



# German Red Cross Scoping Study

## Humanitarian Assistance in the Urban Context

### Final Report

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## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

Asia-Pacific Regional Urban Community Resilience Hub	UCRH
British Red Cross	BRC
Cash Based Interventions	CBI
Community Resource Centre	CRC
Danish Refugee Council	DRC
Disaster Risk Reduction	DRR
Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment	EVCA
German Red Cross	GRC
Global Disaster Preparedness Centre	GDPC
Housing Land & Property	HLP
International Committee of the Red Cross	ICRC
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	IFRC
International Organisation for Migration	IOM
International Rescue Committee	IRC
Local Authority	LA
National Society	NS
Nepal Red Cross Society	NRCS
Non-Government Organisation	NGO
Norwegian Refugee Council	NRC
Participatory Approach to Safe Shelter Awareness	PASSA
Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation	PHAST
Participating National Society	PNS
Partners for Resilience	PFR
Palestinian Red Crescent Society	PRCS
Philippines Red Cross	PRC
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement	RCRC
Strengthening Urban Resilience & Engagement	SURE
Terre Des Hommes	THD
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR
Urban Collaboration Platform	UCP
Urban Multi-Sector Vulnerability Assessment Tool	UMVAT
Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment	VCA
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene	WASH

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This scoping study, undertaken from October to December 2019, **aims to inform priorities and actions of the German Red Cross (GRC) in relation to humanitarian assistance in the urban context.**

In doing so, the scoping study **took stock of existing literature, tools, methods, networks and initiatives (phase 1).** Building on this mapping exercise, interviews with humanitarian agencies working in urban areas (predominantly representatives from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) were undertaken to **gain an understanding of existing needs and gaps that obstruct the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian agencies working in urban areas (phase 2).**

The overall scoping study was guided by the following questions:

- **What is already available to support humanitarian organisations** working in urban areas and what is their level of conceptual quality and practicality?
- **What do organisations still need / what gaps remain / what are the barriers** to work efficiently and effectively in urban areas?
- **What tools and approaches could be starting points for efficient and effective humanitarian approach in urban areas?** Have they been assessed for their usefulness, applicability, strengths and weaknesses?

## PHASE 1: MAPPING OF EXISTING RESOURCES ON HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN URBAN AREAS

Primary findings and observations from the mapping of literature, tools, methods, networks and initiatives (phase 1), identified:

**A growing evidence base:** The availability of literature, tools and guidance is growing to inform urban humanitarian response. This is most evident in the last five years as an increasing number of humanitarian agencies and initiatives commenced developing or adapting existing tools to urban contexts.

### **Leading the way with context analysis and urban profiling:**

The quantity of literature, tools and guidance related to understanding the urban context, (both generally and in contexts of crisis), is notably larger than the quantity of available tools and guidance related to urban response operations.

### **Adapting what exists and learning through experience:**

Guidance, tools and manuals continue to be developed by individual agencies, networks and inter-agency initiatives. As a strong body of knowledge exists, GRC and National Society (NS) partners are encouraged to utilise existing knowledge and further develop skills through direct field experience and implementation. This highlights the importance of proactively sharing learning and communities of practice.

**The increasing prevalence of every-day crises:** The standards of living (e.g. indicators of morbidity, health, income, education, residence status, access to services) of those residing in informal urban settlement may not be dissimilar to humanitarian crises. When crises do affect these settlements, the impacts are compounded. This emphasises the need to prioritise interventions to those residing in informal urban settlements.

With regards to programming, phase 1 identified a number of **key thematic priorities and approaches** in preparedness, response and recovery in urban contexts, including, but not limited to:

- **Intentional targeting:** The concept of 'communities' in urban contexts is fluid – with communities existing according to culture, livelihoods, ethnicity etc. Initiatives deliberately targeting a specific group (e.g. street vendors, taxi-drivers, school teachers etc.) serve as useful entry points to reach broader population groups in cities.
- The need for a **complementary approach** to provision of essential services, whilst increasing the focus on enabling support.
- **Strengthening partnerships with local authorities**, which can include a suite of support options further outlines in this document.
- The **clear relevance of Cash Based Interventions (CBIs) and area-based approaches** in complex urban contexts.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Continued)

## PHASE 2: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS TO GAIN A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF WORKING PRACTICES IN PRIORITY NS / COUNTRIES

Phase 2 of the scoping study builds on phase 1 findings and further incorporated interviews with humanitarian agencies working in urban areas, together with results from a GRC workshop held in Berlin in December 2019. Research and analysis from phase 2 identified a suite of priority themes for the GRC and partners, including:

1. **Prioritise external partnerships and coalitions**, through:
  - Focus on the comparative advantage of the Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) and 'partner for the rest'
  - Strengthen private sector partnerships
  - Leverage the existing RCRC skill base
  - Lead with effective context analysis and stakeholder mapping - by identifying *who* is out there and *what* are they strong at?
2. **Scale the convening role of the RCRC**, through:
  - Utilising the RCRC's unique role and potential to convene
  - Strengthening the skills needed to convene effectively
  - Supporting and / or forming city alliances
  - Prioritise convening in everyday contexts
3. **Engage with local authorities**, through:
  - Identifying local authority needs and capacities
  - Contributing to local development planning & priorities
  - Creating a 'suite of programme options' with local authorities in priority cities
4. **Strengthen community engagement & accountability; protection, gender & inclusion**, through:
  - Investing in the RCRC Movement's participatory approach tools
  - Piloting and / or supporting one-stop-shop / referral services
  - Partnering with the media for community outreach
  - Identifying the most effective community entry points in each urban context

5. **Lead with strong context analysis and needs assessments**, through:
  - Creating guidance / 'tool navigator' to filter the multitude of tools
  - Being more open to using external tools
  - Piloting a series of city primers / profiles
  - Provide more comprehensive training and capacity strengthening to apply tools effectively
6. **Prioritise strategic programming across the continuum**, through:
  - Strengthening NS capacity in 'peace time'
  - Prioritising the everyday crises
  - Moving beyond the project-based approach
  - Creating a platform for guidance & tools for urban specific thematic programming
  - Prioritise programmes supporting social inclusion in cities
  - Bringing the urban lens into all sectors
7. **Capacity, training and standards**, through:
  - Identifying skills needed for urban contexts and supporting capacity strengthening programmes for RCRC staff
  - Providing training & support to RCRC volunteers and partners
  - Rethinking volunteering in cities & towns
  - Developing dedicated guidance on: Urban violence / conflict; and understanding local authorities
8. **Knowledge and information management**, through:
  - Supporting urban knowledge hubs / platforms
  - Creating a knowledge management system
  - Accessing broader networks to utilise knowledge / training opportunities

Further consolidating the above priority themes, a list of '**overall recommended priorities and actions**' has been created (page 16), synthesising the explicit actions GRC can take at both a global level and targeted city level.

# METHODOLOGY

This scoping study, undertaken from October – December 2019, was divided into two distinct phases:

- **Phase 1:** Mapping of existing resources on humanitarian assistance in urban areas
- **Phase 2:** Series of interviews and focus group discussions to gain a thorough understanding of working practices in priority NS / countries

## PHASE 1: MAPPING OF EXISTING RESOURCES ON HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN URBAN AREAS

The phase 1 mapping exercise reviewed a total of **132 documents**, comprised of reviews, case studies, tools and guidance.

A further **43 entities** were reviewed, comprised of networks & platforms, donor initiatives, private sector entities and training service providers and courses. Findings of phase 1 were presented in two formats:

1. **A synthesis report**, extracting key observations from the overall exercise; categorized into thematic focus areas; and according to external platforms, donors and service providers. Available as **annex 1**.

2. **An excel document / database**, listing all reviewed sources, categorised according to:
  - Programming focus (including context analysis, needs assessment, shelter, WASH, CBI, HLP, etc.)
  - Additional general literature
  - Platforms
  - Potential donors
  - Thank tanks & academia

Available as **annex 2**.

## PHASE 2: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS TO GAIN A THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF WORKING PRACTICES IN PRIORITY NS / COUNTRIES

A total of **18 humanitarian representatives were interviewed throughout phase 2**. Key informants were predominantly identified by GRC and reflective of current GRC country priorities.

Key informants included both RCRC and 'external' representatives, comprised of:

- **RCRC:** 15 interviewees were Movement representatives based in Bangladesh, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Palestine, Philippines; at regional levels in asia-pacific, middle east & north africa; and in global roles.
- **External:** A further 3 external, 'urban expert' representatives held global roles in their organisations.

Informed by the ToR and inception report, semi-structured interviews commenced with the initial set of questions:

5. What you would consider to be the **strengths / added value of [the NS; GRC & other PNS operational in country X]** in humanitarian programming in urban contexts?

1. Conversely, what would you consider to be the **limitations & gaps?**
2. In your opinion, what **priority actions are needed to remedy / reduce the limitations & scale / amplify the strengths?**
3. To what degree does the NS' urban humanitarian response programming contribute to: **disaster risk management and support longer term sustainable and inclusive development for vulnerable urban communities?**
4. How can we **amplify these strengths & address limitations?**

Following the above-listed questions, further questions and discussion expanded on identified issues unique to each interview.

