



# URBANISATION, DISASTERS AND DISPLACEMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

## RESEARCH PAPER

September 2014

DISASTERS  
CLIMATE CHANGE AND  
DISPLACEMENT  **EVIDENCE  
FOR ACTION**

PARTNERS

**THE  
NANSEN  
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DISASTER-INDUCED CROSS-BORDER DISPLACEMENT

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The author thanks the Norwegian Refugee Council for commissioning this research and for their support throughout the process. Thanks also to Peter Walker and Dyan Mazurana of the Feinstein International Center - Tufts University for their guidance. He would like to extend a special thank to all the interviewees from governments, civil society and international organisations that contributed to the report.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Norwegian Refugee Council and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Published by the Norwegian Refugee Council.



The Norwegian Refugee Council is an independent, humanitarian, non-governmental organisation, which provides assistance, protection, and contributes to durable solutions to refugees and internally displaced people worldwide.

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The project is funded  
by the European Union  
with the support of  
Norway and Switzerland



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This report examines issues that arise when addressing displacement in the context of disasters, when urban areas are a source and/or destination of displacement. Research considered the operational and policy challenges related to the three phases of displacement: prevention of displacement, protection and humanitarian assistance during displacement and the search for durable solutions. The report examines the experiences of El Salvador and the Philippines, countries selected because they are highly exposed to hazards and the effects of climate change, their populations are at heightened risk of displacement and displacement regularly occurs after disasters. These highly urbanised and disaster prone countries offer valuable perspective on the challenges of protecting displaced people and conducting disaster management in urban areas.**

As a consequence of climate change and increasing urbanisation, government disaster management (DM) and humanitarian actors will face more frequent and more intense disasters, triggering further displacement in urban areas. In order to most effectively protect populations before, during and after displacement, they will have to adjust their policies and protection interventions to meet the intricacies of the urban landscape, the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and those who might be displaced across borders.

Before disasters, DM and humanitarian agencies must understand the natural risks that residents of urban environments experience. In order to mitigate them so as to prevent displacement to the greatest degree possible, urban authorities need to conduct risk sensitive urban planning, enforce no-build rules and facilitate relocation or safe housing for residents of marginalised and informal settlements. Prevention and preparedness tools such as risk maps and contingency plans should be designed and managed locally and in a participatory manner that includes residents. Local governments should understand likely patterns of displacement and prepare accordingly to ensure residents' rights are protected during displacement.

During disasters, DM and humanitarian actors should implement assistance and protection mechanisms that are appropriate for urban areas. These should be accessible displaced people who are both in and outside official shelters. Those who respond to disasters must understand what displaced people in urban areas need in order to achieve a durable solution and minimise their risk of future displacement. Governments should facilitate access to recovery assistance in order to allow returned IDPs to rebuild and resume their lives. Residents of urban areas who previously lived in risk-prone locations should have access to safe transitional housing and relocation to an environment that ensures comprehensive protection of their rights.

Effective governance is key. Urban and environmental planning laws, disaster risk reduction (DDR), climate change policies and disaster management legislation may be meaningless without the will and capacity of local and national governments to apply and enforce them. Rapid and uncontrolled growth, corruption, weak political leadership and difficulties in stimulating community participation are just a few of the factors that hinder effective disaster management in urban areas.



Residents have rebuilt in an informal settlement in Tacloban City that was declared a No Build Zone following Typhoon Haiyan. The ship in the background was washed ashore by the storm. Photo © Jeremy Harkey

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The global climate system is warming and extreme weather and climate events have increased in intensity and duration. Experts predict that these trends will continue.<sup>1</sup> The poorest are among the most vulnerable to natural hazards, as a result of their reduced resilience and capacity to cope.<sup>2</sup> Those who are most marginalised will be the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.<sup>3</sup>

Disasters cause displacement, both within and across borders, when individuals are not able to cope with the effects. It is difficult to ascertain the number of individuals displaced throughout the world by disasters and climate change events. The Norwegian Refugee

Council's (NRC) Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that from 2008 to 2012, 143.9 million people globally were newly displaced by disasters.<sup>4</sup> This is the figure for rapid onset disasters only. Due especially to climate change, experts expect this trend of massive displacement to increase.<sup>5</sup> The UN has projected that by 2050 it is likely 200 million people will have been displaced by environmental factors.<sup>6</sup>

Half of the world's population lives in or around cities and towns.<sup>7</sup> Low and middle-income countries host around three quarters of the world's urban population and the majority of the largest cities in the world. These countries also host the highest proportion of urban residents most likely to be affected by the increased frequency of disasters due to climate change.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IPCC, 2013, *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis: Working Group I Contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Summary for Policy Makers, pp.1-5, <http://goo.gl/o45xtJ>

<sup>2</sup> See: Akter, Sonia and Mallick, Bishawjit, 2013, "The poverty-vulnerability-resilience nexus: evidence from Bangladesh" *Ecological Economics* 96, <http://goo.gl/NHLMWd>; Boano, Camillo, Zetter, Roger and Morris, Tim, 2008, *Environmentally displaced People: understanding the linkages between environmental change, livelihoods and forced migration*. University of Oxford, Refugee Studies Centre, <http://goo.gl/la8Lri>; and Kolmannskog, Vikram, 2008, *Future Floods of Refugees: A comment on climate change, conflict and forced migration*. Norwegian Refugee Council, <http://goo.gl/7T12AN>

<sup>3</sup> IPCC, 2014, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability: Summary for Policymakers*, p.7, <http://goo.gl/GmbSJs>

<sup>4</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013b, *Global Estimates 2012: People Displaced by Disasters*, p.11, <http://goo.gl/XeGmQc>

<sup>5</sup> IPCC 2014, *op. cit.*, p.20.

<sup>6</sup> The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2009, *State of world population 2009. Facing a Changing World: Women, Population and Climate*, p.30, <http://goo.gl/CGP0ve>

<sup>7</sup> IASC Reference Group on Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas, <http://goo.gl/EXo5GW>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2014, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision*.



Urban disaster risk has been increasing as a result of development patterns.<sup>9</sup> Net rural to urban migration and natural population increase cause urban areas to grow. Indeed, all net future population growth is expected to be in towns and cities. The UN predicts that urban population growth will be composed to a high degree of poor people, whom local governments frequently fail to consider in urban planning.<sup>10</sup>

Land use and building code regulations are important to ensure that urban development policies consider climate change and risks. Much urban growth has not been regulated.<sup>11</sup> Urban areas are expanding outwards and new formal and informal developments are being built on risk prone land. This particularly affects the poor, as they are unable to afford land prices in city centres.<sup>12</sup> The pace of development also has implications for urban areas' abilities to manage risks. Flooding in urban areas, for example, is linked to the ability of storm water runoff systems to handle heavy flows.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.2 KEY FINDINGS

El Salvador and the Philippines face similar challenges in protecting disaster-induced urban IDPs. Following are key findings from field research for the two case studies.

### 1.2.1 Prevention of and preparedness for displacement

- Local governments and communities are essential to ensuring the effectiveness of disaster prevention and preparedness activities. Administrative boundaries in large urban areas create a high number of DM offices, each with localised tools and systems. Local governments may not be interested in fulfilling their responsibilities around risk management, disaster preparedness and prevention. They also may lack capacity. As a result, communities are increasingly vulnerable to disasters and under-prepared to protect displaced people. Due to poor governance urban areas have a patchwork prevention and preparedness map, reflecting gaps even among administrative units that focus on similar and/or interconnected risks.

- Formal and informal settlements throughout urban areas are exposed to multiple natural hazards. Logistical challenges to enforcing development and land use laws, and corruption, reduce the capacity of local governments to ensure that residents do not settle in risk prone locations. Challenges to the relocation of those in at-risk settlements include residents' social ties to their community and land; inability to afford to participate in relocation programmes and limited available land for intra-city relocation.

### 1.2.2 Protection of the displaced

- People displaced by disasters in urban areas seek shelter for short periods before returning to their place of origin. Security concerns contribute to reluctance to leave homes and assets. They also help determine destinations of displacement. Displaced people in urban areas flee to a wide variety of destinations, including official shelters, unofficial and impromptu shelters and the homes of family and friends. Particularly when unable to access humanitarian assistance and protection in urban areas, displaced people may flee to other urban areas or to rural destinations.
- It is difficult to track displaced people in urban areas and identify and respond to their protection needs. Systems to track and identify displaced people are labour intensive and require strategic use of local government and community networks. Many displaced people are not able to access protection support.
- Displaced people experience protection challenges in each of the types of shelter. The farther they are from the assistance and protection monitoring that focuses on the official system, the greater their protection needs may be. Urban areas require a high number of official shelter facilities, due to the volume of displaced people and the small size of most facilities. Protection challenges result from inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of separated sleeping spaces and under-prepared shelter management staff. Gangs and human traffickers may target displaced people.

<sup>9</sup> Chang, Stephanie E., Gregorian, Martin, Pathman, Karthick, Yumagulova, Lilia and Tse, Wendy, 2012, "Urban growth and long-term changes in natural hazard risk", *Environment and Planning A* 44(4), p.990, <http://goo.gl/2sRw6K>

<sup>10</sup> UNFPA, 2007, *State of the world population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth*, p.6, <http://goo.gl/EYF99G>

<sup>11</sup> UN-HABITAT, 2008, *State of the world's cities 2008/2009: Harmonious Cities*, Earthscan, p.145, <http://goo.gl/9wJH9r>

<sup>12</sup> Satterthwaite, David, 2008, *Climate Change and Urbanization: Effects and Implications for Urban Governance*, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, p. 9, <http://goo.gl/GTurtP>; Lall, Somik V and Deichmann, Uwe, 2009, *Density and Disasters: Economics of Urban Hazard Risk*, The World Bank, p.4, <http://goo.gl/rmCQZe>; Bruch, Carl and Goldman, Lisa, 2012, *Keeping up with Megatrends: The Implications of Climate Change and Urbanization for Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response*, United Nations Environment Programme and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, p.5, <http://goo.gl/j4OYBM>

<sup>13</sup> Bruch and Goldman, *op. cit.*, p.16.

### 1.2.3 Impediments to durable solutions

- Displaced people in urban areas are often expected to leave shelters without assessment of their ability to return to safe conditions. This is further complicated when shelters are housed on private land or in schools. School directors may have authority to ask displaced people to leave, without considering their ability to return to a safe home. Residents of informal settlements may face eviction following their displacement. Governments may declare informal settlements to be “no build” or “no habitation” zones.
- It is difficult for humanitarian actors to provide comprehensive support to rebuild damaged homes. Space for transitional and relocation housing in urban areas is limited. This may force displaced people to return to their unsafe place of origin. Transitional housing may also pose protection challenges, particularly if it is hastily constructed.
- Transitional housing may become permanent if relocation options do not materialise or are insufficient. Relocation faces similar impediments before and in the wake of disasters. However, due to time pressures following disasters authorities may fail to conduct participatory and rights-based planning for relocation.
- Depending on the type and scale of the disaster, formal and informal urban livelihoods may be interrupted for an extended period of time. Except in major disasters, humanitarians provide little post-return assistance or livelihoods recovery support. Cash and voucher assistance allows recipients to use funds as they see fit.

## 1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

### National disaster management actors

- Urban governments should mainstream DRR when planning and maintaining infrastructure. Authorities and communities should cooperate to identify and comprehensively address risk.
- Disaster management plans should consider how urban risk factors such as gangland boundaries might affect displacement patterns.
- Facilities used as shelters should be appropriate for the needs of the displaced and shelter management staff should be adequately trained in protection. Governments should build adequate shelters and/or retrofit other facilities so as to address the protection needs of the displaced. Schools should not be used as shelters.
- Urban residents should be informed of which official shelter they should go to during disasters. Officials should also inform residents how they may access humanitarian assistance and protection support if they take shelter elsewhere.
- Systems should be developed to provide assistance to those who chose to seek shelter in homes and in rural or in other urban areas.
- Relocation programmes should be participatory and rights-based and should meet the livelihoods and protection needs of potential beneficiaries.

### Humanitarian actors

- Humanitarian actors should partner with, local authorities, civil society actors and communities to improve assistance and protection systems for those in unofficial shelters.
- Humanitarian and development actors should help urban communities and governments build capacity on displacement in disaster response, particularly before disasters.

### Donors

- Donors should consider funding projects to reduce disaster risk and prevent displacement. This should include the appropriate strengthening of vulnerable housing and relocation of populations at risk.
- Donors should support efforts to improve and retrofit shelters prior to disasters.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

**El Salvador and the Philippines have a great deal in common, starting with the fact that they are both within the top ten countries on the World Risk Index.<sup>14</sup> Their urban areas are exposed to multiple hazards and their populations – particularly the poorest and most marginalised – are highly vulnerable to displacement. Development is expanding into urban peripheries and into increasingly risk prone sites. Disasters and human displacement are recurrent.**

Using El Salvador and the Philippines as case studies, this report examines the challenges of preventing and preparing for displacement as a result of disasters in urban areas, protecting displaced people and facilitating durable solutions. It examines how different phases of protection of displaced people in urban areas are interlinked, and how protection gaps in each phase affect the ability to ensure protection in the others.

The research findings from each country are presented in separate sections. The report presents key findings from the country studies and highlights important differences.

### 2.1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Norwegian Refugee Council commissioned this research to support the Nansen Initiative's Regional Consultations in Central America and Southeast Asia. The Nansen Initiative is a state-led, bottom-up consultative process intended to build consensus on a protection agenda addressing the needs of people displaced across international borders by disasters and the effects of climate change.<sup>15</sup> This report is intended to strengthen the evidence base on key issues around protecting those displaced by disasters, both internally and across borders and to make recommendations on how humanitarians may most effectively protect displaced people in urban environments. This report primarily discusses the protection of internally displaced persons, however the protection issues may become more relevant to cross border displacement in the future.

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<sup>14</sup> This index calculates countries' disaster risks as a factor of exposure to hazards and societal vulnerability. See *World Risk Report 2013* for further information, <http://goo.gl/RJVtpA>

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.nanseninitiative.org/>

**INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON (IDP):** The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (Guiding Principles) defines internally displaced persons as

*...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.*<sup>16</sup>

**PROTECTION:** States are responsible for ensuring the responsibility to ensure the protection of individuals in their territories at all times. This responsibility extends to preventing violations of human rights, protecting victims against threats and providing reparation and full rehabilitation following human rights violations.<sup>17</sup> This responsibility includes protecting its population from internal displacement, during and after displacement. These responsibilities, and the rights of individuals in each of these phases, are considered in the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross, protection is defined as:

*“... all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. HR law, IHL, refugee law)”*<sup>18</sup>

This definition may consider a wide variety of activities to qualify as protection efforts. Some scholars have argued this is too all-encompassing.<sup>19</sup> The *IASC Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters* offers another definition. This narrows the concept by placing emphasis on protection activities to ensure access to rights, protection thereof, and fulfilment.

*“...the role humanitarian and (in the context of recovery) development actors play with regard to ensuring that the rights of affected persons under international human rights law are respected, protected and fulfilled without discrimination”*.<sup>20</sup>

This report uses the IASC definition when referring to protection activities.

