



DECISION MAKERS' BRIEF

DURABLE HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT



POLICY BRIEF: HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

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ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This decision makers' brief summarizes the key housing, land and property (HLP) solutions for internal displacement. It distils analysis from 24 case studies across displacement-affected contexts globally, offering practical guidance for practitioners and policymakers in humanitarian, development, peace and government sectors working to establish durable HLP solutions for internally displaced persons, host communities and other vulnerable groups. The brief is organized across three categories of intervention: humanitarian protection, recovery and development and resilience. It draws from the report "Policy Directions: Housing, Land and Property Solutions to Resolve and Prevent Displacement", published by UN-Habitat and the Global Land Tool Network in 2024, where more in-depth analysis of trends, causes and solutions can be found, along with definitions, case studies and bibliographic references.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

D

DRC Democratic Republic of the Congo

E

EU European Union

G

GLTN Global Land Tool Network

H

HLP Housing, Land and Property

I

IDMC Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

IDP Internally Displaced Person

IFRC International Federation of the Red Cross

ILC International Land Coalition

ILO International Labour Organization

IOM International Organization for Migration

N

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

NRC Norwegian Refugee Council

R

RCEU Red Cross EU Office

RCO United Nations Resident Coordinator Office

S

SME Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise

STDM Social Tenure Domain Model

U

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UN-Habitat United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UNHCR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. THE DISPLACEMENT CHALLENGE

The twenty-first century sees an unprecedented number of people on the move. By the end of 2024, 83.4 million people were internally displaced, with 73.5 million displaced due to conflict and violence and 9.8 million due to natural hazard- and climate-induced disasters. Displacement resulting from conflict disproportionately affects Africa and the Middle East, and tends to lead to more protracted crises. Over half of forcibly displaced people, including those displaced within the borders of their countries, live in urban areas alongside nearly 1 billion urban poor in informal settlements, all facing challenges in accessing adequate housing, land and livelihoods. Climate change further compounds these pressures, with projections that it will displace more than 200 million people by 2050, most of whom would move to already densely populated urban areas.

Addressing housing, land and property rights in displacement contexts requires navigating complex realities. Certain groups face particular vulnerabilities: at the end of 2024, women and girls accounted for roughly 53 per cent of those internally displaced, often facing compounded discrimination in accessing and claiming housing, land and property (HLP) rights. Indigenous peoples, with their special dependency on and attachment to their lands, are at particularly high risk of displacement due to disasters and face additional barriers when displaced. Ethnic and religious minorities experience discrimination that deepens during displacement.

Legal pluralism – the coexistence of statutory, customary, religious and informal systems – shapes how people access and hold rights to land and property in most fragile, conflict-affected and post-conflict settings. Navigating this complexity requires an approach that recognizes and works with the multiple tenure systems that exist. The continuum of land rights approach promotes inclusive land governance that records, administers and protects the full spectrum of legitimate tenure arrangements, from formal registered ownership to customary, communal, lease, occupancy and informal rights, all of which must be addressed

in displacement solutions. Adopting this approach in complex environments ensures that HLP solutions are comprehensive, recognizing individual, collective, customary and state-held rights.

Housing, land and property rights are both an end in themselves, as human rights, and enablers for a wider range of rights and durable solutions. When people's HLP rights are protected, they have access to adequate housing and their vulnerabilities are reduced, as they are better protected from physical assaults, illnesses and extreme weather. HLP rights form the foundation for safety, security, livelihoods, education, infrastructure and services, enabling people to provide for themselves and their families, secure spaces for economic activities, access land for agriculture and grazing and maintain their dignity. When clearly defined, recognized by society and protected by authorities, these rights increase the potential for peaceful dispute resolution, laying the groundwork for social reconciliation and sustainable peace.

Finding durable solutions to displacement requires area-based approaches that address the needs of internally displaced persons alongside those of refugees, returnees, migrants, host communities, the urban poor and other marginalized groups, all of whom compete for the same scarce housing, land and livelihood opportunities. HLP solutions can be structured across three categories of interventions: (1) solutions for humanitarian protection that address acute needs in the initial phase of displacement; (2) solutions for recovery and development that ensure medium- to long-term sustainability, enabling displaced persons to overcome needs specific to displacement; and (3) solutions for resilience that prevent and mitigate the impacts of displacement in contexts prone to future crises. This policy brief provides decision makers with an overview of these solutions, based on the full UN-Habitat report *Policy Directions: Housing, Land and Property Solutions to Resolve and Prevent Displacement*, where comprehensive analysis, detailed case studies and technical guidance can be found.

2. HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Housing, Land and Property (HLP) solutions must address the full displacement cycle: immediate protection when crises hit, sustainable recovery as displacement becomes protracted and resilience-building to prevent and better respond to future displacement.

This section presents HLP solutions across three phases of the displacement cycle, accompanied by key “dos and don’ts” drawn from field experience implementing HLP interventions in displacement contexts worldwide, with examples from a wide range of case studies demonstrating how these approaches work in practice.

The detailed case studies are available in the report *Policy Directions: Housing, Land and Property Solutions to Resolve and Prevent Displacement* that informs this brief.

Housing, Land and Property solutions for humanitarian protection

In the initial phase of displacement, when people are most vulnerable and their HLP needs are acute, rapid solutions are essential to provide protection and assistance. These interventions address immediate shelter needs, safeguard documentation and property rights, prevent forced evictions and lay the groundwork for longer-term solutions. This phase can last from days to years depending on the nature of the crisis (Table 1).

Do’s and Don’ts

- Don’t operate with a short-term humanitarian mindset only. Do adopt a long-term perspective: displacement is complex, protracted and requires sustained engagement across the humanitarian-development-peace-climate nexus.
- Don’t treat HLP as purely a shelter issue in emergencies. Do assess the full range of HLP needs from the outset: housing, tenure security, access to agricultural land, grazing areas, communal resources, commercial properties and land-based resources.
- Don’t wait until displacement is protracted to address issues related to legal frameworks and documentation. Do immediately begin safeguarding HLP documentation, mapping legal and institutional frameworks, and preparing groundwork for reconstruction, restitution and compensation mechanisms.
- Don’t assume formal land administration is the only system that matters. Do recognize and work within legal pluralism: statutory, customary, religious and informal systems all provide legitimate pathways to HLP solutions.
- Don’t proceed without proper HLP due diligence. Do verify legitimate HLP rights and administrative records, ensure fair and transparent agreements, engage trusted brokers, establish accessible and inclusive dispute resolution mechanisms and monitor host community acceptance.
- Don’t overlook forced eviction risks for displaced populations. Do establish monitoring, early warning and accountability mechanisms from the start.
- Don’t provide gender neutral HLP solutions. Do proactively address gender discrimination in HLP rights from the emergency phase onward.

Table 1: Housing, Land and Property (HLP) solutions for humanitarian protection

Key HLP Solutions	Selected Examples
<p>1. Assess HLP needs, by conducting HLP assessments and including HLP issues in multisectoral assessments, area-based assessments, urban and neighbourhood profiling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humanitarian Needs Overviews of Afghanistan (2023)⁶ and South Sudan (2023)⁷ City profiles of Al Tal, Aleppo, Homs and Ein El-Tal Palestinian camp, in Syria⁸ Urban Profiles of Aden, Sana'a, Al Hodeidah, Zinjibar, Ta'iz, Al Hawtah, Sa'dah and Marib in Yemen⁹
<p>2. Understand and review the legal and institutional frameworks, through assessments of land and HLP policies, laws and institutions, including policy and legal reforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews and analyses of Syrian Urban Law,¹⁰ laws and policies affecting Syrian refugees in Lebanon¹¹ and HLP-related legal, institutional and administrative frameworks of Iraq¹² and Libya¹³
<p>3. Identify options for sheltering displaced people, by conducting analyses and identification of available options</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Recovery Framework analysis toolbox for assessing damaged buildings and prioritizing interventions¹⁴ Site selection and planning for the spatial integration of IDPs in Berbera, Somalia¹⁵
<p>4. Shelter displaced people away from their homes, including in suitable retrofitted public or private residential buildings on public, private or customary land, and by increasing the shelter offer by host communities and securing land rights of host communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased access of displaced people to the low-income housing market in Lebanon¹⁶ Brokered tenancy agreements between private landlords and displaced people in Greece¹⁷ Private hosting mechanisms in Europe¹⁸
<p>5. Provide access to land and properties other than shelters, such as land for agriculture, livestock and domestic animals, access to communal resources (e.g. forests, grazing areas, water), properties for commercial activities and accessible and safe public and communal spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiated group agreements for access to grazing land by pastoralist tribes in South Sudan¹⁹ Support for refugees and host communities through the Abjad multi-functional community centre in Tripoli, Lebanon²⁰ Social cohesion through rehabilitation of Yarmouk Park in Mosul, Iraq²¹
<p>6. Prepare the ground for return, restitution and compensation, by repairing and reconstructing housing, safeguarding HLP documentation, establishing restitution and compensation mechanisms and clearing land of explosives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding of evidence of housing, land and property rights for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Iraq²² Documentation of forcibly abandoned houses and lands in Honduras²³
<p>7. Provide access to justice and dispute resolution, by strengthening and supporting formal, informal, customary and alternative justice systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated local integration and return through land conflict mediation and participatory land recordation in North Kivu, DRC²⁴
<p>8. Prevent and address forced evictions, through monitoring and strengthening accountability mechanisms for respect of state obligations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eviction flash alerts in Somalia²⁵

