

Realigning responses to protracted displacement in an urban world

Comparative research on wellbeing, self-reliance and livelihoods of displaced people in urban areas and camps

2020–2023



Protracted
displacement
in an urban
world



In brief

For decades, the response by the international community to mass movements of people fleeing war or political persecution has been to provide humanitarian assistance in camps. Despite highly-charged debates on the negative impact of maintaining people in often remote regions and dependent on humanitarian assistance, camps remain the default response to new displacement crises. Camps are not, however, the choice of the majority of the world's displaced people, and estimates suggest that over 60% of refugees and at least half of internally displaced persons (IDPs) now live in towns and cities.

Research, international policy, and local action have been slow to catch up. This research project is the first large-scale study to compare experiences of protracted displacement in cities and camps – where people have been displaced for at least five years. A mixed methods, comparative approach will be applied across one camp and one city in four countries with large displaced populations: Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Jordan and Kenya. The research will provide evidenced analysis of the different outcomes for displaced people in camps and urban areas, focusing specifically on the wellbeing and economies of refugees, returnees and IDPs.

We will engage a wide range of municipal stakeholders in the research process by establishing a participatory forum in each city. Local partners will convene the forum regularly throughout the project, and will use emerging findings to inform the co-production of solutions to the challenges of urban displacement. With the ultimate goal of improving the self-reliance, wellbeing and productive economies of refugees, returnees and IDPs, the research will assess how cities can foster displaced people's local inclusion, while benefitting host governments and communities. The research will generate evidence and recommendations for local, national and international policy makers on the pathways towards a more strategic urban response to protracted displacement.

The overall aims of the research are to:

- 1. Build an evidence base for national and local governments, humanitarian agencies and donors on the opportunities and challenges of hosting displaced people in camps vs. urban areas.**
- 2. Assess current responses to urban protracted displacement, raising awareness of unmet need and the potential economic and social contributions of refugees and IDP for host cities.**
- 3. Support municipal authorities, displaced people, NGOs, organisations of the urban poor and other local actors to use participatory planning to co-produce innovative, inclusive solutions to forced displacement.**

The importance of a camp-urban comparison

Camps have captured the attention of the media, relief organisations and academia. But as short-term emergencies turn into protracted displacement, camp living can erode residents' dignity and increase aid dependency. In response, displaced people are increasingly moving to cities, avoiding camps to seek autonomy and opportunities over dependency and isolation.

The different impacts of camp and urban environments on the lives and livelihoods of refugees, returnees and IDPs have not been systematically evaluated. Relatively little is known about how displaced people in cities interact with local people, institutions, and economies (informal and formal), or how cities can better respond to their needs. This understanding is critical if we are to move towards displacement responses that promote rights, dignity, and wellbeing, and facilitate displaced people's economic contributions to their host settings.

Key concepts

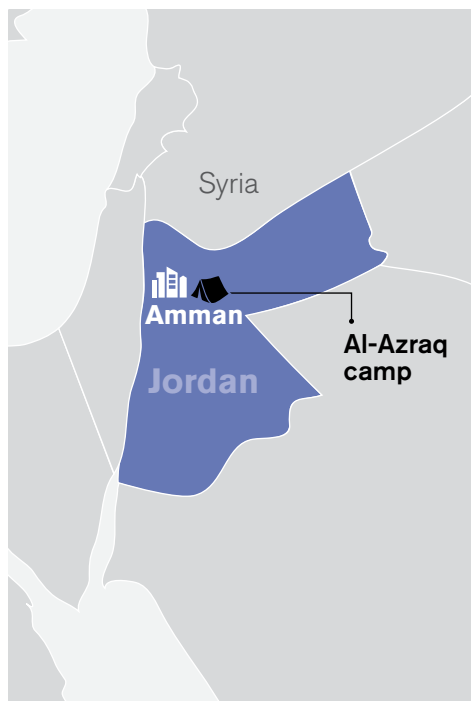
A desire to promote self-reliance among refugees and IDPs gained renewed emphasis after the affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018. The Compact was initiated in response to rising numbers of people displaced by conflict, disasters and climate change and increasing pressure on humanitarian aid budgets. But what does it mean to be self-reliant? How do displaced people themselves understand the term, and

how do they think it can be achieved? And how does their enterprise and endeavour contribute to host communities and economies?

