



A Review of Context Analysis Tools for Urban Humanitarian Response

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Purpose

This desk review was produced by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) as part of the Stronger Cities Initiative. The Stronger Cities Initiative is a consortium led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and World Vision International (WVI).

This paper is part of a series of research pieces produced under the 'Urban Crises Learning Fund' managed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), the Urban Crises Learning Fund aims to build an in-depth understanding of how the humanitarian sector can most effectively operate in urban contexts.

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The magnitude of urban disasters in high population densities – combined with complex social, political, economic and institutional environments – has challenged the manner in which humanitarian agencies are used to working. Humanitarian agencies are now grappling with how to change their approaches to this reality. This desk review aims to provide an audit and analysis of existing context analysis tools along the themes of governance and power analysis; vulnerability, social and conflict analysis; and urban systems analysis. The lack of contextual understanding by urban humanitarian response has often been cited. This review finds that there are strong context analysis methodologies but the application and existence of tools specifically designed for urban humanitarian response remains limited. The tools that are available often require substantial time to conduct data collection and analysis. They are also frequently narrow in analytical focus, fail to address the multi-scalar nature of a city, and lack specificity in tool selection and methodology. The review suggests that the advancement of an urban context analysis tool for humanitarian response is needed and should aim to build from the strengths of existing tools and learning from new tools that are under development.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger)
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
ARC	American Red Cross
CSA	Conflict sensitivity analysis
DCA	Dividers and connectors analysis
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DNH	Do no harm analysis
EMMA	Emergency market mapping and analysis
HEA	Household economic approach
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LMA	Labour market analysis
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PCMA	Pre-crisis market analysis
PEA	Political economy analysis
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
PVA	Participatory vulnerability analysis
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SNA	Social network analysis
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCA	Vulnerability and capacity assessment
WFP	World Food Program
WRC	Women Refugee Commission
WVI	World Vision International

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- (i) Improve how stakeholders in urban crises engage with each other to form new partnerships and make better decisions, and
- (ii) Improve mitigation of disasters, preparedness and response by developing, testing and disseminating new approaches to forming relationships and systems.

Two consortia have been developed to undertake the work. The first consortium includes Habitat for Humanity Great Britain (HFHGB), Oxfam GB, University College London (UCL) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). It aims to research urban responses to natural hazards in urban areas. The second consortium is the Stronger Cities Initiative Consortium led by the IRC, the NRC and WVI. It is leading on research and developing tools and guidance on urban response in conflict, displacement, and natural hazard settings.

The authors are pleased to present this review on existing context analysis tools used by humanitarian actors in urban areas to IIED, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) department.

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1

Introduction

With the global phenomenon of urbanisation, the challenge of forced displacement¹ has become increasingly urbanised. Today, over half of the world's internally displaced persons and refugees are living in urban areas (Meral 2015). Forced displacement presents both a humanitarian and development challenge given that displacement is often long term, with more than 80 per cent of refugee crises lasting ten or more years (Crawford *et al.* 2015). Those affected by forced displacement often face the key risks and impoverishment processes of: (a) landlessness (b) joblessness (c) homelessness (d) marginalisation (e) food insecurity (f) loss of access to common property resources (g) increased morbidity and (h) community disarticulation² (Jennings *et al.* 2014). The combination of these risks is further compounded by political marginalisation that can ultimately lead to the breakdown of social capital amongst the displaced and social cohesion between them and the host communities. Urban displacement crises – as a result of manmade or natural causes – present a set of challenges that are generally different from those faced in rural or camp-based settings. Table 1 provides an illustration of how the urban setting challenges many of the humanitarian response models and approaches that have been developed for non-urban and rural areas.

While these challenges are nothing new to urban planners and city governments, it has presented the need for a paradigm shift for humanitarian actors whose approaches and ways of responding to crises have been primarily based on experiences in rural and camp-based settings (Grünwald *et al.* 2011). One of the key distinctive features that make urban spaces different from rural settings as noted by Haysom's synthesis of seven in-depth case studies in urban centres is the lack of control or influence humanitarian actors have in an urban setting. For instance, humanitarian actors may not have control or influence over how the urban system functions in informal areas, the quality of service provision, employment opportunities, infrastructure, or legal rights in an urban setting (Haysom 2013). These factors are further exacerbated by a density and diversity of host communities that may be poor and face similar problems as the displaced populations. This distinction necessitates a transition in the way humanitarian actors work to respond to forced displacement and underscores the necessity of collaboration with and support for the governments of cities and countries accommodating displaced persons and their host communities. Any intervention must not only understand what the risk factors are but also the underlying factors that may exacerbate or reduce the associated risks and impoverishment processes.

¹ For the purposes of this desk review, forced displacement is defined as the situation of persons who are forced to leave or flee their homes due to conflict, violence, human rights violations or natural disasters. Forcibly displaced persons may be internally displaced or refugees that have crossed an international border.

² Community disarticulation, also referred to as social disarticulation, has been defined by Cernea and McDowell (2000) as the dismantling and scattering of kinship groups and informal networks of mutual help that occurs as a result of displacement. In other words, it represents a loss of social capital (McDowell and Morrell 2010).

Table 1. Displacement in urban and non-urban settings: differences and challenges

FACTORS/ISSUES ³	NON-URBAN DISPLACEMENT	URBAN DISPLACEMENT
Land, housing, and property	Humanitarian actors through United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps can provide shelter for the displaced	In the absence of UN- or government-managed camps, the displaced find it challenging to secure shelter and the burden on host communities is often beyond their capacity to absorb
Delivery of services	The cluster system enables humanitarian actors to have more control and influence over the types, access to and quality of services provided	There are a larger number of existing services and service providers. As such, humanitarian actors have less control and influence regarding access to services for the displaced population
Spatial access and mobility	Displaced populations are often located in an enclosed space to which humanitarian responders have easy access	Displaced populations are dispersed and may have unequal access to the city
Re-establishment of livelihoods	The camp and rural settings often allow opportunities for informal subsistence agricultural or small enterprises that can sustain a household	Re-establishing livelihoods is often made challenging by restrictive government policies towards rights to work, restricted mobility, and competition with host communities for jobs
Protection	Displaced populations in camps and well-managed rural settings have better access to humanitarian actors with protection specialists available to provide case-management support	Displaced populations are more prone to protection risks such as child labour exploitation, gender-based violence (GBV), unsafe working conditions, xenophobic attacks or harassment from police etc
Accountable and responsive governance	Local government authorities in rural settings are often absent or too weak to provide services for the displaced population and the host community. Humanitarian actors are better able to apply the Sphere standards ⁴ and the IASC's accountability to affected populations (AAP) principles. ⁵	Local government authorities are often stronger and more involved in policy making and implementation in urban settings where they may tend to prioritise the needs and interest of the local host population over those of refugees and internally displaced persons.

A lack of contextual understanding is consistently cited in the literature as one of the key limitations for humanitarian interventions in urban settings (Creti 2010; Kyazze *et al.* 2012; Earle 2014; Grünwald *et al.* 2011; Brown *et al.* 2015). To be effective and appropriate in these environments, the assessments of humanitarian agencies need to go beyond only identifying the needs of the displaced population. In rural contexts, the displaced may outnumber the host community, so the logic is that if the displaced population's needs are understood, then humanitarian actors have the authority and space to respond. However, in urban areas, the displaced are just one part of a bigger picture that

municipal authorities have to worry about. Humanitarian actors responding to urban crises and displacement have to understand the complex contextual factors and dynamics operating in a given situation. Who are the stakeholders? What are the existing power relations and which groups dominate the decision-making processes? How are resources distributed? What existing policy and legal frameworks are in place? What role do social networks play? Why do certain social groups have access to some services while others do not? Why are services located in certain areas and not in others?

³ The categorisation of the key factors/issues was informed by Jennings *et al.* (2014) and Haysom (2013).

