

# #32

## Migration and Displacement Amidst Crises:

From humanitarian to sustainable responses

Peer Learning  
Online, April 2022



GFMD  
Mayors  
Mechanism

Learning  
UCLG

**Organized by**

Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Mayors Mechanism  
 International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
 Mayors Migration Council (MMC)  
 United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

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 Global Task Force on Migration  
 Mediterranean City 2 City Migration (MC2CM)  
 UCLG's Working Group for Territorial Prevention and Management of Crisis

**Edit**

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# Foreword

**Last year in New York mayors and local government leaders marked a milestone at the first International Migration Review Forum. Supported by UCLG as part of the Mayors Mechanism partnership and Global Task Force, they delivered the largest number of pledges to advance the Global Compact for Migration. They demonstrated strong commitment to the human mobility agenda by presenting 70 people-centred local actions for migrants and displaced persons in their territories. Conjointly, at the 7th global Summit of Local and Regional Governments in Daejeon in 2022, the constituency backed these strides with a strong political vision, placing dignity and solidarity at the centre, reflected in the Lampedusa Charter for Dignified Human Mobility and Territorial Solidarity.**

Local and Regional leaders around the world are acknowledging that the impact of growing inequalities within and between cities and regions is too large to ignore and that the management of those realities necessitates a renewed type of multilateralism where the interests of people are put first and beyond borders. The overlapping and imminent emergencies place this sphere of government closest to the people at the forefront of responses to address the surging forced evictions, displacement, and dispossession.

Local governments are often at the front line of crisis management and need to implement policies even when they do not have the desirable resources or competences. Local needs and realities need to be faced, solutions need to be sought, even in scenarios which are unprecedented.

Local and regional governments know the importance of addressing the needs of every neighbour regardless of their origin or legal status, in order to guarantee cohesion within the community. They also experience first hand that in distraught times extending solidarity is not only the right thing to do but also a beacon of security for healthy societies.

Strong democratic local institutions allow to waive a web of trust which answers not only the material needs through inclusive service provision but also addresses the need of guaranteeing dignity and hope for a future to those subject of forced displacement.

It is in hard times, when our shared values and principles are put to the utmost test, that we must rise to the task and become instrumental in the construction and consolidation of sustainable peace.

Since its origins, our World Organization has championed the transformative power of city diplomacy to foster solidarity, decentralised cooperation, advance the rights of communities, and involve populations as the only way towards sustainable peace founded on local ownership.

It is time to put people at the centre, addressing the needs of current generations and expanding the rights of the future ones by guaranteeing access to public services and reclaiming the commons with care at the heart of the agenda.

We have arrived at a once in a generation opportunity to review our tools. The most knowledgeable generation capable of constructing beings smarter than oneself, should also be capable of ensuring a sustainable future for People and Planet with strong inclusive government.



**Emilia Saiz**

Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

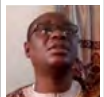
# Introduction

Over 11-13 April 2022, the GFMD Mayors Mechanism supported by UCLG, the Mayors Migration Council, and the IOM convened around 100 participants from local and regional governments from Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia, as well as their associations. The event showcased the realities, initiatives, and challenges of local and regional governments in responding to the impacts of humanitarian emergencies and implementing sustainable and inclusive responses for migrants and displaced persons.

The event included interactive reflection exercises, presentations and peer review of local practices among local and regional governments and their associations, and an information session on the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), which took place in May 2022. The learnings of the event described in this note fed the messages carried by the Mayors Mechanism on behalf of local and regional governments throughout the IMRF, and provide key lessons and inspirations for LRGs addressing human mobility in context of crises as well as on a daily basis.

## Guiding questions for the peer-learning event

- What are the lessons that local and regional governments have learned from the recurrent and protracted displacement crises in the past years? What has improved and what challenges remain?
- How can local policies and actions move from emergency responses to medium and long-term sustainable approaches to migration and displacement?
- How can international and humanitarian actors contribute positively to this process in partnership with local and regional governments in their territories and communities?
- What tools do local and regional governments need to increase their humanitarian response and their resilience to large influxes (in terms of resources, competences, expertise, processes, etc.)?
- In the longer run, how can local and regional governments turn the migration and displacement challenges into opportunities and leverage the advantages that migrant and displaced persons bring to their territories?



# Crises, Displacement and Migration

The population forcibly displaced by conflict, persecution, violence, human rights violations and events crossed 100 millions in 2022, with about 58% internally displaced.<sup>1</sup>

Protracted and short term displacement crises, which we have witnessed on many occasions in numerous parts of the world - like Afghanistan, Sudan, Syria, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Venezuela, Turkey or Poland to name some- continuously remind us of the role local and regional governments play - not only receiving the affected persons arriving to their territories, but also on the global stage. Today, as multiple crises continue to unfold and shape human mobility worldwide, cities have a responsibility to build bridges across and within borders, strategizing collectively for the safety, dignity, and humanity of all citizens.

In many of these cases, local governments have responded by organizing themselves or with other levels of government or partners to provide access to accommodation, transportation, information, education, and soon employment opportunities, but also to mobilize humanitarian aid and political support for affected territories and States. Civil society organizations and citizens have shown great solidarity and often are at the forefront, working hand in hand with municipalities to strengthen local reception efforts.

Local and regional governments across the world have made important strides to organize and support each other in responding to migration and displacement in varied contexts. Initiatives of the municipal movement gathered in UCLG such as the [Gaziantep Declaration](#), the [Marrakesh Mayors Declaration](#), the [UCLG Peace Prize](#) and the [UCLG Africa Charter](#) bear testimonies of cities' activism to establish innovative and fitting practices and balanced narratives on migrant and displaced populations and human mobility all around the world.