Housing, Land and Property solutions for recovery and development

As displacement becomes protracted, medium- to long-term HLP solutions are needed to ensure that internally displaced persons no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement and are integrated into local services and communities.

These interventions should be planned in parallel with humanitarian protection measures but focus on sustainable housing, functioning land administration, restitution and compensation mechanisms, and the transformation of informal settlements. Preparation for recovery should begin early, even as emergency responses continue (Table 2).

Dos and Don'ts

- Don't design HLP solutions only for IDPs in isolation. Do implement area-based approaches that promote social cohesion and address the needs of IDPs alongside refugees, returnees, migrants, host communities, urban poor and other vulnerable groups competing for the same resources.
- Don't focus solely on building new housing/ allocating new land. Do prioritize making existing land and housing sectors function better for displaced populations: improve rental markets, ease legal requirements, facilitate access to credit and support host communities to secure and expand their housing stock.
- Don't overlook secondary occupation of housing, land and properties. Do adopt conflict-sensitive, rights-based approaches to address secondary occupation. This includes collecting and verifying HLP claims, ensuring due process and prioritizing solutions that prevent further displacement while supporting restitution and providing alternative tenure arrangements for secondary occupants.
- Don't treat informal settlements as problems to be cleared. Do recognize their potential to provide HLP solutions: transform, retrofit, regularize and integrate them into urban planning to increase housing supply and improve living conditions for all.
- Don't assume registered ownership is the only form of secure tenure. Do recognize and strengthen the full continuum of land rights, ranging from formal ownership to customary and communal rights, as well as rental, occupancy and use rights.



Figure 1. A beneficiary in Nepal holds up her land ownership certificate. Source: UN-Habitat

Table 2: Housing, Land and Property (HLP) solutions for recovery and development

Key HLP Solutions	Selected Examples
<p>9. Conduct area-based assessments and urban profiles, including comprehensive multisectoral area-based analyses, city and neighbourhood profiles, spatial planning and territorial analyses and strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Recovery Framework as area-based analysis toolbox²⁶ • City profile of Beirut, Lebanon²⁷ • Strategic planning and identification of priority interventions to accommodate the displaced in Juba, South Sudan²⁸ • Multisectoral and multi-partner neighbourhood profiles to inform area-based programming in Lebanon²⁹ • Examples cited in solution area 1
<p>10. Provide housing in areas of current displacement or in third locations, through three main types of intervention:</p> <p>(a) provision by public institutions and development actors (land to be developed, sites and services, basic expandable units, housing construction, social housing, retrofitted buildings);</p> <p>(b) increasing the offer of adequate housing available to displaced persons (host communities renting houses, incentives to repair or extend properties, new housing construction by private individuals or companies); and</p> <p>(c) construction and purchase of houses, lands and properties by displaced people themselves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of plots on newly developed public land and cash assistance to resettled displaced people in Baidoa, Somalia³⁰ • Identification, rapid planning and allocation of vacant state land to IDPs and refugees in Kabul and Herat, Afghanistan³¹ • Increased access of displaced people to low-income housing market in Lebanon³² • Brokered tenancy agreements between private landlords and displaced people in Greece³³ • Private hosting mechanisms in Belgium, France, Ireland, Hungary, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania and Slovakia³⁴ • Holistic durable HLP solutions approach including urban profiling, legal review, dispute resolution and provision of basic services in Southern Somalia³⁵
<p>11. Provide HLP solutions in areas of origin, including for return (including of landless and homeless), through repair and reconstruction interventions, restitution of HLP taken by force or illegally acquired or sold and compensation schemes, when restitution is not possible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial planning and reconstruction of housing in Gaza, Palestine³⁶ • Securing HLP rights and rehabilitating houses of the Yazidi minority in Iraq³⁷ • HLP restitution and compensation scheme in Kosovo³⁸ • Collective restitution of dispossessed lands in Salamina, Colombia³⁹ • Restitution and compensation through the 'Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes' in Iraq⁴⁰

