7. Neighbourhood upgrades

Description

Neighbourhood upgrades generally shift the focus from IDPs specifically to area-based interventions integrated into broader urban and development plans. They are distinct from individual or beneficiary-based approaches, and as such help to overcome one of the main challenges faced by humanitarian organisations working in urban - how to reach dispersed IDPs who are largely invisible in broader communities that include other vulnerable people such as migrants, marginalised groups and the urban poor. In some cases, however, such as the Roma Mahalla in Kosovo, the upgrade was part of a return project specifically conceived as a durable solution for IDPs living in protracted displacement in lead-contaminated camps in second case study below). Better use of space to create more housing can also be achieved via North Mitrovicë/a (see first case study).

Neighbourhood upgrades include support for municipalities in improving associated infrastructure and services to an area, and more efficient use of space to increase the number of affordable rental properties available. This is often done by encouraging property owners to build additional rooms to accommodate IDPs’ local integration, as was the case in Katye in Haiti.

The third case study describes how the Transitional Solutions Initiative involved community members in Colombia in identifying their priorities and then simultaneously addressing their humanitarian and development needs in the regularisation of their informal settlement.

The neighbourhood approach

‘Practitioners define the Neighbourhood Approach as an area-based intervention that responds to multi-sectorial needs and is informed by community-based decision-making reflective of the social, economic, and physical features of the delineated area.

The approach is shelter-led but settlement-focussed: it shifts the attention from conventional ‘four walls and a roof’ efforts centred on households, towards a more synergistic and complementary focus on the entire community in defined spatial contexts. The process requires understanding of available local resources, emergent opportunities, and potential constraints regarding the sheltering of people, the recovery of affected economies, and the reduction of risks associated with vulnerability to natural hazards”.

Source: “The Neighbourhood approach” Improving the Delivery of Humanitarian Assistance in Urban Areas.” USAID/DCHQ/OFDA, no date

Residents in new housing in Ravine Pintade, a hilly area in the center of Port-au-Prince which was previously damaged by the earthquake. An extra floor was added to address the small size of the plots. Photo: CHF/Maggie Steber, May 2012
Review of practices and case studies

Housing programs and policies that support durable solutions for urban IDPs

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Review of practices and case studies

planning and construction practices, vulnerability to caused, Ravine Pintade had problems, such as poor during the earthquake. Ninety per cent of the residents settlement spans 16 acres and is built on a steep slope displaced. One such area was the Ravine Pintade. The project took a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach, including the provision of transitional shelter that could be upgraded, disaster risk reduction measures, rubble removal, and initiatives in the areas of water and sanitation, health, livelihoods and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Case study 1: Katye1 neighbourhood improvement programme in Ravine Pintade (Haiti)

Practice

Katye neighbourhood improvement programme in Ravine Pintade

Main actors

CHF International (now Global Communities) Project Concern International

Context

Ninety per cent of Ravine Pintade residents, or around 2,000 people, were displaced by the 2010 earthquake. Almost 2,000 people benefited from the programme. Impact

return to Ravine Pintade. It also contributed to an overall improvement in residents’ access to adequate housing. The project took a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to settlement improvement, including the provision of transitional shelter that could be upgraded; disaster risk reduction initiatives; rubble clearance; water, sanitation, health and livelihoods programs; and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Community enumeration and profiling exercises identified different forms of land rights, tenure claims and ownership in the settlement. The enumeration exercise also helped to identify the community’s priorities and needs regarding housing, settlement planning and infrastructure. CHF and PCI conducted a risk mapping exercise with the community and then proposed solutions based on their findings. The entire process of programme design, including the enumeration and profiling exercises, aimed to build consensus around the objectives and implementation of the initiative.

In an effort to improve living standards, two-storey housing units were proposed to make up for the small plot sizes in the settlement. In some cases, an extra floor was built on the condition that the beneficiary would offer it rent-free to a homeless or displaced person. The initiative led to a moderate increase in rental housing stock in the settlement, and water, sanitation and drainage infrastructure were also installed. Drainage is particularly important in terms of disaster risk reduction.

Community participation played a significant part in the success of the project, not only identifying needs that the programme could address, but also by engendering a sense of ownership of the project, building trust and resolving problems that arose during implementation. These included dealing with threats from within and outside the community; and negotiating land concessions to incorporate disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures such as retaining walls, drainage infrastructure and wider footpaths. Technical experts helped residents to implement the measures.