<sup>1</sup> [UNHCR Data Finder](#)



## The Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees

In 2018, 152 national governments endorsed the [UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration \(GCM\)](#) and the [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#). The Compacts are non-binding agreements covering all dimensions of international migration and refugee policy in a comprehensive manner. These frameworks are firmly rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and provide a path for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Both these compacts support the SDGs' targets - particularly the target 10.7, which "facilitates orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people". Together, these agendas are committed to ensure migrants and refugees are not left behind, but also to ensure that migrants and refugees' contributions to building safer, more equal and more prosperous societies are unlocked and expanded.

**The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)** counts 23 objectives that seek to advance all aspects of international migration – from labor migration to irregular movements, access to services and rights, and discrimination.

The GCM recognizes local governments as key actors to achieve its objectives. Some that are particularly relevant include:

- #7 Reducing vulnerabilities and safeguarding human rights
- #8 Saving lives of people on the move
- #15 Providing safe access to basic services, regardless of migration status
- #16 Facilitating inclusion, and
- #17 Preventing all forms of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination



Figure 2: Objectives of the Global Compact for Migration

**The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)** on the other hand provides a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing so that host communities get the support they need and that refugees<sup>2</sup> can lead productive lives.

The GCR defines 4 main objectives on sustainable solutions for refugee situations. These objectives seek to:

- #1 Ease the pressure on host communities,
- #2 Enhance refugee self-reliance,
- #3 Expand third country solutions (resettlement and complementary pathways), and
- #4 Support conditions for return in safety and dignity.

This agenda recognizes that local governments are first responders to large-scale refugee situations, and are among the actors that experience the most significant impact over the medium term. As such, they are well-positioned to identify and respond to the needs of refugees and host communities, encourage integration and self-reliance, and promote access to livelihood opportunities.

<sup>2</sup> The 1951 Refugee Convention defines refugee as: "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."

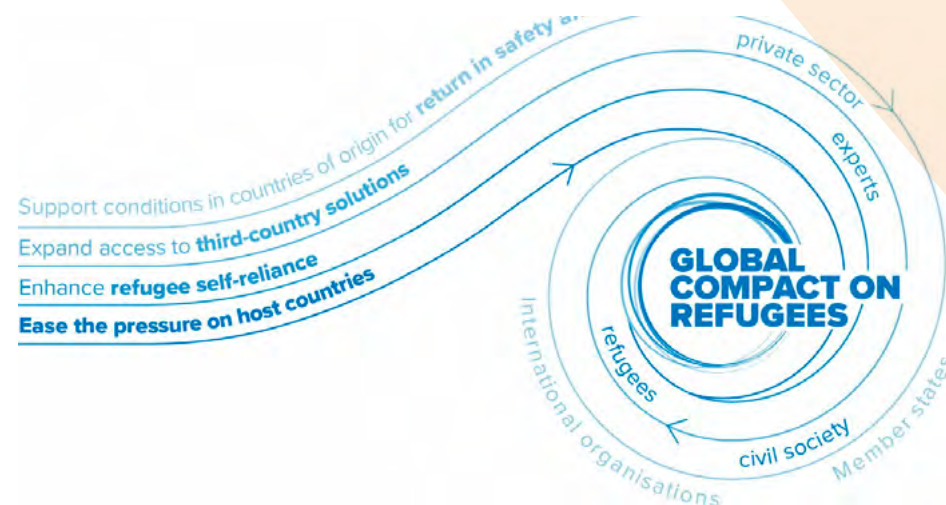


Figure 3: Objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees

Global Fora such as the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) conducted last May 2022 and the upcoming Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in December 2023 gather national governments, civil society organizations, and international stakeholders to periodically review the progress made so far to implement the objectives of these Migration and Refugee Compacts. These fora, as well as the Global Forum on Migration and Development provide LRG actors an avenue to showcase their local efforts, as committed in the Marrakech Mayors' Declaration, that contribute to these Global agendas. To effectively enable LRGs to localize the GCM-GCR compacts in unison with the 2030 Agenda in their territories, the Mayors Mechanisms [Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees](#) draws 8 thematic priorities.

### **The UN Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement**

While internal displacement falls outside of the scope of the global compacts, its impacts on displaced and host communities are increasingly acknowledged. The [Action Agenda](#) recognizes that displacement can take many years and that the places that receive large influxes of people are often not well equipped or capable to contribute to their welfare and hence to the implementation of the SDG agenda. This agenda explicitly recognizes the leadership role that local authorities need to play in finding durable and equitable solutions.

