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POLICY DIRECTIONS

HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY SOLUTIONS TO RESOLVE AND PREVENT DISPLACEMENT

REPORT 9/2024

POLICY DIRECTIONS: HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY SOLUTIONS TO RESOLVE AND PREVENT DISPLACEMENT

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DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

Customary land rights

Customary areas are those in which customary tenure prevails, i.e. where the "laws, rules and norms governing rights to land and natural resources are upheld by an authority other than the state and subscribed to by a collective defined by characteristics other than national citizenship".[1] This is linked to the concept of traditional land rights, where land is managed according to local customs and cultural norms and is usually administered by tribal or community leaders. In these areas, "the concept of ownership – and related rights and obligations – generally differs from the statutory land administration system".[2]

Durable solutions

Durable solutions "include any means by which a situation necessitating refugee status can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved in a manner that would enable those affected to lead normal lives without the need for protection or perpetual humanitarian assistance". In the case of internal displacement, a "durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement".[3]

Fit-for-purpose land administration

Fit-for-purpose land administration systems are designed to meet the needs of society today and are flexible, affordable, and incrementally improvable, allowing for secure land rights for all. These systems focus on ensuring that the land administration is functional, scalable, and sustainable, instead of aiming for high precision or exhaustive detail. This approach emphasizes practicality, affordability, and adaptability to serve the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders in a given country or region.

Forced evictions

Forced evictions are defined as the "permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection". This is differentiated from "evictions carried out by force in accordance with the law and in conformity with the provisions of the International Covenants on Human Rights",[4] to which the term does not apply.

Host communities

Host communities are "the local, regional, and national governmental, social, and economic structures within which refugees and other displaced or migrant communities live, including specifically the local individuals and groups of people residing in close physical and social proximity who are often the most directly impacted by any influx or arrival of refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons (IDPs)".[5]

Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights

Within the humanitarian response, HLP rights are commonly understood as having a home free from the fear of forced eviction and a place that offers shelter, safety and the ability to secure a livelihood. The concept of HLP includes the full spectrum of rights to housing, land and property held according to statutory or customary law or informally – both public and private. HLP rights are held by owners, tenants, customary land tenure owners and users, and informal settlement occupants.[6]

1 Knox, 2010, cited in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2019a

2 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024a

3 IOM, UNHCR, cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

4 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General comment No. 7: The right to adequate housing (art. 11 (1) of the Covenant): Forced evictions, para.4, 1997

5 UNHCR, cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

6 The Global Protection Cluster HLP Area of Responsibility

Internally Displaced Person(s) (IDPs)	IDPs are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border".[7]
Land administration	Land administration refers to "the processes of recording and disseminating information about the ownership, value, and use of land and its associated resources. Such processes include the determination, survey, description, and detailed documentation of land rights; the detailing of other attributes of the land; and the provision of relevant information in support of land markets and land use management".[8]
Land-based financing	Land-based financing (LBF) refers to the "range of instruments by which local governments expand their revenue base and generate funds that will help them realize their service delivery, infrastructure development, and maintenance goals and hence contribute to sustainable urbanization".[9]
Land governance	Land governance refers to the "rules, processes and structures through which decisions are made about access to land and its use, the manner in which the decisions are implemented and enforced, and the way that competing interests in land are managed".[10] Good land governance contributes to a number of development objectives, including "poverty reduction, food security, gender equality, economic development, sustainable infrastructure, balanced territorial development, sustainable cities and communities (including adequate housing), responsible consumption and production, climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental protection, resilience, post-disaster/conflict redevelopment, social stability, peace and security".[11]
Land recordation	Land recordation involves recording different types of land rights along the continuum of land rights.[12]
Land registration	Land registration refers to "the process of recording and registering land rights either in deed or title form. The aim of registration is to guarantee the security of property transactions, to protect the owner from encroachment by third parties, and to enhance land tenure security as a whole".[13]
Land tenure	Land tenure is "the way land is held or owned by individuals and groups, or the set of relationships legally or customarily defined amongst people with respect to land".[14] Land tenure describes who has which rights to do what on which parcel of land, and for how long.

7 UNOCHA, cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

8 World Resources Institute, 2016, cited in UNCCD, 2017

9 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2015

10 FAO and UN-Habitat, 2009

11 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2017a

12 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2019

13 UNCCD, 2017

14 UN-Habitat, 2008 cited in UNCCD, 2017

Legal pluralism

This refers to the coexistence, interaction and overlap of a combination of different legal systems, such as customary, statutory, religious laws, norms and regulations. Legal pluralism acknowledges that individuals and groups may be subject to, or may choose to adhere to, different sets of rules and norms depending on various factors like context, culture and social relationships. "The relationship among statutory, customary and religious laws usually depends on the level of recognition and domestication of traditional and religious laws and practices in the formal legal system. This can range from full or partial recognition to non-recognition of religious and customary laws".[15]

Migrant

A migrant is "a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes several well-defined legal categories of people and types of movement, such as migrant workers and smuggled migrants, as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students".[16]

People on the move

People on the move is an overarching category of people who are relocating from one place to another for a relatively long period of time, for a wide variety of reasons.[17] Today, most people on the move are fleeing armed conflict, natural disasters, war or environmental conditions made worse by climate change. This encompasses migrants (see definition above) including economic migrants, climate migrants and those moving for family reunification as well as refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers who are experiencing forced migration. Though broad, the phrase "people on the move" can be useful in avoiding negative connotations or preconceptions that some may associate with refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers or migrants.

Resilience

Resilience is the "ability of a system, community, or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform, and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management".[18]

Restitution

Restitution refers to "the process of returning to one's home after displacement and achieving the recovery of one's land".[19] It is "a legal remedy which can support refugees and internally displaced persons in their choice of a durable solution (whether return, resettlement or local integration)".[20] When possible, restitution should "restore the victim to the original situation before the gross violations of human rights law or serious violations of international humanitarian law occurred. Restitution includes, as appropriate: restoration of liberty, enjoyment of human rights, identity, family life and citizenship; return to one's place of residence, restoration of employment and return of property".[21]

15 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024a

16 IOM, cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

17 Pijnenburg and Rijken, 2020

18 UNDRR, cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

19 NRC, 2017

20 OCHA/IDD, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, FAO, OHCHR, NRC and IDMC, 2007

21 The Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, A/RES/60/147, 2005

Refugee	A refugee is a person who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it".[22]
Relocation	Relocation refers to the planned transfer of people from one area to another.
Returnee	A returnee is a person who was a refugee or an IDP and has recently returned to his/her country and place of origin with the intention of settling there.[23]
Spatial planning	Spatial planning refers to decision-making processes aimed at realizing economic, social, cultural and environmental goals in an area through physical and spatial visions, strategies and plans and the implementation of these by applying a set of policy principles, tools, institutional and participatory mechanisms and regulatory procedures.[24]
Voluntary return	Voluntary return is the assisted or independent return of a migrant, a refugee, or a forcibly displaced person to their area of origin or habitual residence based on their own free will and informed decision-making.
Vulnerability	Vulnerability describes the conditions (physical, social, economic and environmental) which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets, or systems to hazards, shocks and stressors.[25]
Vulnerable group(s)	Vulnerable groups include "any identity group, community, or segment of society that is at higher risk of being subjected to discrimination, violence, natural or environmental disasters, or economic hardship, than other groups. Such groups may include women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, or migrants and often experience higher risk in periods of conflict and crisis".[26]

22 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

23 OHCHR, cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

24 UN-Habitat, cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

25 UNDRR cited in UN-Habitat, 2024a

26 IOM, cited in in UN-Habitat, 2024a

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARAZI	Afghanistan Land Authority
CAD	Civil Affairs Division of the UN Mission in South Sudan
CRRPD	Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes (Iraq)
DEM	Digital Elevation Model
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECHO	European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid
EU	European Union
ESTIA	Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation Programme
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FFP	Fit for Purpose
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GLTN	Global Land Tool Network
HEC RAS	Hydrologic Engineering Center River Analysis System
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPCC	Housing and Property Claims Commission (Kosovo)
HPD	Housing and Property Directorate (Kosovo)
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IT	Information Technology
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILC	International Land Coalition
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KPA	Kosovo Property Agency
LDT	Land Dispute Tribunals
LDRC	Land Dispute Resolution Committees
LWSC	Land and Water Settlement Commission (Palestine)
NDRA	National Displacement and Refugee Agency (Somaliland)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

PROSPECTS	Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities
RCEU	Red Cross EU Office
RCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator Office
RS	Remote Sensing
SHURA	Sustainable Human Settlements in Urban Areas to Support Reintegration in Afghanistan Programme
SME	Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise
STDM	Social Tenure Domain Model
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPPA	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
URF	Urban Recovery Framework
USWG	Urban Settlements Working Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The twenty-first century sees an unprecedented number of people on the move. **Internal displacement** has risen sharply over the past five years, with the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) growing by 51 per cent in that time (IDMC, 2024a). By the end of 2023, 75.9 million people were living in internal displacement, having been forced out of their homes to other parts of their country due to conflict, violence, natural disasters, human rights violations and abuses and the negative impact of macro socio-economic trends (IDMC, 2024a).

Migration is also on the rise, with 280 million international migrants (IOM, 2020) and 740 million migrants remaining within their country of origin (IOM, 2009). Figures on human mobility in the context of environmental degradation, climate change and disasters are not yet consolidated. However, the analysis of converging national trends and global projections describes alarming climate-related displacement scenarios. The World Bank (2018) estimates that there will be more than 143 million people displaced by climate change by 2050 in three regions of the world alone.

People on the move – particularly the most vulnerable in fragile, poor and conflict-affected countries – tend to settle in rural and urban areas already affected by multi-dimensional poverty. Nearly 1 billion urban poor currently live in **informal settlements** (HLPF, 2023). By 2050, an additional 4 to 5 billion people will live in urban areas (World Bank, 2023), enhancing the competition for jobs, housing, land and properties, services and infrastructure. It is important to have a holistic view of such dynamics when contextualizing the land and HLP solutions to internal displacement because these trends are intertwined, and their combination aggravates the conditions of each population category directly or indirectly affected.

Causes of displacement

Displacement and migration are the result of a complex combination of factors that interact with household and individual needs and aspirations. Conflicts, disasters and climate change are the main drivers of displacement. While statistics are often shown separately, there is an inextricable interrelation between them. Disasters and climate change are key drivers of conflict, while conflict aggravates the impacts of climate change.

Conflicts, violence and insecurity are major causes of internal displacement. By the end of 2023, 68.3 million people were internally displaced because of conflict and violence, an all-time high, while those internally displaced by disasters were 7.7 million (IDMC, 2024a). Conflict-induced displacement disproportionately affects Africa and the Middle East, and tends to lead to more protracted crises compared to other causes of displacement.

Climate change and natural disasters, such as floods, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis and wildfires, have a significant impact on displacement. In the course of 2022, 32.6 million internal displacements due to disasters were reported, with 8.7 million people remaining displaced by the end of the year (IDMC, 2022). Disaster-related internal displacement accounted for more than half (54 per cent) of all new displacements in 2022 (UNHCR, 2023). Sea level rise, water scarcity, droughts, shifting and expansion of drylands and desertification patterns are also projected to become even greater causes of displacement in the future.

Displacement can also be the result of **human rights violations and abuses,** human suffering, exclusion and marginalization not directly related to large-scale armed conflict. Human rights violations that can result in displacement include forced evictions; sexual and gender-based violence, including abuse, sexual exploitation, and early and forced marriage; persecution based on ethnic, religious or political affiliation or sexual orientation; State repression, using displacement as a method to control dissent; or environmental degradation or exploitation that leads to adverse impacts on communities.

This policy document

Understanding and developing a common vision to tackle land issues and housing, land and property (HLP) rights is crucial to finding durable solutions to displacement. This policy document aims to explain why this is needed and to analyse and propose a comprehensive set of land and HLP solutions to resolve and prevent displacement. The document: (1) **analyses** internal displacement and other forms of internal and cross-border population movements from the land and HLP perspective; (2) provides a set of **land and HLP solutions** to resolve and prevent displacement, articulated in three categories: humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience; and (3) describes **enabling factors** necessary to address and prevent displacement.

The formulation "Land and HLP" refers to two sides of the coin: protection of the rights of displaced populations in relation to housing, land and properties on the one side; and broader land governance and land administration considerations on the other. The latter is crucial to prevent displacement and to put in place a comprehensive set of durable solutions. Housing, land and property rights include the whole continuum of land rights, ranging from registered ownership to informal and customary rights of individuals, families or groups (e.g. pastoralists, nomads and Indigenous peoples).

The document draws on **24 case studies**[27] of durable solutions in displacement-affected contexts. It is addressed to a broad and non-specialized audience composed of humanitarian, peace and development actors, including representatives of governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and private sector actors with a stake in addressing and preventing internal displacement.

Finding durable solutions

Internal displacement must be addressed through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*. Durable solutions include returning to the area of origin, integrating locally at the point of destination or settling in another part of the country, until the vulnerabilities related to displacement no longer exist.

Solutions must be crafted with a whole-of-society perspective, considering the needs of IDPs alongside those of refugees and returnees, but also those of migrants, local poor and marginalized groups and host communities overall. An **area-based approach** in analysing issues and finding solutions is therefore the most appropriate to promote an adequate standard of living for all.

Understanding **urbanization** is essential to address displacement. Cities have become safety nets that accommodate those who flee from conflicts, natural and climate-induced disasters, poverty and persecution. Consistent with global urbanization trends, over half of forcibly displaced people – including those displaced within the borders of their countries – live in urban areas (World Bank, 2023).

Different groups experience the impacts of displacement in unique ways. For women, Indigenous peoples, ethnic and religious minorities and other marginalized groups displacement tends to reinforce or deepen pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. At the end of 2022, roughly 35.8 million women and girls were internally displaced due to conflict and disaster (IDMC, 2023). Indigenous peoples are at high risk of displacement due to disasters. Vulnerable groups may face increased human rights violations as a result of displacement and discrimination when seeking assistance, hence specific attention must be paid to address their needs.

Categories of land and HLP solutions to displacement

There are three main areas of land and HLP solutions in contexts of displacement:

1. **Land and HLP solutions for humanitarian protection.** These are needed in the initial phase of displacement when people are very vulnerable,

27 Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Greece, Afghanistan, Somalia, Palestine, Mozambique, Sudan, South Sudan, Iraq, Kosovo, the DRC and Pakistan

their HLP needs are most acute and solutions need to be quick. This phase can last from a few days to a few years, depending on the type of crisis.

2. **Land and HLP solutions for recovery and development.** These are needed for medium- to long-term sustainability to ensure that IDPs no longer have specific needs linked to their displacement and are integrated in the provision of local services. The preparation for their implementation should start in parallel with the establishment of shorter-term solutions for humanitarian protection described above.

3. **Land and HLP solutions for resilience.** These can prevent and mitigate the impacts of displacement and should be worked on in any context prone to displacement. This includes areas that present vulnerabilities potentially resulting in displacement and areas that may receive IDPs and other vulnerable groups.

Within these categories, this document identifies twenty key solution areas, each with a subset of specific land and HLP solutions.

Table 1: Land and HLP solutions areas.

Land and HLP solutions for humanitarian protection	**Solution areas:**
	1. Assess HLP needs, including though HLP assessments, inclusion of HLP issues in multisectoral assessments, area-based assessments and urban and neighbourhood profiling.
	2. Understand and review the legal and institutional frameworks.
	3. Identify options for sheltering displaced people.
	4. Shelter displaced people away from their homes, including in buildings or on lands that are public, private or communal and by increasing the shelter offer by host communities.
	5. Provide access to land and properties other than shelters, including land for agriculture, livestock and domestic animals, access to communal resources, properties for commercial activities and accessible and safe public and communal spaces.
	6. Prepare the ground for return, restitution and compensation, including through repairing and reconstructing housing, safeguarding HLP documentation, establishing restitution and compensation mechanisms and clearing land of explosives.
	7. Access to justice and disputes' resolution.
	8. Prevent and address forced evictions, including through forced evictions' monitoring and strengthening accountability mechanisms.
Land and HLP solutions for recovery and development	**Solution areas:**
	9. Area-based assessments and urban profiles, including comprehensive multisectoral area-based analyses, city and neighbourhood profiles, spatial planning, territorial analyses and strategies.
	10. Housing in areas of current displacement or in third locations through provision of housing by public institutions and development actors (plots of land to be developed, site and services schemes, construction of basic units to be expanded, social housing, retrofitted buildings); increasing the offer of adequate housing available to displaced persons (host communities host and rent out repaired, extended or new housing, incentives for new constructions); and construction and purchase of houses, lands and properties by displaced people.
	11. HLP solutions in areas of origin, including for return, through repair and reconstruction interventions, restitution of HLP taken by force, illegally and forcibly acquired or sold, and compensation schemes.
	12. Land and properties in areas of displacement and in third locations including communal and customary land
	13. Address secondary HLP occupation, including through formal justice, alternative dispute resolution and transitional justice mechanisms, and finding alternatives for secondary occupants.

	14. Transform, retrofit and regularize informal settlements.
	15. Functioning housing sector that works for the displaced, including through housing sector profiles, housing strategies and reform of housing polices and laws.
	16. Functioning land administration sector, including by assessing the sector, identifying key short-term improvements to address displacement, demarcation and allocation of plots through fit-for-purpose land administration approaches, establishing incremental and participatory recordation of HLP rights, resolution of HLP conflicts and improving women's HLP rights.
Land and HLP solutions for resilience	**Solution areas:**
	17. Identify causes and risks of future displacement, including through multidimensional analysis of displacement causes and risks, analysis of root causes of conflict and climate vulnerability assessments.
	18. Preparedness, including developing scenarios, protocols, preparedness plans and HLP solutions for future displaced populations.
	19. Address and mitigate the causes of displacement, including 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 the states' compliance with HLP-related human rights obligations.
	20. Functioning land and housing sectors, including through increasing the affordable housing stock; repairing, constructing and reconstructing housing units; reforming the rental market; increasing housing affordability; reducing vacant housing; transforming slums; establishing functioning land and property registration and effective fit-for-purpose land administration; integrated urban planning; and monitoring HLP trends, including sex-disaggregated data.

Enabling interventions

Enabling interventions should complement durable HLP solutions to resolve and prevent displacement. These require paradigm shifts, empowerment of affected communities, policy and legal reforms, credit and financing, justice and disputes' resolution and evidence-based action.

Paradigm shifts

A long-term perspective – Displacement is not a short-term emergency that can be resolved through humanitarian action, although humanitarian response is essential at the peak of a crisis. 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 centres. 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 people and host communities. Inclusive spatial planning, compact and serviced urban growth, and an effective land management system are essential preconditions of a functioning housing sector and are necessary to drive economic and spatial integration and social cohesion.

A fit-for-purpose United Nations system – A United Nations system with a holistic understanding of displacement causes and solutions, including on land and HLP issues, would be most suited to address it. The frameworks of analysis of humanitarian, peace, development and climate actors should have a stronger convergence on displacement projections and trends. Coordination and programming, at global and country level, 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 land and HLP solutions that are available. One-stop centres 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 land and HLP solutions, including negotiations on land-related resources, return and restitution commissions 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.

Governance and whole-of-society capacity

Governments – Addressing displacement, and its land and 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 the narratives around displacement and migration, the spreading of fear and exclusion-based discourses should be counterbalanced. The accountability of governments to recognize IDPs as citizens entitled to land and 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, 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.

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, 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.

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/she can have access to. 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 catalyse action on land and 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

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.

Transitional justice mechanisms – To address large caseloads of housing, land and property rights violations, putting in place transitional justice mechanisms 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 disputes' resolution.

Data for evidence-based action

The systems to generate and analyse necessary data and knowledge on land and 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 land and HLP issues and to enabling whole-of-government responses and evidence-based planning, budgeting and action.

1. INTRODUCTION

Internal displacement has risen sharply over the past five years, with the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) growing by 51 per cent in that time (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2024). By the end of 2023, 75.9 million people were living in internal displacement, having been forced out of their homes to other parts of their country due to conflict, violence, natural disasters, human rights violations and abuses and the negative impact of macro socio-economic trends (IDMC, 2024a).

The 2021 Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future* sheds light on this global crisis and calls for a change of mindset, working methods and institutional arrangements to tackle it. The report recognizes the "need to go beyond addressing internal displacement as only a humanitarian crisis and understand that it is directly linked to broader challenges of governance, development, human rights and peace. It is also closely tied to the interconnected realities of climate change, urbanization and fragility" (p.ii). Effective solutions will require collective action across the humanitarian-peace-development (and -climate) nexus.

Understanding and developing a common vision to tackle land issues and housing, land and property (HLP) rights is crucial to finding durable solutions to displacement. This policy document aims to explain why this is important and to analyse and propose a comprehensive set of land and HLP solutions to resolve and prevent displacement. The document:

- analyses internal displacement and other forms of internal and cross-border population movements from the land and HLP perspective;
- provides a set of land and HLP solutions to address and prevent displacement, articulated in three categories: humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience;
- describes enabling factors necessary to address and prevent displacement from the land and HLP perspective.

The document is addressed to a broad and non-specialized audience composed of humanitarian, peace and development actors, including representatives of governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and private sector actors with a stake in addressing and preventing internal displacement.

Durable solutions

Internal displacement must be addressed through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*. This framework focuses on creating sustainable outcomes for displaced populations, emphasizing three key elements: voluntary return, local integration and settlement in third locations of choice. It prioritizes the safety and dignity of those affected, aligning with IASC standards to ensure a rights-based and humanitarian approach, promoting long-term solutions for displaced populations. In the context of internal displacement, durable solutions include returning to the area of origin, integrating locally at the point of destination or settling in another part of the country, until the vulnerabilities related to displacement no longer exist.