<p>12. Provide access to land and properties in areas of displacement and in third locations, including individual lands and properties and communal and customary land</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiated group agreements for access to grazing land by pastoralist tribes in South Sudan⁴¹ • Relocated communities given access to communal forests to boost livelihood in Bo Hon, Vietnam⁴²
<p>13. Address secondary HLP occupation, through formal justice, alternative dispute resolution and transitional justice mechanisms, and by finding alternatives for secondary occupants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternatives for secondary occupants of properties in Kosovo provided through transitional justice mechanisms⁴³
<p>14. Transform, retrofit and regularize informal settlements, through regularization, settlement upgrading and policy interventions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to area of origin and local integration through the regularization of settlements and registration of land parcels in customary and informal areas in Lomitas, Carceres, Tierralta and Ataco, Colombia⁴⁴
<p>15. Ensure a functioning housing sector that works for the displaced, through housing sector profiles, housing strategies and reform of housing policies and laws</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing profile of Afghanistan analysing legal, institutional, economic and customary challenges and proposing policy and programming solutions⁴⁵
<p>16. Ensure a functioning land administration sector, by assessing the sector and identifying key improvements, demarcating and allocating plots through fit-for-purpose approaches, establishing incremental and participatory recordation of HLP rights, resolving HLP conflicts and improving women's HLP rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of land sector and provision of pragmatic solutions to improve it in fit-for-purpose manner to address the HLP needs of displaced in Darfur, Sudan⁴⁶ and Syria⁴⁷ • Enabled local integration through rapid mapping and recordation of extended family land tenure rights in Abyei, Sudan⁴⁸ • Facilitated return and integration through land conflict mediation and HLP rights' recordation in North Kivu, DRC⁴⁹ • Harmonization of legal provisions and mechanisms for resolution of HLP disputes in Somaliland and Puntland, Somalia⁵⁰

Housing, Land and Property solutions for resilience

HLP solutions for resilience prevent and mitigate the impacts of displacement before crises occur. These interventions apply to areas vulnerable to displacement as well as areas likely to receive displaced populations, addressing root causes of conflict, conducting climate vulnerability assessments, strengthening land governance systems and establishing preparedness protocols. Building resilience requires sustained investment in functioning land and housing sectors that can absorb shocks and accommodate population movements (Table 3).

Dos and Don'ts

- Don't wait for displacement to happen before addressing land-related root causes of conflict. Do proactively tackle historical grievances, land disputes, unclear land rights, discrimination in land access and resource competition.
- Don't plan settlements without assessing climate vulnerability. Do conduct comprehensive risk mapping: flood zones, sea-level rise impacts, drought risks and other hazards; plan accordingly and prepare relocation options where needed.
- Don't develop preparedness plans that ignore HLP dimensions. Do identify land banks, map vacant properties, establish protocols for matching housing supply with potential future displacement needs, develop scenarios.
- Don't exclude women and marginalized groups from land governance and decision-making. Do ensure women's participation in land negotiations, peace processes, dispute resolution and customary land management; this strengthens both HLP rights and community resilience.