⁴ For more information on the Sphere project's handbook *Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in humanitarian response* see: www.sphereproject.org

⁵ For more information on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) APPs see: <http://tinyurl.com/iasc-app>

Context analysis approaches aid humanitarian actors to understand the complex dynamics of a given situation by unpacking the political, economic, social and spatial factors that could potentially enable or hinder effective crisis responses. They do so by enabling users to:

- Generate contextual information that goes beyond telling us what the current situation is (the visible effects of the problem) to instead **explain why things are the way they are and how they are connected** (the less apparent systemic issues and the non-traditional actors⁶ that influence them).
- **Understand what influences the types of decisions** made by local authorities, bureaucrats, and frontline service providers (state and non-state) and how displaced populations may affect their perspective and decision making.
- **Identify practical and realistic entry points** when designing interventions that contribute to an effective response while remaining true to humanitarian principles and values.

There is a range of needs-assessment tools with varying levels of depth and analytical focus depending on the purpose for which they have been designed. Needs assessments can be conducted as a standalone or built into a sectoral framework such as a food security framework or developed to capture needs in multiple sectors. While these tools have their intrinsic value in helping humanitarian actors identify needs of the displaced population, they are limited in their ability to produce information on the underlying political, economic, social and built-environment factors that may limit the impact of interventions. See Table 2 for a comparison of needs assessments and context analyses regarding the information collected and how that information informs project design.

There is a salient reason and rationale that explains why humanitarian actors seldom use context analysis tools

focusing on structural and systemic factors. These tools can take between a few weeks to months to collect data and analyse them. Humanitarian actors working in rapid onset emergencies do not have the luxury of time to conduct such analysis. However, given that 50 per cent of the world’s refugees are outside of camps – often living in informal settlements, hard to reach and hidden in towns and cities across the globe – humanitarian actors increasingly need to better adopt and adapt approaches that take into account systemic issues from a political, economic, social and spatial perspective (Meral 2015).

An approach to context analysis that unpacks these underlying factors is important because it helps urban responders to:

- Avoid doing unintentional harm or exacerbating social tensions, especially between displaced populations and host communities
- Identify stakeholders in terms of their capacity, interest in, and influence in forced displacement response
- Understand the relationships between stakeholders and where partnerships, coalitions, coordination and advocacy could add value
- Recognise the existing legal frameworks, formal and informal institutions, urban systems and power structures that will affect a response programme and vice versa
- Design a response based on analysis of the entry points and activities that will be most valuable in addressing needs with an understanding of the impact in both short and long-term development of an urban area, and
- Make explicit the programme assumptions, risks and trade-offs involved in planning and implementing programmes (Heykoop and Kelling 2014).

Table 2. Comparing traditional needs assessments and context analyses for informing project design

TASKS	TRADITIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENTS	CONTEXT ANALYSIS
Information gathering	Focuses on the ‘what and where’ types of questions to understand the current situation	Focuses on the ‘why and how’ to understand systemic or complex factors impacting the current situation
Project design and implementation	Project priorities and design primarily determined based on the needs of the affected population from the perspective of humanitarian actors	Project priorities and design reflect networks of actors, institutions, interests, incentives and capacities from the perspective of a variety of actors

⁶ Non-traditional actors in this instance are defined as actors not normally engaged in international humanitarian response such as the private sector and local civil society.

2

Methodology

The purpose of this desk review is to take stock of context analysis tools that focus on structural and systemic issues as opposed to specific individual/households needs. This is to inform the development of an urban context analysis tool.⁷ The review includes an overview of the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in existing tools, frameworks and approaches. The desk review is not meant to be an exhaustive literature review of urban contexts or context analysis. Rather, the review is meant to be a synthesis of the existing knowledge base on context analysis and its explanatory power for understanding urban forced-displacement crises and for identifying entry points for intervention. As such, the review focuses on synthesis reports, literature reviews and case-study reports where possible, and has relied on individual key informants where further investigation was needed.

The key research questions guiding the review were:

- What existing tools can provide a nuanced understanding of political, economic, social and spatial factors that can be adapted in urban contexts?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each tool for informing effective responses to urban forced displacement crises?
- What is the most appropriate tool for piloting in an urban context and what adaptations are needed for that tool?

The review primarily focuses on analyses tailored to protracted and slow-onset forced displacement situations. It focuses on published approaches, guidance and frameworks as opposed to methodologies used in a particular setting that are a hybrid of a number of approaches.

The search approach to the desk review has comprised of (a) database and website searches using key words and phrases to identify tools and other supporting literature and (b) key informant interviews with people who have experience in applying context analysis tools in urban settings. A full list of contacts is shown in Annex 1.

⁷ The tool would provide a series of templates, questions and an analytical framework for conducting the context analysis. The tool will ultimately be accompanied by a guidance note on how to use the tool. The audience of the tool would be development practitioners, humanitarian/development donors, and municipal governments.

3

Justification of tool selection

The categories of tools in this section were selected as they constitute the standard approaches used in understanding contextual dynamics and underlying systemic issues in a given context. The tools are divided between three key emerging themes from the review⁸: governance and power analysis; vulnerability, conflict and social analysis; and urban systems analysis.

3.1 Governance and power analysis

3.1.1 Audit of governance and power analysis tools

Governance and power analysis aim to understand the range of structures, institutions and stakeholders/actors that have influence over responses to an urban crisis and the power dynamics at play within and between formal and informal institutions. It helps increase understanding of the potential impact that the various crisis responders (positive and negative) may have on local coordination and partnership, local government capacity, and on local power and authority structures (Brown *et al.* 2015). According to Creti, *'the ability to map these structures, their power relations and to*

identify specific interests at the very beginning of an assessment helps in figuring out possible political implications, opportunities and threats within a specific context' (2010: 3).

There are a range of tools that humanitarian and development agencies have developed or adapted that touch on governance and power analysis. Most of these tools are based on the methodologies developed for DFID's *Drivers of change* (DFID 2004) and *Political economy analysis: how to note* (DFID 2009); the World Bank's *Problem-driven governance and political economy analysis: good practice framework* (Fritz *et al.* 2009) and *Political economy assessments at sector and project levels* (Poole 2011); and Swedish International Development Agency's (Sida) *Power analysis: a practical guide* (Petit 2013). The tools that have been developed by these agencies are primarily for development contexts. However, the World Bank Global Programme for Forced Displacement has applied political economy analysis (PEA) to forced displacement. It focused on the contestation and distribution of power and resources along with the development challenges associated with forced displacement crises in nine countries: Senegal, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan

⁸ The titles of these themes are not neat categories but they best reflect the findings of the review.

and Zimbabwe (see Box 1). The purpose of conducting the PEA on forced displacement was to inform policy dialogue and operations so that the interests of vulnerable forcibly displaced populations and their hosts were effectively accommodated in resource allocation decision making and in poverty alleviation initiatives.

Depending on the specific purpose for which these tools are designed and utilised, they could take between a few weeks to months to complete. For humanitarian actors, power analysis or political economy analysis are often conducted as a complement to a needs assessment (see Box 2 for an example from NRC in Iraq). For instance, some agencies have developed sectoral frameworks that incorporate elements of these analyses to create clear conceptual linkages between context factors and the needs of the people they serve. For example, Action Contre la Faim's (ACF) assessment of sustainable livelihoods and urban vulnerabilities framework includes an analysis of formal and informal actors, services, institutional structures and power relations (Levron 2010). In addition, it includes a context analysis checklist of macro-economic factors to understand public policy framework, governance, service provision and social capital features (Creti 2010).

While there are a range of political economy and power analysis tools that have been developed, the review found that only one tool guide has been developed specifically for an urban context. Save the Children in partnership with the Urban Institute has developed the urban situational analysis tool that aims to assess child-relevant challenges in urban situations by applying a political economy analysis lens analysing permission, resource and incentive constraints stakeholders face.⁹

The review, however, did not find any existing tools that have been developed specifically for rapid onset, slow onset or protracted crises. Due to time constraints in such contexts, humanitarian organisations will often conduct stakeholder analyses and consultations that are typically limited to a few days. These analyses provide an initial mapping of actors but do not reveal underlying power dynamics between the actors.

BOX 1. WORLD BANK POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT

In a review of nine country case studies on forced displacement, the World Bank found the application of political economy analyses effective at understanding the causal forces of displacement as they are 'political, social, and economic in nature and the result of a complex combination of conflict, institutional weakness, governance deficits, policy incoherencies, the agenda of malign actors, and structural or situations economic inequities' (Jennings *et al.* 2014: 8).