Internal displacement does not exist in isolation. It often intersects with other forms of internal and cross-border population movements. Solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) must be crafted with a whole-of-society approach that considers the needs of refugees and returnees, but also those of migrants, local poor and marginalized communities. These vulnerable individuals and groups, although with their specificities and rights, compete for the same scarce resources: adequate and affordable housing and land, employment, access to health, education and basic services. An area-based approach in analysing these issues and finding solutions is therefore the most appropriate to understand and address land and HLP solutions for internal displacement and to promote an adequate standard of living for all. Area-based solutions, which provide wholistic, multi-sectoral support to the entire crisis-affected population within a specific geographic area, as opposed to a single sector or target group(s), build on and strengthen

existing governance structures, markets, service delivery mechanisms, community cohesion and capacity (Urban Settlements Working Group [USWG], 2019).

Urbanization

Understanding urbanization is essential to address displacement. Today, over 56 per cent of the global population, approximately 4.4 billion people, live in cities. This trend will not reverse soon. It is estimated that, by 2050, over 70 per cent of the global population will be urban, and equating to nearly 9 billion urban settlers (World Bank, 2023). The sustainability of the planet will rely on the social, economic and environmental sustainability of cities. Peace, stability and the enjoyment of human rights will also depend on the ability of cities to provide decent living conditions to all urban dwellers.

Accommodating the most vulnerable people will be the greatest challenge. While there has been progress over the last 25 years in reducing the proportion of the world's urban population living in informal settlements from 28 per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2018, this still equates to nearly 1 billion urban poor who live in such settlements (UN-Habitat, 2022a).

Cities have become safety nets that accommodate those who flee from conflicts, natural and climate-induced disasters, poverty and persecution. Consistent with global urbanization trends, over half of forcibly displaced people – including those displaced within the borders of their countries – live in urban areas (World Bank, 2023). Based on the available data, nearly 3 in 5 internally displaced persons live in urban areas (59 per cent); this proportion is expected to increase once more granular data becomes available (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2022).

The World Bank (2018) estimates that, by 2050, climate change could force the internal migration of over 200 million people, most of whom would move to already densely populated urban areas. The *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future* report confirms that, although data is limited, the vast majority of IDPs already live in non-camp settings in towns and cities, with host communities in rural areas and in informal settlements.

Migration is also on the rise. International migrants are 280 million, 3.6 per cent of the global population (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2020), while most remain within their country of origin – corresponding to approximately 740 million people according to the most recent available figures (UNDP, 2009). Both international and internal migration contribute to increasing urbanization rates (Lall et al., 2006).

Urban dwellers, the poor, migrants and people displaced by conflicts, climate, poverty and persecution – an additional 4 to 5 billion people by 2050, added to the current 4.4 billion (World Bank 2023) – will increasingly compete in the urban space for a decent life, housing, land, jobs, services and infrastructure. Those that are already marginalized (such as older persons, persons with disabilities and youth) will face disproportionate exclusions. Cities and towns are therefore at the heart of providing solutions for internal displacement and for protecting, respecting and fulfilling the rights of those impacted, in the context of the broader intertwined population movement dynamics.

Displacement also has disproportionately negative consequences on those already marginalized. Over half of the displaced population worldwide consists of women and girls, who experience displacement differently to men and boys and often face additional challenges, including in cities. For communities that are reliant on their land and natural resources, such as Indigenous peoples, displacement may have disastrous consequences, from the non-recognition of their culture and rights to ending up in situations of poverty or extreme poverty (IDMC, 2021).

Housing, Land and Property rights in the context of displacement

This policy document builds on the concept and definition set in the *Guidance Note of the Secretary-General: The United Nations and Land and Conflict*:

Land is the surface of the earth, the materials beneath, the air above and all things fixed to the soil. It contains structures, resources, and landscapes of significant political, economic, cultural, spiritual, and symbolic value. It represents a strategic socio-economic asset tied

closely to complex relations of production, exchange, and reproduction. A resource of limited availability and a high value asset, issues related to access, control and ownership of land are tied closely to power, wealth, identity and even survival for a large part of the world's population. Land forms part of economic, social, political, cultural and historical activity and is tied directly to peace and security, human rights and development. Land includes 'property rights,' 'territory' and 'legitimate tenure rights' as used in the international standards; 'housing, land and property (HLP) rights' from the humanitarian field; 'land rights,' 'land management,' 'land governance' and the 'land administration' and 'geo-spatial data' systems that support them, as used by governments; and 'land tenure' to reflect the complex social relationships among people with respect to land and its resources. There is a continuum of land tenure types that includes all legitimate types – based on the recognition that land has a social function and is not just a commodity. Both formal and informal land tenure types are considered legitimate in the eyes of the community and capable of being legalized with land documents. This includes formal and informal rental agreements, cooperative housing, leases, customary and indigenous rights, community and group rights and the informal land in slums.

As this policy document is addressed to an audience of development, peace and humanitarian actors, it refers to "Land and HLP", highlighting the two sides of the coin: the protection of the rights of displaced populations in relation to housing, land and properties on the one side; and broader land governance and land administration considerations on the other. The latter is crucial to prevent displacement and to put in place a comprehensive set of durable solutions.

Housing, land and property rights include the whole continuum of land rights, ranging from registered rights to informal and customary rights of individuals, families or groups (e.g. rural farming communities, pastoralists, nomads and Indigenous peoples).

BOX 1

The continuum of land rights

Land tenure is commonly described in opposing terms: formal/informal, legal/not legal, secure/insecure, de facto/de jure. Yet, a broader and more complex range of tenure arrangements exists between these extremities, creating a "continuum" of land rights. The continuum of land rights is an inclusive approach that recognizes the existence of a broad spectrum of land tenure types (e.g. rights of use, occupancy, lease or ownership), each with its own specific characteristics, level of legal recognition and tenure security. The rights along the continuum may be documented and undocumented, formal and informal, for individuals and groups, including pastoralists, slum dwellers, displaced people and Indigenous peoples, etc. They may be legally registered and recognized or not, they may overlap and have different durations.

Registered individual ownership is often perceived as the stronger form of land tenure security. However, this is not necessarily the case. The most secure tenure arrangement depends on the broader socio-political and economic context, on the needs of local communities and on the role and effectiveness of land administration authorities.

The continuum of land rights advocates for the gradual strengthening of the wide range of land tenure arrangements found in any specific context. It provides an effective, scalable and time-efficient way to improve tenure security for all. The continuum of land rights is embraced by UN-Habitat and the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) partners, and by a wide range of international and national actors, some of which use different names for defining similar concepts (including the Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO] and the European Union). Several countries have already merged it into their national legislation, while others only in their land administration approaches.

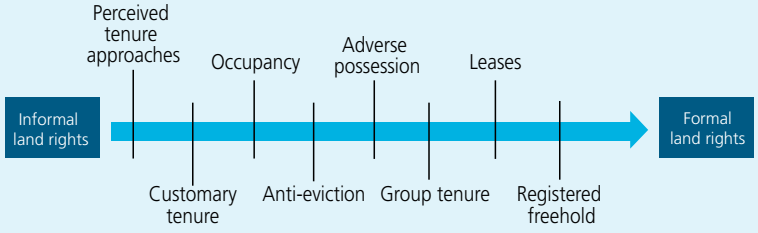

Figure 1: Schematic representation of the continuum of land rights.

Source: The Continuum of land rights (UN-HABITAT/GLTN, 2008).

2. CONTEXTUALIZING DISPLACEMENT

Trends

The twenty-first century sees an unprecedented number of people on the move. The different types of populations' movements are intertwined, and their combination aggravates the conditions of each population category directly or indirectly affected.

Internal displacement has been rising sharply. As of the end of 2023, 79.5 million people were internally displaced (IDMC, 2024a), 68.3 million of whom were displaced due to conflict (UNHCR, 2024). Millions are trapped in a situation of protracted displacement. Overall, at the end of 2023, 117.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced,[28] 7.1 million people more than at the end of 2022 (UNHCR, 2024). Out of these, 43.4 million were **refugees** (UNHCR, 2024).

Migration is also on the rise, with 280 million international migrants (IOM, 2020) and 740 million internal migrants (UNDP, 2009). Figures on human mobility in the context of environmental degradation, climate change and disasters are not yet consolidated. However, the convergence of national trends and global projections describe an alarming climate-related displacement scenario. The World Bank (2018) estimates that there will be more than 143 million people displaced by climate change by 2050 in three regions of the world alone.

These people on the move – particularly the most vulnerable in fragile, poor and conflict-affected countries – tend to settle in rural and urban areas already affected by multi-dimensional poverty. Nearly 1 billion urban poor currently live in **informal settlements** (High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development [HLPF], 2023). By 2050, an additional 4 to 5 billion people will live in urban areas (World Bank, 2023), enhancing the competition for jobs, housing, land and properties, services and infrastructure. It is important to have a holistic view of such dynamics when contextualizing the land and HLP solutions to internal displacement.

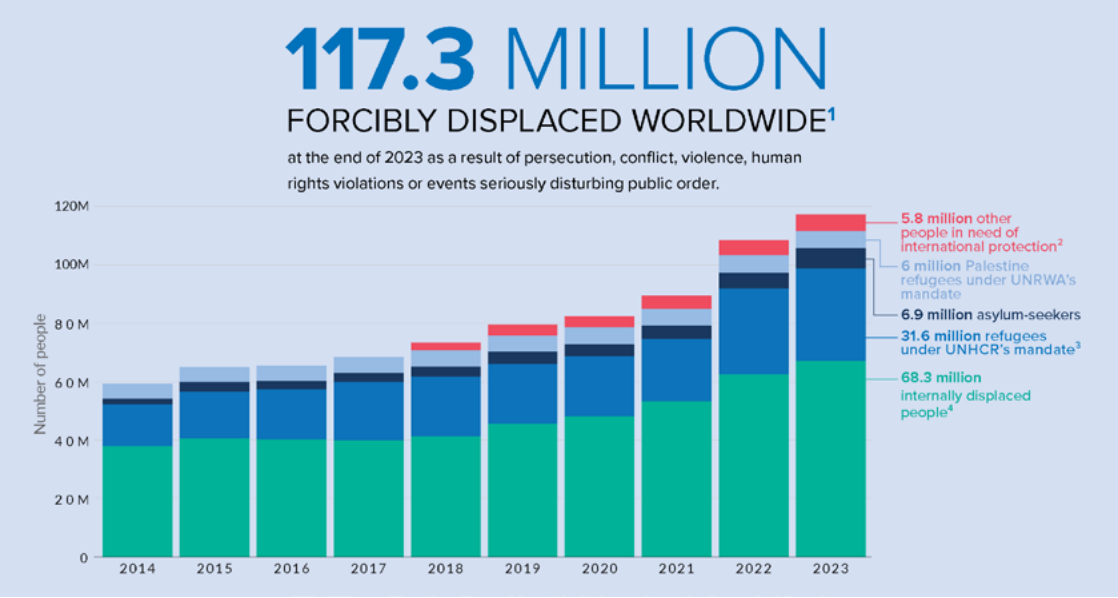

Figure 2: Forcibly displaced people worldwide.

Source: UNHCR, 2024 (not including people internally displaced by natural disasters or impacts of climate change)

28 This figure does not include people who have been internally displaced by natural disasters or impacts of climate change.

Causes

Displacement and migration are the result of a complex combination of factors that interact with household and individual needs and aspirations. Conflicts, disasters and climate change are the main drivers of displacement. While statistics are often shown separately, there is an inextricable interrelation between them. Disasters and climate change are key drivers of conflict, while conflict aggravates the impacts of climate change (UN-Habitat/ GLTN, 2022).

This section outlines the key causes that correlate with land and HLP rights, which force millions to move from their area of origin.

Climate change and disasters

An agreed consolidated methodology to link the projected impact of climate change with people's movement is not available yet. Experts, however, concur in considering the impact of climate change one of the main forces driving displacement and migration. The most impactful effects of climate change that have a land-related dimension and that lead to displacement are described below.

Natural disasters, such as floods, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis and wildfires, have a significant impact on displacement. In the course of 2022, 32.6 million internal displacements due to disasters were reported, with 8.7 million people remaining displaced by the end of the year (IDMC, 2022). Disaster-related internal displacement accounted for more than half (54 per cent) of all new displacements in 2022 (UNHCR, 2023).

Sea level rise induced by global warming is a major cause of concern, considering that nearly 900 million people, 10 per cent of the world's population, live in coastal areas (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 2023). The United Nations Secretary-General warned that with present policies that are hurtling past the 1.5°C warming limit "[w]e would witness a mass exodus of entire populations on a biblical scale" (UNSC, 2023). At the current rate, sea levels will be 1 to 1.6 metres higher by 2100. In less than 80 years, 250 to 400 million people will need to relocate because of sea level rise alone (Kórösi, 2023).

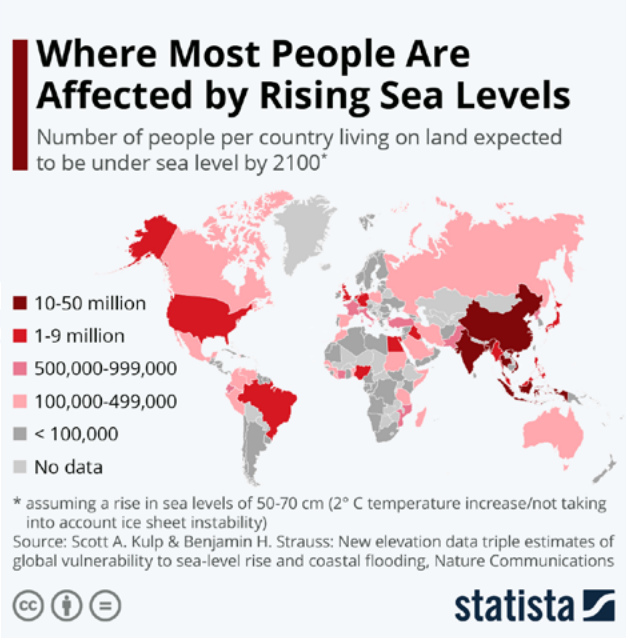

Figure 3: Map of countries most affected by rising sea levels.

Source: Statista, 2020.

Water scarcity, droughts, shifting and expansion of drylands and desertification patterns are projected to reduce the productivity of agriculture and livestock and reduce biodiversity, affecting people's livelihood and their movement. The dryland population, vulnerable to water stress, drought intensity and habitat degradation, is projected to reach 178 million people by 2050 if the earth warms by 1.5°C, increasing to 220 million people at 2°C warming, and 277 million people at 3°C warming. Results of such phenomena will include increased internal and cross-border displacement, disrupted food chains, threatened livelihoods and exacerbated stresses for conflict. Asia and Africa are projected to have the highest number of people vulnerable to increased desertification (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2019).

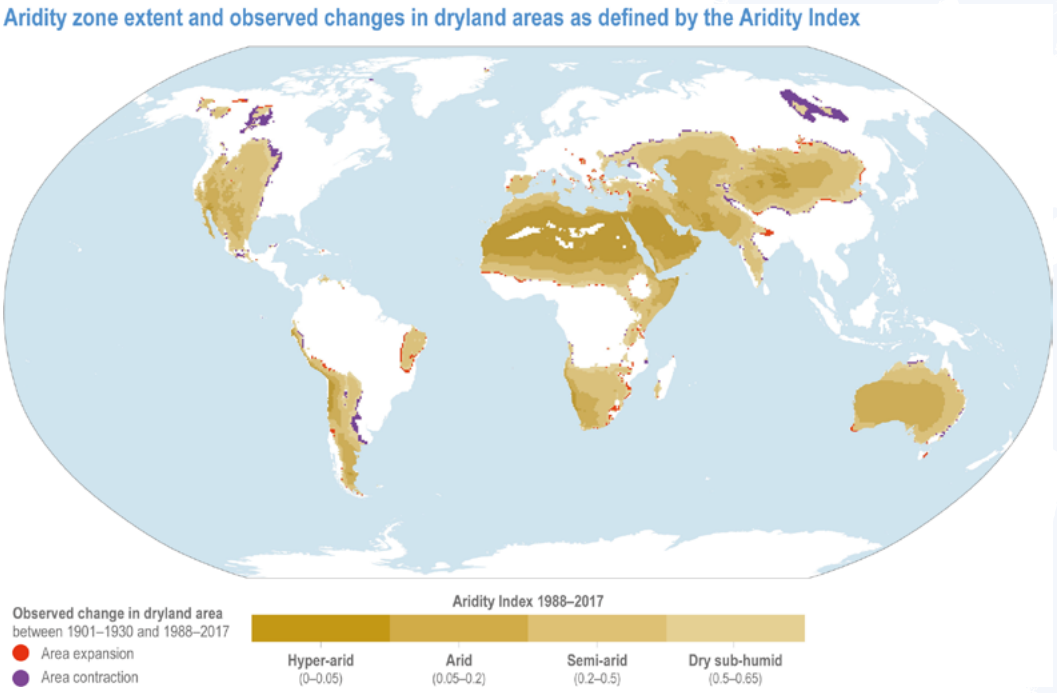

Figure 4: Aridity zone extent and observed changes in dryland areas as defined by the Aridity Index (AI).

Source: Figure CCP3.1 in Mirzabaev, A. et al., in Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability.

Conflict and violence

Conflicts, violence and insecurity are major causes of internal displacement. By the end of 2023, 68.3 million people were internally displaced because of conflict and violence, an all-time high, while those internally displaced by disasters were 7.7 million (IDMC, 2024a). Conflict-induced displacement disproportionately affect Africa and the Middle East and tends to lead to more protracted crises, compared to other causes of displacement.

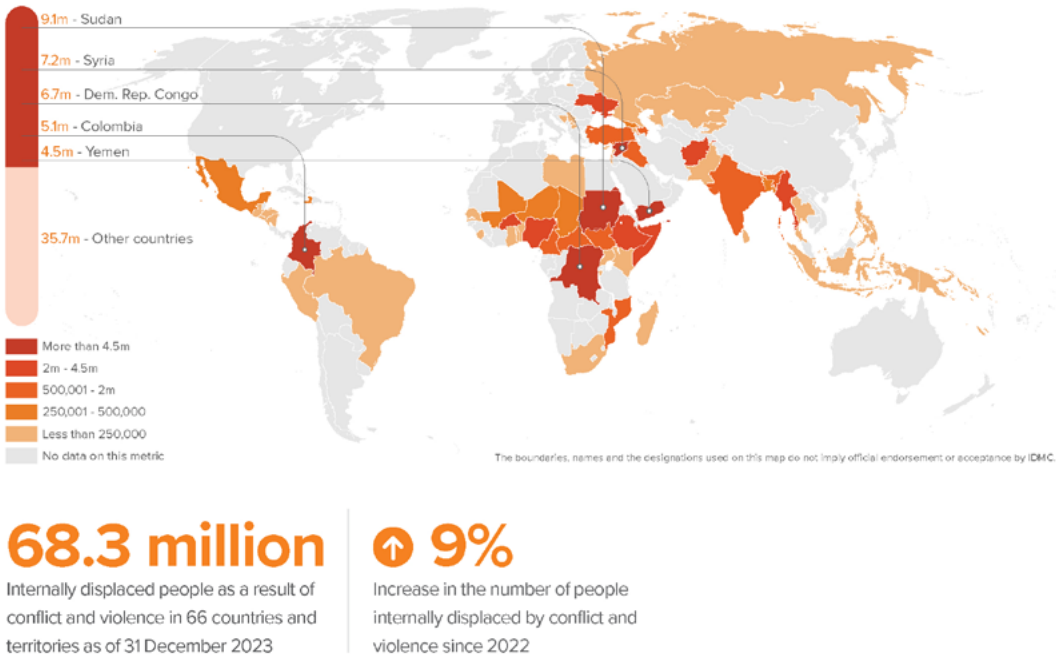

Figure 5: Number of people internally displaced by conflict and violence, 2023.

Source: IDMC, 2024b.

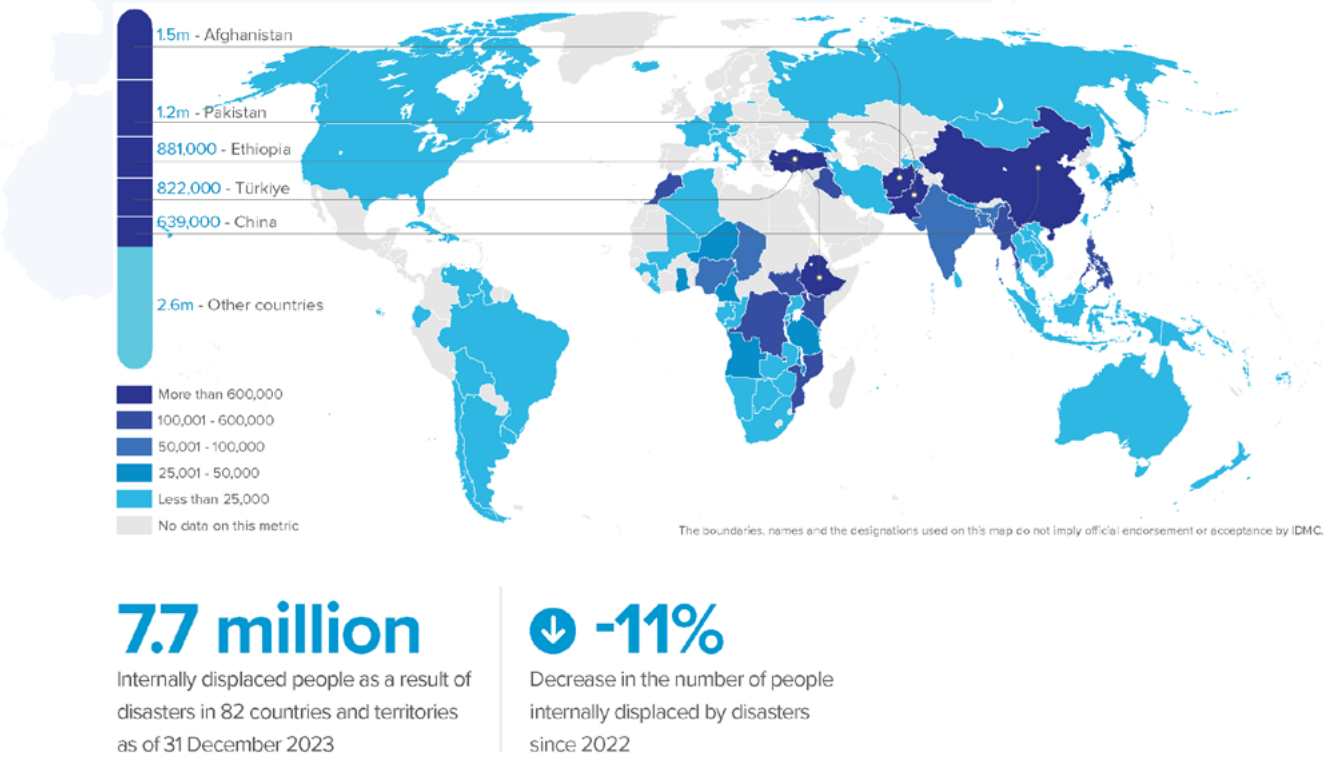

Figure 6: Number of people internally displaced by disasters, 2023.
Source: IDMC, 2024b.