The practice involved the community from an early stage, and its participation engendered a feeling of community ownership over the project. Enumeration and mapping exercises were used to identify different forms of land rights, tenure claims and ownership, and a risk mapping exercise was also conducted. A profiling exercise helped to identify the community’s priorities and needs early on in terms of housing, settlement planning and infrastructure.

The practice resulted in a moderate increase in rental housing stock in Ravine Pintade (similar to the incremental housing approach in Jodada). It included disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures such as retaining walls, drainage infrastructure and wider footpaths. Technical experts helped residents to implement the measures.

The practice involved auxiliary programmes, such as free community health care, training programmes and protection initiatives.

Background

In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, many neighbourhoods or katyes were severely damaged and their residents displaced. One such area was the Ravine Pintade informal settlement situated between Port-au-Prince and Petionville, which was home to nearly 3,000 families. The settlement spans 16 acres and is built on a steep slope with precarious housing that suffered severe damage during the earthquake. Ninety per cent of the residents were displaced. Damaged roads and rubble made the settlement inaccessible.

Even before the earthquake and the displacement it caused, Ravine Pintade had problems, such as poor planning and construction practices, vulnerability to floods and landslides, and a lack of public infrastructure including water and sanitation. Even if IDPs were to return, without disaster risk reduction measures they would be vulnerable to renewed displacement in the event of another natural hazard.

Overview

To facilitate return to Ravine Pintade, it was determined that the settlement would have to be rebuilt and upgraded. CHF International (now Global Communities) and Project Concern International (PCI) developed a katye improvement programme that combined humanitarian assistance with a longer-term development approach emphasizing recovery and the upgrading of the settlement. In effect, the programme not only supported IDPs’ prompt

return to Ravine Pintade. It also contributed to an overall improvement in residents’ access to adequate housing. The project took a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to settlement improvement, including the provision of transitional shelter that could be upgraded; disaster risk reduction initiatives; rubble clearance; water, sanitation, health and livelihoods programs; and the protection of vulnerable groups.

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Key challenge(s)

Inaccessibility of the site complicated and slowed down implementation and raised costs. Tension with surrounding neighbourhoods not included in the project. Lack of training on building maintenance, vertical and horizontal expansion and the re-use of materials.

Factors for potential replicability

The cost-effectiveness of this type of broad approach at different scales. Community ownership and participation.

CHF and PCI employed community members to clear rubble, providing short-term livelihood opportunities for returning IDPs who had lost income as result of their displacement. The programme also tried to address neglected tenants’ needs. Many early recovery and housing up-grade or reconstruction schemes favour property owners over tenants, who tend to be side lined. As such, the help provided to returning families in upgrading their homes and building extra floors to provide rent-free housing for homeless people and IDPs were important elements of the initiative.

Challenges and lessons learned

The community’s participation and sense of ownership were the main strength in the programme, which was founded on trust. Among other things, it meant that beneficiaries waiting for housing upgrades were able to rely on the community for temporary solutions by making arrangements with friends or family, which added no additional cost to the programme.

The cash-for-work initiative was helpful, but payment by the hour rather than based on productivity was not appropriate. CHF and PCI also considered reusing the rubble for building, but it was deemed unsafe to do so. The programme would have benefited from more livelihood interventions, including vocational training and access to small business loans. It could also have conducted more outreach to surrounding areas to make it even more inclusive, and more training on building maintenance, vertical or horizontal expansion and the recycling of materials should have been included. DRR activities benefited from the presence of technical experts.

The programme helped only a small fraction of the 2.3 million people left temporarily homeless by the earthquake, but it also influenced several other projects through the organisation of field visits and the dissemination of information on its methodology, best practices and costs. IFRC, the American Red Cross, the World Bank and UN-OPS among others acknowledged that it had guided the development of their own programmes.

This was a new project implemented at a relatively small scale, but it could be developed and scaled up as part of future recovery programmes. One key factor to consider, however, is how cost-effective such a multi-sectoral, community-based approach would be at different scales. It touches on the perennial question of whether it is better to assist many people with relatively little, or to help a few with high-level assistance. This is hardly a realiz
tic portrayal of the cost-efficiency trade-offs involved in programme design, but it does reflect that the fact that humanitarianists and their counterparts in the development sector often have to pit quantity against quality.

