



ADAPTING HUMANITARIAN ACTION TO AN URBAN WORLD

BY 2050, 70% OF THE
WORLD'S POPULATION
WILL LIVE IN URBAN AREAS.

BACKGROUND

The humanitarian landscape is changing. Urbanization is defining our global reality and will shape our future. The majority of the world's population now lives in urban areas, and urbanization continues unabated, including in fragile settings. It is often rapid and unplanned, and exacerbates the impacts of a range of natural and man-made disasters. Armed conflict and the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas cause death and injury amongst civilians; earthquakes inflict unique levels of devastation in cities, as do severe storms and floods. In sum, global demographic trends are generating a fundamental shift in the nature, scale and impact of humanitarian crises.

But urban areas can also offer sanctuary. Sixty percent of refugees and the majority of the world's internally displaced people are living in towns and cities. This generates new challenges: forced displacement is increasingly protracted, lasting an estimated 25 years on average. In urban areas displaced people are at risk of falling to the bottom of society, as they are not easily identifiable and have limited access to livelihoods and longer-term solutions to their situation. Communities hosting displaced people face enormous pressures on, and competition for, scarce basic services, housing and jobs. At the same time, there is a significant disconnect between the traditional humanitarian service delivery model focused on camps, and the needs of the urban displaced.

VISION

The Global Alliance for Urban Crises promotes a vision of inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and towns (as laid out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) in which urban communities, their leaders and members have the power, capacities and resources to address the risks and reality of humanitarian crises, to mitigate crisis impacts on the most vulnerable, including the displaced, and to enable affected people to determine, with dignity, the course of their lives and their futures.

Urbanization and its intersection with climate change, conflict and displacement, calls into question the traditional ways of working humanitarians have employed in remote rural areas. The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) offers the unique opportunity to bring global focus to the urban dimensions of humanitarian crises and for stakeholders to commit to adapt crisis response so that it is fit for purpose in an increasingly urban world.

A wide range of organizations have seized this opportunity and have come together under a new global, multi-disciplinary and collaborative framework: the Global Alliance for Urban Crises (the Alliance). The Alliance brings together local authorities, humanitarian, development, and urban professionals such as planners, architects and engineers, in an innovative partnership that will render urban humanitarian responses more appropriate, effective and sustainable.



WHAT THE ALLIANCE WILL ACHIEVE

Members of the Alliance will sign up to the *Urban Crises Charter* which sets out guiding principles for operating in urban areas. Partners of the Alliance will take additional steps to align efforts and commitments around four key thematic areas. Together, their work will bring about a fundamental shift in the way that international and local actors interact with each other in response to urban humanitarian crises.

Activities will include:

- Tailoring humanitarian response to the urban context by developing shared assessment and profiling tools, promoting joint analysis, and adapting coordination mechanisms.
- Developing or working with existing global, regional and national rosters to facilitate the deployment of urban leaders, managers and technical experts.
- Building the evidence base on the specific characteristics of protracted displacement in urban areas, and contributing to the design of appropriate and cost-effective responses, with particular regard to protection of vulnerable people, shelter, basic services and infrastructure.
- Ensuring that initiatives focused on building urban resilience incorporate components on resilient response and recovery from crises, and that they leverage greatest impact in cities most at risk of humanitarian emergencies.

OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS, THE URBAN POPULATION IN LOWER INCOME AND FRAGILE SITUATIONS IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE INCREASED BY 326%.

60% OF THE WORLD'S REFUGEES ARE LIVING IN TOWNS AND CITIES.

LOOKING AHEAD

In addition to supporting operational adaptations and programming innovations, the Alliance will play a key role in influencing relevant international policy discussions. Alliance members are already working on ensuring that the *New Urban Agenda*, to be agreed at Habitat III in Quito, October 2016, gives appropriate attention to the wide range of humanitarian crises that impact on cities and their populations. Members are also engaging with governments to take the necessary steps to mitigate the impacts of conflict, displacement and natural hazards on their urban populations.

JOIN US

Urban areas may be increasingly at risk, but they also offer opportunities to work differently and to ensure crisis response provides immediate humanitarian relief while also strengthening urban resilience. This will require new partnerships that go beyond the humanitarian sector. The Alliance provides the framework to build these partnerships and work towards common goals to improve how we prepare for and react on the ground when faced with an urban humanitarian crisis.

For further information, to download the *Urban Crises Charter* and associated *Recommendations*, and to express an interest in joining the Alliance, please contact urban.session@whsummit.org or visit www.urbancrises.org