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**Statement of MIT Displacement Research & Action Network (DRAN)
to the Global Consultation of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit – 14-16 October, 2015 Geneva**

Recent trends in displacement to urban areas as a result of conflict, natural hazards and other drivers show that humanitarian responses in cities are becoming an increasing concern. Thirty-eight million people around the world were forced to flee their homes from armed conflict and generalised violence alone at the end of 2014 (IDMC, GLOBAL OVERVIEW 2015). Nearly half of these displaced end up in urban areas where they are at risk for secondary displacement due to evictions, infrastructure projects and real estate development. There they join many more millions who have been displaced to urban areas, due to rural impoverishment, large development projects, and other structural causes which increase urban informality. Displacement is also becoming more and more protracted- generally ten years or more- requiring longer-term interventions that blur the mandates between humanitarian, development and local governance actors (IDMC, GLOBAL OVERVIEW 2015).

For local authorities that are often struggling to provide housing and services to the urban population, the rapid influx of displaced persons compounds a multitude of pre-existing issues. Displacement to urban areas further represents a particular challenge to humanitarians, who struggle to adapt program models grounded on rural, camp-based responses and the provision of emergency shelter. Responses by humanitarian actors are also governed by international humanitarian law, while sustainable responses to housing and other rights of the urban poor are governed through international human rights law, with very different goals and standards. DRAN therefore calls on the WHS to take into account the complexity of infrastructure and institutional, legal, political and policy frameworks which make urban areas far more complex to work in for humanitarian responses than rural areas. DRAN believes that the urban nature of these concerns demands particular attention in its own right. Likewise, we feel that the humanitarian community's current emphasis on supporting mostly refugee populations fails to adequately protect the vast populations of urban poor and Internally Displaced Persons. As such, a large amount of potential exists in improving humanitarian response by further including the needs of these additional vulnerable populations, in better coordination with development policies and strategies.

This statement aims to complement the Urban Recommendations being put forth by the Global Urban Crisis Partnership (Global Urban Consultation) by further highlighting a number of unaddressed areas. As such, the following statement strives to provide suggestions to be considered in advance of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS).

The following principles should be seen as central to ensure a more effective and humane response involving displaced populations:

- A comprehensive risk and impact assessment prior to humanitarian and development interventions, including in the context of secondary displacements, which includes specific preventive measures to avoid displacement in most cases;
- A framework of legal, policy and practical measures for resettlement including specific protocols for at-risk populations;
- Continuing assistance for local institution and capacity building to sustain responses to displacement.

In recognition of the World Humanitarian Summit's stated themes of Humanitarian Effectiveness; Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risk; and Serving the Needs of People in Conflict, DRAN urges that the preparatory for the WHS include attention toward the following displacement-linked issues:

1. REFRAMING RESILIENCE

DRAN recognizes that as issues of humanitarian crisis enter further into the urban realm, there has been a shift in humanitarian thinking to support the resilience of cities. One way that strengthening the resilience of urban governmental institutions and infrastructure is currently being defined is through the ability to absorb rapid fluctuations in population, which calls for humanitarians to adopt flexible municipal support tools and make quick assessments in order to provide financial aid and other resources to maintain adequate water, electricity, transport, and waste management services. However, supporting the "resilience" of communities must go beyond the technical planning of cities to include a human rights-based approach that ensures that the "resilience" of the most vulnerable and at-risk populations is prioritized and humanitarian intervention does not aim to return to, nor reinstates a prior unequal and unjust status quo.

Thus, DRAN:

- Calls on the WHS to explicitly define their understanding of resilience in a human rights-based framework. This would entail the full integration in all humanitarian interventions of the fundamental human rights principles of non-discrimination, gender equality, participation, non-retrogression and right to a remedy.
- Urges humanitarians to base their responses on international human rights law, particularly the right to adequate housing, and on frameworks that cover displacement and bridge the gap between humanitarian and human rights imperatives such as the UN guiding principles on IDP's and the UN basic principles and guidelines on development-induced displacement.
- Supports the meaningful participation of IDPs in housing programmes and community ownership of the process which should be an integral component of humanitarian shelter and housing programmes.

2. PROMOTION OF RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING, INCLUDING TENURE SECURITY

IDPs in urban settings are often forcibly evicted as a result of tenure insecurity. Successive displacement or the threat of it reduces the capacity of displaced persons to cope and increases their vulnerability. Policies and practices that aim to improve tenure security as an integral part of the right to adequate housing are key to preventing renewed displacement. Combinations of the following models can be used to strengthen tenure security: temporary, incremental, rental/leasehold, prevention of unlawful evictions by landlords, freehold/full title, and "right to occupy," urban commons, social housing, cooperative housing and community land trusts. A particular duration of tenure should not be standardised, because duration of tenure in temporary models can range from three months up to a year's in both occupancy/use-hold and rental models. More permanent models offer 5, 10 or 99 year leases, and freehold or full title models guarantee full ownership rights. However, it should be understood that tenure is not a fixed system. Rather tenure is a process that should result in the progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing.

