IGAD Support Platform

Concept Note

Thematic Roundtable on Urban Dimensions of Forced Displacement in the IGAD Region;

Towards Resilient and Sustainable Human Settlements

22-23 May 2025

Haile Grand Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Background

The IGAD region continues to face one of the highest concentrations of displaced people, with over 6 million refugees and asylum seekers and 21 million people internally displaced by conflict in March 2025. The number has more than tripled over the past decade, compounded by climate-induced displacement that resulted in 3.1 million additional displacements in 2023 alone according to the 2023 global report on internal displacement. Many displaced populations, their hosts, and communities in areas of origin are repeatedly affected and displaced by both conflict and climate-related shocks, adding to complex drivers of internal and cross-border displacement in the region, including refugee movements.

A significant number of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people reside in or migrate to urban or peri-urban areas, seeking not only safety, but improved livelihoods and job opportunities, access to education and health and better living conditions in general. Additionally, many protracted displacement settings have transformed into urban or urban-like contexts over time. Local authorities play a critical and transformative role in promoting reception, protection and local inclusion: Cities and local authorities often function as the primary service providers, delivering essential services to all populations regardless of status. They demonstrate remarkable agility in adapting local regulations and development plans to address the needs of displaced populations, often pioneering inclusive approaches that later inform national policy frameworks. The municipal-level interventions directly translate into tangible improvements in displaced persons' daily lives – from access to education and healthcare to housing and employment opportunities – creating pathways to meaningful inclusion that extend beyond temporary assistance. Despite their innovations, cities and local authorities face significant challenges in

promoting sustainable inclusion. Their capacities are severely constrained by underfunding, limited human resources, and inadequate infrastructure to meet increased demands.

Policy Framework and Progress

The policy foundation for addressing urban displacement has evolved significantly over the past fifteen years. In 2009, UNHCR established its policy on the Protection and Solutions of Refugees in Urban Areas. This was followed by several pivotal global commitments strengthening the recognition of urban displacement responses.

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit marked a critical turning point with the establishment of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises, building on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's strategy for addressing humanitarian challenges in urban areas. This alliance formalized the commitment to area-based approaches and strengthening local authorities' capacity in crisis response. That same year, the Habitat III Conference in Quito launched the New Urban Agenda (NUA), a landmark document securing state commitments to "ensuring full respect for the human rights of refugees, IDPs and migrants, regardless of their status, and supporting their host cities in the spirit of international cooperation". The NUA notably acknowledged the significant social, economic, and cultural contributions that displaced populations bring to urban environments.

Building on this foundation, the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees further emphasized the role of cities and municipalities in refugee inclusion through sharing best practices on inclusive public services and innovative urban response approaches. The 10th World Urban Forum in 2020 reinforced this direction, asserting that "in urban crisis situations specifically, the inclusion of migrants, IDPs and refugees into response and recovery strategies is crucial for increasing social cohesion, reducing inequalities and promoting human rights." That same year, UNHCR and UN-Habitat jointly developed a Guidance Note for Responding to Displacement in Urban Areas to mobilize coordinated humanitarian-development efforts for urban resilience.

These global policy frameworks provided the foundation for regional action in the IGAD region. Recognizing the unique displacement challenges facing its member states, the IGAD Support Platform for the Global Compact on Refugees was launched in December 2019 during the first Global Refugee Forum. The Platform was specifically designed to sustain momentum and mobilize additional resources for implementing the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) across the region. During the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, the Multistakeholder Pledge on Climate Resilient, Sustainable Human Settlements for Refugees and their Hosting Communities was launched, co-led by the Government of Ethiopia and UN-Habitat. This initiative received 48 pledges from 39 entities, including fourteen policy pledges from countries at the forefront of displacement.

Specifically, five IGAD countries – Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda – made policy pledges among the 48 pledging entities for the Multistakeholder Pledge on Human Settlements. These pledges are now translating into concrete action across the region. Ethiopia is advancing its commitment to transform refugee camps into sustainable settlements by 2027, with substantial support from the European Union's International Partnerships Directorate

(INTPA). Similarly, Kenya has made significant progress in transforming its refugee camps into municipalities, supported by the World Bank, Germany, Switzerland, UK, among others. Support is also provided to IGAD, notably by the European Union, to support IGAD's efforts in delivering durable solutions for forcibly displaced people across its member states. A key component of this support focuses on promoting dialogue and strengthening the capacity of cities and local authorities to implement area-based development planning for displaced populations.