The inextricable relation between conflict, climate change and land

All violent conflicts have a land dimension. Land is related to very existential aspects of people's lives. Land is essential for agriculture, pastoralism and food security overall. It is necessary for the extractive industry and for environmental conservation and biodiversity. It is deeply intertwined with the identity of nations and ethnic groups. Land is power. Since ancient times, taking and maintaining control of land and territories has been a primary concern of leaders (UNSC, 2019).

Not all conflicts include competition over the control and use of land as a root cause, but the majority do. This renders conflicts particularly intractable and difficult to resolve. On the other hand, all violent conflicts generate widespread displacement, mass housing, land and property rights violations and land degradation.

Land conflicts do not necessarily escalate into violent conflicts. But if the conflictual aspects around land are not properly addressed, violence flares up. Some conflicts are related to lack of clarity about who owns, and who can make decisions about, land. It is estimated that less than one third of land rights in developing countries are legally registered (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2018a). In many parts of the world, certain segments of the population are routinely excluded from accessing some or all of their land rights, including, for example, women. This exacerbates disputes over the ownership and control of land that may escalate into group violence, especially when historical grievances and other triggers of conflict are present.

During conflicts, the appropriation of land can become an instrument of war and ethnic cleansing and to change the demographic composition of a region. Land, housing and properties are often captured to finance warfare. The states' weaknesses in protecting land rights leaves space for armed groups to offer such protection in exchange for contributing to the fighting (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2020a).

Competition and conflict over land are intensified by the growing pressures of climate change, population growth, food insecurity, migration and unregulated urbanization. Land degradation changes the land use patterns of agriculturalists and pastoralists and pushes communities off their land. This mounting pressure on land resources will continue to drive conflict dynamics at global, regional, national and local levels, increasing displacement.

On the other hand, there is evidence that addressing and resolving land-related issues significantly contributes to sustainable and durable peace (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2018a). Addressing land issues is fundamental across the three pillars of peace and security, human rights and development: "In peace and security, land can be a root cause or a trigger of armed conflicts, while at the same time being a key factor for building resilience and sustaining peace. In human rights, land-related human rights abuses, such as forced evictions, are often key to the conflict and connected to large-scale population displacements. In development, land is essential during the whole conflict cycle, including for overall recovery from conflict, economic recovery and for ending displacement. Dealing strategically and in a sustained manner with land-related issues during the development phase could be a preventative measure. It can lessen the risk of relapse through the engagement of the parties to the conflict and strengthens state-society relations" (UNSC, 2019).

Human rights violations, abuses and human suffering

Displacement can also be the result of human rights violations and abuses, human suffering, exclusion and marginalization not directly related to large-scale armed conflict. Human rights violations that can result in displacement include forced evictions; sexual and gender-based violence, including abuse, sexual exploitation and early and forced marriage; persecution based on ethnic, religious or political affiliation or sexual orientation; State repression, using displacement as method to control dissent; or environmental degradation or exploitation that leads to adverse impacts on communities. Estimating the number of displacements specifically attributable to human rights violations can be complex, as displacement often results from a combination of factors. Nonetheless, it is clear that a substantial share of global displacement is driven by situations involving severe violations of human rights, including during conflict and war.

Other forms of human suffering, exclusion and marginalization that can result in displacement include lack of livelihood and food insecurity; lack of adequate housing; uprooting from livelihoods and separation from the community support networks; lack of education, leading to increased vulnerability to trafficking, recruitment by gangs and armed and radicalized groups; or stigma, marginalization and exclusion due to gender and sexual orientation, political convictions, age or disability.

Macro-economic and social inequalities

Displacement is the result of a complex set of causes related to macroeconomic and social inequalities. Some directly force people out of their homes and communities. Others are slower and their correlation with displacement is less visible. Nevertheless, with the view of acting on durable solutions and prevention of displacement, it is worth mentioning the key land- and HLP-related causes.

Unsustainable food systems – Food insecurity is a key driver of displacement and migration. The sustainability of food systems has a role to play in preventing these phenomena. 25 to 30 per cent of the total food produced is lost or wasted. Per capita food consumption has increased by a third since the 1960s, but unequal access and change in consumption patterns has resulted in about two billion adults being overweight or obese, while 821 million people are undernourished. Further, agricultural production patterns present other challenges; for example, agriculture accounts for 70 per cent of global fresh-water use. The stability of food supply is projected to decrease with the increase in magnitude and frequency of extreme weather events, leading to higher food prices and increased risk of food insecurity and hunger (IPCC, 2019). Population growth is a pivotal factor in this context.

Land-use changes and land degradation – Land-use changes and rapid land-use intensification have supported the increasing production of food, feed and fibre, but have also contributed to desertification and land degradation. A quarter of global land area is subject to human-induced degradation, at times exacerbated by climate change. In 2015, about 500 million people lived within areas that experienced desertification. People living in already degraded or desertified areas are more exposed to the negative effects of climate change, food insecurity and water scarcity (IPCC, 2019) and are therefore more prone to displacement.

Inequalities and discrimination in access to land – Inequalities in ownership and use of rural and urban lands are on the rise. In most countries, land inequality

is growing, and new data shows that it is significantly higher than previously reported. This trend directly threatens the livelihoods of an estimated 2.5 billion people worldwide involved in smallholder agriculture (International Land Coalition [ILC] & Oxfam, 2020). It undermines stability and the development of sustainable societies and contributes to the push factors leading to rural displacement and migration.

Between the early twentieth century and the 1960s and 1970s, agrarian policies prioritizing small-scale and family farmers and land redistribution programmes in several countries led to a global decline in land inequality. However, the market-led policies, industrial, export-oriented farming and financial speculation in agriculture prevalent since the 1980s has led to increased inequality in land distribution once again (ILC & Oxfam, 2020). In several parts of the world, modern tenure systems are replacing customary, communal and traditional systems, small-scale land holdings being sold off and consolidated and communal lands are being privatized.

In the Arab region, vulnerable land owners and land users are being displaced by commercial agricultural ventures and climate mitigation schemes – known as green grabbing – that appropriate land and other natural resources, particularly in places where land rights are not protected or recognized (UN-Habitat/ GLTN, 2022). In sub-Saharan Africa investors seeking to acquire large plots of land for mineral exploitation and agro-industrial enterprises are exacerbating land scarcity there (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2010).

Further, in certain contexts, access to land is not equal and certain groups are prevented from owning, purchasing or inheriting land in law or in practice. For example, women and girls are significantly constrained in their ability to own, purchase and inherit land and properties, although they globally do most of the work on land.

Challenges in access to adequate housing – Access to adequate housing for all is a global struggle, which impacts displaced people both in the area of origin and in the area of displacement. Other vulnerable groups, the poor and minorities are also particularly affected. Women, too, generally have less access to adequate housing than men. Affordability is a major concern, particularly in urban areas. Tenure insecurity is a challenge that increases the vulnerability of both displaced and host communities, hindering the identification of durable land and HLP solutions.

In 2023, 39 per cent of internally displaced persons and 39 per cent of refugees and asylum seekers were reported living in habitable and affordable housing, up from 37 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively, the previous year (UNHCR, 2023). More host community households reported having adequate housing (85.4 per cent) than displaced households (61.5 per cent) (IOM, 2023). Internally displaced persons who have access to adequate housing are more than three times more likely to not rely on humanitarian assistance (6.9 per cent) than those without (23.8 per cent) and are twice as likely to have stable income (34.4 per cent) than those living in inadequate housing (17.1 per cent) (IOM, 2023).

Impact of displacement on people

Different groups experience the impacts of displacement in unique ways. For women, Indigenous peoples, ethnic and religious minorities and other marginalized groups displacement tends to reinforce or deepen pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. Such groups may face both increased human rights violations as a result of displacement and discrimination when seeking assistance.

At the end of 2022, roughly 35.8 million women and girls were internally displaced due to conflict and disaster (IDMC, 2023). The impacts of displacement that women experience are often different from men in terms of housing, land rights, job opportunities, security, health and education. Caregiving responsibilities often fall to women and become more burdensome during displacement due to the lack of access to healthcare and education. While some displaced women report increased financial independence, most face more difficulties in finding livelihood opportunities, which in turn creates difficulties in accessing adequate housing (IDMC, 2023). Social norms can also create a barrier in women legally owning or renting a home. These combined factors mean that displaced women are often forced to live in camps or informal settlements where

risks of gender-based violence and communicable disease are higher while livelihood opportunities are scarce. Moreover, patriarchal norms and other barriers to justice mechanisms make it more difficult for women to resolve disputes related to their housing and land rights (IDMC, 2023).

Indigenous peoples are at particularly high risk of displacement due to disasters. Between 2017 and 2019 there were an estimated 50,000 disaster-related displacements of Indigenous peoples globally (IDMC, 2020). The health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples are closely tied to their land and natural resources making them particularly vulnerable to the impacts of displacement. This relationship is recognized in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which advise that States must protect against the displacement of Indigenous peoples, minorities and other groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands (United Nations, 2004). Other vulnerabilities stem from the often isolated or remote locations of Indigenous communities, making it more challenging to respond and assist during a disaster, and from the greater likelihood that Indigenous persons do not possess civil documentation, potentially leading to barriers in accessing assistance and maintaining rights to land and housing (UNHCR, 2011).

3. LAND AND HLP SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT

In 2023, 6.1 million displaced people returned to their areas or countries of origin, the vast majority (5.1 million) of whom were internally displaced persons, while more than 1 million refugees returned, though just over 150,000 were resettled (UNHCR, 2024). The gap with those remaining displaced – roughly 95 per cent of all forcibly displaced (UNHCR, 2024) – calls for a renewed focus on the identification of sustainable and durable solutions to displacement. This section describes land and HLP solutions to displacement, categorized in three sets: solutions for humanitarian protection; for recovery; and for resilience.

Introduction

The *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future* report describes five core areas of solutions: 1. Safety and security; 2. Jobs, livelihoods and access to income and social protection; 3. Housing, land and property; 4. Education; and 5. Infrastructure and services. The deployment of effective tools and approaches to address housing, land and property needs of displaced persons and other vulnerable marginalized groups and to put in place sustainable land governance and land management approaches that contribute to

Table 2: Relevance of land and HLP interventions in achieving solutions for displacement contexts.

Area of solution	Relevance of land and HLP interventions in achieving solutions for displacement contexts
Safety and security	• 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, extreme weather and other risks related to homelessness. • When HLP rights are clearly defined, recognized by society and protected by the authorities, chances for individual and group disputes to erupt are reduced, and the potential for these disputes to be resolved peacefully increases. • The factors that force displaced people to take up risky behaviours and make them vulnerable to adopt negative coping mechanisms –- such as the sale of sex, forced marriage and other harmful practices –- are reduced. This is particularly important for the protection of women and girls. • Addressing historical grievances, exclusions, discrimination and conflicts over ownership, control and use of land and land-based resources lays the foundation for social reconciliation and sustainable peace. • Protected HLP rights increase the likelihood of safe and voluntary return to areas of origin, and ensure safety in resettlement areas, mitigating the risk of violence and land disputes.
Jobs, livelihoods, income and social protection	• When HLP rights are protected, people are better able to provide for themselves and their families and to cope with the social and economic impacts of displacement and of the possible lack of support of their community and extended family when ties are severed by displacement. This includes having a shelter that guarantees dignity, access to water and sanitation. • When HLP rights are protected, displaced people are better able to secure a space where they can undertake economic activities. Access to land for agriculture, business and livelihood activities improves livelihoods, increases economic stability and self-reliance. • When the land rights of farmers, pastoralists and Indigenous communities are protected, they can access land for subsistence farming, grazing animals, collecting firewood and medicinal herbs. The food security and health of the communities improve. • When everyone has access to their housing, land and property rights, including women, women have decision-making power and are less at risk of destitution, abuse and SGBV. This improves their economic opportunities as well as their access to local level decision-making.
Education	• When displaced families have access to adequate shelter, housing and the related basic services, such as water, sanitation and electricity, they are in a better position to access education and learning, even in contexts of displacement. • Conducting due diligence to secure safe and suitable land for the establishment of temporary schools or to ensure that existing schools are cleared from explosives and other hazards is essential to guarantee the right to education.

Area of solution	Relevance of land and HLP interventions in achieving solutions for displacement contexts
Infrastructure and services	• Suitable land for the provision of basic infrastructure and services to the displaced and their host communities must be made available. This can be challenging in dense urban contexts where vacant land is scarce and expensive (and therefore expropriation is not an option), areas prone to natural hazards and where the competition for land among different groups is high and poorly managed, and so can lead to violence. The deployment of suitable conflict-sensitive land tools and approaches is crucial in such contexts, particularly land readjustment and land-based financing. • Conducting land-related due diligence is key to ensure that services and infrastructure – including those to be repaired through the interventions of international actors –- are cleared from explosives and their location and control does not turn them into a weapon of war. • Conflict-sensitive land and property taxation has proven to be a suitable tool to mobilize local finances in fragile contexts, including for the provision of basic services and infrastructure.
Housing, land and property	• HLP rights are both an end in themselves, as human rights, and enablers for a wider range of rights, such as an adequate standard of living, food, adequate housing, safety, etc. • In areas of displacement or relocation, HLP rights are a prerequisite for safe shelter and housing, access to farming, grazing, communal lands and common land-based resources (such as water and forests). • In areas of origin, conducting due diligence and clarifying HLP rights enable the reparation and reconstruction of damaged or destroyed houses and properties and the clearance from explosives. It also enables claiming compensation for the losses when supporting mechanisms are in place. This includes safeguarding or recreating land and property records that were lost or destroyed and the restitution of houses, lands and properties to the legitimate owners who have been forcibly displaced and whose properties have been illegally occupied or sold. • Across the durable solutions spectrum, in areas of displacement, return or relocation, comprehensive land and HLP strategies ensure the provision of adequate housing for all, protection from eviction and access to productive lands for food production and livelihood.

the prevention of displacement and to sustainable land management is foundational to progress in all these areas, as shown in Table 1.

Three categories of land and HLP solutions

There are three main categories of land and HLP solutions in contexts of displacement:

1. Land and HLP solutions for humanitarian protection, needed in the initial phase of displacement when people are very vulnerable, their HLP needs are most acute and solutions need to be quick.
2. Land and HLP solutions for recovery and development, which are needed to ensure sustainability in the medium- to long-term to make sure that IDPs no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement, including by being integrated in the provision of local services. The preparation for their implementation should start in parallel with the establishment of shorter-term solutions for protection and assistance described above, but their implementation would run for longer.
3. Land and HLP solutions for resilience, which can help prevent and mitigate the impact of displacement and should be worked on in any context prone to displacement, including areas that present vulnerabilities potentially resulting in the displacement of people and areas that may be recipients of IDPs and other vulnerable groups (such as refugees, migrants, the poor from host communities, homeless people, newly established low-income families, marginalized groups and women in positions of vulnerability to exploitation).[29]

The three categories of solutions are described below. The lists are non-exhaustive, as a wide range of localized context-specific approaches exist. Further, some of the solutions described are relevant across the displacement cycle, from the humanitarian protection to the recovery to the resilience phase.

29 Human rights and gender assessments can provide a good understanding of who is at risk of being left behind in their access to HLP rights.

3.1 Land and HLP solutions for humanitarian protection

At the onset of displacement, people need protection and assistance to satisfy their basic necessities. In this phase, vulnerabilities are at the highest and emergency and transitional interventions are required. This phase can last from a few days to a few years, depending on the type of crisis. This section describes some of the key land and HLP solutions to address displacement before it is considered protracted. A wide range of customized approaches exist at the local level, hence the list is non-exhaustive; some solutions are relevant for recovery, development and resilience as well.

Table 3: Key land and HLP solutions for humanitarian protection in emergency and transitional phases[30]

Land and HLP solutions for humanitarian protection		
Solution area	**Menu of land and HLP solutions**	**Examples and case studies**
1. Assess HLP needs	• HLP assessments[31] • Inclusion of HLP issues in multisectoral assessments, area-based assessments, urban and neighbourhood profiling	• HLP incorporated in Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNO), as in the 2023 HNO Afghanistan, and 2023 HNO South Sudan • City profiles in Al Tal, Aleppo, Homs and Ein El-Tal Palestinian camp, in Syria (see case study 1) • Urban Profiles for Aden, Sana'a, Al Hodeidah, Zinjibar, Ta'iz, Al Hawtah, Sa'dah, and Marib in Yemen[32]
2. Understand and review the legal and institutional frameworks[33]	• Assessments of the land and HLP legal and institutional frameworks • Policy and legal reforms	• Analysis of Syrian Urban Law[34] • Review of laws and policies affecting Syrian refugees in Lebanon[35] • Review of HLP-related legal, institutional and administrative frameworks of Iraq[36] and of Libya (see case study 2)
3. Identify options for sheltering displaced people	• Analysis and identification of the options available	• Urban Recovery Framework: an analysis toolbox to assess damaged buildings and prioritize repair and recovery interventions[37] • Site selection and planning for the spatial integration of IDPs in Berbera, Somalia (see case study 4)
4. Shelter displaced people away from their homes	• Shelter in suitable retrofitted public buildings • Shelter on public land • Shelter in suitable retrofitted private buildings • Accommodation in private residential buildings • Shelter on private land • Shelter on customary lands • Increase the shelter offer by host communities • Secure land rights of host communities	• Increase the access of displaced people to the low-income housing marked in Lebanon (case study 3) • Brokered tenancy agreements between private landlords and displaced people in Greece (case study 6) • Private hosting mechanisms in Europe (case study 5)

30 Non-exhaustive list, as a wide range of customized approaches exist at the local level. Some solutions are relevant for recovery, development and resilience as well.
31 Including human rights and gender considerations to understand specific needs of groups with additional protection needs
32 UN-Habitat Yemen Portal: Urban Profiles.
33 Including in legally pluralistic contexts where statutory, customary, religious and informal law and practices coexist
34 UN-Habitat, 2022b
35 Section IV: Legal Status, in UN-Habitat and UNHCR, 2018
36 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024b
37 UN-Habitat, 2021a

5. Access to land and properties other than shelters	• Land for agriculture • Land for livestock and domestic animals • Access to communal resources (forests, grazing areas, water) • Properties for commercial activities • Accessible and safe public and communal spaces	• Negotiate group agreements for access to grazing land by pastoralist tribes in South Sudan (case study 14) • Support refugees and host communities through the Abjad multi-functional community centre, Tripoli, Lebanon[38] • Create social cohesion through the rehabilitation of Yarmouk Park in Mosul, Iraq[39]
6. Prepare the ground for return, restitution and compensation	• Repair and reconstruct housing and properties • Safeguard HLP documentation • Establish restitution and compensation mechanisms • Clear land of explosives	• Safeguarding evidence of housing, land and property rights for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Iraq (case study 9) • Document forcibly abandoned houses and lands in Honduras[40]
7. Access to justice and disputes' resolution	• Strengthen and support the justice system (formal, informal, customary, alternative)	• Facilitate local integration and return through land conflicts' mediation and participatory land recordation in North Kivu, DRC (case study 18)
8. Prevent and address forced evictions	• Forced evictions' monitoring • Accountability for the respect of state obligations on forced evictions	• Eviction flash alerts in Somalia[41]

Solution area 1. Assess HLP needs

The implementation of any suitable solution starts with an adequate understanding of context and needs. The scope and depth of assessments is often dictated by contextual considerations (such as funds available and access). HLP information can be gathered through dedicated data collection initiatives or by incorporating HLP-related questions in **multisectoral assessments** led by protection, shelter or other partners, when time and funds are scarce (see case study 1).

A solid **shared methodology** to gather data on HLP needs is not available yet. Examples of indicators that can be used and adapted can be found in the *Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework* and in monitoring frameworks developed by specific organizations. This is an area where further action by the international community is required.

Area-based multisectoral assessments are recommended to evidence the complex inter-related dimensions of displacement (see case studies 1 and 12). Capturing the spatial dimension of HLP needs is crucial to strategically prioritize and tailor the interventions to local contexts, particularly in urban and periurban areas. When crises and displacement are protracted, u**rban profiling is recommended** (see city and neighbourhood profiles in Section 3.2).