BOX 2. NRC CONTEXT ANALYSIS FOR SHELTER PROGRAMME IN BAGHDAD, IRAQ IN 2014

In 2014, to inform an urban shelter programme for internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Baghdad, NRC conducted a context analysis utilising political economy analysis approaches including stakeholder analysis, analysis of institutional and legal frameworks, and the web of institutionalisation to assess institutions, relationships and changes in the context of the urban shelter programme. They concluded that the analysis was 'vital' to identify where they could add value to the challenges faced by displaced populations in Baghdad and 'must be resourced as a high priority, particularly in urban response' (Heykoop and Kelling 2014: 48).

⁹ If interested in the Urban Institute's framework for political economy analysis, please refer to *A politically economic framework for the urban data revolution*: <http://tinyurl.com/edwards-et-al-2016>

Table 3. Governance and power tools applied in urban humanitarian response

NAME OF TOOL	DESIGNED FOR URBAN CONTEXTS OR HAS URBAN SPECIFIC GUIDANCE?	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	PHASE OF INTERVENTION	EXISTING TOOL GUIDANCE
Political economy analysis	N/A	Political economy analysis is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time. While there are a range of branded political economy analysis tools, the common analytical core is generally similar and for most practical purposes the diversity is unimportant.	Development	<p>*specific urban references in guidance</p> <p>Problem-driven governance and political economy analysis, World Bank (Fritz et al. 2009)</p> <p>Governance and context analysis* (CARE 2014)</p> <p>Political economy and context analysis* (Oxfam 2014)</p> <p>Understanding local power dynamics and 'how to' guidance note (IRC, draft)</p> <p>Urban situational analysis guide* (Save the Children, draft)¹⁰</p>
Power analysis	N/A	Power analysis is a flexible, process-oriented tool that is used to understand and analyse power relations at the macro (national and sub-national) level. The approach is centred on the links between human rights, democracy and poverty reduction. The premise is that issues of power asymmetries, access to resources and influence over politics must be addressed for poverty reduction.	Development	Power analysis (Pettit 2013)

¹⁰ The tool is under development. For further information about the initiative see: www.urban-response.org/directory/20

3.1.2 Governance and power analysis: strengths, weaknesses and gaps

The following section focuses on the strengths, weaknesses and gaps of the tools in Table 3 as it relates to their utility in understanding the context of urban forced displacement crises:

Strengths

- **A good understanding of local power dynamics** helps practitioners to systematically unpack the reality behind who holds power, influence and decision-making authority, which may not reflect official positions. Such understanding:
 - Contributes to a shared understanding of local power dynamics and its impact on programme/project outcomes
 - Gets beneath the formal and visible structures to revealing the underlying incentives, capacities and accountability mechanisms that affects outcomes, and
 - Supports risk-management and scenario planning by helping to identify the critical factors that are likely to drive or impede significant, positive change.
- **Adaptable analytical framework and approaches** can be applied to different sectors and problems (livelihoods; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); social cohesion etc), a range of institutions (government, private sector, market, etc) and contexts (fragile, conflict, urban, peri-urban, rural).
 - Political economy and power analyses function at multiple levels, helping to analyse the horizontal and vertical informal and formal power structures.
 - They can also identify causal and systemic factors underlying urban forced displacement that can inform embedding sustainability and resilience in responses.
 - Strong stakeholder analysis/actor mapping identifies the diverse range of stakeholders and the specific added value of a particular actor to support displaced persons and affected communities. Helps to identify enablers and inhibitors.
 - This can also raise the self-awareness of the actors conducting the context analysis of the potential political impacts any proposed intervention or activity may have. This is particularly important in

an urban context where there are existing systems and institutions that may be impacted by an external humanitarian response.

- There are a host of existing methodologies for conducting political economy and power analyses, and many humanitarian organisations have already developed tailored approaches for their institutions. Most relevant to this review is Save the Children's urban situational analysis tool which is currently in development.¹¹

Weaknesses

- There are several notable analytical weaknesses in relation to the utility of political economy and power analyses in urban displacement that the review identified:
 - The approaches do not address the **connection between actors/institutions and the built environment** or the physicality of a particular place.
 - Tied to the above is that the analyses **do not include spatial mapping** of the environment. This can play a vital and informative role in dynamic contexts to reveal underlying factors contributing to a particular outcome.¹²
 - The analyses typically have a **limited or no focus on access to basic services or understanding of market systems**.
 - The approaches are often **macro level, problem driven or sector driven**. They do not typically address multi-sectoral issues.
 - The **analytical framework is often too complex** requiring external expertise to conduct the analyses. This approach both reduces uptake within the agency conducting the analysis and the ability to engage other stakeholders in the conduct of the analysis.
 - **Gender analysis is not systematically included** in political economy analysis. Few analyses include gender and when included are often referenced in passing (Browne 2014).
- There are also several notable methodological weaknesses that the review identified:
 - Many of the tools provide general guidance but **do not give user-specific sub-tools** (eg sample questionnaires) for conducting the analysis or collecting data.

¹¹ See: www.urban-response.org/directory/20

¹² For example, the Caerus Mapping the Conflict in Aleppo, Syria project provides area-specific data on needs and the evolving context in relation to conflict and other humanitarian determinants such as market closure and assistance access and coverage. See: <http://aleppo.firstmilegeo.com>

- There is **not a standard approach to ensuring the analysis is kept up to date** such as identification of indicators for monitoring changes or unintended impacts of the intervention.¹³ This limitation may be especially acute if outside expertise is required to keep the analysis up to date.
- The density of stakeholders within the systems and their action is high in an urban setting. It may be **difficult to balance a thorough contextual understanding and the time needed** to produce the analysis.
- If not carefully constructed, the political economy analysis and power analysis can often result in **generic statements of context**, particularly national/macro-level analysis, without leading to specific programmatic recommendations. It is important that the tool has a particular decision-point aim.

Gaps

- There are a couple of gaps in the literature on the application of political economy and power analyses in urban forced-displacement crises.
 - First, while organisations cite the value of using political economy and power analyses they are often **not utilised or well-tailored to humanitarian contexts**. This may stem from the fact that the analyses were originally focused on macro-level and/or sector analysis in a development context rather than on specific projects/programmes in the context of programming in urban settings.
 - Second, when the analyses are applied in emergency contexts, the case studies and research produced often promote a one-sided angle of the positive application. The **humanitarian case studies rarely discuss the limitations of the analyses** and there remains a limited evidence base on the impact of the analyses on programmatic decision making (Hudson and Marquette 2015).

3.1.3 Governance and power analysis tools: a reflection

Stakeholder analysis/actor mapping¹⁴ included in political economy and power analyses should form the foundation for a context analysis. This should aim specifically to:

- Identify who is there and what they do including national and local government authorities, business interests, religious influences and informal power structures, etc.
- Understand what social groups and social institutions people identify with and why.

Structural and institutional analyses along with reviews of budgets and spending data may be helpful in understanding the political economy of the local planning context. It can also help to explain the rationale, incentives and interests that inform the types of decisions power-holders make. For example, the analyses could inform:

- How power may be used to exclude certain groups such as the displaced, women and girls and/or minorities and why their voices and preferences are not factored into local development planning and decision-making processes.
- How local or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and agencies may have differing or divergent incentives that are not aligned between each other or necessarily with the people or communities they aim to serve.

Participatory approaches required to conduct political economy and power analyses are important not just in ensuring a thorough understanding of the local context but also in providing opportunities to:

- Identify entry points to enhance local capacity and support local authorities in urban planning, preparedness and response to crises
- Generate stakeholders' buy-in and a common understanding of the situation, and
- Link humanitarian coordination to government administrative structures ensuring ownership is locally owned.

¹³ Oxfam's PEA guidance includes a quality assessment scorecard though this is primarily to test the impact of the intervention on the political economy context and adjust interventions as needed. Since humanitarian interventions are often not primarily targeted to changes in the political economy context this approach may be less suitable.

¹⁴ There are a range of methodological approaches to these analyses. Sida's *Power analysis: a practical guide* (Pettit 2013) cited IIED's stakeholder power analysis and stakeholder influence mapping and the International Food Policy Research Institute's (IFPRI) Net-Map as useful tools and methods for analysing sources of power.