## 2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This research was preceded by a literature review. The review examines relevant academic and grey literature globally and for El Salvador and the Philippines. The review borrows from literature on the protection of conflict IDPs and refugees in urban areas to understand which challenges may also be relevant to the protection of disaster induced displaced people. Key findings from the literature review help improve understanding of issues presented in the main body of the report.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.2.1 Prevention of and preparedness for displacement

The population density of urban areas, and particularly of informal settlements, causes greater vulnerability to the effects of disasters and a greater risk of displacement.<sup>22</sup> Effective land use planning can decrease vulnerability to natural hazards if it considers disaster risks.<sup>23</sup> When local authorities do not plan settlements, or cannot enforce development plans, populations may settle in risk prone areas. Unplanned and informal settlements are frequently in peripheral and more risk-prone locations.<sup>24</sup>

Disaster risk management can contribute to reducing the risk of displacement in urban areas, as well as improving the protection of the displaced. Helpful interventions include the relocation of populations at risk and the improvement of dwellings. Efforts to map and understand risks and vulnerabilities can help populations prepare for disasters by creating

<sup>16</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 1998, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, p.1, <http://goo.gl/r519kv>

<sup>17</sup> Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 2011, *IASC Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters*, pp.5-6, <http://goo.gl/C1rl40>

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Reichold, Urban and Binder, Andrea with Niland, Norah, 2013, *Scoping study: what works in protection and how do we know?*, Global Public Policy Institute, pp.5-6, <http://goo.gl/7CPE60>

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>21</sup> The literature reviews available at: <http://www.nrc.no/disasters>

<sup>22</sup> Lall and Deichmann, *op. cit.*, p. 4; Bruch and Goldman, *op. cit.*, p.6

<sup>23</sup> Khailani, Dzul Khaimi and Perera, Ranjith, 2013, “Mainstreaming disaster resilience attributes in local development plans for the adaptation to climate change induced flooding: A study based on the local plan of Shah Alam City, Malaysia”, *Land Use Policy* 30(1), pp.615-616, <http://goo.gl/yP9vfa>

<sup>24</sup> Jabareen, Yosef, 2013, “Planning the resilient city: Concepts and strategies for coping with climate change and environmental risk”, *Cities* 31, p. 222; Bruch and Goldman, *op. cit.*, p.15, <http://goo.gl/3jHYjb>



Informal settlers have built two-three stories above flood-prone river banks in Metro Manila. The bare parcels in the foreground were previously inhabited by families that have relocated. These shanties are separated from a middle class neighbourhood by a concrete flood wall. Photo © Jeremy Harkey

early warning systems and evacuation routes.<sup>25</sup> Such systems do not comprehensively reach all those affected, especially those living in vulnerable communities such as informal settlements.<sup>26</sup> Poor roads, footpaths and drains in urban areas can make evacuation particularly difficult.<sup>27</sup>

Governance is key to effective prevention of, and preparedness for, disasters and displacement. Unfortunately, the countries that are most prone to disaster induced displacement are also often those that are least prepared and have limited capacity to respond in the event of a major disaster. Civil strife and poor governance, especially in countries with high risk

of displacement, contribute to this problem.<sup>28</sup> Local governments often do not allocate sufficient resources to disaster risk management and disaster preparedness interventions. Particularly in low-income countries, this is a result of insufficient risk assessment data, a lack of political will and weak legal enforcement.<sup>29</sup> Disaster preparedness and risk reduction in urban areas require a well-established and interlinked local disaster management system. This must include risk factors that lie beyond administrative boundaries. Communication and coordination mechanisms should be established at a community level and linked to other city and national systems.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), 2011, *2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction: Revealing Risk, Redefining Development*, pp.79-80, <http://goo.gl/Vilxi7>; UNISDR, 2010, *Local Governments and Disaster Risk Reduction: Good Practices and Lessons Learned*, pp.3-5 and 22-23, <http://goo.gl/ndElwZ>

<sup>26</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013, *Disaster-induced internal displacement in the Philippines: The case of Tropical Storm Washi/Sendong*, p.7 and p.25, <http://goo.gl/U8MRBK>

<sup>27</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2010, *World Disasters Report 2010: Focus on urban risk*, p.21, <http://goo.gl/3SPdcB>

<sup>28</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013a, *Technical Paper: The risk of disaster-induced displacement: Central America and the Caribbean*, p.17, <http://goo.gl/V5R2Tb>

<sup>29</sup> UNISDR, 2011, *op. cit.*, pp.86-88.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.79-80.

## 2.2.2 Protection of the displaced

Individuals who have been forced to displace within national boundaries are considered IDPs. The definition of an IDP includes the effects of disasters as a reason for flight, thus extending protection to this population. While the *Guiding Principles* do not specifically reference climate change or climate change events, the categorical inclusion of “natural disasters” does not exclude those that can be attributed to climate change.<sup>31</sup> According to the *Guiding Principles*, national authorities have the primary duty to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to IDPs, without discrimination of any kind.<sup>32</sup>

Those displaced within national boundaries as a result of climate change or disasters are subject to the protection of international human rights law, which extends to them without discrimination for any reason. National laws and policies that govern protection of the displaced also protect IDPs, insofar as such laws exist at a country level.<sup>33</sup>

There is no single international legal protection mechanism for those displaced by climate change or disasters. Regional refugee definitions can be interpreted to apply to this population and countries can offer protection based on their national legislation or policy. The lack of clear and objective standards creates a normative protection gap. Individuals displaced across borders by disasters or climate change are protected by international human rights law (IHRL) yet IHRL does not guarantee a right to remain in another country. Its utility therefore may be limited for those who need to remain in a host state as a result of disasters or climate change events.<sup>34</sup>

The *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its 1967 protocol (hereafter 1951 Convention) do not consider flight because of disasters or climate change as qualifying reasons for receiving refugee status.

In certain circumstances, there may be an interface between environmental factors and conflict, as in the case of conflict over water or other natural resources. If individuals displaced across borders by such conflicts seek refugee protection, they may qualify under the 1951 Convention definition.<sup>35</sup> In other contexts, disasters that occur in conflict-affected areas may exacerbate the negative experience of affected populations.<sup>36</sup> It is possible that disasters might stimulate international displacement and that such a caseload could qualify as refugees. However, in the absence of reasons for flight that fit squarely into the refugee definition, the 1951 Convention cannot be considered to automatically apply to this population.

Humanitarian visas that national governments offer to populations affected by disasters allow qualifying individuals to enter a country and remain for specific periods. In the wake of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the Dominican Republic extended humanitarian visas to the caretakers of Haitians who were receiving medical treatment in the country.<sup>37</sup> Some governments have used temporary legal protection for citizens of disaster-affected countries who are already within their national borders. The United States has extended Temporary Protected Status to citizens of countries affected by “an environmental disaster (such as earthquake or hurricane), or an epidemic.”<sup>38</sup>

Humanitarian policy and practice have not kept pace with the complexities of protecting IDPs in urban areas. Disaster induced IDPs tend to disperse across urban areas. This creates challenges for identifying IDPs, assessing their needs and distributing humanitarian assistance.<sup>39</sup> IDPs displaced outside of official shelters may receive little assistance or protection support and what they do receive is likely to be once-off.<sup>40</sup> Local and national disaster management agencies, civil society and INGOs would benefit from better developing and utilising partnerships.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kälin, Walter and Schrepfer, Nina, 2012, *Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change: Normative Gaps and Possible Approaches*, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), pp.22-23, <http://goo.gl/6ik0eN>

<sup>32</sup> OCHA, 1998, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> Kälin and Schrepfer, p.23; IDMC/NRC, 2009, *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2008*.

<sup>34</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2008, *Climate Change, Migration and Displacement: Who will be affected?*, p.2, <http://goo.gl/jsFOiY>

<sup>35</sup> Warner, Koko, Afifi, Tamer, Dunn, Olivia, Stal, Marc and Schmidl, Sophia, 2008, *Human Security, Climate Change and Environmentally Induced Migration*, Institute for Environment and Human Security, United Nations University, p.3, <http://goo.gl/jEXCPD>; Guterres, António, 2009, *Climate change, natural disasters and human displacement: a UNHCR perspective*, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), <http://goo.gl/6fG847>; IASC, 2008, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> Warner et al., 2008, p.15

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR, 2010, “Dominican Republic visa programme helps Haitian quake victims”, <http://goo.gl/KNxY>

<sup>38</sup> See <http://goo.gl/ZiciFi>

<sup>39</sup> Sanderson, David and Knox-Clarke, Paul with Leah Campbell, 2012, *Responding to Urban Disasters: Learning from Previous Relief and Recovery Operations*, ALNAP and Overseas Development Institute, pp. 5-6, <http://goo.gl/HtnIE3>; IDMC/NRC, 2011, *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2010*, p.21, <http://goo.gl/wCW4pe>

<sup>40</sup> Crisp, Jeff, Morris, Tim and Refstie, Hilde, 2012, “Displacement in urban areas: new challenges, new partnerships”, *Disasters* 36(s1), pp. S25-S26, <http://goo.gl/VsSFNW>; Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, 2013, *Under the Radar: Internally Displaced Persons in Non-Camp Settings*, The Brookings Institution, p.10, <http://goo.gl/OSRfP1>

<sup>41</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2010, *IASC Strategy: Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas*, p.2 and pp.4-5; Sanderson and Knox-Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp.10-12; Crisp et al., *op. cit.*, p.26.

IDPs' perceptions of safety in camp or shelter settings may influence their decisions on displacement destinations.<sup>42</sup> IDPs who have specific needs may experience heightened vulnerability during displacement. Women and girls may be vulnerable to sexual violence and gender based violence (GBV), especially in official shelter settings.<sup>43</sup> Female IDPs who are displaced outside camps or shelters may sometimes be better protected but this is not guaranteed.<sup>44</sup> Disasters may interrupt not only formal and informal employment but also provision of loans and movement of remittances.<sup>45</sup> Livelihoods support for urban IDPs should take account of the fact that urban areas have cash- and market-based economies.<sup>46</sup>

### 2.2.3 Durable solutions

People displaced by disasters tend to return to their places of origin soon after the cause of their displacement has receded in order to resume their lives and rebuild.<sup>47</sup> Displaced people can face challenges in accessing their land, particularly when they have lost (or never had) formal land title or when they are not able or allowed to rebuild following a disaster.<sup>48</sup> Due to challenges to land tenure and insufficient transitional housing, some IDPs may experience secondary or tertiary displacement.<sup>49</sup> This risk is particularly pronounced for residents of informal settlements. The relocation of populations residing in risk prone locations to safe sites within urban areas is particularly challenging. Governments face difficulty in identifying urban relocation sites due to the overcrowded nature of large urban areas. Urban residents frequently prefer intra urban solutions but governments may tend to relocate populations to peri-urban or rural zones. Relocation to sites far from urban residents' origin may negatively affect their livelihoods.<sup>50</sup> Trauma as a result of the disaster and displacement may go under-addressed in urban areas.<sup>51</sup> There is a need for psychosocial support to extend beyond the disaster, and to become a tool in achieving a durable solution.

## 2.3 FIELD RESEARCH

Field research was conducted between February and March 2014, with ten days allocated to El Salvador and twelve days to the Philippines. The principal researcher held semi-structured interviews with representatives of local and national government agencies, civil society, and international institutions. He identified the majority of informants prior to conducting field research through liaison with NRC and IDMC. Other informants were chosen in country.

In El Salvador, the researcher interviewed 23 informants: four representatives of the national government, two from local government, eight members of national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), five staff members of international NGOs and five representatives of UN agencies. In addition, there was one community focus group.

In the Philippines, the researcher interviewed 41 informants: five representatives of regional government, four representatives of local government, six staff members of national NGOs, nine staff members of international NGOs, six representatives of UN agencies, an academic expert and ten IDPs and returned IDPs.

In order to respect confidentiality and as promised to each interviewee, this report will not specify the names of individual informants.

This research has not been able to accurately classify challenges in disaster management according to the size of the urban area, or other characteristics that might differentiate one city from another. The report identifies trends that apply to urban areas generally in each country and to specific cities when examples are used.

<sup>42</sup> Rofi, Doocy, and Robinson, in Mazurana, Dyan, Benelli, Prisca, Gupta, Huma and Walker, Peter, 2011, *Sex and Age Matter: Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies*, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

<sup>43</sup> Cohen, Roberta and Bradley, Megan, 2010, "Disasters and Displacement: Gaps in Protection", *Journal of International Humanitarian Legal Studies* 1(1), pp.120-121, <http://goo.gl/eQkSBL>

<sup>44</sup> Crisp et al., *op. cit.*, p. S29-S30; Haysom, Simone, 2013, *Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability Final Report*, Overseas Development Institute, p.19, <http://goo.gl/hZyuLR>

<sup>45</sup> Feinstein International Center, 2011, *Examining Linkages between Disaster Risk Reduction and Livelihoods: Literature Review*, p.5, <http://goo.gl/q3E0xU>

<sup>46</sup> Sanderson and Knox-Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp.8-9.

<sup>47</sup> The Government Office for Science (United Kingdom), 2011, *Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change: Future Challenges and Opportunities: Final Project Report*, p.48, <http://goo.gl/hLa9aI>; Black, Richard, 2001, *Environmental refugees: myth or reality?*, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), p.7, <http://goo.gl/2omtAl>; Morrow-Jones and Morrow-Jones 1991, Quarantelli 1982 in Perch-Nielsen, Sabine L., Bättig, Michèle B., and Imboden, Dieter, 2008, "Exploring the link between climate change and migration", *Climatic Change* 91(3-4), p.381, <http://goo.gl/taZmc0>

<sup>48</sup> Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 2008, *Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: A Manual for Law and Policymakers*, p.143, <http://goo.gl/OB6NBQ>

<sup>49</sup> Crisp et al., *op. cit.*, p. S32; Haysom, *op. cit.*, p.15.

<sup>50</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013, *op. cit.*, p.15.

<sup>51</sup> Crisp et al., *op. cit.*, p.31.



### 3. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS FROM EL SALVADOR

El Salvador is prone to multiple sorts of disasters. These include storms, floods, earthquakes, droughts and volcanic eruptions. El Salvador is the ninth-most risk prone nation in the world and the ninth-most exposed to natural hazards.<sup>52</sup> Climate change is expected to increase the intensity of rainfall, heat waves and drought, and risk of displacement.<sup>53</sup>

Figure 1 demonstrates the frequency of specific disasters between 1985 and 2013. Storms, floods and earthquakes are the most frequent rapid onset disaster, while droughts also had a high incidence. It is important to note that among the disasters, earthquakes affected the greatest number of people. Although cities such as San Salvador sit on fault lines, presently the disaster management system places much greater emphasis on hydro meteorological events.