### **Local & Regional Governments' voices at the Global stage on Migration and Displacement**

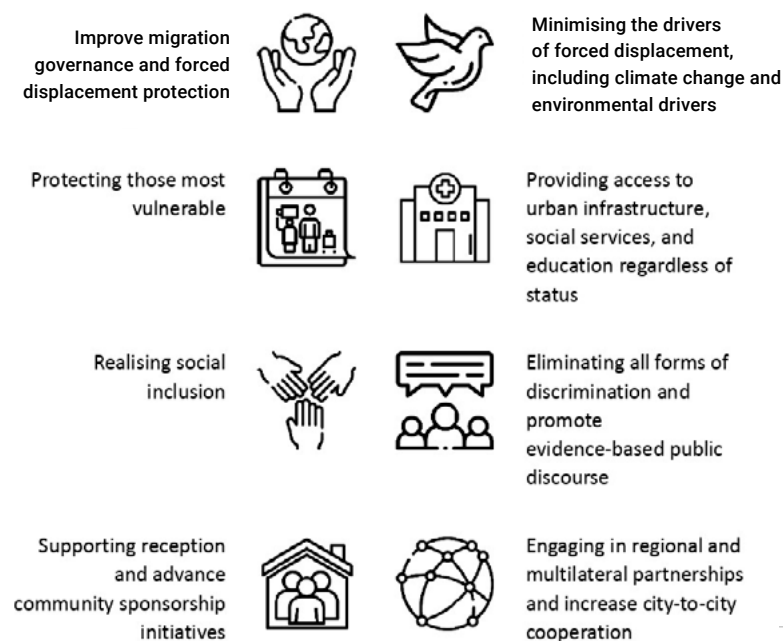
While the Compacts are UN-led frameworks open to member states only, over 150 cities have signed the 2018 Marrakech Declaration calling for the full and formal recognition of the role local governments play in the implementation of the GCM and the GCR and committing to achieving the objectives of both Compacts.

In this context, the Mayors Mechanism aims to carry the voice of local authorities, and seeks to influence the political process, strengthen dialogue with member states and international actors, and showcase local practices tied to the implementation of the Compacts – during the IMRF and beyond.

To this end, the Mayors Mechanism's Call to Local Action online platform and LRG repository serves three critical objectives. First, to expand the number of

local governments publicly endorsing both compacts through the Marrakech Mayors Declaration. Second, to collect and showcase the bold, people-centered local actions that achieve or exceed the compacts' goals. Third, to create a cohort of publicly recognized local and regional leaders engaged in the implementation of both Compacts to inspire the participation of other local authorities.

Launched at the IMRF Forum of May 2022, the Call to Local Action strives to continue its positive momentum of over 70 implemented and ongoing actions by 44 LRGs in 33 countries<sup>3</sup>, benefitting around 100 million people across the globe.



**Figure 4:** 8 Thematic Priorities of the Mayors Mechanism Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report 'Localizing the Global Compacts: Local Action for Migrants and Refugees 2022'

# Identifying needs and entry points

During interactive sessions throughout the 3-day peer-learning, examples and exercises drew the precise challenges, needs and responses of local and regional governments to displacement flows caused by crises at different stages of the process.

The first exercise revolved around the profiles of 3 diverse people on the move which highlighted various aspects of displacement and levels of vulnerability addressing needs of migrants in displacement. Participants were invited to reflect on each character's journey, identifying needs, challenges, and interactions with local elements.

Participants identified three particular types of needs for displaced persons. First, the need for **safety and security**. Displaced persons tend to flee conflicts and hazards for a safe haven. Among them, women, children, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, religious minorities and others can be considered particularly vulnerable and exposed to harassment, violence, and exploitation. Displaced persons therefore require special care and attention from local authorities. Second, displaced persons need **access to basic services** such as accommodation, health care including mental health, information preferably available in their native language, but also education and language training. Third, displaced persons newly arrived in a city need **legal aid and support** with documentation, community support from migrants and grass-roots organizations in order to start rebuilding their lives.

Participants agreed that the reception of displaced persons represents a **challenge for local and regional governments, but also an opportunity**. Local governments need to mobilize a number of municipal services, from local security and protection forces to education facilities, social services, and healthcare provisions. In some cases, setting up specific taskforces for coordination is particularly useful to deploy those instruments efficiently. They need to organize reception efforts in cooperation with civil society organizations and citizens (or at times, against the will of host communities). The participation of civil society, and especially of migrant-led initiatives, is paramount to gain the trust of newly arrived groups. Most importantly, they need to develop sustainable responses for displaced persons to integrate

