



# Urban context analysis toolkit

## Guidance Note for Humanitarian Practitioners

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Stronger Cities Consortium



## Preface

The *Stronger Cities Initiative* is a consortium of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and World Vision International (WVI) with technical advice from David Sanderson, University of New South Wales, Sydney. The purpose of the initiative is to produce practical field-tested guidance for humanitarian organisations working in urban conflict, displacement, and natural hazard settings.

The urban context analysis toolkit and guidance were developed by the IRC. The IRC responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises, helping to restore health, safety, education, economic well-being, and power to people devastated by conflict and disaster. Founded in 1933 at the call of Albert Einstein, the IRC is at work in over 40 countries and 26 US cities helping people to survive, reclaim control of their future, and strengthen their communities.

This guidance note was written by Brian Sage (Oxu Solutions), Andrew Meaux (IRC) and Wale Osofisan (IRC) with contributions from Mary Traynor (Oxu Solutions) and Tatiana Reye Jove (Oxu Solutions). The authors would like to thank the policymakers and practitioners that generously shared their time to input and review draft versions of the toolkit and guidance note: Barri Shorey, Bryce Perry, Bobi Morris, Geoffroy Groleau, Ilaria Michelis, Kristin Kim Bart, Laro Gonzalez, Leah Campbell, Tyler Radford, Yasin Abbas, and Zeina Shuhaibar. In particular, the authors would like to David Sanderson, Pamela Sitko, Laura Phelps, Samer Saliba and Tobias Metzner for their support and critical guidance throughout the toolkit's development. Most importantly, the authors are indebted to the amazing IRC staff and local interpreters in Jordan, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Thailand that made piloting the toolkit possible.

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## IIED's Human Settlements Group

The Human Settlements Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) works to reduce poverty and improve health and housing conditions in the urban centres of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It seeks to combine this with promoting good governance and more ecologically sustainable patterns of urban development and rural-urban linkages.

This paper is part of a series of research pieces produced under the 'Urban Crises Learning Fund' managed by IIED. Funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), the fund aims to build an in-depth understanding of how the humanitarian sector can most effectively operate in urban contexts.

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Today, over half of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are living in cities. This means that forced displacement is both a humanitarian and development challenge, given that displacement is often long term, with more than 80 per cent of refugee crises lasting ten or more years. Current models and tools developed mostly for rural, camp-based settings are not equipped to help responders understand and navigate the complex nature of urban contexts. Context analysis approaches can help humanitarian actors have a better understanding of the dynamics in a given setting by unpacking the political, economic, social, service delivery and spatial factors that could potentially enable or hinder effective crisis responses of affected populations.

The urban context analysis toolkit was created to provide an analysis toolkit that is user friendly, relatively quick to use, and adaptable. The toolkit contains a set of practical tools (work plan, questionnaires, analysis tables, report templates) tailored to conducting analysis that informs context specific responses – targeting both the displaced and host communities – in a given urban crises setting. The guidance note provides step-by-step guidance on how to apply the context analysis toolkit in practice. This toolkit will enable users to identify relevant stakeholders, existing power relations, resource distribution, governance and legal frameworks, sources of livelihoods, social networks, and access to services that will help responders to determine suitable entry points and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of their programmes.

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid
FBO	Faith-based organisation
FGD	Focus group discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
IDP	Internally displaced person
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key informant interview
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
LNGO	Local non-governmental organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
NSA	Non-state actor
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WVI	World Vision International

# Introduction

## Why urban context analysis matters

The global phenomenon of urbanisation brings forth new and pressing challenges to the humanitarian sector, especially to actors responding to forced displacement. It is predicted that by 2030, four billion people – nearly 50 percent of the world's population – will live in the towns and cities of low- and middle-income countries (UN DESA, 2014). This increased urbanisation is expected to magnify urban displacement crises resulting from conflict or natural disasters, straining already stretched infrastructure and services even more acutely in low-income country cities.

Today, over half of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are living in cities (Meral, 2015). This means that forced displacement is both a humanitarian and development challenge given that displacement is often long-term with more than 80 percent of refugee crises lasting ten or more years (Crawford *et al.*, 2015). Those affected by forced displacement often face the key risks and impoverishment processes of: (a) landlessness; (b) joblessness; (c) homelessness; (d) marginalisation; (e) food insecurity; (f) loss of access to common property resources; (g) increased morbidity; and (h) loss of social capital (Jennings *et al.*, 2014).

Current models and tools developed mostly for rural, camp-based settings are not equipped to help responders understand and navigate the dynamic and complex nature of urban contexts. Urban spaces are different from rural settings in numerous ways. One key distinction is that, in urban settings, humanitarian actors have limited leverage or influence over contextual factors such as how the urban system functions in informal areas, the quality of service provision, employment opportunities, infrastructure, or legal rights (Haysom, 2013). These factors are further exacerbated when host communities are densely populated, mostly low-income and face similar problems as the displaced populations. This distinction necessitates a transition in the way humanitarian actors respond to forced displacement and underscores the necessity of collaboration with and support for the governments of cities and countries accommodating displaced persons and their host communities (Meaux and Osofisan, 2016). Successful interventions must not only understand what the risk factors are but also the underlying factors that may exacerbate or reduce the associated risks and impoverishment processes.

### KEY TERMS

Urban contexts “are characterised by high numbers of very different people living and working in close proximity to one another (Global CCCM Cluster, 2014; CaLP, 2011). In contrast to rural areas, urban inhabitants are more mobile (Brown *et al.*, 2015; Shelter Centre and NRC, 2010) and largely dependent on technical or economic systems in order to meet their basic needs (SKAT and IFRC, 2012; UNHCR, 2009; Sanderson *et al.*, 2012). The social, political and institutional environment is also more complex” (SKAT and IFRC, 2012; USAID, 2008; CaLP, 2011).

Source: Parker and Maynard 2015

## What is context analysis

Context analysis approaches aid humanitarian actors to understand the complex dynamics of a given situation by unpacking the political, economic, social and spatial factors that could potentially enable or hinder effective crisis responses to affected populations.<sup>1</sup> They do so by enabling users to:

- Generate contextual information that goes beyond telling us what the current situation is (the visible effects of the problem) to instead explain why things are the way they are and how they are connected (the less apparent systemic issues and the non-traditional actors that influence them).
- Understand 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 perspective and decision making.
- Identify practical and realistic entry points when designing interventions that contribute to an effective response while remaining true to humanitarian principles and values.

A context analysis is not focused on needs and, therefore, must be understood as quite distinct from a needs assessment. Consequently, while the outputs of context analysis may point to potential opportunities (geographical areas, sectors/services of focus, etc.) for the organisation, they will not include significant information on needs or gaps in services required to design or implement programming. Examples of common types of humanitarian context analyses include stakeholder analysis, political economy analysis,<sup>2</sup> conflict analysis, and market analysis.

### WHY CONDUCT A CONTEXT ANALYSIS?

- Avoid doing unintentional harm or exacerbating social tensions, especially between displaced populations and host communities
- Identify stakeholders in terms of their capacity, interest in, and influence in forced displacement response
- Understand the relationships between stakeholders and where partnerships, coalitions, coordination and advocacy could add value
- Recognise the existing legal frameworks, formal and informal institutions, urban systems and power structures that will affect a response programme and vice versa
- Design a response based on analysis of the entry points and activities that will be most valuable in addressing needs with an understanding of the impact in both short and long-term development of an urban area, and
- Make explicit the programme assumptions, risks and trade-offs involved in planning and implementing programmes (Heykoop and Kelling, 2014).

Source: Meaux and Osofisan (2016)

## Why an urban context analysis toolkit

Humanitarian organisations often struggle to understand and navigate the dynamic and complex nature of a crisis, especially those occurring in an urban area. Responses to crises require a sound understanding of the underlying factors of why things are the way they are and the entry points for addressing systemic challenges. There is a dearth of easy-to-use tools to help humanitarian actors quickly assess an urban area's pre-existing structures, systems, and actors.

The urban context analysis toolkit was created in response to this immediate need and designed specifically to provide an assessment mechanism that is more user friendly, quick and adaptable in comparison to macro level context analysis tools often used to inform policy reform or development projects. The toolkit is designed to enable user modification to specific contexts and connect community-level actions with city, state, and national-level

<sup>1</sup> Affected populations in the guidance note will be used to cover all people in area that have been affected by the crisis or disaster. This may include displaced populations, host community, migrant populations, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Political economy may be an unfamiliar term for many humanitarian organisations. In short, political economy "focuses on how power and resources are distributed and contested in different contexts, and the implications for development outcomes. It gets beneath the formal structures to reveal the underlying interests, incentives and institutions that enable or frustrate change" (DFID, 2009).

issues. The toolkit was piloted in five cities including Maiduguri (Nigeria), Juba (South Sudan), Amman (Jordan), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), and Bangkok (Thailand) in 2016 and 2017. Each of these pilots helped to test the toolkit in various cultural/geographic areas (Asia, Middle East, East Africa, and West Africa), various types of crises (ie IDPs in urban areas, refugees in urban areas, camps in urban areas), various lengths of displacement (temporary and protracted), and, finally, various levels of city fragility (from stable to highly fragile, conflict prone).