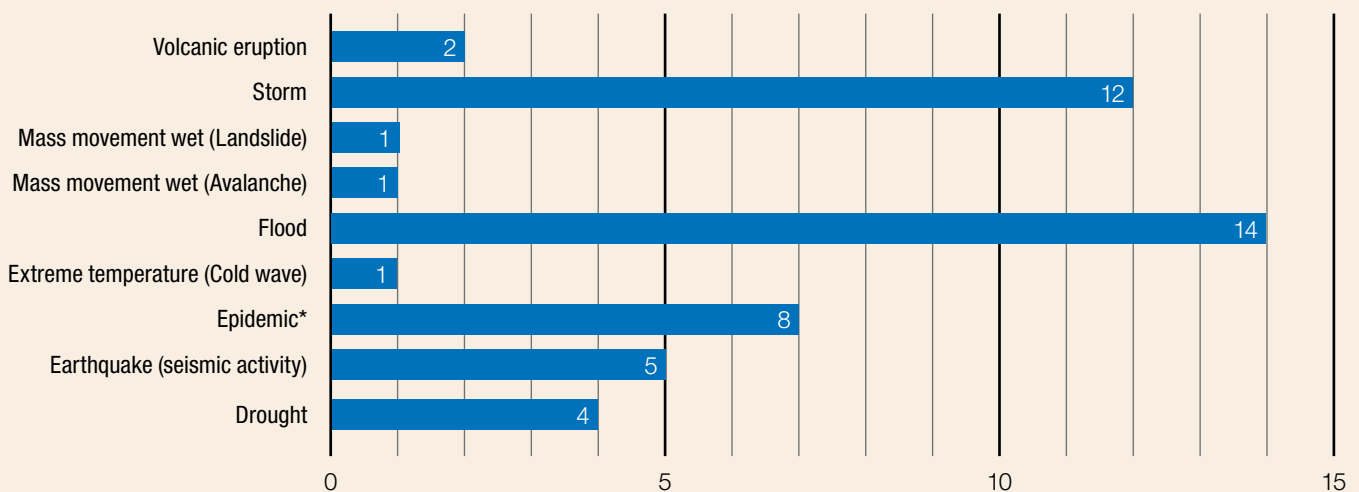
Between 1985 and 2013, an average of two disasters occurred each year. On average each killed 132 people and affected over 122,000. Earthquakes affected the greatest number of people, with the January and

February 2001 earthquakes together affecting more than 2.5 million people.<sup>54</sup>

The World Bank and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)<sup>55</sup> note that several factors increase vulnerability to displacement by disasters within El Salvador:

*Severe land degradation, unplanned urban growth in areas unsuitable for development and weak enforcement of building codes and zoning regulations are the main drivers of most of the current vulnerability [to floods and landslides] in El Salvador.*<sup>56</sup>

Figure 1: Frequency of specific disasters between 1985 and 2013



\* Bacterial and viral infectious diseases

Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be)



Historically, El Salvador has experienced an absolute displacement rate of 12,800 people per year as a result of disasters. This corresponds to a relative rate of 2,023 individuals per million.<sup>57</sup> As Figure 2 indicates, earthquakes have caused the greatest proportion of displacement.

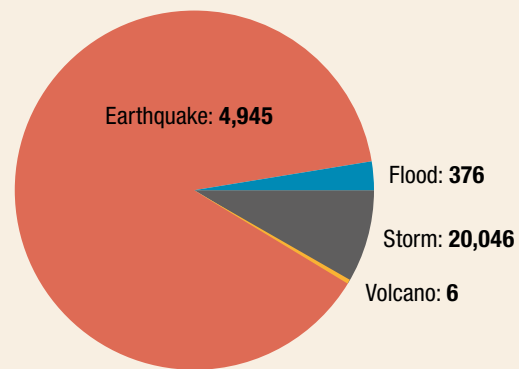
IDMC and NRC estimate that displacement by disasters between 2014 and 2018 will be higher than the historic rate, at 16,791 average per annum (absolute) and 2,654 per million inhabitants. This represents a 31 per cent change in the relative rate of displacement.<sup>58</sup> The data does not distinguish between rural and urban origins of displacement. The report notes that high population density and exposure to risk are significant factors in the country's disaster risk configuration.

### 3.1 BACKGROUND ON URBANISATION AND DISASTER RISK

In a global study of cities with at least 750,000 inhabitants in 2011, San Salvador ranked among those at highest risk of floods and landslides and in the top half in terms of risk of earthquakes and volcanic eruption. This profile is similar to other cities in Central America, particularly inland cities. San Salvador's risk of volcano eruption is, however, unique in the region. Additionally, San Salvador – like Panama City – is considered to have no risk of drought, which is an important threat for Managua and Guatemala City.<sup>59</sup>

The Área Metropolitana de San Salvador (AMSS) is a conglomerate of 14 municipalities legally designated a single urban area for planning purposes. About 35

Figure 2: Annual displacement estimates per hazard



Source: IDMC and NRC 2013a, p. 34

per cent of the national population live within the AMSS, which covers only three per cent of the national territory.<sup>60</sup> Roughly 70 per cent of public and private investment is found in this area.<sup>61</sup> Within the AMSS, there is diversity in terms of land use but 90 per cent is considered urban.<sup>62</sup>

The World Bank reports “[a]bout 41 percent of the Salvadoran population resides in municipalities exposed to high risk of natural disasters...” and “as of 2005, 65 percent of the country was threatened by landslides.”<sup>63</sup> San Salvador is at the foot of a volcano and the area has experienced natural hazards, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and flooding since its establishment. Generally, neither inhabitants of zones at high seismic risks nor officials concerned with improvement of urban areas adequately take natural risk into account.<sup>64</sup> Particularly in informal settlements, formal land tenure is rare. Land-related conflicts centre on environmental degradation and basic water and sanitation infrastructure, rather than ownership.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>52</sup> 2013 World Risk Index

<sup>53</sup> World Bank and GFDRR 2010, p.146.

<sup>54</sup> EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be)

<sup>55</sup> See <https://www.gfdrr.org>

<sup>56</sup> The World Bank, Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR), 2010, *Disaster Risk Management in Latin America and the Caribbean Region: GFDRR Country Notes*, p.145, <http://goo.gl/QJvS4E>

<sup>57</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013a, *op. cit.*, p.34.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34

<sup>59</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2012. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision*, CD-ROM Edition.

<sup>60</sup> Programa Integración Participativa de la Gestión Ambiental y de Riesgos en los Planes de Desarrollo y Ordenamiento Territorial del Área Metropolitana de San Salvador (IPGARAMSS), *Área Metropolitana de San Salvador*, <http://goo.gl/tpHJOV>; Oficina de Planificación del Área Metropolitana de San Salvador (OPAMSS), 2004, *San Salvador y Su Área Metropolitana*, <http://goo.gl/dkwuHK>

<sup>61</sup> IPGARAMSS, *op. cit.*

<sup>62</sup> OPAMSS, *op. cit.*

<sup>63</sup> World Bank and GFDRR, *op. cit.*, p.142.

<sup>64</sup> Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (MMARN) (El Salvador), 18 October 2010, *Programa Nacional de Reducción de Riesgos*, <http://goo.gl/kKFSFO>

<sup>65</sup> Lungo, Mario, 2004, *Land Management and Urban Planning in San Salvador and Panama City*, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, p.9, <http://goo.gl/PQB9HK>

Migration patterns within El Salvador tend to follow the global trend of rural to urban movement. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a significant shift in the nation's population from primarily rural to primarily urban.<sup>66</sup> Research on El Salvador demonstrates a trend of conflict-induced displacement from rural to urban areas, in particular to San Salvador.<sup>67</sup> Population growth and rural-urban migration – particularly from eastern and southern departments – has resulted in rapid, uncontrolled expansion since the mid-20th century.<sup>68</sup> Secondary cities such as Santa Ana and San Miguel have had similar patterns of rapid urbanisation as the AMSS, but with far less planning capacity to deal with the implications.<sup>69</sup>

Rapid urbanisation has caused environmental degradation. Development and migratory patterns have also resulted in many people, especially the poor, living in high-risk zones, including flood plains.<sup>70</sup> This growth is expected to continue, both in terms of population and expansion, in alignment with trends elsewhere in Central America.<sup>71</sup> This has serious implications both for the types of risks communities face as well as the governance issues associated with planning for risk. In Santa Ana, for example, the city grew spatially by 120 per cent in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ninety per cent of this growth is on terrain above 600 meters and a significant amount on slopes greater than 30 degrees.<sup>72</sup>

In marginal settlements in El Salvador, residents face limited access to services and infrastructure like clean water, sanitation, roads and alleys. Structures are built with inappropriate materials.<sup>73</sup> Thus these communities not only lack basic means to prepare themselves for natural hazards, but also their housing and

infrastructure are made more vulnerable by extreme weather events, further increasing risk.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore:

*marginalised communities in El Salvador... are often forced to settle in higher risk areas which lead to recurring, small-scale internal displacement patterns largely dependent on specific year-to-year patterns of small-scale, or extensive, disaster risk.*<sup>75</sup>

### 3.2 PREVENTION OF DISPLACEMENT AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

The Ley de Protección Civil, Prevención y Mitigación de Desastres (2005) governs disaster management in El Salvador. It establishes the National Commission on Civil Protection and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, which is the national coordinating and oversight body. El Salvador does not presently have a DRR policy but there is a regional Plan Regional de Reducción de Desastres (PRRD) for Central America. The Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central (CEPREDENAC) of the Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana (SICA) and national actors created the PRRD as a strategy for reducing vulnerability toward and the impact of disasters in the region.<sup>76</sup>

The Política Centroamericana de Gestión Integral de Riesgo a Desastres of 2010 (PCGIR) is a relevant regional document.<sup>77</sup> The PCGIR – which does not differentially address urban areas – emphasises the importance of

<sup>66</sup> Lungo, Mario and Baires, Sonia, 1995, "San Salvador: crecimiento urbano, riesgos ambientales y desastres", *Alternativas para el Desarrollo* 29, p.3, <http://goo.gl/113zgr>

<sup>67</sup> Brockett, Charles D, 1994, "EL SALVADOR: The Long Journey from Violence to Reconciliation", *Latin American Research Review* 29, p.179, <http://goo.gl/Tz2l3o>

<sup>68</sup> Hild, Anne, 2009, Riesgos urbanos: la población de San Salvador entre volcanos, barrancos y sismos, "La Gestión del Riesgo Urbano en América Latina: Recopilación de Artículos", Plataforma Temática de Riesgo Urbano – UNISDR, pp.194-195, <http://goo.gl/flmHQp>; Lungo, *op. cit.*, pp.5-6.

<sup>69</sup> Rajack, Robin, and McWilliams, Katie, 2012, *Expanding Land Supply in Rapidly Urbanizing El Salvador: A Latin American Success*, Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, Washington 2012, p.8, <http://goo.gl/6BUq4x>

<sup>70</sup> Hardoy, Jorgelina and Pandiella, Gustavo 2009, "Urban poverty and vulnerability to climate change in Latin America", *Environment and Urbanization* 21 (1), p.204, <http://goo.gl/SXiXqz>

<sup>71</sup> Comisión Centroamericana de Ambiente y Desarrollo (CCAD) and Sistema de Integración Centroamericana (SICA), 2010, *Regional Strategy on Climate Change*, p.22, <http://goo.gl/V4l0Wz>

<sup>72</sup> Rajack and McWilliams, *op. cit.*, p.11.

<sup>73</sup> Groen, Evelien Thieme and Jacobs, Carolien, 2012, "Risk Analysis El Salvador", Cordaid, p.5, <http://goo.gl/TyGUBF>; Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Programa El Salvador, Ministerio de Economía (MINEC), Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD), 2010, *Mapa de Pobreza Urbana Y Exclusión Social*, p. 81, <http://goo.gl/8lDRD6>; FUNDASAL, 2011, *Gestión Del Riesgos En Los Manantiales*, p.6, <http://goo.gl/2y5rt2>

<sup>74</sup> Hardoy and Pandiella, *op. cit.*, p.204.

<sup>75</sup> IDMC/ NRC, 2013a, *op. cit.*, p.19.

<sup>76</sup> Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central (CEPREDENAC), 2006, *Plan Regional de Reducción de Desastres 2006-2015*, <http://goo.gl/scnTqT>

<sup>77</sup> See <http://www.sica.int/cepredenac/pcgir.aspx>

DRR as a tool of risk management. The PCGIR was created under SICA in order to stand as an orienting framework for disaster risk management policies in the region. Though non-binding, Salvadoran NGOs have used it as a guide in their advocacy to encourage the government to revise national legislation.

### 3.2.1 Local disaster management systems

Each municipality and community must have a Comisión de Protección Civil, Prevención y Mitigación de Desastres (hereafter ‘commission’). Figure 3 illustrates the architecture of the local disaster management system. When municipalities lack commissions there are significant implications for the prevention of and preparedness for the protection of displaced people. If disaster management tools such as DM plans do not comprehensively consider risks and vulnerabilities, the local system may not be prepared to protect displaced people in disaster situations. It is particularly difficult in urban areas to create, strengthen and maintain these commissions.

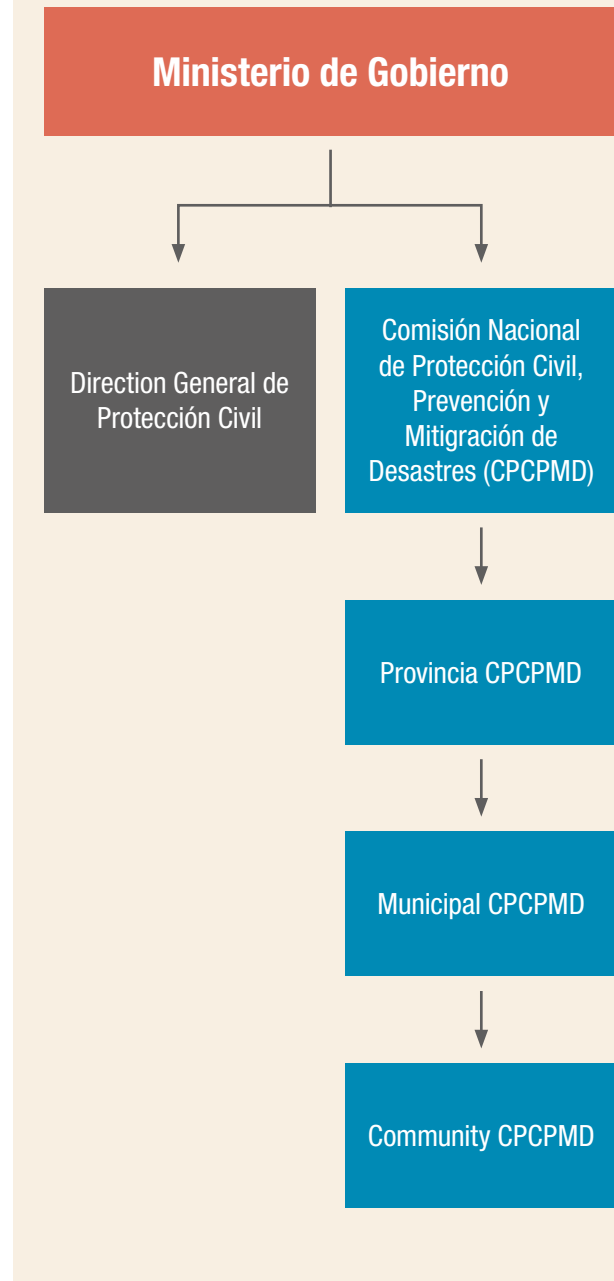
Municipal governments are not consistently able to serve as effective local disaster management leaders. Informants from both national and international NGOs stressed that political leadership is essential to ensuring the existence of the commissions and the quality and integrity of their work. A local NGO staff member described other factors that contribute to commissions’ weaknesses: insufficient technical capacity of Protección Civil staff, difficulty in accessing funding and insufficient consideration of gender-specific needs.