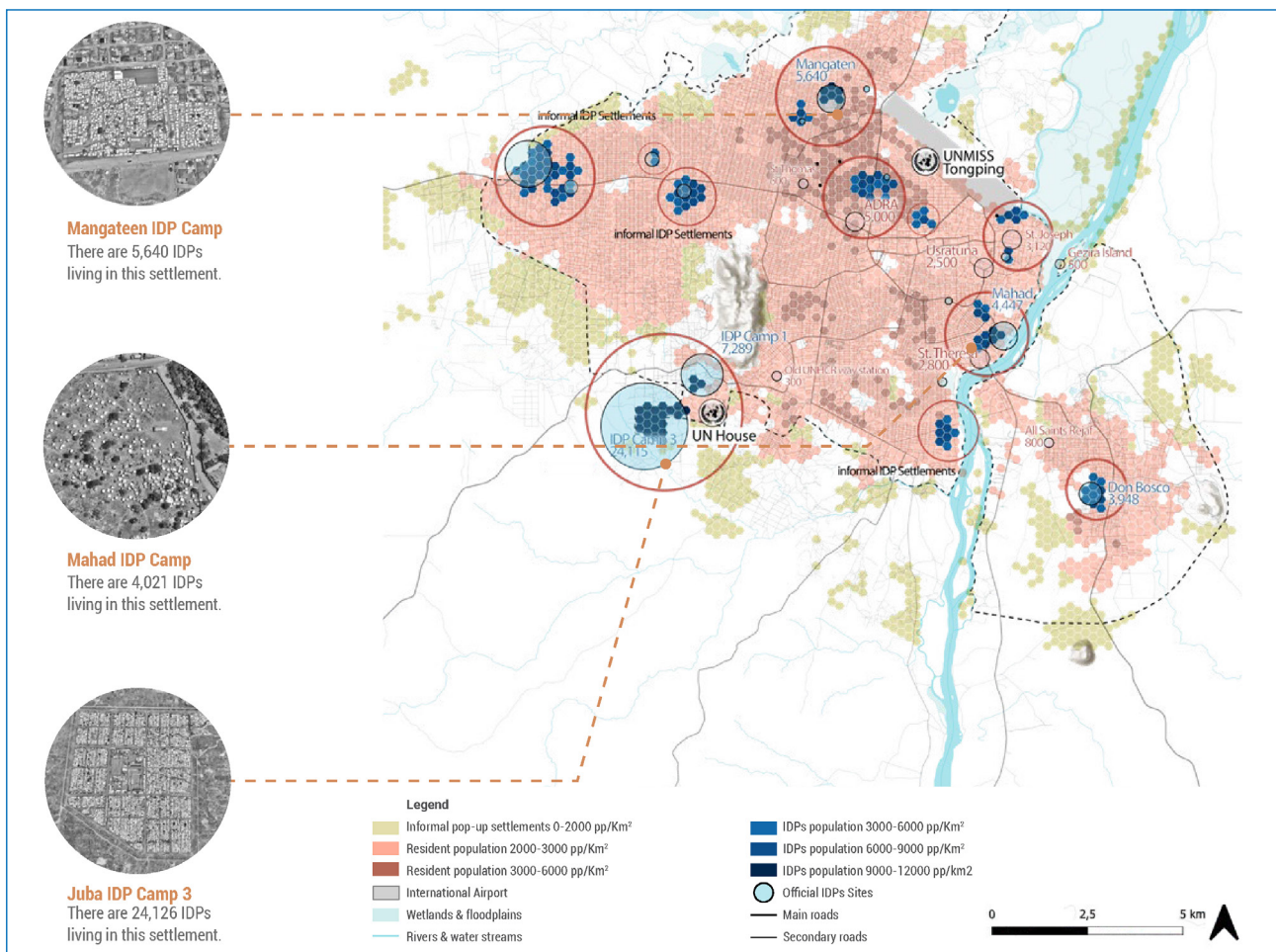


Figure 2. Strategic diagnosis: Unstable population dynamics (returnees, refugees & IDPs). Source: UN-Habitat (2023). Juba Strategic Plan.