Solution area 2. Understand and review the legal and institutional frameworks

Grounding HLP interventions in existing legal and institutional frameworks promotes accountability and provides the basis for stability and predictability in decision-making, essential elements for durable solutions. **Mapping relevant policies, laws and regulations** will help identify the legal instruments that can support the provision of land and HLP solutions for displaced people (see case studies 2, 8, 10 and 18).

The **legal review** might identify explicit blockages to HLP for displaced people, calling for targeted action for amending discriminatory laws. While refugees or foreign migrants can be victims of different treatment and lesser HLP rights by law, IDPs are more often affected by discrimination that does not derive from statutory law, but from customary or informal practices and negative perceptions in the host communities.

38 Box 8 in UN-Habitat, 2021c
39 Box 11 in UN-Habitat, 2021c
40 Honduras case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2018b
41 NRC Systems, n.d.

HLP rights are often shaped by **legal pluralism** and therefore HLP provisions across all key sources of law should be mapped. Land and HLP solutions for displaced people can come **from religious, customary and community-based practices** (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c), and positive experiences can be reviewed, adapted and reinforced with statutory laws, if needed.

New specific pieces of legislation might be required to address gaps in the legal framework. Examples include decrees that introduce temporary occupancy permits for displaced people when they have limited or no access to other tenure arrangements, such as ownership or standard lease contracts; permission to issue HLP documents to women; or listing all household members or both spouses in tenure documents when such options are not envisaged in the legislation.

Collaboration between national / local experts familiar with the national legislation and international experts with experience in introducing incremental legislative changes in comparable contexts is required.

Solution area 3. Identify options for sheltering displaced people

Having a roof over one's head is one of the first priorities when displaced. In most contexts, particularly urban and periurban settings, the avenues for sheltering the displaced are many. A systematic **analysis of the options available**, including their shortcomings and advantages in the short-, medium- and long-term, should be undertaken (see case studies 3, 4, 7 and 12). The location of shelter options matters, hence **spatial planning** considerations should be factored in.

Such an analysis will identify the types of shelter solutions that can be considered as well as their **characteristics**: type of land or building available, type of tenure that can be provided (group or individual rights, ownership or use, duration of the ownership, rights and obligations, etc.), maximum duration of the solution, number of households that can be accommodated, local acceptance, impact on host communities, impact on enabling integration and resilience over time, institution / organization that will manage the process, etc. This systematic analysis will ensure that promising but less obvious solutions are not overlooked and that all key aspects of the solutions identified are considered.

Solution area 4. Shelter displaced people away from their homes

Displaced people can be sheltered away from their homes (areas of displacement or third locations) in buildings or on lands that are public, private or communal. To be durable, all these shelter solutions must have some common features.

HLP due diligence is key. When securing HLP agreements, it is important to ensure that actors are dealing with the 'rightful owners' or, in case of public or communal properties, those mandated to administer such buildings or lands. This might not be straight forward in contexts where institutional mandates are contested, territorial control is questioned or fought over and land administration is weak. When it is not possible to identify with a reasonable level of certainty the rightful owner or administrators, multi-party agreements can be established with all those who claim a stake over the properties where displaced people are to be sheltered, without getting into complex ownership adjudication processes.

Clarity in the terms of the HLP agreements is very important. All parties (host, displaced, broker) should have the same understanding of terms, conditions, rights and obligations. Whenever possible, written agreements are preferable, and they can be recorded digitally with phones so that parties can refer back to them when needed. Oral agreements can also be context appropriate and can work well if witnessed by trusted intermediaries.

A respected broker is needed. The presence of an impartial, independent and respected broker accepted by hosts and the displaced that can mediate disagreements is very important to secure durable shelter solutions (e.g. municipal departments, religious institutions, trusted non-governmental organizations, United Nations).

Dispute resolution mechanisms that are accessible, affordable and fair to all are needed to address in a timely manner the disagreements that inevitably arise between host and displaced communities, or among displaced families. Formal justice or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are helpful and complement each other (see also Solution Area 7).

Host communities' acceptance is a crucial element that might vary and should be monitored over time. Host communities in their diversity should be consulted to avoid creating or inflaming frictions that can result in further displacement. The gains of the HLP solutions introduced should be fairly distributed among displaced and host communities.

Shelter in public buildings or on public land

At the onset of displacement, people can be accommodated in suitable **public buildings temporarily retrofitted** as shelters (schools, stadiums, theatres, public offices, etc.). This solution is more common in urban areas. In rural areas, it might be easier to identify suitable **public or communal land** that can accommodate the construction of camps of tented settlements. Public land and buildings identified should be safe in terms of location (away from hazards), structural stability and adequacy overall (basic services, privacy, hygiene conditions, responsiveness to the diversity of needs, etc.) (see case studies 4, 7 and 13). Authorities should commit to ensure that these temporary housing and shelter solutions remain in place until suitable alternative options are identified (e.g. not forcibly evict displaced people).

Shelter in private buildings and on private land

Sheltering displaced people in private buildings is becoming more common and offers the biggest potential for scalability. Group accommodation can be provided in **large private buildings** (e.g. private cinemas, theatres, dismissed industrial buildings) or in **private residential properties** (houses or apartments). The latter has great integration, scalability and sustainability potential, both in developing and developed countries.

Many displaced households find shelter solutions **without support from authorities and external partners**, striking their own bilateral tenure agreements with host families. Variations of this solution are possible: renting or occupying the full property; or only a room / a portion of the property; group rentals, etc.

Vulnerable families require **assistance to access shelter in private houses** or on private land. There are several good examples to learn from, all highlighting the importance of a legitimate broker bridging the gap between host and guest families (see case studies 3, 5 and 6).

Advocacy and support to local authorities and landlords on how to improve such agreements and protect the rights of both parties should be established. The sustainability, gender-responsiveness and durability of such self-arranged solutions should be improved. Lessons from successful experiences should be learned, for scaling up.

Shelter on customary or communal land

About 70 per cent of the land rights in developing countries are not recorded and are managed by the communities according to customary practices, communal arrangements or informal or religious mechanisms (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2018a). Some of these land rights are held individually or by households, while others are held as collective rights. Many countries have large areas of customary land, sometimes referred to as traditional, Indigenous,[42] tribal, community, collective, pastoral or informal land. These areas operate under customary, informal or religious laws and practices alongside statutory, formal legal systems (legal pluralism).

Customary lands are usually administered by community leaders based on long-standing traditions that include community-based decision making. This generates a wide range of local and context-specific unwritten tenure arrangements and governance practices that create distinct challenges and solutions when displacement occurs from or to customary and communal land. Large waves of displacements have historically been accommodated on customary and communal lands, from which lessons learned can be derived.

42 Indigenous peoples have special attachments to their land and corresponding rights recognized in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, notably the right to free, prior and informed consent for any activities undertaken on their land, though these rights may or may not be recognized or enforced at country level.

Similarly to private or public lands, **due diligence** on customary and communal lands where displaced people are to be accommodated must be undertaken. As such lands are seldom registered and their ownership is rarely documented, identifying the legitimate rights' holders and administrators can be complex, but unavoidable. The opportunity of **strengthening and recording the land rights of the host communities** is an attractive incentive for their engagement and increasing their willingness to accommodate the displaced.

Solid **consensual agreements** based on informed consent among the host communities, the various land users and the displaced must be brokered with the support of the customary land administrators. The stakeholders to be involved are many, including community representatives, customary, Indigenous and religious leaders and officials from the statutory authorities responsible for the area. Such agreements should be **recorded or witnessed** by reliable parties and can be in the form of temporary occupation of land for housing, grazing, subsistence agriculture, etc.

A common weakness of customary systems is the protection of **women's HLP rights** and their participation in decision-making; such aspects require particular attention (see Box 1).

A variety of land and HLP solutions for displacement specific to customary contexts are described in *Durable housing, land and property solutions for customary contexts* (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024), which analyses case studies from different regions and draws a set of recommendations. A selection of these recommendations is summarized in Box 1.

Box 1. Selected recommendations to prevent displacement and provide durable HLP solutions in customary contexts[43]

1. **Legitimate customary land rights and the role of customary land administrators.** It is necessary to recognize all legitimate customary land rights, acknowledging and strengthening individual, household and group rights. This may require revised policies and laws. It also entails recognizing the role and progressively strengthening the capacities of customary land administrators.
2. **Legal pluralism.** Legal pluralism prevails in most customary contexts, where customary, statutory, religious and informal laws and norms coexist and create a range of local practices. It is important to work with local actors who have a good understanding of the customary, religious and statutory laws at play. Solutions should consider drawing upon the different legal frameworks. With a longer-term perspective, it is important to progressively reform laws and norms to increase their alignment, harmonize and better define how they and their implementation mechanisms relate to one another and when each applies.
3. **Land tenure security and adequate housing.** In customary contexts, the guiding principles of 'land tenure security' and 'adequate housing' for all provide better entry points than restitution and compensation approaches, particularly in rural settings and contexts affected by multiple displacements where HLP rights are unregistered. On the other hand, HLP restitution and compensation mechanisms are useful for people returning to areas where HLP rights are registered and documented and for built-up properties.
4. **The type of HLP rights accessible to individuals from displaced and host communities may vary** from ownership and long-term use rights to short-term use rights, but all these options have the potential to provide durable HLP solutions.
5. **Recordation of customary land rights.** The recordation of renegotiated and adjudicated land rights through innovative participatory, fit-for-purpose, community-led processes is widely and successfully used. Customary land management systems must continue to evolve to protect people from displacement and improve resilience to causes of displacement. Communities with stronger land tenure security invest more in climate resilience and environmental conservation which results in improved livelihoods and reduced vulnerability to displacement.
6. **Rapid participatory mapping of group rights** using customary land tenure types proved to be a cost-effective short-term solution to record land rights and lay the ground for local integration and durable solutions. These work best when built on pre-existing, locally acceptable customary mechanisms and when further institutionalized in law.

43 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c

7. **Written short-term land use agreements and lease agreements** also proved effective in strengthening land tenure security and facilitating recourse to formal or traditional dispute mechanisms.
8. **Women's HLP rights.** Displaced women's safe access to HLP is crucial to protect them from violence, to improve their and their families' standard of living and to move towards recovery and self-reliance (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024a). To make advancements, it is essential to understand the communal dimension of customary land management, where the nature, duration and characteristics of individuals' rights depend on their position and role within society, community and family. HLP provisions in customary law are often not the same for men and women, often to the detriment of women. However, **customary land administration practices are an important avenue** to provide HLP solutions, including for women, because they are well known and accepted by the communities, which increases their chances of being enforced. The acceptance of customary norms and practices largely stems from the perception that they are rooted in long-standing traditions and non-threatening to society and family values. Hence, **HLP solutions perceived to be in line with traditions are more likely to be durable**, and they can always be incrementally upgraded and strengthened over time. HLP solutions that require a fundamental change in the way communal and customary lands are managed, on the other hand, are unlikely to lead to a sustainable positive outcome in the short and medium term.

   While introducing more gender responsive ownership patterns, which is extremely important, **women's use rights** over the houses, land and properties of their male relatives, families and communities should be strengthened. This is often the most impactful and durable HLP solution for women. This includes usufruct rights of widows, longer agreements for the use of agricultural land and the use of written agreements that more clearly define rights and responsibilities.

   The **recordation of customary land** and the issuing of **joint documentation** also proved successful in making customary land management practices more gender responsive, with positive effects on the prevention of displacement. The inclusion of women in **decision-making** and all aspects of the land sector needs to be pursued, accompanied by capacity development. Customary and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms are more likely to be used by women as they are more accepted by the community and less confrontational. These should be further strengthened and rendered more gender responsive.

Benefits for host families and communities

Some of the solutions can be on a fully charitable basis. These are best over short time periods and for displaced that are close to the host in terms of language, ethnic or religious group and family ties. Other arrangements entail a payment that can be shouldered by the displaced or supported by external actors. Shelter-for-work arrangements can also be considered, if clearly defined, based on informed consent, not abusive and with recourse to justice for all parties.

The benefits that HLP solutions present for the host families must be carefully assessed and leveraged. Besides the immediate financial or labour compensation, HLP solutions on private or communal lands can **strengthen the tenure security of host families**. Having a valid tenure document, such as an updated title deed, may constitute an attractive incentive in some contexts considering that only 30 per cent of land rights in developing countries are registered (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2018a) and large portions of rural populations, informal dwellers and people living in countries where land administration is dysfunctional are unlikely to have a valid and legally recognized ownership title.

Formalizing rental agreements creates an opportunity to strengthen the land rights of host families. This contributes to making these solutions mutually beneficial for hosts and guests. Due diligence should be applied to ensure such agreements are entered into with legitimate owners.

Solution area 5. Access to land and properties other than shelters

Displaced people need to access land and properties for uses other than shelter. These uses vary depending on the context, livelihood and lifestyle of the people displaced. In rural areas, people might need access to land for subsistence farming, animal grazing and collection of firewood, food and medicinal herbs. In urban areas, the displaced might need spaces where they can work as artisans, professionals or traders (see case studies 5 and 6). The solutions described for accessing shelter can be adapted to respond to the other land and property needs. Access to public and community spaces is essential for all, particularly the youth.

Solution area 6. Prepare the ground for return, restitution and compensation

Repair, reconstruct and clear from explosives

Displacement can be caused by the destruction of houses, lands (including agricultural land infrastructure), properties and related services and infrastructure, such as in the event of natural disasters. During conflicts, contamination of land with explosives may occur.

The decision to prioritize the repair and reconstruction of houses, lands and properties and their clearance from explosives entails assessing variables such as the level of destruction, the presence of essential services, infrastructure and livelihood opportunities, safety and security considerations and the intentions of displaced communities to return. If the conditions for return are conducive, the repair and reconstruction of houses and the clearance from explosives and rubble should be prioritized.

A **database** linking information of legitimate property owners, spatial information of properties, levels of destruction and contamination (and other key indicators) should be created, building on existing sources or generated through surveys and data collection campaigns (see case study 9). This forms the basis for repair, reconstruction and clearance interventions. Financial and contextual considerations contribute to assessing feasibility and timing of such interventions, often firmed up in **legislation** (e.g. decrees).

People should **not be excluded on the basis of the type of tenure** they hold and the type of documentation they have to prove such tenure. This is especially relevant for individuals or groups traditionally discriminated in their HLP rights, such as women or minorities. This concept is described further below.

Restitution and compensation

People forcibly displaced from their houses, lands and properties are often victims of multiple HLP rights' violations. After the forced evictions, their properties can be occupied without their consent or illegally sold, often multiple times. Displaced people often lose their HLP documents (e.g. title deeds or rental agreements) and their civil documentation (identity cards, marriage certificates, death certificates, etc.), which are often needed to formalize marital and family relationships and claim their housing, land and property rights. Others may have not had titles in their name in cases where these are traditionally issued to the male head of household, who may have died or be missing as a result of the cause of displacement.

Establishing mechanisms for the restitution of illegally misappropriated houses, lands and properties and for compensating their permanent loss is described in the Durable Solutions section of this document (see also case 16). However, it is important to lay the groundwork for such interventions at the onset of displacement.

Awareness of the importance of civil and HLP documentation should be raised. **Information campaigns** on how to protect, retrieve or re-issue such documentation should be undertaken. These should be carried out in such way that they are accessible and understandable to all members of the displaced communities. **Safe keeping** of HLP documents and other kind of evidence (e.g. utility bills, court decisions, testimonies) should be encouraged and supported. **Preliminary discussions** to pave the way for the establishment of restitution and compensation mechanisms should be initiated.

Solution area 7. Access to justice and disputes' resolution

People living in displacement often face difficulties in accessing justice and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms to protect their HLP rights in the area of origin and in the area of displacement. In many displacement-affected contexts, the justice system reflects the prevailing legal pluralism, and formal courts are complemented by religious, customary and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms. In contexts where certain members of the community traditionally struggle to access these mechanisms, such as women-headed households, older persons or Indigenous Peoples, these exclusions are often exacerbated when these individuals or groups are displaced.

Countries should ensure that displaced people are not discriminated against when seeking justice. International and national actors can support the provision of **legal**

counselling and assistance for the protection of HLP rights, including for marginalized groups within the displaced community (see case study 16). **Collaborative dispute resolution mechanisms** and techniques, such as mediation and negotiation, can also be used to resolve HLP disputes (see case studies 8, 10, 14 and 18). Displaced women often face an additional layer of discrimination, and particular attention should be paid to ensuring their access to justice.

Solution area 8. Prevent and address forced evictions

Forced evictions' monitoring plays a critical role in safeguarding human rights and ensuring fair treatment for affected communities, as it can help ensure that evictions are conducted in compliance with international human rights standards. Documenting instances of forced evictions provides evidence that can be used to hold governments or other entities accountable, which is needed for legal and advocacy efforts to address and rectify injustices, as well as providing a basis for legal challenges against unlawful evictions. Monitoring can also help identify the needs of those affected by forced evictions, leading to the provision of essential support and services, such as legal aid, temporary housing or relocation assistance.

States have the obligation to protect people from forced evictions. National legislations normally have provisions on this, which should be strengthened or made more explicit for displacement. Creating accountability systems and processes for HLP rights violations and sharing findings with relevant authorities will strengthen protection from forced eviction and other violations of HLP rights (see case studies 14, 16 and 18). **Moratoria on evictions** or further regulating evictions and protecting the most vulnerable people during crises is an important tool.

3.2 Land and HLP solutions for recovery and development

As displacement becomes increasingly protracted, HLP solutions that foster recovery should be crafted from the earlier stages of the crises. This section describes the land and HLP solutions that can be deployed, in partnership with the displaced communities and local and national actors, to address displacement through the provision of medium- and long-term solutions, until the displaced people are no longer afflicted by the vulnerabilities associated with displacement. These should complement protection and resilience solutions, should be planned from the onset of a crisis and should be sustained by enabling interventions.

The HLP needs of IDPs should be considered alongside those of other vulnerable individuals and groups: refugees, migrants, the poor from host communities, homeless people, newly established low-income families, marginalized groups, women in situations of vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, etc. These groups compete for similar housing, land and property options. If converging needs are not factored in, the HLP solutions put in place for IDPs might be captured by others and might spark conflicts that aggravate inter- or intra-communal violence and lead to further displacement. People must be able to make informed and voluntary choices about the preferred HLP solution and participate in their planning and management.

Table 3 includes a list of key land and HLP solutions for resilience. A wide range of local approaches exist; hence the list is non-exhaustive. Some solutions are relevant for protection and resilience as well.

Solution area 9. Area-based assessments and urban profiles

The establishment of durable land and HLP solutions require a thorough understanding of the context to be effective, especially when resources are scarce. **Multisectoral area-based assessments and urban profiles** analyse the situation and the needs of a city, town or neighbourhood (see case studies 1, 4, 8 and 12). Such profiles create the basis for all stakeholders, including the displaced and host communities, to engage in emergency, recovery and reconstruction interventions in a coordinated and coherent manner. Area-based assessments cover all people living in a defined geographic area with the aim of informing programming addressing the needs of all residents; this approach helps mitigate tensions between the hosts and the displaced and enhance social stability within communities.

Table 4: Key land and HLP solutions for recovery and development.