A context analysis is the starting point of a process to understand the complexity and fluidity of an urban environment; this toolkit will enable users to appreciate stakeholders, existing power relations, resource distribution, governance and legal frameworks, sources of livelihoods, social networks, and access to services.

The main **output** of the toolkit is a final narrative report containing:

- Stakeholder analysis
- Key contextual findings by theme: political; social and cultural; economic; service delivery and infrastructure; space and settlements; and crosscutting
- Identifying entry points and risk mitigation strategies for programming, and
- Opportunities to strengthen existing or for future programming.

As noted previously, the context analysis is a complement to an in-depth assessment that may be sector- or programme-specific. It will not be sufficient alone to design a full programme, but will provide an invaluable understanding of the local context to ensure that programmes are effective and responsive to local dynamics.

## Who is the toolkit for, when to use it and limitations

### Who is the toolkit for?

The urban context analysis toolkit and this narrative guide have been designed for use by programme staff members or consultants with experience of conducting assessments or qualitative studies. The primary users are presumed to be a technical lead in-country, a technical advisor in headquarters, an emergency response team member, or a programme generalist with programme design and assessment experience. See **Step 1** for further details on suggested team composition including team lead and data collectors.

### When to use the toolkit?

While the toolkit is intended to be comprehensive and adaptable, it is primarily designed for organisations wishing to conduct an urban context analysis of a **man-made crisis or one leading to population displacement to an urban area**. The toolkit itself is generally designed with the assumption of approximately two weeks in country of data collection as a starting point from which users will adapt according to their needs. It will likely be most relevant for organisations interested in transitioning from emergency response to recovery and resilience-building activities rather than immediate response.<sup>3</sup> The assumption made while developing the toolkit was that the organisation using it will already have been operating in the city/country for at least several months prior to the analysis and will need to conduct a context analysis in order to develop a better understanding of the context they are working in before or alongside a needs or vulnerability assessment.

The toolkit was nevertheless, designed to be modified easily for use. The guidance under **Step 2** in this document contains some additional considerations that may influence the duration and focus of the analysis. The toolkit and narrative guide have been designed to constitute a standalone kit. Many organisations may, however, have their own context analysis tools or analytical frameworks. Users may, therefore, find the toolkit a useful complement to existing tools and choose to adapt and incorporate some of its components.

A context analysis will be most effective at the very start of the programme life cycle before assessments or programme design has started. The urban context analysis toolkit is part of a broader suite of urban-specific urban guidance and tools that may be found at [www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative](http://www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> If interested in a rapid response context analysis, see World Vision's good enough context analysis for rapid response (GECARR) here: <http://wvi.org/peacebuilding-and-conflict-sensitivity/publication/good-enough-context-analysis-rapid-response>. IRC's conflict sensitivity analysis toolkit also provides workshop-based modules that can be completed in one to two days (See IRC, 2016b).

<sup>4</sup> The suite of urban tools includes an urban multi-sectoral vulnerability assessment tool (UMVAT), an urban response analysis framework (URAF), guidance for targeting in urban displacement contexts, and urban stakeholder engagement and coordination guidance. These may be found at: [www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative](http://www.iied.org/stronger-cities-initiative)

## Limitations

As with any guidance document, the challenge is to be specific and concrete enough to be useful while remaining general enough to be used in varied contexts. This narrative guide assumes that all the tools, which are based on standard project and qualitative research tools, will be adapted by users for the specifics of the urban context being examined and according to the rationale behind the launch of the analysis. In addition to adapting the tools for specific contexts, users should be prepared to update the analysis as the dynamics of urban displacement evolve on the ground. Urban environments are constantly changing – new governments take office, new policies are enacted, etc. – and users should revise the analysis as necessary to ensure it remains relevant.

Second, this 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, potential conflict tensions, and other risks that should be taken into consideration when developing a strategy or programmes/projects. It is also intended to be linked to other toolkits and design processes.

Third, the toolkit and steps outlined in this document describe a **qualitative** exercise. If users have time and resources to carry out quantitative research, eg a household or individual survey, the toolkit could certainly complement these efforts. Depending on the intended audience for the report, the user may want to consider quantitative methods. This may include either turning qualitative data into quantitative data or employing counting methods in FGD discussions to yield data that can be turned into charts and graphs to analyse trends numerically.

## How to use the toolkit and narrative guide

The toolkit is composed of ten tools with accompanying step-by-step narrative guide.

**Figure 1** contains a listing of the complete urban context analysis toolkit (which can be found in Annexes 1 to 10). The toolkit includes a set of practical tools (workplan, questionnaires, analysis tables, report templates) in easily-modifiable Word and Excel formats.

Figure 1: Complete urban context analysis toolkit

<b>Tool 1</b>	Workplan and budget
<b>Tool 2</b>	Desk review summary
<b>Tool 3</b>	Stakeholder analysis
<b>Tool 4</b>	Data collection plan
<b>Tool 5A</b>	FGD guide for displaced populations
<b>Tool 5B</b>	FGD guide for host communities
<b>Tool 5C</b>	KII guide for influential stakeholders
<b>Tool 5D</b>	KII guide for service provider stakeholders
<b>Tool 5E</b>	KII guide on labour and business climate
<b>Tool 5F</b>	KII guide for local government
<b>Tool 5G</b>	KII guide for NGO service providers
<b>Tool 6</b>	KII and FGD debrief template
<b>Tool 7</b>	Key findings
<b>Tool 8</b>	Programme implications
<b>Tool 9:</b>	Urban analysis workshop
<b>Tool 10:</b>	Urban context analysis final report outline

**Figure 2** contains an overview on the phases and steps to complete the urban context analysis. The iterative approach to analysis recommended for the exercise is also presented.

The remaining sections of this narrative guide is organised as follows:

- Phase 1: Preparation (Steps 1-3)
- Phase 2: Data collection (Steps 4-6)
- Phase 3: Data analysis and documenting (Steps 7-10)

Each step throughout the guidance note contains a description of purpose, available tools, and advice for their preparation and use.

Figure 2: Overview of context analysis steps

<b>STEP 1</b> Launch context analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop workplan and budget</li> <li>• Develop role descriptions for team members and partners for the analysis</li> </ul>	<b>Phase 1</b> Preparation
<b>STEP 2</b> Frame the context analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use criteria to determine on what, in which area, and over what period of time to focus the context analysis</li> </ul>	
<b>STEP 3</b> Select initial key context analysis questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft key analysis questions using provided framework to guide and provoke ideas</li> </ul>	
<b>STEP 4</b> Collate secondary data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out desk review, refine framework and document findings</li> <li>• Map existing understanding of important stakeholders</li> </ul>	<b>Phase 2</b> Data collection
<b>STEP 5</b> Prepare to collect primary data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft data collection plan to include the identification of KIIs and FGDs</li> <li>• Adapt and contextualise KII questionnaires and FGD guides</li> </ul>	
<b>STEP 6</b> Carry out primary data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debrief regularly and discuss findings to refine hypotheses</li> <li>• Conduct a meeting midway through data collection to review findings and identify outstanding questions for additional FGDs or KIIs</li> </ul>	
<b>STEP 7</b> Analyse primary and secondary data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarise and analyse information gathered during data collection to identify key findings, implications for programming and stakeholders analysis</li> </ul>	<b>Phase 3</b> Data analysis and documenting
<b>STEP 8</b> Validation workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise a workshop to validate and refine analysis</li> </ul>	
<b>STEP 9</b> Write final report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document key findings and decisions in report or presentation</li> </ul>	
<b>STEP 10</b> Communicate findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share findings with internal and external stakeholders</li> </ul>	

# Phase 1 – Preparation

At this time, the implementing organisation puts in place the structure and resources required for the context analysis. It also begins to reflect on the issues and questions it wants to explore during the analysis.

## Step 1: Launch context analysis

### STEP 1: OVERVIEW

#### Tools

- **Tool 1: Workplan and budget** provides a template for planning the analysis

#### Output

- Completed workplan and budget
- Establish team roles
- Decision on partners to engage in the analysis

Once an implementing organisation has made the decision that a context analysis is an appropriate initial action in their response to a crisis, they must carry out a few practical basic tasks to prepare and structure the analysis.

### Workplan and budget

Individuals who have conducted these types of analyses and/or used similar tools know that the time to implement them can shift significantly, and the time required to prepare the meetings in the area can be highly variable.

**Tool 1: Workplan and budget** provides an illustrative workplan and budget based on a 14-day on-site analysis period for the urban context analysis to understand and

estimate the costs and time required. Of course, each organisation will adapt the tools and planning according to their available budgets, existing experience in the country and complementary assessments already completed/planned. The toolkit itself is generally designed with the assumption of approximately two weeks in country of data collection as a starting point from which users will adapt according to their needs.

The workplan should be refined just after or with the budget as changes may need to be made to the workplan if budget constraints limit the scope of the analysis. This tool should be used and updated by the team lead throughout the analysis period. The activities in Column C of the workplan should be modified to reflect the planned analysis and then planned across the days/weeks. If some team members are consultants or are staff from HQ or another office that will need coverage from another budget, the user should estimate the anticipated time allocation of each team member for each line item (see Columns D-F). Similarly, for the budget, the 'services' estimates are only necessary if some team members are consultants or are staff from HQ or another office that will



Photo credit: Meredith Hutchison/IRC

need coverage from another budget. The user should update the anticipated unit rate and number of units for each line item to estimate the total required budget.