Table 3: Housing, Land and Property (HLP) solutions for resilience

Key HLP Solutions	Selected Examples
<p>17. Identify causes and risks of future displacement, through multidimensional analysis of causes and risks, analysis of root causes of conflict and climate vulnerability assessments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of land- and HLP-related root causes of conflict in Jubaland, Somalia and recommendations on how to address them⁵¹
<p>18. Establish preparedness measures, including scenario development, protocols and preparedness plans and programmes for provision of HLP to future displaced populations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood modelling for climate-resilient settlements in Pakistan⁵² • Participatory village mapping to identify suitable areas to settle future returnees and IDPs, preventing conflicts with host communities in Darfur, Sudan⁵³
<p>19. Address and mitigate the causes of displacement, through spatial planning (that includes climate resilience), community resilience interventions, relocation to safe grounds, tackling historical grievances related to land and HLP violations, strengthening community mechanisms to resolve HLP disputes, protecting women’s HLP rights and enhancing states’ compliance with HLP-related human rights obligations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based vulnerability assessment, participatory land use mapping, settlement planning and construction of climate resilient infrastructure in Afghanistan⁵⁴ • Gender-sensitive housing project for relocation of displaced women and girls in Northern Mozambique⁵⁵ • Dialogues and local territorial agreements to prevent conflicts over use of land resources between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary communities in South Sudan⁵⁶ • Addressing HLP-related historical grievances through the ‘Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes’ in Iraq⁵⁷ • City Resilience Action Planning CityRAP⁵⁸
<p>20. Ensure functioning land and housing sectors, by increasing affordable housing stock (including through repair, construction and reconstruction of housing units), reforming rental markets to increase affordability and reduce vacant housing, transforming slums, establishing functioning land and property registration, establishing effective fit-for-purpose land administration systems, integrated urban planning and monitoring HLP trends, including sex-disaggregated data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-disaggregated HLP data to safeguard women’s rights in the West Bank, Palestine⁵⁹ • Improved land administration, land and property registration and tenure security through new urban land law in South West State, Somalia⁶⁰ • Participatory planning and establishment of fit-for-purpose land recordation system in Darfur, Sudan⁶¹ • Prevention of displacement through customary land recordation system that increases land tenure security, reduces conflicts and fosters local investments in Chamuka, Zambia⁶² • Integrated urban planning in protracted crisis contexts in Kalobeyi, Kenya⁶³ • Examples cited in solution areas 15 and 16

3. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Durable HLP solutions for displacement cannot succeed in isolation; they require an enabling environment that includes paradigm shifts in how displacement is understood and addressed, empowered communities that can claim and protect their rights, functioning governance systems at all levels, legal frameworks that remove barriers rather than create them, accessible financing and credit mechanisms, effective justice and dispute resolution systems and reliable data to inform evidence-based action.

These enabling interventions create the conditions for HLP solutions to be sustainable, scalable and nationally owned. Without them, even well-designed housing, land and property interventions risk remaining fragmented, short-term and dependent on external actors rather than building the systemic capacity needed to prevent and resolve displacement over the long term.

Paradigm shifts

Long-term perspective – Displacement is not a short-term emergency that can be resolved through humanitarian action alone, although humanitarian response is essential at the peak of crises. It is the result of a complex mix of causes and vulnerabilities, some of which are outside the direct control of national and local actors. Understanding its various dimensions is essential to estimate its proportions, prepare for it, mitigate its impact and establish suitable durable solutions from the onset.

Effective urban systems – Most displaced people head to urban centers. Effective preparedness and response strategies need to be developed based on a good understanding of the urban environment. When urban systems work well, they can offer better solutions to displaced people and host communities. Inclusive spatial planning, compact and serviced urban growth, a functioning housing sector and an effective

land management system are essential preconditions for driving economic and spatial integration and social cohesion.

Fit-for-purpose UN system – A United Nations system with a holistic understanding of displacement causes and solutions, including on HLP issues, would be most suited to address it. The frameworks of analysis of humanitarian, peace, development and climate actors should have stronger convergence on displacement projections and trends. Coordination and programming, at global and country levels, should include all these actors and be informed by multi-sectoral joint analyses. There is a need to work better with national and local actors, to ensure that international coordination modalities do not replace and weaken national and local systems and services.

Empowerment of affected communities

Practical grassroots support – Displaced people need to be aware of and receive practical support to access the HLP solutions that are available. One-stop centers are required at the grassroots level to provide information and support. Women and others facing compounding exclusion need to receive particular attention.

Knowledge and decision-making – Displaced people should understand HLP concepts to be able to protect and claim their rights. Active participation and inclusion in decision making are essential. Displaced women and men should be empowered to participate and lead discussions on HLP solutions, including negotiations on land-related resources, return and restitution commissions, dispute resolution processes and peace agreements.

