demand for male psychosocial support in Jalalabad. The data on these differences is currently too weak to conduct a full analysis about why these variations occur, but DRC will do this as the hubs progress.

Second, the importance of integrating different types of services, and targeted services. The hubs in Kabul and Herat are only now starting to offer livelihoods activities, and this may enable more beneficiaries to access supplementary legal and psychosocial services. Similarly, counsellors in the Kabul and Herat hubs have noted the need for other services, including community health and hygiene awareness-raising, that could be provided through the community centres; by integrating these services, the centres could both meet an immediate need and build a basis for stronger long-term

engagement with communities. This is particularly important in protracted displacement settings, where modalities of distributing aid are already established and the effectiveness of new urban programming approaches not yet proven.

Third, both DRC and its donors demonstrated adaptability and flexibility through the project. For example, the centres were designed to target displaced people, but the pilot phase shows heavy use of the centres by host communities. DRC, with support from donors, adapted its modalities to provide transport from displacement sites to the hubs, while ensuring that the hubs remained open to host communities given the heavy demand for their services. DRC is also considering other operational modalities to improve outreach, including systematising mobile outreach between the hub and spoke sites, establishing 'hub buses' with space for legal and psychosocial clinics, which travel among given communities according to a set schedule, and finally community engagement measures, such as adjusting opening hours, holding community events and giving communities more direct control over the centres.

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The Dhaka Earthquake Simulation: lessons for planning for large-scale urban disasters

Charles Kelly

Recent urban disasters, including the 2017 flooding of Houston and 2015 flooding in Chennai, highlight the challenges faced after disasters in large urban areas. While attention to disasters in large urban areas has increased since the 2010 earthquake affecting Port-au-Prince, developing a comprehensive process for managing disasters which can affect millions of people is still at an early stage. Conventional disaster risk management planning is important in reducing urban disaster risk, but the scale of large urban disasters (affecting urban areas with populations above a million) and the social and physical complexity of urban environments require looking beyond conventional approaches.

Box 1 Urban Crises Learning Partnership

The Urban Crisis Learning Partnership (UCLP) was an effort to improve the humanitarian response to large urban disasters. It was a collaboration between Habitat for Humanity (HfH), Oxfam, University College London and the Overseas Development Institute, and was funded by the UK Department for International Development. This paper has been condensed from the Dhaka City Earthquake Simulation report. Additional information is available at https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/what-we-do/urban-crises-learning-partnership and https://www.iied.org/urban-crises-learning-partnerships.

The Dhaka simulation was managed by Habitat for Humanity Bangladesh and Oxfam Bangladesh. The Dhaka Ahsania Mission managed engagement with local stakeholders, provided direct support to simulation sessions and arranged for neighbourhood visits and the participation of local authorities. Support was also provided through Oxfam Bangladesh's Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors' project.

This paper summarises an Urban Crises Learning Partnership (UCLP) effort to use a scenario-based simulation to:

- Provide humanitarian actors in Dhaka with an opportunity to examine preparedness and identify where action can be taken to improve the ability to prepare and respond to an earthquake.
- Explore response options, focusing on existing social protection and market systems, to provide cash for food security, shelter and water, sanitation and health.
- Explore the use of simulations to promote learning and capacity-building.

The context

The primary disaster risk for Dhaka, a city of between 15 and 17 million people, stems from the seismic faults that cross under and near it. Past earthquakes have resulted in significant damage and land form changes. Assessments and response plans make for dire reading. A major earthquake is expected to lead to half a million fatalities, 1.2m injured and the loss of up to 80% of housing, severe damage to roads, water, electrical and other critical lifeline systems and the disruption of food supplies and other critical commodities. Much of the earthquake planning to date has focused on the immediate life-saving response. Less effort has focused on how Dhaka can sustain itself and recover following a major earthquake.

The UCLP Dhaka simulation intended to go beyond immediate relief to consider how social protection systems could deliver support, how the economy would function with significant infrastructure damage, and how cash could be used to address critical needs in shelter, WASH and food security. The development of the simulation recognised the role of local government and neighbourhood organisations in addressing needs following a major earthquake. As such, in addition to a range of international and local NGO participants, the simulation involved participants from neighbourhood

organisations. Two Dhaka neighbourhoods were used as examples of the challenges which could be faced in responding to a major urban disaster.

Simulation planning

Planning for the simulation began with discussions between UCLP members, HfH Bangladesh and Oxfam Bangladesh several months before the event. UCLP developed a background paper which was shared with stakeholders and revised to incorporate their inputs. Weekly calls were held between the UCLP core team and Dhaka counterparts on the simulation, supplemented by emails and document sharing via DropBox. I was hired as a consultant in late April 2017 to lead the development and execution of the simulation. I produced a range of documents, including a schedule for the preparations, a narrative plan for the event and a detailed session outline. Contact was made with the Shelter and Recovery Cluster, and with WFP Bangladesh on social protection issues.

One issue raised was whether a community assessment field exercise was necessary as part of the three-day simulation. Some in Dhaka felt that many who would be involved in the simulation were already competent in conducting community assessments, and the field exercise was not necessary. After discussions which highlighted the critical role field assessments play in disaster response, and the complexity of simulating such assessments in a closed workshop environment, it was agreed to include the community assessment fieldwork in the simulation. Oxfam Bangladesh proposed using Kobo[1] for data collection to make the process quicker and less complicated. Oxfam converted the survey form into Kobo with ease, a process which also served to check the questionnaire content and translation. While Kobo was not used for all the surveys, the software considerably facilitated field data collection and processing during the simulation.