Municipal commissions should be able to provide technical support to community commissions and offer a model for community DM tools. Even in the absence of strong municipal counterparts, some community commissions exist when communities themselves establish them and/or receive support from non-governmental actors.

The degree to which local government and communities create and maintain effective commissions hinges on:

- **Community mobilisation:** Local NGOs report that few communities create and strengthen their commissions without the help of municipal commissions or national or international NGOs. Community mobilisation does not occur organically in urban areas. This is due to diverse and long work schedules, lack of community solidarity, population mobility and divisions caused by political affiliation, religion and football allegiances. NGO and INGO informants pointed out that one advantage to community organising in urban areas is that women participate more in organising and training than they do in rural areas, given increased flexibility in their schedules.
- **Politics:** Electoral cycles and variable political will undermine the continuity of commissions’ membership and the content of disaster management plans. Mayors may prioritise support for communities mostly voting for their party.
- **Gangs:** Gangs (known as maras) are present in most urban areas of El Salvador. NGO and INGO informants indicated that maras support community organisation for disaster management. Communities and NGOs must however reckon with their requests and preferences. Maras harass and threaten the staff of NGOs and agencies have had to make logistical adjustments to respond to their demands.

**Figure 3:** The architecture of the local disaster management system



### 3.2.2 Disaster preparedness

Given that not all municipalities or communities have commissions, there is a high degree of variability in disaster preparedness within urban areas. This means that adjoining or upstream communities facing similar risks may have significantly different preparedness systems and capacity. This has implications for preparedness tools such as early warning systems and coordination mechanisms.

- **Disaster management plans:** Government and NGO informants indicated that not all communities have disaster management plans and other tools prescribed by law such as risk maps. Thus communities are limited in their ability to prevent displacement and plan for the protection of individuals or families with specific needs. Among disaster management plans that do exist there are, informants noted, gaps in their consideration of existing but infrequently occurring risks, such as earthquakes.

NGO informants observed that risk maps and disaster management plans do not consider the borders of gang territories. Neither civilian nor gang-affiliated community members can cross these boundaries, either in normal or disaster situations, for risk of being targeted by the gang that controls the neighbouring community. If disaster management plans do not consider these risk factors, and plan accordingly to ensure access to shelters and humanitarian assistance within defined territories, individuals could be forced to displace across boundaries.

- **Shelters:** A range of informants noted that municipal and community disaster commissions do not consistently prepare and approve shelters prior to disasters. Each municipality and community must have multiple shelters in order to host large numbers of IDPs. Official shelters are considered in municipal and community DM plans and are, typically, schools, community halls and sports facilities. Not all official shelters are structurally sound and many lack sufficient pre-positioned relief goods. IDPs use unsanctioned shelters in communities where there are not sufficient official shelters, or when they do not want to go to official shelters. These structures are similar to official shelters but authorities have not previously examined or approved them.

### 3.2.3 DRR and prevention of displacement

- **DRR in development plans:** Government and NGO informants observed that neither private nor public developers consistently adhere to environmental risk-related regulations for new construction and authorities do not consistently enforce them. This results in formal communities being established in risk-prone locations. Particularly in San Salvador, municipal authorities face operational challenges in preventing informal and unplanned settlements in risk-prone areas.
- **Risk mitigation:** A range of informants noted that many communities most vulnerable to disasters and displacement, particularly informal settlements or older informal settlements that were formalised in spite of disaster risk, have significant disaster and non-disaster-specific improvement needs. Cities have built river retention walls and filled sinkholes but they place little attention on risk mitigation projects such as soil retention walls and systems to channel water. Instead, they focus on improving basic services such as paving, water, electricity and sewage, which as one NGO informant pointed out, might more readily attract votes.
- **Relocation of populations at risk:** NGO and government informants noted that there are multiple challenges to relocating formal and informal homes and settlements that are located in risk-prone sites. In many cases IDPs resist relocation because of social ties to their community and because they would face challenges in re-establishing livelihoods elsewhere. The financial requirements of public housing loan programmes restrict access by residents of the most risk prone urban areas.

Public housing loan programmes require high and secure income, which makes them difficult for residents of the most risk prone urban areas to access. As various informants pointed out, relocation programmes do not consider social protection factors in destinations, such as proximity to families' sources of livelihoods or security factors related to gangs. Institutional support for livelihoods recovery at relocation sites is not typically available.

- **Social protection as disaster resilience:** Local governments and NGOs do little to strengthen the resilience of urban residents to disasters. An informant noted that those employed in the informal sector, and especially single mothers, are particularly vulnerable to such shocks while those with formal employment may lose their jobs if their employer is affected by the disaster. Residents have little access to financial and livelihoods recovery support.

### 3.3 DURING DISASTERS: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION

Particularly in dense urban areas, residents flee to official shelters, unsanctioned shelters, impromptu shelters and the homes of family or friends that serve as family shelters. This variety of destinations of displacement makes it challenging to ensure protection for IDPs. As one INGO informant put it:

*following natural disasters in urban areas, the high number of shelters, both formal and unsanctioned, creates a context of many different mini-disasters in the course of providing protection to the displaced population.*

It is particularly difficult to track IDPs and monitor and respond to their needs.

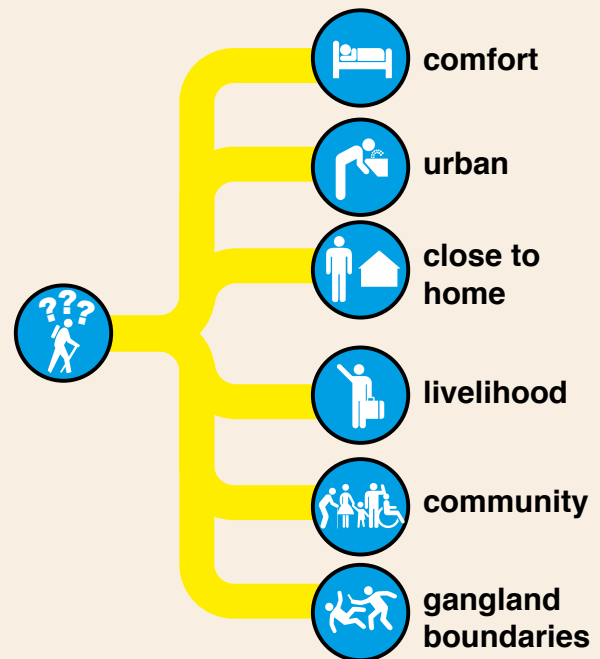
IDPs in urban areas primarily flee temporarily within their city or to an adjoining city and then return to their place of origin once it is safe. A range of informants indicated that rural populations prefer to flee to shelters in rural areas, in order to stay near their properties. Despite this it is reported that some rural disaster commissions have designated shelters in nearby small cities as official evacuation centres.

#### 3.3.1 Considerations when choosing displacement destinations

IDPs consider multiple factors when determining their destination of displacement. Each is related to protection considerations during and in the aftermath of their displacement. Informants provided evidence that:

- Urban populations flee to locations where they will feel comfortable and protected: many thus stay with family or friends.
- They seek to remain within urban areas and as close to their home as possible in order to check on and protect their homes and other assets.
- They want to protect the assets and relationships vital to livelihoods, such as holding on to a location in a marketplace.
- Informal vendors may wish to remain close to the customers who know them.
- Some residents flee with a group of neighbours: by staying together they can retain social solidarity and self-protection mechanisms.
- Residents of gang-controlled areas must consider the boundaries of their 'zone' when deciding their destination of displacement. Even if the IDPs are not gang affiliated, they would risk being targeted if they crossed a demarcation line to go to a shelter in a rival territory.

**Figure 4:** Factors affecting choices on destinations of displacement



#### 3.3.2 Destinations of displacement

A range of informants provided information on the reasons why IDPs opt for one destination over another:

- **Official shelters:** Because official shelters are established promptly and managed by government officials, IDPs can rely on them to, at least minimally, meet their needs.
- **Unsanctioned shelters:** If IDPs cannot reach an official shelter, due to distance or obstacles including gangland boundaries, or if these are overcrowded, they may go to unsanctioned shelters. These are in community centres or churches, and are not managed by DM officials. IDPs may also prefer these because they are closer to their homes, they have a personal affiliation and sense of comfort and because they are often less crowded than official shelters.
- **Impromptu shelters:** Especially after earthquakes, IDPs create shelters or receive shelter materials. They typically establish these in front of their house or in a nearby open space. IDPs prefer this because it allows them to remain close to their community and to protect their assets.
- **Family shelters:** Many IDPs who have a network that allows it, and who are physically able, flee to the home of a family member or friend unaffected by the disaster. These are perceived to offer greater comfort and to better meet IDPs' needs.



In Santiago de María survivors of the 2001 earthquakes remain in housing that was intended to be temporary. Housing and services are inadequate but residents have not been able to relocate. Photo © Habitat para la Humanidad El Salvador

### 3.4 CHALLENGES TO PROTECTING THE DISPLACED IN URBAN AREAS

#### 3.4.1 Tracking and responding to needs

Neither DM nor humanitarian actors have managed to adapt to response systems to the various kinds of displacement. This appears in part to be a result of the government's focus on strengthening official shelters. Government agencies do not provide assistance to IDPs in unsanctioned shelters or in home shelters. According to a government informant, DM officials object to unsanctioned shelters because the facilities have not been vetted and because they consider them to present a risk of abuse by local government or community actors. Family shelters are formally considered a shelter mode, but the DM system has not extended its reach to them. NGO informants indicated that the onus to protect these IDPs therefore falls largely on humanitarians. However, they do not comprehensively have policies, capacity or mechanisms to do so.

Identifying IDPs in unofficial shelters requires those displaced to communicate their location, partnership between humanitarians and community leaders to determine where people are staying and proactive efforts by humanitarian actors to locate the displaced. The degree to which humanitarians achieve this varies according to the destination of displacement. In the case of unsanctioned shelters, IDPs are able to communicate

their location and needs to humanitarian agencies and they respond with support. In the case of impromptu shelters, informants indicated identification was fairly comprehensive in the aftermath of earthquakes, but tended to miss those IDPs who were most isolated. Informants indicated that although the government officially recognises displacement to family shelters, in practice this population is not tracked. Such IDPs are not considered eligible to receive humanitarian or recovery assistance from the government because they have not fled to an official shelter. A few NGOs provide assistance, but it is not systematic.

#### 3.4.2 Partnerships and coordination

Government actors are able to react to disasters more readily in urban areas than rural areas. In addition to local governments, an array of government ministries, humanitarian agencies and the private sector can become involved in the response. Some of the same factors that facilitate disaster response in urban areas also create challenges. Informants noted that it can be more difficult to coordinate and distribute responsibilities. Humanitarian agencies accustomed to being strong protagonists in rural settings must adjust to government leadership. There is a greater chance of political interference by municipal authorities.

Humanitarian response in urban areas may require coordination with gangs that exercise significant control over communities and agencies operating in their area

of control. NGO and INGO informants emphasised that this does not entirely subside in disaster situations. Gangs may prove to be helpful to the disaster response by assisting the unloading of supplies, but they may also divert supplies or challenge the authority of responders. This clearly poses a challenge to humanitarian neutrality.

### 3.4.3 Protection gaps

Each of the destinations of displacement present specific protection risks. While IDPs make choices based on which options are available to them, and their perception of how their needs will be satisfied in each, all of the displacement modalities present inherent protection risks. Informants provided information on each choice.

#### Official shelters:

Overcrowding and inadequate facilities are the primary cause of protection issues in official shelters.

- **Water, sanitation and hygiene:** The infrastructure of shelter facilities and limitations in public services in districts surrounding shelters render them inadequate for the displaced population. Consistent problems include inadequate toilets, showers and wastewater drainage. Facilities are not segregated by gender or age and lactating women cannot consistently access privacy. DM actors endeavour to remedy these gaps to the extent possible with temporary fixes, but this is complicated by logistical and financial limitations. Interviewees report that these gaps contribute to the risk of other protection challenges such as sexual violence and GBV. Some official shelters such as sports facilities are better outfitted to host large populations.
- **Nutrition:** IDPs in urban areas may have existing nutritional problems upon displacement in which case humanitarian assistance may fill nutritional gaps. However, reportedly, DM and humanitarian responders do not conduct nutritional assessments or allocate food rations according to age or other specific needs. One advantage for programmes in urban areas is that DM actors may have greater access to food donations and purchasing.
- **Sexual violence and GBV:** NGO informants indicated that verbal harassment that is sexual in nature is a risk, as are rape and other forms of sexual violence. This is particularly true for girls and single women. This violence occurs in dormitories and toilets not separated by age and gender. Security in dormitories is not adequately monitored, especially during the day when men leave the shelter to work or to check on their home. Intra-family violence reportedly occurs in shelters as well, but DM and humanitarian actors do not regularly identify or respond to it. It is unclear whether this increases during disasters, but informants indicated that abusive behaviour outside of disasters appears to continue in shelters. According

to one informant, cultural acceptance of domestic violence appears to contribute to failure to address the issue.

- **Gangs:** Gang members enter shelters along with the rest of the population. According to NGO informants, gangs may use the environment to forcibly recruit children and youths and to extort money from residents. Although authorities patrol shelters, it is difficult for them to combat gang crime. This may be because although the community recognises gang members, individuals fear reporting crimes. Gangs know each member of their community and can readily follow through on threats made in shelters.
- **Sex work and trafficking:** Informants indicated that shelters seem to allow criminals to coercively recruit females into sex work. This is not verified, however. Several sources suggested responders do not take steps to prevent it.

#### Unsanctioned shelters:

Shelters which are not officially recognised pose similar infrastructure-based protection challenges as official shelters. However, often the conditions are even worse. It is difficult for DM and humanitarian actors to reach the shelters, and to monitor and respond to the protection needs of the displaced. One informant described conditions in some unsanctioned shelters as “inhumane”.

- **Relief assistance:** Because only non-governmental actors provide assistance to IDPs in these shelters, assistance may be delayed and insufficient.
- **Shelter management:** According to NGO informants, unofficial shelters are not managed by trained officials. Community members must manage the shelters themselves, with limited support from humanitarians. This contributes to a risk of protection challenges such as sexual violence and GBV.
- **Exposure to hazards:** Unsanctioned shelters may be in risk-prone locations and, according to informants, may therefore not effectively protect IDPs from further hazards.

#### Impromptu shelters:

Unless IDPs receive shelter materials they will take shelter in a structure that they have built or another structure that appears to not have been affected by the disaster. These shelters are a means for IDPs to remain close to their homes and belongings. However, their distribution and the fact that there may be many throughout an urban area, makes it difficult to respond to and monitor them. Impromptu shelters may be prone to collapse and unable to withstand subsequent hazards. IDPs in these facilities may not have access to food and non-food relief supplies or services.

## Sheltering with families:

Official shelter guidelines call for linking those who take shelter in homes (officially designated as albergues familiares – family shelters) with commissions for the purpose of distributing assistance and monitoring protection.<sup>78</sup> In practice however, this has not been done. The degree to which family shelters satisfy the protection needs of IDPs varies depending on the characteristics of the dwelling and their hosts and the relationship of the displaced with their hosts.