**Interviewee responses were then analysed and categorised into 'themes'**. The themes presented in this report represent those which arose in the majority (or all) of the interviews held.

Additional themes discussed in some (less than half) of the interviews and discussed, but not prioritised in the Berlin workshop, are listed on page 7 under 'additional themes'.

# PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

## 'PRE-WORKSHOP' FINDINGS

Informed predominately by phase 2 interviews, **key research findings were presented as 'themes'** to be discussed at the Berlin workshop in early December 2019. (See next page for the list of themes).

A series of '**primers**' were created for each theme to inform workshop discussions. The content for each 'primer', heavily informed by phase 2 interviews, was structured according to the following:

- '**Needs, gaps & barriers**': Outlining a summary of the needs, gaps and barriers for humanitarian organizations to work efficiently and effectively in urban areas.

### 'Good practice recommendations and proposed actions':

Outlining key findings for improving the approaches, systems and tools and to ensure humanitarian action in urban areas complements disaster risk management and longer

- '**Overall recommended priorities and actions**' term sustainable and inclusive development for vulnerable urban communities.
- : A summary table, extracted from the good practice recommendations, outlining explicit actions GRC can take at global levels and in targeted cities.

Primers are available as **annex 3**.

## 'POST-WORKSHOP' FINDINGS

Following discussions at the Berlin workshop, key discussions and actions were captured, synthesised and consolidated into the following 1-page series of findings. Findings are structured according to:

- '**Needs, gaps & barriers**': Outlining a summary of the needs, gaps and barriers for humanitarian organizations to work efficiently and effectively in urban areas.
- '**Proposed actions and recommendations**': Outlining key actions GRC can take at global levels and in targeted cities to improve approaches, systems and tools and to ensure humanitarian action in urban areas complements disaster risk management and longer term sustainable and inclusive development for vulnerable urban communities.

- '**Existing Good Practice**': A selected list of RCRC movement and 'external' good practice initiatives identified throughout the scoping study, related to the specific theme.

Further analysing themes and discussions at the Berlin workshop, a synthesised list of '**overall recommended priorities and actions**' has been created (page 16), outlining explicit actions GRC can take at global levels and in targeted cities. This summary table is heavily informed through the workshop prioritisation exercise undertaken on the afternoon of day two.

# OVERVIEW OF THEMES

As mentioned in the 'methodology' and 'presentation of findings' sections, a number of recurring themes were identified throughout the scoping study.

## PRIORITY THEMES

The themes illustrated below arose explicitly in discussions in all of the interviews in phase 2, whilst remaining congruent with priorities emerging priorities / observations identified throughout the phase 1 mapping exercise.

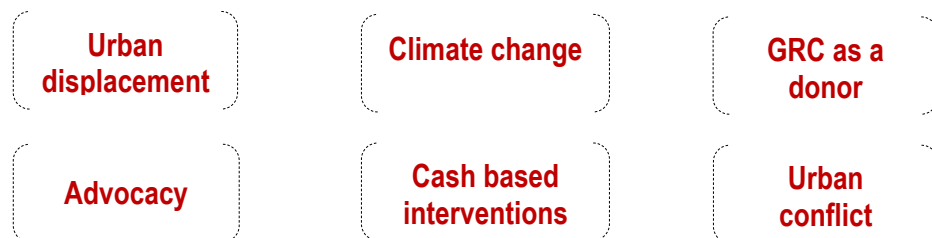
The below themes provide the structure of recommendations and actions in this final report.



## SECONDARY THEMES

In addition to the above-mentioned primary themes, additional, **secondary themes** arose in a number of interviews and / or with specific participants in the Berlin workshop.

These themes did not arise in sufficient interviews to warrant a separate primer, nor were they specifically prioritised during the workshop prioritisation exercise on the afternoon of day two. However, due to their relevance, they are captured below.





# 1. EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS

## NEEDS, GAPS AND BARRIERS

**Appetite to partner?** There are reported varying degree of interest amongst NS to partner with traditional and non-traditional external actors. Embedded / established ways of working may not result in external partnerships being prioritized within NS.

**Local level partnerships:** Feedback within several countries highlighted that partnerships may occur more frequently at NS branch and chapter level, based off responding to the local population's specific needs and opportunities.

**Competition:** The sparse funding environment and competition for resources is a clear contributing factor for reduced engagement.

**Overloading 'partners of choice':** When (often local) partners are identified as strong / partners of choice, there is a risk of becoming overloaded by partnership opportunities by international actors.

**Focus on operationalising partnerships:** There are occurrences of partnerships / MoUs between the RCRC and other large agencies. These MoUs outline general collaboration, but often do not translate into operational programming.