Given that the focus of this report is on employing a rights-based approach to durable solutions, it is important to ask whether programmes such as the one in Ravine Pintade could be mainstreamed in a more cost-effective and time-effective way.

Conclusion
Despite the fact that this was a small and isolated programme, it provides a powerful example of how IDPs’ short and longer-term needs can be addressed in a complementary way by combining humanitarian and development approaches.

Case study 2: Return to Roma Mahalla (Kosovo)

Overview
Roma Mahalla is a neighbourhood on the south bank of the river Ibar in the city of Mitrovica/a in northern Kosovo. Before the 1999 armed conflict, it had around 150 homes on at least 13.6 hectares of land and as many as 8,000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) residents,1 the largest community of its kind in the former Yugoslavia.2

The entire population of Roma Mahalla was displaced as a result of the armed conflict that pitted the Kosovo Liberation Army against Yugoslav government forces and Serbian paramilitary units, the subsequent NATO bombing and the wave of retalatory violence by ethnic Albanians. Roma Mahalla residents were targeted by Albanian Kosovars, who looted the neighbourhood and burned it down because they believed the RAE had collaborated with the Serbs.3

RAE who had the resources fled elsewhere in Europe, but the poorest, many of whom had previously been informal settlers, sought refuge in displacement camps near north Mitrovica/a or fled to Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro.4 The camps were only intended to provide temporary shelter for a few months, but IDPs ended up living there in insalubrious and harmful conditions for up to 13 years. Since the 1999 conflict, Mitrovica/a has been politically divided. The north of the city is de facto controlled by Serbia, and the south by Kosovo. Further inter-ethnic violence displaced 4,200 people in the city in 2004.

Before the conflict, RAE’s informal settlements, including Roma Mahalla, had not been integrated into the Mitrovica/a municipality’s urban development plan. The land in Roma Mahalla was divided into three categories, each of which required different types of solution. It had private land, much of it owned by people living in western Europe and unwilling to return and jeopardise their asylum claims; municipal land, on the majority of IDPs had been informally settled and land administered by the Kosovo Trust Agency, on which very few IDPs had been settled.

Informal RAE settlers, tenants and those living with others tend not to have properly documents. Some had never registered their property with the cadastral office, or did not record inheritance or sale transactions. To complicate matters further, Mitrovica/a’s cadastral records had been taken to Serbia during the conflict. The UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) requested and received the cadastral records, and updated vector coordinates and urban plans for Roma Mahalla to ensure that the locations of all previous plots and buildings were properly recorded before the rubble was cleared and reconstruction began. The information was essential in getting the project off the ground.

Mitrovica/a is a highly politicised environment. In the aftermath of inter-ethnic conflict, it was particularly difficult to get land allocated for displaced minorities. The city also underwent significant urbanisation after the conflict. Its population is said to have doubled with the arrival of IDPs from other parts of Kosovo who wanted to integrate locally rather than return to areas where they would be part of a minority.

Roma Mahalla sits on prime land in the city centre and the municipality had many other potential uses for it. RAE’s return to the neighbourhood was in line with the national preference for IDPs to go back to the home areas, but it took a directive from the prime minister’s office before the municipality would agree to allocate land for the process.5

Camp conditions
An estimated 1500 IDPs from Roma Mahalla and elsewhere were accommodated in four camps in Cesmin Lug, Ziljakovac, Klabare and Leposavic.6 Shelter consisted of makeshift tents, huts and metal containers with cardboard insulation, outdoor plumbing and intermittent electricity. Initially meant to be temporary, the camps were managed by UNHCR from 1999 to 2001, UNMIK from 2001 to 2008 and the Ministry of Communities and Returns from 2008 until their closure. Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) managed Cesmin Lug and Ostlerode, another camp set up in 2007, on UNMIK’s behalf.

The Cesmin Lug, Ziljakovac and Klabare camps were established on land near the Trepca lead mine and smelter that was contaminated with heavy metals. The contamination affected all local residents, but the health risks to RAE in the camps were significantly higher than for the rest of the population. Many RAE were employed in lead smelting to earn an income, and their lead-painted

**Snapshot**

**Practice**

Return to Roma Mahalla (2004 to 2013)

**Main actors**

UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

Municipality of Mitrovica/a

Norwegian Church Aid

Danish Refugee Council

UNHCR, OSCE, Mercy Corps

**Context**

Around 8,000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) people fled the Roma Mahalla neighbourhood in the city of Mitrovica/a in northern Kosovo during the 1999 conflict. The poorest settled in informal camps where they lived for up to 13 years, during which time it emerged that they were lead-contaminated.

