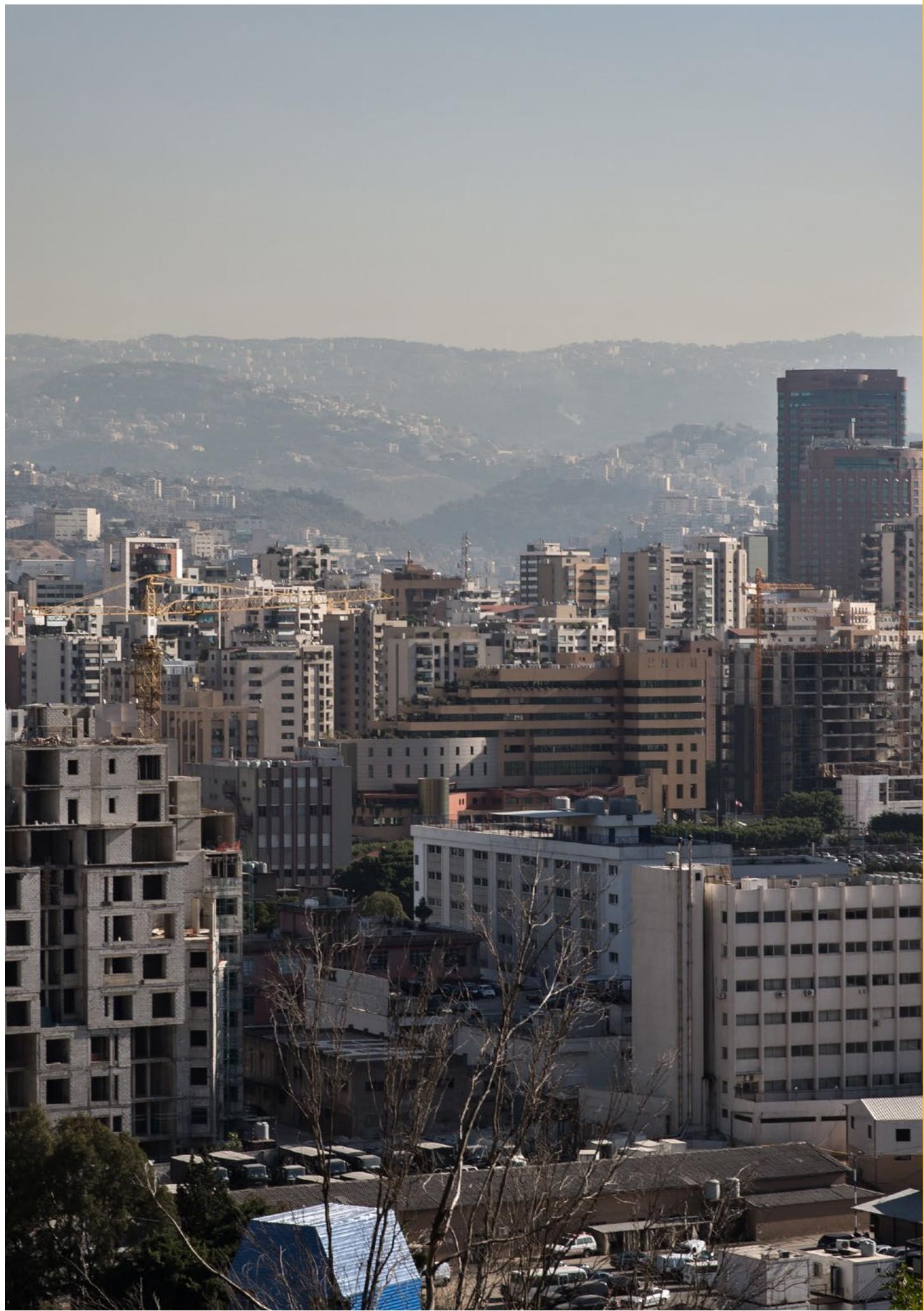




# Violence in the City

A Systematic Review of the Drivers of Violence against  
Displaced Populations in Urban Crisis and Post-crisis Settings

International Rescue Committee | JANUARY 2017



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FRONT COVER: A family of forced migrants living in the Eastleigh neighbourhood of Nairobi, Kenya.  
Forced migrants in Nairobi face harassment, discrimination, and exploitation,  
among other forms of violence. *Andrew McConnell/IRC/Panos*

OPPOSITE PAGE: Of any country, Lebanon has the greatest number of refugees relative to its resident population.  
The vast majority of these refugees congregate in cities such as Beirut (pictured), where they are  
at risk of types of violence they may not experience in camps or rural areas. *T. Breuer/IRC*

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# Executive Summary

Humanitarian aid to refugee and internally displaced people (IDPs) has increasingly shifted from rural and camp environments to urban areas in recent years, with 60% of all refugees and 80% of all IDPs currently living in urban areas. Risks of violence for displaced persons in camp-based humanitarian settings are well documented and include gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and forced marriages, as well as a number of other forms of inter-communal violence, discrimination, and denial of resources, assistance, or assets. However, little is known about types and drivers of violence and interventions to reduce violence among displaced and host populations in urban areas, who likely face a different set of challenges due to the complex infrastructure, sociopolitical context, and service provision systems found in cities.

This systematic review, following PRISMA reporting guidelines, was undertaken to research the current state of knowledge regarding:

**Aim 1 The drivers of violence;**

**Aim 2 The contributing factors of violence or rights violations; and**

**Aim 3 Programming to address violence among displaced and host populations in crisis and post-crisis urban areas.**

Through a search of academic and grey literature sources, 23 publications met the eligibility criteria of including an urban crisis or post-crisis setting and being related to interpersonal or community violence. Eligible studies were primarily qualitative in nature with non-random (or convenience) samples. Of the 23 publications, four were identified through the academic literature search and 19 were identified through the grey literature search. Results related to the drivers of violence were organised using the social ecological model (SEM)\* as a framework, categorising drivers at the individual, familial, community, and structural/policy levels. None of the eligible studies included evaluated interventions to reduce violence in urban humanitarian settings (Aim 3).

Types of violence experienced by displaced populations were varied and included physical, verbal, sexual, and economic violence, child labour, and multiple forms of gender-based violence against women and girls.

This review considers these types of violence at different levels of the social ecological model. The most common drivers of violence were at the structural and community levels, including economic strain, harmful gender norms, and discrimination.

At the structural level, economic strain encompasses poverty, financial stress, food insecurity, and unstable housing experienced by individuals or populations and was discussed as a driver of intimate partner violence (IPV), sex trafficking and transactional sex, gang violence, economic exploitation and police harassment/abuse.

\* According to UNICEF, the social ecological model (SEM) is a theory-based framework for understanding the multifaceted and interactive effects of personal and environmental factors that determine behaviours, and for identifying behavioural and organisational leverage points and intermediaries for health promotion within organisations.

There are five nested, hierarchical levels of the SEM:

- individual;
- interpersonal;
- community;
- organisational; and
- structural, which considers the policy/enabling environment.

OPPOSITE: A market in Côte d'Ivoire, where research has found that economic empowerment programming has the potential to reduce intimate partner violence against women.

