



POLICY NOTE

# DURABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS IN DISPLACEMENT CONTEXTS

## **POLICY NOTE: DURABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS IN DISPLACEMENT CONTEXTS**

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**Cover image:** UN-Habitat / Ruth McLeod (2012)

**Strategic Partners:** Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany.

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## ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This policy note presents key recommendations and housing solutions in displacement-affected contexts. It distils analysis from field experience and case studies, offering practical guidance for practitioners and policymakers in humanitarian, development and government sectors working to establish durable housing solutions for displaced persons and host communities.

The note draws from the research undertaken in preparation to 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 a more in-depth analysis of trends, causes and solutions can be found, along with definitions, case studies and bibliographic references.

The note also intends to advance the development of global policy recommendations on housing in crisis-affected contexts, as part of the Intergovernmental Open-Ended Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS



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<b>BMZ</b>	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GLTN</b>	Global Land Tool Network
<b>HLP</b>	Housing, Land and Property
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>Sida</b>	Swedish International Development Agency
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UN-Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNOCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

# BACKGROUND: CONFRONTING THE HOUSING CRISIS IN DISPLACEMENT-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

The twenty-first century sees an unprecedented number of people on the move. As of mid-June 2025, an estimated 117.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide due to conflict, violence, human rights violations and the negative impact of macro socio-economic trends. This figure comprises approximately 42.5 million refugees, 8.4 million asylum-seekers, and 67.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict or violence. In addition, nearly 5 million IDP returnees and 9.8 million people internally displaced by disasters were recorded globally in 2024. Displacement has risen sharply over the past decade, and it is increasingly protracted rather than temporary. Conflict-related displacement situations last on average 10 to 15 years, with many IDPs experiencing repeated or cyclical displacement over time.

Understanding urbanization is essential to addressing displacement. Cities are increasingly becoming safety nets that accommodate those who flee from conflicts, natural and climate-induced disasters, poverty and persecution. Over half of forcibly displaced people live in urban areas. Displacement needs to be seen at a territorial level, with families moving from place to place and deciding where to settle based on several push and pull factors, such as safety, social

networks, basic services, access to livelihoods, aid and housing.

Access to adequate housing, security of tenure and basic services are crucial to fostering durable solutions to displacement. Displaced persons compete for the same housing options as other vulnerable groups, including the nearly 1 billion poor currently living in informal settlements. Finding housing solutions requires balancing the needs of displaced populations with those of local communities. When housing interventions focus solely on the displaced without considering local community needs, they can create or deepen tensions, undermine social cohesion and lead to further displacement.

Access to adequate housing remains a critical global challenge, disproportionately affecting displaced populations, as well as minorities, people living in poverty, and other vulnerable groups. In 2023, only 39 per cent of IDPs and refugees lived in habitable and affordable housing. Affordability is a major concern, particularly in urban areas, along with tenure insecurity. Women face compounded disadvantages: they generally experience lower levels of tenure security than men, limiting their access to adequate housing and exposing them to heightened risk due to persistent barriers such as discriminatory social norms that restrict their ability to own or rent

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1. UNHCR (2025). [Mid-year Trends](#).

2. UNHCR (2025).

3. IDMC (2025) [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2025](#).

4. UNHCR (2025). [Global Trends report 2024](#).

5. World Bank (2017). [Forcibly Displaced](#).

6. World Bank (2023). [Urban Development Overview](#).

7. A durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer face displacement related vulnerabilities and can enjoy their rights without discrimination in the place where they reside - whether through sustainable return, local integration or settlement elsewhere - as outlined in the [IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs](#).

8. High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (2023). [SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities](#). UNHCR (2023). [Global Report 2023](#).

9. Adequate housing is defined in line with the criteria set out by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in General Comment No. 4, including security of tenure, availability of services and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, suitable location and cultural adequacy.

homes. In many contexts, the secondary occupation of properties during periods of displacement further complicates return processes and the realization of durable housing solutions (see Box 1). Adequate housing, including access to basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation, significantly reduces vulnerabilities by providing protection from physical assaults, illnesses and extreme weather, while enabling better access to jobs, livelihoods,

income and education. IDPs with access to adequate housing are more than three times less likely to rely on humanitarian assistance (6.9 per cent) and twice as likely to have stable incomes (corresponding to respectively 23.8 and 34.4 per cent) than those living in inadequate housing (17.1 per cent). This underscores how important adequate housing is in supporting the overall dignity and well-being of displaced populations.