**Red lines of Humanitarian Principles:** When working with non-traditional partners (e.g. private sector), there can be a challenge to ensure humanitarian principles remain followed.

## PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Focus on comparative advantage and 'partner for the rest':** No NS / agency can be all things to all people. A recommendation, therefore, is to stick to core expertise and role (depending on the country / NS, this may refer to health, ambulance services, WASH etc.), and promote a partnership approach for other intervention areas, informed by a strong context analysis / stakeholder mapping.

**Strengthen private sector partnerships:** More strategic engagement with the private sector as partner (rather than solely as donor) should be prioritised across NS, with a focus on how these partnerships can be operationalised at the community level.

**Leverage our existing skill base:** The IFRC brings expertise through its role as shelter cluster coordinator at the global level and in many countries. These coordination skills should be further disseminated across the Movement through knowledge management portals, training, mentoring etc.

**Who is out there and what are they strong at?** Often NS do not know which actors are present and what their strength is. A clear stakeholder analysis is recommended to inform programme design and priorities.

## EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE

**Palestinian Red Crescent Society's (PRCS) Referral role:** Across Gaza, the PRCS has developed a clear link with other CBOs and organisations by partnering with community organisations, kindergartens, sports clubs as key community 'entry points' to introduce topics related to health and DRR.

**Partners for Resilience (PFR):** The Netherlands Red Cross, the Red Cross Climate Centre, CARE Netherlands, Cordaid and Wetlands International established PFR to increase the resilience of citizens against natural disasters, climate change and the deterioration of ecosystems

## 2. THE CONVENING ROLE OF THE RCRC

### NEEDS, GAPS AND BARRIERS

**Established ways of working & limited external partnerships:** Many NS prioritise efforts towards direct service provision. Whilst this represents a vital service provided, the convening role is not broadly institutionalised across the Movement. This is further compounded by comparatively limited engagement with international / external actors.

**Limited skill base and capacity strengthening programmes:** An effective convening / coordination role requires a strong skill base, which may not be inherent within NS staff and volunteers. Compounding this, whilst the IFRC / ICRC undertake a shelter cluster coordination role in many large-scale crises, the majority of these tasks are undertaken predominantly by international staff, with limited opportunities for shadowing / mentoring of national staff in these roles.

### PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Utilise RCRC's unique role and potential to convene:** The Movement remains uniquely positioned to take a convening role in cities (establishing or joining existing city-wide coalitions, or regional networks of networks). With the support of PNS / IFRC, branches / chapters / NS can take a stronger role in peacetime convening.

**Support / form city alliances:** Identify priority / vulnerable cities and support the creation & maintenance of alliances / coalition to reduce vulnerability and prepare for response. The alliance / coalition can be utilised as a core stakeholder group in comprehensive context analysis exercises.

**Convening in everyday contexts:** NS can take a stronger role in convening city actors – in partnership with local authorities, focused on DRR, preparedness, contingency plans etc.

**Strengthen the skills needed to convene:** Convening / coordination expertise exists within the Movement which should be prioritised towards NS staff capacity, implemented through:

- Dedicated capacity strengthening of staff (training, exchange, mentoring etc.)
- Regional or global learning / knowledge exchange

**Different modalities of convening:** Identify a range of modalities which can be undertaken by the NS to support city level convening, such as dedicated support to local authorities to lead this platform (e.g.: provision of information management support, coordination and meeting facilitation skills etc.)

### EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE

**Coalition-building in coastal cities:** The Global Disaster Preparedness Centre (GDPC), IFRC and American Red Cross have developed a set of tools and services to assist NS and partners create city coalitions on community resilience, targeting climate resilience and coastal risk reduction. This programme, implemented in 3 countries across Asia-Pacific (Myanmar, Indonesia & Vanuatu) focuses on the convening power / role of the Movement to engage partners to identify and address priority risks facing vulnerable communities in the city.

**Shelter Cluster Coordination:** A strong skill base exists within the Movement, including through utilising skills and experience gained from shelter cluster coordination in numerous countries.

## 3. ENGAGING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

### NEEDS, GAPS AND BARRIERS

**Local partners are also impacted in crises:** In sudden-onset crises especially, local authorities are often affected and operating at limited capacity. Establishing working relationships in a post-crisis context may bring additional pressure on already overloaded local authorities.

**Dynamics between local, provincial & national authorities:** Many NS do not have a contextual understanding of how local authority relates / aligns to district and national level priorities, acting as a further barrier for engagement.

**Limited strategic engagement:** Whilst increasingly common, engaging with urban local authorities is often activity- or project-based, rather than to inform more effective programming and contribute / align programming to local government priorities & plans.

