



# Protection and Urban Resilience: Research Design

*Preparedness and Resilience to address Urban Vulnerability (PRUV)  
Work Package 2*

*This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme  
under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 691060*



## **A Protection Approach to Urban Resilience: Research Design**

### **PRUV Work Package 2**

*Protection is considered a core component of humanitarian action alongside material assistance (O’Callaghan & Pantuliano 2007). This document provides a justification for investigating protection within the Preparedness and Resilience to Address Urban Vulnerabilities (PRUV) project. It defines the question and objectives of this work package and outlines the study framework to guide data collection, analysis and interpretation.*

#### **Background and Rationale**

Communities living in informal urban settlements suffer human rights violations and the consequences of urban violence. In these settings there are particular vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons, women and girls, children and youth. This can be described as a generalised lack of protection.

Informal settlements are defined by UN-HABITAT as “residential areas where 1) inhabitants have no security of tenure vis-à-vis the land or dwellings they inhabit, with modalities ranging from squatting to informal rental housing, 2) the neighborhoods usually lack, or are cut off from, basic services and city infrastructure and 3) the housing may not comply with current planning and building regulations, and is often situated in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas” (UN-HABITAT III, 2015).

People living in slums also have to face other challenges related to health, education, labour and livelihood, harmful gender dynamics, mobility and connectivity, public space, climate change and natural hazards (UN-HABITAT III, 2016). Additionally, due to the lack of presence and goodwill of the authorities, particular slum areas are under the violent control of non-state armed actors.

It has been noted that the humanitarian sector has not adequately come to terms with the particular dynamics at play in urban settings, historically focusing as it did on refugee camps and the hosting of refugees in rural areas (Pantuliano 2012). Given the scale of urbanization and its implications for urban violence, it is beyond the capacity of any one actor to address. A comprehensive approach to protection requires a concerted effort on the part of governments and the aid community broadly defined, including humanitarian actors, development professionals and the peace-building community (World Humanitarian Summit secretariat 2015).

#### ***The nexus between protection and resilience approaches***

Due to the lack of protection in informal urban settlements, this work package analyses and proposes, from a humanitarian action perspective, a holistic and participatory protection approach to enhance resilience.

Protection is a fundamental component of humanitarian action (O’Callaghan and Pantuliano 2007), an idea that was reinforced in the World Humanitarian Summit (in 2016) where the importance of placing protection at the heart of humanitarian action was highlighted. In addition to material assistance, it is recognised that people require a guarantee of their

physical and psychological well-being and dignity. While several operational definitions of protection can be outlined,<sup>1</sup> protection activities can be understood as the identification of vulnerabilities and threats, the causes, drivers and consequences, as well as violations of human rights and humanitarian law, in order to establish appropriate responses. In this way, protection activities translate fundamental rules contained in international humanitarian law, international human rights law and refugee law into practical interventions to safeguard the physical and psychological integrity of individuals.

As well as protection, the concept of resilience has acquired increased currency within both the humanitarian and development aid sectors. Firstly, because resilience has been additionally treated as the framework in which both fields converge. Secondly, because resilience has been defined as “the ‘answer’ to the challenges posed by protracted and recurrent crises” (Churruca 2016), such as protracted crises arising in informal urban settlements. A significant aspect of resilience is the ability to maintain continuity through all shocks and stresses, while positively adapting and transforming toward sustainability (UN-HABITAT, 2017). Consequently, resilience, as with protection, requires the addressing of structural issues, including the combating of poverty, vulnerabilities and a political economy that fosters grossly unequal development (Churruca 2016).

The framework used by Work Package 2 will combine both protection and resilience approaches. Traditionally, protection has been understood as a top-down approach to protect people from the risks identified in informal settlements, and resilience understood as a bottom up approach depending on individual and community capacities (HSU, 2009).

In developing the following questions are considered (Gómez and Des Gasper, 2014):

- Whose protection? This research work package focuses on the protection of communities living in informal urban settlements, and in particular of particular vulnerable groups: internally displaced persons, women and girls, children and youth.
- Protection of what? Work Package 2 considers some of the relevant rights contained in the Humanitarian Charter: dignity, humanitarian assistance and protection and security, as well as the key elements of human security: the survival, livelihood and dignity of individuals.
- Protection from what? Here the work package will identify the risks confronted by communities in informal urban settlements.

Work Package 2 understands that protection relates to much more than security from violence and crime, and also implies the guarantee of human rights.<sup>2</sup> The framework used by this Work

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<sup>1</sup> The Sphere Project (2011) provides a typology of protection activities as: *preventive* (preventing physical threats or abuses from occurring or reducing exposure to such threats and abuses); *responsive* (stopping ongoing violations by responding to incidents of violence); *remedial* (providing remedies to ongoing or past abuses through reparation and rehabilitation, offering healthcare, psychosocial support, legal assistance or other services and support). In addition, *advocacy* – building an environment conducive to respect for the rights of women, men, girls and boys of all ages in accordance with international law – is a common element linking these activities.