Ben Barrows/IRC

## **Executive Summary** (continued)

Harmful gender norms, primarily at the structural level but present at every level of the SEM, were discussed in two forms and were cited as contributors of IPV, domestic violence, and street harassment. First, traditional gender norms, such as those that value women and girls less or differently than men and boys, were a contributing factor to GBV against women and girls. Secondly, changing gender norms, in which women/girls gained new rights or experiences (i.e. employment), increased the risk of violence against women through strained relationships or disapproval of new activities by men who preferred traditional gender norms. Discrimination, a community-level driver, refers to violence as a result of gendered, religious, ethnic, and xenophobic prejudices. Types of violence related to discrimination included sexual exploitation, transactional sex, physical abuse, verbal abuse and harassment, rape, and gang violence. Discrimination was commonly discussed as perpetrated by host communities and directed at displaced populations, as host communities viewed refugees and IDPs as a burden and as competition for jobs and services.

As a result of this systematic review, it is clear that urban displaced are exposed to drivers of violence unique to urban areas as well as others shared across a variety of humanitarian settings, including refugee camps. Economic strain, the inability to meet basic food and shelter needs, lack of legal protections, and broad discrimination against refugees and IDP populations by host communities are all examples of challenges specific to displaced populations in urban areas that contribute to the violence they experience. Based on the findings, a number of recommendations are provided, geared towards service providers and researchers working with urban displaced populations. They include recommendations for more high quality, methodologically rigorous, and explicit research on the drivers of interpersonal and community violence and the evaluation of effective programming to address violence, the inclusion of perpetrators in research to better understand and ultimately prevent violence, and a socio-ecological approach to designing and evaluating interventions related to violence. They also include recommendations for humanitarian practitioners working to combat violence in urban areas.

## **Research Recommendations**

- **Researchers should conduct a study focused explicitly on the drivers of violence in urban areas.**
- **Future research should involve more rigorous research methodologies.**
- **Future research on the drivers of urban violence should involve a greater breadth of urban displaced and host residents.**
- **Programmes designed to address violence in urban post-crisis setting should be rigorously evaluated.**
- **Incorporate violence indicators in evaluations of economic empowerment interventions.**

## **Programmatic Recommendations**

- **Programmatic interventions aimed at reducing violence should consider drivers across the social ecological model.**
- **Legal status, documentation, and assistance should be prioritised as a violence reduction strategy.**
- **Humanitarian actors should recognise the disproportionate risk of violence against women and girls in urban areas.**
- **Humanitarian actors should strengthen protection monitoring and analysis on exploitation and abuse against refugees and migrants in urban areas.**

# Introduction

Over half of the global population now lives in urban areas – an estimate projected to rise to 66% by 2050 (United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UNDSEA), 2015). One of the most stunning demographic shifts associated with this urban transition is the move of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to cities.

With the increase in urban conflicts and natural disasters, 60% of the total 19.5 million refugees and 80% of the world's 34 million IDPs are urban-residing (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016).

Most urban refugees and those internally displaced are relocated to already fragile communities characterised by over-crowding, scarce employment opportunities, and limited access to services and resources (Pavanello, Elhawary, & Pantuliano, 2010). This has important implications for the social and economic vulnerability of new arrivals and the host population. For example, competition over resources and employment opportunities jeopardises the well-being of both host and displaced groups and compounds challenges local governments already face in managing rapid urbanisation (Guterres, 2010).

Another major concern for the welfare of these communities is violence. Risks of violence in humanitarian settings, though largely rural or camp-based, are well-documented. Gender-based violence (GBV), including intimate partner violence (IPV) (Hossain et al., 2014), non-partner sexual violence (Peterman, Palermo, & Bredenkamp, 2011; Vu et al., 2014), and early and forced marriages (Amowitz et al., 2002) are established concerns for women and girls in these settings. Though other vulnerable groups, including people who have a disability (Tanabe, Naguijah, Rimal, Bukania, & Krause, 2015) as well as men and boys (Hossain et al., 2014), also face a range of abusive behaviours in humanitarian settings. These threats also exist in crisis-affected cities, but are likely compounded by existing urban violence, which can take the form of local violent crime, interpersonal abuse, and gang violence (Montgomery, 2009; World Health Organization, 2010).

Increasing attention to violence prevention in camp and rural humanitarian settings has led to the recent design and evaluation of promising interventions. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, Gupta et al. (2013) found that combining an economic empowerment programme with efforts to address household gender inequities has the potential to reduce intimate partner violence against women in this rural, conflict-affected setting. Similarly, research conducted in the same region by Hossain et al. (2014) indicated that interventions that engage men can also reduce IPV.

Despite this new evidence, there remains limited knowledge of effective violence prevention interventions for use by humanitarian organisations working with refugee and displaced populations (Tappis, Freeman, Glass, & Doocy, 2016). This is acutely the case in crisis-affected cities. These urban areas present a variety of additional challenges for intervention not faced in traditional humanitarian settings. Refugees and IDPs are hard to identify because they conceal their often precarious legal status, they reside in dispersed urban communities, and share a variety of economic and security vulnerabilities with the local urban poor (Guterres, 2010). Protection and service provision is further complicated by the need for humanitarian organisations to engage with existing urban infrastructure, sociopolitical systems, and a broader range of stakeholders (International Rescue Committee (IRC), 2014).

With the substantial shift of displacement to cities, violence prevention among urban displaced and refugee populations is an emergent priority for humanitarian organisations. However, evidence of the needs and effective interventions in these settings is lacking.

In an effort to address this critical knowledge gap and to inform effective violence programming tailored specifically to these urban areas, **more evidence is needed regarding the**

**1 drivers of violence,**

**2 specific protection risks, and**

**3 existing effective programming.**

With this in mind, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) conducted a systematic literature review.

# The IRC's Principles of Urban Humanitarian Response

The IRC has been working in cities and towns impacted by humanitarian crises for decades and our experience shows that urban settings require new approaches to delivering assistance. We are currently exploring innovative ways to support the displaced and host communities in urban contexts to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. We are dedicated to not only meeting the immediate needs of affected populations, but to also fostering recovery, resilience, and self-reliance in the aftermath of a crisis, so that affected populations are safer and healthier, with less disruption to their education, economic wellbeing, and ability to influence decisions that affect them, and the city is able to better cope with future shocks and stresses. We are committed to improving our response to urban crises and sharing our experience and evidence with the wider humanitarian community.

While there is no effective one-size-fits-all approach, the following principles can guide an effective response to humanitarian crises in urban contexts.



## WORKING WITHIN A COMPLEX CONTEXT

As no two cities are alike, no two cities in crisis are alike. Effective urban humanitarian response requires a full understanding of the scale and complexities of the local context, its interconnected systems and stakeholders, and the way in which diverse urban communities live within it and alongside one another. To be most effective, humanitarian actors working in an urban context should take into account local power dynamics, social networks, existing structures, systems and geography in order to identify suitable entry points and opportunities to leverage the distinct characteristics of the city or town.



## SUPPORTING RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Building long-term recovery and resilience must be considered from the outset of a crisis, as the transition from emergency response to recovery can be rapid and normally involves a period in which the two phases overlap. Cities operate on longstanding and interconnected networks of service provision channels (such as education, health, and legal services), markets, governance structures and social systems. Humanitarians should strive to work within these systems, to avoid their duplication or disruption, and to work in ways that leaves them stronger and better able to ensure long-term recovery and resilience.