Empowerment and inclusion of women – Women face multiple layers of discrimination with regard to HLP rights. Displacement adds a layer of vulnerability. Particular efforts must be made to ensure their inclusion

and to monitor the gender responsiveness of the solutions provided. Sex-disaggregated data should be collected and analysed. Women must be empowered to participate and lead land-related processes, and their presence should be a requirement in land and HLP-related discussions. Women are agents of peace, mediators and negotiators in their communities, and when their HLP rights are protected, their meaningful participation in decision-making and peacebuilding increases.

Governance and whole-of-society capacity

Governments – Addressing displacement and its HLP dimensions requires strong political will and government capacity. Solutions to displacement should be incorporated into national and local development plans and sector-specific plans of ministries. The politicization of narratives around displacement and migration and the spreading of fear and exclusion-based discourses should be counterbalanced. The accountability of governments to recognize IDPs as citizens entitled to HLP solutions applicable to other citizens should be enhanced.

Local authorities – Local authorities are essential partners in all contexts and key to facilitating, regulating and coordinating the integration of displaced persons and the provision of durable HLP solutions. By mediating land disputes, enforcing property laws and providing land for resettlement and public services, local governments help create a stable environment conducive to recovery and development. Local governments and traditional authorities should be capacitated and supported in their role.

Whole-of-society – Local actors and communities are crucial for success. There is need for a whole-of-society approach. Displaced persons, local communities, civil society, the media, academia, faith-based organizations, grassroots and women-led organizations, youth and networks of professionals can play an increasing role. The contribution of the private sector in the provision of HLP solutions needs to be better recognized and unlocked.

Coordination and institutional strengthening – Effective responses to displacement require coordination mechanisms that reinforce, rather than bypass, national and local systems. International and external actors should work with and support existing government institutions, local authorities, customary leaders and community-based organizations, strengthening their capacity to act as primary drivers of HLP solutions.

Policy and legal reforms

Legal frameworks – There might be laws or policies that explicitly or accidentally discriminate against displaced people, affecting their access to HLP. A review of the legal framework is needed to identify and reform policy and legal bottlenecks, ensure their alignment with international human rights frameworks and remove discriminatory elements. Context-specific vulnerabilities and gaps in domestic policy and laws need to be identified and addressed through multi-stakeholder processes, as different actors are able to highlight different gaps.

Legal pluralism – Displacement often takes place to and from areas that are governed by a plurality of legal systems: statutory, customary, religious and informal. Acknowledging this complexity, adapting to it and recognizing the opportunities offered in terms of HLP solutions is crucial. When possible, the HLP provisions in the different legal systems should be harmonized, reconciled and aligned to avoid jurisdictional confusion. While acknowledging and working within plural legal systems, it is important to avoid undermining state institutions and laws.

Blockages preventing return – The return of IDPs and refugees to their areas of origin may be hindered by several factors. The destruction or damage of housing, land and properties and their illegal or secondary occupation are major constraints. There might be legal impediments that become push factors to return, such as the lack of civil and HLP documentation. Such blockages should be identified and removed.

Legal HLP requirements – In most countries, the legal status of a person defines which type of HLP solutions

he or she can access. A review of the legal requirements needed to access available HLP solutions can provide useful recommendations for removing or easing unnecessary legal and administrative blockages.

Credit and financing

Access to credit – Lack of access to credit by displaced people is one of the key bottlenecks to the enjoyment of HLP rights. The mechanisms to gain access to financial services and credit should be eased for displaced people. People with informal HLP rights are usually excluded from credit schemes because they lack the collateral assets requested by most financial institutions. Legal and administrative revisions can be considered to ease the requirements to access credit.

Predictable financing – At the system level, predictable financing is required to catalyze action on HLP solutions to internal displacement and support the national ownership of such interventions in the long term. Funding should be provided as locally as possible and local financing should be leveraged, including through land-based financing solutions.

Justice and dispute resolution

Address barriers to justice – Displaced persons often struggle to access justice and dispute resolution due to a variety of reasons. Women are often particularly vulnerable. This negatively impacts the ability of the

displaced to protect themselves from forced evictions, discriminatory practices and other HLP violations, both in areas of displacement and in areas of origin. Solutions to address HLP challenges related to access to justice include providing legal assistance, counseling, representation and mediation; simplifying, popularizing and translating key legal documents into simple language or local dialects; and assisting IDPs in taking the necessary measures and completing the required procedures for safeguarding their HLP rights. The capacity of formal, customary, religious and community-based justice systems should be built on HLP issues.