## BOX 1

### Key bottlenecks affecting access to adequate housing for displaced populations

- Documentation requirements, residency rules, and eligibility criteria restrict displaced populations' access to formal rental markets, social housing, and housing assistance, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes.
- Legal status, risk perception, and market practices often limit displaced households' ability to access private housing markets on equal and non-discriminatory terms.
- Limited access to the labour market and social protection reduces displaced households' ability to afford adequate housing, including within lower-cost market segments.
- Limited access to dispute resolution, tenancy regulation, and administrative remedies increases exposure to evictions, exploitation and housing insecurity for displaced households.
- Lack of supply capacity and financing mechanisms needed to respond to increased housing demand associated with displacement.
- Limited investment in durable housing solutions and long-term integration due to policy and planning approaches that continue to address displacement as short-term temporary issue.
- Insufficient integration of displaced populations' needs in urban planning, land-use decisions, and infrastructure investment, contributing to spatial exclusion and service gaps.

## HOUSING SOLUTIONS FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

### Dos and don'ts

The following Dos and Don'ts emerged from field experience, they are not ranked in any order of priority, importance, or sequencing:

**Don't aim for housing solutions that only consider the needs of displaced persons;** this may undermine social cohesion, negatively impact sustainability and lead to further displacement.

- ▶ **Do implement holistic area-based housing solutions that consider the needs of all people in vulnerable situations** - independently of displacement status, promoting adequate standard of living for all.
- ▶ **Do support national and local governments to develop evidence-based housing strategies, lead housing programmes, and act as reliable brokers of sustainable housing agreements** between local communities and the displaced - for example, by facilitating private hosting solutions, rental agreements, and tripartite housing and shelter agreements for families or groups.

**Don't plan housing responses only as emergency or short-term interventions** providing sub-standard housing solutions that fail to meet adequate housing criteria - including security of tenure, availability of services and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, suitable location and cultural adequacy - as these approaches risk further marginalising displaced populations.

- ▶ **Do combine short-term measures with long-term planning,** including location,

maintenance schemes, tenure options and pathways that support durable integration of displaced populations and that can improve the quality and resilience of the housing stock in the long term.

- ▶ **Do support the evolution of housing and urban planning standards** to enable sustainable urban development, including standards related to plot size, building regulations, and incremental construction.
- ▶ **Do promote housing solutions that can incrementally meet adequate housing criteria,** including a location that guarantees access to services, infrastructure and livelihood opportunities.

**Don't assume displaced populations have uniform needs or capacities.**

- ▶ **Do assess the profile of people served,** their status, demographic characteristics, intention to stay/return and any other factor which may impact their access to housing and housing needs.
- ▶ **Do support a range of housing solutions and adapt housing typologies** to reflect diverse needs, resource availability, levels of vulnerability, and capacities for social and economic integration.
- ▶ **Do remove and mitigate barriers** that prevent IDPs, refugees and returnees from accessing adequate housing solutions, such as legal blockages and complex administrative requirements.
- ▶ **Do enable the provision of tailored social accompaniment** for the most fragile households, including social, psychosocial and

administrative support, as well as access to education, economic opportunities and basic services, as relevant.

- ▶ **Do improve access to housing information** and develop systems to connect the housing offer with demand. **Don't design housing responses without a solid understanding of housing markets** and overall provision systems.
- ▶ **Do carry out housing market and sub-markets assessments** to understand supply, demand, pricing dynamics, access and constraints (e.g. guarantees, contract duration, documentation requirements and informal practices), as well as the full ecosystem of stakeholders, with particular attention to barriers faced by female-headed households, non-nationals, persons with disabilities, unaccompanied youth, and other marginalised groups.
- ▶ **Do assess potential market distortions and unintended effects of housing interventions**, particularly large-scale housing interventions, impacts of cash assistance, subsidies, or demand-side support on rents and design mitigation measures accordingly.
- ▶ **Do identify opportunities for coordinated/complementary provision of housing with non-traditional housing providers and intermediaries** (eg., universities, faith-based groups, cooperatives, etc).
- ▶ **Do support the joint development of shared, evidence-based model contracts** (e.g. rental agreements, hosting arrangements, tenure instruments).