### Decision to launch Urban Context Analysis in Maiduguri, Nigeria, 2016

The IRC had been working in Borno State in Nigeria for over one year in response to the displacement of populations due to the threat of violence from Boko Haram. Programming in Maiduguri began after violence in the remote areas caused displacement to Maiduguri. The organisation initially primarily responded in the camps but recognised that many displaced were in host communities living on the property of host families. This raised different issues of how to ensure access to adequate services for the affected populations. It was decided to undertake an urban context analysis as a way of preparing to ensure that future programmes could better address the needs of displaced and community members impacted by the displacement caused by the insecurity in Borno State.

### Team composition

The context analysis team will be led by a team lead who should have significant experience conducting qualitative studies and familiarity with the type of analysis. If possible, it is helpful to have one to two additional experienced individuals to provide support. For the FGDs and KIIs, at least four staff with knowledge of the area(s) investigated would be beneficial. The latter would ideally be national staff who come from and know the local languages of both the affected communities (if IDPs/migrants/refugees), as well as host communities (remembering that even in many host communities several local languages may be spoken with one prevailing language serving as a common – but not necessarily native – language). Those who do not speak local languages will need to be paired with national staff with appropriate language capabilities or translators. Typical translators will not be ideal for this work, however, as direct translation is time-consuming; it would be preferable to have a counterpart trained to understand the nuances of the questions and follow-up questions. It is essential to recruit interviewers/facilitators who are from the country/city/same groups as the participants in the context analysis, eg refugees, ethnic minorities, male and female. Below, Table 1 describes the team members' roles.

Table 1: Team member roles

ROLE	DESCRIPTION	PRIOR EXPERIENCE
Team lead (optional additional co-leads)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine team roles and responsibilities</li> <li>Develop and maintain workplan and budget</li> <li>Determine initial geographic scope for analysis</li> <li>Coordinate writing of desk review</li> <li>Adapt tools for context</li> <li>Design data collection methodology</li> <li>Facilitate team debriefings, analysis sessions, etc.</li> <li>Analyse data and formulate findings</li> <li>Coordinate writing of final context analysis report</li> </ul>	Leading qualitative studies, eg evaluations, assessments, context analysis, etc.
Support and logistics team member(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate identification and scheduling of FGDs and KIIs</li> <li>Coordinate vehicle rental, workshop rental, translator hiring, as needed</li> </ul>	Knowledge of local context including language(s). Experience in planning in fast-shifting environments.
Data collection team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support main team to interview KIIs and facilitate FGDs</li> <li>Report findings</li> <li>Contribute to preliminary analysis by participating in regular debriefing meetings with full team</li> <li>Translators may also be needed for some team members</li> </ul>	Local language competencies; knowledge of context, notetaking capacities.

## Joint analysis and partnerships

If the implementing organisation is already established in the city and partnering or coordinating with other (local or international) organisations working in the same area, then it may want to consider collaborating formally with them on the analysis. This would bring the usual benefits and challenges of partnership: diverse perspectives; possible complementary areas of expertise; and local knowledge versus the need to plan for additional coordination and contractual activities. As described below in Steps 5 and 7, there will be scope to involve (formal or informal) partners in the planning for data collection and analysis of findings. Organisations should be careful about taking on new partners to execute a context analysis in an urban crisis if there is a significant conflict or protection dynamic at play. Some factors to consider in deciding whether to include local partners or in which phases/steps are:

- Do the partners know the areas of the city much better than the implementing organisation, such that they can narrow the focus of the data collection or assist in the formulation of questions?
- Are there protection concerns for the staff of the local partner participating in the data collection? Are there any risks of bias of the potential partner participating in data collection that cannot be mitigated through the overall team composition?
- Will sharing findings publicly create risks for any groups that may have participated in data collection or in the analysis?

In general, there will be many more advantages to having more stakeholders involved in the context analysis as it will minimise differing perspectives on the context, and increase the likelihood that donors and government stakeholders appropriate the findings, which will yield better coordinated responses. Also, often due to sensitivities of the analysis it may be hard to share the final report. Joint analysis can help to facilitate knowledge transfer on the findings.

## Step 2: Frame the context analysis

### STEP 2: OVERVIEW

#### Output

- Decision on the scope and scale of the analysis
- Decision on the particular sub-areas of the city to conduct the analysis

Urban areas are by their size, density, social and economic diversity inherently complex and unique. Consequently, seeking to understand and assess the many political, administrative, economic, social and cultural factors that might affect an international organisation's programmes in the relatively short period of time available for a typical analysis exercise requires defining the specific problem(s) you seek to address. This will enable the team to focus the analysis to ensure that specific questions are identified and can be addressed as part of the data collection steps of the context analysis (described below in **Steps 4-6**).

### Review considerations and questions to frame the context analysis

**Table 2** below contains criteria for the implementing organisation to review when considering what and in which areas they want to focus the context analysis before drafting key analysis questions in **Step 3**. These guiding questions can help to define boundaries of the analysis ensuring that the analysis helps to answer, along with highlighting key considerations to be taken into account during logistic and data collection planning.

Table 2: Considerations and questions to frame the scope and scale

CONSIDERATIONS	QUESTIONS
Organisational capacity and interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the current organisational coverage and background in the urban area(s)? Is there any existing or planned programming?</li> <li>• What other organisations are operational/have influence in the area(s)?</li> <li>• Is the intention from the outset to analyse only specific populations or sub-areas or can these be explored and refined based on the analysis findings?</li> </ul>
Type of crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what type of crisis is the organisation intending to respond?</li> </ul> <p><i>Types of crises:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Conflict that causes internal displacement TO a city</li> <li>ii) Conflict that causes refugee displacement TO a city</li> <li>iii) Violent conflict WITHIN a city</li> <li>iv) Naturally triggered hazards WITHIN a city or displacement TO a city</li> </ul>
Populations of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which are the affected population(s)?</li> <li>• Where are they living/accessing services (eg in or out of camps)?</li> <li>• Are populations of interest clustered in specific areas of the city or living across multiple area(s)?</li> </ul> <p><i>Depending on the nature of the event (natural-triggered hazards with rapid or slow onsets or conflict etc.) and scale of the event you may explore issues related to certain demographics such as host communities, migrants, IDPs, refugees, etc.</i></p>
Type of city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What size is the city? How might this impact the number of areas of the city to conduct primary data collection in?</li> <li>• What is the size of the specific area(s) of interest within the city? How will that impact the amount of time for data collection in each particular area of the city?</li> <li>• Is the city a capital of a country or of a province/state/district, which may have additional layers of authority and influence?</li> </ul> <p><i>Knowing all of the above can also be relevant in terms of access to key informants and inform the scope of the analysis.</i></p>

## Prioritise and map sub-areas

As will be explained further in Phase 2, the urban context analysis aims to collect data at both city-wide level and in sub-areas. An area (also known as a neighbourhood or settlement) is a community within a defined geography. They may be formally defined administrative boundaries (eg municipality or ward) or physical boundaries based on features of the urban landscape (eg roads, rivers) combined with social analysis considerations (Parker and Maynard, 2015). Typically, it takes approximately one to two days to complete data collection in a sub-area of a city. As such, each organisation will have to select the number of sub-areas that may be covered given resources, time, and interest for the analysis.

Below are examples of criteria that may be used to prioritise areas of the city for a context analysis:

- Vulnerability of the sub-area in comparison to other areas of the city
- Implementing organisation's existing programming or strategic preferences
- Known gaps in contextual understanding
- Security/access to sub-area, and
- Request for support/documentation of needs by local government/UN, etc.

When selecting areas of the city, it can be very helpful to review maps of the areas and how the sub-areas selected relate to other parts of the city. Some cities may have helpful data on vulnerability that can support this analysis.

## Selecting sub-areas for an urban context analysis, Dar es Salaam, 2016

Dar es Salaam is a large, sprawling capital city. Consequently, it would be time-consuming to try to include the entire city in a context analysis exercise. Given that the implementing organisation intended to target refugees and displaced persons for programming, particularly Burundians and Congolese, it was able to focus the analysis on three areas of the city that were known to have higher concentrations of these groups. This facilitated a more in-depth inquiry into those areas and the development of a more comprehensive picture of the issues they faced. Without that basic understanding of the population groups prior to the analysis, choosing the relevant areas of the city would have been challenging and might have led to analysis of areas that would only reveal an incomplete picture of the city and how its communities and services function for the target groups.

## Step 3: Select initial key context analysis questions

### STEP 3: OVERVIEW

#### Output

- Adapted thematic framework and guiding questions for the analysis

**Figure 3** depicts the themes for the urban context analysis. This framework applies a system-thinking approach that aims to understand both individual thematic areas and the interconnections and relations between each of the areas. The framework is based on research conducted by the IRC (Meaux and Osofisan, 2016) and ALNAP (Campbell, 2016) on humanitarian response in urban areas. It is organised according to analysis themes (described below) and sub-themes identified as particularly relevant to an urban context analysis. It also contains

a series of key questions to be used as a starting point to explore the themes, sub-themes and issues of interest to the implementing organisation. These questions will be used by the team to guide the adaptation of the FGD and KII questionnaires (**Tools 5A to 5G**) that will be used for data collection in **Phase 2**.