Land and HLP Solutions for recovery and development		
Solution area	**Menu of land and HLP solutions**	**Examples and case studies**
9. Area-based assessments and urban profiles	• Comprehensive multisectoral area-based analyses • City and neighbourhood profiles • Spatial planning • Territorial analyses and strategies, linking urban and rural	• Urban Recovery Framework: an area-based analysis toolbox to assess damaged and prioritize repair and recovery interventions, including on HLP[44] (case study 12) • City profile of Beirut, Lebanon[45] • Strategic planning and identification of priority interventions to accommodate the displaced, Juba, South Sudan[46] • Multisectoral and multi-partner neighbourhood profiles to inform area-based programming, including for hosting displaced people, Lebanon[47] • Examples cited in Solution Area 1
10. Housing in areas of current displacement or in third locations	**Type 1. Provision of housing by public institutions and development actors** • Provision of land to be developed (incl. public, purchased or long-leased land) • Sites and services • Construction of basic units that can be expanded • Construction of housing • Social housing • Retrofitted public buildings **Type 2. Increase the offer of adequate housing available to internally displaced persons** • Families and individuals in host communities rent houses to displaced persons • Host families receive incentives to repair / extend their properties for the displaced • New housing units are built by private individuals or companies to be rented to displaced persons **Type 3. Construction and purchase of houses, lands and properties by displaced people**	• Provision of plots on newly developed public land and cash assistance to resettled displaced people in Baidoa, Somalia[48] • Identification, rapid planning and allocation of vacant state land to IDPs and refugees in Kabul and Herat, Afghanistan (case study 7) • Increase the access of displaced people to the low-income housing market in Lebanon (case study 3) • Brokered tenancy agreements between private landlords and displaced people in Greece (case study 6) • Private hosting mechanisms in Belgium, France, Ireland, Hungary, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania and Slovakia (case study 5) • Providing durable HLP solutions to IDPs through a holistic approach including urban profiling, legal review, disputes' resolution and provision of basic services in Somalia (case study 8)
11. HLP solutions in areas of origin, including for return	• For the return of the landless and homeless • Repair and reconstruction • Schemes to restitute HLP taken by force, illegally and forcibly acquired or sold • Compensation schemes, when restitution is not possible	• Spatial planning and reconstruction of housing in Gaza, Palestine (case study 11) • Paving the way for return and peace by securing HLP rights and rehabilitating the houses of the Yazidi minority in Iraq[49] • HLP restitution and compensation scheme in Kosovo (case study 16) • Collective restitution of dispossessed lands in Salaminita, Colombia[50] • Restitution and compensation through the 'Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes' in Iraq (case study 15)

44 UN-Habitat, 2021a
45 UN-Habitat, 2021b
46 UN-Habitat, 2023
47 UN-Habitat, n.d.
48 Baidoa, Somalia case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c
49 See Box 4 in UN-Habitat, 2021c
50 Salaminita, Colombia case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2018b

12. Land and properties in areas of displacement and in third locations	• Individual lands and properties • Communal and customary land	• Negotiate group agreements for access to grazing land by pastoralist tribes in South Sudan (case study 14) • Relocated communities are given access to communal forests to boost their livelihood, in Bo Hon, Vietnam[51]
13. Addressing secondary HLP occupation	• Formal justice, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and transitional justice mechanisms • Finding alternatives for secondary occupants	• Alternatives for secondary occupants of properties in Kosovo provided through transitional justice mechanisms (case study 16)
14. Transform, retrofit and regularize informal settlements	• Regularization • Slum transformation • Policy interventions	• Return to the area of origin and local integration through the regularization of settlements and the registration of land parcels in customary and informal areas in Lomitas, Carceres, Tierralta and Ataco, Colombia[52]
15. Functioning housing sector that works for the displaced	• Housing sector profiles • Housing strategies • Reform of the housing polices and laws to improve housing sector's functioning, inclusiveness and accessibility for the displaced	• Housing profile of Afghanistan that analyses legal, institutional, economic and customary challenges and proposes policy and programming solutions to secure adequate housing for all, including the displaced[53]
16. Functioning land administration sector	• Assess the land administration sector and identify key areas for introducing short-term improvements to address displacement • Demarcation and allocation of plots through fit-for-purpose land administration approaches • Establish incremental and participatory recordation of HLP rights • Resolution of HLP conflicts • Improve women's HLP rights	• Assess the land sector and provide pragmatic solutions to improve it in a fit-for-purpose manner to address the HLP needs of the displaced. See examples from Darfur, Sudan[54] and Syria[55] • Enable local integration through rapid mapping and recordation of extended family land tenure rights, Abyei, Sudan[56] • Facilitate return and integration through land conflict mediation and HLP rights' recordation in North Kivu, DRC[57] • Harmonization of the legal provisions and mechanisms for the resolution of HLP disputes in Somaliland and Puntland, Somalia (case study 10)

The elements of analysis and their formulation may vary depending on the context and the actors involved. The most common are demography; governance; economy and livelihood; housing; land tenure security / HLP rights; basic services and infrastructure; social protection, gender-responsiveness and inclusion; community engagement; environment; cultural heritage; and level of damage. Spatial planning considerations need to be included.

Area-based assessments also add value to interventions in rural areas. Territorial analyses and profiles facilitate the understanding of urban-rural linkages and the identification of the push and pull factors for human mobility.

Solution area 10. Housing for displaced people in areas of current displacement or in third locations

Enabling displaced persons to access adequate housing is a very effective way of achieving durable solutions in situations of protracted displacement. These solutions are suitable for areas of current displacement, third locations, and areas of origin where the displaced do not have a house to return to (e.g. it was destroyed or they no longer have access). To be effective, the

51 Bo Hon, Vietnam case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c
52 Lomitas, Carceres, Tierralta and Ataco case studies in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c
53 UN-Habitat, 2017
54 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2020b
55 UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2021
56 Abyei, Sudan case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c
57 North Kivu case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c

described interventions need to be accompanied by complementary measures for other vulnerable groups (such as refugees, migrants, the poor from host communities, homeless people, new families, marginalized groups, vulnerable women, etc.) with an area-based approach.

The options available to house displaced people in areas of displacement and third locations can be categorized into **three main types**: (1) provision of housing by public institutions or development actors; (2) increase the offer of adequate housing available to the displaced; and, though less common, (3) construction or purchase of housing by displaced people. While the first option can be necessary in some circumstances, the second option has a greater potential to provide durable HLP solutions at scale to the internally displaced and other vulnerable people. The second option also provides better opportunities for the establishment of win-win situations, where the host communities do not feel left behind, increasing social peace and integration. The three types are further described below.

Provision of housing by public authorities or development actors

A non-exhaustive list of the most common options include:

1. Provision of land to be developed for housing and other uses (public land, private purchased land or long leased by public authorities)
2. Sites and services schemes
3. Construction of basic units that can be expanded
4. Construction of transitional shelters or housing
5. Provision of social housing, which may entail its construction, expansion or repair
6. Retrofitting of public buildings

Some of the key aspects to be considered are the identification and **availability of suitable land** and the **planning** that needs to accompany its selection and development (see case studies 4 and 7). The definition of suitable, gender-responsive **tenure options** that will be made available to the displaced people (e.g. determining whether they will be owners, tenants or tenants with the option to progressively become owners) must be considered. This requires deciding **who will own** the land and the structures allocated to the displaced (e.g. which public institution or organization). The responsibility for the **maintenance** of the structures and associated basic services must be clarified, as well as the management of **property allocation**, including re-allocation when displaced persons move out.

The **exit strategy** for the institutions or organizations managing such programmes should be clearly defined. It is important to consider whether the use of the properties will remain restricted to protected groups such as displaced people, low-income individuals, marginalized and other vulnerable populations, or whether these properties may eventually enter the open property market, allowing current occupants to sell them. If the latter approach is adopted, an **incremental approach** would be necessary, whereby displaced individuals gradually strengthen their tenure security over the allocated properties, taking on corresponding responsibilities such as monthly payments.

It is important to carefully consider the **building standards** applied to these property development programmes, because houses of a higher standard might attract different groups of users, regardless of the legal and formal measures put in place by the institutions and organizations designing the programme.

Increase the offer of private adequate housing available to internally displaced persons

In the short and medium term, enabling people to rent properties that belong to others – the host families – is the most effective solution. The most common options include:

1. Families and individuals in host communities **rent out existing properties** to internally displaced persons (see case studies 3 and 5)
2. Families and individuals in host communities **repair or extend their properties** to rent them out to displaced people, including through provision of incentives (see case study 6)
3. **New housing units** are built by private individuals or companies to be rented to displaced persons

These solutions need reliable **brokers** to ensure that trust between the parties is established and maintained along with the establishment of **clear agreements** between owners and tenants. Whenever possible, these **agreements should be written** in a language that is understandable to both parties. Alternatively, they should be witnessed by trusted members of the community.

It is crucial to **remove the blockages** that prevent owners from renting out their properties to displaced people; the requirements should be simplified, and legal support and mediation can be provided for their enforcement. Typical blockages include the prohibition of renting properties to foreigners (mostly affecting refugees), or the lack of personal identification documents by displaced people, as well as prejudice and fear towards persons outside the community, especially when they are already marginalized. The inclusion of **women's names** in all types of land tenure documents should be promoted.

Further, such solutions can be supported by accompanying initiatives, such as the **identification of empty houses** and other properties that can be made available to displaced people. Such databases can be developed by a variety of institutional and non-government actors even before the manifestation of a crisis, as a preparedness measure.

Construction and purchase or houses, lands and properties

For the longer term, if they wish to, displaced persons should be enabled to construct or purchase housing, land and properties in areas of current displacement, in third locations or in areas of origin for those who do not have a house to return to (see case study 13).

Solution area 11. HLP solutions in areas of origin, including for return

There are two related, yet distinct, aspects related to Land and HLP solutions in areas of origin:

1. The range of HLP solutions to be made available to displaced persons returning to their areas of origin.
2. The restitution of (or compensation for) the houses, land and properties that were taken by force and illegally or forcibly acquired and sold.

In most circumstances, a return to the status quo before displacement is unlikely. Radical changes might have occurred since displacement: large-scale destruction of houses, services and infrastructure, shifts in the socio-economic context and livelihood opportunities, disappearance of agricultural infrastructure (e.g. destruction of the irrigation systems), etc. In case of disaster, in addition to the previous challenges, large portions of land might have disappeared or become unusable. For climate-induced displacement, land-use patterns might be irreversibly changed, with new areas becoming unusable because they are prone to floods or sea level rise or due to the insufficient supply of water for personal use and agriculture. After protracted displacement, the skillsets, lifestyles and aspirations of the displaced people, and their children and grandchildren, might have shifted substantially. Communities might have increased in number. All these changes might call for housing, land and property solutions that were not there before displacement.

Land an d HLP solutions available to displaced persons returning to their areas of origin

Some **returning displaced people might not have a house, a property or a piece of land** to return to. They, and their descendants, might have sold it, lost access to it, or never had one before displacement. Women may have lost HLP registered in the name of male relatives who passed away during displacement. In such cases, the HLP solutions in areas of displacement and third locations apply.

Those who still have houses, land and properties that are not occupied may choose to return to them. Support might be required to undertake required repairs, reconnect to utilities, re-start economic activities, obtain the necessary HLP documentation and permissions, etc.

Some might require assistance to **reconstruct their properties** (see case study 11). A range of solutions and schemes are used around the world, with funding from governments, the international community or a mix of

the two. Schematically, the steps required for this are: (1) defining the characteristics and procedures of the scheme through policies that define eligibility, amounts, prioritization, administrative procedure, decision-making bodies, etc.; (2) setting aside the funds required; (3) putting in place an administrative body to oversee and coordinate the repair and reconstruction scheme; (4) undertaking HLP due diligence on the properties, to ensure that the people being supported with repair and reconstruction assistance are the legitimate owners or users of the properties; (5) defining the mechanisms for resolution of disputes among the different claimants to the property (formal, alternative); (6) finding suitable alternatives for secondary occupants of the properties, quite a cumbersome engagement if it applies to many people; (7) implementing repair and reconstruction works; (8) updating the land and property registries as needed, considering that in most displacement contexts it is likely that legitimate owners do not have updated and legal property documents.

Restitution of HLP taken by force and illegally or forcibly acquired and sold

The restitution of land and properties can lay the groundwork for safe, voluntary and dignified return, where this is chosen by the displaced. Where individuals prefer not to return, restitution is nevertheless essential for social reconciliation, peace and stability. Displaced people have the right to restitution (and compensation) regardless of their willingness to return. Restitution and compensation measures must be put in place through legal processes established in accordance with international standards (i.e., the "Pinheiro Principles").

Restitution of properties must be prioritized over compensation, which should only be considered when there are overarching blockages preventing restitution (e.g. the land disappeared due to sea level rise or the properties are in areas destroyed to a level beyond repair), also considering that it is a more expensive option that has not yet proven to work at scale. Restitution also presents other problems, such as challenges in prioritizing among the different categories of those in need of land and housing, including host communities (see case study 16).

There is a wide range of configurations of **HLP restitution and compensation schemes**, which generally have the following components:

1. Reaching an agreement on the overall goals and directions of the restitution process with key actors.
2. Designing the programme's architecture and management.
3. Policymaking and decision-making about restitution and compensation, including developing the legal and operational frameworks.
4. Collecting and reviewing claims to housing, land and properties and associated information and documentation.
5. Decision-making and adjudication of cases; this requires objectively assessing the capacity of the formal court system and considering the establishment of a transitional justice system that can adjudicate the cases using administrative procedural determinations rather than judicial adjudication.
6. Recording of the decisions in the land and property registry.
7. Financing of the programme and of the eventual compensation component of the programme.
8. Development of capacities, particularly in the area of administration of justice, including mediation, dispute resolution and adjudication. An independent and impartial transitional justice mechanism is likely to be needed.

The displaced community should engage in these processes, which need to be gender-responsive, human rights-based, simple and inclusive, and the production of evidence should be streamlined and simplified, including identifying alternative means/evidence for property verification. The government should be supported in building the capacity to enforce restitution decisions.

Compensation can be considered when restitution is not possible (see case study 15). This situation might be the result of different causes: for example, the property might be completely destroyed, or in an area that has

been rendered inhabitable, or it was modified to an extent that it would not make it practical to be restored to its former use and restituted to the former owners.

In crisis-affected contexts, restitution (or compensation) is not only crucial to enable displaced people to rebuild their lives in their areas of origin, but also to **promote peace and reconciliation** in communities where the violation of housing, land and property rights was used as a weapon of war to change the demography of an area or to reward and pay combatants.

Solution area 12. Land and properties in areas of displacement and in third locations

While housing is a need for all, additional access to land and properties should also be protected for those who want and need to engage in other activities that require land:

- Agriculture, including growing crops, raising livestock and cultivating fruits and vegetables;
- Commercial or artisanal uses, including offices, shops, workshops and industries;
- Access to land-based resources, such as water, forests, hunting grounds and mining areas;
- Recreational and community activities.

Similarly to housing, internally displaced persons can be given a range of short-, medium- and long- term tenure rights to land and properties, either directly from the institutions or through host communities. Such rights are extremely important for communities, depending on their environment and the surrounding ecosystem for their survival, such as subsistence farmers, fishers, pastoralists, Indigenous communities and hunter/gatherers. It helps facilitating **access to credit** for displaced persons to enable them to access and make productive use of lands and commercial properties (see case study 17).

In many cases, such rights are held over **communal lands**, and they need to be shared with host communities and other users. The process of defining and agreeing on the sharing of such communal resources must be inclusive and gender responsive. Different groups need to be represented in the negotiations of the agreements and the implementation of their monitoring. Early warning mechanisms and effective dispute resolution mechanisms need to be established to mitigate and diffuse the tensions that can arise from the sharing of communal land rights.

Solution area 13. Address secondary HLP occupation

In displacement contexts, particularly protracted displacement, dealing with secondary occupation upon return of legitimate owners or users of land and properties is an important element. In contexts characterized by large-scale destruction of properties and waves of displacement, the phenomenon is more widespread. While some secondary occupations might occur in bad faith, this is not the case for all secondary occupants.

Secondary occupations occur for different reasons: the occupant may have been involved in the displacement of the legitimate owner or occupant, may have purchased the property in good faith from another person or may have been forced to use the property because of their lack of access to an alternative shelter. The restitution process should **deal with secondary occupants** based on legal and humanitarian considerations and in full respect of their human rights; in particular, secondary occupants should not be forcibly evicted. This will have administrative, financial and time-frame implications, as alternative suitable options must be identified for secondary occupants who lack access to alternative shelter (see case study 16). Property restitution mechanisms must consider that secondary occupants are entitled to compensations for the necessary improvements made to the properties (for instance, in the case of repair or reconstruction).

Solution area 14: Transform, retrofit and regularize informal settlements

Many countries have large portions of their population living in informal settlements. This phenomenon has many causes and effects. When faced with a crisis, there is an opportunity to review the policies of regulations of (some of the) informal settlements. The **regularization and transformation of informal settlements** is one viable option to increase access to adequate housing

for displaced people, host communities and other marginalized individuals and groups. This would also facilitate access to support for repairing and reconstructing destroyed and damaged properties of displaced people, as normally such types of incentives are only available for properties legally owned and formally registered in the cadastre.

Solution area 15. Functioning housing sector that works for the displaced

Durable land and HLP solutions go beyond housing. However, adequate housing is the most universal and pressing need that should be addressed if durable solutions are to be made available to displaced persons. The housing sector should be profiled to identify its key features: number of housing units occupied, destroyed, damaged or usable but empty (and the reasons behind their being empty); the functioning of the rental market and of the financing/credit systems; rented properties and rental market; affordability; informality; legal and institutional frameworks; functioning of the land and property registration and taxation system; homelessness; social housing schemes; etc. (see case studies 2, 3 and 10).

Housing assessments may help bring to the surface unsuspected distortions and help to identify corrections that may require little financial investments by national and international actors. For example, large numbers of vacant housing units can be made available on the market by changing the policies that regulate and balance the rights and obligations of owners and tenants, or by increasing the property taxes for vacant housing units. Based on the housing profiles, comprehensive **housing strategies** should be developed to define present and current needs of the different categories of people in need of adequate housing – including internally displaced persons – and how to cater for them (see case studies 5, 6 and 13). Further information on the components of a functioning housing sector is provided under Solution Area 20.

Solution area 16. Functioning land administration sector

A dysfunctional land administration system affects access to housing, land and properties for all, particularly the most vulnerable, including displaced persons in several ways: it does not adequately protect the HLP rights of people, particularly those living in informal settlements or where land rights are not fully recognized (e.g. some customary areas) or where parts of the population are excluded from partially or fully accessing their rights; it prevents people from participating in formal land markets due to complex bureaucratic procedures, high transaction costs or corruption; it creates difficulties for the formal housing market to function properly and to cater to the housing needs of all income groups; and it hinders access to credit to purchase land and housing (see case studies 2, 7, 10, 18, 19 and 21). The combination of the effects of dysfunctional land administration contributes to the shortage of adequate housing, increasing competition among low-income groups and marginalized people, including displaced persons. Further information on the components of a functioning land sector is provided under Solution Area 20.

3.3 Land and HLP solutions for resilience

Displacement and population movement are caused by a combination of localized factors and global dynamics. Preventing displacement and strengthening the mechanisms that reduce and mitigate its negative impacts includes a wide range of actions. The key actions related to land and HLP are listed in Table 4, and some are further described below. As a wide range of customized approaches exist at the local level, the list is non-exhaustive. Further, mitigating the causes of displacement and establishing functioning land and housing sectors (solutions areas 19 and 20) are broad topics, only succinctly touched upon in this document.

Solution area 17. Identify causes and risks of future displacement

At regional, country or local level, the multidimensional causes of displacement and other forms of internal and cross-border population movements should be assessed. Factors should include certain, likely and unlikely but relevant events (e.g. droughts, rapid and unregulated urbanization, floods, conflicts, earthquakes, economic crises or pandemics) (see case studies 20 and 24). A set of tools and experiences to learn from is available, particularly with regard to climate vulnerability and, to some extent, conflict.

Table 5: Key land and HLP solutions to foster resilience and prevent and mitigate the impact of displacement.[58]

Land and HLP solutions for resilience		
Solution area	**Menu of land and HLP solutions**	**Examples and case studies**
17. Identify causes and risks of future displacement	• Multidimensional analysis of displacement causes and risks • Analysis of root causes of conflict • Climate vulnerability assessments	• Analysis of the land- and HLP-related root causes of conflict in Jubaland, Somalia and recommendations on how to address them *(case study 24)*
18. Preparedness	• Scenario development • Protocols, preparedness plans and programmes for the provision of HLP to future displaced populations	• Flood modelling for climate-resilient settlements in Pakistan (case study 20) • Participatory village mapping to identify suitable areas to settle future returnees and IDPs, preventing conflicts with host communities *(case study 21)*
19. Address and mitigate the causes of displacement	• Spatial planning that includes climate resilience • Community resilience interventions • Relocation to safe grounds • Tackle historical grievances related to land and HLP violations • Strengthen community mechanisms to resolve HLP disputes • Protect women's HLP rights • Enhance the states' compliance with HLP-related human rights obligations	• Community-based vulnerability assessment, participatory land use mapping, settlement planning and construction of climate resilient infrastructure in Afghanistan *(case study 22)* • Gender-sensitive housing project for the relocation of displaced women and girls in Northern Mozambique *(case study 13)* • Dialogues and local territorial agreements to prevent conflicts over the use of land resources between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary communities in South Sudan *(case study 14)* • Addressing HLP-related historical grievances through the 'Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes' in Iraq (case study 15) • City Resilience Action Planning CityRAP[59]
20. Functioning land and housing sectors	• Increase the affordable housing stock, including by repairing, constructing and reconstructing housing units • Reform the rental market, to increase affordability and reduce vacant housing • Transformation of slums • Functioning land and property registration • Effective and fit-for-purpose land administration system • Monitor HLP trends, including sex-disaggregated data • Integrated urban planning	• Gender-disaggregated HLP data to safeguard women's rights in the West Bank, Palestine *(case study 23)* • Improve land administration, land and property registration and tenure security through a new urban land law in South West State, Somalia *(case study 19)* • Participatory planning and establishment of a fit-for-purpose land recordation system in Darfur, Sudan *(case study 21)* • Prevention of displacement through a customary land recordation system that increases land tenure security, reduces conflicts and fosters local investments in Chamuka, Zambia[60] • Examples provided for Solution Areas 15 and 16 • Integrated urban planning in protracted crisis contexts, the case of Kalobeyei, Kenya[61]

Solution area 18. Preparedness

Displacement scenarios that consider the potential impacts on a broad range of people (displaced, migrants, new urban and rural dwellers, etc.) should be developed. This would feed into humanitarian-peace-development programming and serve as guidance when developing land and HLP prevention and preparedness interventions.

58 The list is non-exhaustive, as a wide range of customized approaches exist at the local level. Some solutions described are relevant for humanitarian protection, recovery and development as well.
59 See B.2. CityRAP: City Resilience Action Planning, in UN-Habitat, 2022c
60 Chamuka, Zambia case study in UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c
61 See B.3. Integrated urban planning in protracted crisis contexts, in UN-Habitat, 2022c

The shelter and housing options to be made available for future displaced people should be mapped (see case study 21). Some of these options are suitable for short-term displacement, typically caused by natural disasters or causes that have a short-term impact. Others are more suitable to address long-term displacement caused by slow onset events, such those compounded by climate change and conflicts

A database (e.g. develop a database of empty properties) and **protocols** for matching needs and offers can be developed and kept ready to be rolled out. Responsible institutions and organizations can be identified to minimize the time required to organize the response when the waves of displacement come.

The housing options to be considered are those already outlined in the previous sections in more detail: construction of new housing, rental of existing housing, refurbishing abandoned housing, upgrading, densification, buildings and spaces currently vacant or occupied for collective shelters to meet temporary needs and mitigate associated risks, etc. (Solutions areas 4, 10, 11, 12)

Further, scenarios for the **distribution of the inflow of displaced people across the national territory** can be developed, in full recognition of the rights of the displaced. Similarly to housing, the mapping and identification of lands and properties for uses other than residential should be identified.