- ▶ **Do facilitate displaced persons' access to credit and financing** to rent, purchase or build houses.

**Don't focus on housing solutions only in areas of current residency**, without considering the absorption capacity of existing urban areas or the feasibility of return options.

- ▶ **Do adopt a broader territorial approach**, creating capacity to integrate displaced people across national territories and regions.
- ▶ **Do assess, support and plan for early return where appropriate**, particularly in post-disaster contexts, to support people's (re) integration, resilience and recovery.
- ▶ **Do prioritise the repair and upgrading of existing housing** and the built environment where feasible, to avoid unnecessary losses and complex return processes, especially in informal and self-built settlements.
- ▶ **Do identify areas with lower housing competition** where displaced households can access affordable, socially accepted housing that is well connected to economic opportunities. This includes locations and housing typologies that cater to specific groups, such as students, workers, or other population segments.

**Don't develop housing in isolation from land suitability, tenure systems and spatial planning frameworks**, to avoid building isolated settlements with no social or economic mix, or limited access to services and opportunities.

- ▶ **Do anchor housing responses within multi scale spatial and strategic planning frameworks**, integrated broader spatial

planning and land management considerations, to ensure that location choices and housing approaches are informed by regional dynamics, economic opportunities, and development trajectories particularly of urban areas.

- ▶ **Do upgrade existing informal settlements and make serviced land available** in suitable locations, increasing the overall supply of land and housing to both local communities and displaced populations, while mitigating risks of gentrification.
- ▶ **Do consider existing land tenure systems**, including customary, communal, and locally recognized arrangements, and ensure that housing interventions align with these systems to avoid HLP disputes and strengthen legitimacy and sustainability.

**Don't develop publicly managed housing units without confirming their long-term adequacy, maintenance arrangements, as this often results in unsustainable and tenure schemes.**

- ▶ **Do support long-term maintenance systems for public housing** assets to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of public investments.
- ▶ **Do develop inclusive long-term tenure frameworks** that accommodate displaced persons and vulnerable groups.
- ▶ **Do establish transparent beneficiary selection mechanisms** for accessing publicly

managed housing and conduct regular assessments of evolving housing needs, covering both displaced populations and host communities.

**Don't cost housing solutions based on the number of housing units needed**, as this often results in unsustainable projects that cannot be scaled or financed.

- ▶ **Do cost housing strategies aimed at financing and increasing the supply of different housing solutions by local communities and the private sector**, including through upgrading existing settlements, investing in services and infrastructure in new areas, facilitating and subsidizing access to land and incremental housing options and working with existing financing instruments.

## MENU OF HOUSING SOLUTIONS AND APPROACHES FOR DISPLACEMENT-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

The table below presents key housing solutions and approaches for achieving durable housing solutions in displacement-affected contexts. While some options are more suitable for short, medium, or long-term implementation, all contribute to a comprehensive set of durable housing strategies. Special attention must be given to women and other vulnerable groups to ensure inclusivity and protection. The list below is not exhaustive, as a wide range of locally tailored approaches also exist at the community level<sup>12</sup>.

12. Some of the solutions existing at community level have been documented by UN-Habitat and GLTN in the report "[Durable Housing, Land and Property Solutions for Customary Displacement Contexts](#)" published in 2024.