RIGHT: Amman, Jordan's capital city, is home to over 170,000 Syrian refugees. Meeting their needs requires humanitarians to adapt to the urban context.  
*Samer Saliba/IRC*



## URBAN PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATION AND INCLUSION

Cities are shaped by a multitude of international, national and local actors from multiple sectors, including government, civil society organisations (CSOs), the academic community, the private sector and development practitioners. These diverse actors, who possess valuable knowledge of and influence over how the city functions, form networks that humanitarians can leverage to inform effective and inclusive responses. Their understanding of how the city operates and provides services, as well as how legal and social frameworks affect the lives of urban residents and communities is a critical, but often overlooked, resource. Humanitarians should support local authorities and service providers to coordinate responses while leveraging the emergence of national and locally led response networks to ensure that activities and advocacy are well coordinated. Such an approach will help build local and sustainable capacity for preparedness and response while striving for the inclusion and empowerment of marginalised groups, such as women and minority groups.



# Aims

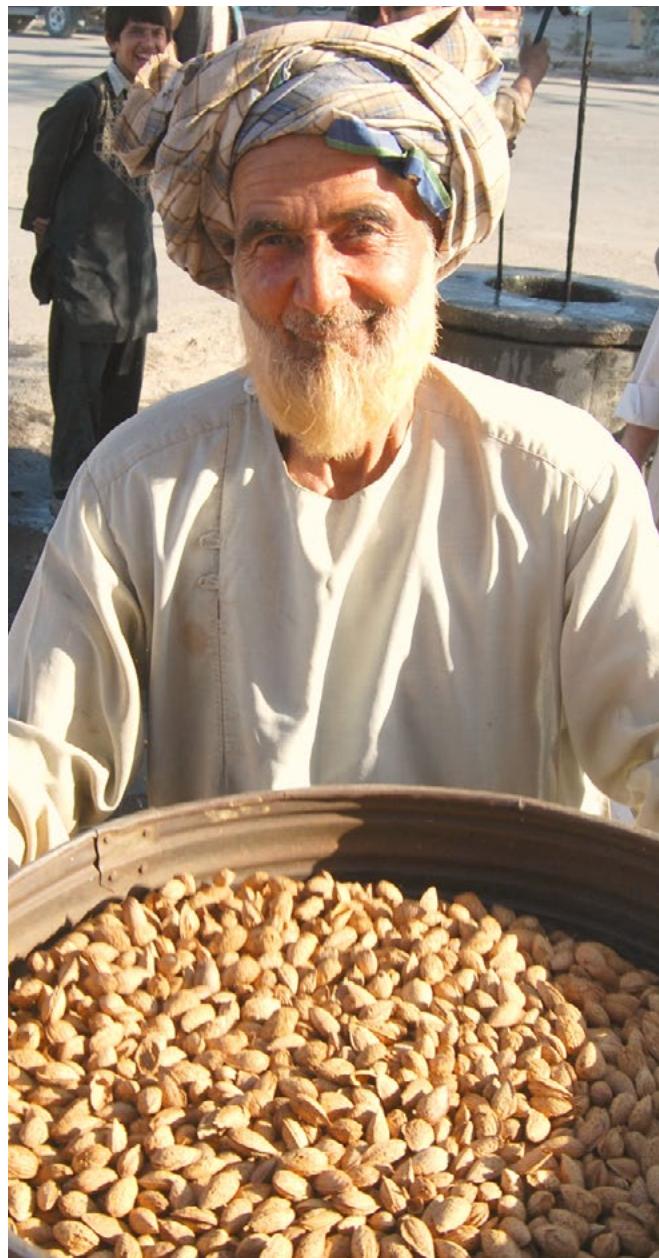
This systematic review surveyed academic and grey qualitative and quantitative literature for empirical evidence of the drivers of violence, protections risks and rights violations, and evaluated violence prevention and response programmes related to urban crisis and post-crisis contexts, with a focus on vulnerable populations. The term “violence” refers to all forms of physical, emotional abuse, sexual and economic exploitation, neglect, coercion and deprivation at the interpersonal and community level.

The review was conducted and reported following Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009) and addressed the following three research questions:

- 1 What is known about the nature of violence/drivers of violence in urban crisis and post-crisis contexts?**
  
- 2 What is known about the protection risks and rights violations affecting displaced and local populations in urban crisis and post-crisis contexts?**
  
- 3 What is known about evaluated violence prevention and response programming in urban crisis and post-crisis contexts?**

RIGHT: In urban Afghanistan, unemployment may be linked to violence. A study of employment in Afghanistan found that labour discrimination against Pashtun males drove women and girls to beg in the street, increasing their exposure to harassment or abuse by the police.

Ned Collet/IRC





# Methodology

## Eligibility Criteria

All studies addressed at least one of the following topics:

- 1 **drivers of violence,**
- 2 **protection risks or rights violations**, and/or
- 3 **programming to address violence**  
in urban crisis and post-crisis contexts.

Both qualitative and quantitative studies were considered.

Study eligibility was determined with separate criteria for the distinct review aims (Aims 1 and 2 are combined). For drivers of violence and rights violations, studies were included if they were related to:

- 1 an urban setting that experienced a recent conflict or natural disaster or that is hosting displaced and/or refugee populations, and
- 2 interpersonal or community violence.

For evidence of evaluated interventions, studies were included if:

- 1 the intervention took place in an urban setting that experienced a recent conflict or natural disaster or that is hosting displaced and/or refugee populations,
- 2 the intervention addressed interpersonal or community violence, and
- 3 evaluation results were reported.

If an intervention took place in rural and urban areas, but the results were not disaggregated by region, the study was not eligible. Likewise, if the intervention did not distinguish if participants were IDPs, refugees, or from the host community, the study was not eligible.

It is well accepted that urban areas differ from rural areas in terms of population size, density, diversity of residents and the complexity of their political, social and service provision systems. However, no universal definition of what constitutes an “urban” setting among researchers or practitioners currently exists. Therefore, for the purpose of this review, studies were considered to be “urban” if identified as such by the authors of the report or study under review.

## Publication Dates and Languages

As humanitarian aid delivery has increasingly shifted from rural and refugee/IDP camps environments to urban areas in recent years, searches were limited to the previous 10 years. Thus, only English-language studies published after 2006 were considered for the systematic review.

## Search Strategy and Identification of Studies

### Databases

The following electronic databases were searched for relevant published academic literature:

- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
- PubMed/Medline
- PsycINFO
- JSTOR
- EMBASE

### Grey Literature Strategy and Additional Information

Grey literature was identified via multiple strategies. The websites of relevant international aid and humanitarian organisations and websites publishing reports and resources for the humanitarian community were searched. Google searches of key search terms were also conducted and the first 200 results reviewed for eligibility.

Additionally, we conducted a key informant interview with an expert in the field of violence prevention in urban post-crisis settings. This aided in identifying additional reports. Finally, we reviewed reference lists from reports to identify additional sources of information. A list of databases, websites, and key informant interviews is available in Table 1 on page 11.

OPPOSITE: Bilal, 13, on his way to school from the informal settlement where he lives with his family in Tripoli, Lebanon. By going to school, Bilal is less likely to be a victim of the violence he experienced while working on the streets of Tripoli. See page 22 for more information on this case study.  
*T. Breuer/IRC*

## Methodology (continued)

### Search Terms

Search terms were divided into five categories:

- **Setting**  
i.e. urban or city
- **Study type**  
e.g. research, survey
- **Violence type**  
e.g. child marriage, abuse
- **Humanitarian context**  
e.g. crisis, disaster
- **Population**  
e.g. refugee, women

See Table 2 on page 11 for the full list.