Modelling and mapping the causes of potential future displacement, particularly natural disasters and climate-related events, and their predicted impacts on housing, land and property should also be undertaken (see case study 20).

Solution area 19. Address and mitigate the causes of displacement

Displacement caused by natural and climate-related hazards – The risk of displacement caused by natural and climate-related hazards can be mitigated or prevented by a set of measures, including:

1. Adequate **spatial planning**, which includes the **mapping of areas prone to environmental** hazards (see case study 20).
2. Interventions aimed at **improving the resilience** of neighbourhoods and communities, which also require providing land tenure security to the communities (UN-Habitat, 2024) (see case study 22).
3. **Relocations** might be necessary in some cases (see case study 13).
4. Enact **social protection policies** to foresee and mitigate the impact of droughts, famine, flooding, economic collapse, etc.
5. Most importantly, humanity needs to deal with **climate change**, both in terms of **mitigation and adaptation** (to droughts, sea level rise, desertification, etc.). Continued and collective action is needed to scale up these efforts, including through 'climate-proofing' cities, developing the resilience of individuals and communities and introducing climate-smart agricultural practices. Indigenous peoples, pastoralists and other groups with a special dependency on and attachment to their lands, and especially vulnerable to climate change and disasters, need to be particularly supported (UNSG, 2021).

Displacement caused by conflict and violence – Displacement is often caused by conflicts and violence. Some of the causes of conflicts are not directly related to land and HLP rights. To prevent and mitigate the causes of conflict that are related to land and HLP, the following solutions can be adopted:

6. **Address the land- and HLP-related root causes of conflicts**, as outlined in the UN Secretary-General's Guidance Note The United Nations and Land and Conflict, and by using the *How to do a Root Cause Analysis of Land and Conflict for Peace Building* tool developed by the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) (see case study 24).
7. Address **historical grievances** related to land ownership and dispossession.
8. **Strengthen community mechanisms** to prevent, manage and mitigate land-related conflicts, including through peace and reconciliation committees (see case studies 14, 18, 19 and 21).
9. Women are agents of peace, mediators and negotiators in their own communities. They play a critical role in preventing and resolving conflicts and building and sustaining peace within

societies. When **women's housing, land and property rights** are protected, their meaningful participation in decision-making processes within communities and in public discourse and debates increases, including in peace actions and peace-making. These efforts then lead to more inclusive decision-making and more effective, sustainable peacebuilding outcomes (UN-Habitat et al., 2021) (see case study 23).

10. **States should comply with their human rights obligations**. Evidence suggests that widespread and systematic human rights abuses can signal a heightened risk of conflict, violence or instability. Such violations often serve as underlying causes or short-term triggers. In Resolution 2171 (2014) the UN Security Council recognized that serious human rights violations not only result from conflicts but can also foreshadow their onset or escalation of violence. Ensuring the effective implementation of human rights obligations domestically can play a crucial role in preventing conflicts in a timely manner (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], n.d.). As such, effectively and immediately addressing human rights concerns is an effective way to reduce the risk of conflict and other situations of violence. International accountability is key for the prevention of displacement: "While parties to conflict may drive displacement inadvertently, in some cases, they do so deliberately, in direct violation of International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law. Other tactics, such as the targeted or indiscriminate destruction of infrastructure and the use of explosive weapons, particularly in urban areas, both drive displacement and prevent return and recovery" (United Nations Secretary-General [UNSG], 2021).

Solution area 20. Functioning land and housing sectors

Functioning land and housing sectors are very important elements of functioning urban systems and are crucial to enable national and local governments to adequately respond to the land and housing needs of all people living in displacement-affected contexts (IDPs, refugees, host communities, etc.).

Housing sector

When the **housing sector** is healthy, all people have access to adequate housing, either through private ownership, leasing, social housing or other complementary avenues available for particular population categories (IDPs, refugees, students, short-term residents, visitors, migrants, etc.). Some flexibility in the housing stock should allow the accommodation of new and newly arriving households. The competent authorities should **monitor the health of the housing sector through urban observatories**[62] and the improvement and digitalization of the **housing information** (occupancy rate of housing units, prices, areas, type of tenure, availability of basic services, social inclusion issues, etc.). This would enable the introduction of evidence-based reforms of the housing sector.

The monitoring and reform of the **rental market** is a key, yet underutilized, mechanism to increase the housing options available to displaced people. Having an idea of how many vacant units are available, their location and the reason for their **vacant status** (in need of refurbishing, lack of services, holiday houses, etc.) is important to put in place policies and regulations that can facilitate the entrance of vacant housing stock on the market. Solutions to rapidly increase the amount of vacant housing on the market in case of a rapid influx of displaced persons can be devised. These include provision of **tax exemptions, financial incentives, grants for refurbishing** the properties, use of **specific rental agreements** with particular terms and conditions adequately protecting owners and displaced, etc.

In cases where the **construction of new homes** is needed, interventions to support and incubate the necessary construction skills and knowledge to nurture a more mature construction sector should be considered, including supporting and regulating the **private real estate sector** to ensure it increases the housing stock targeting low-income households. Such interventions should take into consideration all the parameters of housing adequacy, climate resilience and energy and water efficiency.

62 See J.4. Urban Observatories, in UN-Habitat, 2022c

Programmes for the **repair and refurbishment** of dilapidated housing stock and the **transformation of slums** and their regularization are also important avenues to increase the availability of adequate housing. Similarly, the **construction or repair of affordable commercial buildings** might be necessary, to foster economic development and prevent displacement or to provide livelihoods for host communities and displaced people.

Land sector

Establishing a functioning land administration system is a long-term endeavour, but it is crucial for countries to prevent and respond effectively to displacement. Functional land administration fosters resilience to displacement: it provides the tenure security required to invest in the land, which leads to improved livelihoods and incentivizes climate resilience interventions; it allows for better land use planning with positive dividends for the economy, food security and provision of services and infrastructure; it reduces conflicts over ownership and use of land and natural resources; it provides the instruments for spatial planning, including mapping the areas prone to disaster and environmental hazards. It is an essential precondition for the identification and the allocation of suitable land for housing and can be leveraged to mobilize resources through land-based financing mechanisms.

To make land administration function well in displacement-prone or affected contexts, **fit-for-purpose land administration** approaches are recommended. These are affordable, flexible and inclusive, and facilitate the incremental development of land administration solutions that can be gradually upgraded to become more precise, technically sophisticated and legally recognized. Examples include extra-legal recordation of HLP rights, safeguarding HLP evidence, reconstitution of HLP records lost or destroyed during displacement and alternative HLP dispute resolution mechanisms. They can support humanitarian and early recovery activities by facilitating due diligence and clarifying land ownership. For increased effectiveness, they can be supported and institutionalized through legal and institutional reforms.

The **registration or recordation of HLP rights** is a key land administration function that entails improving the functioning of the registration system (or systems). It protects people from forced evictions and illegal property transactions. It reduces HLP conflicts and contributes to land tenure security. It can also provide a valuable source of information for evidence-based decision making. For instance, knowing where land is available to be rented or temporarily allocated for emergency shelters, or construction of temporary housing, is crucial for timely interventions, facilitates due diligence and saves time in emergency response.

4. ENABLING INTERVENTIONS

Enabling interventions should complement the land and HLP solutions described. These include paradigm shifts, empowerment of affected communities, governance and whole-of-society capacity, policy and legal reforms, credit and financing, justice and disputes' resolution and data for evidence-based action.

Paradigm shifts

A long-term perspective – Displacement is not a short-term emergency that can be resolved through humanitarian action, although humanitarian response is essential at the peak of crises, when needs are acute. 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. Well-managed displacement can be an opportunity that brings positive dividends to displaced and host communities; adopting a long-term perspective can help capitalize on the situation.

Effective urban systems – Most displaced people head to urban centres. 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 to drive economic and spatial integration and social cohesion.

A fit-for-purpose United Nations system – A United Nations system with a holistic understanding of displacement causes and solutions, including on land and HLP issues, would be most suited to address it. The frameworks of analysis of humanitarian, peace, development and climate actors should have a stronger convergence on displacement projections and trends. There is a need to strengthen multi-sectoral joint analyses and to develop a larger menu and a more critical analysis of successful practices. Coordination and programming mechanisms – at global and country level – should include all these actors, to meaningfully engage in analysis and response. United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs), solutions working groups and other thematic multi-stakeholder platforms have a key role to play. 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 – All the land and HLP solutions described would not have an impact unless displaced people are aware of them and can receive practical support to access them. One-stop centres are required at the grassroots level to support them in identifying and accessing the land and HLP solutions that best suit their needs. Women and others facing compounding exclusion need to receive particular attention.

Knowledge and decision-making – Displaced people should understand basic concepts related to HLP rights, to be able to protect and claim theirs. Active participation and inclusion in decision making are essential. Displaced women and men should be empowered to participate and lead discussions on land and HLP solutions. This includes negotiation and mediation efforts related to access to, use of and control over land and land-related resources, dispute resolution processes, land commissions, return and restitution commissions, definition of land and HLP-related provisions in peace agreements and other relevant frameworks.

Empowerment and inclusion of women – Women face multiple layers of discrimination with regard to HLP rights and more broadly. 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, including peace negotiations, land conflict resolution mechanisms and land-related commissions, as noted in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

Governance and whole-of-society capacity

Governments – Addressing displacement, and its land and HLP dimensions, requires strong political will and government capacity, drawing from the expertise and mandates of multiple institutions. Solutions to displacement should be incorporated into national and local development plans and sector-specific plans of individual ministries. The politicization of the narratives around displacement and migration, the spreading of fear and exclusion-based discourses should be counterbalanced with facts and rigorous analyses of causes and consequences by national think tanks (universities, experts, analysts, etc.). The accountability of governments to recognize internally displaced persons as citizens, and therefore entitled to land and HLP solutions applicable to other citizens, should be enhanced (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2020a).

Local authorities – Local authorities are essential partners in all contexts (UNSG, 2022) and key to facilitate, regulate and coordinate 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 to create a stable environment conducive to recovery and development. Their knowledge of local contexts enables the tailoring of interventions that meet the needs of both displaced and host communities, fostering durable solutions and social cohesion. Local governments and traditional authorities should be capacitated and supported in their role in addressing land and HLP issues related to displacement.

Whole-of-society – Local actors and communities are also 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, 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 for displacement-affected contexts needs to be better recognized, understood and unlocked.

Policy and legal reforms

Legal frameworks – There might be laws or policies that explicitly or accidentally discriminate against displaced people, affecting their access to housing, land and properties. 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 elements that discriminate against minorities, Indigenous peoples, women and other groups (e.g. citizenship, guardianship, inheritance, ownership or credit laws). Context-specific vulnerabilities and gaps in domestic policy and laws need to be identified through multi-stakeholder processes, as different actors 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, informal (UN-Habitat/GLTN, 2024c). Acknowledging this complexity, adapting to it and recognizing the opportunities offered in terms of HLP solutions is crucial (see Box 1). The key actors and existing virtuous practices should be mapped. When possible, the HLP provisions in the different legal systems should be harmonized, reconciled and aligned to avoid jurisdictional confusion, which negatively affects the most vulnerable people, including internally displaced persons and women. While acknowledging and working within the plural legal system, 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 (ongoing violence, personal security concerns, destroyed services and infrastructure, lack of livelihood opportunities, etc.). The destruction or damage of housing, land and properties and their illegal or secondary occupation are major constraints.

Additional obstacles are lack of information about the situation of housing, land and properties back home; statements by influential public figures discouraging return or objecting to HLP restitution; lack of institutional messages about the protection of HLP rights in areas of origin, etc. 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/she can have access to. For example, as described in Case Study 2, in Libya people without legal residence cannot formalize a lease agreement; this exposes them to a heightened risk of eviction. 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. Women and marginalized individuals and groups face additional difficulties. 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. Specific programmes targeting IDPs should be established and scaled up in collaboration with national or international institutes of credit, as described in Case Study 17 for Iraq.

Predictable financing – At the system level, predictable financing is required to catalyse action on land and 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 that proved effective to provide municipal finance in displacement-affected contexts such as Afghanistan and Somalia.[63] Local financing would also need to be unlocked through the re-purposing of the current financing systems, to unlock small loans and microcredit at the local level.

Justice and disputes' resolution

Displaced persons often struggle to access justice and dispute resolution due to a variety of reasons: their displacement status, loss of documentation, financial constraints, language and cultural barriers, prejudice and stereotyping, long-standing exclusion and discrimination, lack of access to community-based dispute resolution mechanisms in areas of displacement, etc. 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: (1) Providing legal assistance, counseling, representation and mediation, and removing practical and logistical barriers (distance, cost, language and literacy, childcare, etc.); (2) Improving legal accessibility by simplifying, popularizing and translating key legal documents into simple language or dialects understandable by the displaced people; (3) Putting particular care into understanding and addressing women's needs, such as having access to non-confrontational land dispute resolution mechanisms that do not jeopardize their family relationships; (4) Assisting displaced persons in taking the necessary measures and completing the required procedures for maintaining or re-establishing their property rights back home can enable their safe return to and security of tenure within their home country upon their voluntary return (UN-Habitat & UNHCR, 2020); and (5) Build the capacity of formal, customary, religious and community-based justice systems on land and HLP issues, including how they apply in displacement, particularly for women and marginalized groups.

63 See Section G.2 Land-based finance for good governance and inclusive development in UN-Habitat, 2022c

Transitional justice mechanisms – To address large caseloads of housing, land and property rights violations, putting in place transitional justice mechanisms 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 disputes' resolution. Such mechanisms can also promote cohesion. Effective dialogue and reconciliation between communities are also essential to prevent the emergence or resurgence of new conflicts in the future.

Data for evidence-based action

The systems to generate and analyse necessary data and knowledge on land and 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 land and HLP issues and to enabling whole-of-government responses and evidence-based planning, budgeting and action.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Displacement is on the rise, compounded by a complex mix of vulnerabilities and causes, such as climate change, disasters, conflicts, violence, human rights violations, macro-economic trends and social inequalities. Its prevention and resolution, the mitigation of its effects and the seizing of opportunities it provides require a holistic understanding and the well-coordinated action of humanitarian, development, peace and climate actors.

Understanding the impact of land and HLP dynamics on displacement is crucial for resilience and prevention. On the other hand, displacement generates an intricate set of land and HLP challenges that require a rich menu of context-specific and localized solutions. This policy document describes the main durable land and HLP solutions for humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience, noting that most solutions would be applicable across the displacement cycle.

The increasingly urban nature of displacement, and its interrelation with other trends, such as urbanization and population growth, highlight the need to approach this challenge from an area-based perspective. A good understanding of the urban environment is crucial because when urban systems work well, they can offer better solutions to displaced people and host communities. A functioning housing sector and an effective urban land management system are particularly important to respond to the land and HLP needs of the displaced, their host communities and the other groups competing for the same land and HLP solutions.

ANNEX: CASE STUDIES

Case study 1. City profiles for an area-based integrated approach for protracted displacement crises, Syria

Categories of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection and recovery
Relevance for solution areas	1 and 9

The protracted crisis in Syria has had a significant impact on urban areas, including damage to buildings and infrastructure and large-scale displacement. Information gathered as part of the humanitarian response is often sector specific. However, given the inter-related nature of urban systems, an integrated area-based approach is better suited to describe and analyse the complexities of urban contexts to inform humanitarian and recovery interventions.

Hence, since 2014 UN-Habitat has developed and subsequently updated several rapid city profiles (for Homs, Aleppo, Dara'a, Latakia, Deir-ez-Zour and Al Tal), focusing on hotspots where population vulnerabilities are acute (such as in as the Ein Al-Tal informal Palestinian camp). In-depth neighbourhood level shelter needs assessments were also conducted, based on the findings of the city profiles.

The profiles give a holistic, multi-sector overview of the impact of the crisis on the city as a whole. They link displacement patterns with a comprehensive analysis of the damage and conditions of key sectors: housing, water supply, sanitation, road networks, electricity, health, education, economy and food security. They also provide a pre-2011 baseline to measure the impact of the crisis against the current situation.

Urban profiles provide useful insights into how people residing in different neighborhoods are coping with the crisis. They help humanitarian actors see where needs are greatest, where recovery is possible, where the most vulnerable groups are located and – based on this evidence – prioritize and coordinate sectoral interventions, such as the repair of housing and provision of basic services.

Key references: 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.

Case study 2. Land administration and land rights for peace and development, Libya

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	2, 15, 16 and 20

The humanitarian crisis ongoing in Libya since 2011 evolved into a full-fledged conflict by 2014. Violence and political instability led to mass displacement. In 2021, Libya hosted 125,000 IDPs, 700,000 returnees and 49,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers. Displacement was compounded by the destruction of homes and properties, secondary occupation, loss of or limited access to civil and HLP documentation and reduced access to basic services and dispute resolution mechanisms.

The country's institutions have been shaken by over fifteen years of instability, resulting in an outdated policy and spatial planning framework, a dysfunctional, outdated and paper-based land and property registration system, extensive informality in the housing sector, rapid urban sprawl of underserviced neighbourhoods in peri-urban areas, illegal appropriation of public and private lands and rapidly increasing land and housing costs.

Because of their legal status in the country, non-Libyan migrants, refugees and asylum seekers do not have access to public services and cannot formalize rental housing agreements, which exposes them to an increased risk of forced eviction.

In 2021, as part of its Arab Land Initiative, UN-Habitat undertook an analysis of the legal, institutional, administrative and spatial frameworks governing land and HLP rights in the country. Weaknesses and entry points for establishing functioning land and housing sectors and strengthening land tenure security for all, including the displaced and women, were identified. Pathways to land sector reforms and the resolution of new and longstanding land disputes and historical grievances were indicated.

Key reference: UN-Habitat/GLTN (2023). Land Administration and Land Rights for Peace and Development in Libya: Analysis and Recommendations.

Case study 3. Assess and improve the low-income rental housing market in Lebanon

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	3, 10, 15 and 20

Between 2014 and 2020 rental prices in Lebanon nearly doubled due to a shortage of affordable rental housing units. The political and economic crisis also led to a rise in unemployment (37 per cent) and poverty (74 per cent), with peaks of 89 per cent of extreme poverty among Syrian refugee households. Many of these households struggle to pay rent, and the number of individual and mass eviction threats across the country have increased. While tenants are increasingly unable to afford rent, property owners are also losing income due to currency devaluation, which decreases the value of the rental income they receive. Some owners are reluctant to rent their properties until the financial crisis stabilizes. This raises questions around the effectiveness of rental assistance programmes, if the value of that assistance is not adapted to market fluctuation.

The Norwegian Refugee Council undertook an assessment to document the current situation of the rental housing market in Lebanon, focusing on the poorest households. The assessment examines the impact of compounding crises in Lebanon on access to adequate and affordable housing for the most vulnerable households and presents an overview of the perspectives of tenants and property holders.

The assessment also looks at the quality of relationship tenants have with their landlords and neighbours, which impacts the likelihood of eviction, and thus tenure security. Evidence shows that tenants who have good relationships with property owners are more likely to have more lenient payment terms and are also more likely to access assistance for upgrading or rehabilitating substandard housing. One-third of respondents indicated being under threat of eviction, while one-quarter of property owners indicated their intention to evict their tenants.

Other key findings about the rental housing sector: low-income rental housing is accessible almost only through the informal market; between 2019 and 2021 rent prices increased 20 per cent on average, and more in Beirut; most people still pay rent in the local currency, but dollarization of rent is increasing; most low-income tenant households occupy small, overcrowded units; many tenants move frequently, often into cheaper, substandard, non-residential units; one quarter of those interviewed reported being in their current property for less than one year.

A set of recommendations for humanitarian actors, donors and government on reforms and programmes to mitigate the risks of forced evictions, improve the design of rental assistance programmes and increase access to affordable housing through the rental market by displaced and low-income households was developed.

Key reference: NRC (2021). Low-income Rental Housing Market Assessment – Lebanon.

Case study 4. Site selection and planning for the spatial integration of IDPs in Berbera, Somalia

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection and recovery
Relevance for solution areas	3, 4, 9 and 10

In the Horn of Africa, displacement is rooted in security issues, drought and other natural disasters. The 2016-2017 drought triggered a large-scale displacement of 300,000 people throughout Somaliland. Most IDPs, both those recently displaced and those already displaced by protracted crises, live in urban centres, primarily Hargeisa and Burao, but also Berbera and Boroma. They either settle among the local communities or in separate settlements. Most IDPs intend to remain in the area of displacement and integrate into local communities.

In Somaliland, conventional approaches for the permanent accommodation of IDPs in the urban centres where they were displaced to involve their relocation in separate settlements developed for this purpose, where livelihoods and basic services are difficult to access.

UN-Habitat championed an alternative approach: planning urban extensions that integrate existing IDP settlements and make space for new, planned ones that are part of the urban fabric. This results in a more compact, connected and serviced urban growth and better living conditions and access to employment.

Based on self-reliance and integration considerations, a set of criteria for identifying the land most suitable to settle and shelter IDPs and returnees was developed: the land should be vacant and free from claims and disputes; it should be free from environmental hazards (risk of landslides, floods, extreme wind) and not contaminated by chemical or biological pollutants; its topography should be suitable for construction; it should not be fertile agricultural land; there should be sufficient water to meet household needs; and livelihood opportunities should be nearby (or adequate transportation should be available). Identifying and negotiating access to appropriate sites through a thorough vetting process is the most crucial part of the process.

Such an approach was successfully rolled out in Berbera and adopted by state and local authorities including the National Displacement and Refugee Agency (NDRA) and the District Commissioners' Offices. IDPs continue to successfully integrate into the Berbera local communities, which benefit from the installation of services initially provided for the IDPs but also accessible by all residents of the area.