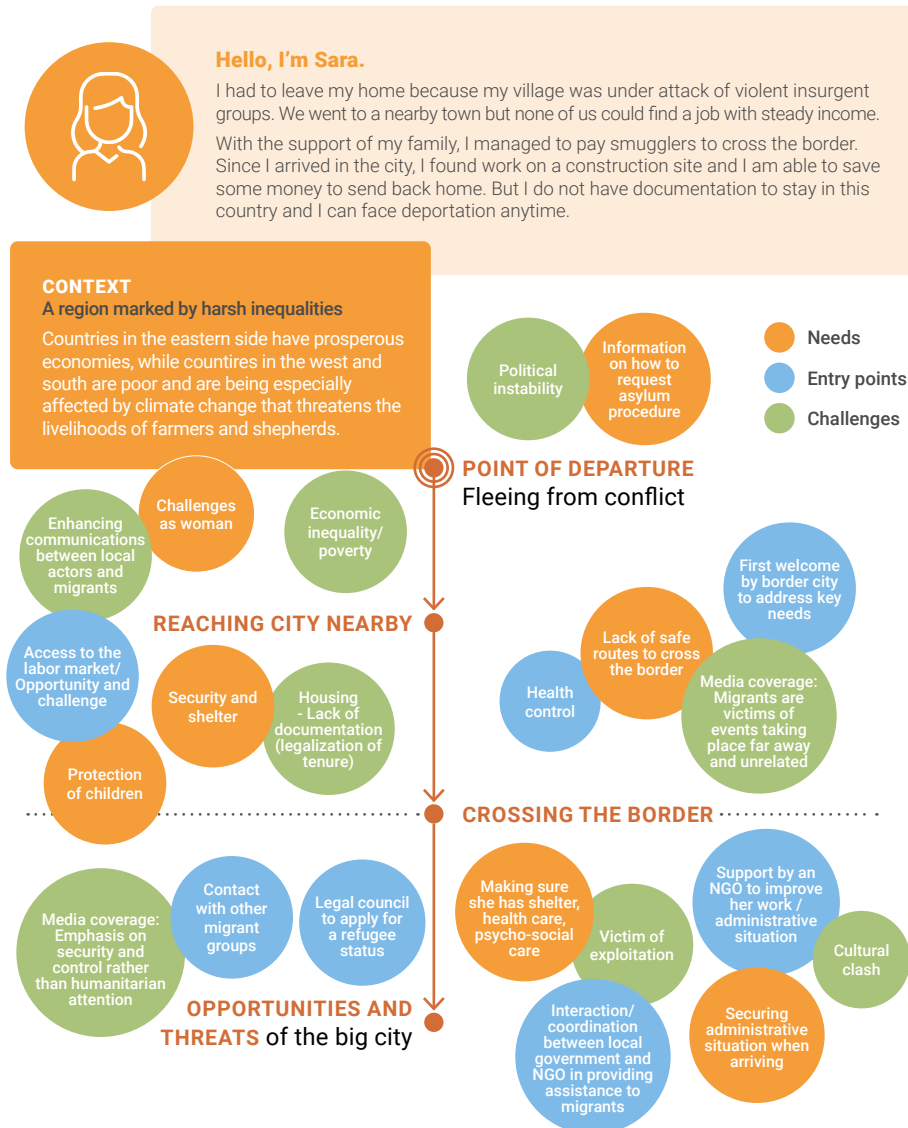


Figure 5: One of the stories developed by participants around one of the migration profiles.

into the local urban fabric in an emergency context and in record time. In the long run, however, migrants and displaced persons represent a **diversity advantage**. Well-established diaspora groups can act as bridges between places, increase a city's attractiveness, and foster innovation.



# Case Studies and Peer Review

During two separate sessions, city representatives gave insights to their initiatives for the reception and inclusion of displaced persons. The cases reveal very diverse challenges and responses, while almost all struggle with limited time for response, often innovative but difficult to sustain, and overcoming the traditional competences of the local administration.

## Buenos Aires, Argentina

“Nosotras Conectadas” (We, Women, Connected)

**Migrants, and especially migrant women, tend to face greater difficulties than host communities to access the job market.** This situation only worsened with the COVID-19 pandemic. To prevent the economic and social isolation of migrant women, the municipality of Buenos Aires developed online vocational courses for women professionals – migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and beneficiaries of international protection. The courses tackled digital skills such as online marketing and programming. Today the municipality considers using this first experience to expand the panel of courses offered.

To learn more about this program “Nosotras Conectadas” (We, Women, Are Connected) and the recently launched second phase of the programme, please **scan or click on the following QR codes:**



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**Figure 6:** Beneficiary migrant, refugee and asylum seeker women receive graduation diplomas on completion of their vocation course. *Source:* Gobierno de Buenos Aires

## Cauayan City, Philippines

Rehabilitation of IDPs and resilience building to better respond to future disaster induced displacement



**Figure 7:** Cauayan City residents sit on their rooftops, waiting to be rescued in the aftermath of Typhoon Ulysses. *Source:* Cauayan DRRMO / ABS-CBN (Nov, 2020)

Cauayan City is a 3rd class component city with a population of 140,218 (2016), involved in agriculture trade and commerce, with almost 60% of the city area as agricultural land. The city is prone to numerous disasters, with 7-10 typhoons hitting it each year and causing major damages due to limited or no pervious surfaces and lack of storm water sewers and other infrastructure. These disasters also provoke internal displacement – the Typhoon Ulysses in November 2020 displaced 5,478 families, caused a loss of P22.5M (almost 42 M USD) in crop production and P50M (almost 95 M USD) in damages to roads, bridges, and houses.

**To mitigate the disaster risks and address internal displacement, the city developed resettlement areas for pre-evacuation and relocation of vulnerable families** (3,626 households in flood-prone areas). Cauayan City also created more green, open spaces and installed rainwater harvesting systems in all 65 villages and is fostering citizen engagement through early warning systems. The city also implemented 2 smart disaster resilience systems – the integrated digital twin system for disaster resilience in collaboration with the Singapore startup Graffiquo and Project ODeSSEE (Optimization of Decision Support System For Effective E-governance), a web-based system to develop automated preemptive evacuation plan for flood disaster.



## Dédougou, Burkina Faso

Welcoming internally displaced children to school



Figure 8: Newly arrived internally displaced children attend school among local pupils

The Sahel region is regularly marked by attacks from non-state armed groups. Official buildings, such as schools, are a preferred target. Regular attacks and armed incursions have led villagers to move to nearby cities for safety. Dédougou, in Western Burkina Faso, **has provided support to children of internally displaced families to allow them to attend and remain in school**. Displaced children are welcomed in local schools and are offered psycho-social support. In the future, new classrooms could be added to the school compound to welcome displaced and local pupils in better conditions.

**For more information scan or click below:**



## Esteban Echeverria, Argentina

Reaching migrant populations in the city

With the arrival of large numbers of immigrants, the municipality of Esteban Echeverria created a dedicated municipal department. Because immigrants and newcomers often lack information about administrative services, municipal staff have decided to go to the beneficiaries. **The city has set up field stands that provide information about documentation on national procedures** (identification, residency and pathways to citizenship), support with contact to relevant embassies and consulates, **and information about integration, social and cultural activities** organized with diaspora groups. Recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the municipality funded laptops for immigrant children to follow online schooling.