The simulation itself took place over three days, between 23 and 25 May, and was attended by close to 60 participants from multiple organisations. Further details on the simulation can be found in the Dhaka City Earthquake Simulation report, forthcoming from UCLP.

Lessons

The simulation was an opportunity for staff from NGOs and international organisations to explore the challenges involved in providing relief and recovery following a major earthquake in Dhaka. Brainstormed ideas, such as boating water to Dhaka or using houseboats to provide shelter, are worth investigating, particularly given an expectation that two or more years will be needed for recovery to reach full steam, and long-term but still interim solutions will be needed across a range of sectors. Attention is also needed to understand how and where NGOs and international organisations should expect to intervene, where the private sector should be left to its own devices, and where the government needs to take the lead. It is also important to distinguish between what can be delivered through large-scale (e.g. $100 million) distributions of funds to groups such as retirees and the disabled following a major disaster, and what can be accomplished by NGOs working through informal, small-scale or emergent social protection systems after an earthquake.

International organisations and NGOs may find significant opportunities in the shelter and settlements sector. The simulation highlighted that any effort to provide shelter for earthquake-affected people in Dhaka, a city where 80% of the population are renters (a number in the millions), requires engagement with the government on policy, as well as practical challenges such as damage assessment and the extent of provisional repairs. International organisations and NGOs could focus on providing a combination of material support, technical advice, small loans and support for self-recovery. This mix of assistance will be critical to re-establishing short- and long-term housing and rebuilding neighbourhoods.

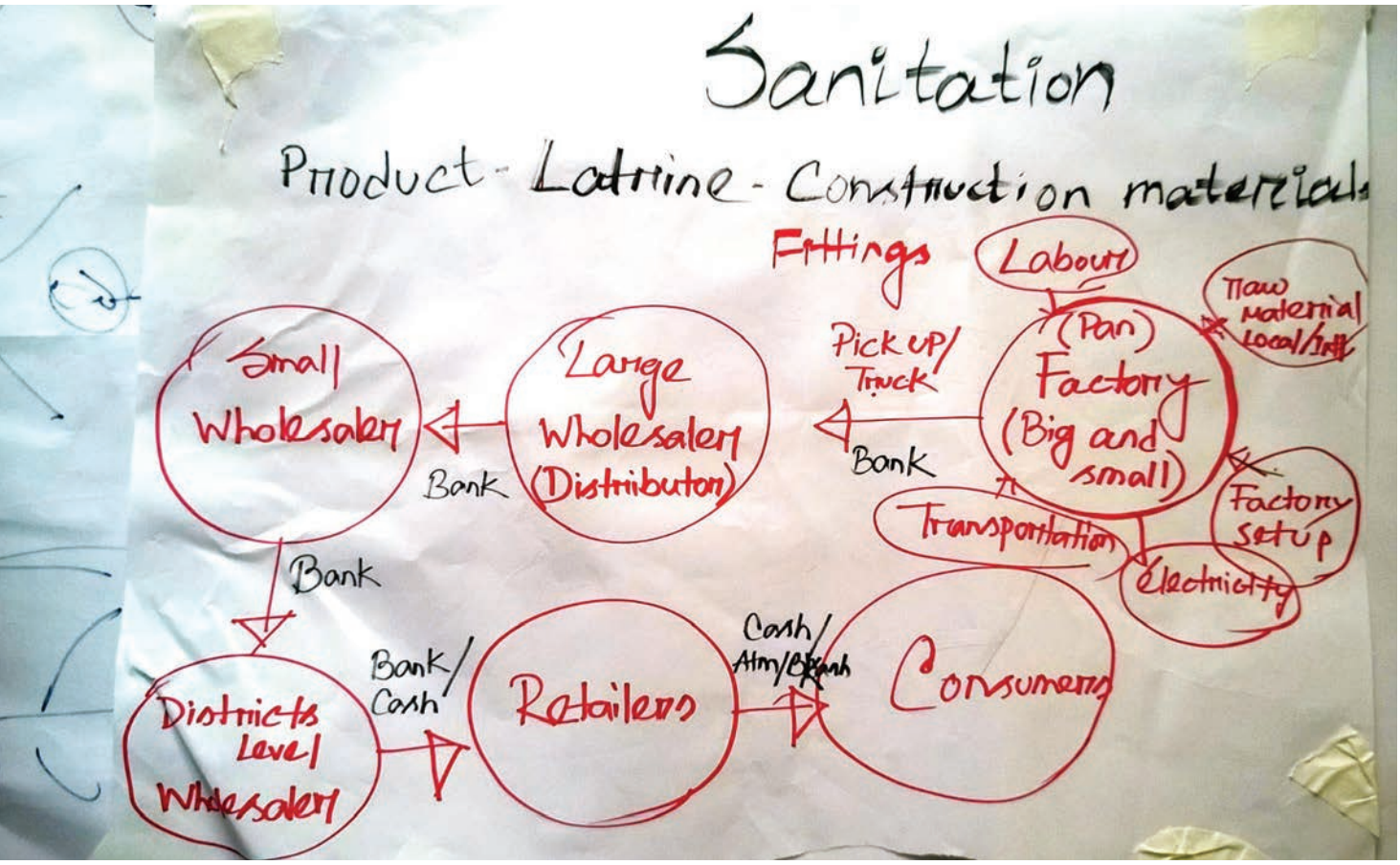
Developing a clearer understanding of where NGOs, international organisations and the government can best support recovery, and how to identify and mobilise informal and emergent groups, are core to planning and preparing for a major Dhaka earthquake. Most of the recovery options identified in the simulation require government engagement before the disaster, if only because many post-disaster recovery interventions will be a significant change from current practice. Good ideas on addressing the challenges of a post-earthquake Dhaka were identified, including the expanded use of vending machines to sell water and floating houses, but there was insufficient time to explore them in any depth, and the general sense was that the simulation tried to pack a lot into a short period of time. The simulation opened the door to post-earthquake planning, but much more needs to be done to ensure that results have practical applicability. Even so, this is probably the best that could be expected after three days.

