to services. It is culturally appropriate because property ownership is the preferred form of tenure security in Georgia, though the condominium system is relatively new.

The programme has also encountered many challenges. Some IDPs’ privatised space was neither big enough or in good enough condition to be considered a durable housing solution, and the renovation of sewage and solid waste management systems, gas and electricity supplies and flooded basements has not always been up to standard.6 Many IDPs in Tbilisi have taken ownership of living space that does not even meet the criteria for habitability. Those who had complaints were often unclear about who they should address them to.7

After its initiation in 2009, privatisation almost came to a halt in 2010 and 2011, which created a large backlog. With thousands of families on waiting lists, the government stepped up the process in 2012 with around 8,255 families receiving ownership in the run-up to October elections. The process was not transparent, however, making it difficult to assess its impact. There were also delays in the issuing of title deeds, which meant that the new owners were not able benefit from infrastructure improvement schemes offered by their municipality to condominiums. Around 10,000 families were still waiting for their title deeds as of the end of 2014.8

The action plan for the state strategy on IDPs included various types of information sharing activities with IDPs and all plans for the collective centres were made public. IDPs tended, however, not to be consulted or involved in the process, and the exact purpose, conditions and consequences of privatisation were in many cases not properly explained. More efforts are needed to communicate with IDPs properly about the privatisation process to avoid disappointments and grievances.

The government has not proceeded with privatisation based on detailed assessment of the needs of the IDPs living in collective centres. No survey of IDPs’ wishes and needs was done to inform the process, the result being that the most vulnerable were not treated as a priority.

The privatisation process is unfinished in around 400 former centres, resulting in “mixed buildings” in which some residents live in privatised space and others do not. The state still partially owns the building, but there are no mechanisms for its participation in condominiums, which prevents new owners from managing and maintaining their shared spaces.

Conclusion

The renovation and transfer of ownership of living space in collective centres is a commendable initiative that has significant potential for providing IDPs who wish integrate locally with adequate housing. It is also an example of a government accepting and facilitating local integration after a long period of insisting that return was IDPs’ only option. A combination of political will, the initiative being based on a policy framework, significant international funds and the active involvement of donors and international organisations have been key to its success in allowing IDPs to maintain the lives they have established over many years in their places of refuge.

Notes

1. Government of Georgia, December 2010
2. Privatisation working group, Annual privatisation report 2009, 10 April 2010
3. Standards for Rehabilitation, Conversion or Construction Works for Durable Housing for IDPs
4. Privatisation working group, Annual privatisation report 2009, 10 April 2010
5. Privatisation working group, Annual Privatisation Report January-December 2012; Transfer of Ownership of IDP Living Units, April 2013
6. UNHCR, Participatory assessment, December 2011; EUMM monitoring, 2010
7. Ibid; Privatisation working group, Analysis of the transfer of ownership process, February to June 2009
8. IDMC correspondence with MRA, 17 February 2015
A report by the Haiti shelter working group and an operational manual by the World Bank carried out a comparative review of rental support grant programmes in Haiti to generate a methodology that could be applied both in the country and elsewhere, therefore contributing to knowledge transfer, one of our selection criteria. The two reports highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of various programmes and provided guidance on the steps and elements to include in a rental cash support programme. The practice below reflects the key positive features of rental support grant programmes identified in these two reports.

**Snapshot**

**Practice** Rental support grants in Haiti

**Main actors** World Bank (funded the operational manual)

**Context** Post-disaster displacement

Numerous IDPs still living in camps years after the 2010 earthquake and at risk of forced eviction by landowners and political drive to close them

Lack of adequate housing and tenure security for tenants, especially those who were living in informal settlements before earthquake, and whose situation had worsened significantly since then

Limited government resources and capacity to lead urban planning and reconstruction activities

Humanitarian response in the form of emergency and transitional shelter not linked to a long-term housing reconstruction strategy or urban development plan

**Target group** Urban IDPs living in camps due to be closed

IDPs who did not own housing or land before their displacement and so did not necessarily qualify for transitional shelter, housing upgrades or new housing

Owner-occupiers waiting for transitional shelter and durable solutions, such as return or resettlement to areas with newly constructed homes

Displaced families willing to live with host families, so supporting both groups

Displaced families who moved out of Port-au-Prince into the provinces

**Summary** Rental support programmes were used in Haiti to relocate people out of camps back to their neighbourhoods of origin or other areas. Based on their housing status before the earthquake, residents in camps targeted for closure were given options of transitional shelter, housing repairs, new home construction or rental support grants. All of the options except the grants, however, were steered more towards homeowners than tenants, who made up the overwhelming majority of the urban poor.