Key reference: UN-Habitat (2019). Berbera: Site Selection, Planning and Design Principles for the Spatial Reintegration of IDPs.

Case study 5. Private Hosting in Europe

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	5, 10, 15 and 20

The ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine has resulted in the displacement of more than 7 million people, many of whom have sought shelter in neighboring countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, while others have traveled further across Europe. Since the conflict escalated in 2022, there has been a notable outpouring of solidarity across Europe, with people providing assistance and sheltering those who fled Ukraine in their homes.

Private hosting is defined as the act of offering accommodation to someone in need of a place to stay. It is considered one of the oldest forms of humanitarian response, with communities stepping up to provide shelter for displaced people during times of conflict and natural disasters, notably in countries such as Sri Lanka, Haiti, the Gambia, Pakistan and Lebanon. In Europe, the more recent private hosting movement began in 2015, when the Irish Red Cross launched its Registry of Pledges to share accommodation with those fleeing the Syrian conflict. Also in 2015, Housing Justice in the UK began connecting hosts with migrants facing homelessness, and Takecarebnb was founded in the Netherlands, matching asylum seekers with temporary hosts. Hosting can take different forms, from offering space in a shared household to renting vacant property specifically to those who have been displaced from conflict areas.

Since the conflict in Ukraine, private hosting in Europe has surged. Reflecting the growth of the movement, in 2022 the European Commission developed Safe Homes Guidance to assist those organizing private hosting and to promote safe, suitable accommodation. To support and operationalize the Guidance, in 2023 nine national Red Cross societies across Europe (Belgium, France, Ireland, Hungary, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) along with the Red Cross EU Office (RCEU) and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) created the Safe Homes Programme, contributing to the sourcing, matching, safeguarding and nurturing of relationships between hosts and guests. The programme also aimed to develop a transnational practice model reflecting good practices and lessons learned.

In addition to the immediate impact of providing needed shelter to asylum seekers in the short-term, private hosting is also a valuable integration tool. It can offer a welcoming environment, networks and support systems to help guests transition from the temporary hosting arrangement to longer-term housing solutions and facilitate access to health, transportation, education and livelihood services and opportunities.

Key references: RCEU (2024). Lessons from private hosting: from emergency to preparedness for future welcoming initiatives; RCEU-IFRC (2024). Safe Homes: Key Lessons from Hosting People Displaced From Ukraine In Private Homes; RCEU. Safe Homes Programme; European Commission (2022). Safe Homes Guidance.

Case study 6. Urban rental accommodation and cash support for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	5, 10, 15 and 20

Since early 2015, over one million refugees and migrants have embarked on a dangerous journey to Europe. Many arrived on the islands or on the mainland of Greece, overwhelming municipalities' accommodation capacity, as the needs far exceeded the local stocks of appropriate shelter solutions. Although the situation has been improving, challenges persist in providing adequate shelter for new arrivals, particularly on overcrowded islands where Reception Identification Centres face capacity issues.

To increase sustainable shelter solutions, UNHCR developed an urban accommodation scheme under the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation Programme (ESTIA), supported by the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO). Urban accommodation and cash assistance to refugees and asylum seekers was provided by a partnership among the Greek Government, NGOs, local authorities in the host cities of Athens and Thessaloniki and UNHCR.

The intervention reduced barriers to refugees' access to rental housing, as UNHCR partners enter directly into contractual agreements with apartment owners. Respective rights and obligations of these partners and the beneficiaries are clearly outlined in separate agreements.

Complementary services and in-kind support to beneficiaries are also provided, including psychosocial support and translation. Technical guidance for UNHCR and partners regarding the selection of rental housing for refugees was developed, to fill the gap in national legislation regarding refugee accommodation.

Through this approach, more than 64,000 beneficiaries were provided access to housing by January 2020; nearly 26,000 rental places had been created through the project, including 4600 apartments and 8 buildings across 14 cities and seven islands.

The Urban Accommodation Scheme is recognized by local and national authorities, as well as by the host population, as the most appropriate solution for refugee accommodation. Refugees and asylum seekers have better access to services, public space, infrastructure and job opportunities than in more remote refugee camps and the scheme also facilitates integration. Furthermore, it incorporates solutions for both refugees and host communities, which benefit from apartment rental income.

Key reference: UN-Habitat and UNHCR (2020). Guidance for Responding to Displacement in Urban Areas.

Case study 7. Identification, planning and allocation of land and provision tenure security to displaced people in Afghanistan

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	3, 4, 10, 16 and 20

Afghanistan's protracted crisis, caused by a combination of conflict and droughts, led to the displacement of over half of its population, either inside or outside the country. Since 2014, over 3.5 million refugees returned, but the housing and land rights' situation in the country is dire, particularly for returnees and IDPs. Many returnees settled in open areas or informal urban settlements, where they are vulnerable to eviction and violence. Resolving HLP challenges is a crucial precondition for their reintegration.

In 2017, the Government of Afghanistan in partnership with UN-Habitat, UNHCR and IOM launched the Sustainable Human Settlements in Urban Areas to Support Reintegration (SHURA) programme to address reintegration and livelihood needs of returnees and IDPs. It identified vacant, state-owned land, assessed its suitably, ensuring it was located near viable livelihood opportunities to promote integration and self-reliance, and allocated plots of land to displaced persons. Complementary humanitarian assistance and development interventions were also established to support the most vulnerable.

From the technical perspective, suitable vacant public lands were identified through a rapid survey. A quick assessment of their absorption capacity based on environmental, economic and social considerations was then conducted, followed by rapid site planning and preparation. The communities that relocated to these lands were given a non-transferrable collective type of tenure called 'permission to stay'. In terms of tenure security, the 'permission to stay' is stronger than informal land rights (although not as strong as formal and registered ownership). People no longer feared forced evictions, built houses and started to invest on their lands. Schools and infrastructure were also built.

The identification and allocation of land suitable for durable solutions included the creation of a Land Bank database, established by the Government of Afghanistan with technical support from IOM. The Afghanistan Land Authority (ARAZI) inventoried 19,000 hectares of State land in provinces with high numbers of returnees and displacement.

Between 2017 and 2019, the SHURA programme benefitted 22,688 IDPs and returnee households in Herat (3,260), Jalalabad (6,418), Kandahar (2,309) and Mazar-e-Sharif (2,791). The project helped prevent the formation of makeshift settlements and established safe, planned communities, enabling families to live in inclusive, secure, resilient and sustainable settlements. ARAZI registered 1.4 million jeribs (2.800 sq km) of land under the Land Bank database. A legal framework to promote durable solutions for displaced persons was also developed and adopted.

Key reference: UN-Habitat and UNHCR (2020). Guidance for Responding to Displacement in Urban Areas.

Case study 8. Holistic durable solutions' approach including urban profiling, legal review, disputers' resolution and provision of infrastructure and basic services in Southern Somalia

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	2, 7, 9 and 20

Out of Somalia's population of 17.6 million, approximately 3.9 million people are IDPs. Displacement adds to the challenges posed by pre-existing factors such as lack of basic services in locations where IDPs settle. In 2019, approximately 80 per cent of displaced persons resided in urban areas. This strained already limited resources and absorption capacity of host communities.

In 2017-2019, UN-Habitat and IOM collaborated with the populations affected by displacement to strengthen local governance, improve social cohesion, find durable solutions for IDPs and returning refugees and improve social cohesion in the Hirshabelle, Jubaland and South West States.

The urban resilience component focused on spatial planning, affordable housing and basic services for IDPs. It included: (1) development of urban profiles that combined spatial planning and analysis and guided the long-term development of urban settlements; this included participatory consultations on matters related to spatial planning and land; (2) support for governments in drafting land legislation, which would ultimately lead to the creation of systems and procedures to regulate access to land rights and land use; (3) development of step-by-step guides for implementing the newly-drafted land legislation; (4) establishment of community-based dispute resolution committees (typically consisting of traditional leaders and local government representatives); and (5) training on HLP, land dispute mediation and resolution. Priority community infrastructure projects was also implemented (construction, expansion or upgrading of medical facilities, roads, markets and schools).

Approximately 23,000 displacement-affected people (IDPs, refugees, returnees and members of affected host communities) benefitted from the project directly, and additional 54,000 people benefitted indirectly (through enhanced cohesion, better access to basic services and enhanced planning capacity).

Key reference: UN-Habitat and IOM (2020). Facilitating Durable Solutions in Somalia: Experiences from Midnimo-I and the Application of Human Security.

Case study 9. Recording and safeguarding Syrian refugees' HLP rights and supporting evidence

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection and recovery
Relevance for solution areas	6 and 16

Syria remains one of the largest, protracted and most complex humanitarian emergencies with 6.8 million IDPs and 6.6 million refugees worldwide. Return intention surveys conducted in 2023 among Syrian refugees living in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt found that only 56.1 per cent of Syrian refugees hoped to return to Syria one day, compared to 70 per cent in 2021. Respondents indicated that the main issues affecting their decision to return relate to the lack of safety and security and livelihood opportunities, inadequate basic services, lack of adequate housing and uncertainty over their properties in Syria.

The protection of HLP rights of displaced people in areas of origin is a precondition for voluntary, safe and dignified return and is crucial for social reconciliation and economic recovery. If not addressed appropriately, HLP issues will directly prevent return, and they may undermine stabilization and recovery, triggering further social unrest and conflicts.

Protecting HLP rights and safeguarding HLP documents of Syrian refugees is therefore pivotal for the achievement of durable solutions, and to sustain peace and stability in the long term. Documents and other evidence of HLP rights are often lost when people flee their homes, destroyed or partially destroyed in conflicts or confiscated by armed groups with the malicious intentions of appropriating such properties. The loss or destruction of HLP documents increases with time passed from the first wave of displacement, as refugees are pushed out again and again from their temporary accommodation and suffer further incidents. Collecting and safely storing copies of such HLP documents helps mitigate the risk of further damages and losses, and creates an important basis for future restitution, compensation and disputes' resolution efforts.

Since 2020, UN-Habitat and the Global Land Tool Network have been working with international and local partners in Lebanon and Iraq to safeguard the housing, land and property rights of Syrian refugees therein displaced. Using a land and property recordation tool, the intervention documents Syrian refugees' claims to their residential and non-residential properties in Syria. This is done through a rigorous participatory and voluntary enumeration process.

Available evidence to support the claims is also collected and stored for safekeeping. Digital copies of the information and evidence collected during the interviews are stored with UN-Habitat which is the data custodian for this project. The claims documented include full ownership, joint ownership, long- and short-term use rights. A wide range of legally recognized and additional types of evidence are accepted and safeguarded, as well as supporting personal documentation. As part of the project, 'Certificates of Collection and Safeguarding of Tenure Relationship Documents' are issued. The certificates are designed to help the claimant and his/her household to safely store his/her housing, land and property claims and supporting evidence in case of loss of these documents.

Between 2020 and 2024, 60,000 Syrian refugees were supported by the project. The information gathered is being used to advocate for and design future programmes to restitute the properties illegally occupied, transacted or destroyed, claim compensation and support dispute resolution efforts. The intervention also created improved knowledge and awareness on HLP issues among national and local partners and communities.

Key reference: UN-Habitat/GLTN. Safeguarding evidence of housing, land and property rights of Syrian refugees. Arab Land Initiative.

Case study 10. Harmonization of the legal systems for the resolution of HLP disputes in Somaliland and Puntland, Somalia

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	2, 7, 15, 16 and 20

In Somaliland and Puntland, clans have traditionally collectively owned and managed large tracts of rural and agricultural land according to customary law. In recent decades, there has been a shift in the legal framework governing land in these regions, which are now characterized by legal pluralism and use a mix of formal statutory, customary and sharia law. These different sources of law form the basis to resolve HLP disputes through the respective disputes' resolution mechanisms. Discrepancies and inconsistencies among these sources of law result in different outcomes to the resolution of disputes, depending on the forum chosen. This weakens HLP justice and undermines land governance overall.

To address these challenges, in 2010, Somaliland established Land Dispute Tribunals (LDTs). In 2000, Puntland established Land Dispute Resolution Committees (LDRCs) and in 2017 it established LDTs as well. LDTs are administrative tribunals established by law and holding quasi-judicial powers with jurisdiction over urban areas. They consist of government representatives from agencies overseeing land issues, with the support of UN-Habitat. LRDCs, on the other hand, are ad-hoc administrative bodies that have developed organically at the local government level, involving elders and religious leaders, and hear disputes over both urban and rural land.

Both LDTs and LDRCs are hybrid institutions intended to draw upon the different benefits of every system: formal, customary and religious. The types of disputes brought to LDRCs appear to indicate that the customary system alone is particularly less effective in addressing disputes related to urban land. LDTs and LDRCs were established specifically to address land grabbing, which is widespread in both Somaliland and Puntland, and do not address other land use or ownership issues.

LDTs in Hargeisa were shown to be effective in adjudicating land disputes in urban areas and securing land tenure rights, leading to their establishment in other urban areas in Somaliland. The tribunals soon took over from the courts the exclusive jurisdiction for urban land disputes relating to ownership, considerably helping local governments and the court system in reducing land-related caseloads.

LDTs, however, have not been able to reach their full potential yet. Amendments to the legislation around LDTs could serve to make them even more effective, for example by specifying how to proceed when statutory, customary and sharia laws conflict with one another, and how to specifically protect women, minority groups and internally displaced persons. Additionally, because LDRCs developed organically, they lack formalized support, structures, procedures and mechanisms to ensure their consistency and accountability.

Key reference: UN-Habitat (2015). Harmonization of the Legal Systems Resolving Land Disputes in Somaliland and Puntland: Report and Recommendations.

Case study 11. Build Back Better through spatial planning and reconstruction of housing in Gaza, Palestine

Category of land and HLP solution	Recovery
Relevance for solution areas	11

The Gaza Strip has suffered extensive destruction from repeated military conflicts. The 2008-2009 conflict left tens of thousands homeless. The 2014 conflict led to the displacement of over 500,000 people, severely damaging houses, infrastructure, health facilities and public services. The conflict started in October 2023 resulted in 1.9 million IDPs (July 2024) and the destruction of over 60 per cent of residential buildings (May 2024) and critical infrastructure, with total damage costs estimated at around $18.5 billion and approximately 39 million tons of debris accumulated.

Since 2015, UN-Habitat has spearheaded several initiatives aimed at rebuilding and improving urban life in Gaza through participatory spatial planning, reconstruction of housing and improvement of public spaces.

Key interventions include the 'Building Blocks' programme and the 'Gaza Participatory Spatial Planning Support Programme', which supported municipalities to develop urban development plans and detailed plans for nine communities, rebuild using participatory planning approaches and develop the capacities of local technical personnel. Community committees were also established to sustain engagement with local authorities on planning and development.

UN-Habitat also implemented projects addressing immediate housing needs. The 'Reconstruction of 100 Housing Units for Non-Refugees in the Gaza Strip' project helped families whose homes were destroyed in the 2008-2009 conflict by rebuilding on the same land, to prevent displacement. In 2023, the 'Housing Rehabilitation for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip' project completed the repair of 50 homes damaged during the May 2021 conflict using self-help approaches.

The project 'Utilizing Digital Tools to Promote Human Rights and Create Inclusive Public Spaces in the Gaza Strip' introduced Minecraft as a tool to enable community members, including disadvantaged groups, to participate in designing their living environments. The project led to the development of three public spaces, enhancing the quality of life for 130,000 residents in Beit Lahia, Alshoka and Al-zawayda.

Key references: UN-Habitat (2015). Gaza Urban Profile: Gaza Crisis; UNDP (2014). Detailed Infrastructure Damage Assessment – Gaza; World Bank (2024). Joint World Bank, UN Report Assesses Damage to Gaza's Infrastructure.

Case study 12. Application of the Urban Recovery Framework in Syrian cities

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection and recovery
Relevance for solution areas	1, 3 and 9

UN-Habitat's Urban Recovery Framework (URF) uses an integrated and holistic area-based approach to analyse crisis-affected areas and identify entry points for local interventions, including on HLP. Between 2014 and 2021, the URF has been used by UN-Habitat and its partners to address urban recovery comprehensively. This resulted in 15 Rapid City Profiles, 26 City Profiles, 6 Localized Needs Assessments, training of local experts in mapping, a set of policy papers on topics such as local governance, environment, infrastructure and heritage, HLP analyses, risk screening, situational reports and stakeholder analysis, including recommendations for return considerations.

Comprehensive urban recovery plans were developed for the cities of Aleppo, Dar'a, Harasta and Homs. For each city, distinct strategic priorities and activities linked to those priorities were identified and implemented. The plans address areas such as damage to housing stock, slow speed of reconstruction, complicated land ownership jurisdictions, prevalence of informal housing, economic recovery and more. Basic recovery plans were developed for an additional 80 locations.

Homs, which suffered large-scale damage and displacement, identified one of its priority areas as restoration of service functionality in support of resident and displaced communities, applying an area-based approach to put in place conditions for returns, taking into account demographic displacement dynamics. In Dar'a, UN-Habitat works with UNRWA to put in place the conditions for return of Palestinian refugees who had been displaced from the Dar'a Refugee Camp through a targeted action plan that connects the camp to the overall Dar'a Recovery Plan.
Key references: UN-Habitat (2022). Urban Recovery Framework: An enabling institutional and policy framework to support resilient urban recovery at scale and the renewal of the social contract in urban crisis contexts; UN-Habitat (2022). Urban Recovery Framework: Responding to Displacement in Urban Recovery Approaches.

Case study 13. Gender-sensitive housing project for the relocation of displaced women and girls in Northern Mozambique

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection, recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	4, 10, 15 and 19
Mozambique has experienced large-scale displacement because of conflicts and natural disasters, particularly floods and cyclones. In 2019, Cyclone Kenneth damaged or destroyed half a million homes and mass-displaced the residents. In 2020, the conflict in the north intensified. As of 2024, more than one million people were internally displaced; many fled to urban areas in the province of Cabo Delgado, with some towns seeing population increases of up to 30 per cent in a matter of months, straining local resources and capacities. The Government of Mozambique, with the support of humanitarian and development partners, developed a strategy to implement durable solutions for displaced groups through the creation of new settlements for about 70,000 households. One of the projects in these new settlements was implemented at the Marocani Resettlement Site in Ancuabe District, Cabo Delgado between 2021 and 2023. It aimed at strengthening the protection of displaced women and girls, from the initial displacement and temporary accommodation phase to the final relocation, through the construction of adequate, accessible, resilient and secure housing. The phases of the project included: participatory planning of the housing solutions; technical training and community engagement; and community-led construction of housing. The project built 50 permanent adequate, affordable, safe and resilient houses for 250 beneficiaries within women/girls-headed households. Displaced women and girls were at the center of decision-making and implementation in all project activities. Besides being allocated houses, the project improved their technical and construction skills and contributed to their livelihood opportunities. Three local associations were also strengthened, contributing to community resilience.	
Key reference: Global Shelter Cluster (2023). Shelter Projects 9th edition.	

Case study 14. Dialogues and territorial agreements to prevent conflicts over the use of land-based resources between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary communities in South Sudan

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	7, 8, 19 and 20
Every year during the dry season, large groups of nomadic pastoralists cross from Sudan into South Sudan seeking pasture and water for their livestock, returning when the rains arrive. This migration frequently leads to clashes between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary communities over land and resources. Clashes can escalate into full-fledged inter-communal violence, leading to death, displacement and destruction of properties. However, this migration plays a crucial role in the local economy, sustaining border communities in both countries for decades. Pastoralists provide goods and services while creating a market for local products including fish, honey, skins, hides and minerals. These HLP conflicts over access to and use of natural resources can be prevented through dialogue and territorial agreements. The Civil Affairs Division (CAD) of the UN Mission in South Sudan developed migration dialogues as a tool to manage these conflicts between pastoralist and sedentary communities. These consist of three stages: planning meetings, pre-migration dialogues and post-migration exchanges and learning. Planning meetings take place every year before the migration begins. Nomadic communities send representatives for consultations with leaders of the host community, where they discuss conflict prevention, experiences from previous migration seasons and how land and water resources will be used in the coming season. CAD organizes these meetings and provides logistical and technical support.	

Pre-migration dialogues are held with the aim to agree on a mechanism to manage the migration season and are therefore the most critical part of the preparatory process. The pre-migration dialogue consists of an open exchange among stakeholders from both communities to discuss problems and benefits from the previous migration season, such as economic and security gains, and issues that might clash with social and cultural norms of the sedentary / host communities. The dialogue ends with a formal agreement among stakeholders from both communities. CAD is the technical facilitator during these dialogues, helping the groups reach consensus.

Post-migration exchanges take places at the beginning of the rainy season, when most conflicts occur. The are intended to prevent tensions and escalation, bringing communities together to evaluate adherence to the agreement, as well as any breaches and compensation. Communities also agree on migration routes for the pastoralists as they head north, back to Sudan.

Stakeholders include cross-border peace committees and pastoralists unions, civil society organizations, international NGOs, government authorities, UNHCR and CAD. CAD also supported capacity building on conflict management for traditional leaders, local authorities, cross-border peace committees and the Upper Nile Pastoralists Union.

The migration dialogues and the local territorial agreements on land use have increased social cohesion, increased trade and a reduction in intercommunal conflict between pastoralists and host communities, mitigating the risk of displacement. More broadly, the dialogues contribute to state-building in South Sudan by strengthening institutional and government capacity and acting as a buffer against widespread conflict and instability in the country.

Key reference: UN-Habitat/GLTN (2018b). Land and Conflict: Lessons from the Field on Conflict Sensitive Land Governance and Peacebuilding. See "South Sudan: Migration Dialogues to Prevent Conflict Between Host Communities and Pastoralists" by Jimmy Okumu, United Nations Mission in South Sudan. p.88.