Figure 9: Newly arrived internally displaced children attend school among local pupils

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## Fuenlabrada, Spain

### City of Peace Plan



**Figure 10:** A thousand Fuenlabrada residents gather support for the refugees arriving from Ukraine. *Source:* Ayuntamiento Fuenlabrada

A city of 200,000 inhabitants, Fuenlabrada already hosted a little over 800 Ukrainian residents before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Since then, over 100 Ukrainians have arrived to Fuenlabrada. **The municipality organizes reception initiatives, and provides health and psychological assistance, in addition to access to different activities** including for children, language learning groups, as well as a website and leaflet with basic information translated in Ukrainian including information from national ministries. Many of these efforts were supported by the creation of a network of existing Ukrainian residents, which has been very active and instrumental to support with the reception of fellow Ukrainians.

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## Gaziantep, Turkey

### Ensuring multilevel coordination for refugees' rights

Due to its proximity with the Syrian border, Gaziantep in south-east Turkey, welcomes an important number of Syrian population. The city has received around 500,000 Syrian refugees – which grew the city population by 25%. **The municipality chose to place refugees' rights at the core of its action and to see migration and displacement as a reality rather than a problem to solve.** In the process, the municipality established a dedicated department for migration management that acted as a coordination force within municipal departments, and between the city and other stakeholders (civil society, national government, and international organizations).



**Figure 11:** Shared community meal event organized in Gaziantep with refugee and local communities

This initiative forms part of many of the city's Municipal Social Cohesion Model. **For more information scan or click below:**

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## Lampedusa, Italy

Migration as a window to the world



Figure 12: The 'Porta di Lampedusa - Porta d'Europa' monument in Lampedusa

For many years, the island of Lampedusa has been a point of destination for migrants reaching Europe across the Mediterranean, as well as the witness of unnumbered shipwrecks. With this experience, the municipality of Lampedusa has since consolidated its reception capacity. Upon arrival, people go through a health check, registration, and identification at the dedicated welcome center. **For the municipality of Lampedusa, cities have a responsibility to engage with one another to better coordinate their efforts to save and protect lives.**<sup>4</sup> The 3-meter "Porta di Lampedusa - Porta d'Europa" monument on the island serves as a symbol of this engagement, a door to Europe and a window to Africa.

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<sup>4</sup> The Mayor of Lampedusa also initiated the process of the *Lampedusa Charter*.

## Moron, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Language training for immigrants

The municipality of Moron organizes Spanish language courses for immigrants from African and Caribbean countries. Language training is an important step toward integration for immigrants to find a job, get their documentation, and communicate with local communities. Because of the tailored nature of the course, the municipality was able to accompany some immigrants with their registration and other administrative requests.



Figure 13: Migrant students attend in Spanish language class in Moron, Buenos Aires

The first phase of this language training program took place from October 2021 to the end of 2022. Beyond this, counselling for documentation and administrative processes is still in operation, in coordination with other municipal and provincial areas. Reception of migrants and counselling following instances of discrimination, racism and xenophobia, with the short-term project of training for educational training institutions are also ongoing.

The directorate of human rights and other principal staffers in charge of this program are learning from the challenges faced during its course and strategizing how to overcome these issues:

- The issue of procurement of literacy spaces was addressed by partnering with a local school in coordination with education.
- They engaged concurrently with administrative institutions and established a network to help local migrant communities.

## Nador, Morocco

Media training to combat xenophobic speech



**Figure 14:** Dialogue organized by the city of Nador on how to confront negative narratives around migration.

The municipality of Nador, nearby the Spanish enclave of Melilla, welcomes a large population of immigrants from sub-Saharan countries, but xenophobic speech and discrimination impede their inclusion to the city. **The municipality, in cooperation with the local NGO Asticude, launched a series of trainings for journalists and the media on migration who created a short video debunking prejudices on immigrants in Nador.** This action has helped to create bridges between the municipality, the civil society, the media and migrant populations.

This initiative complements the City's vision to become "Social and Sustainable Nador" via initiatives such as hosting similar intercultural dialogues for the social inclusion of migrants and social cohesion amongst its local communities.

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## Commune of Notsé, Haho 1, Togo

Preventing conflict between herders and local communities

The commune of Notsé in Haho 1 finds itself in the border region between Togo and Benin. In this region, seasonal cross-border pastoral movements of herders and their animals has become a source of tensions between pastoralists and host communities due to increasingly difficult climate conditions that have an impact on the subsistence of the communities. During their migration, animals tend to occupy and destroy cultivated land of local farmers. To address the issue, **the municipality has led mediation efforts between pastoral and host communities, with the support of traditional community leaders and the national authorities (prefecture).** These efforts led to the creation of dedicated signage and pastoral land for herders and their animals to limit conflict between communities.



**Figure 15:** Seasonal cross-border pastoralists and local communities gather in the commune of Notse City-Practice

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## Sao Paulo, Brazil

Keeping migrant children in school



**Figure 16:** A resettled Syrian refugee looks on during classes in school in Sao Paulo, Brazil. © UNHCR/Gabo Morales

In line with Sao Paulo Municipal Policy for the Immigrant Population, the municipality has been acting to prevent migrant children from dropping out of school and ensuring universal access to education to all children since the COVID-19 pandemic. **The municipality has developed a city curriculum that was shared with identified schools across the city and conducted webinars to map their challenges in integrating migrant children.** The municipality continues to monitor the situation of migrant pupils in partner schools.

The city also actively involved local public educators to engage with migrant and host community families for extensive reach through territorialized public services, as one of the goals set by its Municipal Plan of Policies for the Immigrant Population (2021-2024).