Goods of $600 per household were given, varying on the basis of family size, to cover a year’s rent with a private-sector landlord. The grants guaranteed that beneficiaries had access to safe, cost-free or highly subsidised shelter for the duration of the lease. The subsidy could also be used for repairs.

Houses rented through the programme were verified to ensure that minimum standards were respected in terms of safety and living conditions.

**Strengths** (Key elements of right to adequate housing and key programmatic elements from matrix appear in **bold**)

Targeted tenants, who tended to make up the large majority of the most vulnerable displaced families in urban areas

Allowed 500,000 people to leave camps

Focused on absorbing IDPs into existing housing stock, instead of waiting for new construction

Ensured short-term affordability by covering rental costs for a fixed period of time

The reports and operational manual contributed to a transfer of knowledge

A “keep the change” policy was adopted to encourage beneficiaries to negotiate their rent with landlords, allowing them to keep the difference between the grant and the actual cost of their rent

The practice helped to improve living conditions in rented housing. Verification ensured minimum standards were respected in terms of safety, accessibility to services and build quality. This was key to ensuring that the “keep the change” policy did not lead IDPs to rent less than adequate housing to save more money

Verification also encouraged landlords to invest in improving and increasing rental housing stock. Such investment could be better guided with technical assistance on adhering to good construction practices in terms of disaster risk reduction, flood hazard zoning and general building regulations.

**Key challenge(s)** Lack of follow-up on the fate of households after their one-year grant expires, particularly for those at risk of renewed displacement or forced eviction. Some studies suggest that only 25% of beneficiaries renewed their rental contract. The main reason cited by the 75% who moved out was not having enough income to remain. This highlights the necessity forInterval support programmes to complement rental support grants (see box on the graduation approach), although livelihood initiatives may not always be able to address structural poverty

Required significant oversight and monitoring to ensure rental housing stock was habitable and not in a hazard-risk area

**Factors for potential replicability** Availability of affordable rental housing stock

Landowners willing to sign written rental agreements with guidelines on maintenance, safety and protection from eviction

Mechanisms to verify proposed rentals and determine their safety in terms of disaster risk reduction

Access to bank accounts and/or mobile cash-transfer technologies

**Overview** On 12 January 2010, a devastating earthquake struck Haiti, killing more than 200,000 people and leaving 2.3 million temporarily homeless. It was a huge disaster not only because of its scale, but also because of its effect on urban areas. Almost 20 per cent of homes in the capital, Port-au-Prince, were destroyed. Across the country as a whole more than 105,000 buildings were razed and 200,000 damaged. At the height of the crisis, around 1.5 million people were living in 1,500 temporary displacement camps in the capital and surrounding areas. As of September 2014, there were still 85,432 officially recognised IDPs in 123 camps.

Port-au-Prince had undergone rapid urbanisation and unplanned growth since the 1980s, leading to the expansion of densely populated informal settlements and a shortage of adequate housing and basic services for low-income residents. Even before the earthquake, the country was short of 100,000 units, and the housing sector was worst affected by the disaster, incurring losses put at $2.3 billion and accounting for 40 per cent of all the damage it caused.

Haiti’s political system and state institutions before the earthquake were described as “centralised, weak and self-interested” with poor capacity to delivery public goods, little legitimacy and vast inequality. Article 22 of the country’s constitution recognises the right of every citizen to “decent housing”, and the Ministry of Social Affairs has an established public agency for the promotion of social housing (EPPLS). It is, however, vastly underfunded and has not been able to tackle systemic structural issues of “poor urban planning, lax building code enforcement and an archaic system of land registry”. The “price of building materials is not regulated, rent control legislation is not enforced, and speculation on land and housing is widespread”.

These issues persist. EPPLS has since been strengthened, but social housing may or may not be appropriate for Haiti, given that it is resource-intensive and requires significant government oversight. There is still a need though for more designated, serviced land for housing construction and the further integration of housing and urban growth management.