Kosovo’s bid for independence meant it came under EU scrutiny.

Mitrovica/a is a divided city. The northern part is in effect controlled by Serbia and the southern part by Kosovo. Significant urbanisation has taken place in Mitrovica/a since the conflict, and the Roma Mahalla is prime land in the town centre.

**Target group**

Displaced RAE families, particularly those living in lead-contaminated camps

**Summary**

After lengthy negotiations, the Return to Roma Mahalla agreement was reached by the International Stakeholders Group for the Mitrovica/a Region and the Mitrovica/a municipality, and was signed on 18 April 2005 by the Municipal Assembly President, UNMIK’s Regional Representative, and representatives of OSCE, UNHCR and UNMIK. It outlined the rights of all former residents of the neighbourhood to return and the terms under which the move was to take place. Between 2005 and 2012, the project involved temporary resettlement, soil and blood testing for lead contamination, training of public health workers, identity registration, the verification of property rights, rubble removal, infrastructure and housing construction, educational and livelihoods initiatives and strengthening the capacity of Mitrovica/a’s municipal authorities.

Housing units were distributed according to family size, and former homeowners had their properties rebuilt. Those who were given new housing units signed a 99-year lease, improving their tenure security compared to their residence in the Roma Mahalla informal settlement before the conflict. Beneficiaries did not pay rent, but were responsible for all utility bills and building maintenance costs. The project helped to overcome the sense of abandonment that the IDPs felt after years of languishing in lead-contaminated camps with few if any effective initiatives to help them.

**Key challenge(s)**

Considerable advocacy was required regarding the urgent need to close the lead-contaminated camps and resettle the IDPs. The RAE project beneficiaries were highly vocal about some issues, but their participation in planning and implementation was limited.

It was not always clear who the legitimate community leaders were, a fact which continues to create confusion for local and international interlocutors.

Dealing with the effects of lead contamination, particularly in children and young people.

Overcoming RAE’s mistrust of the local and international community and their fears about the possible security issues involved in returning to Roma Mahalla.

Absence or inaccuracy of land registries.

Some beneficiaries sold their homes in violation of their tenancy agreement, which the municipality considered illegal but approached with flexibility to keep the peace.

There were not enough livelihood opportunities for beneficiaries to become self-reliant, which in turn reduced the habitability of their housing over time.

**Factors for potential replicability**

1. A strong legal and policy framework on durable solutions at the national, regional and municipal level

2. Stability and security after the cessation of violence and hostilities

3. Effective coordination mechanisms between local, national and international organisations and displaced and receiving communities

4. Municipal agreement to allow returnees to resettle on public land

**Dealing with the effects of lead contamination, particularly in children and young people.**
doors and windows, substandard living conditions, poor diet and hygiene practices, and infrequent medical visits only served to make their health risks worse. A 2004 World Health Organisation (WHO) study found elevated blood lead levels among RAE in the camps. Further studies by WHO and the Mitrovica/A public health institute conducted each of the next four years showed similar results and led to calls for the camps to be closed. RAE, human rights organisations and UN special procedures and treaty bodies issued parallel statements about the dangerous health and living conditions in the camps and pressed UNMIK to address the issue.

Five years of neglecting the lead contamination problem were followed by years of haphazard efforts to resolve the issue. RAE living in the camps were resettled to Osterode until returns to Roma Mahalla began in 2007. After more than a decade living in lead-contaminated camps, the RAE community developed significant mistrust of the international community.

Policy shifts in favour of IDPs’ return
Several national, regional and local legal and policy frameworks were applied or invoked in implementing the return of the RAE community to Roma Mahalla. The key legal document, the Return to Roma Mahalla Agreement, was signed on 18 April 2005. It outlined the terms of the right of return of all former Roma Mahalla residents. The decision would rest with the municipality and UNMIK to address the issue.