3.2 Vulnerability, conflict and social analysis

3.2.1 Audit of existing vulnerability, conflict and social analysis tools

Urban displacement can intensify inequality, resource scarcity and competition for livelihoods, social conflict, and protection challenges in communities (Guay 2015). Vulnerability, conflict and social analyses tools generally aim to understand risks, resilience, conflict dynamics and social networks between actors, organisations and institutions in a given setting. These sets of analyses are differentiated from the prior tools discussed in that the focus is on relationships and the characteristics of these relationships, including social capital,¹⁵ rather than the actors alone. These sets of tools when applied to urban displacement most often relate to the concept of social cohesion¹⁶ and resilience.¹⁷ The review focused on participatory vulnerability analysis (PVA), conflict sensitivity analysis (CSA) and social network analysis (SNA). All of the above also have content that overlaps with governance and power analysis. For example, they all include a form of stakeholder analysis albeit tailored to different purposes.

PVA utilise participatory methods to assist field workers and communities to analyse people's vulnerability, create action plans, mobilise resources and enact appropriate policies, laws and strategies to reduce their vulnerability to disaster. There are a range of different types of analyses (see Table 4) but they all generally apply participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methods to assess vulnerability, often associated with natural disasters but not exclusively (Moret 2014). The analyses enable humanitarian and development actors to establish links between emergencies and development; and they allow actors to recognise developments or events that may impact on communities' vulnerability (Chiwaka and Yates 2004). They utilise the output generated from local-level analyses to inform action and policies.

CSA is conducted to enable practitioners to have a better understanding of the conflict context within which they operate and the interaction between their

programme/project interventions and the conflict context. This better understanding enables the design and delivery of interventions in ways that mitigate – or at the very least do not trigger – conflicts. The resources produced by the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium have been the standard approaches used and or adapted by humanitarian actors working in fragile and conflict-affected settings.¹⁸

Urban forced-displacement literature also recognises the important role of social networks in **bridging** divides between groups and promoting **bonding** within groups for self-reliance and self-sufficiency.¹⁹ The Women's Refugee Commission's (WRC) research of 26 key studies found that 'many of the challenges faced in acquiring financial, human, physical or natural capital, which would reinforce refugees' abilities to become truly self-reliant, could be circumvented to a certain extent by reinforcing social capital' (Lyytinent and Kullenberg 2013: 20). In a comprehensive review of the response to the Haiti earthquake, the authors recommended the building of social and human capital and civil society as a 'vital component' for all programme approaches and at all stages of response and recovery (Clermont *et al.* 2011: 8). In comparison, a key difference in urban social networks versus rural is that they are 'based on political, religious and economic, as well as ethnic affiliations' (USAID 2008: 3).

While social capital analysis has a long history in research and academia, its ability to inform specific programme implementation and decision making has been limited, especially in humanitarian response and recovery. The World Bank has applied a macro-level survey called the social capital assessment tool, but the full approach is extensive, involving household surveys which are not appropriate for the intended urban context-analysis tool (Krishna and Shrader 1999). However, components of the social capital assessment tool such as community profiling have been adapted by humanitarian agencies for use in refugee contexts but not formally standardised as a tool (Calhoun 2010). Lyytinent and Kullenberg (2013) documented research methods utilised for analysing refugee social capital. The methodologies applied varied and were primarily from an academic research standpoint rather than meant for informing programme activity (*ibid.*).

¹⁵ According to Putnam (2000: 19) 'social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise.'

¹⁶ Guay (2015: 9) defines social cohesion as 'the nature and set of relationships between individuals and groups in a particular environment (horizontal social cohesion) and between those individuals and groups and the institutions that govern them in a particular environment (vertical social cohesion).'

¹⁷ 100 Resilient Cities (2016a) defines urban resilience as 'the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.'

¹⁸ See: www.conflictsensitivity.org

¹⁹ Social capital typically comes in two forms: bonding (social networks between homogenous groups) and bridging (social networks between heterogeneous groups) (Guay 2015).

Similarly, there are several macro-level planning processes for resilience that have incorporated social analysis. For example, regional and national frameworks relevant for Lebanon and Jordan have aimed to set goals and indicators for social cohesion. However, the operationalisation at project-level to undertake social analysis has yet to be fully realised. As Guay (2015: 29) notes, 'humanitarians have yet to (as an industry) articulate or agree on what social cohesion is, how best to measure it, what causes it or how it impacts communities in conflict-affected urban emergencies'.

An approach to social analysis that is gaining traction is social network analysis (SNA). This entails the process of mapping relationships and analysing the structure of a network of relationship as they relate to trust, conflicts and the influence of different actors. SNA first emerged as a research tool in humanitarian work, but recently implementing agencies have tried to operationalise it in their programmes, most notably by Net-Map in 2007

in the Net-Map toolbox (ODI 2009). It can be applied to look at both the vertical dimensions of a crisis such as service provision/governance actors along with the horizontal dimension of a crisis in terms of intra- and inter-community relations (see Box 3 for an example from Mozambique). IRC recently launched its Context Adaptability Initiative and has piloted SNA in Sierra Leone, Myanmar and the United States. Social networks and social capital are heavily related to the issues or factors that may promote connection – through bridging or bonding – or division within and between communities. The Do No Harm framework's dividers and connectors analysis (DCA) has been widely adopted by humanitarian organisations to understand what factors may connect or divide people impacting the nature of social networks/relations and levels of social capital. At present, there is a lack of existing case-study information to assess the strengths and weaknesses of DCA in an urban environment.

BOX 3. SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF IN MOZAMBIQUE

"In February 2000, Mozambique suffered its worst flooding in almost 50 years: 699 people died and hundreds of thousands were displaced. Over 49 countries, 30 international NGOs and 35 local organisations provided humanitarian assistance. A team of researchers used social network analysis (SNA) methods to examine the structure of inter-organisational relations among the 65 NGOs involved in the flood operations. The results showed a correlation between the central role of an organisation in the social network (ie the number and strength of connections with other organisations) and the numbers of beneficiaries served, specifically during the emergency period immediately following the flooding. This association was shown in turn to be affected by other factors, such as NGO type, sector of engagement and provincial presence. As an example, with the exception of the Mozambique Red Cross (which was the most central member of the

network), local NGOs in general remained peripheral to the coordination processes. This suggests that local civil-society capacity for responding to future disasters had not been developed over the course of the crisis, and that the response may have increased dependence on international NGOs. Interestingly, the association between network position and beneficiary numbers did not hold during the post-emergency recovery period, a fact which was linked to the observed reduction of coordination levels during this phase. By using social network analysis to determine how the network structure affects inter-organisational coordination and humanitarian aid outcomes, the study showed that the success of humanitarian aid operations ultimately depends on the ability of organisations to work together, and that working together was built on knowledge sharing and joint operations and projects, in an appropriate inter-organisational network structure" (ODI 2009).