For academic databases, a Boolean<sup>†</sup> search strategy was utilised, such that all possible combinations of the terms were employed. For organisational websites, which have different functionality than academic databases, the search strategy was modified. Specificity tended to limit results, in many cases yielding no studies. Instead, we opted to use broad terms, for instance, “urban” and “violence,” scanning all of the results. For sites that allowed additional terms, we would include “research” and a humanitarian context term, for instance, “conflict.” For the Google searches, the first 200 results were reviewed for eligibility.

### Data Collection and Analysis

#### Selection of Studies

All identified study titles and abstracts or executive summaries were reviewed independently by the authors (SS, LC) to determine eligibility. Discrepancies in identified studies were resolved through discussion. For studies meeting the inclusion criteria, both authors reviewed the full texts. Studies not meeting the inclusion criteria were stored separately.

#### Data Extraction and Synthesis

A PRISMA flow diagram was generated to capture the number of studies identified, screened for eligibility, and included or excluded. See Figure 3 on page 17.

In addition, a table following PRISMA reporting guidelines, summarising the data extracted from each study was created.

The table includes:

- **Administrative details**  
title, author(s), year of publication
- **Study design**  
methodology(ies), sample size, location(s), population(s), sampling procedure
- **Major results**  
drivers and contributing factors of violence

See the Annex, beginning page 31, for the full table.

The authors conducted a narrative review to answer questions regarding the drivers, contributing factors, and interventions being carried out in urban humanitarian emergency and recovery contexts. No meta-analysis or other statistical combinations of data were performed.

† In a Boolean search, all terms that contain any of the key search terms are included in the search results. For example, by searching for the term “violence,” all phrases with this word are returned.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- intimate partner violence
- gender-based violence
- domestic violence
- sexual violence
- physical violence
- psychological violence
- economic violence
- child violence
- violence against women
- etc.

**Table 1: Search Locations**

Academic Literature Databases	Organisation Websites	Additional Websites	Key Informant Interview
Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews	International Committee of the Red Cross	Active Learning Network for Accountability in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)	One stakeholder interview with academic researcher
PubMed/Medline	International Rescue Committee	Devex	
PsycINFO	UN-HABITAT	Google	
JSTOR	UNHCR	ReliefWeb	
EMBASE	UNICEF	Sexual Violence Research Initiative	
	Women's Refugee Commission		

**Table 2: Key Search Terms**

Setting	Study Type	Violence	Humanitarian Context	Target Population
Urban City	Research	Violence	Emergency	Internally displaced persons
	Questionnaires	Child marriage	Conflict	Women
	Evaluation	Forced marriage	Crisis	Girl
	Assessment	Sexual exploitation	Natural disaster	Refugee
	Survey	Abuse	War	Children
	Screening	Neglect	Political violence	Female
	Prevalence	Child labour	Complex emergency	Youth
	Intervention	Deprivation	Humanitarian emergency	Transient
	Programme	Coercion	Recovery contexts	Immigrant
	Project	Torture		Elderly
	Services	Arbitrary arrest		Ethnic minority
	Community-based			People with disabilities
	Qualitative			
	Interview			
	Focus group			



# Results

The systematic review of academic and grey literature sources identified 23 studies related to the drivers of violence in urban crisis and post-crisis settings. See Figure 3 on page 17 for the full PRISMA flow diagram.

Of the 23 publications, four were identified through the academic literature search and 19 were identified through the grey literature search. To organise the results, we classified the drivers in relation to the social ecological model (SEM), noting drivers at the individual, familial, community, and structural/policy levels. As shown in Figure 1 on page 13, 13 drivers were identified and classified into the aforementioned four broad categories of the SEM. Each driver and the supporting studies are discussed in greater detail below.

Overall, identified studies were primarily qualitative in nature and even in the case of mixed methods studies, information about drivers of violence was primarily collected via qualitative methods. Interviews and focus groups with vulnerable populations and key stakeholders (NGOs, service providers, etc.) were the most common methodologies used and only one study, which examined IPV perpetration among male migrants in Boston, USA, investigated the drivers of violence exclusively via quantitative surveys (Gupta et al., 2009). All of the studies used non-random sampling to identify individuals.

The review returned zero eligible studies for evaluated interventions to prevent or reduce violence in urban humanitarian settings with displaced populations. However, one protocol for an ongoing study was identified (Falb et al., 2016) and a second study that investigated violence reduction in an urban post-conflict setting (although not specifically with displaced or host populations) is described briefly in the Evaluated Interventions section on page 21.

## Types of Violence

A wide range of abuses faced by refugee, displaced, and host communities were identified in this review. Each of these types of violence will be discussed in further depth within the context of the factors driving them. Table 3 below delineates the spectrum of abuse.

**Table 3: Documented Types of Violence against Forcibly Displaced in Urban Areas**

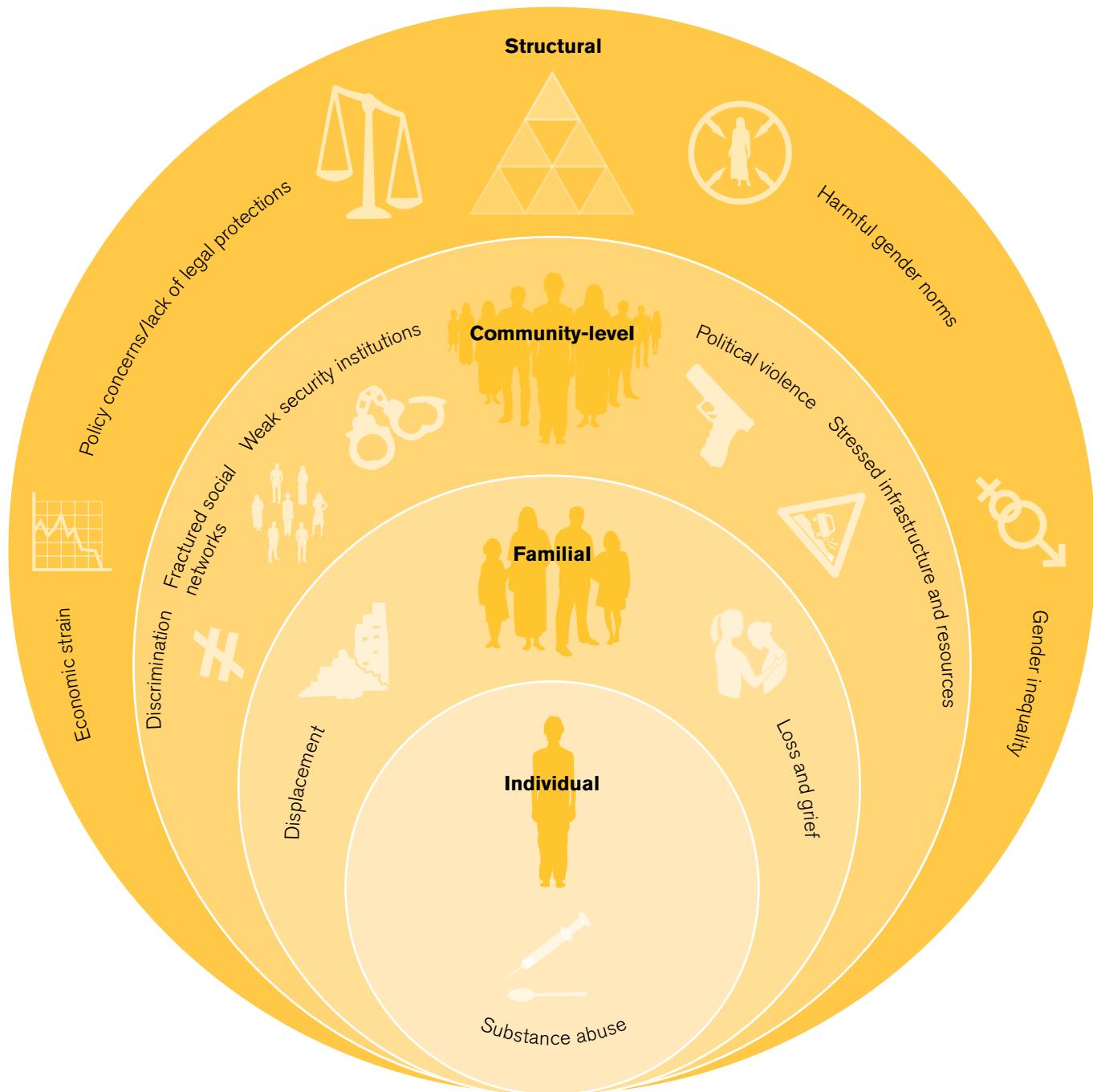
General	Gender-based
Physical assault	Emotional, physical, sexual, and economic intimate partner violence
Verbal harassment	Sexual harassment
Forced eviction	Forced/early marriage
Economic exploitation	Sexual exploitation
Child labour	Non-partner sexual violence