In parallel with the urgent need to address long-term structural issues in the housing sector, the situation in the country’s displacement camps began to grow dire in 2010 and 2011. Many became seriously overcrowded, and health, water and sanitation conditions deteriorated, leading in some cases to cholera outbreaks. There were also increasing numbers of violent forced evictions, sometimes enforced by the police, and gender-based violence, including sexual violence, was rife.

It is also important to note that not all of the camp residents were IDPs. Many were urban poor who were not directly affected by the earthquake in terms of housing, but both groups faced similar challenges.

When President Michel Martelly took office in May 2011, he made an ambitious pledge to close all camps within six months. He announced the 16-6 plan, which was to be financed by the Haiti Reconstruction Fund and called for the rehabilitation of 16 neighbourhoods and the clearance of six public areas where camps had been set up. The plan was implemented by a coordinating body, which included the government, USAID, UNDP, UNOPS and ILO.

**Policy shifts and programme design**

**Rental support programmes** were the most popular way of moving camp residents back to their original neighbourhoods or other areas. Other housing options were also offered, including transitional shelter, housing repair and new home construction, but all except the grants were aimed more at homeowners. Rental support grants were defined as “a financial payment given to a family displaced by a humanitarian emergency. The financial payment is given to a family or individual on the condition that it is used to pay for a fixed-term lease in...
accommodation rented from a private-sector landlord. The cash grant guarantees that the beneficiary has access to the safe, cost-free or highly subsidized shelter for the duration of the lease.14

Households were allocated baseline grants of $450 to use either as a rent subsidy,15 Given that 70 per cent of camp residents were tenants before the earthquake, the vast majority received rent subsidies. The baseline figure covered around a year’s rent, and families with more than seven members received double.

After the earthquake, engineers from the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communication assessed the safety of buildings. Buildings considered safe were stamped green, those for repair yellow and those for demolition red. Grant recipients were instructed to avoid these zones at all costs.

Payment was also subject to a home verification check to determine whether recipients’ chosen property met building and safety requirements. Monitoring was an important component of the programme as a counterbalance to its “keep the change” element, which encouraged tenants to try to negotiate down their rent with their landlord and pocket the difference – a potential incentive to choose cheaper, substandard housing. Seventy-seven per cent of landlords surveyed in 2012 said they had invested around two-thirds of their rental income in upgrading their properties to meet the requirements of the home verification team, which led to some improvement in rental housing conditions.16

A grievance and appeals mechanism was set up for those excluded from the beneficiary list, made up of representatives from the Port-au-Prince mayor’s office, the Unit for the Construction of Housing and Public Buildings (Unité de Construction des Logements et Bâtiments Publics, UCLBP) and IDOM. People found to be making a fraudulent application were denied and told to vacate their camp. If they did not leave willingly, they were forced to do so under legislation introduced in 2004,17 with “red zones” deemed to be at high risk of floods and landslides. Grant recipients were instructed to avoid these zones at all costs.

The grant guarantees that the beneficiary has access to the safe, cost-free or highly subsidized shelter for the duration of the lease.

Impact and challenges
There is debate about whether rental support grants can be seen as supporting durable solutions, given that they cover only relatively short fixed periods, and as such are unlikely in and of themselves to end the cycle of displacement. The World Bank’s operational manual suggests they should be just “one building block in an overall shelter assistance strategy aiming to provide durable housing solutions for displaced populations”.18 Their objective generally is to restore tenant’s living standards to those before their displacement (see Figure 3). Complementary measures that monitor beneficiaries’ ability to continue paying rent after their cash-based assistance ends or that keep track of affordable rental housing stock are not necessarily considered integral components of rental support grant programmes.

According to a 2013 external evaluation of rental support grants in Haiti, no recipients returned to their camps, but only 25 per cent renewed their leases at the end of the first year.19 Inefficient income was main reason cited for not doing so. The poorest urban residents earn less than $2 a day. As such, livelihood support is essential to durable housing programmes (see box on the graduation approach). Such support cannot address structural poverty, but it can help IDPs who have temporarily lost incomes as a result of their displacement to recover wages, gain new skills and find other sustainable livelihood opportunities. Families not eligible for grants because they did not have the required documentation received third-party help to obtain them.21

Contrary to initial concerns, the programme did not cause inflation in the rental housing market by flooding it with excess cash when supply was low for two main reasons. By June 2013, 40,000 people had secured rented accommodation in and around Port-au-Prince, meaning that a significant number of IDPs were housed in existing stock. The “keep the change” approach also helped to maintain competition between landlords, while the home verification checks ensured that the policy did not result in IDPs’ living conditions deteriorating by their choosing to rent cheaper, substandard accommodation in order to pocket more cash.