**Small scale engagement:** When engagement does occur, this is often at a small scale and not sufficient to create meaningful impact city-wide. Often, capacity building may focus on one or a small group of individuals within the municipality with limited scope to institutionalize strengthened capacity.

### PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Local authority / partner capacity assessment:** Partner with local authorities to undertake a capacity review / analysis to identify capacity needs and priorities within the local authority.

**Contribute to local development planning & priorities:** Whilst the humanitarian imperative must be met, ensure programming is aligned to / informed by priorities within the local authority.

**Create a 'suite of programme options' with local authorities in priority cities:** A number of options for support are available and can be prioritized or upscaled in partnership with local authorities, including:

- Seconding staff / funding key staff positions within the partner local authority.
- Dedicated training & mentoring follow-up / exchange.
- Promote / support the creation of a city coalition, led by the local authority and supported by the NS.
- Provision of support services (e.g. information management) for local authorities.
- Joint activity implementation (e.g. context analysis; VCA; stakeholder mapping etc.).

### EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE

**British Red Cross / Nepal Red Cross Society's SURE programme in Nepal,** implemented in 5 districts, including Kathmandu Valley, involves a strong focus on policy support and building municipal capacity and to inform the strategic planning processes at the ward level.

**The International Rescue Committee's** partnerships with local authorities within cities and towns in Uganda, Jordan, Greece and Nigeria, working on joint contextual analysis & prioritisation activities.

## 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY & PROTECTION, GENDER AND INCLUSION

### NEEDS, GAPS AND BARRIERS

**Engaging and accountable to all?** Volunteers in some NS have limited awareness / training to ensure broad engagement and accountability. This translates into a risk that Movement staff & volunteers may not be engaging with all demographics & vulnerable groups within the community.

**Ensuring community feedback informs programmes / actions:** Whilst tools and guidance exist to assist in gathering and analysing community needs, results / findings from these processes do not always lead to or inform subsequent programme priorities.

**Targeting affected communities in cities & towns:** Identifying affected / vulnerable populations dispersed across cities brings significant challenges – with community members may wanting to remain invisible as a result of HLP & protection risks. The time and costs needed to reach affected populations can be significant. Further challenges highlight the difficulties of prioritising one vulnerable group over another in complex, interdependent contexts.

### PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Invest in the Movement's participatory approach tools:** Through utilising a user experience approach, scale & strengthen the application of participatory approaches, including EVCA, PASSA and PHAST to garner strong community engagement, build trust and identify community priorities.

**Pilot / support a one-stop-shop / referral service:** Support NS to strengthen their ability in cities (e.g. the branch / chapter office) as a service / location for communities to receive information & receive referrals.

**Strengthen community outreach to support technical sectors:** Prioritise effective modalities / channels for urban areas – text messages, radio, information at community centres / referral points.

**Partner with the media for community outreach:** The communication role of the Movement can be further leveraged through partnerships with media to more effectively engage with mass populations in urban areas.

**Identify the most effective entry points:** As the 'entry points' to communities in cities are numerous (e.g. workplaces, schools and community groups), these various entry points should be further utilised to engage with the broader community / locality.

### EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE

**Philippines Red Cross:** A community volunteering programme - '143' establishes a volunteer leader and core set of volunteers in each barangay in the Philippines. This programme matches the existing organising structure of communities with community volunteers to establish a Red Cross presence in the community.

**Community Resource Centre (CRC) Initiative:** CRCs are a government driven initiative co-led by the Government, together with six humanitarian partners (ACTED, DRC, IOM, NRC, TDH and UNHCR). CRCs support returns, reintegration and durable solutions by serving as coordination, information and referral hubs where all community members (IDPs, returnees and host community) can receive information on available services, including in particular locations and areas of origin, and registration information.

# 5. CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## NEEDS, GAPS AND BARRIERS

### Understanding the urban context:

- Despite the existence of numerous tools, agencies broadly struggle to attain a comprehensive understanding of the urban context.
- Whilst NS bring close proximity with urban communities, this is not always complemented by a strong understanding of the surround urban context & dynamic. The ability to detect vulnerable groups and understand community needs can be limited.

**Too many tools?** A large number of tools exist for context analysis and needs assessment (over 40). Agencies / staff often do not know: 1. What tools are out there; and 2. What tools are most appropriate for their context / needs.

**Data analysis:** Whilst agencies are increasingly experienced at collecting data, gaps often remain with regards to strong data analysis and data protection.

**Outdated data:** Comprehensive assessments require time and resources. As urban contexts are fluid and dynamic, data collected from priority communities can be out of date and insufficient to inform programme design and / or response.