OPPOSITE: A shanty town outside Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, where displacement was identified as an underlying cause of their economic stress and poor living conditions, both drivers of intimate partner violence.

Gerald Martone/IRC

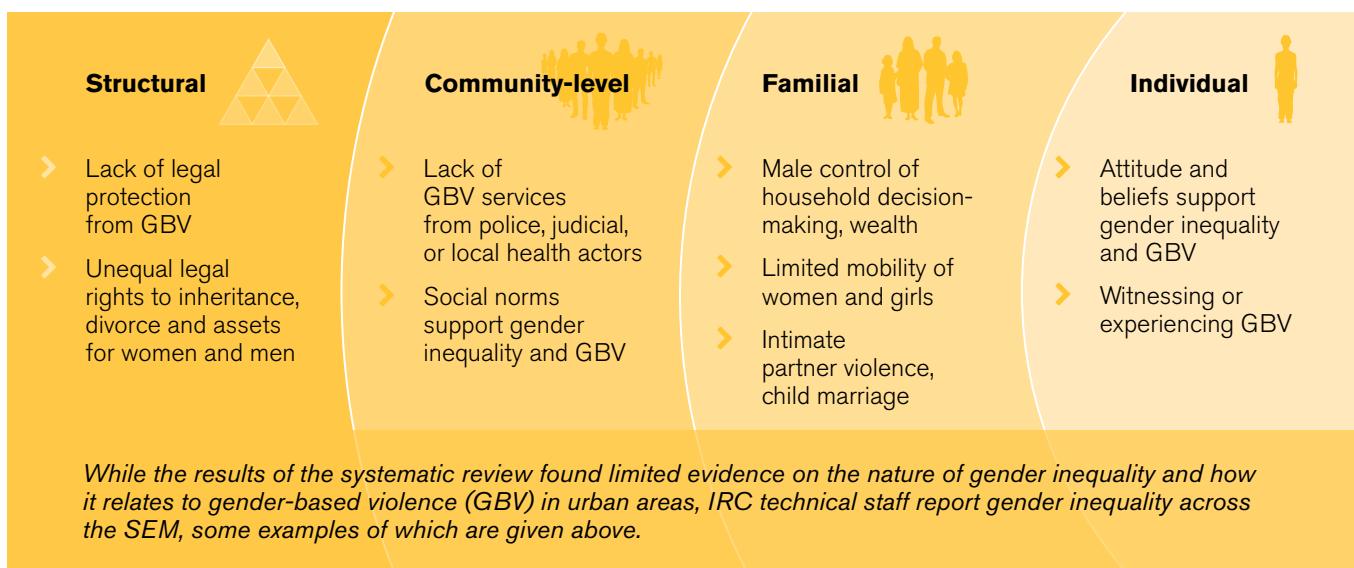
## Results (continued)

**Figure 1: Drivers of Violence in Urban Humanitarian Settings in the Context of the Social Ecological Model<sup>‡</sup>**



<sup>‡</sup> This figure highlights those drivers of violence identified in the results of the systematic review. It is not meant to serve as a comprehensive list of the drivers of violence in urban areas.

## Figure 2: Gender-based Violence in Urban Areas



## Drivers of Violence

### Structural

#### ECONOMIC STRAIN

Economic strain encompasses poverty, financial stress, food insecurity, and unstable housing experienced by individuals or populations. Fifteen studies mentioned some form as economic strain as a driver of violence, making it the most commonly mentioned driver of violence in the review.

In Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, prolonged economic strain was cited as a source of stress between couples and a driver of IPV against women. In focus group discussion, both IDP and non-IDP men and women mentioned chronic under- or unemployment resulting in feelings of frustration and inadequacy among men, which in some cases contributed to their perpetration of physical, sexual, economic and/or emotional IPV on their female partners (Cardoso et al., 2016). Likewise, in a study with IDP women in urban Colombia, male unemployment was mentioned as a driver of IPV against women (Wirtz et al., 2014). For IDP and non-IDP women and girls in urban Afghanistan, poverty is a risk factor for early marriage of girls, which is in turn a risk for IPV against women and girls (Schmeidl & Typer, 2015). Key stakeholder interviews with service providers, religious institutions, NGOs, and government organisations in South Sudan also underscored poverty as a risk factor for IPV against women (Martin & Sluga, 2011).

Poverty was mentioned as a driver of sex work, sex trafficking, and/or transactional sex in several studies, including among internally displaced women in urban areas of Colombia and IDPs in Nairobi, refugees in Kampala, New Delhi, Johannesburg, and Syrian refugees in Jordan (Buscher, 2013; International Rescue Committee, 2013; J Krause-Vilmar, 2011; Washington & Rowell, 2013; Wirtz et al., 2014). In another qualitative interview study, refugee women from Quito, Beirut, Delhi, and Kampala cited lack of employment opportunities as driving sex work for men, boys, women, and girls (including LGBTI and persons with disabilities) (Rosenberg, 2016).

In a study of Somali youth involved in gang violence in Kenya, participants discussed unemployment as a contributor to their perpetration of community violence (Im, Caudill, & Ferguson, 2016). In one study of Afghanistan, employment discrimination against Pashtun males drove women and girls to beg in the street, increasing their exposure to harassment or abuse by the police (Metcalfe, Haysom, & Martin, 2012). A study with female Burmese forced migrants in Thailand identified the collapse of the Burmese economy as the root cause of their migration to Thailand, where they work in urban factories and are exploited, underpaid, and overworked – all forms of economic violence. (Leiter, Suwanvanichkij, Tamm, Iacopino, & Beyer, 2006).

## **Results** (continued)

### **POLICY CONCERNS AND LACK OF LEGAL PROTECTION**

Lack of legal protection was discussed in five studies in the context of occupational conditions, rental agreements, and immigration status. All of the studies included interviews or focus groups with refugees who talked about exploitation from various members of their host community resulting from a lack of legal protection.