Rental support grants can be disbursed either as one-off lump sums payments or on a monthly basis, which makes them easier to control but more expensive to administer. There are indications that lump sum payments in Haiti allow some recipients to purchase land in the Canaan informal settlement rather than securing rented accommodation. As such, they could be seen as contributing to the expansion of such settlements, but in reality grant recipients made up only a fraction of those setting up home in Canaan. Its expansion is rather a symptom of the country’s huge housing shortage, which neither the government nor the international community have addressed.

Knowledge transfer
A variety of agencies worked together as part of the return working group of IASC’s Haiti E-Shelter/CCCM cluster to implement the rental support grant programme. They included Catholic Relief Services, Concern Worldwide, IRC, IOM, the J/P Haitian Relief Organisation and World Vision International.22

The graduation approach?
Livelihoods support and overcoming barriers to work to complement cash-based assistance

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Livelihoods support and overcoming barriers to work to complement cash-based assistance

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Each agency employed slightly different methodologies with varying degrees of success, and the working group’s experiences were encapsulated in its 2012 Toolkit of Best Practices and Lessons Learned, which sought to transfer country-specific knowledge to global shelter practices. Two years later, the World Bank hired the toolkit’s author, Emmet Fitzgerald, to write an operational manual on rental support grants – a knowledge transfer of humanitarian shelter experiences to an international development organization that created a broad methodology with a specific focus on governments’ role in devising rental support grant policies and programmes.

The Haiti programme was eventually integrated into the government’s broader reconstruction and displacement policy agenda. If the approach had been further institutionalised, the grants could have been channelled through a government body rather than via various agencies.

The success of Haiti’s rental support grant programmes lies not so much in the closure of camps, but in the knowledge transfer from the return working group’s practical experiences to an institutional norm in the government’s strategic framework for disaster response, and to a general methodology for such interventions in other contexts. The World Bank manual outlines the project cycle; the grievance and appeals process; protection, health and psychosocial support; and data management. The project cycle consists of eight steps, which cover registration; psychosocial support; and data management. The project also addresses the specific interests of vulnerable groups, and recommends the establishment of protection teams to assist elderly people, people with reduced mobility, blind people, people with acute or terminal illnesses, people suffering from psychological trauma, single parents with large families, families with children showing indicators of malnourishment, pregnant women and unaccompanied minors.27

The manual also envisages the use of innovative data collection and monitoring tools such as smartphone applications to register camp residents, and strategies to circumvent forgeries and illegitimate claims for grants.

**Impact**

Rental support grants in Haiti helped to clear some of the camps targeted for closure. Some were forcibly evicted by landowners, and others left because of the threat of natural hazards and disease. Many owner-occupiers left because they were eligible for transitional shelter, reconstruction assistance or new homes.

The rental support grant programme also encouraged private sector reconstruction and repair by increasing demand for affordable rental housing. As such, it had economic benefits for the wider affected community and the neighbourhoods people returned to.

**Conclusion**

If they are to contribute to durable solutions, rental support grants need to be combined with longer-term complementary programmes. The most sustainable impact of the Haiti initiative is its inclusion in UCLBP’s program and the government’s disaster response strategy. It has also influenced the thinking of both humanitarian and development advocates for the use of such programmes elsewhere.

Cash-based assistance is by no means unique to Haiti. The lessons learned from Haiti are valuable, but it is unclear whether there has been enough institutional reflection and longitudinal studies on the history of such support.

**Notes**

5. Helping Families, Closing Camps, UCLBP and Government of Haiti
8. Some fled undamaged buildings out of fear, so were able to return quickly.
11. “In 1997, a study by the GOH reported that 67 per cent of the Port-au-Prince population lived on 20 per cent of the city’s inhabited area,” in Priscilla Phelps, “Analyzing the Haiti Post-Earthquake Shelter Response and Housing Recover: Results and Lessons Learned the First Two Years.” The World Bank, 2013, p12
15. UCLBP, Helping Families, Closing Camps
17. Fitzgerald, p49
18. Ibid, p12
19. Ibid, p24
25. Ibid, p12
26. Ibid, p30
27. Ibid, p40