**Appetite for external tools:** Whilst a growing number of tools exist across agencies, the interest / appetite to apply external tools with the Movement (and more broadly across the sector) is limited.

**Limited use of secondary data:** Agencies value collecting primary data. However, context analysis and needs assessment exercises are often undertaken without effectively utilising existing / secondary data, resulting in a risk of community fatigue, and unnecessary time delays and resource wastage.

**Using findings to inform prioritisation:** The findings from assessment and profiling activities are not always translated into programmes. Regardless of the identified needs, agencies are known to revert back to established / known ways of working and response options.

## PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Create guidance / 'tool navigator' to filter the multitude of tools:** Informed by the city context, NS time and resources available, propose a pilot / trial & error system in 3 – 4 cities to support GRC / NS define a narrow suite of tool options (e.g. from +40 to approx. 3). Following the below process:

- Define 'what do we need to know'
- Identify performance standards & success factors for strong context analysis exercises (e.g. tested, used by multiple agencies)
- Identify what are stakeholders involved in this process (generally and per city)

**Be more open to using external tools:** Support IFRC and NS management / leadership to be open to apply or adapt strong (externally developed) tools within the Movement.

**Pilot a series of city primers / profiles:** Building off good practice from humanitarian & development partners, identify a number of priority cities (3 – 4) to create a city primer / profile to inform GRC / NS programming – including a mapping of the formal and informal structures operating within a city.

**Better training to apply tools:** The application of existing tools to a high quality remains a priority. Further training & mentoring (for example, to complement week-long training intensives) is needed. This could include knowledge / information exchange platforms, mentoring, exchange visits etc.

## SELECTION OF AVAILABLE TOOLS AND GUIDANCE

### External tools including:

- Stronger Cities Initiative' **urban multi-sector vulnerability assessment tool (UMVAT)**
- Save the Children's **urban situation analysis guide**
- **UNHabitat's city & neighbourhood profiling, JIPS' guidance for profiling urban displacement situations** are other examples from a growing list.

### RCRC tools, including:

- The **EVCA** of the IFRC
- GDPC's **city-wide risk assessment**
- The **PASSA and PHAST processes**

## 6. STRATEGIC PROGRAMMING ACROSS THE CONTINUUM

### NEEDS, GAPS AND BARRIERS

**Immediate response capacity:** The first 72 hours following a sudden-onset is a strength of the Movement (ambulance services, search & rescue, first aid.). Following this initial window, the direction of programming was on occasion viewed to be less strategic / impactful, as a result of:

- A limited ability to clearly identify needs and vulnerable groups
- Falling back into standard ways of working rather than being informed by assessment findings.

**Application of tools to inform urban response programming:**

There are examples where the VCA and other assessment processes do not necessarily inform programming. There is a reported tendency for NS to fall back on fundamentals of established response services rather than to focus on current needs / priorities.

**Strengthening capacity in peacetime:** NS have the ability to scale response in a sudden-onset crisis. However, more can be done in everyday urban contexts, including: better understanding the contexts, community engagement, risk reduction, preparedness, supporting vulnerable groups.

**Not addressing the everyday crises:** Informal settlements in urban areas are characterised by high vulnerability and poor living conditions, compounded by a risk of eviction as a result of limited tenure security. These locations are often located in high risk areas and should be prioritised for support both during and outside of traditional crisis contexts.

**Gaps in handover of coordination structures:** Large sudden-onset crisis are often coordinated through the cluster / sector system, often led internationally. As funding subsides or the immediate needs are met, the coordination architecture ceases / downscales, often leaving a gap in coordination architecture and the ability for agencies to programme collaboratively.

**Securing ongoing funding:** Agencies (both Movement and NGOs) continue to struggle to identify longer term funding opportunities which remain flexible to be directed towards risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery programming. Agencies therefore often continue following a short term project-based approach.

### PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Strengthen NS capacity in peacetime:** A clear need to focus on strengthening risk reduction, preparedness and response capacity of NS in peace time. These efforts need further investment by PNS and donors.

**Contribute to durable solutions:** DRR, preparedness, response and recovery programmes need to sit within a coherent strategy, not just within the NS, but aligned to the priorities / plans of the respective local authorities.

**Prioritise the everyday crises:** Many vulnerable urban locations / informal settlements could be further supported in everyday contexts with support to coalition building, needs prioritisation, DRR and preparedness programming.

**Move beyond the project-based approach:** Prioritise working in specific locations (informal settlements, vulnerable locations), and develop longer-term programming, including direct NS / RCRC implementation, and in partnership with other actors (NGOs, local authorities

**Provision of technical support:** Identify & provide targeted technical support on risk reduction preparedness and response with local authorities and local actors / NGOs.