<sup>2</sup> The definition adopted by the Permanent-Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC), composed of UN agencies and major international humanitarian NGOs as well as by the Working Group Protection Cluster, refers to protection as being the “... all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. HR law, IHL, refugee law).”

Package aims to enhance the relationship and synergies between providing protection and enhancing resilience from a humanitarian action perspective. The objective of this combination is that humanitarian protection supported by resilience should aim at providing the minimum threshold of the rights to protection and assistance reflected in the provisions of international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law (Humanitarian Charter): the right to life with dignity, the right to receive humanitarian assistance and the right to protection and security (The Sphere Project, 2017). In addition, an understanding of humanitarian action as providing both protection and assistance facilitates this approach. Equally, by adopting a protection approach to enhancing resilience, the artificial gap created between humanitarian aid and development is bridged conceptually.

The determination of protection needs throughout a risk assessment evaluation also justifies the importance of a holistic approach, which combines protection and resilience. By applying this, protection needs can be defined as risks to the protection of affected people. Additionally, this can show the main protection capacities that have to be built (one aspect of resilience) in order to help meet the protection needs of a given group of people, together with a range of other protection approaches. As detailed in the figure below, risks are proportional to the existing threats against a given group and to the vulnerabilities of that same group (and inversely proportional to the protection capacities of that group).

$$\text{Risk} = \frac{\text{Threat + vulnerability}}{\text{Capacity}}$$

Ultimately, the scope of the protection agenda has expanded in recent years such that both protection and resilience converge in a common core objective: reducing vulnerabilities and risks and enhancing capacities of the population in order to improve, for instance, their protection. For this reason, Work Package 2 understands that if humanitarian action contributes to building protection capacities (understood as one aspect of resilience), this will improve the way that people cope with their protection needs (participatory protection). In summary, building protection capacities is a critical component of resilience.

### ***Gender and age dynamics***

Academic research and humanitarian practice show that gender and age differentiation are particularly acute in situations of crisis (Benelli, 2012). Girls and boys, women and men, are exposed to, and experience differently, different types of risks and vulnerabilities in crises. There is a need to further collect, analyze and use sex- and age-disaggregated data to inform humanitarian response, in order to address the real and urgent needs of girls and boys, men and women in urban settings (Benelli, 2012).

For example, the Colombian conflict has had a disproportionate impact on women and children, making 48% of the displaced population female and 44% minors (Bernal, 2012). Not only are households headed by women significantly more likely to be threatened by violence in the conflict than those headed by men but households are likely to be headed by women as a consequence of the violence, when male households get assassinated or leave their families after displacement (Engel and Ibañez, 2007). What is more, financial difficulties and the change in traditional gender roles can often cause domestic discord (Carillo, 2009). All of these specific gendered issues can lead to further vulnerability amongst women and girls in disadvantaged

urban areas, particularly female-headed households. There is a need to further explore such gender dynamics and norms that drive gender-based violence, and the specific vulnerabilities and fundamental rights violations of women and girls in informal urban settings.

Children and youth are one of the most vulnerable social groups during humanitarian crises and have specific and unique protection needs at different stages of their lives. Current protection mechanisms such as Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE) attempt to increase the capacities of these groups for resilience (Child Protection Working Group, 2012; Child Protection Working Group, 2010; International Save the Children Alliance, 2007; UNICEF, 2007). However, there is a need to complement existing literature concerning child and youth protection mechanisms to determine more concretely how they are established in urban settings, under what conditions they ought to be established, and their effectiveness in protecting children and youth and fostering resilience to specific vulnerabilities and risks (Lansdown, 2010). There needs to be a deeper investigation into the current gaps in child and youth protection mechanisms – including the response to the intersection of gender and age dynamics with other vulnerabilities, such as displacement and disability – to identify barriers, best practices and lessons learnt from a child and youth protection approach to enhancing resilience of crisis-affected communities and vulnerable groups in urban settings.

### **Work Package Objectives**

In sum, the nexus between protection and resilience interventions has been under-theorised, especially in the areas outlined above, despite the clear benefits to be obtained from linking the two discourses. Therefore, the research objective of Work Package 2 is as follows:

Overall objective: To advance the state of the art by addressing, from a humanitarian perspective, the theoretical and practical protection gaps of communities and particular vulnerable groups in informal urban settlements in order to acquire new evidence-based knowledge to enhance resilience.

Specific objective 1: To analyse the protection needs of communities and particular vulnerable groups generated in informal urban settlements.

Specific objective 2: To analyse the evolution of protection and resilience approaches in Humanitarian Action, as well as the humanitarian response to urban crises, particularly in informal urban settlements.