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## Peer Review

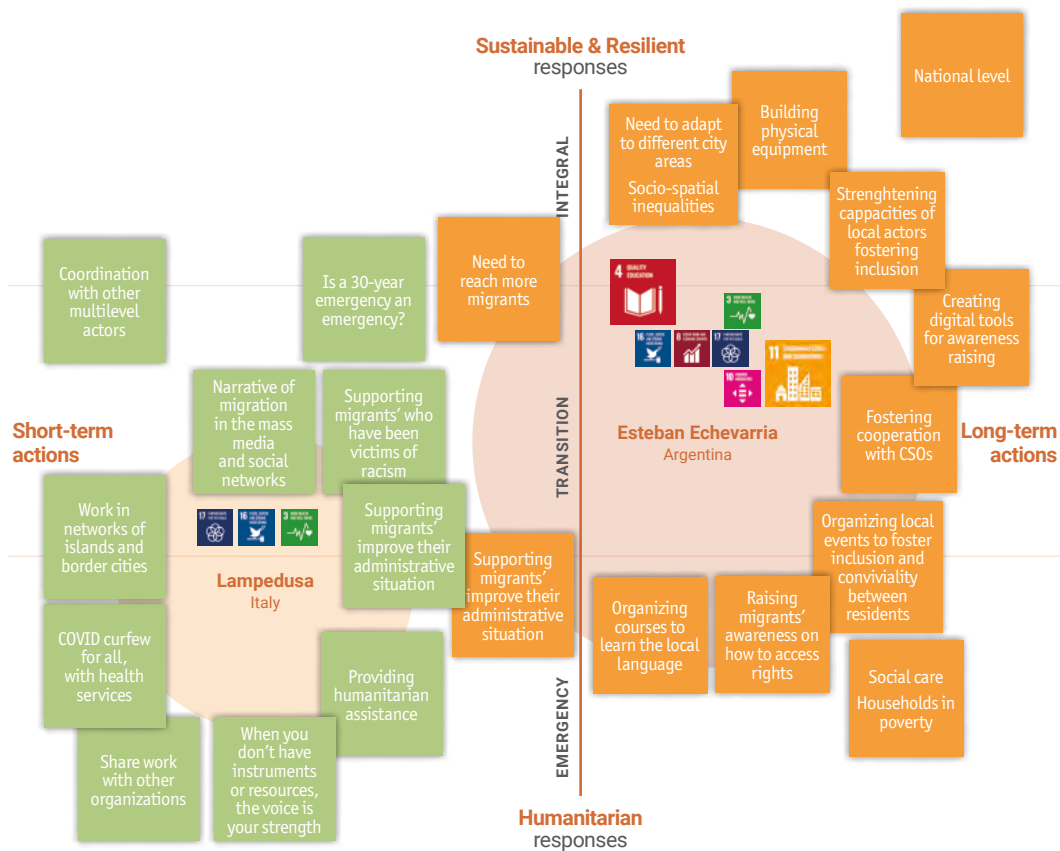
As part of the peer-learning, participants were invited to collectively discuss how the practices presented fit in the spectrum of emergency to sustainable responses, and their linkages to global agendas on migration, refugees and sustainable development.

Using the matrix shown below, participants systematically analyzed their city practices with regards to:

- A. The implementation period of the practices - short term or continued in the longer run (horizontal axis)
- B. The nature of the responses - ranging from humanitarian responses targeting immediate needs on the ground to Sustainable and resilient responses towards inclusion and reconstruction (vertical axis), categorized by the following phases:
  - i. Emergency phase (Humanitarian)
  - ii. Transitional phase (Humanitarian towards Sustainable)
  - iii. Integral phase (Sustainable)
- C. The global goals and targets localized by the practices, comprising:
  - i. The 23 objectives of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM)
  - ii. The Global Compact on Refugee (GCR) objectives
  - iii. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Often owing to limited LRG mandates regarding entry and stay regulations for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other displaced populations, many local actions are short-term. However, with recurrence or protraction of the displacement crises, LRGs **often repeat their emergency responses** following immediate influxes of migrants and displaced persons into their territories, **applying lessons learnt from prior experiences**. LRGs that enjoy a higher degree of decentralization **upgrade their short-term practices to longer-term sustainable responses**, via the implementation of municipal policies favoring migrant and displaced persons and the development of

place-based urban interventions and amenities benefiting these groups as well as the host communities. Even while deploying emergency responses to assist these vulnerable newcomers, LRGs **tend to already assess potential durable responses to include and empower these communities**, to reduce their aid dependency upon the host and enable them to contribute to community development. Oftentimes **diaspora and relatively better established peers of these newcomers provide substantial support** to the local unit in charge of managing these migration and displacement challenges.



**Figure 17:** Peer Review (here between Lampedusa's and Esteban Echevarria's practices) along the Humanitarian - Sustainable responses Matrix

## Connecting the dots

### Towards sustainable and effective emergency governance of human mobility

It can take many years until people fleeing hazards and conflicts can return home safely or make a decision to remain or settle somewhere else. It is estimated that close to 80 percent of all refugees were in a situation of protracted displacement in 2018 – meaning that they had been displaced for more than 5 years.