#### Themes:

- **Politics and governance:** exploration of who holds power, influence, and decision-making authority and whether the reality of these dynamics corresponds to official policies, regulations and laws.
- **Social and cultural:** consideration of the social structure, identities (eg language, ethnicity or religion), and individual factors that may support or hinder social relationships and cohesion.
- **Economic:** examination of issues such as income-generating opportunities, wage rates, commodity prices etc. that have a close connection to opportunities and vulnerabilities of affected population(s).
- **Service delivery and infrastructure:** review of access to quality services for affected population(s).
- **Space and settlements:** analysis of the space in which the crisis is taking place (physical organisation, risks and access).

The framework also incorporates '**Do No Harm**' and **gender equality** as cross-cutting themes. 'Do No Harm' analysis helps to ensure that programmes do not increase tension or undermine existing local systems (eg existing service providers or local government support). Gender equality<sup>5</sup> 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 assigned to them. Considerations of these cross-cutting themes are integrated throughout the toolkit, including the questionnaires and analysis steps, to be gender and conflict sensitive.

<sup>5</sup> If the team is only interested in the theme of gender equality, it is recommended that the organisation conducts an in-depth gender analysis instead. For example see IRC, 2017. Gender Analysis and Program Design Toolkit. Available at: <https://rescue.box.com/s/sob2felahuyz5h7yi1wia2gslfcdqam>

Figure 3: Typology of urban systems



Source: Campbell, 2016

### Adapting the themes, sub-themes, and guiding questions:

The thematic framework in **Table 3** provides guiding questions that can be adapted to a team's particular context analysis. A team should **always adapt** these questions and, as needed, sub-themes. The framework is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather a tool for framing the context-specific key questions to be developed by the team for data collection and analysis. While the team will continue to refine the context analysis before data collection,<sup>6</sup> early in the preparation, it is useful to begin to define the key questions of interest. During Step 3, users should review the framework, note questions that appear particularly relevant or irrelevant to their context, and use the themes and sub-themes to brainstorm other potential questions. This process should help to outline initial recommendations for data collection methods and the focus of the team during later steps. When adapting the questions, the team should consider:

- Is this question relevant to my context (keep / remove)? For example, questions on legal protection may be less relevant for an IDP context vs a refugee context.
- Does this question need adaptation to be relevant for my context? Will knowing the answer to this question help to inform more effective approaches to programming?
- Are there any key questions missing about anything the team wants to investigate?

It is important not to assume that the team knows the answers to all the guiding questions. Often humanitarian staff will make assumptions about a particular context that are wrong, or only half of the full picture of the context. If the team does not have data to back up assumptions, the team should consider investigating the question.

Finally, a context analysis value is only as valuable as the questions that guide the context analysis. Therefore, it is critical that the team identifies during Step 3 what it seeks to learn through the context analysis to ensure that data collection and analysis reflect the key desires for the learning of the team. This can mean a team may need to add new questions or only focus on particular themes to ensure enough data is collected on the particular questions of value to the programme team.

<sup>6</sup> For example, the framework is also included in **Step 4** when the context-specific findings of the desk review are used to remove any irrelevant sub-themes and more precise key questions may be identified by the team. Later, during primary data collection (**Step 6**), and during the analysis of primary and secondary data (**Step 7**), the framework will again serve to organise preliminary and then final findings from the analysis.

Table 3: Thematic framework

THEME	SUB-THEME	GUIDING QUESTIONS <i>[TO BE REFINED BY THE TEAM IMPLEMENTING THE CONTEXT ANALYSIS]</i>
POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE	Stakeholder analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the key actors that have an influence on the affected population (negative or positive)? Why and how to engage these actors?</li> <li>• What are the incentives and motivation that enable or constrain the actors to respond to the displacement crisis?</li> <li>• What is the capacity of each actor to respond to the needs of affected populations?</li> </ul>
	Governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the governance structure (centralised, decentralised, etc.)? At what level are policies on displacement made? At what level are policies on service delivery made?</li> <li>• What is the relationship between different government institutions and departments?</li> </ul>
	Policy and legal frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main policies, initiatives, strategic plans and regulations that may have a negative or positive impact on affected populations? (eg city resilience plan, IDP or refugee policy, municipal bye-laws or plans, national and municipal disaster preparedness plans).</li> <li>• What are the main legal frameworks in place that have the greatest influence on populations affected by displacement and/or the crisis? What traditional mechanisms or community practices supplement or undermine the legal frameworks?</li> </ul>
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL	Social relationships and cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the key social groups or identities (eg religious, ethnic, language, gender etc.) in the area? How do different identities affect social relationships between groups (eg host and IDPs)?</li> <li>• What does the networks of relationships among people in the area look like, and how do trust issues between different groups affect these relationships?</li> <li>• Are there social, ethnic, religious, other differences within the existing population currently or historically? If there is a displacement, will the nature of the displaced groups affect fears or concerns with implications for the risk of conflict?</li> </ul>
	Protection risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the risks of harm to different groups (minority groups, women, youth, disabled, LGBT, etc.)?</li> </ul>
ECONOMIC	Jobs and characteristics of labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the labour market look like in the area? What are the main sources of income? What jobs and skills in demand and in the future?</li> <li>• How does the labour market structure affect other urban systems (eg heightened politics around jobs, limited ability of affected populations to access to services, or inequality in development of different parts of a city, etc.).</li> <li>• What opportunities and constraints (financial, social or legal) exist for livelihoods of affected populations?</li> </ul>

THEME	SUB-THEME	GUIDING QUESTIONS <i>[TO BE REFINED BY THE TEAM IMPLEMENTING THE CONTEXT ANALYSIS]</i>
SERVICE DELIVERY AND INFRASTRUCTURE	Demand and supply of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which groups have access to social services? What are the barriers to access (eg proximity, infrastructure, and discrimination, financial)? Do affected populations know who to go to for services?</li> <li>• Who are providing services? Are critical services delivered publicly or privately (or hybrid)?</li> <li>• What is the capacity of service providers (eg technical, resources, infrastructure, policy implementation, and planning)? Are they consistent and coherent with existing service provision norms?</li> <li>• What is the nature of accountability between service providers and service users? Are service-users able to influence service provision?</li> </ul>
	Coordination of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is service delivery to affected populations coordinated between various service providers (INGOs, LNGO, FBO, UN, host government and the private sector, etc.)?</li> <li>• What is the relationship between the different service providers (cooperative/ competitive)?</li> </ul>
SPACE AND SETTLEMENTS	Urban plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the urban and/or investment plans for the area of interest? What are the trends in urbanisation/growth? How would these trends and plans impact a potential programme?</li> </ul>
	Environmental risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the natural or man-made risks that uniquely affect the areas studied? How might access to services increase or mitigate these risks?</li> </ul>
	Access to housing and land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which groups have access to housing, land and shelter? Why/why not? Are property and tenancy rights respected?</li> </ul>
	Access to public and open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do different groups access public spaces for economic or social purposes? Are certain people excluded from these spaces? Why (eg safety, transportation)?</li> </ul>
CROSS-CUTTING	Gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the social and cultural norms that affect gender relationships and expectations? What are the assigned gendered roles and responsibilities define what acceptable types of work for men and women?</li> <li>• Compared to men, what level of access to, and control over, resources and services do women have? What role do women play in the decision-making process?</li> </ul>
	Do No Harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do we ensure that programmes do not increase tensions or undermine existing systems (eg service delivery systems or processes)? What are the entry points for promoting positive change?</li> </ul>

# Phase 2 – Data collection

Data collection will be the most time- and resource-intensive phase. The phase involves firstly reviewing secondary data (eg existing reports, data, assessments, analyses) to help focus the subsequent primary data collection (ie KIIs and FGDs). Primary data will be collected in selected sub-areas or neighbourhoods of the city that have been identified as significant in relation to the crisis of interest.

## KEY TERMS

### Primary data collection

Data collected directly from the source through fieldwork for the purpose of an assessment. Sources include key informants, community/focus group discussions, and direct observations (KIRA, n.d.).

### Secondary data collection

External research and other information gathered to inform the current assessment. Secondary data is produced by another institution, person, or entity for a different purpose, and generally has undergone at least one layer of analysis. Secondary data includes published research, Internet materials, media reports, and data which has been cleaned and analysed (ACAPS, 2012).

## Step 4: Collate secondary data

### STEP 4: OVERVIEW

#### Tools

- **Tool 2: Desk review summary** provides an outline to organise findings and an optional desk review memo
- **Tool 3: Stakeholder analysis** provides a template in which to list influential stakeholders

#### Output

- Completed desk review
- Completed (initial) stakeholder analysis  
Decision on partners to engage in the analysis

### Conduct desk review

Completing a desk review is arguably one of the most important phases of research. **Tool 2: Desk review summary** contains a suggested outline for a desk review. A thorough and proper study of secondary data can save time and resources in the long-run because it reveals existing knowledge and gaps, identifies potential entry points, and conceptualises an efficient primary data collection and targeted analysis. In short, a desk review helps the team analyse what information already exists and what information will need to be collected through KIIs or FGDs.