This regional progress is complemented by initiatives such as the Cities Alliance programs, supported by the EU and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation since 2018, which provide financial and technical assistance to urban stakeholders in developing context-specific approaches to migration management. Since 2024, the EU has further enhanced this support through the Sustainable Urban Integration of Displacement-Affected Communities (SUIDAC) Programme, working across nine secondary cities in Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Somalia to foster sustainable integration. To ensure coordination and knowledge-sharing across these initiatives, Cities Alliance established a Regional Dialogue Platform for Secondary Cities in 2019 foster peer learning and collaborative problem-solving on urban displacement challenges. The platform is co-led by local authorities and displacement-affected communities with IGAD as a steering committee member.

Rationale and Objectives

With financial support from the European Union's International Partnerships Directorate (INTPA) and in collaboration with UNHCR, Cities Alliance, UN-Habitat and other members of the core group of the IGAD Support Platform, IGAD intends to convene a thematic roundtable on Urban Dimensions of Forced Displacement. The roundtable builds on the March 2024 Djibouti peer-learning event, which focused on the role of secondary cities in addressing migration and forced displacement. It seeks to promote dialogue, highlight the unique challenges and opportunities cities encounter in providing durable solutions and deepen the regional understanding of fostering the inclusion of displaced populations in local development planning, with a strategic focus on taking stock of implementation progress for the Multistakeholder Pledge on Human Settlements pledge ahead of the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) in December 2025. This critical stocktaking exercise will not only document achievements but also identify implementation barriers and mobilize additional support to accelerate progress on transforming refugee camps into integrated human settlements across the IGAD region.

The main objectives of the meeting include:

- To assess implementation progress: Take stock of advancements made in implementing the Human Settlements pledges across the IGAD region, with particular focus on the transformative initiatives by Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, and Somalia. Document concrete examples of policy reforms, innovative and best practices, and successful camp transformation models that can be scaled up within and outside the region.

- To identify implementation challenges: Analyze critical barriers impeding progress, including financing gaps, technical capacity constraints, and coordination challenges. Develop targeted recommendations to address these gaps to feed into the HLOM.
- To galvanize technical and financial support: Mobilize development and humanitarian partners to provide enhanced support for pledge implementation, particularly through innovative financing mechanisms, technical expertise, and capacity-building initiatives for local authorities leading settlement transformation efforts.
- To strengthen coordination: Enhance collaboration among governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and local communities to improve the response to urban and urban-like displacement.
- To develop policy recommendations: Formulate actionable policy recommendations to guide national and regional efforts in addressing urban displacement.

Themes:

The roundtable will explore the following themes:

- **Urbanization and displacement:** The intersection of urbanization and displacement, including the drivers of displacement, urban migration patterns, and the impact on host cities and communities.
- **Access to services and livelihoods:** The challenges and opportunities for displaced persons to access basic services, including healthcare, education, and sanitation, as well as livelihoods and economic opportunities in urban and peri-urban areas.
- **Protection and safety:** The protection concerns safety risks faced by displaced persons in urban areas, including issues related to shelter, security, and exploitation.
- **Host community-displaced person relations:** The dynamics between host communities and displaced persons, including opportunities for social cohesion, community engagement, and inclusive urban planning and governance.
- **Innovative solutions and partnerships:** The role of innovation, technology, and partnerships in addressing the urban dimensions of forced displacement, including examples of successful initiatives and collaborations across the HDP nexus.

Expected Outcomes:

The roundtable aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Improved understanding of the urban dimensions of forced displacement in the IGAD region, including the challenges, opportunities, and best practices.
- Identification of policy and programmatic recommendations to address the urban dimensions of forced displacement, including opportunities for governments, international organizations, and civil society to collaborate and improve responses.
- Strengthened relationships and partnerships among stakeholders, including governments, international organizations and the private sector, to foster collaboration and coordination in addressing the urban dimensions of forced displacement.

- Documentation of best practices and innovative solutions in addressing the urban dimensions of forced displacement, including case studies and examples of successful initiatives that will later feed into the stocktaking meeting of the Nairobi Declaration and IGAD Support Platform that is scheduled for the last quarter of 2025. The stocktaking report will further document implementation progress on Human Settlement pledges across the region, highlighting achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. This report will serve as input for the IGAD stocktaking event later this year and December 2025 HLOM.