Transitional justice mechanisms – To address large caseloads of housing, land and property rights violations, transitional justice mechanisms can be put in place that allow the bulk provision of justice and dispute resolution to displaced communities through a combination of administrative and judicial channels, including mediation and alternative dispute resolution.

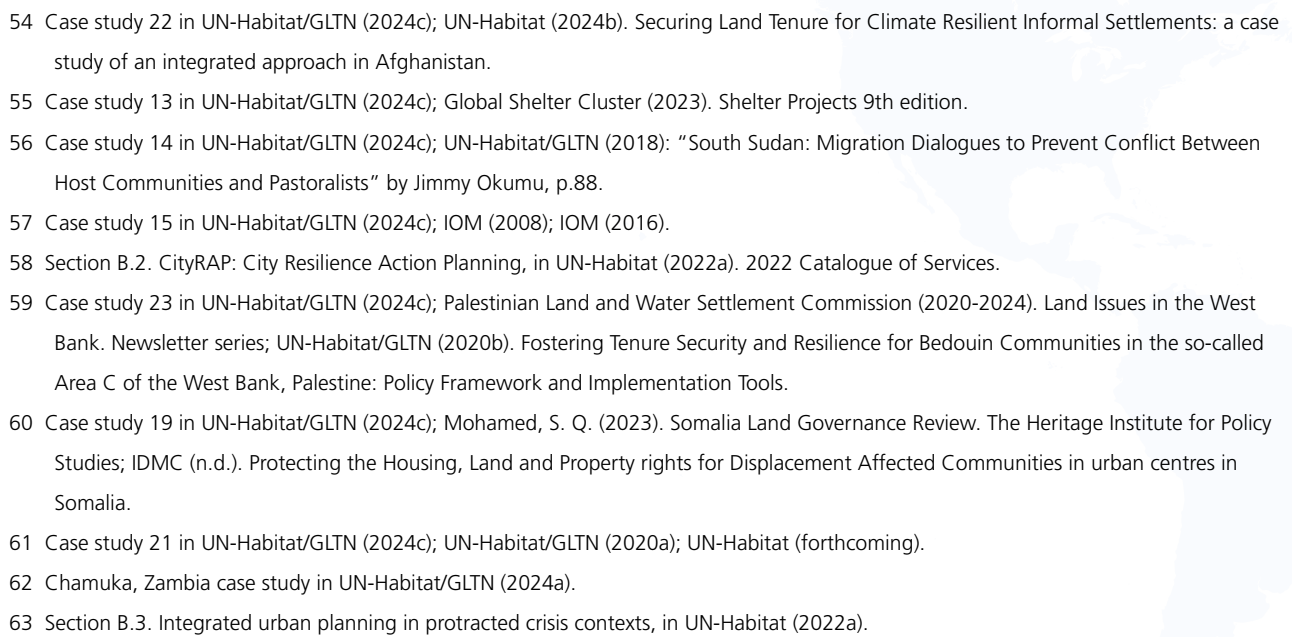
Data for evidence-based action

Data for evidence-based action – The systems to generate and analyse necessary data and knowledge on HLP in displacement-affected contexts should be strengthened. It is important to work with data produced by national or local institutions, including on projections. This contributes to developing national and local capacities on monitoring HLP issues and to enabling whole-of-government responses and evidence-based planning, budgeting and action.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2025). 2025 Global Report on Internal Displacement.
- 2 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (2023). SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.
- 3 World Bank (2018). Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration.
- 4 UNHCR (2025). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2024.
- 5 The continuum of land rights is a conceptual framework that recognizes land tenure as a spectrum ranging from informal and customary arrangements to fully formal and legally registered ownership. It acknowledges that multiple tenure forms often coexist within a society and that each can provide varying degrees of security, legitimacy and recognition. Rather than treating tenure as a simple divide between formal and informal, the continuum approach supports the idea that rights can evolve or transform over time, and that improving tenure security can occur at any point along this spectrum.
- 6 UNOCHA (2023a). Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023.
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