The desk review should be led (carried out or coordinated by) the team lead approximately two to three weeks before data collection. In short, there needs to be enough time after completion of the desk review to review and adjust the data collection plan (**Step 5**) based on the identified gaps in existing materials. A desk review can take anywhere from two days to up to a week to complete depending on the time available for the team to work on it and the amount of existing resources on the context. Ideally, in-country staff who are familiar with the context and existing resources will be involved in this process.

A desk review can help you answer key questions such as:

- What is the timeline of the crisis?
- What is the common understanding of its root cause(s)?
- What is well-documented? Where are there gaps?
- How credible are the existing sources?
- What issues could be particularly divisive or sensitive during primary data collection?

Tool 2 Desk Review Summary provides a template for reviewing existing materials along with guidance on potential sources of secondary data for each sub-theme of the thematic framework. As you develop the desk review, the team should document information that exists to answer the guiding questions along with what questions remain.

The information from the desk review will be used to:

- Populate **Tool 3 Stakeholder Analysis**
- Revise the guiding questions of the thematic framework based on gaps or new areas of interested identified
- Provide direction and considerations for **Step 5's** preparation of **Tool 4** data collection plan

Finally, the desk review can help to ensure that all team members have a common understanding of the crisis and are preparing for data collection with a shared understanding of the existing knowledge and gaps. This is especially important when the data collection team is international and may not be familiar with the context, but also may be equally important for country staff that may not have a broad understanding of the context (eg legal and governance structures are often misunderstood or unknown).

## TIP: LEVERAGING GEOGRAPHIC MAPS

Analysing the space of a city can be key to understanding the underlying dynamics and vulnerabilities such as inequity in service provision, natural hazards, differences in shelter/urban planning etc. Open Street Map is a great starting place for exploring the dynamics of an urban area.

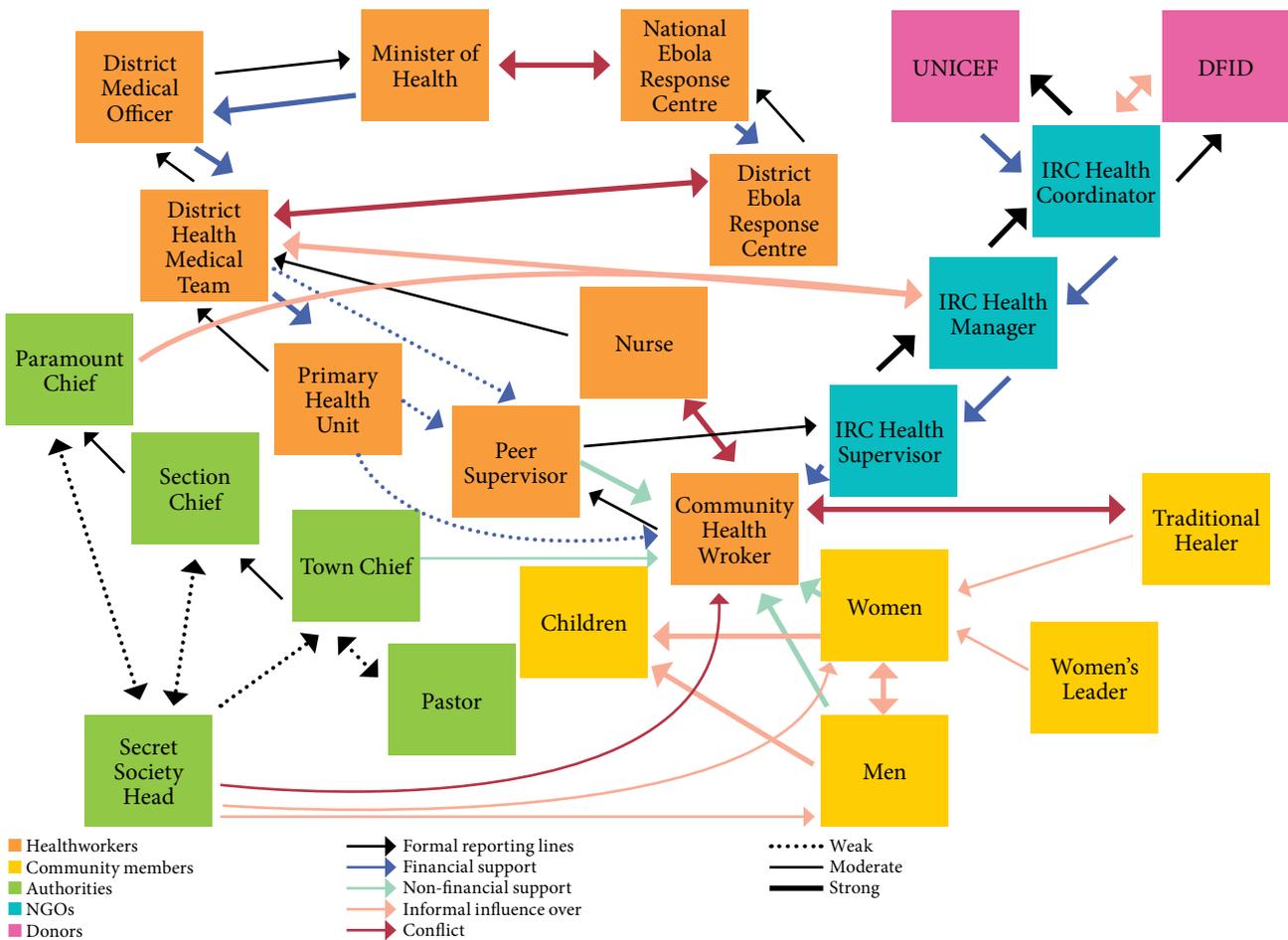


Photo credit: Ned Colt/IRC

## Map key stakeholders

Stakeholder analysis, also known as actor mapping, involves listing influential stakeholders that the implementing organisation wishes to better understand as part of the analysis. Data collection will inform the team's comprehension of why the actors are influential in the particular context, what their relationships are to other actors and affected population(s), and how they may affect the implementing organisation's work (and vice versa). When mapping stakeholders, it is important to be as specific as possible. For example, rather than stating local government, map the specific important positions and people that make up local government. Figure 4 is an example of the range of stakeholders that may be relevant for a project representing government, community leaders, affected populations, and donors.

Figure 4: Stakeholder analysis from Sierra Leone



Source: IRC (2016)

Common key stakeholders for responses in urban areas will include:<sup>7</sup>

Affected population groups (displaced, host, social groups)

- Community leaders
- Civil society, LNGOs, CBOs, NSAs
- International NGOs, UN, donors
- National, sub-national, and local government
- Private sector
- Urban planning institutions, and
- Academia.

Use the information collected from the desk review to map key actors. Use **Tool 3: Stakeholder analysis** to consolidate this information. Fill in the initial columns (B-E):

- List the name of the stakeholder
- Note what type of stakeholder they are (eg ministry, donor, UN agency, community group, local organisation, etc.)
- Note at what level they operate and where they operate, and
- If possible include some basic information on their role(s).

If additional information (eg their level of influence or openness to partnership, etc.) is known, this may also be added here, but the team should view the tool as one to be updated as and when information becomes available. Columns F-J of the stakeholder analysis tool will be updated throughout data collection (**Step 6**) and will structure the stakeholder analysis (**Step 7**) to better identify, summarise, and rank actor interests and incentives.

The stakeholder analysis information will be helpful for:

- During data collection: identification of key informants for primary data collection.
- During analysis: identification of stakeholders who are likely to have an impact (positive/negative) on future programmes or provide opportunities to enhance the impact of a programme through engagement. This information can then be used by an organisation to inform its coordination strategy and plan throughout a programme life cycle.

## TIP: DON'T FORGET DIFFICULT STAKEHOLDERS!

When identifying stakeholders, don't forget to consider difficult stakeholders. These are individuals or entities that may seek to block, divert, or capture assistance for particular groups (eg local gangs or other armed groups, corrupt officials, etc.).

Difficult stakeholders are often critical to the success of a programme, as they can control access to key groups and individuals, or use influence to erode support for an agency's programme. When identified and properly engaged, they can provide access to and influence among groups and populations that would otherwise not be reached.

Source: Basedow et al. (2017)

<sup>7</sup> See Basedow *et al.* (2017) for further details on considerations of key stakeholders for urban areas.

## Step 5: Prepare to collect primary data

### STEP 5: OVERVIEW

#### Tools

**Tool 4: Data collection plan** is a template for planning and implementing data collection. It includes sampling and staffing needs (interviewers, translators, etc.), and will facilitate logistics and meeting planning for efficient data collection.

**Tools 5A-5G** contain a series of sample question guides to structure the KIIs and FGDs:

- **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 for labour and business climate
- **Tool 5F:** KII guide for local government
- **Tool 5G:** KII guide for NGO service providers

#### Outputs

Completed data collection plan (**Tool 4**)

Adapted question guides (**Tools 5A-5G**)

### Plan for focus group discussions and key informant interviews

**Tool 4: Data collection plan** provides a template for detailed data collection planning of focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) for the urban context analysis. It contains the estimated time required per geographic area and sampling recommendations. This planning work will be ongoing throughout data collection as details continue to be refined and therefore it is recommended to continue to update the document throughout the phase. It should be managed by the team lead; local coordinator(s) will likely be necessary to arrange logistics and mobilise participants for FGDs.