- **No tracking or protection assistance:** For the most part, neither DM nor humanitarian responders register or trace IDPs who flee to family shelters. They do not regulate or monitor their protection needs, nor provide humanitarian assistance. Informants indicated that IDPs sheltering with families may not be eligible for recovery assistance.
- **Inadequate facilities and satisfaction of basic needs:** The homes in which IDPs stay may not be spacious enough. Sleeping space may be cramped, and may not allow for gender and age segregated sleeping. Such IDPs generally do not receive food rations and must contribute to the purchasing of food or rely on the ability of their hosts to share with them. This may cause food security gaps.
- **Sexual violence:** NGO informants indicated that IDPs, particularly females and children, may be exposed to sexual violence by members of their host family and may not have access to reporting and protection mechanisms.

## 3.5 DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Non-governmental informants indicated that the national disaster management system places minimal emphasis on durable solutions.

### 3.5.1 Consultation and information

According to an informant, except in cases of severe localised devastation, DM and humanitarian actors offer little accompaniment or other support to help residents of urban areas assess the safety of return following disasters. Instead officials and the media offer general advice for whole urban areas. Urban residents may return to unsafe conditions. Some community and NGO actors conduct home damage assessments in order to advocate for rebuilding support from the municipality and to inform their own interventions.

### 3.5.2 Recovery assistance

- **Humanitarian assistance:** A range of informants indicated that although some municipalities and NGOs provide assistance, this is severely limited. DM actors calculate that residents of urban areas have sufficient capacity to recover following disaster and will be able to count on support from their neighbours. It appears that urban populations receive less support than rural populations.
- **Psychosocial support:** DM and humanitarian actors identified psychosocial support as being necessary, but insufficient.
- **Resumption of public services:** Disasters can damage precarious urban water and sanitation systems. This can leave communities without water and with clogged or damaged drainage and sewage systems. According to NGO informants, authorities work to fix these problems, but their response is slow.

## 3.6 HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY (HLP)

- **Housing reconstruction:** Informants indicated that only minimal resources and services are available to help residents fix or rebuild damaged housing. The Ministry of Housing has limited resources for reconstruction and the poor may lack the means to access commercial loans. Municipalities have some resources but an informant reported they may allocate them according to political considerations.

Disasters have a disproportionately damaging effect on informal settlements and marginalised communities, making it more likely low-income residents will remain in risk prone housing. NGOs provide some support through loans, provision of materials and cooperative rebuilding assistance but cannot provide these services to informal settlers or to those living on plots of land deemed unsafe for occupation. Residents of damaged houses often take shelter in transitional housing such as a tent or a rudimentary shelter. Sometimes they remain in them for years.

- **Relocation:** Historically, particularly after the devastating earthquakes of 1965 and 1986, displaced populations self-relocated individually or as communities within the metropolitan area of San Salvador. An informant reported this is no longer feasible given the density of buildings in urban areas and improved governance in urban planning.

<sup>78</sup> Ministerio de Gobernación de El Salvador, Protección Civil El Salvador, 2013, *Guía práctica para la planificación, montaje y coordinación de albergues temporales*, <http://goo.gl/2gKe9J>



Those community relocation projects which have been launched have taken years to complete. If the relocation fails to occur housing intended to be temporary may become permanent.

### 3.7 CROSS-BORDER DISPLACEMENT AND PROTECTION OF INTERNATIONAL POPULATIONS

- **Instances of displacement:** Informants could not identify historic instances of Salvadorans being displaced across borders by disasters, nor of neighbouring countries' residents being displaced into El Salvador.
- **Protection for individuals displaced across borders by disasters:** El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua have a Central America – 4 Border Control Agreement which allows citizens of these four countries to cross borders without additional visas for a limited (but renewable) period of time. This facilitates entry but does not provide permission to work and allows for deportation of those caught doing so. A government informant indicated that no humanitarian visa currently exists, but that this may be included in a revision of the country's migration law.
- **Humanitarian assistance for foreign citizens:** Several NGO informants indicated that foreigners (such as migrant workers or migrants in transit) who are present in El Salvador when a disaster strikes receive humanitarian assistance on the same basis as Salvadoran citizens. Informants presented varying information on whether government officials require disaster-affected and displaced individuals to present a Salvadoran identity document in order to enter a shelter or receive other assistance. One suggested that this practice might discourage migrants with irregular status from requesting assistance.



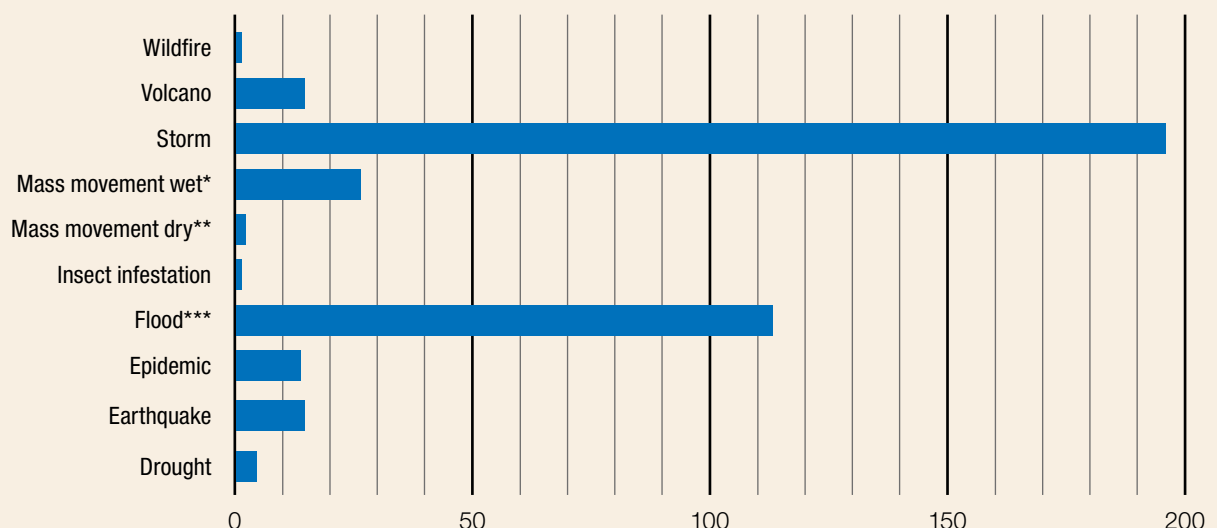
## 4. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines, a country of 7,000 islands in the Pacific Ring of Fire and the Pacific typhoon belt, is prone to multiple sorts of disasters including storms, floods, earthquakes, drought, and volcanic eruptions. The 2013 World Risk Index ranked the Philippines as the third-most risk prone in the world and the third-most exposed to natural hazards.<sup>79</sup> Climate change has caused an increased rate and intensity of disasters and expanded the area affected by disasters.<sup>80</sup>

The Philippines experiences disasters on an almost continual basis, with an average of 13 disaster events occurring in the country each year between 1985 and 2013. Figure 5 indicates the frequency of disasters in the Philippines. During that time an average number of over five million people were affected by disasters each year and the average annual economic damage was reported at over US\$721 million.<sup>81</sup>

Disasters cause extensive displacement in the Philippines, and severely impact homes, property and livelihoods. Due to relatively poor infrastructure and insufficient in building construction standards, large portions of the population are displaced whenever disasters occur. Proportionally more individuals are displaced than in other countries, such as Japan.<sup>82</sup>

Figure 5: Occurrence of disasters by type between 1985 and 2013



\*Landslide; \*\*Avalanches, landslides and subsidence; \*\*\*Includes storm surges/coastal floods  
Source: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be)

<sup>79</sup> World Risk Index data, <http://goo.gl/eLI87y>

<sup>80</sup> UNDP Philippines, "UNDP Fast Facts: AdapTayo, Building Resilience to Climate Change and Disaster Risk," p.1, <http://goo.gl/K4o22V>

<sup>81</sup> EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database, [www.em-dat.net](http://www.em-dat.net), data updated to November 2013.

<sup>82</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013, *op. cit.*, p.7.



Previously an informal settlement, this area of Tacloban City was destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan. Photo © Jeremy Harkey

In November 2013, Super-typhoon Haiyan (locally designated as Yolanda) – one of the strongest tropical cyclones ever recorded – displaced approximately four million of the 14 to 16 million people it affected. IDPs with specific needs remained vulnerable for weeks.<sup>83</sup> The scale of displacement caused by Haiyan was unprecedented: between 2008 and 2012 no combination of events had triggered such a degree of displacement.<sup>84</sup> As shown in Figure 6 between 2008 and 2012 12.4 million people were displaced by disasters.

**Figure 6:** People displaced by disasters 2008-2012

Year	Displaced people
2008	2,921,000
2009	2,062,000
2010	1,002,000
2011	2,499,000
2012	3,859,000
Total	12,343,000

Source: IDMC/NRC, 2013b, *op. cit.*, p.22.

The fact that disasters and displacement frequently occur simultaneously or in close proximity challenges the population’s efforts to recover. It also makes it difficult for responders to effectively assist and protect IDPs. Figure 7 shows the scale of displacement from 2009 to 2013.

Armed conflict is also a cause of displacement: populations already displaced by armed conflict are among those most vulnerable to disaster displacement. From December 2012 to November 2013 three major disasters as well as armed conflict and human rights violations forced the internal displacement of up to eight million people and affected approximately 23 million.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Government of the Philippines, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), SAS, 2014, *The Evolving Picture of Displacement in the Wake of Typhoon Haiyan*, p.2, <http://goo.gl/bPm9cf>

<sup>84</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013b, *op. cit.*, p.22.

<sup>85</sup> International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), 2013, *PHILIPPINES: Comprehensive response to wave of displacement crises needed*, p.1, <http://goo.gl/MjIMkxj>

Many of those affected by tropical storms do not actually leave their homes, particularly those in informal settlements who may not have title to their land. An assessment of shelter conditions following Tropical Storm Washi found that:

*there is a significant portion that are living in temporary shelters or damaged houses on their own property. According to key stakeholders and cluster members, this is often due to informal property rights resulting in families unwilling to leave their land for fear of not being able to return, or because they have no alternative coping mechanism.<sup>86</sup>*

This issue is not specific to either rural or urban areas, as lack of land titles can affect rural farmers and urban squatters alike.

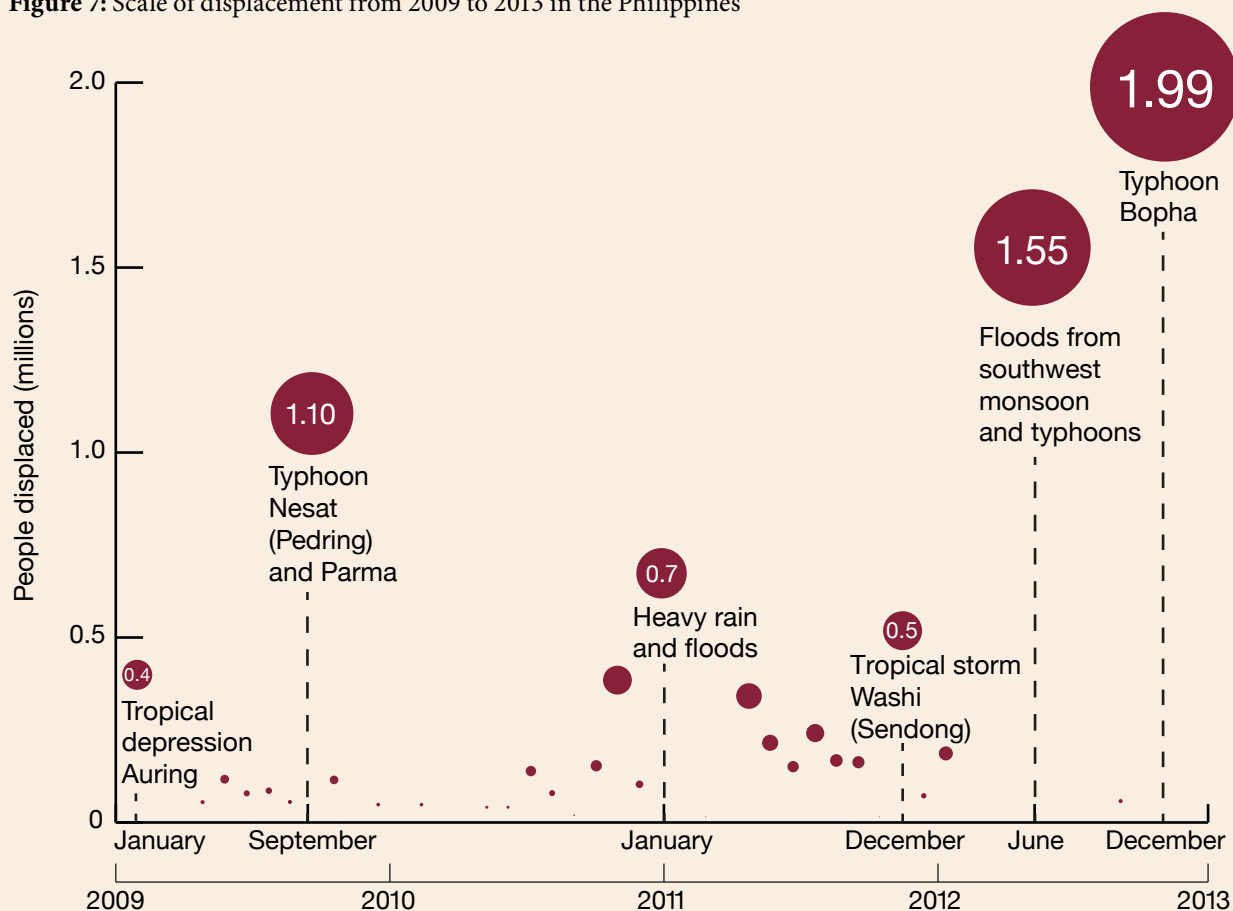
Very few disaster induced IDPs actually stay in formal shelters. IDMC found that 97 per cent of those displaced by Haiyan were living outside government-run facilities.<sup>87</sup> A few months after Tropical Storm Washi only about nine per cent of the estimated number of IDPs was in official centres.<sup>88</sup> Also, some IDPs, particularly those in rural areas dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, preferred to remain close to their livelihoods and take shelter in the homes of neighbours or in makeshift structures near their own land.<sup>89</sup>

## 4.1 BACKGROUND ON URBANISATION AND DISASTER RISK

The Philippines has one of the world's highest urban growth rates.<sup>90</sup> By 2050 it is projected to have the tenth highest urban population in the world and the 20th highest percentage of its population living in urban areas.<sup>91</sup> A comparative perspective between cities in the Philippines and other cities in Southeast Asia reveals important patterns regarding the risk associated with disasters. In a global study of cities with at least 750,000 inhabitants in 2011, the three largest cities in the Philippines ranked among those with the highest risk of flood and cyclones in the world. Davao and Manila are both considered high risk (top 8-10<sup>th</sup> deciles, on the global scale) for earthquake, making them the only two cities in Southeast Asia with high risks from three different hazards.<sup>92</sup>

The Philippines is distinguished from other countries in the region by its population density. Despite having less than half the population of Indonesia, its population density is significantly higher with 322 inhabitants per square kilometre in 2012, compared to 130 in Indonesia. This density is similar to that of Vietnam (274 in 2012).<sup>93</sup>

Figure 7: Scale of displacement from 2009 to 2013 in the Philippines



Source: IDMC/NRC, 2013b, op. cit., p.2.