Table 4. Vulnerability, conflict and social analysis tools applied in urban humanitarian response

NAME OF TOOL	DESIGNED FOR URBAN CONTEXTS OR HAS URBAN-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE?	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	PHASE OF INTER-VENTION	EXISTING TOOL GUIDANCE *urban adaptations or references in guidance +revisions underway for urban adaptations
Participatory vulnerability analyses	No, but some tools/guidance have been applied or adapted for urban settings	Participatory vulnerability assessments are typically based on PRA methods specialised to assess vulnerability. These tools have most often been applied in response to natural disasters to gain a more nuanced understanding of how vulnerability is experienced locally and the way community assets are impacted by a crisis.	Response, recovery, and development	IFRC: Vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) (IFRC undated) ²⁰ Action Aid: Participatory vulnerability analysis (PVA) (Chiwaka and Yates 2004) Oxfam: Participatory capacity and vulnerability analysis (PCVA) (Turnbull and Turvill 2012)* Christian Aid: Participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment (PVCA) (Christian Aid 2009) ACF: Participatory risk, capacity & vulnerability analysis (ACF 2012)*
Conflict sensitivity analysis Including: Dividers and connectors analysis ²¹	No, but has been applied in urban settings	Conflict analysis is a structured process of analysis to better understand a conflict. It aims to shed light on the following key aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the background and history of the conflict • Identifying all the relevant groups involved • Understanding the perspectives of these groups and how they relate to each other • Identifying the causes of conflict • Understanding what factors may connect or divide people 	Response, recovery, and development	Conflict Sensitivity Consortium: How to guide to conflict sensitivity (2012) Conciliation Resources: Gender & conflict analysis toolkit for peacebuilders (Tielemans 2015) IFRC: Better Programming Initiative (2003)* WVI: Making sense of turbulent contexts (Garred et al. 2015) IRC: Conflict sensitivity analysis toolkits and guidance notes (draft)
Social network analysis	N/A, no specific design context	Social network analysis is the process of mapping social networks that exist when people are connected: within organisations, communities, between clients and service providers, within markets, and even within and between conflicting parties. The process includes analysing the structure of the network and the influence of different actors.	Development	ODI: Social network analysis toolkit (2009) World Bank: Network analysis – part of tools for institutional, policy and social analysis of policy reform (2007) Pact: Organizational network analysis handbook (2011) IFPRI: Influence network mapping – Net-Map toolbox (Schiffer 2007) IRC: Social network analysis handbook (2016)

²⁰ In 2014, the IFRC reviewed the applicability of VCA for urban areas. See IFRC (2014).

²¹ Dividers and connectors analysis (DCA) is a specific tool within the Do No Harm framework that aims to understand (i) the issues, factors and elements in societies which divide people from each other and serve as sources of tension and (ii) the issues, factors and elements which connect people and can serve as local capacities for peace (Wallace 2014).

3.2.2 Vulnerability, conflict and social analysis: strengths, weaknesses and gaps

The following section focuses on the strengths, weaknesses and gaps of the tools in Table 4 as it relates to their utility in understanding the context of urban forced-displacement crises:

Strengths

- Participatory vulnerability analysis
 - **Engages vulnerable communities and households** using their local expertise and knowledge. This effort can also help to bring diverse communities together around common issues that may unite them (ACF 2012).
 - Helps practitioners and communities **create action plans and mobilise resources** to reduce their vulnerability to disaster.
 - Reveals different **causes of vulnerability** and offers entry points for programme interventions. Vulnerability analyses also have a strong focus on understanding how natural disasters and environmental factors may impact a community (Chiwaka and Yates 2004).
- Conflict sensitivity analysis/dividers and connectors analysis
 - Help practitioners to identify how a programme/project intervention could be designed to **avoid triggering violent conflict** which may put the people we serve, partners and project staff at risk.
 - DCA is directly targeted at **understanding the dynamics that may support or detract from social cohesion** and the potential impact a project may have on these dynamics. As noted, social cohesion is a central challenge faced in urban displacement crises.
 - DCA concepts are **easy to grasp and may be owned by in-country staff** to help shift from analysis to implementation. The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium also notes that 'it is descriptive in nature and therefore challenges the users to do their own analysis and apply problem-solving skills to the situation. When used well, it can improve the quality of programming, lowers the risks to staff and community, and lays a solid foundation on which peacebuilding can take place' (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium).

- The methodology can provide micro-level analysis in both **emergency and development settings** (ibid).
- Conflict analysis has mainstreamed **gender and social inclusion dynamics** to ensure an understanding of the unique challenges these populations may face and how a project may impact them.²²
- Social network analysis
 - SNA can be applied at **multiple levels** to understand dynamics from community to city to regional and national levels.
 - The methodology is **simple, quick and intuitive** and can be adopted by practitioners.
 - The methodology goes beyond stakeholder analysis to reveal relations and the power dynamics of those relations. This can help urban responders **understand the wide variety of actors who may have influence in a city** along with the **structural factors of the network** that may be inhibiting change.
 - The methodology's **participatory approach** can help to create a common understanding of the challenges when conducted in an inclusive way. This approach can help to bring various actors in an urban context together and build trust through the process.
 - SNA makes explicit social networks that can lead to **new entry points for partnership and collaboration** which are critical given the density of actors in an urban space.

Weaknesses

- Participatory vulnerability analysis
 - PVA tools are most often applied for resilience and disaster risk-management programming rather than for recovery and response efforts (Moret 2014).
 - PVA is limited in its application to scale in an urban context where communities are diverse and dispersed within a larger geographical area (IFRC 2014).
 - Its focus at the community level makes it challenging to capture the multiple dimensions of vulnerability – ie environmental, socio-cultural, economic and institutional-cum-governance dimensions – all of which transcend a specific community (IFRC 2014).

²² Conciliation Resources recently released in December 2015 a gender and conflict analysis toolkit (Tielemans 2015).

- In an urban displacement context, it may be challenging to bring together inclusive community groups for PVAs due to social tensions that may inhibit cooperation or protection concerns for displaced people that may lack legal status (IFRC 2014).
- Conflict sensitivity analysis/dividers and connectors analysis
 - DCA is primarily focused on the micro situation and less suitable for an in-depth analysis of macro-level conflict. If used without consideration of the macro context, the tool may create a false sense of security for staff. It may also not give a full picture of challenges faced at a city-wide level (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium).
 - While DCA investigates a range of context features, the ultimate aim of obtaining this information is to avoid doing harm and where possible to promote social cohesion. This singular focus may be less useful when considering the broad challenges faced by those forcibly displaced.
 - Similar to SNA, the information for analysis is primarily drawn from practitioners. The analysis risks exclusion bias. Urban contexts are highly complex and solutions for working in this context will require a broad range of thinking about these issues.
- Social network analysis
 - SNA is a single tool for a very specific purpose. It needs to be situated within a wider toolkit for context analysis that addresses historical context and the built environment.
 - As a discussion-based approach, it is affected by bias and open to manipulation by participants. Depending on the context, the results of the SNA may require triangulation. For example, there may be specific knowledge gaps that the SNA cannot address. For example, the participants may lack an understanding of how the built environment leads to or inhibits social cohesion (IRC 2016).
 - The approach may also not be relevant in situations of conflict or competition between the various stakeholders. Sensitivity is required to determine if such a participatory approach is most appropriate or who to include in the SNA.

Gaps

- As previously noted, there is a lack of common 'taxonomy of matters of social cohesion and related concepts in urban, conflict affected, humanitarian settings' (Guay 2015: 29). As such there is no commonly agreed analytical framework for measuring social cohesion.
- Further research is required to understand the relevance of DCA in an urban setting and the required adaptations needed in methodology as there were no existing case studies found for review.
- SNA remains a relatively new methodology. Further testing is required to test the validity of the approach and how best it can fit into a toolkit for conducting context analysis.
- Cities offer increased opportunities to leverage information and communication technologies (ICTs) for data collection, analysis and community feedback that could be applied to community and social analyses. These potentially could offer new ways 'to capture information about community networks, relationships, belief systems and behaviours (through participatory SMS reporting, social media content analysis and/or data mining for communications exhaust)' (Guay 2015: 32). At present, the use of ICT tools for this purpose remains limited.

3.2.3 Vulnerability, conflict and social analysis: a reflection

- SNA is a powerful methodology for mapping the structure and influence of relationships between various actors. The use of SNA will heavily depend on the key questions the context analysis seeks to answer and the appropriateness of such a participatory approach in this context.
- CSA/DCA and the broader Do No Harm framework²³ should be included as part of the context analysis to ensure conflict sensitivity and where possible increase the responsiveness of an intervention to address the challenge of social cohesion.
- Participatory vulnerability analysis can be a powerful tool at the community level but may struggle to achieve scale due to time constraints and scalar focus at community level. Its use may be less appropriate for emergency context analysis and would require use within a broader multi-scalar assessment of the context.

²³ <http://cdacollaborative.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2015-CDA-From-Principle-to-Practice.pdf>

3.3 Urban systems

3.3.1 Audit of existing approaches to urban systems

Urban areas must be understood by looking at entire systems rather than just their individual parts ... this requires a more holistic approach in urban areas.