For the majority had only ever lived in individual family homes with no yard. The steering group tried to address the fact that RAE representatives were still able to make themselves heard. They were, for example, vehemently opposed to living in apartments, because the vast majority had only ever lived in individual family homes with a yard. The steering group tried to address the fact that

Housing programs and policies that support durable solutions for urban IDPs

First, the RAE community had developed significant mistrust of the international community after more than a decade of unmet promises while living in lead-contaminated camps. Second, and very much related, community participation was low in activities such as the Roma Mahalla task force, community meetings and tripartite agreements with implementing agencies and the municipality.

Third, communication was made more difficult by RAE speaking mainly Albanian or Serbian. Mercy Corps hired an external legal firm to explain the content of the tripartite agreements to beneficiaries in their respective languages before they signed.

Fourth, it was not always clear who the legitimate RAE leaders were. Over the years, different people had claimed to lead the Roma Mahalla community, which created confusion for local and international interlocutors. In an effort to better understand the situation, the municipality hired a Roma woman who had returned from lead-contaminated camps to be their representative in the neighbourhood.

Fifth, power relations were unequal when negotiations took place between community leaders and national or international agencies. The steering group executive officer, Laurie Wiseberg, described the situation on 14 March 2005 during talks between the municipality and RAE representatives as “nervous; on the other side were the municipal officials and professionals (an urban planner, a lawyer, an architect, a political leader) in suits, well-versed in negotiations, and at ease.”

Coordination mechanisms and IDPs’ participation
After the signing of the Return to Roma Mahalla Agreement in 2005, a project management steering group was established. It was co-chaired by the Mitrovica/A municipality and UNMIK’s minority rights adviser who served as executive officer. It included units on legal and protection issues, community development and technical implementation, which were co-chaired by the municipality and UNHCR, OSCE and UNDP respectively. RAE representatives were not formally included. Interpretation was provided at all meetings, and minutes were published in English, Albanian and Serbian.
apartment buildings were not considered culturally appropriate by making modifications to their design. They limited each building to 12 apartments and included measures to accommodate Roma traditions. Each apartment was designed to include storage space, a wood stove for cooking and a balcony. Residents who moved in during the first phase of the project were given apartments, but the steering group redesigned the accommodation for the second phase to provide terraced housing.

While Roma Mahalla was being reconstructed, UNMIK’s civil affairs department and the UN secretary general’s special representative for Kosovo proposed relocating IDPs in the lead contaminated camps to vacant army barracks. The RAE community, however, was emphatically opposed. Its sentiments were captured by one camp leader, Shender Gusi, who said: “International organisations are not doing a good job … people only want to return to the same houses as they had before … the camps do not want another temporary relocation as they do not want to be forgotten”. Camp residents were still offered the relocation and though not all chose to accept it, most eventually did.

When UNMIK and NCA left Kosovo in 2009, Mercy Corps took on a more prominent role in the reconstruction of Roma Mahalla, and in April 2010 it entered into a bilateral memorandum of understanding with the municipality. The agreement set out the duties and responsibilities of each party, and regular meetings were held with the municipality, the Ministry of Communities and Return, UNHCR, DRC, OSCE, the Kosovo police, NATO’s Kosovo Operational Force (KFOR) and the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS). The meetings helped to coordinate the closure and demolition of the camps, resettlement procedures, and the addressing of education and protection concerns.

Mercy Corps was not able to sign a memorandum with RAE community leaders, because of their mistrust of external organisations and their feeling that their resettlement requests were not being met. It did find, however, that they “were more comfortable signing limited and specific agreements such as the list of beneficiaries or the contents of the food resettlement packages”. This was ultimately viewed as a more productive way to engage community leaders in implementing resettlement, rather than a symbolic memorandum demonstrating general support for the project.

Programme design

After brokered a lengthy consensus building, negotiations and coordination, the Return to Roma Mahalla initiative was established as a series of projects across various sectors implemented by international organisations and funded by international donors and, to a lesser extent, the Ministry of Communities and Return. Between 2005 and 2012, it consisted of temporary resettlement, soil and blood testing for lead contamination, training of public health workers, identity registration, property rights verification, rubble removal, infrastructure and housing construction, and coordination of educational and livelihood assistance and efforts to strengthen the capacity of the municipal authorities.