The term has no agreed definition or fixed set of indicators by which it can be measured. The starting point for this project is that self-reliance must be more than a measure of income and ability to meet basic needs. Our research will deepen understanding of self-reliance by exploring displaced people's overall wellbeing and how this contributes to their perceptions of life in the camp and the city. It will also examine the significant and creative ways that displaced people and their networks contribute to the local, national and international economies. Finally, it will lead to new methods of co-production with municipal actors.

Promoting participatory and inclusive city planning

A central component of the research programme is to promote interaction between urban refugees/IDPs, the urban poor, municipal authorities and other local actors. In addition to quantitative and qualitative research, we are supporting a participatory and inclusive planning process in each country, convening 6-monthly stakeholder workshops throughout the project. These will ensure that beneficiaries are involved in the design of research tools, validation of findings and creation of co-produced solutions that support self-reliance, wellbeing and productive livelihoods in cities.



Maps showing the urban (in white) and camp (in black) locations where the fieldwork for this research project will be carried out.

Cardiff University is a member of the UK's elite Russell Group of top universities, ranked 5th in the UK for research quality, and in the top 100 in the World QS University subject rankings. The Informality Research Observatory in the School of Geography and Planning has global expertise on livelihoods and urban crises research.

Dilla University is a Public University based in Dilla, Southern Ethiopia. It is engaged in teaching, research, community service and technology transfer. Currently it has about 3000 academic and administrative staff; more than 31,000 students in six colleges, three schools and two institutes training undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The Hashemite University is a Jordanian state-run university, established by a Royal Decree in 1991. As a youthful and prominent higher education institution, the University is committed to preparing loyal individuals who are not only technically competent in their professional fields, but also life-long learners who have a breadth vision, loyalty to their nation, and a sense of civic and moral responsibility and a devotion to the fundamental values of human life.

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** is a global leader in rapid response and durable solutions for populations in conflict, transition, and development. The IRC helps people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future. The IRC has expertise in ensuring city government plans, policies, and projects are inclusive of the needs and preferences of displaced populations.

Maseno University is a public university in Kenya established by an Act of Parliament in 1991. It is a modern institution of higher learning set up to advance teaching, learning, research and development that responds to the emerging socio-economic as well as technological and innovation needs of Kenya and the Eastern African Region.

The **Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS)** is a coordination and information hub that aims at stimulating forward thinking programing and policy development in the search for durable solutions in East Africa. ReDSS is comprised of 14 NGOs and DRC, IRC, and NRC form the ReDSS steering committee.

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research in countries affected by issues of migration and displacement. Our research connects the voices of communities to change makers for more inclusive societies. Samuel Hall has offices in Afghanistan, Kenya, Tunisia, and Germany, and a presence in Somalia and the United Arab Emirates.

Slum Dwellers International Kenya, is the non-profit technical and professional secretariat for the federation of Kenyan slum residents known as Muungano Wa Wanavijiji. This local alliance is affiliated to the global network of slum based social movements called Slum Dwellers International.

The **Women's Refugee Commission** works to improve the lives and protect the rights of women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice.

Get in touch

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To find out more about this specific project, and to find links to publications, blogs and other media, please visit IIED's website: www.iied.org/responding-protracted-displacement-urban-world

More information on the work of IIED's Human Settlements Group can be found here:
www.iied.org/urban

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Project Materials

Urban

Keywords:

Refugees, internally displaced people, urban crises, urban poverty, participation

Cover photo: Internally displaced persons informal settlement in Kabul, Afghanistan.
Credit: Preethi Nallu for Samuel Hall