Thus, DRAN:

- Calls on the WHS to acknowledge and recognise various forms of tenure, including informal, because they are key to the progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing.
- Calls on WHS to acknowledge that tenure security goes well beyond ensuring tenure and includes appropriate procedures and institutions for lawful evictions, protection against frequent mobility, and novel forms of collective property rights which provide economic, social and cultural support for tenure holders.
- Demands that all have equal tenure and property rights, without any discrimination based on any of the grounds recognized under international human rights law, including sex, gender, race, colour, descent, origin, regardless of their civil or other status in the design of shelter and housing programmes.
- Demands that adequate protection from forced eviction be integrated into humanitarian shelter and housing programmes in order to avoid renewed displacement and increased impoverishment.
- Calls for greater attention to providing affordable rental housing in lieu of home ownership schemes, with sufficient protection of renters' rights, given that a large majority of urban residents rent, particularly the poorer and more marginalised among them and including IDPs.

3. CONSIDERATION OF AREA-BASED APPROACHES

DRAN supports the use of area-based approaches that are inclusive and address the needs of the wider community in which displaced persons live. Many displaced persons 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 already be inadequate. Thus, a population influx has the potential to create social tensions over access to overburdened services, livelihoods, jobs and housing. The more rapid the expansion of informal settlements, even when municipalities intend to serve incoming populations, the more it is hard for them 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. Moreover, local governance institutions play a key regulatory role, and they may have resources and decision-making powers that can multiply the efforts of international agencies and NGOs. Supporting municipalities is an indirect but more sustainable way of supporting displaced persons, and it strengthens local ownership and accountability. Lastly, involving local governance institutions and the development sector earlier during the humanitarian phase can help share the costs of longer-term interventions given the prevalence of protracted displacement (> ten years).

Thus, DRAN:

- Urges that the focus of humanitarian interventions on displaced individuals and households should shift to inclusive, area-based interventions that are integrated into broader urban planning and development strategies.



- Suggests that the use of spatial analysis (i.e. mapping displacement, eviction monitoring, joint-IDP profiling service, satellite imagery) will help identify and yield disaggregated data for targeting specific needs and vulnerabilities of all populations
- Suggests that increasing the urban housing supply is a significant development resource and economic multiplier, with upstream linkages to building materials and land markets and downstream linkages to construction companies and employment. The local production and supply of goods and provisions of services for IDPs can make a significant contribution to a district's economy.
- Urges that the provision of affordable housing be adopted as a goal of humanitarian interventions, which can be achieved in different ways, as appropriate as humanitarian situations warrant, including the opening up of serviced land, investment in infrastructure, provision of affordable credit, retrofitting of abandoned property, allowing extra floors on existing housing structure, re-zoning land for residential use, increasing population density by encouraging in-fill and subsidies for the upgrading of vacant or dilapidated housing stock.

In the context of the issues raised above MIT DRAN fully supports the call for the WHS to endorse the idea of a Global Urban Crisis Alliance. Such an alliance would be ideally place to meet the challenges outlined above. We commit ourselves to actively contribute to the work of such an alliance.

DRAN Background

The Displacement Research and Action Network, an initiative of the *Program for Human Rights and Justice* at the *Department of Urban Studies and Planning* at MIT, is the first-ever inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral global network on displacement. Founded in 2012 by MIT DUSP Professor Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the Network has been shaped by Miloon Kothari, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, a visiting scholar at DUSP, with contributions from Olivier De Schutter, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and many other leading experts from MIT and elsewhere. The Network brings together activists, academics and policy makers to build new theory and evidence of the increasing incidence of mass internal displacement around the world due to development, conflict, or climate disaster.

The Network's main goals are to:

- Provide a platform that connects activists, planners, scholars, policymakers and human rights practitioners, and allows displaced populations to share their stories;
- Co-produce knowledge about drivers, causes and consequences of displacement through research and the development of new tools and technologies, including methodologies of mapping displacement;
- Contribute to the implementation of existing national and international human rights standards on displacement and the evolution of, where necessary, new global normative and policy frameworks on displacement, housing and land rights;
- Assist local communities, civil society networks and social movements to better analyze the impacts of displacement and increase knowledge of advocacy tools that challenge forced displacement.

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- Influence country-level normative and regulatory frameworks in collaboration with national-level civil society groups and academic networks.

For more information

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