Key housing solutions and approaches	Selected examples
<b>PREPARE THE GROUND FOR ADEQUATE HOUSING SOLUTIONS</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Assess housing needs</b>, including through dedicated assessments or by including housing in multisectoral assessments.</li> <li>2. <b>Identify and address barriers faced by marginalized and vulnerable groups</b> in accessing housing and land.</li> <li>3. <b>Assess the land and housing stock</b> including affordability, tenure types, and access barriers (e.g. legal, administrative or financial constraints affecting displaced persons, non-nationals and other vulnerable groups).</li> <li>4. <b>Undertake area-based assessments, neighbourhood and urban profiles</b>, and spatial planning and territorial analyses to strategically locate housing interventions.</li> <li>5. <b>Review tenure arrangements, legal and institutional frameworks</b>, including housing, land and property related laws and policies.</li> <li>6. <b>Conduct land and housing market and sub market assessments</b> to analyse supply and demand, pricing dynamics, constraints and risks.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Humanitarian Needs Overview of Afghanistan (2023)<sup>13</sup> and South Sudan (2023)<sup>14</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026<sup>15</sup>.</li> <li>▶ Facing an impossible choice: Refugee women’s housing, land and property rights in Syria<sup>16</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Women, Land and Peace: Training guide to advance women’s Housing Land and Property rights in fragile contexts<sup>17</sup>.</li> <li>▶ Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees in Thessaloniki<sup>18</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Diagnosis of housing situation to inform the development of Lebanon’s future National Urban Policy<sup>19</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Assessment of Shelter Arrangements in Out-of-Camp Situations in Borno State, Nigeria<sup>20</sup>.</li> <li>▶ City profiles in Al Tal, Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Dar’a Camp, Yarmouk Camp and Ein El-Tal Palestinian camp, in Syria<sup>21</sup>; Beirut, Tripoli and Tyre in Lebanon<sup>22</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Neighbourhood profiles in Lebanon<sup>23</sup>.</li> <li>▶ Analysis of Syrian Urban Law<sup>24</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Land Administration System in Syria: Analysis and Recommendations<sup>25</sup>.</li> <li>▶ City of tenants – assessment of rental patterns in Lebanon<sup>26</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Low-income Rental Housing Market Assessment – Lebanon<sup>27</sup>.</li> </ul>

13. UNOCHA (2023). [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023](#).

14. UNOCHA (2023). [South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023](#).

15. UNOCHA (2023). [Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026](#).

16. NRC (2024). [Facing an impossible choice: Refugee women’s housing, land and property rights in Syria](#).

17. UN-Habitat/GLTN (2024). [Women, Land and Peace: Training guide to advance women’s HLP rights in fragile contexts](#).

18. NRC (2016). [Study on Adequate Urban Housing for Refugees in Thessaloniki](#).

19. UN-Habitat Lebanon (2021) [Guide for Mainstreaming Housing in Lebanon’s National Urban Policy](#).

20. IOM and USAID (2021) [Assessment of Shelter Arrangements in Out-of-Camp Situations in Borno State, Nigeria](#).

21. UN-Habitat (2016). [Syria country profile](#); UN-Habitat (2016). Homs multi-sectoral response strategy; UN-Habitat (2016). Al-Tal city profile; UN-Habitat (2014). [Aleppo city profile: multi sector assessment](#); UN-Habitat (2014). [Homs city profile: multi sector assessment](#); UN-Habitat (2022). Ein El-Tal Palestinian camp: Rapid urban review. UN-Habitat (2022). Dar’a Camp Housing Profile. UN-Habitat (2022). Yarmouk Rapid Urban Review. UN-Habitat (2025). Hama City Profile and Recovery Plan.

22. UN-Habitat Lebanon (2021) [Beirut City Profile](#); UN-Habitat Lebanon (2016) [Tripoli City Profile UN-Habitat](#) (Updated September 2017); UN-Habitat Lebanon (2017) [Tyre City Profile](#).

23. UN-Habitat and UNICEF (2020) [Lebanon Neighborhood Profiles \(2017–2020\)](#).

24. UN-Habitat (2022). [Analysis of Syrian Urban Law](#).

25. UN-Habitat/GLTN (2021) [Land Administration System in Syria: Analysis and Recommendations](#).

26. Beirut Urban Lab. [City of tenants](#).

27. Norwegian Refugee Council (2021). [Low-income Rental Housing Market Assessment – Lebanon](#).

7. **Conduct building damage and debris assessments**

- ▶ Beirut Port Explosions Response: Beirut Municipality Rapid Building-level Damage Assessment<sup>29</sup>;
- ▶ Building Destruction and Debris Quantities Assessment: South, Nabatiyeh, Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel Governorates in Lebanon<sup>30</sup>;
- ▶ Gaza Strip Comprehensive Damage Assessment<sup>31</sup>.

8. **Develop evidence based housing strategies**

**HOUSE DISPLACED PEOPLE IN AREAS OF DISPLACEMENT OR IN THIRD LOCATIONS**

9. **Improve access to administrative services and housing, land and property rights information in areas of displacement.**

- ▶ Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA) programmes<sup>32</sup>.