The tool is composed of two tables:

- **Tab 1 (4A): Detailed data collection planning for sub-areas** – To investigate a particular area, the tool recommends a sampling approach to apply for a particular community area. This would typically entail FGDs with affected populations (displaced and host) along with KIIs at an area level (eg community leaders, religious leaders, local shops).
- **Tab 2 (4B): Detailed data collection planning for city-wide sampling** – To gain a perspective of the wider context of the city, it is recommended to conduct KIIs with stakeholders that work at a city level (eg INGOs, city government, large companies).

**Adapting the data collection plan:** Because of the specific nature of each urban crisis, sampling will need to be tailored to the context and the groups and actors that are affected by or able to affect the crisis. This should ensure that a diversity of people participate in the FGDs and KIIs, representing a plurality of views. Sampling will also be dependent on the staffing and resources available of the analysis team. There is no magic bullet to composing an appropriate sample.

**Planning for key informants:** As noted previously, a stakeholder analysis will be the starting point to identify key informant interviews.

- Ideally, in **Step 4** you will have begun to identify key positions, or even names, of individuals to be included for key informant interviews at the sub-area or city-wide level. At a minimum, you will have identified some key positions to be included for the government and other organisational stakeholders. These should be added to the data collection plan.
- Ask country office staff for their suggestions of individuals from government, civil society, and the private sector, and particularly those individuals who might be able to speak to the issues of certain populations or sub-populations of key concern (such as women, youth, ethnic or religious minorities, other potentially marginalised groups, etc.).
- If resources permit, the team may also consider a facilitator stakeholder mapping or social network analysis in a workshop format (noted below) as a way to identify key stakeholders.

**Planning for FGDs:** Plan for separate FGDs for men and women/adolescent boys and girls with same sex facilitators: adolescents in particular may be less likely to speak in a mixed-gender group.

**Geographic/spatial considerations:** When planning the data collection, it is useful to understand the particular geographic and social characteristics of the area before starting data collection. The geographic considerations (ie location of area in the city, size of the area, location of interviews within the area, camp or out of camp, etc.) can help to inform how to organise the team and feasibility for number of KIIs or FGDs. Likewise, it is important to understand the social dynamics of an area to apply a 'Do No Harm' approach to the data collection and tailor questionnaires accordingly, given protection, conflict, or gender sensitivities.

**Participatory data collection planning workshop:** If conducting the analysis in partnership with another organisation or if staff have limited knowledge of the local communities, it may be helpful to have a participatory workshop with local stakeholders knowledgeable of the city (eg local NGOs, local government, academic, affected populations/community leaders etc.). This could be facilitated in a half-day or one-day workshop to finalise data collection planning in targeted sub-areas. The toolkit contains an optional tool (**Tool optional city overview workshop**) that contains a draft agenda (including facilitation guidance) for teams with the resources to incorporate a workshop into their data collection planning. If time and expertise permit, the team may consider conducting a social network analysis mapping to identify key informants that are influential and should be included in the analysis.<sup>8</sup>

## Adapt and contextualise data collection tools

Based on the adapted framework of thematic, sub-thematic areas and guiding questions along with findings from the desk review (**Steps 3 and 4**), the team should now adapt and contextualise the question guides for primary data collection. **Tool 5 Question Guides (A-G)** includes questions for KIIs dedicated to: **key influential stakeholders; service providers; labour and business climate; local government; and NGO service providers**. Two guides for FGDs are included: one with **displaced populations** and one with **host communities**.

**The question guides should always be reviewed and adapted for every context analysis; just as no context is the same, no context analysis will be the same.** The themes in the framework are connected to specific modules in the questionnaire. This will make it easier to identify which questions to prioritise during the interviews/focus groups and also aid the team to identify information sources during analysis. Some questionnaires also collect information to develop a general understanding of the community profile; for example see **Tool 5A: Module 1**. These questions can help to provide general context information that may be important to informing multiple aspects of the analysis.

## TIP: ENSURING REPRESENTATION OF FULL COMMUNITY

It is important to ensure that women and minority social groups are adequately represented and that the gender distribution of the groups and individuals is balanced. This is essential for collecting information on the barriers women and girls, including minority social groups, experience related to accessing services, business and employment, education, etc.

<sup>8</sup> For guidance on conducting a social network analysis see IRC, 2016a.

The following tasks are essential to adapting and contextualising the question guides:

1. Eliminate questions that are not relevant, or for which there is ample data from the desk review.
2. Add questions relevant to issues or problems already raised consistently in the data or by peer organisations, etc. (eg child exploitation, GBV, etc.). You may need more qualitative information about causes, motivations, or how something has changed since the event or circumstances which inspired the context analysis.
3. Allow time to validate the tools with country staff and to ensure data collectors fully understand the issues to be explored; this may require additional protection and gender training and guidance to the extent possible within the time and resources available (IRC, 2013).
4. Discuss potential protection risks that might arise around certain questions, particularly gender-based violence or child exploitation issues with all team members, including translators, as part of training/orientation; all team participants should have clear guidance on what to do in such instances, eg with regard to referral, reporting, etc.

### TIP: WORKING WITH DISPLACED POPULATIONS

Many displaced populations, especially refugees living in urban areas, attempt to mask their identity to avoid exposure to risk or discrimination based on their identity. It's important that data collection activities employ principles of protection and do not expose FGD participants to potential harm.

## Training the data collection team

As with any data collection event, qualitative or quantitative, it is important to take the time to orient the team members, data collectors and/or translators, to the purpose of the data collection event and the specific tools. At a minimum, you should plan to spend a half to full day to review the purpose of the contextual analysis and key findings and gaps from the desk review as well as the data collection plan. Subsequently, some useful techniques to orient the participants in the tools are as follows (in addition to, or instead of, direct written translation as appropriate for the context):

- Review the questions in the tools, identifying key terms where participants should agree on the best equivalent terms or phrases to use in the local language
- Role play between those who speak the local language as a way of translating the tools and agreeing on key terms that should be articulated the same way, and
- Pilot the tools in some areas of the city and come back to discuss changes in the tools and/or approaches.

Given that it is less likely that someone is likely to do enough observations and data entry to tabulate and use a software package to analyse the quantitative responses, it may make sense to pilot the question guides in target areas of the study, to enable the team to incorporate the information and insights gained during the pilot.

## Step 6: Carry out primary data collection

This is when the KIIs and FGDs take place. This step will require the ongoing involvement of the most experienced members of the team to ensure appropriate participation and adequate notetaking and cleaning.

### Continually review and assess participation and representation

- As part of each KII and FGD, be sure to get referrals for who else the team should contact regarding certain topics. Use this snowball/referral sampling method to help identify additional key informants or focus group participants.
- Be mindful that ensuring appropriate participation is a challenge, especially in a time-efficient way, and relying on key powerholders to organise participation may introduce bias.
- Throughout the data collection process, the team should be on alert for possible gaps in representation of vulnerable, marginalised, and minority groups, particularly as the team learns more about power dynamics in the geographic areas.

### STEP 6: OVERVIEW

#### Tools

- **Tool 6: KII and FGD debrief template** provides a template for debriefs to summarise findings to date per sub-area during data collection

#### Output

- Completed KII and FGD debrief template (one per geographic sub-area)

### Note findings daily, debrief, and review at planned intervals

#### NOTETAKING

Detailed notes should be taken during each FGD and KII. This will help to maintain a recording of the data collected and can be cross-referenced later. The team lead should review the notes collected regularly as a way to monitor whether team members are correctly asking questions and probing to ensure complete and credible responses from participants.

#### DAILY DEBRIEFS

Daily (or every second day) hold a debriefing session with the data collection team. This will provide the team with the opportunity to review and discuss findings. This enables the team to construct an understanding of what is happening in a given sub-area and to refine hypotheses to be tested during data collection in subsequent sub-areas.

#### MID-DATA COLLECTION REVIEW

1. Use **Tool 6: KII and FGD debrief template** to note rough summaries of findings to date per sub-area. It is not necessary to note exhaustively the findings or to polish language. The idea is to prepare to discuss findings against the framework with the rest of the team during a mid-data collection review. The tool contains two sheets:
  - The framework of thematic, sub-thematic areas and key questions for the analysis against which the preliminary findings per sub-area may be mapped;
  - A table in which to list local service providers.

The framework sheet contains a column (Column G) with the exact information sources (which modules in which question guide(s) can be used to populate each sub-theme line in the template).
2. Schedule a specific time to revisit the known information and remaining gaps. This review can help the team to step back and reassess how the data collection is going and whether any adjustments are needed in the upcoming schedule of FGDs or KIIs to ensure the gaps are filled.
3. Following the review, clean up notes in Tool 6; these should be reviewed by other team members to ensure clarity and completeness of the information.

These two sheets will be used again in **Step 7** below when the team are ready to collate and analyse findings for the full context analysis.

## Protection considerations and data collection

Notes should include general references to the type of interview and location but should be careful not to include identifiable information. Even without names of individuals, information contained in these notes could pose risks to study participants. The sample question guides contain an explicit informed consent statement to make sure that participants understand what will be done with the information.