(Brown *et al.* 2015)

The following section investigates tools for key urban systems pertaining to service delivery (including infrastructure systems), economic systems/livelihoods, and the urban spatial environment. In addition, it looks at synthesis approaches that aim to holistically understand an urban environment in crisis. For displaced and vulnerable populations in a city, access to services and livelihoods may differ substantially. Displaced populations often join already marginalised areas of the city, which has a direct impact on their struggle to secure jobs, education for their children or access to healthcare and basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity (Haysom 2013). Responders to urban crises must both understand an urban system in isolation and its interaction with other urban systems.

Service delivery systems: Access to quality services is often one of the biggest challenges to meeting needs of displaced populations and vulnerable host communities. This requires understanding what services exist, the quality of the services (including infrastructure), management of the services, and access to services (in particular legal, social, or spatial barriers to access). The mapping of existing service provision and patterns of service provision – by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) or international coordination forums – have often been limited to humanitarian service provision. WRC recently developed a simple urban service provision mapping tool for vulnerable displaced and host communities to assess those providers already engaging displaced populations and those that could be engaged. However, the tool is new and testing is in process. For development contexts, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) developed its comprehensive managing municipal service-delivery assessment to look at technical aspects, financial aspects, legal/regulatory and institution issues, and community participation and customer relations of service provision. USAID's assessment approach includes many of the analytical questions that are addressed in a political economy analysis. In addition to these general tools, there are multiple sectoral tools aimed at understanding a

particular service or urban system. These tools are often most associated with a needs assessment that aims to both understand the needs of a target group and the contextual barriers to meeting those needs.

Economic systems/livelihoods: In urban contexts, in which vulnerability is highly linked to commodity prices, income opportunities and wage rates, there is a need to understand these dynamics more fully as part of a context analysis (WFP 2016). Based on the sustainable livelihoods framework, ACF has developed a livelihoods assessment tailored to urban areas. This includes a strong focus on analysing contextual factors including urban policies, mapping of cyclical vulnerabilities, and social and institutional analyses of local services as part of the livelihoods assessment. There are also several existing market analysis tools that have been successfully applied in urban settings and are well adapted (Creti 2010). Although originally developed for rural areas, emergency market mapping analysis (EMMA) and pre-crisis market analysis (PCMA) based on EMMA have been applied in urban areas in Kenya, Gaza, Nepal, Jordan and Haiti (see online list of reports in EMMA; ALNAP 2015b). Recently, humanitarian actors have also applied the more common development-assessment approach, labour market analysis (LMA), to better understand opportunities for long-term employment and self-reliance in situations of protracted displacement (Truelove *et al.* 2015). There are a range of different tools that have been developed for conducting LMAs, such as Mercy Corp's guidance on labour and market assessments (Mercy Corp) or the International Labour Office's (ILO) local economic recovery in post-conflict guidelines (ILO 2010).

Cross-cutting theme of spatial analysis: A cross-cutting form of analysis that can be applied to many of the prior tools referenced is to understand the spatial and physical dimensions of urban displacement. While spatial analysis is not a conceptual framework in and of itself, it is a critical theme for understanding urban spaces that appears throughout the literature. Cities are highly heterogeneous, multi-scalar, and multi-factored settings. Spatial mapping can help to 'understand situations, to communicate this understanding amongst stakeholders, and to plan activities' (Grünwald *et al.* 2011: 63). The utilisation of spatial analysis has been limited in urban humanitarian responses, and there is not an accepted framework or key analytical questions for its application to forced displacement. Humanitarian organisations tend to apply spatial analysis for individual shelter mapping or plot the geographic zones of different agencies but rarely apply holistic mapping to an area's physical and social information such as demographics, population density, socio-economics,

spatial access and barriers to mobility (Crawford and Killing 2011).²⁴ However, the use of spatial analysis to enhance analyses has been increasing. For example, Caerus conducted a conflict spatial analysis in Aleppo, Syria from September 2013 to January 2014. It conducted monthly surveys of 561 residents that helped international organisations to understand the Syrian conflict, urban public safety, and the humanitarian dynamics of the civil war.²⁵

Synthesis approaches: Recently, there have been several new tools that aim to operationalise a system understanding of a city and integrate resilience thinking in urban crisis response by connecting political, social, economic, environmental and infrastructural systems. None of the following methodologies are publicly available yet, but draft versions were shared for the purposes of this review.

- UN-Habitat has developed a methodology for city profiling and neighbourhood profiling²⁶ that has been applied in Syria. In this process, they holistically and spatially map the needs of the displaced population in tandem with the impact of the conflict on the city's urban systems. Each profile varies slightly, but shares some key commonalities including a review of the city context and pre-crisis situation, city damage analysis, urban functionality analysis, and a mapping of the displacement and shelter conditions.
- World Vision developed a city-wide assessment for their urban area-based development programmes that analyses the dimensions of (i) healthy cities: children enjoy good health (ii) safer cities: children cared for and protected (iii) resilient cities: children care for their environment and others, and (iv) prosperous cities: educated for life, ready for economic opportunity.
- The American Red Cross (ARC) has developed a multi-scalar and spatial urban assessment process for disaster risk-reduction and resilience programming. It entails a vulnerability and opportunity analysis that combines spatial data and stakeholder information to determine community selection. After community selection, the ARC then conducts a vulnerability and capacity assessment aimed at the community level.
- Pamela Sitko, Oxford Brookes University Department of Planning and World Vision Global Urban Technical Advisor, developed the urban disaster resilience analytical framework based on complex adaptive systems and urban morphology theory. The conceptual framework aims to understand the multiple layers of an urban area along the dimensions of topography, roads, public open spaces, plots, buildings and services against the key systems of economic forces, governance networks and social dynamics.

The conceptual frameworks for urban resilience were also considered in this review. The most prominent framework, Arup's City Resilience Framework, has been adopted by the 100 Resilient Cities project (100 Resilient Cities). UN-Habitat is working to operationalise the framework as part of the City Resilience Profiling Programme to develop a 'comprehensive and integrated urban planning and management approach for profiling and monitoring the resilience of any city to all plausible hazards' (UN-Habitat). The resilience frameworks go beyond the scope of a humanitarian actor to respond to a crisis and are thus considered outside the scope of a context analysis. Moreover, they primarily focus on monitoring trends and changes in context rather than assessing a context to lead to a particular response or intervention.

²⁴ Crawford and Killing's (2011) research on Haiti reconstruction cited two key reasons for a lack of spatial mapping by humanitarian actors, which included illiteracy with understanding and developing spatial maps and a difficulty to translate coordination dialogue into spatial plans.

²⁵ See: <http://aleppo.firstmilegeo.com/>

²⁶ See example reports here of UN-Habitat's city and neighborhood profiles of Homs, Syria: UN-Habitat's Homs city profile (<http://unhabitat.org/city-profile-homs-multi-sector-assessment>) and Old City of Homs neighbourhood profile (<http://unhabitat.org/neighbourhood-profile-old-city-of-homs>).

Table 5. Urban systems tools applied in urban humanitarian response

PURPOSE OF TOOLS	TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS	DESIGNED FOR URBAN CONTEXTS OR INCLUDES URBAN SPECIFIC GUIDANCE?	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	PHASE OF INTERVENTION	EXISTING TOOL GUIDANCE *URBAN ADAPTATIONS OR REFERENCES IN GUIDANCE
Service delivery systems (including roads and public spaces)	Infrastructure assessments Institutional assessments Technical assessments	Varies depending on the tool	There is a wide variation in tool focus – no general description can be applied	Response, recovery and development	USAID: Making Cities Work assessment and implementation toolkit (2006)* WRC: Service provision mapping tool: urban refugee response* (draft) (2015)
Economic Systems/ livelihoods	Livelihoods assessment Household economic approach (HEA) Humanitarian market analysis ²⁷ Labour market analysis ²⁸	Varies depending on the tool	There is a wide variation in tool focus – no general description can be applied	Response, recovery and development	RHVP, SCF and FEG: Practitioner's guide to the household economy approach (HEA)* (Boudreau 2008) ACF: Assessment of sustainable livelihoods and urban vulnerabilities* (Levron 2010) IRC: Revised pre-crisis market analysis (PCMA)* (2016) EMMA: Emergency market mapping and analysis* (Albu 2010) IRC: Labour market analysis in humanitarian contexts* (Truelove 2015)
Spatial analysis	Spatial mapping Community asset mapping Transect walks	Varies depending on the tool	Spatial analysis entails the geographic mapping of where things are, their interrelation, what that relation means, and entry points for action	Recovery and development	Un-Habitat: Community mapping guide* (2010) World Bank: Transect walk (undated) Field Guide to Humanitarian Mapping (2011) http://mapaction.org/component/mapcat/download/2426.html?fmt=pdf
Synthesis approaches	City-wide assessment Resilience frameworks	Yes	There is a wide variation in tool focus – no general description can be applied	Recovery and development	Kadihasanoglu, A. (2015) Guidance for Urban Resilience Programming (Revised). American Red Cross.* World Vision: City-wide assessment* (draft) Sitko, P. (2016). <i>Urban disaster resilience: Learning from the 2011 Bangkok flood</i> . PhD. Oxford Brookes University*

²⁷ See CALP's Comparison of humanitarian market analysis tools for a comprehensive overview of all tools: www.cashlearning.org/markets/humanitarian-market-analysis-tools

²⁸ See Truelove (2015) for a complete list of labour market analysis tools that have been applied in the response to the Syria regional crisis.