10. **Broker housing agreements between local communities and displaced populations (e.g. facilitate private hosting arrangements, rental agreements, and tripartite housing and shelter agreements) in line with existing local tenure systems, including customary and communal arrangements.**

- ▶ Brokered tenancy agreements between private landlords and displaced people in Greece<sup>33</sup>.

11. **Prevent forced evictions of displaced people from the areas where they are settling, including through monitoring, early warning, mediation and strengthened accountability mechanisms.**

- ▶ Eviction flash alerts in Somalia<sup>34</sup>;
- ▶ Housing and Land Rights Violation Database - Mapping Forced eviction<sup>35</sup>.

12. **Work with authorities to mitigate and remove legal and administrative barriers to social housing programmes.**

- ▶ New publicly managed social housing in Burkina Faso<sup>36</sup>.

13. **Construct housing units on suitable public or private land that meets the criteria for adequate housing.**

14. **Retrofit / adapt suitable public or private buildings.**

- ▶ City Plaza: Greece's refugee hotel<sup>37</sup>.

15. **Create site and services schemes.**

- ▶ Provision of plots on newly developed public land to resettled displaced people in Baidoa, Somalia<sup>38</sup>;
- ▶ Identification, rapid planning and allocation of vacant state land to IDPs and refugees in Kabul and Herat, Afghanistan<sup>39</sup>.

29. Municipality of Beirut and UN-Habitat Lebanon (2020) [Beirut Port Explosions Response: Beirut Municipality Rapid Building-level Damage Assessment](#).

30. UN-Habitat Lebanon, UNOSAT, Shelter Sector, University of Balamand, and Saint Joseph University Center for Environmental Research of the Eastern Mediterranean (forthcoming) Lebanon: Building Damage and Debris Quantities Assessment. Initial findings are found in: UN-Habitat, University of Balamand, and Saint Joseph University (2025) [Lebanon – Building Destruction and Debris Quantities Assessment: South, Nabatiyeh, Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel Governorates](#).

31. UNOSAT and UNITAR (2025) [Gaza Strip Comprehensive Damage Assessment](#).

32. [Information, counselling and legal assistance](#) by NRC.

33. Greece case study in UN-Habitat and UNHCR (2020). [Guidance for Responding to Displacement in Urban Areas](#).

34. Norwegian Refugee Council (n.d.). [Somalia Eviction Information Portal](#).

35. HLRN/HIC: [Housing and Land Rights Violation Database: Mapping Forced Eviction](#).

36. UN-Habitat (2023). [Final evaluation of the EU-funded project on increased resilience of local authorities in Burkina Faso impacted by massive internal displacement and COVID-19](#).

37. Reliefweb (2016). [City Plaza: Greece's Refugee Hotel](#).

38. Baidoa, Somalia case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN (2024). [Durable Housing, Land and Property Solutions for Customary Displacement Contexts](#).

39. Afghanistan case study in UN-Habitat and UNHCR (2020). [Guidance for Responding to Displacement in Urban Areas](#).

16. **Source accommodation in private residential homes**, increasing the shelter offered by local communities, through dedicated rental schemes and programmes to facilitate the renovation, extension or construction of new housing.
17. **Support the maintenance, consolidation and incremental upgrading of temporary housing solutions**, enabling their progressive evolution into adequate and durable housing where appropriate, and avoiding the creation of long-term sub-standard living conditions.
18. **Facilitate purchase and construction (including self-built)** of housing by displaced people through access to credit and financing.
19. **Assess urban absorption capacity** and opportunities for regional integration.

▶ Private hosting mechanisms in Europe<sup>40</sup>.

▶ Incremental shelter solutions in Haiti<sup>41</sup>.

### ENABLE RETURN TO AREAS OF ORIGIN

20. **Prepare the ground for return**, including through safeguarding housing, land and property documentation; preventing illegal occupation of vacant houses; restoring lost and damaged HLP and civil documents; identifying land and housing for returns.
21. **Establish restitution and compensation mechanisms**.
22. **Clear neighbourhoods and properties of debris**, unsafe or damaged structures, unexploded ordnance and other hazards, and restore access routes and basic circulation networks.
23. **Repair and reconstruct damaged and destroyed houses**, while integrating adaptations to meet current needs and enable incremental and future-oriented housing improvements.
24. **Address secondary occupation**, including by relocating secondary occupants, to enable the return of IDPs and refugees.