The municipality agreed to donate 10 hectares of land to RAE residents under a 99-year lease.\(^13\) The concept of land donation was reinforced in April 2010, when the prime minister issued a letter advising all municipalities to allocate land for resettlement and return as a show of support of the Kosovo operational plan for displacement.\(^14\)

The leasehold agreement stipulates that no rent shall be paid, but beneficiaries are “responsible for paying all utilities and for the maintenance including repairs to water pipes, windows and roofs. Beneficiaries had to pay a nominal fee of €1 to enter into the agreement. The Return to Roma Mahalla Agreement stipulated that 20 per cent of the labour force would come from the RAE community. Most materials were also bought from local vendors in Kosovo, although they were manufactured elsewhere. As such, the project contributed to the local economy and provided livelihood opportunities for IDPs and local communities. As the beneficiaries moved in, they signed acceptance forms to confirm that they were happy with their new homes. Professional removal companies helped them move, and they also received a resettlement package of food, non-food items, furniture, home appliances, firewood and income generation assistance. Returnees acknowledge the improved housing conditions in Roma Mahalla.\(^15\)

Residents who did not previously hold title deeds received new apartments or terraced houses with 99-year leases providing tenure security. As the beneficiaries moved in, they signed acceptance forms to confirm that they were happy with their new homes. Professional removal companies helped them move, and they also received a resettlement package of food, non-food items, furniture, home appliances, firewood and income generation assistance. Returnees acknowledge the improved housing conditions in Roma Mahalla.\(^16\)

Residents have access to a range of health facilities, such as the Roma Mahalla clinic, the south Mitrovica/a family medical centre, the hospital in north Mitrovica/a and the Institute of Public Health in Pristina.\(^17\) The clinic, or ambulanta, was equipped with lead testing equipment and local healthcare workers were trained in its use and the treatment of those with high blood lead levels. This benefited Roma Mahalla and other local residents alike, particularly given that Mitrovica/a is a heavily polluted area, and because the medication to treat lead contamination is not listed as essential, meaning recipients would otherwise have to pay for it.

To deal with the issue of lead poisoning, NCA constructed a medical centre with DRC’s support. Around 150 RAE children from the camps were found to have high levels of lead in their blood, which in some cases dropped to acceptable levels naturally when the moved out. Between 2010 and 2012, 45 children were treated with chelation therapy, vitamin supplements and a healthy diet, and by December 2014 only two children – whose families continue to smelt – still had high blood lead levels.

The neighbourhood received an infrastructure makeover, funded by donors and local households. New housing projects were developed for members of the receiving community identified by the municipality as living on social assistance without their own homes. They also received vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities. Municipal officials were trained extensively in various topics, including Roma employment, public-private partnerships and foreign investment.

A learning centre was established in Roma Mahalla to address the issue of Roma children being stigmatised because they did not do their homework. The centre also provides extra-curricular support, activities and supplies. Of the 300 or so children in the neighbourhood, around 250 go to school in north Mitrovica/a to continue to access to Serbian language instruction. The remainder do not go to school and dropouts are common.

Livelihood support evolved over time. Skills and market assessments were conducted to determine the most appropriate and lucrative types of assistance, and returnees were given equipment ranging from chainsaws and masonry tools to musical instruments. Some received business and vocational training, and internships in some cases led to employment.

When it became apparent that some families were selling the equipment they received, the approach shifted to providing skills rather than goods. Some organisations gave grants to businesses and factories to hire returnees, which helped some gain full-time employment. Others, however, gave up working under the arrangement, arguing that they wanted to be paid daily rather than monthly and preferred short-term labour.

A social business incubator was also set up in Roma Mahalla. It is a depot that offers space for workshops, offices and tools, and the services of a mentor. Those wishing to use the facilities have to provide a business plan. Four out of 12 businesses started in the incubator are active and profitable, with the collection of plastics for recycling the most successful. Roma Mahalla’s central location and commercial value have the potential to attract both consumers and investors.

Challenges

Some returnees sold or exchanged their new housing, or transferred it to someone else in transactions that were formalised by a lawyer.\(^18\) Mercy Corps monitors
the occupancy of the terraced houses it built, and as of August 2014, 25 of the 182 units were unoccupied and 15 had been sold, for €12,000 ($21,000).

The municipality is aware of these transactions, and considers them illegal. The terms of the leases do not permit them, but the authorities have not abrogated them, opting rather for leniency to keep the peace. The wording of the leases on the terraced houses built during the second phase of the project was changed to forbid their sale after it emerged that earlier returnees had sold their apartments.