Three of the studies addressed occupational policies that encouraged or promoted exploitation. In a study with primarily female refugees and asylum seekers from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, and Darfur living in Cairo, focus group participants raised the issue of work permits. Participants cited the lack of legal avenues to obtain employment using work permits and, as a result, women are forced into the unregulated sector, such as performing domestic work. In turn, unregulated employment increased their risk of exploitation and abuse from employers (Heller & Tomoney, 2008). According to another study with refugees from the Congo, Somalia, and Burundi living in Kampala, displaced women selling products on the street, or having to solicit individual businesses to purchase their wares, require a selling licence that they find difficult to obtain. As a result, they face harassment by individuals on the street as well as from government officials soliciting sexual favours to overlook their unauthorised selling (J Krause-Vilmar, 2011). Finally, in a study with female Burmese forced migrants in Thailand, women reported that employers, in an effort to save money on taxes by not registering workers, exploited them by overworking, underpaying, and allowing them to work as unauthorised employees under constant threat of deportation (Leiter et al., 2006).

Concerning non-occupational related policies, a study with Syrian refugees in Iraq found that the lack of rental contracts in housing resulted in forced evictions of refugees from their homes, exposing them to insecure living conditions and exploitation (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016). In another study with recently arrived refugees in Nairobi, Kenya, refugees cited that police harassment was occurring in the form of random document checks to extort money. In this study, males and refugees from the Horn of Africa were particularly susceptible to this type of police harassment as a result of their refugee status (Hough, 2013). Harassment by police about legal status was also brought up by Burmese female migrants in Thailand (Leiter et al., 2006).

### **GENDER INEQUALITY**

Women's low social status was mentioned explicitly in one study with displaced persons in Yei, South Sudan as a driver of IPV. In focus groups with men, one man expressed concern that women, and not men, were often the beneficiaries of support from NGOs (i.e. microfinance programmes), which he did not understand or approve of. He cited this unfair preference for women by NGOs as justification for men beating their wives (Martin & Sluga, 2011).

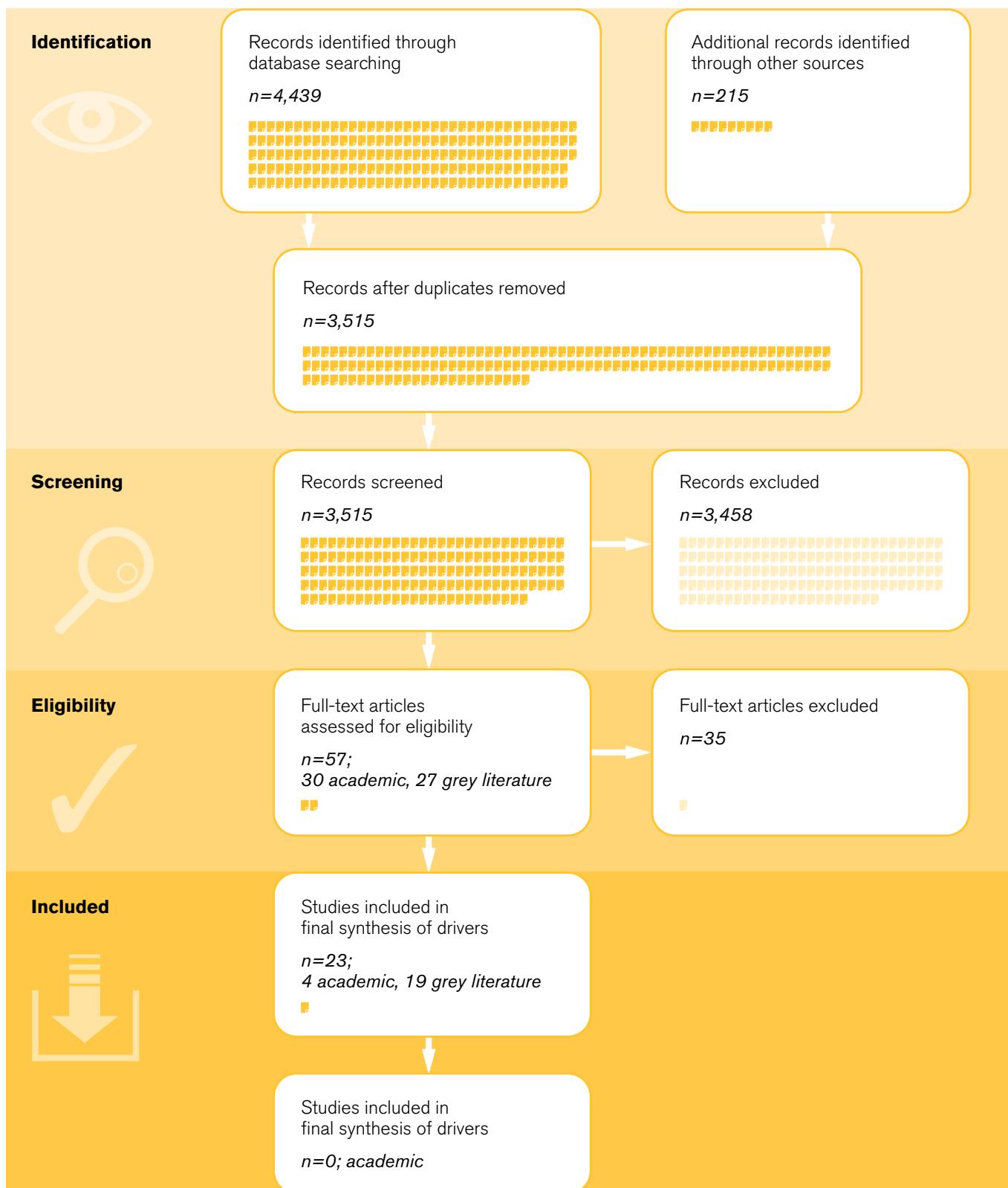
### **HARMFUL GENDER NORMS**

Gender norms were cited by eight studies as contributors to different forms of violence, including IPV, domestic violence, and street harassment. Gender norms were discussed in two ways. First, traditional gender norms, such as those that value women and girls less or differently than men and boys, are a contributing factor to GBV against women and girls. Secondly, and more commonly mentioned as a theme in this literature, that changing gender norms, in which women/girls gained new rights or experiences (i.e. employment), increased the risk of violence against women through strained relationships or disapproval of new activities by those who preferred traditional gender norms.

IDP and non-IDP women living in Afghanistan discussed how traditional gender norms are a driver of violence in their experiences. In the case of urban Afghanistan, strict cultural norms severely limit the mobility and decision-making of women. As a result, women are unable to build social networks, work, or attend school under the threat of violence. The Taliban threatens families that send their girls out of the house with violence (Schmeidl & Typer, 2015).

IDPs in Côte d'Ivoire and Columbia along with refugees in Uganda, Jordan, Egypt, and Afghanistan all mentioned that changing gender norms were a driver of violence. In Abidjan, Colombia and Kampala, as a result of poverty and poor job opportunities for men, more women from cultures where men have traditionally earned money for the family reported working. In some cases, this shift in earning power and responsibility has led to increased tension, insecurity, and fighting between partners that in turn can result in increased IPV (Cardoso et al., 2016; J Krause-Vilmar, 2011; Wirtz et al., 2014). A study with adolescent girl refugees (primarily Syrian) in Jordan reported similar findings. However, the adolescent girls experienced increased tension and violence in the home, a driver of domestic violence (including physical IPV) and threats of child marriage to generate income (Qamar & Lokot, 2015).