- ▶ Safeguarding evidence of housing rights in Lebanon and Iraq<sup>42</sup>;
- ▶ Document forcibly abandoned houses in Honduras<sup>43</sup>;
- ▶ Participatory village mapping to identify areas for returnees and prevent conflicts Darfur, Sudan<sup>44</sup>.
- ▶ Housing restitution and compensation scheme in Kosovo<sup>45</sup>; and restitution and compensation in Iraq<sup>46</sup>.
- ▶ “Rubble to Mountains” initiative, which repurposed debris from the 2020 Beirut Port explosion<sup>47</sup>.
- ▶ Secure HLP rights and rehabilitate the houses of the Yazidi minority in Iraq<sup>48</sup>;
- ▶ Rehabilitation of residential buildings of heritage value and rehabilitation of structures affected by the 2020 Beirut Port explosion<sup>49</sup>.
- ▶ Alternatives for secondary occupants through transitional justice mechanisms in Kosovo<sup>50</sup>.

40. Red Cross EU Office (2024). [Lessons from private hosting: from emergency to preparedness for future welcoming initiatives](#); Red Cross EU Office and International Federation for the Red Cross and Red Crescent (2024). [Safe Homes: Key Lessons from Hosting People Displaced From Ukraine In Private Homes](#); Red Cross EU Office (n.d.). [Safe Homes Programme](#); European Commission (2022). [Safe Homes Guidance](#).

41. Humanity & Inclusion (2017). [Impact evaluation: Improve living conditions for the most vulnerable populations affected by the earthquake](#).

42. UN-Habitat/GLTN. [Safeguarding evidence of housing, land and property rights of Syrian refugees](#). Arab Land Initiative.

43. Honduras case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN (2018). [Land and Conflict: Lessons from the Field on Conflict Sensitive Land Governance and Peacebuilding](#).

44. UN-Habitat/GLTN (2024). [Policy Directions: Housing, Land and Property Solutions to Resolve and Prevent Displacement](#).

45. IOM (2008). [Property restitution and compensation: practices and experiences of claims programmes](#).

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49. UN-Habitat Lebanon (n.d.) [Beirut Housing Rehabilitation and Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery](#).

50. Kosovo case study in IOM (2008). [Property restitution and compensation: practices and experiences of claims programmes](#).

## MAKE THE HOUSING SECTOR WORK BETTER FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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| <p>25. <b>Develop housing sector profiles</b> to identify bottlenecks and priority actions and inform housing strategies.</p> <p>26. <b>Reform housing policies and laws</b> to improve functioning, inclusiveness and accessibility for displaced people.</p> <p>27. <b>Improve construction standards</b> and practices to enable safer, more resilient housing, including through improved training, strengthened construction value chains and access to appropriate building materials.</p> <p>28. <b>Improve the housing rental market</b>, increasing tenure security, affordability and inclusiveness and reducing vacant housing.</p> <p>29. <b>Improve the functioning of the land administration sector</b>, to simplify land and property registration and transactions and increasing the availability of serviced registered land in the market.</p> <p>30. <b>Transform, retrofit and regularize informal settlements.</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Afghanistan Housing Profile<sup>51</sup>; Syria National Housing Profile (2025)<sup>52</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Housing Monitor in Lebanon<sup>53</sup>.</li> <li>▶ Iraq National Housing Policy 2025–2030<sup>54</sup>.</li> <br/> <li>▶ Assess the land sector and provide fit-for-purpose solutions to improve to address the needs of the displaced in Darfur, Sudan<sup>55</sup> and Syria<sup>56</sup>;</li> <br/> <li>▶ Kenya National Slum Upgrading and Prevention Strategy 2024-2034<sup>57</sup>.</li> </ul> |
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## DISPLACEMENT PREVENTION THROUGH HOUSING INTERVENTIONS