The notes should be stored in a secure way so that access is limited to only a few persons. For most circumstances retaining a copy of interview notes is not required and therefore they can be destroyed after the analysis has been completed and notes from the daily debriefs have been produced. The findings from the process should serve as adequate documentation. If the organisation wishes to maintain FGD/KII notes, it should build into the budget the time to carefully transcribe and then anonymise the notes to ensure the protection of participants.

For further information on data security see ICRC, 2013 (Chapter 6) and Responsible Data Forum (n.d.).

### Protection considerations, Dar es Salaam, 2016

During the Dar es Salaam context analysis in 2016, it emerged that many Burundian and Congolese displaced/refugees would not admit their nationality for fear of being deported. This raised a number of protection issues related to doing context analysis work in seeking to identify and consult with these groups or even in asking about them. The team was fortunate to have a Congolese person on the data collection team to navigate these concerns, but it is a useful reminder to organisations undertaking such an exercise to ensure that they are aware in advance of potential protection risks.



Photo credit: Lucy Carrigan/IRC

# Phase 3 – Data analysis and documenting

As outlined in **Steps 4-6** above, information from the desk review, the FGDs, and KIIs, etc. are discussed, documented, and analysed according to the pre-determined considerations and the framework of thematic, sub-thematic areas and key questions for the analysis during **Steps 3, 4 and 6** using **Tool 2: Desk review summary** and **Tool 6: KII and FGD debrief template**.

Subsequently, during the final phase of the context analysis, it will be necessary to consolidate, review and document findings and communicate the final analysis.

## Step 7: Analyse primary and secondary data

### STEP 7: OVERVIEW

#### Tools

- **Tool 7: Key findings** is a template for summarising primary and secondary data collection findings and analysing it via a series of proposed lenses
- **Tool 8: Programme implications** is a template to structure key considerations for programming and potential partners
- **Tool 3: Stakeholder analysis** – at this step, the tool (previously used in **Step 4**) is used anew to identify, summarise, and rank additional stakeholders, and actors' interests and incentives

#### Outputs (all of which will be refined during **Step 8**)

- Draft key findings
- Draft stakeholder analysis
- Draft programme implications

The toolkit contains three tools in which findings from the data collection will be consolidated, compared against the analysis framework of priority thematic areas and key questions, and (ideally) used to validate findings with expert stakeholders. Interpreting data in a qualitative analytical approach must involve making judgements about the salience of particular findings.

### Analysing key findings

**Use Tool 7A: Key findings** to consolidate all context analysis findings from the desk review and the fieldwork. The findings are organised by sub-areas according to the themes, sub-themes and in response to the questions of the framework used throughout the analysis. Remember that the theme and sub-themes questions in **Tool 7** are guiding questions.

The information collected through the daily debriefs in **Tool 6: KII and FGD debrief template** during **Step 6** will be consolidated into the summary findings by sub-area in **Tool 7: Key findings** (Columns F-H). The information collected through the daily debriefs should be complemented by information collected during the desk review.

The user(s) should then review the preliminary findings per sub-area by identifying the key similarities and differences in findings per sub-theme based on responses to the key question and **most importantly interrogating the reasons for the variations and commonalities, ie the 'why' question:**

- What are the noteworthy differences or similarities per sub-theme across *sub-areas* (**Column I**) and why?
- What are the noteworthy similarities or differences in findings per sub-theme with regard to *gender* (**Column J**) and why?
- What are the noteworthy similarities or differences in findings per sub-theme across *populations* (eg between *host and IDP responses*) (**Column K**) and why?
- What are the noteworthy similarities or differences in findings per sub-theme across *age groups* (**Column L**) and why?

After identifying the findings, also begin to brainstorm and document in **Tool 6** initial implications for programming:

- What are the risks were identified facing the community or to the implementing organisations (**Column M**)?
- What ideas have come up connected to the findings that are relevant for future programming opportunities or partnerships (**Column N**)?

Finally, the user(s) should note outstanding questions or information gaps and provide suggestions of how to address them.

**Tab 2 of Tool 7: Dividers and connectors** contains an **optional** tool to help further investigate social relations and cohesion. This tool is meant to further explore what are the specific factors that divide or cause tension in the area and connectors that may bring people together or build relations between people. To fill out 7B:

- List the dividers and connectors per area.
- Follow the same steps as above in Tab 1 to further analyse and interrogate reasons for variations and commonalities, ie the 'why' question.

## Updating your stakeholder analysis

**Tool 3: Stakeholder analysis** initially drafted during **Step 4** (Desk review) can now be updated and refined using the information from the data collection. Add any newly identified actors (notably sourced from the service providers sheet in **Tool 6: KII and FGD debrief template**) to the list in Columns B-E and complete Columns F-K to the extent possible with the information supplied by informants and noted during data collection. The stakeholder analysis tool helps to structure the team's notes in identifying:

- What the importance of the actor is to future programmes (how critical the actor is to the success of future programmes implemented by the organisation completing the context analysis, eg permissions or approval authority, high influence in community, resources to contribute, etc.).
- How the implementing organisation might engage with the actor (at what stage of the project and in what context, with what capacity, etc.).
- Why the actor might engage with the implementing organisation (what interest or incentive they would have/need).

## TIP: TRIANGULATE INFORMATION

During data analysis, ensure that information is triangulated from a number of different sources. As a data collector you may have one perspective of the context based on the people you interviewed which may not be representative. It is essential that other team members/stakeholders have an opportunity to challenge the findings and analysis and ensure that the team reflects on the analyses.

## From analysis to action: implications for programming

**Tool 8: Programme implications** contains five tables of different programming considerations to be reviewed and populated by the user(s). The purpose of this tool is to put the Key Findings and Stakeholder Analysis into action by noting the practical implications of the context analysis. In other words, what does the analysis mean for existing or future programme design, who might be key stakeholders to partner with, and what are the risks that a project may face and should mitigate for to avoid causing harm.

The content is prompted by a series of questions as follows:

1. What are programming opportunities, potential geographic area, specific sub-population needs and protection concerns, opportunities to build on/ work with, and constraints to be aware of, eg insecurity?
2. Who are the potential partners (including government agencies, local NGOs and civil society organisations, and private sector actors) for design and implementation, per sector and geographic area?
3. What are the key advocacy issues and who are potential partners (including government agencies, local NGOs and civil society organisations, and private sector actors) for these?
4. What approaches or strategies can be adopted to mitigate risks identified through the context analysis?
5. What approaches or strategies can be adopted to harness areas of common interest/connectors identified through the context analysis?

Note: Information for the above can be sourced from Columns F to O, **Tool 7: Key findings and Tool 3: Stakeholder analysis**.

Drafts of these three tools (**Tools 3, 7 and 8**) are vital inputs into the validation workshop described in **Step 8** below. During the workshop they will be used by facilitators to structure discussions and to encourage validation of findings or the identification of supplementary questions.

## Step 8: Validation workshop

### STEP 8: OVERVIEW

#### Tools

- **Tool 9: Urban analysis workshop** includes a one-day urban analysis workshop draft agenda (including facilitation guidance) and participants list

**Outputs** (all of which are drafted and refined several times during the step, notably during the workshop)

- Completed key findings (**Tool 7**)
- Completed stakeholder analysis (**Tool 3**)
- Completed programme implications (**Tool 8**)

A participatory validation workshop is key to challenge and refine the analysis findings. This workshop provides an opportunity to gain wider input into the analysis and facilitate discussion to probe certain issues in-depth. The team should plan for one to two lead facilitators and one overall notetaker.

**Purpose of workshop:** The workshop is used to further validate the initial analysis with a wider group. If engaging people outside the organisation such as local experts or peer organisations, it can be an opportunity to build on relationships with key urban stakeholders and communicate likely programmatic intentions. Involving these actors could be critical to ensuring ownership of the findings though be mindful of the need to maintain confidentiality of data collection sources and any findings that may be sensitive or compromising to participants.

**Workshop participants:** It is essential to involve the full analysis team and internal (and external if feasible) stakeholders who can challenge findings and ensure that the team reflects on the analysis process, revising and refining findings, and implications for future programming. Participants could include analysis team members, stakeholders consulted during the analysis, other stakeholders within the implementing organisation, such as country office management, sector leads, and external – particularly

local – partners. The team may also consider inviting local experts, peer organisations, or even donor agencies to participate that can inform the analysis from their different perspective.

**Gender considerations:** Aim to achieve gender diversity of participants by clarifying the individuals who will be participating and ensuring adequate representation rather than blanket invitations where organisations or departments simply send ‘representatives’. Moreover, in contexts where women face obstacles to participating in mixed group discussions, consider designating some working groups as women-only working groups with documented products from the groups to help ensure that facilitators include those contributions.

**Tool 9: Urban analysis workshop** contains:

- A one-day urban analysis workshop agenda and template for a list of participants, and
- A facilitators’ agenda outlining potential group activities, structure of the sessions and arrangements for notetaking for use by the facilitators.

The tool assumes a total of 15-20 diverse participants representing:

- Stakeholders consulted during the analysis
- Other stakeholders within the implementation organisation, and
- External partners – particularly local partners who know the context.