**Figure 3: PRISMA Flow Diagram**



## Results (continued)

Two studies reported displaced populations clashing with the host population regarding gender norms as contributing factors for violence. Refugee women living in Cairo reported verbal street harassment as a result of not covering themselves in public in line with Egyptian gender norms (Heller & Tomoney, 2008). In another study with Syrian refugees in Jordan, refugee women spoke of a more conservative host community that resulted in them being harassed by local men (International Rescue Committee, 2013).

### Community-level

#### DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination of internally displaced or refugee populations by host communities was one of the most salient drivers of violence against these groups. Nine of the 23 studies highlighted a range of abuses faced as a result of gendered, religious, ethnic, and xenophobic prejudice.

Xenophobia drove violence against refugees in Johannesburg and Cairo in the form of physical assaults against men and women, and sexual assault and harassment of women only (Buscher, 2013; Jina; Krause-Vilmar & Chaffin, 2011). In Cairo, this was particularly the case for women who did not adhere to a conservative dress code (Heller & Tomoney, 2008). Children were also targets of xenophobic abuse at school in the form of verbal and physical harassment by other children (Plan International, 2015) and increasing corporal punishment by teachers (Plan International, 2015).

Ethnic and religious discrimination fuelled violence in other settings. In Delhi, Afghan refugees were harassed on the street because of their religion, and Burmese faced verbal attacks, economic exploitation, and forced evictions based on their ethnic appearance. Due to displacement and the re-clustering of ethnic groups following election violence in Nairobi, IDPs faced verbal harassment as a result of ongoing ethnic tension. This discrimination also fuelled forced evictions by landlords unwilling to rent to IDPs from a rival ethnic group (Metcalfe, Pavanello, & Mishra, 2011).

Discrimination was also described as driver of violence perpetration by IDPs and refugees. In Somalia, the discrimination faced by refugee youth living in Nairobi, was described as contributing to their decision to join gangs and therefore perpetrate criminal violence associated with these groups (e.g., theft, murder) (Im et al., 2016). In Abidjan, IDPs fleeing election violence faced prejudice such that the host community regarded them as desperate and suspected they were from the opposing political party. This seriously constrained their ability to integrate into the new community, find employment opportunities or obtain help meeting their basic needs. These stressors were considered contributing factors to violence perpetrated against women in the home. This included physical, emotional, and sexual violence (Cardoso et al., 2016).

BELOW: A mother and daughter in the western Afghan city of Herat. Research shows that poverty in Afghanistan is a risk factor for early marriage of girls, which is in turn a risk for IPV against women and girls.  
Ned Collet/IRC



## **WEAK AND/OR DISCRIMINATORY SECURITY INSTITUTIONS**

Targeting of refugee and displaced populations by police in the form of physical assault or exploitation was a major concern across a variety of urban post-crisis settings. Poor and under-resourced, and in some cases apathetic, law enforcement are also unable (or unwilling) to address violence in these contexts. Perpetrators of violence, therefore, act with impunity, contributing to continued violence.

Verbal, physical, and sexual abuse by police was reported in many refugee communities (Hough, 2013; Im et al., 2016; Pavanello et al., 2010), as was the threat of violence (Leiter et al., 2006), detention (Leiter et al., 2006; Hough, 2013), or eviction (Metcalfe, Pavanello, & Mishra, 2011) without payment of a bribe. This abuse of power has particular implications for female refugees or IDPs. For example, when women face gender-based violence in Johannesburg, police are reportedly indifferent to their assertions and demand sex in exchange for services (Buscher, 2013).

The inaction of police also contributed to the violence faced in these communities. Police in Kabul and Yei, South Sudan, for instance, are underpaid, and poorly resourced with inadequate equipment. There are also not enough police to meet the demand in these cities. These constraints contribute to a culture of impunity and a norm of addressing matters, violently in some cases, without the help of police (Metcalfe, Pavanello, & Mishra, 2011; Martin & Sluga, 2011). These findings also relate to the structural level of the SEM.

## **STRESSED INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES, RESOURCES**

In some settings, a rapid influx of refugees arrived in poor, already low-resource communities. Their settlement placed a significant strain on already weak infrastructure and services. The influx of IDPs in Kabul led to conflicts over land and water resources (Metcalfe et al., 2012). Similarly, in the urban Kurdistan region of Iraq, within the Erbil Governorate, a spike in displacement has stressed public services, increased competition for land, and has resulted in escalating distrust and tensions among host and displaced populations (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016). In Abidjan, IDPs contributed to the over-crowding of low-income communities, such that the line between private and public space became indistinct, and women's experience of intimate partner violence was well-known among neighbours. Because these neighbourhoods were characterised by distrust, this violence was used by community members to ridicule and further harass the victim (Cardoso et al., 2016).

In other urban settings, however, where displacement has been protracted, such as in Mafraq, Jordan, an initially hospitable environment has seen increasing violence as a result of competition for jobs and the belief that international aid organisations are prioritising the needs of refugees over citizens (Buryan, 2012). A similar situation was described in Nairobi, another city with a protracted refugee situation. Sudanese and Congolese refugees in contact with NGOs described being verbally and physically harassed by Kenyans who believe refugees are getting financial assistance and stealing aid money allocated to Kenya (Pavanello et al., 2010).

## **FRACTURED SOCIAL NETWORKS**

The breakdown of social support networks is a common characteristic of crisis- and displacement-affected environments. Social isolation and the inability to access support contributes to the risk of violence in these settings.

Displaced and non-displaced residents of Abidjan faced fractured social networks as a result of conflict. This had particular implications for women experiencing IPV. Feeling socially isolated family and friends in distant regions acted as a barrier to disclosure of IPV among these women. In turn, IPV persisted (Cardoso, 2016). In Nairobi, non-partnered women arriving to the city without a network often relied on strangers for employment and accommodation and reported sexual abuse as a result (Hough, 2013).

Vulnerable subpopulations of refugees may face the greatest isolation – from both host and refugee communities – and the greatest risk of violence as a result of their status as, for example, a person who is LGBT, disabled, or a sex worker. Lack of informal (e.g., family and friends) and formal (e.g., services and professional care) social support prevents these stigmatised populations from the protection they need to avoid physical and sexual victimisation. For people with disabilities, in particular, a lack of social support for family members can result in violence within the home. Overburdened caretakers may resort to physical violence and in extreme cases, abandonment (Rosenberg, 2012).

Unaccompanied youth are another group whose risk of violence increases as a result of non-existent social support. Often having been separated from family, children may face abuse and exploitation, particularly if they are indebted to the person who organised their accommodation. (Plan International, 2015; Hough, 2013; Metcalfe et al., 2012).

## Results (continued)



### POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Though this review did not examine the violence experienced during conflict, one eligible study linked the experience of conflict-related violence to perpetration of violence against their partners many years later. This study specifically examined the association between exposure to pre-migration political violence (using a 6-item scale that included witnessing the rape of a loved one and nearly being killed) and perpetrating intimate partner violence among immigrant men born in a variety of countries who had settled in Boston, Massachusetts. Findings indicated that men who reported experiencing political violence were more likely to perpetrate both physical and sexual IPV compared to men who did not report experiencing political violence (Gupta et al., 2009).

### Familial Level

#### LOSS AND GRIEF

In the study with gang-involved Somali youth in Kenya, participants cited death or loss of family members, the resulting grief, and feelings of wanting revenge or retaliation as drivers of gang participation and violence perpetration (Im et al., 2016).