Tentative Agenda

Day One		
Time	**Title**	**Responsibility**
08:30-09:00	**Arrival and Registration**	**IGAD**
09:00-09:45	**Opening Remarks**	o Statement by IGAD o Statement by Cities Alliance o Statement by UNHCR o Statement by EU o Opening Remarks by the RRS Director on behalf of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia **Moderator: IGAD**
09:45-11:45	**Session One: Trends and Urbanization of Displacement in the IGAD Region** o Overview of the urban displacement phenomenon in the IGAD region. o Analysis of the factors driving urban displacement. o Impact of urban displacement on host communities	o Overview and Setting the Scene by IGAD o Presentation by UNHCR on Regional Displacement Statistics o Presentation by World Bank on Urban Forced Displacement Framework o Presentation by SCI on the Impacts on Displacement on Children **Moderated Plenary Discussions** **Moderator: IGAD**
11:45-11:15	**Coffee break**	
11:15-13:00	**Session Two: Panel Discussion-The Role of Cities in Addressing Displacement** - What is the role of local and national government in addressing urban	o Keynote Presentation by Cities Alliance o Panel Discussion by Mayors and County Governments

	displacement? - What are some of the innovative models of service delivery and how do they target displaced population? - What are some of the existing coordination mechanisms at local/cities level? - What strategies, legal and policy frameworks have cities and local governments developed to protect the rights of displaced persons - How do cities and local governments ensure the representation and participation of displaced population on local area-development plans?	- Mayor of Baidoa, Somalia - Mayor of Kampala, Uganda - Mayor of Jijiga, Ethiopia - County of Nairobi, Kenya - Mayor of Malakal, South Sudan - Mayor of Obock, Djibouti **Moderated Plenary Discussions** **Moderator: Cities Alliance**
13:00-14:00	**Lunch**	
14:00-16:00	**Session Three: Transforming refugee camps to human settlements: Implementation of Pledges** o Presentation and discussion on lessons learned, challenges and recommendations to advance pledge implementation	o UNHCR Presentation on Human Settlements Multi-Stakeholder Pledge o Presentation by the World Bank on the findings of the camps to settlements o Presentation by RRS Ethiopia on Transformation of refugee camps into Human Settlements o Presentation of Kenya on Shirika Plan o Presentation by Uganda on Action against climate change and increasing access to sustainable energy sources o Presentation by Somalia on Integration of displacement issues into government policies and climate actions o Presentation by South Sudan on the 2024 National Durable Solutions Strategy and Plan of Action **Moderated Plenary Discussions** **Moderator: IGAD**
16:00-16:15	**Coffee break**	
16:15-17:00	**Session Four: Pathways to Inclusion-From Camps to Settlements to Municipalities**	o Case study 1: Kalobeyei-Kakuma Model, Kenya

	o Case Study presentation and moderated discussion on critical factors enabling transition from settlements to municipalities and roles of different stakeholders in facilitating inclusion	o Case study 2: Melkadida Inclusion Process, Ethiopia o Case study 3: Ura settlement in pioneering solutions from the start, Ethiopia **Moderator: UN-Habitat**
Day 2: Addressing Challenges and Identifying Solutions		
09:00-09:15	**Recap of Day 1**	IGAD

09:15-10:45	**Session Five: Livelihoods and Socio-Economic Inclusion**
	  o What are the economic contributions and challenges of displaced populations in urban areas.
	  o What are some of the successful economic integration programs.
	  o What strategies can enhance access to livelihood opportunities for displaced persons in cities and urban areas.
		Presentation and Moderated Plenary
		o UN Habitat
		o IFC-UNHCR Joint Initiative
		o Cities Alliance
		o EU
		o World Bank-Ethiopia
		o Representative of Garissa County
		o IGAD Regional Migration Fund-Window II
		
		Moderator: GIZ

10:45-11:15	**Coffee Break**	

11:15-12:30	**Session Six: Data and Innovation**
	  o What are some of the innovations in data collection and analysis for better decision-making.
	  o What are the best practices on digital solutions for improving access to services and information.
		Presentation and Moderated Discussions
		o UN Habitat
		o UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Centre
		o IOM Solutions Index
		o Cities Alliance
		o Mayor of Koboko
		o Mayor of Bosaso
		o Mayor of Assosa
		
		Moderator: UNHCR

12:00-13:00	**Session Seven: Innovative Financing and Partnerships**
	
	  o Existence of Funding mechanisms to support urban displacement responses.
	  o What role can regional dialogue play in mobilizing finance for cities and local government.
	  o How can we leverage partnerships with NGOs, private
		Presentation and Moderated Discussions
		o UN Habitat
		o UNHCR
		o Cities Alliance
		o EU
		o World Bank
		o AfDB
		o Germany

	sector actors, and international agencies to scale up interventions.	**Moderator: IGAD**
13:00-14:00	**Lunch**	
14:00-15:00	**Recommendations and Way Forward**	○ **IGAD**
15:00-15:30	**Closing Remarks**	