The simulation did not capture the role of emergent groups in responding to an earthquake in Dhaka (emergent groups comprise people who come together following a disaster to provide assistance, forming groups that did not exist beforehand).[2] Emergent groups contribute significantly to disaster relief and recovery, but as they usually form or become engaged only after a disaster has happened, including them in pre-disaster planning and preparation can be difficult.

Another important challenge identified in the simulation was the need to shift thinking from delivering relief to supporting

1 Kobo is a software package which can be used to collect and process survey data. It is adapted for use on hand-held devices, including smartphones and tablets.

2 See E. L. Quarantelli, *Emergent Behaviors and Groups in the Crisis Time Periods of Disasters*, Preliminary Paper 206, Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware, 1994, http://dspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/591/PP206.pdf?sequence=1.



An example of market mapping developed during the simulation. The market mapping example demonstrates how simulations can identify skills and knowledge developed before the simulation exercise itself, in this case from capacity-building to manage cash relief payments in Bangladesh.

recovery. Many of the ideas generated focused on what is generally termed relief. There was much less focus on how to transition towards what will be a very long recovery process, and for a disaster of the scale anticipated in Dhaka it will take years for market systems and services to return to normal. Developing an understanding of what is necessary to make disaster-impacted systems work effectively after a major urban disaster could not be covered in the simulation, but merits significant attention.

Future simulations covering markets, social protection, shelter and settlements or similar lifeline systems post-disaster need to include sufficient time to consider the different phases of disaster relief and recovery. Single-focus simulations that work through the impacts of the disaster on each critical system may be more useful in large urban areas than multi-topic simulations. Single-focus simulations allow a more in-depth exploration of relief and recovery needs in a way that considers the complex post-disaster urban environment. As skills and knowledge are gained, individual topics can be combined into simulations which build across sectors.

Simulation as a learning tool

The Dhaka event demonstrated that simulations can be used for learning and capacity-building, but they are not the same as training sessions or workshops. A simulation places participants in situations where they are required to use skills and knowledge. Simulations commonly provide incomplete information to participants, and then expect participants to work around the information gaps in addressing the often complex problems created as part of the simulation. In this sense, a simulation is a test. If skills and knowledge have not been built before a simulation, participants may mistakenly feel that they have failed the test, but in fact through no real fault of their own.

Simulations can provide an opportunity for learning-by-doing, but this is best linked to the on-site provision of advice, for instance where an advisor stops work during a simulation to discuss what is being done and how it could be done better. The Dhaka simulation didn't provide time for this, even where it was clearly needed. The simulation did demonstrate participants' skills and knowledge, for instance in the market mapping process, but in other areas, such as analysis of community assessment data, skills and knowledge, it did not meet expectations. There was no time to stop the simulation to investigate and address these gaps. Some of the gaps may have simply been due to a lack of time to complete assignments. There was also no baseline in terms of participant skills and knowledge, and so no real basis for assessing improvements. The simulation review indicated that many of the participants felt that they had benefited from the

event, but using a combination of focus groups and interviews to assess capacities and gaps may have been as effective as a simulation.

Conclusion

The UCLP Dhaka Earthquake simulation provided an opportunity to assess the skills and capacities of a range of stakeholders in dealing with the results of devastating earthquake damage to Dhaka. The simulation identified a need to expand assistance opportunities and avenues beyond short-term relief, and the challenges of addressing food security, markets, social protection, shelter and WASH in a major urban disaster. Simulation participants, for the most part, were satisfied with the event. However, the simulation was a one-off and was not fully tied into government preparations for the next big earthquake. Its actual impact on response policy and practice was likely limited.

Simulations can be used to learn about capacities and gaps, but they need to be preceded by training to build skills and knowledge. The UCLP simulation was a good start in preparing for extended relief and recovery needs following a major earthquake in Dhaka. Lessons were learned on organising a simulation, and how simulations can best be used. Nonetheless, to change how major disasters will be handled in Dhaka will require many more such events, and the training to match.

Charles Kelly is a disaster management consultant with over 40 years' international experience. This article presents the views of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of any other individual or organisation.

Using social protection mechanisms to respond to urban shocks

Herma Majoor and Larissa Pelham

Social protection programmes have long contributed to reducing poverty and overcoming chronic and transitory vulnerability and food insecurity, but they are relatively new to emergency response. This article documents lessons from an attempt to use social protection approaches in a simulation exercise involving a large urban emergency in Dhaka. The simulation revealed a gulf in understanding between social protection and humanitarian practitioners about each others' interventions and ways of working in using social protection to address humanitarian crises. The government of Bangladesh is progressive in this area and has plans to extend safety nets in its social protection system to large-scale shocks. However, much more research is needed to understand how and whether social protection can play a role in urban humanitarian crises. The significant investment in time, capacity and financing that this will require means that it is still unclear whether social protection can be responsive enough to meet the needs of large-scale, rapid-onset shocks in urban areas.