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| <p>31. <b>Analyse housing resilience and destruction risks</b> - including climate and disaster vulnerability assessments and integrate information in urban and spatial planning processes to inform land use decisions and housing development – and adopt early warning systems and emergency housing solutions and protocols.</p> <p>32. <b>Prevent secondary displacement</b>, including through the provision of temporary or intermediate tenure instruments (e.g. occupancy certificates, use rights, etc.) that offer protection against forced evictions, even in the absence of formal titles.</p> <p>33. <b>Set up early-warning and referral mechanisms</b> connecting protection, housing, and legal services.</p> <p>34. <b>Facilitate relocation to housing in safe locations</b>, in consultation with the community.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Flood modelling for climate-resilient settlements in Pakistan<sup>58</sup>;</li> <li>▶ Climate-mainstreamed territorial and local master plans to guide safe land use, reduce exposure to climate risks, and prevent settlement in hazard-prone areas in Lebanon and Jordan<sup>59</sup>.</li> <br/> <li>▶ Enable local integration through rapid mapping and recordation of extended family land tenure rights, Abyei, Sudan<sup>60</sup>.</li> <br/> <li>▶ Early Warnings for All Initiative<sup>61</sup>.</li> <br/> <li>▶ Gender-sensitive housing project for the relocation of displaced women and girls in Northern Mozambique<sup>62</sup>.</li> </ul> |
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## ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

An enabling environment is essential for sustainable, durable housing solutions in displacement-affected contexts. The key elements that define an enabling environment are outlined below.


**A long-term perspective** – Displacement is not a short-term emergency that can be resolved solely through humanitarian action. It is the result of a complex mix of causes and vulnerabilities, requiring a mix of humanitarian and non-humanitarian response. 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 people displaced by conflict and disasters head to urban centres hoping to find increased opportunities, and access to services. Effective preparedness and response strategies need to be developed out of a good understanding of the urban environment. When urban systems work well, they can offer better solutions to displaced persons and local communities. Inclusive spatial planning and legislation, compact and serviced urban growth, and effective land and property management systems are essential preconditions for a functioning housing sector and are essential to drive economic and spatial integration, and social cohesion. Adopting an integrated approach to urban and territorial planning ensures that access to housing is addressed holistically through spatial development plans, policies and legislation, and finance frameworks that account for location and access to livelihood opportunities, while integrating disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation and environmental sustainability.

**Public leadership and institutional responsibility** – Addressing displacement and providing durable housing solutions for displaced

persons require strong political will and government capacity. Housing for displaced persons and other vulnerable groups should be incorporated into national and local development plans and sector-specific plans of ministries. The politicization of narratives around displacement, arousing of fear and exclusion-based discourses should be counterbalanced. Government accountability should be strengthened to ensure that IDPs are recognized as full citizens and therefore entitled to housing solutions on an equal basis with other citizens. At the same time, a rights based approach to adequate housing should also be applied to refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, while acknowledging that migrants and individuals without recognized refugee status may have differentiated rights depending on national legal frameworks. Local authorities are essential partners. By mediating land disputes, enforcing property laws and providing land for housing and public services, local governments help create a stable environment conducive to the integration of displaced people, and they should be capacitated and supported in their roles.

**Whole-of-society** – Local actors and communities are central to effective housing responses and are often the first responders and primary accommodation providers for displaced populations, while private sector actors play a crucial role in the housing market. Addressing displacement therefore requires a whole-of-society approach. Displaced persons, local communities, civil society and private sector, the media, academia, faith-based organizations, grassroots, women-led organizations, youth and networks of professionals can play an increasing role. The contribution of the private sector in the provision of housing for displaced persons should be better recognized, understood and strategically mobilised as part of inclusive and sustainable housing solutions. As a consequence, prospective analysis and collaborative research are essential to identify



viable housing solutions and jointly formulate appropriate responses. This includes co-producing evidence with local actors, communities, the private sector and other stakeholders to anticipate trends, test options and inform inclusive, context-specific housing strategies for displaced populations and host communities alike.

**Integrated approaches and cross-sector coordination** – Housing for displaced persons must be addressed as part of an integrated response that includes water and sanitation, livelihoods, protection, health, education and infrastructure. Siloed approaches and post-crisis responses lead to duplication, gaps and inefficiencies, failing to address the interconnected needs of displaced populations and host communities. Coordination and partnership across humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, climate and urban actors are essential to align strategies, pool resources and capacities and deliver coherent area-based housing solutions. Joint planning and programming ensure that housing interventions work in tandem with other sectors, creating synergies that enhance outcomes for all.