**Synthesise / create a platform for guidance & tools for urban specific thematic programming:** Creating a dedicated, curated platform is recommended to help navigate the large number of tools, manuals and guidance been developed for thematic interventions (e.g. shelter, WASH, health, livelihoods).

**Prioritise programmes supporting social inclusion in cities:** Identify 3 – 4 locations and support multi-year programmes through creating / supporting a 'one stop shop' / community centre initiative, accessible to all population groups and providing a service in both peace time and contexts of crisis to its surrounding communities.

**Bringing the urban lens into all sectors (cross-cutting):** Creating ownership in all sectors by ensuring 'urban' is not situated solely in the shelter & settlements teams, but across all sectors etc.

# 7. CAPACITY, TRAINING AND STANDARDS

## NEEDS, GAPS AND BARRIERS

**Urban specific response trainings:** Despite an increasing number of training courses and service providers supporting remote and accessible learning, the number of training courses focused on response in urban contexts remains limited.

**Movement capacity to navigate urban dynamics:** Despite many NS operating in close proximity in towns and cities, (often at branch / chapter levels), NS staff & volunteers are often not sufficiently equipped with the respective skills, knowledge and confidence to effectively operate in complex / fluid urban contexts.

**Importance of translation:** Despite an increasing number of tools, guidance and trainings, these often remain solely in English, therefore limiting their application globally.

### Limited capacity strengthening programmes:

- Recent examples from large sudden-onset crises often resulted in international staff leading coordination and technical roles, with a limited focus / priority on dedicated NS staff capacity (i.e. no / limited shadowing / on the job mentoring which is required during transition to recovery and stabilisation).
- Trainings for the application of tools are often delivered with staff within a relatively short training / briefing window, and with limited ongoing support or mentoring. This can and has resulted in a limited quality of tool application.

## PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Identify skills needed for urban contexts and support increased access to information and capacity strengthening initiatives for RCRC staff:** Identify and strengthen the focus on skills and capacities needed for urban contexts (both thematic, and general, such as coordination, diagnosis, profiling, information management) and remove / lower barriers for RCRC staff to access available information.

### Create a comprehensive suite of training / capacity strengthening vehicles:

- Staff secondments
- Library of tools and guidance (related also to sectoral programming)
- Online learning / webinars / community of practice
- Exchange visits
- Mentoring & on-the-job learning programmes

### Provide training & support to RCRC volunteers and partners:

Provide dedicated support or training to key partners – including to local authorities, local civil society.

**Rethink volunteering in cities and towns:** Highly skilled volunteers can be engaged more explicitly in cities. Once required skills have been clearly identified, a clear recommendation for NS to proactively target volunteers in cities with specific skill sets (mapping, data analysis, urban planning etc.).

### Develop guidance focused on:

- **Urban violence / conflict:** Consider developing guidance / checklist / tools to support NS to operate more effectively in contexts of urban conflict – what priority areas of focus (mediation, negotiation etc.)
- **Understanding local authorities:** Recommend the creation of guidance to understand – generally - the structure and ways of working of local authorities (acknowledging significant diversity across local authorities).

## EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE

**Skills required for urban contexts:** Red has recently developed an Urban Competency Framework (UCF), outlining 12 competencies and accompanying behaviours that underpin effective humanitarian action in urban crises, including (but not limited to):

- Working with diverse stakeholders
- Operating within complex governance structures
- Adopting a holistic people-centred approach
- Promoting social cohesion
- Achieving results in a complex, dynamic environment

# 8. KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

## NEEDS, GAPS AND BARRIERS

**Limited incentives to share information:** Compounded by a competitive funding environment, NS and NGOs are not encouraged to share information externally, especially when sharing limitations or failures.

**Whose responsibility is information management?** Without dedicated personnel focused on knowledge management (need only be part of a role), effective capturing and sharing of lessons has been difficult to achieve.

**Where to look for what information?** Project lessons and recommendations are usually kept in programme managers' files / records, rather than used to share and inform future programming. With no dedicated (trusted / safe) platform, NS / NGOs struggle to know how to best access and utilise this information.

## PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Identify and access existing information:** Prioritise systematised secondary data reviews in targeted locations and remove barriers to accessing this information unique to each city context.

**Support urban knowledge hubs / platforms:** Consider directing efforts towards regional knowledge hubs to promote knowledge sharing across regions (such as the asia-pacific regional urban community resilience hub). Support can be directed towards:

- Strengthening the link between local / domestic and international response
- Sharing lessons through case studies / webinars
- Peer to peer exchange (swaps / secondments) across the region
- Supporting face-to-face meetings, conferences & exchanges in priority regions.