In the Philippines, 41.9 million people - just under half of the population - live in urban areas, defined as municipalities or central municipal districts with a population density of at least 500 people per square kilometre, or *barangays* with other 'urban' characteristics, including the presence of street networks, economic establishments, public buildings or central plazas.<sup>94</sup>

Density has important implications for disaster risk and disaster response. In urban areas, people and their assets are more concentrated. This can increase risk, and change the dynamics of implementing policy aimed at building resilience.<sup>95</sup> Metro Manila, the Philippines' largest urban agglomeration, includes 17 cities and municipalities, as well as the capital, Manila.<sup>96</sup> The metro area is collectively called the National Capital Region (NCR). The NCR constitutes its own administrative and development region and accounts for one quarter of the country's population. Most of the country's export-oriented industrial growth and foreign direct investment have been concentrated here.<sup>97</sup> The main environmental threats include flooding, typhoons and earthquakes.<sup>98</sup>

Due to lack of affordable land and housing, many low-income urban Filipinos have built homes in high-risk areas such as riverbeds, flood plains, mountain slopes and canals.<sup>99</sup> Government and private developers have also built housing and commercial projects in such vulnerable locations. In addition to putting residents at risk of flooding, these developments encroach on waterways, impede maintenance and disrupt water flows. These factors increase the probability of city-wide flooding.<sup>100</sup>

While strong legislation that would prevent displacement exists, it is often not implemented at the local level. After Tropical Storm Washi, the Philippines government established "no build zones" in Cagayan de Oro and Iligan. Many urban poor had settled in these areas before the storm struck, unaware that they were living in designated "no build zones". After the storm the local government did not have safe land on which to relocate people. This extended the duration of displacement and residence in temporary, unsafe and insufficient shelters.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> REACH, 2012, *Rapid Shelter Assessment after Tropical Storm Sendong in Region 10, Philippines: Shelter Cluster Report*, p.4, <http://goo.gl/Ka4YUu>

<sup>87</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013c, *PHILIPPINES: Comprehensive response to wave of displacement crises needed*, p.7, <http://goo.gl/MjMkxi>

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.10-11.

<sup>90</sup> Llanto, Gilberto, 2007, "Shelter finance strategies for the poor: Philippines", *Environment and Urbanization* 19(2), p.402, <http://goo.gl/VmyqAX>

<sup>91</sup> United Nations Population Division, 2012, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <http://goo.gl/YZ2Itc>

<sup>92</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2012. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision*, CD-ROM Edition.

<sup>93</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), 2013, *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2013*, p.17, <http://goo.gl/Is7Jsi>

<sup>94</sup> National Statistics Coordination Board, Philippine Statistics Authority, 2014, *Urban Rural Classification*, p.1, <http://goo.gl/t0kZ2K>; National Statistics Office, Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013, *Urban Barangays in the Philippines* (Based on 2010 CPH), p.1, <http://goo.gl/UdEKVC>

<sup>95</sup> Lall and Deichmann, *op. cit.*, p.4 and p.9..

<sup>96</sup> Malaque III, Isidoro R., and Yokohari, Makoto, 2007, "Urbanization process and the changing agricultural landscape pattern in the urban fringe of Metro Manila, Philippines", *Environment and Urbanization* 19(1), p.192, <http://goo.gl/5Zd9mt>; Shatkin, Gavin, 2005, "Colonial Capital, Modernist Capital, Global Capital: The Changing Political Symbolism of Urban Space in Metro Manila, the Philippines", *Pacific Affairs* 78(4), p.578, <http://goo.gl/2YxVit>

<sup>97</sup> Shatkin, Gavin, 2009, "The Geography of Insecurity: Spatial Change and the Flexibilization of Labor in Metro Manila", *Journal of Urban Affairs* 31 (4), p.385, <http://goo.gl/bD59IK>

<sup>98</sup> Munslow, Barry and O'Dempsey, Tim, 2010, "Globalisation and climate change in Asia: the urban health impact", *Third World Quarterly* 31 (8)p.1346-7, <http://goo.gl/aSGDdR>

<sup>99</sup> Sajor, Edsel, 2003, "Globalization and the Urban Property Boom in Metro Cebu, Philippines", *Development & Change* 34(4), p. 727, <http://goo.gl/wLh8dr>; Shatkin, *op. cit.*, p.1346.

<sup>100</sup> Bankoff, Greg, 2003, "Constructing Vulnerability: The Historical, Natural and Social Generation of Flooding in Metropolitan Manila", *Disasters* 27(3), p.232, <http://goo.gl/ElvtuL>

<sup>101</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013, pp.12, 26.

## 4.2 PREVENTION OF DISPLACEMENT AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act of 2010 (PDRRMA) governs disaster management. Incorporating the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action<sup>102</sup>, it establishes the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) as the national coordinating body. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)<sup>103</sup> is a relevant regional document. AADMER does not differentially address urban areas, but its Work Programme for 2010-2015 specifies that member countries should develop national action plans on urban disaster resilience.<sup>104</sup>

### 4.2.1 Local disaster management systems

The national DM system relies on local government units (LGUs) to establish provincial, city, municipal and barangay Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils (LDRRMC) and Offices (LDRRMO). The LDRRMC acts as an oversight mechanism and the LDRRMOs implement disaster preparedness, mitigation, risk reduction and response interventions. Figure 8 shows the architecture of the local disaster management system.

The extent to which LDRRMOs exist and fulfil their responsibilities has a significant impact on key elements of preventing and preparing for displacement at a local level. LDRRMOs are in charge of risk mapping, contingency planning, community preparedness for disasters, local DRR initiatives and land use and development planning. The institutions formally exist throughout the country as required by law but their technical capacity and performance vary.

The administrative geography of urban areas in the Philippines, and the responsibility for each LGU to have an LDRRMO, means that the challenges that each LDRRMO experiences in strengthening and operating in urban areas may be multiplied by hundreds in any given city. One of the challenges in local disaster preparedness is the sheer number of LDRRMCs and LDRRMOs that must be created, overseen and strengthened. Manila has more than 800 barangays while the 15 other cities and one municipality in the NCR have hundreds more. Many barangays have fewer

than 10,000 residents, but one has more than 50,000. There can be significant variation in LDRRMO capacity within an urban area, and even between contiguous barangays that experience the same risks.

Corruption is an issue. Those who misappropriate disaster funds generally go unpunished.<sup>105</sup> Insufficient transparency and accountability within the system exacerbates the problem of limited financial resources. The most significant gap in disaster management, one referenced recurrently throughout the literature, is the implementation gap. IDMC and NRC note that disaster management laws in the Philippines are the “best in the world” but political will is needed to effectively put them into practice.<sup>106</sup>

Factors contributing to the difficulty of maintaining strengthened LDRRMOs in urban areas include:

- **Variable capacity:** LDRRMOs experience a series of challenges to effectively strengthening their capacity and fulfilling their responsibilities. According to an international NGO staff member, these include a lack of local government prioritisation of the offices’ duties and insufficient technical ability to create locally customised tools. The Department of Interior and Local Government is responsible for ensuring local government compliance with LDRRMOs’ responsibilities. According to a government informant, its offices’ geographic responsibilities within urban areas are too expansive and their human and technical resources are limited.
- **Political will:** City and barangay officials do not consistently prioritise disaster preparedness and DRR. Lack of political will to ensure fulfilment of LDRRMO requirements affects the allocation of financial and human resources to preparedness. Thus LDRRMOs and communities can be moderately to severely under-prepared for disasters. There is also a problem of local officials not funding or conducting preparedness and DRR activities in communities that have not supported them politically. This politicisation can have a particularly detrimental impact on risk prone communities such as informal settlements.
- **Funding:** City, municipality and barangay disaster management funding is calculated as a percentage of local revenue. Wealthier cities and municipalities are therefore better able to fund disaster preparedness. Informants reported that many areas most exposed to disasters, and with the most vulnerable populations, are less prepared and less able to mitigate risk and prevent displacement.

<sup>102</sup> See: <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/hfa>

<sup>103</sup> See: <http://goo.gl/ef6Ek3>

<sup>104</sup> See: <http://goo.gl/5XPMzW>

<sup>105</sup> Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative (EMI) and World Food Programme (WFP), 2011, *Capacity Needs Assessment for Disaster Preparedness and Response in the Philippines*, p.34, <http://goo.gl/aSP4Gy>

<sup>106</sup> IDMC/NRC, 2013, *op. cit.*, p.5.

- **Difficulties in community mobilisation:** Interviewees indicated that both state and non-state agencies face difficulties in conducting community preparedness and DRR activities in urban areas, including vulnerability assessments, training and simulations. This is apparently related to a lack of community cohesion, under-prioritisation of disaster preparedness relative to other needs such as livelihoods, and a lack of free time. Development and humanitarian agencies have to adapt to the schedules of communities. Informants pointed out that one advantage of working in urban areas is that the scale of youth unemployment ensures a greater pool of potential volunteers.

#### 4.2.2 Disaster preparedness

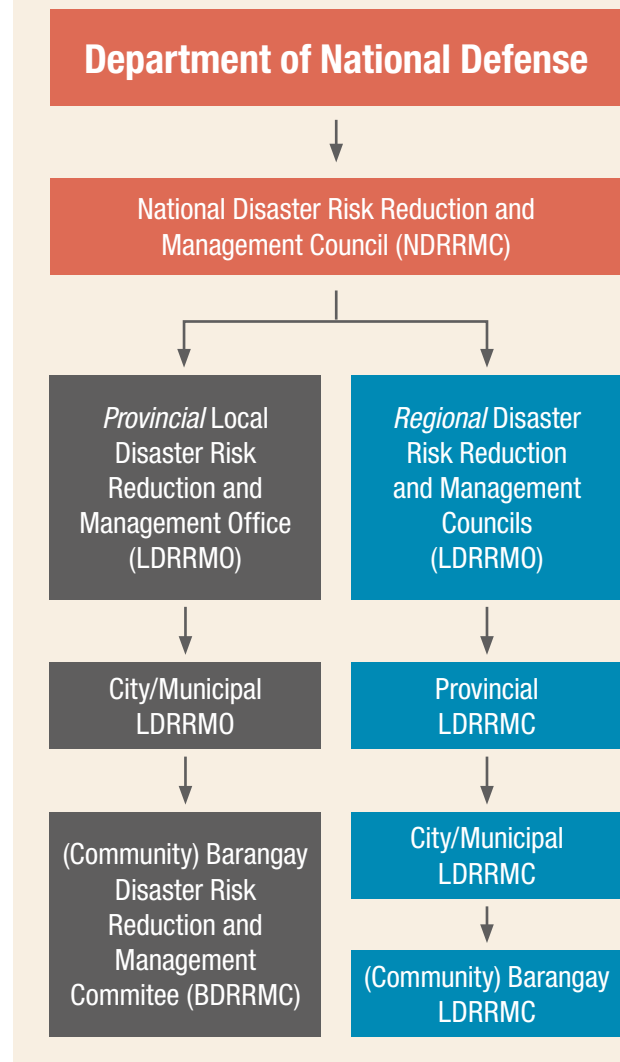
Certain disaster preparedness tools work well in urban areas. Informants noted that these include early warning systems that rely on communication methods to which the population has easy access such as radio and television. Preparedness tools that are more technical and process-based, such as risk maps and evacuation plans, require a higher degree of community-level involvement and LDRRMO leadership. These tools can fail when LDRRMOs do not have sufficient capacity to develop and apply them, do not prioritise them or fail to include densely-populated at-risk informal settlements. Given population density and exposure of informal settlements to hazards, the implications of not effectively preparing for disasters are significant.

- **Risk maps:** Government and INGO informants indicated that LDRRMOs do not consistently maintain accurate and comprehensive disaster risk and population vulnerability maps. This is, in part, the result of a lack of technical capacity – particularly in barangay LDRRMOs – to create maps and interpret data that government or international agencies provide them. A range of informants indicated that risk maps do not consistently consider the risks of residents of informal settlements or vulnerabilities of those with specific needs.

While barangays are required to track residents who have specific needs on an on-going basis they do not consistently do so. Some community officials know the location of individuals with specific needs, such as pregnant women. Generally, however, failure to systematise mapping causes the needs of many to be overlooked in DM and protection plans. Another gap is that although urban areas are exposed to multiple sorts of disaster risks, LDRRMOs do not consistently consider them in risk maps or other preparedness tools. For example, even though multiple fault lines run through the National Capital Region, most LDRRMOs are reported to instead focus on (more frequently occurring) hydro-meteorological risks.

- **Disaster management plans:** LDRRMOs do not consistently maintain locally customised DM plans, share them with residents or conduct simulations. As

**Figure 8:** Architecture of the local disaster management system



a result, populations reportedly do not consistently know how they should behave and where they should go in disasters. Confusion and inadequate planning make it difficult for DM actors to monitor and respond to the needs of IDPs with specific needs.

- **Shelters:** LDRRMOs use installations such as schools, sports facilities and community meeting halls as evacuation centres. A range of informants indicated that these facilities are not consistently prepared to ensure the protection of IDPs. Population density in urban areas and limited space in each facility requires that many be used in each disaster. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities may be limited and there is insufficient space to meet the needs of families, women and older people. Some shelters are exposed to natural hazards. Minimal funding and lack of available building space prevent LGUs from building dedicated evacuation facilities. Resistance to using schools as evacuation centres prevents LDRRMOs from retrofitting installations to improve conditions. LGUs and relevant government ministries do not have sufficient well-trained staff to manage the high number of shelters in urban areas. This reportedly has serious implications for IDP protection.



A house remains next to the scar of a major 2001 landslide in Santa Tecla. The residents apparently refuse to relocate in spite of the risks.  
Photo © Jeremy Harkey

### 4.2.3 DRR and prevention of displacement

LDRRMOs are required to include DRR interventions in their Comprehensive Land Use Plans. One of the greatest challenges relates to informal settlements built along waterways and in other disaster-prone locations. According to INGO and UN informants, infrastructural DRR needs in informal settlements are overlooked when LGUs do not want to be seen to be formalising their existence. Relocation programmes are slow and, in many ways, ineffective. This causes informal settlements to remain exposed to natural hazards.

- **DRR in development plans:** NGO informants indicated that LGUs do not consistently consider disaster risk in land use plans as required by law. Local governments encounter limitations in their ability to identify and interpret risk factors and incorporate them into development plans. Local governments have created no build zones, both pre-emptively and in the wake of disasters, but they face enforcement constraints. These include criminal involvement in the administration of informal settlements, inability to provide alternative living sites and poor coordination channels with local officials. Continual migration into cities sustains demand for such vulnerable housing.
- **Relocation of populations at risk:** Informal settlements are often located in disaster-prone areas and housing is built of flimsy materials. Residents are at repeated risk of displacement in disaster situations. LGUs are legally required to relocate people residing in informal settlements to a safe destination within the city, or to another location if this is not possible.

Residents generally prefer nearby and intra-urban relocation. However, a range of informants noted that the government has faced many difficulties in achieving intra-urban relocation. Urban development space is limited and LGUs cannot afford to buy land for relocation or allocate land they own. Relocation programmes have been implemented in an insufficiently participatory and rights-based manner. Past programmes have relocated people outside urban boundaries to areas lacking adequate services and sufficient and appropriate livelihood opportunities. Relocation areas may themselves be risk prone. Some of those relocated end up returning to informal settlements in cities. Current programmes to relocate informal settlements from waterways in Metro Manila, implemented within the Manila Bay Clean-Up Rehabilitation and Preservation Program, are being prepared in a newly participatory manner. They use People's Shelter Plans to identify community needs and priorities. These plans are used to craft relocation plans that best suit the beneficiaries. Despite the programme's substantial budget, progress has been slow.