**Community-centred access, agency and empowerment** – Housing solutions will only have an impact if displaced people are aware of the options available to them and receive practical support to access them. One-stop centres are required at the community level to support affected people in identifying, navigating and accessing the solutions that best suit their needs. Women, people with disabilities and others at risk of exclusion require particular attention, as displacement adds yet another layer of vulnerability and discrimination concerning HLP rights. Efforts must be made to ensure that women and other vulnerable groups are at the forefront of designing and implementing housing solutions that meet their real needs, and to monitor the responsiveness of the solutions.

**Inclusive HLP legal frameworks** – There may be laws or policies that explicitly or inadvertently discriminate against IDPs and refugees, affecting their ability to access housing, remain safely housed, and access secure tenure. In most countries, the legal status of a person defines which type of housing solutions he/she can have access to. A review of the legal requirements needed to access housing can provide useful recommendations for removing or easing unnecessary legal and administrative blockages. There may be legal impediments that become push factors to return and repossession of housing in areas of origin, such as the lack of civil and HLP documentation. More broadly, 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. 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 is crucial.

**Eased access to credit** – Lack of access to credit is one of the key bottlenecks that systematically exclude displaced people from mortgage markets, housing loans, and even small scale financing for improving their housing conditions. This is because they often lack legal HLP documents and stable income required by formal financial institutions. Access to financial services and credit should therefore be eased, and financial products and eligibility criteria adapted to respond to the needs of displaced populations, including by introducing innovative credit schemes - such as microfinance, group lending, incremental housing loans - and lifting some eligibility requirements, such as formal ownership of collateral assets (e.g. land).

**Predictable financing** – At the system level, predictable and sustained financing is essential to catalyse action on housing solutions for displaced

persons and to support the national leadership of such interventions in the long term. Short-term, fragmented and project-based funding limits governments' ability to plan, scale and institutionalise housing responses, often resulting in temporary or unsustainable solutions. Predictable financing enables the development of long-term housing strategies, strengthens public institutions and reduces reliance on ad hoc humanitarian interventions. Funding solutions should be increasingly localized, and local financing should be leveraged, including through land-based financing mechanisms. Aligning humanitarian, development and climate finance funding with national housing priorities is critical to create coherent, durable and scalable housing solutions for displaced populations and host communities alike.

#### **Accountable justice and disputes' resolution**

– Displaced people often face significant barriers in accessing justice. This negatively impacts their ability to protect themselves from forced evictions and other discriminatory practices. Women are particularly vulnerable. Solutions include providing legal assistance, counseling, representation and mediation; simplifying, popularizing and translating key legal documents into simple language or local dialects; and assisting displaced people and returnees in taking the necessary measures and completing the required procedures for safeguarding their HLP rights. To address large caseloads of housing rights violations, transitional justice mechanisms could be established to provide justice to displaced persons in a rapid manner through a combination of administrative and judicial channels, including mediation and alternative dispute resolution.

#### **Available data for evidence-based action**

– The systems to generate and analyse necessary

data and knowledge on housing in displacement-affected contexts should be strengthened in close collaboration with national and local institutions. This includes improving data availability, quality and interoperability, as well as developing forward-looking analyses and projections to anticipate housing needs, inform planning and guide timely, evidence-based policy and investment decisions. In this regard, pilot and small scale projects can serve as valuable entry points to test approaches, generate practical evidence, and inform policy development. When effectively documented and scaled, such initiatives can help shape enabling policy and institutional environments that respond more effectively to housing challenges in displacement affected settings.

#### **A fit-for-purpose United Nations system**

– A coherent United Nations system, grounded in a shared and holistic understanding of the drivers of displacement and the pathways toward durable solutions - including housing, is best positioned to address displacement effectively. Such an approach enables a transition from predominantly humanitarian responses toward more development oriented and sustainable solutions. Analytical frameworks used by humanitarian, peace, development, climate, and urban actors should therefore converge more strongly around shared displacement projections, trends, and scenarios. Enhanced coordination and integrated programming - at both global and country levels - are essential to systematically bring these actors together. This requires strengthening multi sectoral joint analyses that explicitly incorporate housing as a core component of durable solutions, as well as expanding the range of sustainable responses by building on, learning from, and scaling up proven practices.

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