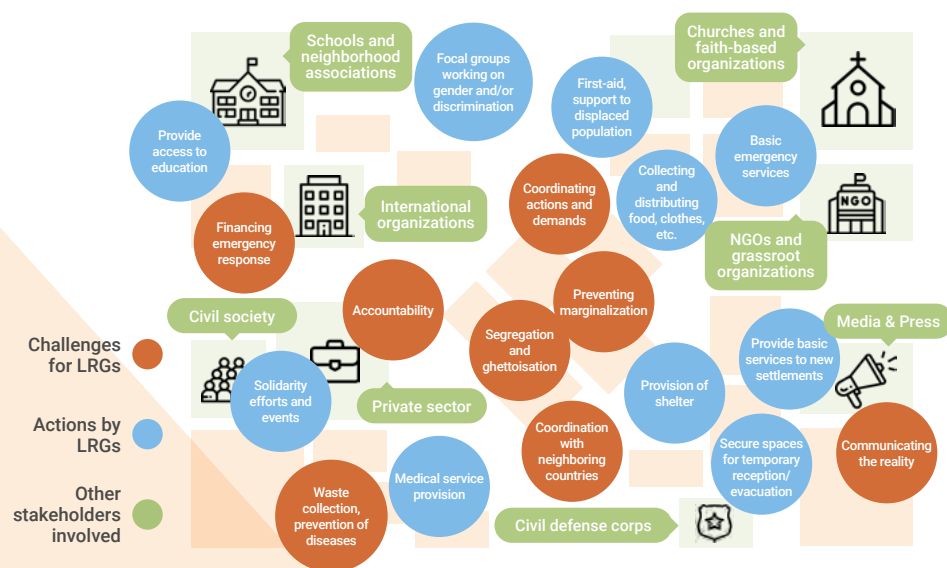
Following up on the exercise focusing on migrants' needs and cities' roles, a second phase of the exercise looked at the transition between emergency responses and sustainable public policy, the coordination among the multiple actors involved, and the gaps that are sometimes left when the "crisis" period ends and international humanitarian actors leave.

For this, participants were invited to first identify the actors engaged in the first few months after an increase in displacement or migration in three different contexts:

1. A capital city marked by surging internal displacement flows and eventual emigration owing to insurgency, resource depletion and limited livelihood opportunities.
2. A transit city for seasonal migrants and people on the move enroute to other cities, adversely affected by climate change.
3. A popular destination city challenged with huge rural-urban and cross-border flows due to scarcity of livelihoods and climate change impacts, with huge swatches of informal settlements

Key entry points for discussion focussed on the **differences and commonalities between different stages of crises and between the kind of solutions that are provided to displacement situations**. In this regard, although conflict-related displacement and climate or natural disaster mobility tend to trigger varied patterns of response, it was agreed that **it often takes long periods to ensure safe and dignified return -whenever that is at all possible**. In this

regard, whereas **rapid and coordinated humanitarian responses are critical in the first phases of crises**, inclusion measures become increasingly relevant as time goes by. This includes **ensuring access to basic services, dignified shelter, education and healthcare**, but also the **promotion of social cohesion and participation of the displaced populations** in their host territories. The role of local governments is fundamental in this regard, supported by other levels of government and by organized civil society, to successfully deploy those measures.



**Figure 18:** Key points highlighted by one of the groups. [Explore the Mural](#) to discover other groups' discussions.

Over the past decade, **place-based approaches to urban displacement** have started to emerge. The objective of place-based approaches is to **upgrade living conditions for all in a specific area, district, or neighborhood regardless of residents' status**. Their implementation requires transversal work across sectors (e.g. sanitation, education, protection, livelihoods, etc.) and in collaboration with humanitarian organizations, national government, local authorities, civil society organizations, and residents. This poses a number of coordination challenges among the different actors but can improve the coherence of national and local responses, increase cities' visibility in policy planning, while including the voices of host and migrant residents.

## Panel Discussion on Ukraine displacement crisis

**A panel discussion shed light on current developments from the Ukraine displacement crisis and the impact on local and regional governments. Representatives from UNHCR, Cités Unies France, and the municipalities of Braga, Portugal and Rzeszow, Poland contributed to the discussion.**

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, over 5 million have fled to neighboring countries<sup>5</sup> and another 7 million are displaced within Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> In line with the provisions of the Global Compact for Refugees for whole-of-government approaches, the UNHCR and other UN agencies have engaged with local governments in the countries of destination of displaced persons to remove access barriers that can be addressed at the local level (opening a bank account, access to work, internet connection, basic information in multiple languages).<sup>7</sup>

The local government association Cités Unies France provides a multi-actor platform gathering local authorities, UN agencies, INGOs and humanitarian actors to coordinate reception efforts and foster an exchange on sustainable crisis responses.<sup>8</sup> Local governments have first-hand information and data on arrivals, current and future needs: their participation in such coordination platforms is crucial to align national and local responses, design policies that address real needs, and draw attention to the financing needs of local authorities.

<sup>5</sup> Operational Data Portal. [Ukraine. Refugee Situation](#)

<sup>6</sup> IOM UN Migration. [7.1 Million People Displaced by the War in Ukraine: IOM Survey](#)

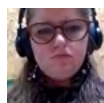
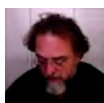
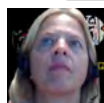
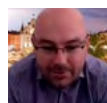
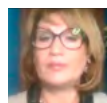
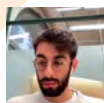
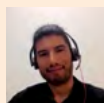
<sup>7</sup> See UNHCR Handbook on ["Effective inclusion of refugees: Participatory approaches for practitioners at the local level"](#)

<sup>8</sup> See the [Protocol of engagement between Local Governments and Humanitarian actors and Guidance for Local Authorities on working with Humanitarian Actors](#)

Local authorities' needs have grown as municipalities are taking on new roles. The city of Rzeszow in Eastern Poland transformed as a hub for people fleeing Ukraine (creation of dorms in train station, malls, schools) and for donations from all over the world to be distributed in Ukraine. In the first few weeks of the invasion, people mostly transited through the city, but those recently arrived preferred to remain close to the border, driven by the hope to return to their places of origin when possible. Rzeszow saw its Ukrainian population increase from 4,000 to more than 30,000 and needs to strike a difficult balance: fostering integration through schooling, language training, and employment in a volatile security context.