3.3.2 Urban systems: strengths, weaknesses and gaps

The following section focuses on the strengths, weaknesses and gaps of the tools in Table 5 as it relates to their utility in understanding the context of urban forced-displacement crises.

Strengths

- Service delivery systems
 - Mapping service delivery of both humanitarian service providers and those outside of the humanitarian sector helps to provide a broad understanding of the actors and the opportunities for partnerships or collaboration to support local systems.
 - USAID's municipal services assessment can provide a detailed understanding of the quality and capacity of municipal governance helping to identify entry-points in which an external actor can provide direct support to them.
- Economic systems/livelihoods
 - Livelihoods assessments often incorporate context analysis, which is a best practice for ensuring that context analysis features are included in assessments. For example, ACF's urban livelihoods assessment has a strong focus on the relationship between livelihoods and urban context factors.
 - Market analysis tools including LMA and EMMA have been tested and validated in urban areas. LMA has become an increasingly important tool for understanding entry points for livelihoods and promotion of self-reliance in protracted displacement crises.
- Synthesis approaches
 - These approaches provide a holistic, multi-sectoral, human-centred and multi-layered approach to understanding the context of a city.
 - The urban disaster-resilience analytical tool synthesises complex concepts into a relatively simple and understandable tool, which is an important feature for fostering utilization of a tool amongst practitioners.

Weaknesses

- Service delivery systems
 - Due to the complexity of urban service-delivery systems, there remains a lack of existing methodologies to understand these and their interactions. For example, service-delivery systems

are often intricately connected to market systems and livelihood opportunities. There is a need to better bridge the gap between them.

- The application of spatial analysis and testing of its potential to understand underlying factors or systemic issues has been limited in urban humanitarian response.
- Sectoral assessments can be highly technical and detailed. As such, they may miss opportunities to understand the interaction between systems.
- Economic systems/livelihoods
 - The market analysis tools are strong at looking at a single market system. But there is not a methodology for looking at the interaction between market systems, for example one which questions how a dysfunctional housing market system might inhibit the labour market system from functioning.
 - While market assessment guidance typically includes analysis of governance and network features (ie examining policies, institutions and processes within which livelihood opportunities are shaped), programmatic decision making in practice often fails to weight these considerations equally with market findings and needs assessment findings.
 - Moreover, the impact of market assessment findings themselves continue to remain limited in programmatic decision making²⁹ (IRC 2014).
- Synthesis approaches
 - In general, synthesis approaches have had limited testing. There is a need for further testing to better understand the weaknesses of the analytical framework and methodologies suggested.
 - The synthesis approaches are primarily developed for resilience and development contexts rather than urban displacement crises with the exception of UNHABITAT's City Profiling Methodology.

Gaps

- There remains a lack of understanding of what constitutes urban systems, how they are interconnected, and how to adapt tools to fit these systems, in particular market assessments. The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) has an ongoing research initiative to investigate this gap (2015a).
- The synthesis approaches that have been developed are quite new. There is a need for further testing of applicability to urban humanitarian responses. There is also a gap in methodologies that are tailored to

²⁹ A research study by the IRC of 40 EMMA reports found that nearly 39 per cent of the EMMA's had no impact on programme development (IRC 2014).

urban displacement contexts, except for UN-Habitat's city profiling.

3.3.3 Urban systems: a reflection

- Mapping services provided by public, private, and NGO institutions is an essential key step to understand the quality and accessibility to services for displaced populations, host communities, and the most vulnerable people within those groups such as women, girls, LGBT, or the disabled.
- An initial context analysis might not be able to incorporate a detailed market or livelihoods assessment but, given the importance of self-reliance, it should aim to shed light on the underlying factors that may enable or prohibit self-reliance.
- The analysis of geospatial information, where available, can inform understanding of A.) where target populations live, B.) what resources are present and accessible to them, and C.) what are the risks and vulnerabilities associated with the places they frequent most often. Maps also may help to strengthen the humanitarian and development continuum by providing a common understanding of the context.

- Primary collection of geospatial context data and spatial mapping to reveal underlying factors that may be causing a particular situation remains limited. Examples such as Caerus's mapping in Aleppo demonstrate that key contextual features can be mapped and can reveal systemic patterns in an urban crisis. However, the application of primary data collection must be balanced with required time-needed and technical capacity.
- The urban disaster-resilience analytical tool presents a complex view of the city in a simple framework that is human-centred. Such an approach would be beneficial for the context analysis tool to adopt to ensure ease of analysis and interpretation for making programmatic decisions.

3.4 Urban context analysis tools: work in progress

On the basis of key informant communications, ALNAP's *Directory of emerging urban learning* (ALNAP) and IASC's *Reference group – meeting humanitarian challenges in urban areas: work plan for 2015–2016* (IASC 2016) several projects are underway (Table 6).³⁰

Table 6. Context analysis tools: work in progress

PRODUCT	EXPECTED OUTCOME	STATUS	LEADING AGENCY
Area-based context analysis	Macro-level analysis tool for area-based contextual understanding	Starts Summer 2016	IMPACT Initiatives
City resilience profiling tool	Macro-level analysis of physical, functional, spatial, organisational, and temporal attributes of a resilient city. For more information see: www.urban-response.org/directory/25	On-going	UN-Habitat
Toolkit for assessment, analysis and monitoring in protracted displacement crises	Toolkit of assessment, analysis and monitoring tools for responding to protracted displacement crises involving local authorities and re-activating local development processes	Ongoing	Oxfam Italia
Multi-sectoral profiling and needs assessment tool for urban contexts	Multi sectoral tool, including protection and governance available here: www.kobotoolbox.org with links to the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) dynamic analysis and reporting tool: www.dart.jips.org for data analysis	To be finalised May 2017	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
IFRC's urban assessment toolbox	Developing new and improving existing tools for an aligned urban assessment toolbox across IFRCs	On-going	American Red Cross (ARC) in cooperation with IFRC

³⁰This table is in specific reference to tools that were not available for review at the time of this desk review. Those tools in development at the time of the desk review are included in the prior sections.

4

Key recommendations and conclusion

4.1 Recommendations for an urban-adapted context analysis tool

The review found that there are many existing tools with strengths and potential utility for analysing an urban context, but there is not a singular tool that can capture all of the key criteria in an efficient assessment for an urban displacement crisis. As such, this desk review recommends an adaptation and combination of several tools that were reviewed in this study. By combining tools in a harmonised toolkit, the urban context analysis will be able to build on each respective strength to create a more analytically comprehensive and resource/time-efficient tool that leads to practical entry points for programme design and coordination. Specifically, the review found that components of political economy analysis, conflict analysis, social network analysis, market analysis, service delivery analysis and spatial analysis are essential and should be considered when developing the tool.

Furthermore, the review recommends that the urban context analysis tool should analyse the following categories of systemic issues: **political, economic, social and the built environment**. Table 7 below provides further details of how the strengths are a signpost of what may be required in an urban context analysis tool.