Specific objective 3: To propose a holistic and participatory protection approach to enhance resilience of communities, and particular vulnerable groups in informal urban settlements.

### **International Context and Frameworks**

Work Package 2 is framed in an international context that is increasingly cognisant of the importance of addressing natural and man-made hazards arising in urban areas. In particular, there is increasing attention paid to those communities and particular vulnerable groups living in the most fragile, vulnerable and violent urban contexts, informal settlements. Approximately one billion people globally live in such settlements (Slum Almanac 2015-2016).

These issues have been addressed by international processes and events, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (mainly

Goal 11) and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. In particular, urban crises acquired a critical importance within the design and implementation of the New Urban Agenda (an outcome of the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development – Habitat III in 2016) and also in the World Humanitarian Summit (2016) at which the Global Alliance for Urban Crises emerged.

The New Urban Agenda contributes to the implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, mainly Goal 11 of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Quito Declaration, 2016). Of particular relevance is point 13 of the New Urban Agenda<sup>3</sup>. Related to this, Work Package 2 aims to analyse the contribution to achieving these global goals from a humanitarian action approach providing protection and building resilience. In this sense, achieving the full realization of the rights violated in informal urban settlements detailed in this humanitarian protection-resilience approach corresponds to some points within the New Urban Agenda.

Furthermore, Work Package 2 highlights the connection with different transformative commitments for sustainable urban development of the New Urban Agenda including social inclusion and ending poverty. The New Urban Agenda recognizes “the rising number of slum and informal-settlement dwellers, are affecting both developed and developing countries” (New Urban Agenda, 2016). To face that the New Urban Agenda proposes principles such as ‘Leave no one behind’, which fixes this work package’s protection and resilience perspective, in the sense of a comprehensive end of poverty in all its forms and dimensions through the guarantee of equal rights.

Moreover, in the Synthesis of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit, safety – protection - and resilience are two of the core principles together with dignity, partnerships and finance. The principle of safety concerns the placing of protection at the centre of humanitarian action in order to keep people safe from harm: “Protecting people’s safety and dignity is a primary aim of humanitarian action” (Synthesis of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit, 2016). For its part, resilience, as a principle, facilitates collective action by humanitarian, development and other partners through the strengthening of people’s capacities. Resilience means preparedness, managing and mitigating risk, reducing vulnerability, finding durable solutions for protracted displacement, and adapting to new threats. In this way it provides a broad wide perspective that allows for synergies with humanitarian protection.

The consultations for the WHS also arose out the Global Alliance for Urban Crises, which was built on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s (IASC) ‘Strategy for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas’. Some of the recommendations, principles and thematic objectives of this Alliance support the importance of a collaborative approach between protection and resilience in humanitarian interventions.

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<sup>3</sup> 13. We envisage cities and human settlements that: (a) Fulfil their social function, including the social and ecological function of land, with a view to progressively achieving the full realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, without discrimination, universal access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation, as well as equal access for all to public goods and quality services in areas such as food security and nutrition, health, education, infrastructure, mobility and transportation, energy, air quality and livelihoods.

Two of the four thematic objectives of the Alliance are (1) the protection of vulnerable people, shelter, basic services and infrastructures; and (2) to ensure that initiatives focused on building urban resilience, understood as a commitment and as a “common framework to align human rights, humanitarian and development goals”. The Alliance recommendations connect resilience and protection because in order to build resilience it is necessary to align immediate life-saving and protection priorities (Urban Crises Recommendations, Global Alliance for Urban Crises, 2016).

In addition, one of the issues addressed by this work package is another core element discussed in the WHS: the importance of strengthening the protection of refugees and IDPs, under the commitment to address forced displacement (‘Leave no one behind’). This is significant because “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 19.5 million refugees living in towns and cities. Displacement is also becoming increasingly protracted and is now averaging 25 years” (Urban Crises Charter, Global Alliance for Urban Crises, 2016). Concretely, WP2 is focused on communities and refugees and IDPs, the latter already compose a particular vulnerable group, which are liable to further forcible displacement in urban contexts. In urban contexts, mainly in informal urban settlements, the trigger of this displacement is urban violence, categorized as ‘other situations of violence’ (ICRC, 2013) or ‘unconventional violence’ (ACAPS, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

Communities and vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons, women and girls, children and youth living in informal urban settlements tend to experience a generalised lack of protection. Informal urban settlements are contexts of urban fragility where expressions of urban violence take place. For this reason, the impacts of crisis in these settings have the greatest impact on those with less resources and capacities for preparation, response and recovery from these risks. Humanitarian action must understand the relevant context and stakeholders in order to implement interventions guided by a framework that provides a holistic and participatory protection approach in order to enhance resilience.

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*This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 691060*