Some instances of damp were reported in the first terraced houses to be built. The damp was treated and the housing design revised to include exterior wall insulation and improved heating and ventilation systems.21

Roma Mahalla residents have not always paid their utility bills. As of the end of 2014, the neighborhood owed water companies around €70,000 and electricity firms €100,000, and power had been cut off.22 OSCE liaised with utility companies to have the electricity reconnect ed. There was also a huge pile of rubbish at one end of the neighborhood, because residents had not paid for waste disposal.

Few people frequent the laundry, hair salon and kiosks established on the ground floor of the apartment building, and some customers keep debts with shopkeepers. The outdoor market space currently serves as a car park.

As of the end of 2014, the sustainability of most returnees’ livelihoods remained questionable. Those without full-time jobs survive on income earned through collecting wood, moving furniture and cleaning, and social assistance. Two families continue to smell lead from batteries. Some returnees work in north Mitrovica/a where there are more jobs, but many wish to emigrate as a result of their bleak economic outlook.23

Many returnees in terraced housing have erected fences around their yards to increase privacy and built sheds to store scrap, recyclables and other items RAE typically collect. They did so without planning permission and at their own expense. Municipal officials carried out an inspection in 2014, leaving many worried that their sheds would be demolished despite their insistence that their leases do not forbid such constructions. Concerned residents are preparing a petition to hand to the mayor of Mitrovica/a during discussions aimed at finding a compromise.

Conclusion

The Return to Roma Mahalla project is a good example of a rights-based, inclusive approach to the provision of land and housing for the return of a minority community, most of whose members had not previously owned their own homes or land. The public outcry over the lead-contaminated camps and Kosovo’s bid for independence, which meant it was under EU scrutiny, were instrumental in pushing the initiative forward.

The project also shows that persistent attempts to foster IDPs’ participation, however challenging, can lead to important modifications or the reformulation of national and international plans and priorities for their return. It also shows that access to livelihoods and establishing self-reliance can be a major challenge for IDPs in protracted displacement, particularly for marginalised groups such as the Roma, and that over time it reduces the habitability of their housing.

Household studies, conducted to support the programme design, were used to determine the feasibility of regularising settlements in areas prone to natural hazards. Interviews were conducted with IDPs and local community members to gain a first-hand understanding of their needs and expectations. The studies also assessed the sustainability of the returnees’ livelihoods and identified potential risks and challenges.

TSI's living conditions component includes the regularisation of informal urban settlements, where most IDPs live, either as a residence or as a workplace. The settlements have expanded significantly over five decades of conflict and some make up a large part of the cities in which they were established. That said, they tend not to be officially connected to water and electricity supplies or sanitation services, and residents are at risk of eviction. The settlements have become an increasingly serious issue, which authorities acknowledge needs to be resolved.

Colombia’s political context offers a good foundation for the implementation of TSI. The government endorsed the Victims’ Law in June 2011, and began peace talks with the country’s largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2012. It has also taken numerous measures in recent years to make the transition from humanitarian aid to pursuing durable solutions for IDPs. TSI reinforces and continues this work.

Challenges and strengths

Continuing violence and armed conflict, a lack of technical capacity and political will and the prohibitive cost of studies to determine the feasibility of legalising settlements in areas prone to natural hazards all constitute obstacles to the regularisation process. That said, the TSI programme has numerous strengths. It goes beyond the narrow approach of targeting individuals and households, and establishes the communities themselves as a legitimate claim to land. The settlements have expanded significantly over five decades of conflict and some make up a large part of the cities in which they were established. That said, they tend not to be officially connected to water and electricity supplies or sanitation services, and residents are at risk of eviction. The settlements have become an increasingly serious issue, which authorities acknowledge needs to be resolved.

TSIs living conditions component includes the regularisation of informal urban settlements, where most IDPs live, either as a residence or as a workplace. The settlements have expanded significantly over five decades of conflict and some make up a large part of the cities in which they were established. That said, they tend not to be officially connected to water and electricity supplies or sanitation services, and residents are at risk of eviction. The settlements have become an increasingly serious issue, which authorities acknowledge needs to be resolved.