## Step 9: Write final report

### STEP 9: OVERVIEW

#### Tool

- **Tool 10: Urban context analysis final report outline** is a table of contents and summary methodological tables for an internal report that synthesises the findings of the context analysis

#### Outputs

- Urban context analysis final report

Depending on the interests of the organisation, a final report may be necessary to communicate the findings. It is worth noting that a final report is not a requirement and the outputs of the validation workshop may be enough for completion of the context analysis.

Before starting the report, it is critical to identify the target audience (whether internal or external to the organisation), as this will shape how content should be presented. Writing up the findings of the context analysis may be considered as the last step during which the team will analyse content. The writing process should be led/coordinated by the team lead and will likely take one to two weeks.

**Tool 10: Urban context analysis final report outline** provides a structure for the overall internal report at the end of the Urban Context Analysis; it also includes summary tables to facilitate the inclusion of *methodological* information in the report. When

writing up the key findings, it is important to recognise there will likely be overlapping content between two sections. This is common as the themes are inter-connected.

Note that this outline assumes the production of a report for internal purposes, ie one that is likely to contain sensitive (contextually and commercially confidential) information that should be reviewed by internal stakeholders before being considered final. Clarify before writing this report if the implementing organisation requires any other summary reports or presentation of findings for external dissemination.

### Context analysis brief, Maiduguri, 2016

In November and December 2016, the IRC conducted an urban context analysis in Maiduguri to understand the impact of internally displaced people on the city and the response of actors to this displacement. An external brief (above) was written to communicate the findings of the report with other stakeholders in Nigeria that had not partaken in the analysis.

An example of a context analysis report is available at the following link: <https://rescue.box.com/s/racxoota63cp14599qr0p7qcpsh8qzh3>

## Step 10: Communicate findings

### Internal stakeholders

The analysis is ultimately designed to help country programme/sector management become more informed and consequently develop contextually-relevant programming. If the country programme/sector management team were not involved in the validation analysis described under **Step 8**, ensure that they now receive the final analysis report (**Step 9**).

**The findings are now for these internal stakeholders to put into practice. This may include refining their programme strategy for the affected area or making adjustments to detailed project design, proposals, workplans, miscellaneous operational documents, etc.** To facilitate this, it will be important to organise a session with them to debrief the final findings and answer their questions/confirm any remaining gaps in understanding.

### External stakeholders

If feasible, the team should plan to share a summary of findings with external urban stakeholders including government and peer agencies, particularly those who may have participated in the analysis. In this way, these other stakeholders may also learn from and apply the findings to adapt their ways of working. The organisation should exercise caution to ensure that sources are anonymised and that any external presentation or summary report respect all commitments made during the informed consent element of the data collection process. Information should always be presented so as not to expose community members to any protection risks should external stakeholders learn of the analysis findings; relevant organisational protection technical advisors may be able to advise further.

### When to update your context analysis

The information and conclusions from this context analysis will not be appropriate indefinitely. Particularly in 'crisis' contexts, the situation is dynamic. It will ultimately be up to the implementing organisation to determine the need to update or completely redo such an analysis.

Some factors that might suggest it is time to revise or update the study are as follows:

- Significant change in the crisis that (eg policy change, major incidents, or crisis resolved).
- New data collection is planned, which presents the opportunity to ask some questions to assess the continued applicability of the context analysis and re-confirm its findings.
- New proposal requiring more in-depth information on particular parts of the context analysis.
- Even outside of major events described above, it is probably useful to re-assess the validity before using the assessment for programming assumptions if it is more than 6-9 months old.

It is certainly possible to revisit only parts of the context analysis if circumstances have changed regarding only some themes or sub-themes.

# Conclusion

The urban context analysis toolkit was created as a user-friendly toolkit to help actors unpack some of the complexities and dynamics of an urban environment. This is needed to identify entry points and risk mitigation strategies that will be useful for the subsequent development of programme design or review of existing programming. Specifically, it should help to understand general tendencies and patterns that yield smarter and more effect assessment, design, and implementation of programmes. The toolkit is structured around a series of themes: political; social and cultural; economic; service delivery and infrastructure; space and settlements; and crosscutting – intended to guide users and organise findings on stakeholders, existing power relations, resource distribution, governance and legal frameworks, livelihoods, social networks, and access to services. Figure 5 below summarises the steps and associated tools for the process.

Figure 5: Summary of urban context analysis process and tools

<p><b>PHASE 1: PREPARATION</b></p>	<p><b>Step 1: Launch context analysis</b> Tool 1: Workplan and budget</p> <p><b>Step 2: Frame the context analysis</b></p> <p><b>Step 3: Select initial key context analysis questions</b> Thematic framework (Table 4)</p>
<p><b>PHASE 2: DATA COLLECTION</b></p>	<p><b>Step 4: Collate secondary data</b> Tool 2: Desk review summary Tool 3: Stakeholder analysis</p> <p><b>Step 5: Prepare to collect primary data</b> 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 for labour and business climate Tool 5F: KII for local government Tool 5G: KII for NGO service providers</p> <p><b>Step 6: Carry out primary data collection</b> Tool 6: KII and FGD debrief template</p>
<p><b>PHASE 3: DATA ANALYSIS AND DOCUMENTING</b></p>	<p><b>Step 7: Analyse primary and secondary data</b> Tool 7: Key findings Tool 8: Programme implications Tool 3: Stakeholder analysis (updated)</p> <p><b>Step 8: Validation workshop</b> Tool 9: Urban analysis workshop</p> <p><b>Step 9: Write final report</b> Tool 10: Urban context analysis final report outline</p> <p><b>Step 10: Communicate findings</b></p>

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# Annexes: Urban context analysis toolkit

Individual annexes may be accessed below. To download the full toolkit click [here](#).

## Tool 1: Workplan and budget

<https://rescue.box.com/s/ev966drlse65cfciatp0os78e3x2mg2i>

## Tool 2: Desk review summary

<https://rescue.box.com/s/0dl7a15x05pgp2pmwikqfddygggwx54>

## Tool 3: Stakeholder analysis

<https://rescue.box.com/s/y30cqnoxdf5odm7bccjwb0kf1usu1rl4>

## Tool 4: Data collection plan

<https://rescue.box.com/s/b00izpiccu643ffu9l5aso52eede6ge4>

## Tool 5A: FGD guide for displaced populations

<https://rescue.box.com/s/fw7kj9uww9xd10op83lrd2ipi9rhwlvu>

## Tool 5B: FGD guide for host communities

<https://rescue.box.com/s/sof3hsjiej6m6cq0ua9cwsepote8t4su>

## Tool 5C: KII guide for influential stakeholders

<https://rescue.box.com/s/gdugf6wobkapmr6ezquuyzbb9hs3cl>

## Tool 5D: KII guide for service provider stakeholders

<https://rescue.box.com/s/c5sb13bd9f9h0e7510su4oum0ul2594l>

## Tool 5E: KII guide on labour and business climate

<https://rescue.box.com/s/tn50t6a9mqtvmcfsa2b22iszg84r4bil>

## Tool 5F: KII guide for local government

<https://rescue.box.com/s/bt9okv94ibtzu1wkay8bvkk6untlhx9j>

## Tool 5G: KII guide for NGO service providers

<https://rescue.box.com/s/dc6g3ibcjxabt9fgcg5vdtc43e9f2uxg>

## Tool 6: KII and FGD debrief template

<https://rescue.box.com/s/k8b7uq7io7wwyuwov86icgc1g2ce41z3>

### Tool 7: Key findings

<https://rescue.box.com/s/kxfdvf8qqb6xcicdw5fe9kghgltk18ku>

### Tool 8: Programme implications

<https://rescue.box.com/s/3zoxv2i5bs7gmaokoo7d8oogn03wa22f>

### Tool 9: Urban analysis workshop

<https://rescue.box.com/s/4jpgw4la9dxtdfapj092tt9lhrzoac1v>

### Tool 10: Urban context analysis final report outline

<https://rescue.box.com/s/5o2c5rtdaimv6c01yju49sor1fti1gb1>

### Optional Tool: City overview workshop

<https://rescue.box.com/s/f2jz1vjcc3eupabe3su1c738yu29yd8g>



Knowledge  
Products

# Toolkit

June 2017

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## Urban

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Today, over half of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are living in cities. This means that forced displacement is both a humanitarian and development challenge, given that displacement is often long term, with more than 80 per cent of refugee crises lasting ten or more years. Current models and tools developed mostly for rural, camp-based settings are not equipped to help responders understand and navigate the complex nature of urban contexts. Context analysis approaches can help humanitarian actors have a better understanding of the dynamics in a given setting by unpacking the political, economic, social, service delivery and spatial factors that could potentially enable or hinder effective crisis responses of affected populations.

The urban context analysis toolkit was created to provide an analysis toolkit that is user friendly, relatively quick to use, and adaptable. The toolkit contains a set of practical tools (work plan, questionnaires, analysis tables, report templates) tailored to conducting analysis that informs context specific responses – targeting both the displaced and host communities – in a given urban crises setting. The guidance note provides step-by-step guidance on how to apply the context analysis toolkit in practice. This toolkit will enable users to identify relevant stakeholders, existing power relations, resource distribution, governance and legal frameworks, sources of livelihoods, social networks, and access to services that will help responders to determine suitable entry points and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of their programmes.

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