Social protection in Bangladesh

In May 2017, under a DFID research learning project,[1] Habitat for Humanity and Dhaka Ahsania Mission through Oxfam hosted a three-day simulation of an earthquake response in Dhaka. Bangladesh is located in an earthquake zone, and it has long been anticipated that such a crisis might hit Dhaka. One of the objectives of the simulation was to explore the viability of using social protection during a humanitarian crisis. Over 50 people attended, representing local and national government, international and national NGOs and UN agencies. The aim was to learn lessons to improve humanitarian response and preparedness to major disasters in an urban metropolis in the food security, shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sectors. A scenario was presented to participants detailing the impacts of a fictional earthquake on people, infrastructure, markets and government services. From this, participants had to develop an emergency response action plan focused on each intervention area. The simulation focused specifically on how using cash, market analysis and social protection in these sectors might deliver a faster, more effective response to affected populations.

Bangladesh is one of the countries where using social protection channels to respond to urban emergencies could be an option. However, despite recent growth in the coverage of government social protection for the rural population (from 16% to 30%), only 9% of the urban population is covered by formal social protection programmes.[2] Urban social protection programmes are smaller and more fragmented than in rural areas, and there are neither beneficiary registries nor a widespread infrastructure that might assist a rapid scale up in response to a large-scale urban crisis. Informal social protection – credit and savings groups, funeral societies – also tends to be weaker in urban areas, leaving urban households with even fewer sources of support.

In 2015, the government launched a National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) (2015–2026). The strategy is intended to improve the effectiveness and coverage of social protection in both rural and urban areas. Ensuring that the social security system supports an effective disaster response system, including urban populations, is highlighted in the NSSS as

1 The Urban Crisis Learning Project was a two-year research project financed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The consortium comprised Habitat for Humanity, Oxfam, ODI and University College London (UCL). See https://www.iied.org/urban-crises-learning-partnerships.

2 See http://sp-fragility-displacement.onetec.eu.

Box 1 Social protection and humanitarian assistance

Social protection broadly refers to the provision of some sort of transfer in kind, cash or service intended to reduce poverty or vulnerability, provided either formally by governments and others, or informally from within the community. The need for social protection is largely uncontested, but for whom, how much and how it should be financed are heavily debated. While the coverage of formal social protection is continuously increasing, globally it is concentrated much more on the rural than the urban poor. The overlap with humanitarian assistance is evident, particularly with regard to cash. While they differ slightly in their objectives (humanitarian support is intended to save lives, social protection to reduce poverty and vulnerability), they frequently work through the same types of interventions. Social protection programmes that provide safety nets in the event of widespread shocks mainly respond to rural, cyclical shocks, and some include a mechanism to scale up to meet acute needs, although this is used much less in the urban sector.

Table 1 Key safety nets in Bangladesh

Ministry	Programme	Type of support	Coverage
Ministry of Food	Food Friendly Programme	Subsidised rice sales	3 million households
Ministry of Disaster Management & Relief	Vulnerable Group Feeding	Annual safety net, food transfer during and after disaster	11% of social security recipients
	Test Relief	Food transfer	10.3% of social security recipients (mainly rural, 6.1% in urban areas)
	Gratuitous Relief	Food transfer	17% of social security recipients (mainly rural, 6.1% in urban areas)
Ministries of Food & Disaster Management & Relief	Disaster Risk Mitigation	Small business/temporary employment	Over 1 million
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare	Maternal Health Voucher Scheme	Conditional cash transfer	174,000 pregnant women
Ministry of Agriculture	Very small programmes only		
Ministry of Women & Children's affairs	Vulnerable Group Development	Food transfer, development package	1 million vulnerable women and their households
	Maternal Allowance	Cash transfer	100,000 families
	Programme for Poor Lactating Mothers		
Ministry of Social Welfare	Allowance for Widows, Deserted and Destitute Women	Cash transfer	3.2 million women
Urban interventions			
Ministry of Food	Open Market sales programme	Subsidised rice sales	Varying
GhorePhera (Back to Home) Programme	Covering cost for income-generating activities in rural areas		
Urban Community Development	Provides multi-purpose support, but this is less disaster-related		

a priority. By the end of 2020, the NSSS plans to improve management information systems and electronic cash delivery channels, as well as establishing mechanisms to identify areas most affected by crises. Small-scale electronic cash transfers have already begun, and would enable the use of social security schemes to deliver emergency payments if a crisis hits. The government also expects to establish short-term humanitarian assistance schemes in the form of food, clothing, temporary shelter and medicines. The plan is to ensure that social security schemes for the elderly, children, vulnerable women and people with disabilities are expanded so that urban residents have the same access as people in rural areas. New proposals for childcare will initially benefit urban residents more than rural ones, since more women in urban locations work outside the home.

The main lesson from the simulation was the gap in knowledge between humanitarian and social protection practitioners. This made it difficult for participants to utilise social protection in action planning for earthquake response: opportunities

Women receiving treatment at Gonoshsthaya Community Health Center outside Dhaka, which provides health care and health insurance to underserved populations in Bangladesh.

to engage do not exist, and humanitarian practitioners are unaware of existing safety nets that they might be able to make use of in an emergency response. Relationships need to be formally established: if social protection is to be used for humanitarian response, both social protection and humanitarian practitioners need opportunities to meet, and to participate in disaster planning and design meetings, cash working groups, cluster meetings and assessments. This needs to happen at almost all stages, from emergency preparedness planning to implementation, and in the design and revision of safety nets. Such coordination is not yet in place, in Bangladesh or elsewhere.

Basic awareness-raising is required to define points of entry and promote understanding of the basic tenets of social protection and emergency response systems, for example using existing safety nets such as welfare lists or finance service or delivery providers during an emergency, rather than starting from scratch. Equally, the social protection sector needs to assess existing safety nets and explore how they might be used during large-scale shocks. Most formal social protection programmes in Bangladesh are small and fragmented and have weak administrative systems, which might make scaling up difficult during an emergency.