4.2 Recommendations for features of context analysis tool

The following section seeks to summarise key principles that the tool should take into account specific to urban contexts:

- **People centred** – capture perceptions of the people who live in the areas to ensure responsiveness to community needs and an understanding of the multiple identities of people living in urban areas.
- **Multi-scalar** – reflect the multiple scales of systems that operate in a city from individual, household and neighbourhood to district, city and onwards.
- **Systems-based** – acknowledge that the urban environment is comprised of various interrelated and interlinked systems (political, socio-economic, infrastructural etc.) that are influenced by forces internal and external to a specific urban setting.
- **Built environment** – recognise and account for the physicality of the city and the manmade structures and infrastructure services in connection with the natural environment and ecosystems of cities and surrounding areas. Analyse buildings, land tenure, road networks, public open spaces, infrastructure systems (such as water supply or energy networks) etc. even though the agency does not intend to work on them because these things form and influence the success of any social, political or economic activities carried out.

Table 7. Urban context analysis themes

THEMES	STRENGTHS
Political: Governance and power	Stakeholder analysis (actors and institutions): 1. Urban actor mapping 2. Incentives/interests of stakeholders 3. Capacity to respond to urban displacement 4. Accountability to whom 5. Legal frameworks 6. Policy and decision-making processes
Social: Vulnerability, conflict and society	Social analysis (relationships and networks): 1. Risks/do no harm 2. Protection risks 3. Gender dynamics 4. Social structure/identities in the area 5. Social capital/trust among and between groups 6. Collaborations/partnerships/civil society
Economic: Economic systems and livelihoods	Livelihoods analysis: 1. Jobs and characteristics of labour market 2. Mapping key market actors and networks 3. Mapping people's access to markets 4. Future investment areas
Built environment: Urban systems	Urban service-delivery systems analysis: 1. Mapping access to services (health, education, water, waste management etc.) 2. Relationship between urban systems/services 3. Mapping access to housing and land 4. Government planning processes

- **Rapid** – ensure ease of use and the ability to do a rapid assessment of an area because urban spaces are fluid and will continue to be.³¹

The following principles relate to the use of context analysis in any setting whether urban or rural:

- An urban context analysis should **pick a pre-defined geographical boundary**.
- The tool should be **self-reflective** by recognising the interests of all actors including those conducting the analyses.

- The context analysis needs to be **multi-sectoral** in nature to avoid the development of a sectoral entry point.³²

- The context analysis should take into account **spatial dimensions** where possible. Numerous reports recognise the importance of geospatial mapping, but there remains a capacity gap in humanitarian actors to conduct this type of analysis and a lack of available geospatial data in many locations.

³¹ Key informant interviews: Thomas Aston (CARE), Pamela Sitko (World Vision).

³² As noted in Brown *et al.* (2015: 16) 'responding in densely populated urban environments requires a more coordinated, multi-sector approach'. This finding was shared in Boyer *et al.* 2011; Grünewald *et al.* 2011; Grünewald 2012; Gupta 2015; IASC 2010; and Kyazze *et al.* 2012.

- **Analysis is only one part of the process.** First, a context analysis can be part of a process of building common understanding, trust and engagement between actors in an urban setting. This is critical for building coordination. Second, for context analysis to have an impact on the design and planning of programmes, it needs to be embedded and occur more than once. Analysis needs to be refreshed to reflect changes in the context.
- Connected to the prior point, the context analysis tool should aim to engage multiple stakeholders in a process of **joint analysis**. While certain findings in the context analysis may be sensitive, other findings may be critical to other humanitarian actors and government actors. The context analysis should as much as possible aim to be jointly conducted or in partnership with other organisations including government working in a particular area; and the findings shared as widely as possible within reason, based on the sensitivity of findings.
- The guidance should include in an annex suggested **adaptations to the context analysis for rapid-onset crises. This annex should explain the adaptations needed and trade-offs it would entail in comparison to the comprehensive context analysis intended for protracted or slow-onset crises.**
- **Identify linkages to other analyses.** Context analysis is not a panacea. The guidance note should aim to clearly identify linkages to other assessments in relation to complementarities in analysis and timing of the analysis – for example, infrastructure analysis or market analysis.
- **Dissemination and promoting uptake of the tool.** Further investigation will be needed to promote uptake of the tool. It will need to tackle the following questions:
 - How much time, skills and experience are required from the people conducting the analysis?
 - What additional activities and training is needed to promote the ability of organisations to utilise the tool?
 - There are many existing context analysis tools by different organizations and for different purposes. How can this tool act as a complement to or inform these?

4.3 Recommendations for guidance note and dissemination

The following recommendations relate to the production of the guidance note in any setting:

- The guidance note should establish **clear justification for tool value**. As such it should aim to answer the questions:
 - What difference does it make and how does it improve programmes?
 - How does the context analysis help ensure ‘do no harm’?
 - What are the specific pieces of context that are important?
 - How and when should you apply the context analysis in planning processes?
 - How does the context analysis tool relate to macro-level context analyses conducted?
 - How frequently should analysis be repeated?
- The guidance should be **simple and easy to understand**. It should aim to pick as few key concepts as possible, and aim to break down definitions and descriptions as best possible.

4.4 Conclusions

Humanitarian response in urban settings requires a shift from direct service provision to supporting and empowering local urban responders and filling gaps in existing service provision. As such, this requires a sound understanding of the underlying factors of why things are the way they are and the entry points for addressing systemic challenges. Context analysis is not an end in and of itself. Context analysis is the starting point of a process to understand and continue to adapt and respond to the complexity and fluidity of an urban environment. This desk review of the selected context analysis tools presents a unique opportunity to develop a user-friendly urban context analysis tool that will enable humanitarian and development actors, including local government authorities, to better respond to people affected by displacement.

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Annex 1

List of stakeholders contacted and websites researched

Stakeholders

KEY INFORMANT	ORGANISATION/POSITION
Aynur Kadihasanoglu	American Red Cross, senior advisor for urban disaster management
Barri Shorey	International Rescue Committee, senior technical advisor for enterprise development and employment
Benjamin Edwards	Urban Institute, research associate
Ben Mountfield	independent consultant
Bobi Morris	International Rescue Committee
David Sanderson	University of New South Wales Australia, Judith Neilson Chair in Architecture
Emily Sloane	International Rescue Committee, markets specialist
Gaia van der Esch	Impact Initiatives, deputy director
Justin Mortensen	Save the Children, convenor, Urban Strategy Initiative; manager, Global Knowledge Priority
Jonathan Beloe	International Rescue Committee, director of context adaptability
Kevin Mugenya	World Vision Kenya, urban technical specialist
Laura Phelps	Norwegian Refugee Council, urban displacement advisor
Pamela Sitko	World Vision International, urban technical advisor
Steadman Noble	Plan UK, governance and accountability advisor
Stephen Commins	Lecturer in Urban Planning, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs
Tobias Metzner	International Rescue Committee, context analyst
Thomas Aston	CARE UK, governance advisor

Websites

WEBSITES:	
ALNAP Urban portal	www.alnap.org/what-we-do/urban
ALNAP Urban portal research directory	www.urban-response.org/directory.aspx
USAID Making cities work	www.makingcitieswork.org/toolkit
IIED	www.iied.org
Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC)	www.gsdrc.org
Rockefeller 100 Resilient Cities	www.100resilientcities.org

The magnitude of urban disasters in high population densities – combined with complex social, political, economic and institutional environments – has challenged the manner in which humanitarian agencies are used to working. Humanitarian agencies are now grappling with how to change their approaches to this reality. This desk review aims to provide an audit and analysis of existing context analysis tools along the themes of governance and power analysis; vulnerability, social and conflict analysis; and urban systems analysis. The lack of contextual understanding by urban humanitarian response has often been cited. This review finds that there are strong context analysis methodologies but the application and existence of tools specifically designed for urban humanitarian response remains limited. The tools that are available often require substantial time to conduct data collection and analysis. They are also frequently narrow in analytical focus, fail to address the multi-scalar nature of a city, and lack specificity in tool selection and methodology. The review suggests that the advancement of an urban context analysis tool for humanitarian response is needed and should aim to build from the strengths of existing tools and learning from new tools that are under development.

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