As 2 million children have fled from Ukraine, the Mayor of Braga in Portugal amongst some other Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) in Europe, joined UNICEF's call, pledging to welcome and protect refugee children and their caretakers. Reflecting on the experience of his municipality in hosting refugee children, he appealed for more LRG pledges to protect children from discrimination and xenophobia at point of entry, registration, and referral, to include in mainstream social system for accessing education and training opportunities, to keep families together and reunite families, and engage young people themselves – “do nothing about them without them”. He insisted on the need for city-to-city exchanges to organize relocation strategies, family reunification, and advocacy.

Similarly, Italian municipalities, too, have been perpetually confronted with the increased arrivals of unaccompanied minors on their territories. According to the Italian legislation, municipalities are responsible for children regardless of their legal status. The municipality of Prato has created a reception system that addresses all children. The system goes beyond the provision of food and accommodation to include orientation services, vocational training, language training and education for the inclusion of all children. The municipality of Prato benefits from the support of UNICEF and is working toward achieving the label “Child-Friendly City”.



# Key lessons & recommendations

**Crises and conflicts are commonplace in humanity's history and result in displacement and migration. What do LRGs actually do, plan to do and recommend to bolster preparedness and crisis mitigation, while protecting those affected?**

## 1. Shifting the narrative: From problem to part of the solution

There's a growing chorus of local and regional governments (LRGs) and civil society voices arguing that human mobility - from voluntary migration to forced displacement, itself is not a problem and can actually be part of the solution to the myriad crises impacting the world. Reasserting the above said, local actors identify the insufficiency of pathways for regular migration and the lack of collaboration and coordination across levels of government as challenges that hinder them from effectively addressing crises with pragmatic and innovative solutions.

## 2. Recognize LRGs role transcending beyond emergency to sustainable responses

As highlighted by some of the practices showcased, and during the mapping exercise amongst the peer learning participants, LRG representatives stressed the need to evolve from the “bare-minimum” emergency response approach to develop sustainable solutions to respond better with bolstered resilience, especially in the case of protracted conflicts in places of origin of the migrants and refugees they host and destination and transit hotspot regions for these people on the move. Furthermore, a stronger dialogue between humanitarian actors and local and regional governments was raised as a critical point of action by participants, building on place-based approaches to urban displacement such as Gaziantep's example, with a stronger recognition of local government's role and capacity needs.



### 3. Access to education and training as a first step

Amidst contexts of crises induced mass displacement, protecting and caring for children and their caregivers, enduring an uninterrupted access to education (SDG 4) and vocational and language training to bridge the gaps that hinder the economic and social inclusion of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers remain strong priorities for LRGs receiving these newly arrived communities - as seen from the Dedegou, Buenos Aires practices. Such practices unlock opportunities for both migrant and displaced children and their caregivers, boosting their self-sufficiency and enhanced contributions to local development - both in their host and origin countries.

### 4. Engage local host communities, including migrant populations, in the response to and mitigation of crises

Effective emergency response, i.e. receiving and protecting newcomers and their eventual social inclusion and cohesion, can be greatly attributed to the active engagement of local as well as diaspora communities - as seen from the practices by Fuenlabrada, Gaziantep and Cauayan City. Such community engagement contributes direct language interpretation skills, practical know-how on the localities and fosters social networks that can informally bridge administrative inclusion barriers for migrant populations. They can also support more inclusive and effective preparedness and mitigation strategies, to prevent and better respond to future crises.

### 5. Empower LRGs to localize global agendas on human mobility

One of the notable barriers faced by LRGs to effectively match fitting global objectives to their local actions is a limited knowledge of 'localisation' or being oversaturated by a vast number of repetitive intersectoral and overarching objectives across varied global agendas, with implementation guidance targeted only at the Member State or national level. Hence, dedicated

interactive training, for LRGs to effectively localize and report on human mobility related accomplishments, as the UCLG-Mayors Mechanism Massive Open online course on Human Mobility and the Mayors Mechanism Call to Local Action on Migrants and Refugees, that condenses the varied global objectives targeted by the GCM-GCR compacts and the 2030 Agenda into 8 overarching thematic priorities, can help address the association barriers faced by LRGs and support them to better connect the dots from local action to the implementation of global goals, and collectively influence migration and displacement policies at global fora such as the upcoming 2023 Global Refugee Forum and the GFMD in 2024.

### 6. Continue to bring LRG voices to interrelated global agendas

Amidst present-day global geopolitical, economic and climate trends, humanitarian actors predict huge waves of people on the move from 2023 - 2025, LRGs are increasingly demonstrating territorial solidarity to collectively address these underlying drivers of migration and displacement, while responding to the reality in their territories. The municipalist Lampedusa Charter calls for territorial dialogue and cooperation with central governments and supranational institutions to ensure people-centered equitable and sustainable planning for crises recovery and climate adaptation that facilitates the inclusion of migrants and displaced people.

At the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) LRGs increasingly hold strong roles to leverage the manifold benefits of human mobility into their territories for sustainable local community and global economic development. At UCLG's periodic Municipal Peace Talks, LRGs dialogue for bolstering the multilateral system to positively influence global peacebuilding and prevention and remediation initiatives for conflicts that deteriorate local self-governance.

Beyond these positive strides, mainstreaming human mobility in Sustainable development is the need of the hour; local action for migrants and refugees needs to be mainstreamed in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and showcased as part of the advancing SDG localisation efforts.

## Partners



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