- **Risk mitigation:** Local governments do not consistently prioritise funding for disaster risk mitigation. A government informant indicated that cities undertake such interventions as building flood walls, pumping stations and dikes, with funding and technical support from international donors and development agencies. However these are often not city-wide and across administrative boundaries.



- **Facilitating disaster resilience:** According to an informant, there is minimal emphasis on bolstering urban populations' resilience to disasters. Those employed in the informal sector may be particularly affected by disasters yet have little or no access to livelihoods strengthening assistance. Other informants noted that the same may be true of those with formal employment: in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan business enterprises in Tacloban City remained closed for weeks, if not months, but provided no compensation to their employees. Inconsistent access to livelihoods recovery assistance, particularly in lower scale disasters, makes it particularly difficult for those in the informal sector to recover.

### 4.3 DURING DISASTERS: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION

Those displaced in urban areas of the Philippines move primarily within the same or an adjoining city. IDPs take shelter in official shelters, homes, impromptu and unofficial evacuation sites and, in some cases, corporate shelters operated by local business enterprises.<sup>107</sup> IDPs also flee to other urban areas and to rural areas. This variety of displacement destinations relieves pressure on official government shelters, which are consistently overcrowded. This also creates assistance and protection gaps for IDPs, because their location and needs are not tracked or monitored. Informants indicated that although DM and humanitarian agencies attempt to fill some of these gaps, significant protection problems remain. These agencies lack the technical expertise to track and support IDPs and do not prioritise these tasks.

Informants indicated that in some cases, IDPs in the Philippines flee from one urban area to another or from an urban to a rural area. Rural populations do not regularly flee to urban areas, unless there are gaps in the humanitarian response in their region and they perceive that they will be able to access assistance in urban areas. Humanitarian assistance in urban areas is exclusively offered to urban residents. IDPs of rural origin may be turned away unless they are with a family member who is a resident of the urban area.

#### 4.3.1 Considerations when choosing displacement destinations

According to multiple informants, IDPs take three main considerations into account when determining a destination of displacement. Each is related to protection considerations. IDPs consider their protection during displacement, as well as their ability to protect the assets that will continue to be important to them following their return.

**Figure 9:** Factors affecting choices on destinations of displacement



- IDPs want to go to a facility with which they are familiar, and where they will be in a community. An example would be an official shelter in a school.
- IDPs seek safety and comfort. Filipinos know the discomforts and protection problems that are common to official shelters in urban areas and will seek an alternative if possible. Most frequently, this means that IDPs will go to home shelters. Residents of informal settlements and IDPs lacking networks of people able to host them are those most likely to take shelter in official shelters.
- IDPs want to take shelter in a location from which they will be able to easily access their property. Some IDPs leave shelters and return to their houses during the day to protect their valuables and commence repairs.

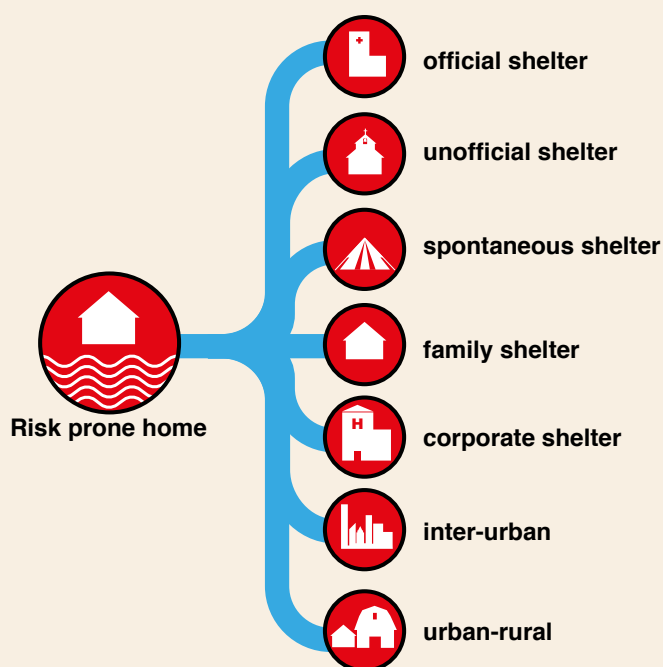
#### 4.3.2 Destinations of displacement:

According to informants there are five main destinations, each with particular protection challenges.

- **Official shelters**, recognised in local disaster management plans, are managed by local officials and are humanitarian assistance distribution points. Used mainly by poor inhabitants of informal settlements, they regularly become overcrowded.
- **Homes** are used by those who seek shelter with friends or family. Informants referred to such shelters as “home evacuation centres” or “home-based shelters.” It is difficult for the disaster management system to trace such IDPs or provide them assistance and

<sup>107</sup> Informants were not able to provide information on the protection challenges that IDPs may experience in corporate shelters.

Figure 10: Destinations of displacement



protection services. Informants mentioned cramped sleeping quarters, food insecurity and the risk of sexual violence and GBV.

- **Spontaneous and unofficial evacuation sites** may include outdoor spaces such as fields, or churches with which IDPs are affiliated. The official disaster management system may not acknowledge those who thus seek shelter.
- **Corporate shelters**, often small hotels, are used by large enterprises to ensure that the needs of their employees are met and to ensure business continuity.
- **Inter-urban or urban-rural displacement** occurs when people sense that their needs are not and/or will not be responded to in their urban area of residence. In the wake of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, in response to delays in humanitarian assistance and looting, residents of Tacloban City went to Manila, Cebu City and other urban destinations. Some reportedly received humanitarian assistance and shelter but others did not. Those who sought refuge in rural areas were not eligible for individual assistance but could benefit if host families received assistance. They could also travel to the urban area to receive food and non-food assistance and return to their rural location of displacement. It is likely that such back-and-forth movement was complicated by blocked roads, disrupted transportation and IDPs' inability to meet transport costs.

## 4.4 CHALLENGES TO PROTECTING THE DISPLACED IN URBAN AREAS

### 4.4.1 Tracking and responding to needs

DM actors are generally able to identify and respond to the needs of those in spontaneous and unofficial shelters. According to a government informant, IDPs who flee between urban areas and from urban to rural areas present a greater challenge for DM and humanitarian actors, as it is difficult to provide monitoring or ongoing assistance. In the wake of Haiyan, IDPs in Manila sought shelter near the airport arrival area and in the homes of family and friends. DM actors tried to register IDPs' destinations and assisted some to reach their hosts' homes. With the exception of the Philippines Red Cross it appears that no DM or humanitarian actors monitored the needs of IDPs sheltering in homes. An informant summarised the risks that such IDPs in Metro Manila experienced:

*They put themselves in a more difficult situation- there are ten times more the evil things of an urban area in Manila. They probably would go to an informal settlement, and face the risk of GBV (and other crimes). They would sort of change citizenship. No longer someone from Tacloban but from Manila, so they would have to access services available to local population.*

In recent years some DM and humanitarian actors – especially those from NGOs – have improved methodologies for reaching IDPs outside official shelters. Informants noted that while DM actors have developed new tools to reach mobile IDPs ensuring comprehensive coverage is difficult. It is also highly labour intensive to deploy staff in communities to identify and assess the needs of IDPs.

Informants indicated that officials and NGO staff attempt to track IDPs by cross-referencing shelter registration lists with the master list of community residents, doing house-to-house verifications and working with barangay officials and community leaders to identify families hosting IDPs. This labour-intensive verification system allows them to deliver assistance, and inform IDPs of their right to request assistance in shelters and register for recovery assistance.

In practice however, informants noted many challenges:

- Informal settlers are not always considered in master lists and thus may not be identified.
- Tracking is not systematic throughout urban areas.
- Provision of assistance to IDPs may cause tensions with non-displaced neighbours.
- Assistance is limited to food and non-food items without needs assessment or protection monitoring. This makes it hard to identify or respond to challenges in home shelters such as sexual violence or GBV.

## 4.4.2 Partnership and coordination

Urban areas have a notable presence of state and non-state DM actors – including from line ministries, local and international humanitarian agencies and the private sector. They are particularly present in the National Capital Region. Cities may seek assistance from unaffected neighbouring cities that have complementary resources. The media can play a greater role in urban areas, highlighting gaps and inefficiencies in the disaster response and informing the public on how to access support.

While urban areas offer some advantages in terms of partnership and coordination they also create challenges that are not likely to be as pronounced in rural areas. A multitude of responders requires greater coordination. Further, unless they prepare accordingly, DM and humanitarian actors can be affected by disasters and rendered unable to respond.

## 4.4.3 Protection Gaps

As noted by informants, the respective protection challenges of each choice of displacement location may be summarised thus:

### Official shelters:

- **Overcrowded:** This leads to the spread of illness and infections, cramped sleeping quarters, disputes and difficulties in preventing sexual violence or GBV.
- **Failure to provide sufficient WASH facilities:** Shelters do not have enough toilets or showers segregated by gender and age. In some cases residents are reported to have to use outdoor spaces. Some agencies attempt to remedy gaps but these efforts are frequently inadequate.
- **Risk of sexual violence and GBV:** Shelter management officials do not effectively prevent, identify or respond to this violence. The lack of segregated sleeping spaces and inadequate lighting near latrines contributes to this problem. Incidents are under-reported and not consistently investigated by shelter management or law enforcement officials. Interviewees suggest this violence appears in part to be a continuation of cultural norms that are not specific to disaster situations.
- **Insufficiently trained managers:** Staff are unable, say informants, to consistently address problems that arise.
- **Subject to politicisation:** Informants noted that city or barangay LDRMOs may not provide needed goods and funds to shelters located in communities with which officials are in political conflict. These situations are eventually resolved but may cause a delay in the delivery of assistance.

### IDPs in homes:

- **Limited tracking and protection assistance:** This is especially problematic, say NGO informants, if local authorities consider proactive protection efforts to be beyond their responsibility or means.
- **Inadequate facilities and basic needs:** Host families may not be able to adequately provide for the needs of IDPs. IDPs may have to stay in cramped sleeping quarters and may not have enough to eat. Women and girls are reported to be particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.
- **Sexual violence and GBV:** While informants did not cite specific cases, one noted the possibility that IDPs could be victims of SGBV at the hands of their hosts.

### Spontaneous and unofficial evacuation sites:

Unofficial shelters such as churches are not consistently staffed by trained officials. This creates challenges in aligning shelter registration with the official system, appropriately meeting needs and dealing with problems that may arise such as linking IDPs to health service providers. Responders are said to be unable to immediately meet the needs of IDPs in outdoor shelters who may be food insecure and lacking healthcare.

### Inter-urban or urban-rural displacement:

Such displacement may pose significant protection problems for IDPs if they are not able to access an official or a home shelter. While some inter-urban and urban-rural displacement is registered, the registration system does not appear to do much to ensure protection in the destination. Unless IDPs stay at shelters in their destination they remain largely unnoticed by responders.

- **Tracking and protection assistance:** Informants indicated that DM and humanitarian actors do not consistently try to trace IDPs going to other cities or to rural areas. It is difficult for them to comprehensively track this population, and to provide continued monitoring of protection.

Following Typhoon Haiyan, government authorities and the International Organization for Migration established desks at the airport in Tacloban City and at key points of entry and exit to the region. Officials gathered information on individuals who had left the disaster-affected region, including demographic data and potential vulnerabilities. The information did not distinguish between forced and voluntary movement. In most cases there was no system in the destination of displacement through which individuals could access assistance or humanitarian actors could monitor protection needs. Some IDPs had a network in the destination city of family or friends but not all could rely on this support. Some stayed in shelters in

the destination set up to receive them but these were impromptu and not managed like official shelters. Non-governmental organisations such as the Philippine Red Cross were not consistently able to identify and monitor displaced individuals. INGO and academic informants pointed to the possibility that IDPs who could not access shelter would have to sleep in public and risk-prone places and experience difficulty in accessing employment. They would also risk exploitative labour, having to resort to survival sex or being trafficked.

## 4.5 DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Informants indicated that in urban areas the disaster management system is much more effective in immediate post-disaster response than in recovery, especially for inhabitants of informal settlements. Governmental and non-governmental agencies fail to comprehensively bridge the gap between response, recovery and development assistance. Disaster-affected and returned IDP populations must largely fend for themselves.

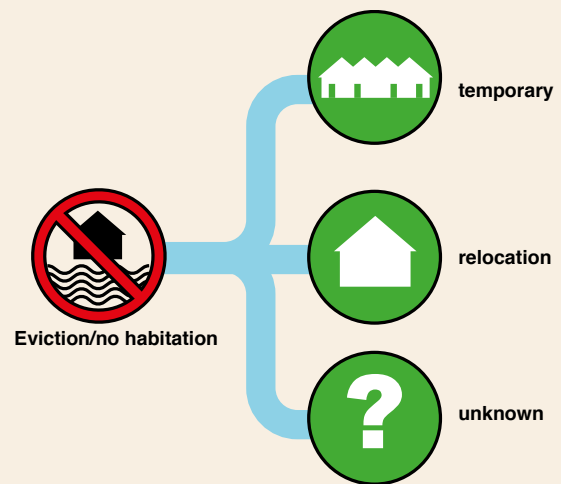
### 4.5.1 Consultation and information

Shelter managers need to be transparent about the timing of cessation of shelter services. Non-governmental informants indicated that there is a problem of shelters prematurely closing before residents can access a safe alternative. Many shelters are housed in schools and school directors are keen to close them so as to resume schooling. They may make decisions to close shelters without regard to achieving solutions for IDPs or consistently seeking the approval of humanitarian staff. Thus many IDPs have to either return to their original homes, even if they are destroyed or dangerous, or move to other locations where their needs are unlikely to be met.

### 4.5.2 Recovery assistance

- **Livelihoods support:** Cash for work and cash grants are the main methods of facilitating livelihoods recovery in urban areas. Informants consider these to be particularly effective because they stimulate the broader urban economy as well as benefitting recipients. It appears that livelihoods support is generally provided only in large-scale disasters. Informants emphasised that if at-risk populations are not able to re-establish their livelihoods, there is a particularly high risk in urban areas of their having to resort to crime or survival sex.
- **Humanitarian assistance:** Returnees do not consistently receive assistance following disasters. A government informant indicated colleagues appear to generally assume that once populations have returned to their homes and urban economies are active, populations will be able to fund their own needs.

Figure 11: Risk of subsequent displacement



Several informants reported that following major disasters such as typhoons Ketsana/Ondoy and Haiyan, DM and humanitarian agencies distributed food or cash assistance only for an arbitrarily pre-determined number of months. In smaller disasters, non-government actors have provided humanitarian assistance during the recovery phase but in limited quantities and without regard to broader needs.

- **Psychosocial support:** A range of informants indicated that services are offered to IDPs during disasters but are inadequate. Following disasters, psychosocial services appear to be even less available to populations dispersed in urban areas.

