



# CITIES IN CRISIS

## Multi-stakeholder coordination in urban responses

Humanitarian Networks and  
Partnerships Week

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# Cities in Crisis: Multi-stakeholder coordination in urban responses

As part of the **Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week** held in Geneva in February 2018, **IMPACT Initiatives** and the **Global Alliance for Urban Crises** hosted - in partnership with **OCHA**, the **Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS)**, the **Global Shelter Cluster** and **CANADEM**, a session titled: **Cities in Crises: Multi-stakeholder Coordination in Urban response**. Panellists shared experiences, insights, challenges and lessons of engaging with diverse actors in urban contexts – including international and national and humanitarian and development actors, **stressing the need for international actors to engage with and support city and municipal authorities**. This note provides a synthesis of key themes discussed throughout the briefing.

- **The humanitarian system has struggled to understand and effectively engage with the complex socio-economic dynamics and governance structures existing within cities.** Coupled with an increasing prevalence and intensity of natural and man-made disasters in urban centres, recent urban crisis have exposed a number of recurrent shortcomings in humanitarian response in cities. **The intensity, challenge and capacity requirements of working in an urban setting, in particular during a conflict phase, cannot be under-estimated:** from understanding the context to stake holder analysis, designing appropriate interventions, and building relationships with a complex web of actors. A nuanced understanding (profiling) of a city is key to ensure coordination and programming is appropriate and inclusive.
- **Now represents an opportunity in the humanitarian sector to become more fit-for-purpose in urban crises response.** Over a decade has passed since the Humanitarian Reform process (2005) to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response. Following the 2011 Transformative Agenda, recent processes including the Grand Bargain and the World Humanitarian Summit called for increased localization of aid and more contextually relevant, fit-for-purpose humanitarian action. **Many of these ideas are not new.** What is new, is the **urgent drive within the humanitarian system to look at how we work with fresh eyes**, to challenge existing practices not yielding results, and to systematically adopt emerging and effective approaches.
- **City and municipal actors are an integral part of any urban system, responsible for the well-being of citizens residing within their administrative boundaries.** Humanitarian response – including humanitarian actors and the systems and structures they operate within, must engage more proactively with established, legitimate authorities – ensuring humanitarian response, to the extent possible, contributes to longer term urban planning and development priorities. However, **more is needed beyond engaging proactively with municipal authorities, as the absorption capacity of municipal authorities in a crises is often diminished.** Authorities, to the extent possible, must be supported to better prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. By extension, complementarity with humanitarian and development interventions is key.
- **A stronger interface between municipal authorities and the humanitarian community is a key ingredient in progressing effectively from response to recovery, reconstruction and development.** Technical and political support is required, not solely from humanitarian actors, but through municipal and city representatives to share expertise, experiences and lessons. In line with this, a number of organisations have developed rosters of experienced urban specialists, to support municipal actors responding to crises.

**CANDADEM** is one such organisation, providing supplementary surge personnel in crisis response, with a dedicated focus towards empowering local actors, including local authorities, municipalities, local NGOs and local businesses.

- **Area (settlement) based approaches, characterised as: *geographically targeted, participatory and multi-sectoral*, can be successfully applied urban contexts**, with relevance in assessment, coordination and programming activities. Most notably in urban contexts, Area-Based Coordination can provide a useful framework to promote joint leadership of coordination efforts with local authorities, coordinating humanitarian response with counterpart municipal or city level authorities. This approach must work in complementarity to existing coordination and response mechanisms (when existing), feeding into the cluster/sectors and the Humanitarian Country Teams.
- **This is not a case of starting from scratch, but rather tailoring existing approaches to be more appropriate – ‘another tool in the toolbox’**. Good practice exists in profiling, coordination, the delivery of aid and support to authorities, as such, it is more a matter of continuous learning, sharing lessons and institutionalising good practice whenever possible.
- Examples were shared from **Central African Republic, Greece, Haiti, Iraq, Nigeria and Syria**, highlighting efforts to ensure profiling, coordination, the delivery of aid and support to authorities more inclusive, participatory and effective in urban contexts.
- In **Central African Republic**, **OCHA**, in partnership with **IMPACT**, supported the capacity of the local municipality in three neighbourhoods in Bangui to address the needs of an influx of IDP returnees. This was achieved by providing coordination support to mayors at the neighbourhood and municipal level, to be better informed and respond to the needs of returnees and host communities.
- In **North-East Nigeria**, **OCHA** and **NGOs** have established Local Coordination Groups, bringing coordination support to Local Government Areas and Wards in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states and strengthen localized response and decision-making.
- Through sharing examples from **Greece, Iraq and Syria**, **JIPs** stressed the need to ensure urban displacement crises are informed by adequate, tailored analysis that accounts for displacement and population vulnerabilities in relation to the wider urban context.
- The **Global Shelter Cluster** highlighted experiences of working with municipal authorities supporting reconstruction efforts in **Syria**. As returnee flows increased in Aleppo, the shelter cluster worked closely with municipal authorities to identify and prioritise locations for reconstruction, meeting technical and humanitarian standards and ensuring adherence to Humanitarian Principles.

Organisations interested in sharing experiences, contributing to ongoing dialogue and exchanging with other organisations committed to improving response and strengthening resilience in cities are welcome to join the [Global Alliance for Urban Crises](#).