

Global Alliance for Urban Crises

Adapting Global Crisis Response to an Urban World

Urban Crises Charter

Policy Commitment

*This Charter outlines guiding principles for members of the **Global Alliance for Urban Crises** (the Alliance). They are to be used as a basis for both policy and operational level engagement, in order to be more effective in preventing, preparing for, and responding to humanitarian crises in urban environments.*

Adapting to an urbanizing world

By 2050, 70% of the world's population will live in urban areas. Accelerating urbanization is defining our global reality and will shape our future. Urbanization intersects with climate change, natural disasters, conflict and displacement. It is a critical lens through which to review national and international efforts to prevent, prepare for and respond to crises, conflict and disasters.

- Over 80% of the world's GDP is produced in cities. As cities also constitute a central part of the global risk landscape, their vulnerability presents significant risk to national and global economic output.
- The urban population in lower-income and fragile countries has increased by 326 percent in the last 40 years. Urban poverty is concentrated in fast-growing, at-risk, and mostly unplanned informal settlements.
- The displaced are increasingly seeking refuge in urban areas, with approximately half of the world's 38 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and more than half of its 13 million refugees living in towns and cities. Displacement is also becoming increasingly protracted and is now averaging 25 years.

The increasing frequency of natural and man-made emergencies in urban areas requires new efforts to address risk, prepare for unavoidable events and mitigate the impact of crises. The provision of immediate humanitarian relief should be aligned with efforts to strengthen urban resilience and to build on the opportunities for self-recovery present in towns and cities.

Urban areas and their exposure to a range of natural and man-made hazards are central to a number of recent international processes and events, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Urban crises are of critical relevance to the design and implementation of the New Urban Agenda (outcome of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development - Habitat III).

Overarching Principles

We, the signatories, commit ourselves to work together to enable urban communities, in particular those most at risk, to prepare for, cope with and recover more quickly from the effects of humanitarian crises, including forced displacement, natural disasters and/or armed conflicts.

We recognize that urban settings have specific characteristics which require effective, context-specific approaches to addressing vulnerability and risk reduction, preparedness and crisis response.

Our commitment is underscored by the urban-specific tenets set out below, embedded in human rights-based approaches and based on principles of gender equality, inclusive participation, accountability to affected populations, non-discrimination and the right to remedy of violations. We commit to ensure that gender

disparities are addressed to ensure equality of access and outcomes in crisis preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery activities.

We furthermore commit to:

1. Prioritize local municipal leadership in determining response to urban crisis that is aligned with development trajectories and promotes the active participation of affected people – with special attention to the participation of women – and other key urban stakeholders. We recognize that the complexity of cities requires:
 - Building on the local knowledge of local government and urban communities;
 - A bottom-up approach mobilizing all local resources and capacities through broad partnerships, including the private sector, local professionals and community-based organizations;
 - Strengthening existing urban governance mechanisms, transparency and accountability, respect for the rule of law and for the rights of citizens, and protection of the most vulnerable.
2. Adopt urban resilience as a common framework to align human rights, humanitarian and development goals, which requires:
 - Building interventions on existing urban service delivery systems, people’s own recovery mechanisms, and the strength of the urban economy, acknowledging the key role of women;
 - Aligning immediate life-saving and protection priorities, reducing the number of individuals, families and neighborhoods in need of humanitarian assistance as soon as possible, addressing climate adaptation, and putting cities and towns on a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient post-crisis urban development track;
 - Innovative strategic and flexible approaches tailored to the city specific context;
3. Manage urban displacement as a combined human rights, development and humanitarian concern, which requires:
 - Ensuring that towns and cities impacted by displacement resulting from violence, armed conflict and disasters are welcoming, inclusive and safe environments;
 - Balancing the needs of refugees and IDPs with the needs of the host community, and in particular those with chronic vulnerabilities and protection needs.
4. Build partnerships between city, national, regional and global levels, across disciplines and professions and ensure involvement of local government and professional associations in order to:
 - Mobilize social, economic, institutional and financial resources to better address immediate humanitarian needs during urban crisis and to sustain longer-term resilience
 - Prioritize reinforcement of local, regional and national capacities, in particular urban and local government expertise, to support urban crisis preparedness and response in cities at risk;
 - Facilitate knowledge development, exchange of experiences and learning.

We commit to advocating for these principles and transforming them into concrete action. In particular, we will advocate for their inclusion in the humanitarian reform agenda, as well as in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Signatories