## 4.6 HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY

Guaranteeing HLP rights is important to ensure IDPs' ability to return to their place of origin, recover and improve resilience to future disasters. Residents of informal settlements face the greatest challenges.

- **Eviction and declarations of inhabitability:** Following disasters, IDPs who previously lived in informal settlements may face eviction. This occurs when landowners take advantage of disasters to clear settlements and local governments declare "no build zones" that prohibit all construction or "no habitation" zones that prohibit residences. One informant noted with frustration that local governments may not appropriately consider the rights and needs of residents of such areas or alternatives to relocation that would allow them to remain in their place of residence.

Although the government must provide relocation housing to residents of informal settlements, it may not be ready to do so immediately after IDPs have to



DRR: In order to be able to escape in case of floods, shanty residents knocked holes through floodwalls that separated their homes from the neighbourhood. Photo © Jeremy Harkey

leave official shelters. If transitional housing is limited, IDPs may not have a safe intermediate alternative. Evictions disrupt networks and livelihoods.

- **Transitional housing:** A range of informants noted that government programmes to provide temporary housing solutions for those relocated from informal settlements may be inadequate. Temporary housing may pose protection problems of its own. If they have no alternative or if they otherwise prefer to, some IDPs will ultimately be relocated to their places of origin in informal settlements as a transitional solution. Some IDPs do this because it is necessary while waiting for relocation housing to become available. They do so even if in defiance of public orders and in spite of on-going exposure to natural hazards. Some local governments can face difficulties in identifying and securing space for transitional housing, perhaps because private landowners reclaim them lest IDPs remain as squatters. Interviewees suggested this may lead to subsequent displacement. Transitional housing options are commonly bunkhouses or tent cities which do not consistently meet protection standards. There are risks of domestic and sexual violence and GBV. Restricted living quarters, inadequate privacy, doors that cannot be locked and insufficient lighting of public spaces contribute to these risks. Transitional housing may be utilised for extended periods of time, as the building of relocation facilities can take up to two years and in some cases is never completed.

- **Reconstruction and rehabilitation of homes:** Various informants noted that residents of informal settlements, including IDPs, do not receive any official assistance in rebuilding their homes. When transitional housing options are few, such as in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban City, the government allowed non-governmental actors to provide basic materials such as tarpaulins or light construction materials. IDPs complement these materials with others of their own. Formal landowners may have access to building materials, but they are not consistently available to all those who need them and are instead given to the worst affected. Particularly in the wake of disasters that garner extensive international support, residents may receive cash vouchers to purchase construction materials. Such landowners may be able to access public rebuilding loans but the process is reported to be complicated and long.
- **Relocation:** Many of the difficulties in facilitating the relocation of at-risk populations before disasters apply to the relocation process following disasters. In the wake of disasters, particularly in areas that are regularly affected by them, the urgency of finding solutions creates a rush that can compromise the quality of the relocation solution.



## 5. ANALYSIS OF KEY FINDINGS

**El Salvador and the Philippines face similar challenges in protecting disaster-induced urban IDPs. Following are key findings from field research for the two case studies.**

### **Cross-Border Displacement**

Informants in neither El Salvador nor the Philippines identified instances of cross-border displacement as a result of disasters. Neither country has a legal protection mechanism for such people. Neither DM nor humanitarian actors appear to have policies for providing assistance to such individuals. These legal protection gaps would make it difficult for the displaced to achieve a solution in the country of destination. Although they might be able to enter on a temporary visa, as in the case of El Salvador, this would not necessarily entitle them to stay for as long as they need to. Further, it would not give them access to rights such as the ability to access health, education and other services during their displacement.

When international migrants are affected by disasters in urban areas, their coping strategies may be weaker than those of national citizens. If they have smaller networks on which to rely for support, they may be more vulnerable to gaps in the official system. Irregular migrants may hesitate to approach DM actors, out of fear that their status will be detected.

### **Law and policy**

Disaster management, urban planning, environmental and climate change adaptation are all of relevance for protecting disaster induced IDPs. Neither El Salvador nor the Philippines have specific policies on how to protect IDPs in urban areas. Local governments experience difficulty enforcing laws and regulations in urban areas, particularly in marginalised areas and informal settlements. Logistical challenges to enforcement, local officials' lack of interest in disaster management and corruption are commonly reported.

### **Local disaster management agencies**

One of the biggest challenges in urban areas is creating and maintaining strong local disaster management agencies. City and neighbourhood/community disaster mechanisms are the basis of DM systems in El Salvador and the Philippines, with primary responsibility for ensuring that local populations are protected before, during and after displacement. Localisation of DM responsibility and expertise should allow each community and city to have customised and effective DM tools. However, local government officials are able to avoid the duties assigned to them by national disaster management laws. In both countries, some DM offices create disaster management plans and other tools that do not take account of local risks, vulnerabilities, and protection mechanisms. It is challenging for government technical oversight agencies to effectively oversee and support the strengthening of a high number of local DM agencies across a city or metropolitan area, particularly when their human and financial resources are minimal.

State and non-state actors find that they need to use urban-specific strategies to mobilise communities around DM issues. Residents of urban communities are much less cohesive and have less free time than rural communities. As a result, official and community DM capacity can vary highly within an urban environment. In both El Salvador and the Philippines very few communities are involved in DM unless NGOs help stimulate community participation.

### **Risk and vulnerability mapping**

In order to effectively understand risks and vulnerabilities throughout an urban area, DM plans must consider a wide variety of natural, physical and social risks.

In communities with high population density DM actors and communities must create and use tools to identify and map vulnerabilities. Some communities in

both El Salvador and the Philippines have created tools for this. It remains a challenge for local DM offices to systematise vulnerability mapping, due to inadequate expertise and lack of capacity building. Many of these offices are either unable to conduct detailed risk assessments or not interested in doing so.

## Shelter

Inadequate shelter preparedness leads to recurrent protection challenges. There is frequently not enough land in urban areas to build dedicated shelter facilities of sufficient size. Shelters, like the areas they are located in, lack sufficient WASH facilities. Shelter managers are inadequately trained. Such weaknesses may drive IDPs to take shelter in unofficial shelters.

DM actors need to understand the patterns of urban displacement and plan accordingly. DM actors should create methodologies to trace, identify, and support displaced people who have assistance and protection needs in their destinations of displacement. In both El Salvador and the Philippines, government and humanitarian actors are slowly expanding their understanding of displacement patterns and their protection and assistance reach. However, ongoing challenges of effectively preparing and managing official shelters appear to be distracting DM actors from preparing for displacement to unofficial shelters.

## Risk reduction and prevention of displacement

Urban governments face challenges to ensuring that development is sensitive to disaster risk. Even when environmental and risk sensitive planning is identified as a requirement, it is difficult for urban authorities to enforce compliance. Creation of settlements in risk prone locations is long-standing and ongoing. In many cases informal settlements have been formalised and benefitted from improvements to electricity, sewage, waste disposal and other services. Nonetheless they remain highly exposed to natural hazards.

It is challenging for local government authorities to reduce the risk of displacement for residents of informal settlements. Agencies do not generally conduct DRR activities in informal settlements. Instead they focus on infrastructural improvements such as flood retention walls. Relocation is seen as the most effective means of protecting residents from displacement, but it is difficult to enact prompt and effective relocation of informal urban settlements. Both the Philippines and El Salvador have programmes to relocate residents of informal settlements but the processes are long and it is difficult to find solutions within urban areas that satisfy beneficiaries' needs and protect their rights. Residents of informal settlements also resist relocation because lifestyles and livelihoods are tied to these spaces. IDPs may find themselves relocated to destinations where their material needs and protection cannot be guaranteed.

Relocation programmes need to be highly participatory. Governments need to be willing to plan creatively and comprehensively to satisfy the needs and rights of beneficiaries. In both countries, there is a risk of policy makers conceptualising relocation in a narrow sense of providing infrastructure, rather than as part of a holistic urban planning exercise.

## Destinations of displacement

Because of the difficulties that governments face in providing sufficient shelter space, official shelters quickly become overcrowded. Urban residents know that it can be difficult to find comfort and security in official shelters and are aware of the consequences of poor management.

People displaced by disasters in urban areas generally remain displaced for as short a period of time as possible, and then return to their homes if they are able to do so. Prior to returning home however, the urban displaced may change locations many times in the course of displacement, as they relocate to find conditions that best suit their needs. Displaced people choose their destination of displacement based on a variety of factors including their perceived comfort and protection in the shelter, the proximity of the shelter to their home, and its proximity to their livelihoods.

## Protection of the displaced

Displaced people may experience protection challenges in each of the destinations of displacement. Urban areas offer the possibility of fleeing to the homes of friends and family members who were not affected by the disaster. Those sheltering in homes also face protection risks. When unofficial shelters remain outside formal registration and monitoring mechanisms it is hard for responders to identify and respond to protection issues.

It is most difficult for DM and humanitarian actors to monitor the protection needs of those who flee to other urban or to rural areas. Such IDPs may be ineligible to access humanitarian assistance or officials may not be able to identify their location.

It is difficult for DM and humanitarian actors to ensure that displaced people who flee to unofficial shelters have access to assistance and protection support. Identifying, responding to and monitoring the needs of displaced people in these shelters require commitment, better tools and more resources. For DM systems that face difficulties in ensuring that official shelters provide adequate protection, having to work beyond the official system may prove to be a logistical challenge and to draw resources away from the official system. It is important for communities to be prepared before disasters to track people who flee from their jurisdiction. If local governments do not consistently include residents of informal settlements in population rosters it is unlikely that government or community leaders will even attempt to identify their location.



A boy flies a kite over the flood-prone river that runs through the informal settlement in which he lives. Photo © Jeremy Harkey

## Livelihoods

Livelihoods recovery is a challenge in urban areas because of the diversity of income generating activities. Disasters can disrupt formal and informal employment, as well as other financial mechanisms such as remittances. In the absence of official livelihoods support, urban populations turn to their own coping mechanisms to meet their needs. In El Salvador, only a small number of humanitarian and development actors provide livelihoods support following disasters. In the Philippines particularly after major disasters humanitarian actors use cash for work and cash grants to facilitate recovery and stimulate urban economies. Cash grants and store purchase credits are particularly valuable because they allow recipients to use them at their own discretion.

## Durable solutions

It is difficult for displaced people to consistently be able to remain in shelters until their homes are safe for their return or until transitional shelters are available. It is difficult to conduct comprehensive risk and needs assessments for the displaced population prior to closing shelters. Formal needs assessments are primarily conducted once IDPs have returned to their homes. Facilities that serve as shelters need to resume their

standard functions as promptly as possible following disasters. This creates a situation of conflicting needs, as shelters close even though displaced people are unable to return to their origins.

Residents of informal settlements in particular need transitional housing, given the high risk of damage to their homes and the risk of eviction. The challenges to relocation following disasters are similar to those of relocating at-risk populations prior to disaster, with the aggravating factor of time. Relocation projects for communities affected by disasters tend to focus on relocating the entire community. In many cases in both countries, this is what the community prefers. However, focusing on relocating entire communities may lead to failure to consider alternative solutions. Community relocation requires building large tracts of housing, which is likely to be time intensive and may require IDPs to remain in transitional housing for extended periods. If relocation programmes are not well planned and if they fail to consider IDPs' preferences, beneficiaries may be relocated to peri-urban or rural communities where there are protection risks and inadequate services. These are often prohibitively far from residents' traditional sources of livelihoods.





# 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 6.1 CONCLUSIONS

Both El Salvador and the Philippines have most of the legislation and policy frameworks necessary to better prevent displacement, prepare for it, protect those displaced by disasters and facilitate durable solutions. For both countries the primary challenge is translating law and policy into action. As urban growth continues, local governments need to be strong leaders, enforcers and facilitators of protection for those urban residents at risk of or affected by disasters. Communities should play an important role, working alongside government and civil society.

The causes of the challenges to effective prevention, preparedness, protection and durable solutions for IDPs in urban areas are not unique to disaster management. In many cases the obstacles are representative of deeper issues of governance challenges, poverty and social marginalisation. Local governance capacity has a significant impact on the effectiveness of measures to prevent and prepare for disasters, provide protection and support the search for durable solutions. It is difficult to maintain strong local capacity where there are insufficient technical and financial resources, corruption and lack of political support.

DM and humanitarian actors have to better understand displacement patterns in urban areas and create protection systems sensitive to them. One of the greatest challenges is identifying those who do not stay in official shelters and extending humanitarian assistance and protection to them. Failure to address the needs of this portion of the displaced population can create significant protection gaps. There are extensive implications, particularly for those who are most disenfranchised and risk prone.

The challenges that government and humanitarian actors face in protecting individuals displaced by disasters are not exclusive to this population. Rather, there are many similarities between the challenges of protecting the disaster induced displaced and protecting individuals displaced internally or across borders by other causes such as armed conflict. Governments should coordinate with actors that address these protection issues, in order to build technical skills and strategy and allow for optimal cooperation.

## 6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

### National Disaster Management Actors

- Local DM systems should be institutionalised and not subject to being undermined by electoral cycles. Technical and financial accountability and review mechanisms should be strong and comprehensive.
- Urban governments should mainstream DRR when planning and maintaining infrastructure. Authorities and communities should cooperate to identify and comprehensively address risk.
- Urban planning and local development planning should be participatory and comprehensively consider disaster risk reduction needs.
- Facilities used as shelters should be appropriate for the needs of the displaced and shelter management staff should be adequately trained in protection. Governments should build adequate shelters and/or retrofit other facilities so as to address the protection needs of the displaced. Schools should not be used as shelters.
- Urban residents should be informed of which official shelter they should go to during disasters. Officials should also inform residents how they may access humanitarian assistance and protection support if they take shelter elsewhere.
- Disaster management plans should consider how urban risk factors such as gangland boundaries might affect displacement patterns.
- Systems should be developed to provide assistance to those who chose to seek shelter in homes and in rural or in other urban areas.
- Recovery assistance should be provided based on needs assessments. It should not be assumed that urban residents will be able to immediately be self-sufficient.
- Relocation programmes should be participatory and rights-based and should meet the livelihoods and protection needs of potential beneficiaries.
- Systems should be developed to provide assistance to those who chose to seek shelter in homes and in rural or other urban areas.

## **Humanitarian Actors**

- Humanitarian actors should partner with civil society actors and communities to improve assistance and protection systems for those in unofficial shelters.
- Humanitarian and development actors should help urban communities and governments build capacity, particularly before disasters.

## **Donors**

- Donors should consider funding projects to reduce disaster risk and prevent displacement. This should include the appropriate strengthening of vulnerable housing, and the relocation of populations at risk.
- Donors should support efforts to improve and retrofit shelters prior to disasters.



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DISASTERS  
CLIMATE CHANGE AND  
DISPLACEMENT



## EVIDENCE FOR ACTION

This is a multi-partner project funded by the European Commission (EC) whose overall aim is to address a legal gap regarding cross-border displacement in the context of disasters. The project brings together the expertise of three distinct partners (UNHCR, NRC/IDMC and the Nansen Initiative) seeking to:

- 1 › **increase the understanding** of States and relevant actors in the international community about displacement related to disasters and climate change;
- 2 › **equip them to plan for and manage** internal relocations of populations in a protection sensitive manner; and
- 3 › **provide States and other relevant actors tools and guidance** to protect persons who cross international borders owing to disasters, including those linked to climate change.

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