The simulation also highlighted the need to avoid jargon: the social protection and humanitarian sectors have their own histories, political drivers, vocabularies and standards, creating misunderstanding even if goals are shared. Humanitarians design interventions with reference to the Sphere standards, Do No Harm methodology, cluster systems, response analysis, minimum expenditure baskets and multi-sector cash. Social protection specialists couch programmes in terms of employment schemes, social assistance, registries, social protection floors, transfer values, appeals processes and means-testing. But there are also areas of alignment – for example, the need to embed social protection in a social contract closely fits with the humanitarian concern for community participation.

Both social protection and humanitarian practitioners need to routinely consider the informal sector – which is the first on hand to provide support in an emergency. This includes religious support, *zakat*, burial societies and loans and sharing. Remittances constitute a substantial safety net for many Bangladeshis, alongside other non-governmental support. During an urban shock, the urban–rural remittance chain might be broken, with significant impacts for rural communities. How these informal networks work, and how robust

and flexible they are during a shock, is poorly understood. This is an area where NGOs, with their close engagement with communities, could help in understanding and finding ways to support these community structures, for instance by supporting the removal of transaction fees for remittances in the aftermath of a major shock, exploring safety nets at the community level or putting cash through burial societies and other community-based savings and loans groups.

Perhaps the key finding from the simulation is how few of the observations and conversations during the simulation apply to the urban context alone. Much applies to utilising social protection interventions for humanitarian response more generally. Areas for attention include:

- A typology is needed for different urban contexts, from rapid-onset shocks to protracted displacement, to categorise how social protection may be used differently in urban contexts.
- Protection and gender concerns in both access to and use of cash will differ in urban areas compared to rural contexts, for example how women access cash and employment and the protection risks they face.
- We know that cash alone is not enough to support people: additional services and support are needed, for instance for small business development and other livelihoods support, which will require specific understanding of the urban context. Oxfam piloted an interesting flood insurance scheme in Bangladesh, insuring against loss of work in a rural emergency, and we need to see if such a scheme can translate to an urban context.
- Design and operational issues will be vastly different between rural and urban settings: targeting methods, defining the household in urban settings, data collection, access to services, cash delivery methods, use of cash (such as for rent) and networks – informal, government, private sector – all need to be considered to see how existing systems might respond, or to support urban safety nets. Emerging evidence suggests that using such systems in urban contexts can help build social cohesion, as well as protecting against vulnerability or reducing poverty.
- Social protection programming in the humanitarian space challenges the roles of all actors, including NGOs. The recent international conference on social protection in contexts of fragility and forced displacement, held in Brussels in September 2017, was framed predominantly as a donor–government relationship, steered by the UN.[4] Yet NGOs have a critical role to play in certain areas: ensuring that the core principles both of social protection and humanitarian standards are respected, engaging civil society, using appropriate targeting mechanisms and having in place appeals and complaints systems that are functional and that hold governments and donors accountable on both humanitarian and social protection mandates and standards.
- Social protection may be a helpful exit strategy from urban humanitarian response by providing ongoing support to recovering households. This would also fulfil the social protection agenda for universal coverage of social protection, and act as a stepping-stone to recovery and resilience.[5] Overcoming the tension between the political considerations that can heavily affect social protection debates (such as providing cash handouts as a way of building political support) and the life-saving demands of emergency interventions will be tricky, but necessary.[6]

The simulation served as an initiation into social protection for many participants, and as such exposed the gaps between the humanitarian and social protection sectors, rather than the links connecting them. Bringing social protection into humanitarian response will require long-term commitment and sustainable finance from governments and donors. More systematic engagement is essential, and there are multiple other actors to consider in this mix, including the private sector, and the role of technology. NGOs have to clearly define their role as well. For actors in the social protection sector, the use of social protection mechanisms in humanitarian response does not fulfil their agenda to ensure provision for shocks throughout the lifecycle. Fully comprehensive social protection must demand both.

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4 See http://sp-fragility-displacement.onetec.eu.

5 See http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/Evience-Brief-Urban-Humanitarian-Action.pdf.

6 See http://www.opml.co.uk/sites/default/files/Shock_responsive_social_protection_Literature%20review_EN.pdf.

Working with WASH markets systems to improve emergency response and resilience in urban areas

Jonathan Parkinson, Tim Forster and Esther Shaylor

Smaller, local-level market traders and service providers are often the principal means by which affected communities obtain the essential commodities they need during a crisis. In urban areas, these actors are part of supply chains consisting of larger suppliers and retailers, from both the public and the private sector. Instead of by-passing these market systems during emergency responses and distributing goods and providing services directly to those in need, humanitarian agencies are increasingly seeking ways to work with these actors to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their responses. Working with market systems can also help support market rehabilitation and livelihood opportunities. In protracted and recurring crises in particular, there is a strong rationale for providing critical goods and services by working through existing supply chains. In most situations, these supply chains are already inadequate, and the impacts of crises are predictable. Seasonal impacts – notably related to changes in rainfall – repeatedly affect water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) market supply chains, often leading to recurring disease outbreaks. Rather than waiting for emergencies to occur, it makes sense to work with and support these supply chains to strengthen their resilience to and preparedness for emergencies.

