

WORLD HABITAT DAY 2025:

URBAN SOLUTIONS TO CRISIS

CONCEPT NOTE

DATE: 6 October 2025

LOCATION: UN-Habitat HQ at UNON, Nairobi - Kenya

An increasing number of people are driven from their homes by crises such as conflict, political instability, climate change and economic hardship. A record 122 million people are forcibly displaced¹. In an increasingly urbanizing world, displacement is becoming an urban phenomenon. Over 60% of internally displaced persons, refugees, and migrants are seeking refuge in cities, putting pressure on local systems. This is accelerating urban growth while changing territories significantly.

This makes urban crisis response and urban displacement a timely focus for World Habitat Day. The day will highlight sustainable, scalable, and transformative solutions to urban displacement that help stabilize populations while promoting prosperity and fostering social cohesion for all. It will put the spotlight on the importance of urban and territorial planning, inclusive urban governance and the role of local governments in sustainable solutions for displacement.

MOVING FROM ACUTE CRISIS RESPONSE TO SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

A humanitarian response that fails to integrate development approaches early, risks prolonging the crisis and aid dependency. There is an urgent need to pivot earlier towards development- and government-led solutions in dealing with displacement situations for more durable outcomes. To effectively transition to sustainable urban solutions and promote self-reliance, three approaches are key:

First, inclusive approaches to urban and territorial development with social cohesion at the center are key to addressing the needs of both host communities and the displaced. In line with SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda, inclusive urban planning and urban governance are essential tools to facilitate social cohesion and integration of displacement of affected communities.

Second, sustainable solutions also need to ensure access to adequate housing, land, and basic services. Displaced populations and host communities, particularly the urban poor, often face acute challenges in access to adequate housing, basic services, and economic opportunities. The ever-worsening global housing crisis exacerbates these challenges, as it strains already limited resources. The influx of more displaced persons strains urban systems even more, and if unplanned, further fuels informal settlements and slums where 1.1 billion people already reside globally.



Third, Mayors and local governments have demonstrated over and over again that they can drive solutions, working closely with the displacement of affected communities in all their diversity. Their leadership is key to ensure social cohesion as a prerequisite for inclusive growth and stability. Enhancing multi-level governance, building local governments' capacity, and ensuring enabling legal and policy instruments, along with comprehensive financing solutions, are critical in achieving long-term solutions for both host and displaced communities and provides them with access to adequate housing.

OBJECTIVES

In line with UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2026–2029, World Habitat Day will:

1. Share urban and territorial development strategies for durable solutions to displacement.
2. Recognize the central role of local governments in championing solutions and the need for multi-level governance.
3. Highlight social cohesion and inclusive governance as key enablers of urban integration of displaced populations.
4. Consider the critical role of housing, land and basic services for sustainable solutions for displacement.
5. Showcase urban practices that have successfully achieved social cohesion, recovery and integration for displacement of affected communities.

1. <https://www.unhcr.org/us/global-trends>