The legal framework in Colombia provides for the regularization of settlements through the law on community property (Ley de Bienes comunes) and the law on urban development, which recognizes informal settlements as a form of land use. The regularization process involves a series of steps, including the submission of a regularization application, a review of the application by the municipality, and a public hearing. If the regularization is approved, the land is registered in the name of the community and the individuals living in the settlement.

Household surveys were conducted to assess the sustainability of the returnees’ livelihoods and identify potential risks and challenges. The studies also assessed the sustainability of the returnees’ livelihoods and identified potential risks and challenges.

Colombia’s political context offers a good foundation for the implementation of TSI. The government endorsed the Victims’ Law in June 2011, and began peace talks with the country’s largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2012. It has also taken numerous measures in recent years to make the transition from humanitarian aid to pursuing durable solutions for IDPs. TSI reinforces and continues this work.
Housing programs and policies that support durable solutions for urban IDPs

Review of practices and case studies

8. Supporting municipalities

Description

When large numbers of IDPs arrive in an urban area, a sudden increase in housing demand is only one of a complex set of strains the influx places on a city, its municipalities and other governance institutions. Longer-term shelter strategies such as NRC’s integrated urban housing programme in Jordan, which stimulate the housing market and add extra units, also require municipalities and commercial providers to make their services more widely available. As such, working towards durable solutions for urban IDPs living in protracted displacement means supporting not only the host community, but also the host municipality as a partner whose resources and capacities need to be strengthened. Local governance institutions play a key regulatory role, and they have resources and decision-making powers that can multiply the efforts of international agencies and NGOs.

If urban governance and infrastructure are to be more resilient and able to absorb rapid fluctuations in population, flexible municipal support tools are needed that can make quick assessments and provide financial and other resources to maintain adequate water, electricity, transport and waste management services. Supporting municipalities is an indirect but more sustainable way of supporting IDPs, and it strengthens local ownership and accountability.

Many IDPs move into districts that are poorly planned and under-serviced by municipalities that are either strapped for cash, staff and resources, or do not have the authority under a centralised government to set their own budgets and development plans. Water, electricity and waste management infrastructure may not have been adequate in the first place, meaning that a population influx has the potential to create social tensions over access to overburdened services. The more rapid the expansion of informal settlements, the harder it is for municipalities to keep up with demand. As such, it is important to think about how to link short-term approaches centred on households to medium and long-term development interventions for displaced and host communities as a whole.

The following case study is of a project that targets urban refugees, but it could be adapted to apply to IDPs. It demonstrates how the development sector is evolving and innovating practices for urban areas that deal with large population influxes.  

Case study: Host community support platform (Jordan)

Overview

Jordan has a history of poor planning and urban sprawl, made worse by previous influxes of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. The arrival of more than 620,000 Syrian refugees since 2011 has only served to complicate matters further. It has been estimated that in addition to the expense of running camps, it will cost Jordan $68 billion to cope with the Syrian refugee crisis. Given that more than 80 per cent of the new arrivals are thought to live outside camps, governore states such as Irbid, Mafraq, Amman and Zarqa are experiencing rapid informal growth in both urban and rural areas. The population of Mafraq has increased by 628 per cent since the arrival of Syrian refugees. Many municipalities in all four governorates were already struggling to meet service demand and in some, refugees have begun to outnumber local residents.

Solid waste management is the most acute challenge for those hosting large populations of Syrian refugees. Across the country as a whole, the influx has created around 340 tonnes of extra solid waste a day. Such an increase requires a major overhaul of handling, compaction, treatment and landfilling, and significant investment. Jordan’s national resilience plan for 2014 to 2016 identified the a series of shortcomings in the country’s existing municipal services:

- Limited attention to service delivery performance, standards and outcomes
- Out-dated equipment and logistical means of ensuring the delivery and maintenance of services and assets
- Insufficient capacities underpinned by a freeze on public recruitment and a patronage-based system of other recruitment
- Lack of planned urban growth, resulting in burgeoning informal settlements
- Limited participation of the population, especially in local development planning
- Out-dated financial management practices and system, leading to limited revenue generation and an unsustainable debt and salary burden
- De facto authority rests with mayors, with few checks and balances
- Inadequate civic engagement
- Steady decline in approval ratings

Given the vast structural and systemic issues in local governance institutions, a flexible and responsive model of cooperation between Jordanian authorities and international agencies that can align along different spheres...