Mapping and analysing market systems to support market-based programming

A market analysis to understand the nature of supply and demand in the WASH market is an essential step in the design of a market-based programme, or potentially to decide that market-based programming is inappropriate in the first place. Such analysis maps out the capacity of the market system to supply essential WASH goods and services and assesses the level of demand in the community (such as people's preferences and purchasing power). Various market analysis tools are available, including household surveys, seasonal calendars and market surveys. These tools are used to understand

Bicycle water vendors are encouraged to collect potable water from the Gumbo water treatment facility – rather than from the river as shown here.

and map how the market functions (prices, volumes, stocks, transport, access to finance) and to understand what people spend their money on, why and what helps or hinders a target group to buy a good or service from the market. Tools such as Mobenzi or Survey CTO are often used to facilitate more rapid data collection and analysis.

Oxfam's experiences in market analysis and programming

With funding from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), Oxfam set out to promote market-based responses to emergencies using pre-crisis market mapping and analysis in Bangladesh, Indonesia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe, focusing primarily in urban areas. The results of these market mapping and analysis activities were used to develop market-based programmes in three categories of increasing depth and complexity, as described below. Oxfam focused on pre-crisis market analysis (PCMA), a version of the more widely recognised Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA), which has been adapted for use in pre-crisis contexts.

At the most basic level, market-based programmes use market supply chains to provide goods and emergency services via existing market actors. However, these actors frequently require some form of assistance to be able to function effectively and meet the needs of affected people in accordance with humanitarian standards. Thus, *supporting market actors* to recover from the shock of a disaster after an event, or to prepare for an emergency prior to a crisis, is often an important programming activity. This may involve using the market for supply by contracting water truckers or procuring latrine slabs locally and stimulating demand with cash grants or vouchers for desludging latrines. Support may include small grants to repair water supply systems, restoring a latrine slab business or subsidising the bulk purchase of sanitary pads.

The third type of market engagement, which is generally only possible in a non-crisis situation, involves *strengthening or developing the market system as a whole*. This is generally a longer-term approach that expands or diversifies existing markets to improve access, or introduces new commodities that provide a better-quality product or service. Market-based programming also involves activities to promote the demand side of the market system, which in the majority of situations involves the use of some form of cash transfer programming, combined with marketing activities and hygiene promotion. Although there is increasing interest in multi-sector cash transfers, there are concerns in the WASH sector that cash will not be utilised for WASH commodities, and the majority of cash programming for WASH used vouchers.

The sections below describe in more detail these approaches to market-based programming with specific reference to Oxfam's experience in the countries participating in its OFDA-funded programme.

Small shops such as this one in Satkhira's market place form an essential part of the supply chain of essential WASH commodities such as water storage containers.

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Using existing market supply chains

Using the market to deliver WASH commodities is feasible as part of an emergency response where the market is still functioning adequately. The most common approach involves working with local market actors to provide commodities to affected communities upon receipt of cash or, as mentioned above, a voucher in exchange for water, a hygiene non-food item (NFI) or use of a privately operated toilet or washroom, for example. In the Gaibandha and Satkhira districts of Bangladesh, flooding and waterlogging affect vulnerable communities on an annual basis. The market assessment undertaken by Oxfam benefited from a Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (VRA), which added depth to the contextual and needs analysis and helped to identify critical WASH markets. The analysis showed that not all of the hygiene items distributed during traditional WASH responses were meeting priority needs. Critical commodities included soap, menstrual hygiene products and containers for storing water. Oxfam Bangladesh prepared framework agreements with local market actors to supply NFIs to affected communities through a range of cash transfer modalities, with a value derived from an estimate of the cash equivalent for the traditional WASH 'basket'. These framework agreements define the payment mechanism, the location of material supplies, specific duties and responsibilities of the vendors and the distribution system, the quality of the materials and compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations.

A market trader in Hopely settlement, on the outskirts of Harare, showing the buy-one-get one free voucher for Waterguard for disinfection of water.

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Supporting market actors

As mentioned above, markets systems may require additional support in order to provide essential supplies or services effectively during a crisis. Market support actions can help suppliers increase resilience and preparedness for future crises. One example of pre-crisis market strengthening was developed in Jakarta to meet the WASH needs of flood-affected populations. During large-scale flood events, the poorest and most vulnerable families are temporarily relocated to centres for shelter and safety. Framework agreements were signed with market actors requiring them to maintain the functionality of the public toilet/shower facilities during flooding. Private sector WASH providers were given grants to upgrade their facilities and, through the agreements, mandated to provide access to these people upon receipt of a voucher. An e-payment system was set up to enable them to access the public toilets/showers during floods, reducing the risk of disease outbreaks in and around centres without such facilities.

Another example of a market support action implemented under the OFDA-funded programme is from Juba, where Oxfam provided support to the community-managed water supply system in Gumbo to enable the operator to understand market demands, function more commercially and be better equipped to deal with a crisis. The aim was to supply potable water from the small water treatment system to households via bicycle vendors, and also to sell water to water tankers. Oxfam carried out market research to understand users' socio-economic backgrounds, consumption patterns, service expectations and willingness and ability to pay for improved water services. Customer profiling combined with an ability- and willingness-to-pay survey was used to assess Gumbo's commercial viability, strengthen management arrangements and set up appropriate accountability systems to protect users' interests and rights. Oxfam provided institutional support to ensure that the management of the system was commercially viable, with separate roles and responsibilities between the operator (i.e. the entity with direct responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the system and sales of water) and the water management committee responsible for oversight and accountability.