**Create a knowledge management system:** Establish / create an accessible knowledge management systems for NS / GRC staff & delegates to document lessons periodically into a database / platform to inform programme design.

**Access broader networks to access knowledge / training:** Proactively access / utilize tools, knowledge, training, capacity strengthening resources external to the Movement and in partnership with other initiatives (e.g.: Stronger Cities Initiative, Making Cities Resilient, Global Alliance for Urban Crises etc.)

## EXISTING GOOD PRACTICE

**ALNAPs urban response portal and community of practice:**

The response portal library contains approximately 3000 documents, with the complementing CoP also with several thousand subscribers provides a strong peer to peer and document resource.

**The Red Cross Red Crescent urban collaboration platform (UCP):** Managed by the IFRC and American Red Cross, the UCP aims to support NS to be better informed, better connected and better engaged in understanding and working in urban contexts.

**Stronger Cities Initiative:** The recently concluded Stronger Cities Initiative brought together a number of International NGOs and academia to develop numerous tools (context analysis, profiling, assessment, response analysis, area-based approaches etc.).

**Asia-pacific regional urban community resilience hub (UCRH):** A RCRC initiative in its inception stage, the UCRH will provide an important platform to share and leverage knowledge related to urban programming (predominantly resilience) across the asia-pacific region.



# OVERALL RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

## GLOBAL

**Support urban knowledge hubs / platforms:** Create or support global / regional knowledge hubs to promote knowledge sharing (such as the asia-pacific regional urban community resilience hub). Support can be directed towards:

- Strengthening the link between local / domestic and international response
- Serve as a repository for GRC and partners for tools and guidance
- Sharing lessons through case studies / webinars
- Resourcing peer to peer exchange (swaps / secondments) across the region
- Supporting face-to-face meetings, conferences & exchanges in priority regions.

**Create guidance / tool navigator for context analysis:**

Develop a context analysis guidance process to support GRC / NS define a narrow suite of tool options (e.g. from +40 to approx. 3), which can be implemented in priority cities, following the below process:

- Define 'what do we need to know'
- Identify performance standards & success factors for strong context analysis exercises (e.g. tested, used by multiple agencies)
- Identify what are stakeholders involved in this process

**Identify skills needed for urban contexts and support increased access to information and capacity strengthening initiatives for RCRC staff:** Identify and strengthen the focus on skills and capacities needed for urban contexts (both thematic, and general, such as coordination, diagnosis, profiling, information management) and remove / lower barriers for RCRC staff to access available information.

**Create a comprehensive suite of training / capacity strengthening vehicles:**

- Staff secondments
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- Exchange visits
- Mentoring & on-the-job learning programmes

**Develop guidance focused on:**

- **Urban violence / conflict:** Consider developing guidance / checklist / tools to support NS to operate more effectively in contexts of urban conflict – what priority areas of focus (mediation, negotiation etc.)

**Understanding local authorities:** Recommend the creation of guidance to understand – generally, the structure and ways of working of local authorities.

## PRIORITY TOWNS AND CITIES

**Identify a priority set of cities (e.g. 3 – 4) with current or planning GRC programming, and:**

**Pilot a series of city primers / profiles:** Building off good practice from humanitarian & development partners and systematised secondary data reviews, identify priority cities to create a city primer / profile to inform GRC / NS programming – including a mapping of the formal and informal structures operating within a city.

**Support / form city alliances:** Identify priority / vulnerable cities and support the creation and maintenance of alliances / coalition to reduce vulnerability and prepare for response. Use the alliance / coalition as a core stakeholder group in comprehensive context analysis exercises.

**Create a 'suite of programme options' with local authorities in priority cities:** A number of options for support can be prioritised or up-scaled in partnership with local authorities, including:

- Seconding staff / funding key staff positions within the partner local authority.
- Dedicated training and mentoring follow-up / exchange.
- Promote / support the creation of a city coalition, led by the local authority and supported by the NS.
- Provision of support services (e.g. information management) for local authorities.
- Joint activity implementation (e.g. context analysis; VCA).

**Prioritise programmes supporting social inclusion:** Identify locations and support multi-year programmes through creating / supporting a 'one stop shop' / community centre initiative, accessible to all population groups and providing a service in both peace time and contexts of crisis.

## ANNEX 1: URBAN MAPPING SYNTHESIS REPORT

See separately attached document – [available here](#)

## ANNEX 2: URBAN MAPPING DATABASE

See separately attached document – [available here](#)

## ANNEX 3: URBAN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE 'PRIMERS'

See separately attached documents – [available here](#)