Case study 15. Restitution, compensation, disputes' resolution and addressing historical grievances related to properties through the 'Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes' in Iraq

Category of land and HLP solution	Recovery
Relevance for solution areas	11

Between 1969 and 2003, official policies laid the groundwork for forced displacement in Iraq, leading to expropriation, confiscation and destruction of homes, agricultural land and other properties. Shia, Kurdish, Turkmen, Assyrian and Marsh Arab communities were disproportionately affected. The expropriated land and property were often sold to third parties, and, given the amount of time elapsed, some are now inhabited by fourth- or fifth-party buyers which makes restitution more difficult. In most cases, those seeking remedy are heirs rather than the original owners.

Iraq's property claims programme was initially established in 2004 by the Coalition Provisional Authority during the occupation of Iraq. In 2006, the Commission was restructured as a fully national Iraqi programme: the Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes (CRRPD). The purpose of the programme was to address HLP rights' violations, and particularly the arbitrary and forced removal of innocent civilian populations, through restitution, compensation or allocation of alternative land.

The CRRPD is an independent body of the Government of Iraq and has precedence over all Iraqi courts with respect to claims that fall within the jurisdiction of the programme. This includes properties that were confiscated or seized between 17 July 1968 and 9 April 2003 for political or ethnic reasons, based on religious doctrine or as a result of policies of ethnic, sectarian and nationalist displacement. The CRRPD did not have jurisdiction over properties seized under the agricultural reform law, properties for which in-kind compensation was paid, or properties that were appropriated for public use.

Beneficiaries of the programme were individuals (including heirs), companies or other entities of any nationality, religion or ethnicity. Original owners could choose between having the property title re-issued in his/her name and financial compensation for the value of the property. The party that first sold the property after confiscation (in most cases the Government of Iraq) is liable to pay the compensation.

By the claim submission deadline of June 2007, 167,096 claims had been received. By August 2015 more than 90 per cent of these had received a final decision, including 14,000 that were approved for compensation of which 12,227 had been paid out. Most remaining pending decisions are linked to claims in the Kirkuk Governorate.

Key references: IOM (2008). Property restitution and compensation: practices and experiences of claims programmes; IOM (2016). Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Issues facing Returnees in Retaken Areas of Iraq.

Case study 16. HLP restitution, compensation and addressing secondary occupation through transitional justice in Kosovo

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection and recovery
Relevance for solution areas	6, 7, 8,11 and 13

The 1998-1999 conflict in Serbia / Kosovo led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands. Secondary occupation became an issue when Kosovo Albanians who had been displaced during the conflict returned to Kosovo. Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanians feared reprisal attacks from those returning and subsequently fled their homes en masse. Because many of the homes of Kosovo Albanians had been destroyed in the conflict, while the homes of Kosovo Serbs, Rom and Slavic Muslims remained intact, some Kosovo Albanians returnees occupied the recently abandoned homes of Kosovo Serbs who had fled. To bring order to the situation while avoiding mass homelessness among the returning Kosovo Albanians, NATO forces and municipal governments each issued temporary permits allowing occupation of abandoned properties on humanitarian grounds.

In late 1999, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) established institutions responsible for the restitution of property – particularly residential property – in Kosovo for violations that occurred between 1989 and 1999: the Housing and Property Directorate (HPD) and the Housing and Property Claims Commission (HPCC). By 2006, the HPD was absorbed into the newly established Kosovo Property Agency (KPA), mandated to resolve all immovable property claims, including agricultural and commercial, as well as remaining residential claims.

There were three categories of claims, for a) people who lost the right to occupy socially owned residential property, b) people (typically Kosovo Albanians) who lost the right to sell private residential property due to discriminatory legislation and c) people (typically Kosovo Serbs) who lost access to their property due to secondary occupancy. Holders of Power of Attorney and heirs of victims could also file claims if they were able to provide evidence of inheritance.

The HDP also created a partial inventory of abandoned housing, conducted research and developed policy guidance concerning property rights, supervised the use and rental of abandoned property for temporary humanitarian purposes and oversaw the eviction process.

In cases of claims involving secondary occupation, the current occupant was first notified by HPD staff of the claim made by the pre-conflict occupant. Occupants were asked if they had legal right to the property or if they lived there only because their property was not habitable. All responses were documented by HPD staff. In the case of the former, occupants could present documents demonstrating their right to occupy the property within 30 days, followed by an interview and opportunity to provide a written statement.

Temporary permits issued on humanitarian grounds had no legal effect in the claims process, and the need for shelter was not a defense to a claim. Current occupants could not request compensation for improvements made to the property during their occupancy. They could, however, request humanitarian housing in HPD-administered abandoned properties. Enforcement of eviction decisions could be delayed for up to six months if the current occupants required humanitarian housing, otherwise eviction orders were executed after 30 days. Most successful pre-conflict occupant claimants elected not to return to their properties but to instead request that HPD administer their claimed property.

The programme succeeded in resolving all claims concerning residential property, which was its primary objective. The option for pre-conflict occupant claimants to have HPD administer their properties also served to provide the needed supply of temporary humanitarian housing for current occupants facing eviction.

Key reference: IOM (2008). Property restitution and compensation: practices and experiences of claims programmes.

Case study 17. Financial inclusion of forcibly displaced persons and host communities in Iraq

Category of land and HLP solution	Recovery
Relevance for solution areas	12

Over a million people are displaced in Iraq (March 2024), due to protracted crises and the relapsing of conflict and instability. Some governorates mostly host IDPs (such as Dohuk), others have a significant returnee population (such as Nineveh) and many have consistent refugee communities.

Despite being nationals of the country, IDPs face significant challenges in accessing credit due to a lack of formal identification, unstable living conditions and limited financial literacy. Many lack collateral and a credit history, which further hinders their ability to secure loans from financial institutions. These barriers impede their capacity to buy or rent commercial properties and start or grow businesses, making it difficult for them to achieve economic stability and self-sufficiency.

As part of the Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities (PROSPECTS), the International Labour Organization (ILO) helps forcibly displaced individuals and host community members gain access to better livelihoods and decent job opportunities. This support includes market-driven skills training, enhanced public employment services, labor-intensive infrastructure projects and initiatives to promote financial inclusion and entrepreneurship, with a particular emphasis on aiding the start-up of new businesses and supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The ILO's financial inclusion initiatives provide vulnerable entrepreneurial households with access to affordable loans from domestic banks and other financial service providers, enabling them to restart or expand their businesses, including securing the necessary commercial properties.
Key references: ILO (2021).ILO's Financial Inclusion Strategy in Iraq; ILO (2021). Advancing livelihoods through financial inclusion in Iraq; ILO. Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS).

Case study 18. Facilitating return and integration through land conflict mediation and participatory land recordation in North Kivu, Eastern DRC

Category of land and HLP solution	Humanitarian protection and recovery
Relevance for solution areas	2, 7, 8, 13, 16, 19 and 20
Beni and Goma municipalities of the North Kivu province in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are traditionally rural farming areas governed by customary law, where land rights are not recorded. Waves of displacement have affected the region over the past decades. Displaced persons returning to their lands have often found them occupied. This resulted in frequent conflicts over land ownership, occupation and use. Parties to the conflict are new land owners, people who have traditionally used the land, incoming refugees and returning displaced groups. In the Masiani neighbourhood of Beni municipality, tenure conflicts have affected 40 per cent of the neighbourhood's 16,300 households, leading to physical violence, kidnapping, assassinations and unresolved disappearances. Land conflict mediation was used by UN-Habitat and its partners as an alternative collaborative dispute resolution mechanism to resolve HLP disputes, prevent related violence, restore and protect legitimate HLP rights of the competing groups and create the preconditions for (re)integration, peace and recovery. The approach included: enabling policy and legal frameworks (including a peace agreement, recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples and recognition of customary land rights); participatory land recordation; technical assistance; and capacity development. Between 2016 and 2018, 564 men and 97 women received locally agreed and legally recognized HLP documents, following mediation and conflict resolution efforts in the neighbourhood. Overall, the resolution of land disputes in DRC positively impacted 110,580 individuals (20,334 men, 23,331 women, 32,545 girls and 34,369 boys), leading to a significant reduction in land conflicts and increased land tenure security, including for returning displaced persons. A transparent land information system was established, facilitating the smooth integration of both returning and resident IDPs through digitized tenure information, a comprehensive database and community-generated maps that allow communities to manage their tenure data. Communication and coordination on land issues among national and provincial governments and civil society have also improved. These efforts supported the development of the National Land Policy, which was approved in 2022.	
Key reference: UN-Habitat/GLTN (2024c). Durable housing, land and property solutions for customary displacement contexts.	

Case study 19. New urban land law to improve land administration, land and property registration and tenure security in South West State, Somalia

Category of land and HLP solution	Recovery and resilience
Relevance for solution areas	16, 19 and 20
In the South West State of Somalia, legal land reforms focused on addressing land tenure, land management and HLP disputes. In 2022, the South West Parliament enacted an Urban Land Law, with the broad objective of providing a comprehensive legal framework for the efficient and equitable management, regulation and allocation of urban land and the protection of HLP rights. It is intended to replace outdated or ineffective regulations with modern, transparent policies that align with national and international standards. This is crucial for promoting orderly urban development and ensuring security of land tenure in rapidly growing urban areas. The Law harmonizes institutional mandates and simplifies land administration procedures and services to maintain accurate land records. Article 17 of the Law establishes the State Land Registry, which compiles the "registration of all planned land transactions in towns and districts provided by local governments", while Article 25 tasks local governments with the creation of a system to "store information related to land and real estate". This will facilitate the formalization of land ownership and use rights in urban areas, addressing the challenges posed by informal land transactions and informal settlements. The Urban Land Law safeguards the rights of individuals, groups, corporations and communities to use, access and own land, and includes a chapter dedicated to managing evictions and land disputes. Notably, it includes protections for internally displaced persons against eviction, establishes a Land Dispute Tribunal and addresses the issue of lost and destroyed land records by allowing tax records as evidence of ownership in disputes.	

Key references: Mohamed, S. Q. (2023). Somalia Land Governance Review, The Heritage Institute for Policy Studies; IDMC (n.d.). Protecting the Housing, Land and Property rights for Displacement Affected Communities in urban centres in Somalia.

Case study 20. Flood modelling for climate-resilient settlements in Pakistan

Category of land and HLP solution	Resilience
Relevance for solution areas	17, 18 and 19

Between June and October 2022, Pakistan experienced devastating floods that affected 33 million people and resulted in the displacement of 7.9 million, with at least 664,000 individuals relocating to relief camps and informal settlements. The German Watch ranked Pakistan among the ten countries most affected by climate change globally. These events created awareness about the need for climate resilient settlement planning in the country.

UN-Habitat Pakistan undertook a pilot project to provide technical assistance to the Government in this regard. The project designed and implemented a model climate resilient local settlement plan in the flood affected area of Kamangar in Dadu district of Sindh Province, which was badly affected by the 2022 floods. A detailed flood vulnerability analysis of the existing settlements in Deh Kamangar was undertaken. Following this, a plan for resilient recovery, rehabilitation and post-flood reconstruction was prepared. It was further envisaged that the model project will serve as the bedrock for future local climate adaptation plans and serve as a model for replication in other areas of Pakistan.

Flood vulnerability was assessed using a high-resolution Digital Elevation Model (DEM) and drones. A base for calculating the exposure was created. The flood intensity, depth, velocity and extension of the flooded areas were assessed (using GIS/RS and an HEC RAS model). Various scenarios were developed, using 400 mm and 500 mm rainfall amounts over different durations (4 hours, 24 hours and 5 days). The various zones in the area were identified and mapped according to their varied vulnerability (high, medium and low).

The magnitude of devastation by floods in Kamangar had also underscored the need for investing in disaster resilient infrastructure. It was with this goal in mind that the project provided technical assistance in the resilient recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction in post-flood development in Kamangar.

Flexible settlement plans were developed for the purpose of aiding resilient recovery at the local level. These plans also have the potential for replication elsewhere. Among additional benefits, shelter demarcation in the plans have helped the government in processing and providing land titles to landless women-headed households in the area. A socio-economic survey and focus group discussions conducted during the preparation of settlement plans have also helped in the establishment of a baseline for monitoring and in identifying community priorities future interventions.

Additionally, a parallel HLP capacity-building initiative was implemented for key stakeholders in the flood-affected districts of Pakistan. A total of 250 individuals, including 190 women, were trained, of whom 67 are young female lawyers. This group has been instrumental in establishing 25 Citizens' Support Forums across all provinces, providing critical assistance to the flood-affected population, especially women and marginalized groups, in protecting their HLP rights at the local level.

Key reference: UN-Habitat (2024c). Climate Resilient Settlement Planning and Vulnerability Assessment: Deh Kamanagar, Taluka Mehar, District Dadu, Sindh, Pakistan.

Case study 21. Participatory planning, identification of suitable areas for settling displaced people and returnees to prevent conflicts with host communities, and establishment of a fit-for-purpose land recordation system in Darfur, Sudan

Category of land and HLP solution	Recovery and resilience
Relevance to solution areas	16, 18, 19 and 20

Darfur has been ravaged by cyclical conflicts and mass-displacement. Access to, use of and control over land and natural resources are fundamental root causes of inter-communal conflict, but also key enablers of durable solutions for IDPs and returning refugees.

Land and natural resources are managed by a web of customary, statutory, religious laws and practices. This legal pluralism, aggravated by unsuitable land-related policies and laws and coupled with a dysfunctional land administration system (less than 2 per cent of the land is registered) weakens the land rights of host and displaced communities. Waves of mass displacement and population movement has occurred over the past decades, making it hard to identify legitimate HLP rights of owners, tenants and other land users and to provide durable HLP solutions for all.

The 'Building Sustainable Peace and Social Cohesion' project addressed the complex interplay between land ownership, natural resource management and inter-communal conflicts through a partnership between UN-Habitat, the Ministry of Urban Planning and Infrastructure and other relevant national partners.

The project included participatory planning (sketch mapping and demarcation) in returnee villages to record communal rights. Informed by community norms and conflict analysis, the participatory planning process resulted in digitized maps for twenty villages. The areas for accommodating returnees were identified to avoid creating conflicts with the host communities.

Additionally, the project piloted the recordation of land rights for approximately three thousand IDPs in three return villages using the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM), a pro-poor land recordation tool developed by the Global Land Tool Network. The use of the tool entailed a community-based approach and the establishment of multidisciplinary 'Core Teams' led by the technical staff of state-level Ministries. The project received technical support and backstopping at various administrative levels, encompassing the entire process from mobilization and enumeration to the digitalization of the village plans and the validation of the decisions taken. The database captures and classifies land plots and lays the foundation for a land records system. 'Core Teams' were capacitated and trained on land registration, STDM and on fit-for-purpose land administration approaches.

These interventions yielded remarkable results, including identifying suitable and conflict-free areas to accommodate IDPs and returnees, empowering local authorities and communities to manage their lands; introducing innovative and participatory land management and land recordation approaches and tools; and improving coordination and collaboration among stakeholders.

Key references: UN-Habitat/GLTN (2020b). Darfur Land Administration Assessment – Analysis and Recommendations; UN-Habitat (forthcoming). Promoting Fit for Purpose Land Administration towards Peacebuilding and sustainable return of IDPs: Darfur Case Study.

Case study 22. Vulnerability assessments, participatory land use planning, recordation of HLP rights and climate-resilience community infrastructure in Afghanistan

Category of land and HLP solution	Recovery and resilience
Solution area	19

Afghanistan currently ranks sixth in the Climate Risk Index. Its population is exposed to drought, floods, landslides and extreme heat. Four decades of conflict and widespread poverty add to climate fragility, making Afghanistan one of the gravest humanitarian emergencies globally, with nearly two-thirds of residents in need of humanitarian assistance. There are more than 1,000 informal settlements in urban areas of the country, populated largely by IDPs. Informal settlements are often located in hazard-prone areas, lack basic services and adequate housing and are subject to frequent evictions by authorities.

In 2022-2023, UN-Habitat implemented a pilot project on land tenure security and climate resilience in the Kart-E-Maiwand informal settlement in Herat, in the drought-prone Western Region. The project secured communal land rights and strengthened the resilience of the community to the impacts of climate change.

Three main components were implemented: (1) Participatory land use mapping to create a spatial record of the settlement and its boundaries; (2) Community-based climate vulnerability assessments and participatory settlement planning to identify climate resilient investments; and (3) Priority climate resilient community investments (e.g. flood resistant drainage system) to reduce climate risk, consolidate the settlement and strengthen de facto tenure security.

The intervention benefitted 347 households (1,885 displaced people) who moved to the settlement from conflict- and drought-affected rural areas in search of safety and improved livelihoods. Capacity building strengthened community-based organizations and the employment of members of the community to build the infrastructure boosted local incomes.

Key reference: UN-Habitat (2024b). Securing land tenure for climate resilient informal settlements: a case study of an integrated approach in Afghanistan.

Case study 23. Strengthening evidence-based data to safeguard women's HLP rights in the West Bank, Palestine

Category of land and HLP solution	Resilience
Solution area	19 and 20

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) highlights the critical role of women in humanitarian response and post conflict reconstruction, preventing and resolving conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding and peacekeeping. The contribution of women in peacebuilding is also outlined by the United Nations Secretary General's Report on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding (2010). In conflict-affected contexts, women's HLP rights are not only important because they reduce women's vulnerabilities, but also because they strengthen women's leadership and participation in decision-making, enabling them to play a bigger role as peace actors.[64] In Palestine, UN-Habitat collaborates with national and international partners to monitor and improve women's HLP rights, including to foster peace and stability and to prevent further displacement.

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Women's land ownership in Palestine is significantly affected by historical, cultural, legal and political factors. The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has led to widespread displacement, with many families losing their land. Women are particularly impacted, due to societal and legal hurdles that impede their rights to reclaim or inherit property. Patriarchal norms and customary laws often favor male heirs, further restricting women's land ownership. The lack of a clear land registration system and protective property rights exacerbates this issue, making it easier for women to be dispossessed. The complex legal framework and bureaucratic obstacles present further challenges for women seeking to assert ownership rights.

The Oslo Accords II, signed in 1995, divided the West Bank into Areas A, B and C, each with different levels of Palestinian and Israeli control, complicating land ownership further. Over one-third of the land remains unregistered, affecting rights to ownership, inheritance and use, and this has disproportionately impacted women. About 34 per cent of the land in the West Bank was registered before 1967. Israeli authorities halted the land registration process from 1968 to 2006, when the Palestinian Land Authority resumed registration, but covered only about 1 per cent of the land mainly in Areas A and B. In 2016, the independent Palestinian Land and Water Settlement Commission (LWSC) was established to carry out the work of settlement and registration of land. Since its establishment in 2016 the LWSC has completed the settlement of roughly 27.3 per cent of the West Bank's total area, including land across all administrative Areas A, B and C. Currently, about 42 per cent of the West Bank's land remains unsettled, with a significant portion in Area C.

UN-Habitat supports LWSC in addressing gender disparities in land registration by disaggregating over 1.158 million dunums of settled land records to reflect women's ownership. In the West Bank, 79 per cent of the lands and properties registered in the name of private individuals, 17 per cent are waqf lands and 2 per cent are state lands. The rest is registered to different entities such as municipal or village councils, unions, committees or universities. Women own only 20.3 per cent of private lands and properties (compared to men's 79.3 per cent).

Technical, knowledge management and advocacy efforts are being made to disaggregate by sex HLP information in Palestine. Ensuring the effective implementation of existing laws, advancing the gender-responsive registration of the land, enhancing women's access to legal services and education and addressing cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality are crucial steps towards achieving gender equality in land ownership, including as a measure to mitigate conflict and displacement.

Key references: Palestinian Land and Water Settlement Commission (2020-2024). Land Issues in the West Bank. Newsletter series; UN-Habitat/GLTN (2020c). Fostering Tenure Security and Resilience for Bedouin Communities in the so-called Area C of the West Bank, Palestine: Policy Framework and Implementation Tools.

Case study 24. Analysis and recommendations to address land and HLP-related root causes of conflict and displacement in Jubaland, Somalia

Category of land and HLP solution	Resilience
Solution area	17 and 20

The Jubaland region in southern Somalia is marked by persistent instability that stems from political friction alongside entrenched clan rivalries that exacerbate local disputes. Control over land and resources is a significant source of tension, with different clans and factions contesting territory and access to essential resources like water and pasture. The presence of Islamist militant groups further complicates the situation, contributing to insecurity and displacement. These intertwined conflicts over political power, control of land and natural resources create a volatile environment, impacting livelihoods of the local population and creating waves of displacement.

Upon request of UNDPPA, UN-Habitat and GLTN investigated the land-related root causes of conflict in the region to help guide the work of the United Nations in peace building and land conflicts management and to inform land policy processes.

The study highlighted and provided recommendations to address the land and HLP related root causes of conflict and displacement: scarcity of land for pastures, environmental degradation, unrecognized and unregistered customary land rights, dysfunctional land registration and land disputes' resolution systems, land grabbing, exclusion of minorities and women from the full enjoyment of HLP rights and unregulated urban expansion. This analysis shows that IDPs and returnees are disproportionally impacted by the manifestations of such root causes.

Recommendations for programming include developing a suitable policy and legal framework, strengthening land institutions, better managing the use of natural resources, scaling up fit-for purpose land administration approaches piloted, strengthening HLP dispute resolution mechanisms, combatting land grabbing and forced evictions, providing HLP solutions for displaced people and landless poor, planning urban growth and focusing on providing access to land and livelihoods to women and youth.

Key reference: UN-Habitat/GLTN (2020a). Land and Conflict in Jubaland: Root cause analysis and recommendations.

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