Developing markets

Market development is a longer-term approach designed for pre- or post-crisis situations. It helps markets diversify products or services, expand existing businesses and access new markets. The supply side of the market may be strengthened through training and the development of public–private partnerships. Demand for new products or services may be stimulated through promotional campaigns, as described below from the example from Harare. As an alternative to traditional emergency responses to outbreaks of waterborne disease involving the in-kind distribution of household water treatment chemicals, Oxfam in Zimbabwe initially worked with MSF Belgium to map market systems in Harare using GIS, to prioritise areas for intervention and map WASH facilities, market actors and service providers. Oxfam's market analysis found that the majority of households could afford to purchase water purification chemicals, but chose not to because of their taste and smell, and the fact that they would be provided free of charge during an outbreak. Consequently, only a few market traders stock these items, and those who did reported little change in demand during an outbreak. In this context, Oxfam's market development programme in

Harare focused on promoting a locally manufactured water treatment product (Waterguard) using conditional vouchers in tandem with water quality monitoring and hygiene promotion. Demand was stimulated using a targeted 'buy one get one free' promotion. Increased sales have enabled market traders, such as the one shown, to develop and expand their business, which was an additional benefit of the programme.

Ensuring wider uptake of market-based programming

Although market-based programming potentially provides a wider set of benefits than traditional humanitarian programmes, there is often a narrow view of what PCMA can achieve and how it fits into the wider context of WASH humanitarian and development strategies. This is based on the under-standing that a PCMA is used in a specific crisis context, rather than as a means to reflect upon and potentially change the overall approach towards emergency responses. In addition, implementing the recommendations from PCMAs can be challenging due to the mandate and capacity of the organisation responsible for the analysis. Close collaboration and coordinated action is therefore required between humanitarian agencies, which are often responding to the needs of populations affected by the same crisis, but also between humanitarian and development agencies, for instance in integrating social protection and cash transfer programmes. Delivering these programmes requires expertise in market development and a good understanding of development programming, as much as it does experience working in emergencies. There is therefore a need for a concerted capacity-building effort in the sector, and a commitment from agencies to support this activity over a sustained period.

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Border towns: humanitarian assistance in peri-urban areas

Estella Carpi and Camillo Boano

Over the last decade, NGO practitioners, policy-makers and scholars have been encouraging humanitarian agencies to recognise the importance of including local authorities and integrating urban infrastructure into humanitarian programming when intervening in crisis-affected settings. Donor investments and scholarly literature have focused on enhancing what we know about responses to urban crises. With the increasing focus on urban areas, the humanitarian sector must develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding and analysis of the urban context: its infrastructure, services and systems, segregation and fragmentation, informal and community-based networks and the broader relationship between transient humanitarian actors and the population at large.[1]

This article looks at some of the consequences of the increasing urbanisation of humanitarian response, with a focus on border regions neighbouring Syria. Towns in these areas retain a rural character despite rapid growth, accelerated by the arrival of large numbers of refugees, and rural livelihoods are still at the centre of their economies. We argue that humanitarians should not approach areas such as these in the same way as they might much larger cities. These settings cannot be fully categorised as 'urban', but nor are they rural; rather, they are undergoing a complex spatial transition along a continuum between the two. Humanitarian actors must take this into account when designing interventions.

The limits of 'systems thinking'

Systems-thinking[2] – an approach suggested recently by ALNAP – advocates a template that deconstructs the urban setting into 'linkages, interconnections and interrelationships between different parts of a system, recognising the potential to arrive at new and different insights than can be gained by looking at each component part individually'.[3] Systems-thinking has increased the humanitarian community's understanding of urban complexity and the links between basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity, healthcare and education at different scales. Humanitarian practice must also reckon with territories that do not fully fit the category of urban. Disputed, socially and economically diverse and subject to rapid change, border territories exemplify such environments.

Border towns hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees in the Middle East, such as Halba in northern Lebanon, Kilis in southern Turkey and ar-Ramtha in north-west Jordan, function as an interface between the rural and the urban. They are marked by the constant movement of family members between towns and rural areas, with livelihoods and networks that cut across the rural and urban space. These towns are

1 L. Landau et al., *Becoming Urban Humanitarians: Engaging Local Government to Protect Displaced People*, The Urban Institute, 2016.

2 P. Sitko, 'Humanitarian Response Is Getting a Major Urban Overhaul', *Citiscope*, 30 May 2017, http://citiscope.org/commentary/2017/05/humanitarian-response-getting-major-urban-overhaul.

3 L. Campbell, *Stepping Back: Understanding Cities and Their Systems*, ALNAP Working Paper (London: ALNAP, 2016).

socially and economically heterogeneous. Peri-urban areas are a mosaic of agricultural and urban ecosystems, and affected by the material and energy flows urban and rural areas demand. They are socially and economically heterogeneous and subject to rapid change. Small farmers, informal settlers, industrial entrepreneurs and urban middle class commuters may all coexist in the same territory, but with different and often competing interests, practices and perceptions.[4] A lack of systematic planning has meant that these towns have grown organically, with a proliferation of unauthorised and unregulated housing and limited infrastructure development.[5]

Examples from Syria's neighbourhood

It is perhaps not surprising that, while people move to cities, they often continue with rural livelihood and survival strategies, such as cultivating vegetables and fruit in the streets, as is currently happening in Syria.[6] Likewise, some urban refugee newcomers still work in surrounding fields to earn a living, as most of the job opportunities in these small border economies are in agriculture. Given constrained urban markets and local labour economies, livelihood programming around Syria's borders has also centred on rural activities.

The traditionally short-term timeframes of humanitarian action are unlikely to have a sustained impact in addressing urban change and preserving local rural capital, and close collaboration with long-term development actors and urban authorities is therefore necessary. Similarly, striking the right balance between urban and rural approaches requires longer timeframes. For instance, in Halba – capital of Akkar governorate in northern Lebanon, the country's poorest region – humanitarian livelihood programmes began to focus on enhancing urban livelihoods in 2014, three years after the start of the Syrian refugee crisis. City cleaning projects run by the Danish Refugee Council and the International Rescue Committee employ vulnerable citizens and migrants and contribute to improving the urban environment. However, the temporary character of refugee labour reflects the limits of short-term urban improvement work. Collaboration between urban authorities, service providers and humanitarian agencies needs to be long-term if humanitarian action is to support the creation of well-functioning public infrastructure (e.g. waste management, access to water). Supposedly 'urban' Syrian refugees interviewed in Halba in the winter of 2017[7] affirmed that rural livelihood programmes were better able to provide them with sustainable income than urban livelihood programmes. While a large proportion of urban livelihood projects focus on making refugees employable in hairdressing and beauty salons or food groceries, Lebanese law allows them to work only in construction, gardening, cleaning and agriculture.

In the southern Turkish border town of Kilis, UNDP is helping municipal authorities improve local service delivery in waste management and recovery. Like Halba, this area received a large influx of Syrian refugees from 2011 and, although relatively developed,[8] the town was not equipped to accommodate the additional needs created by the refugees and by the corresponding influx of humanitarian actors. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) livelihood programmes initially did not address the need to strengthen urban infrastructure, instead focusing largely on agricultural activities (olive-picking) in the surrounding countryside as urban job opportunities for refugees and vulnerable citizens were rare. 'I'm now concerned that our livelihood projects in the olive groves may be reduced, as most of the funding now comes from outside with the purpose of improving the city', stated one local NGO worker.[9]

Unlike both Kilis and Halba, in ar-Ramtha in north-west Jordan humanitarian support has been directed towards agriculture. While this is appropriate in a context where state and NGO support has historically favoured urban dwellers over farmers, and where a large proportion of food needs is met on international markets rather than through domestic production, urban systems are under increasing strain from the refugee influx, suggesting the need for a better balance between support for urban and rural ways of life. In rural areas, some humanitarian programmes have sought to support local businesses by arranging sales of small-scale and homemade products, or by purchasing relief items from local producers. In cities, programmes have primarily supported large-scale businesses.[10]

What are the risks of the urban shift in peri-urban settings?

While it is paramount to improve humanitarian capacities to better address off-camp populations, life outside camps needs to be considered and approached not exclusively as 'urban', but as a complex coexistence of small farmers, informal settlers, industrial entrepreneurs and urban middle-class commuters, with different livelihoods trajectories in the same space. While

4 Few institutions can address both urban and rural activities (A. Allen and J. Davila, *Mind the Gap! Bridging the Rural–Urban Divide*, 2002, http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/38/1/DPU_allen_davila_bridging_rural_urban.pdf).

5 C. Tacoli, G. McGranahan and D. Satterthwaite, *Urbanisation, Rural–Urban Migration and Urban Poverty* (London: IIED Publications, 2015).

6 See http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/factors-driving-the-destruction-of-syria-s-natural-heritage.

7 Interviews conducted by Estella Carpi with Syrian refugees living in Halba, February and March 2017.

8 F. Yirmibesoglu et al., 'Life In Kilis with Its Traditional Urban Fabric and Houses', *Current Urban Studies*, 3, 2015.

9 Interview conducted by Estella Carpi with a local NGO practitioner working in Kilis. Gaziantep, 13 August 2017.

10 Interview with the leader of the Akkar Traders' Association, Halba, 8 March 2017; interview with an international NGO worker in Kilis. Gaziantep, 2 August 2017.

Turkish workers load bags of flour provided by the Turkish Red Crescent onto a truck bound for Syria at the border in Kilis, Turkey.

urban areas are necessarily complex, that complexity is not necessarily captured by the 'urban' definition. Hence, efforts should not merely be focused on how humanitarian actors can better support the people they assist, but rather on designing interventions that take into consideration the functioning of rural and urban areas as systems, and the relationships between them. This demands creative management of both problems and opportunities arising from the meeting of urban and rural activities. 'Land use policies that help to enhance livelihoods and promote a better use of scarce resources and urban waste are crucial. Equally important are appropriate policies concerning basic infrastructure, training, information and improved governance'.[11] Urban programming requires a multi-scale, multi-lens approach.

There is a risk that the humanitarian system's current interest in developing urban capacity in areas affected by crisis may fade when the crisis abates and the humanitarian machinery scales down or moves on. Urban development and capacity-building should not be addressed only in the wake of refugee influxes, but rather need to become long-term objectives for development actors and local authorities. The 'urban shift' also risks being exclusive, leading to the neglect of rural livelihood programmes and inappropriate approaches to the complex systems and spaces at the peri-urban interface. The case of ar-Ramtha – which, unlike Halba and Kilis, rather represents a 'rural shift' – even so shows how diverse ways of life that cut across rural and urban spaces can be neglected.

Care is therefore required to avoid approaching spaces outside camps in a rigid, two-fold way: either 'urban' or 'rural'. The three examples presented here highlight the importance of following trajectories[12] of urban and rural change during and after crises. In border areas, rural areas and resources are inevitably intertwined with urban spaces and resources, with direct implications for planning and for the development of humanitarian policies that reflect spatial diversity and territorial and institutional variety.

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11 Allen and Davila, *Mind the Gap!*.

12 R. Lambert and A. Allen, 'Participatory Mapping to Disrupt Unjust Urban Trajectories in Lima' in P. Imperatore and A. Pepe, *Geospatial Technology. Environmental and Social Applications* (London: InTechOpen, 2016); and V. Castano-Broto, 'Energy Landscapes and Urban Trajectories towards Sustainability', *Energy Policy*, 108, 2017.

Chandra Laxmi Tyata with her son in Bhaktapur city after the earthquake in Nepal, 2015.

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