ABOVE: Kiambiu, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Nairobi. Research shows that loss and grief among Somali youth in Kenya drives them to join gangs and become perpetrators of violence.  
Sophia Jones/IRC

### DISPLACEMENT

Displacement as risk factor for GBV was explicitly mentioned in two studies. For women in Abidjan, displacement was identified as an underlying cause of their economic stress and poor living conditions, both drivers of IPV perpetration for men. Displacement was also a risk factor for harassment outside the home by the host community for IDPs (Cardoso et al., 2016).

In Colombia, women also discussed displacement as a risk factor for GBV. However, unlike Abidjan, where couples were likely to be displaced together, women in Colombia were displaced without their partners. This resulted in a loss of income, driving some women to sex work or being trafficked. Women also mentioned that living or being alone in new urban and unfamiliar spaces increased vulnerability to GBV (Cardoso et al., 2016; Wirtz et al., 2014).

### GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Syrian women and girls in Jordan faced harmful stereotypes as prostitutes and cheap brides (based on their economic status), leading to harassment that included being propositioned for transactional sex and the purchase of daughters for low dowry (Washington & Rowell, 2013). Similarly, in Abidjan, female IDPs were at further risk of sexual exploitation as a result of the economic deprivation they faced, which was fuelled by discrimination against IDPs.

Some partnered IDP women turned to exchanging sex for goods and money, while some unpartnered women were forced into marriages to help support their extended families (Cardoso et al., 2016). Female refugees in Cairo, where employment opportunities are scarce for non-nationals, were forced to take jobs in the unregulated, informal economy where some experienced physical and verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation, and rape (Rosenberg, 2016).

## Individual Level

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Among urban IDPs in Quito, Colombia, alcohol was considered a contributing factor for men perpetrating a range of IPV behaviours including threats, physical, and sexual violence, sometimes with the use of weapons (Wirtz et al., 2014). The abuse of drugs and alcohol, seen as an escalating problem among displaced men in Yei, South Sudan, was similarly described as contributing to violence against women in their homes (Martin & Sluga, 2011). Substance abuse also figured prominently in the violence women faced outside of the home. Metcalfe, Pavanello, & Mishra (2011) found that sexual harassment and assault of displaced women on Nairobi's streets were perceived to be perpetrated by young men under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

## Evaluated Interventions

No identified articles researched or evaluated the effectiveness of programmes to reduce violence among displaced populations in urban crisis or post-crisis settings. While some agencies (e.g., the IRC's Women's Protection and Empowerment unit) described programmes that address or may address the contributing causes of violence (e.g. cash transfer programmes), no studies described evaluated violence outcomes. One protocol paper describing a programme designed to reduce violence and improve safety among conflict-affected adolescent girls residing in a range of post-crisis settings, including an urban area was identified, but this programme is still ongoing and evaluation results are not expected until 2017 (Falb et al., 2016).

One violence reduction intervention that took place in an urban crisis-affected setting was identified, but did not mention the inclusion of displaced or refugee populations. In this study, criminally-engaged men (theft, drug dealing, physical fighting with each other, community members or police) in urban Monrovia, Liberia were randomised to four groups (cash only, cash and therapy, therapy only, and no intervention) and followed for a year to assess continued criminal behaviour. The authors found short-term reductions in criminal behaviour with cash only and therapy only interventions and longer-term (one year) reductions in criminal behaviour when therapy was followed by cash (Blattman, Jamison, & Sheridan, 2015). As this study was not specific to IDPs, refugees, or host populations and did not evaluate other forms of violence besides criminal behaviour, it was not eligible. However, it is mentioned here because it provides an example of the only evaluated study in an urban humanitarian setting that addressed a form of violence.



LEFT: Fouad, 11 years old, stands on the Corniche in Tripoli, Lebanon. When his family fled Syria and came to Lebanon, he sold CDs in the streets of Tripoli to support his family.

A recent IRC survey of 173 Syrian refugee children working on the streets of Lebanon revealed that more than 60% of the children said they had experienced some form of violence. (See page 22)

T. Breuer/IRC

## **Case Study: Hardship and Abuse Experienced by Syrian Children Working on the Streets of Urban Lebanon**

A recent IRC survey of Syrian children working on the streets of Lebanese cities corroborates many of the findings of the systematic literature review with qualitative data. The survey reveals that many refugee children on the streets of the Beirut and Tripoli, two of Lebanon's largest cities, experience different forms of violence while trying to earn money for their families.

Over two thirds of Syrian refugee children working on the streets in Lebanon work for six days a week, with more than half working for up to 10 hours each day. Typically aged between six and ten years old, more than one in four children also reported to the IRC working both day and night shifts.

An estimated 1,500 children work on the streets of Lebanon, and many of these can be found selling CDs, tissues or gum on the streets of Beirut and Tripoli – the two locations surveyed by the IRC.

Lebanon is home to 1.5 million Syrian refugees, and half of them live in extreme poverty. Five years into the conflict, 80% of Syrian families in Lebanon lack residency permits for some or all adult family members, severely restricting their ability to move freely in search of paying work. As a consequence, some refugee parents have decided their only choice is to send their children to work on the street.

Working on the street isn't safe and more than 60% of the children polled said they had experienced some form of violence. This was most commonly physical violence from passers-by but also included verbal abuse and some instances of sexual harassment.

One father interviewed by the IRC expressed his concerns for his child's safety. He said: "I would be scared, and worried about him, until he'd get home. Often his CDs would be stolen, he could have problems with other kids and get beaten up."

While there were similarities between the circumstances of children working in both cities, there were also some marked differences. In Tripoli, nine in 10 of the children



ABOVE: Zayn, 13, on a slide in a playground in Beirut. His family came to Beirut from a village near Aleppo in 2011, fleeing the war in Syria. Zayn used to work to support his family. T. Breuer/IRC

surveyed were from Aleppo governorate in Syria, while the origins of children in Beirut was more varied. In Beirut, almost half of the children polled were girls compared to only 14% in Tripoli. In Beirut, nearly a third (28%) are involved in begging, while in Tripoli only 3% are.

Nearly all of the 173 children surveyed arrived in Lebanon between 2012 and 2014 – so, at a minimum, they have already missed two years of school. In 2016, the IRC helped 150 children working on the street get back into school, even enrolling 112 in an accelerated learning programme to help prepare them for attending formal education again.

Each week around 90 street working children take part in fun activities run by the IRC, to give them some semblance of a normal childhood and help them recover from the trauma and stress they face in their daily life, help them develop their emotional and creative skills and help them recognise danger, especially from predatory adults.

To further combat the dangers faced by children working on the street, the IRC runs a 24-hour emergency hotline so that child protection officers can be alerted immediately to any serious issues.

This case study underlines economic strain as a driver of violence in cities, as well as other themes discussed in the next section of this report. It also highlights possible programmatic interventions to address urban violence, a research area that should be prioritised as more displaced persons move into cities.

# Discussion

The initial aims of this review were to identify drivers of violence and protection risks among refugees and displaced populations living in urban areas. Overall, this review did provide some evidence of factors at all levels of the social ecological model that contribute to violence faced in these settings, though most of the findings focused on structural- and community-level drivers. It's important to note how some of the most salient factors are unique to post-crisis cities and how others are shared across a variety of humanitarian settings.

At the structural level, economic strain was one of the most salient drivers of violence among refugee and displaced populations living in urban areas. While cities can provide opportunities and the prospect of long-term settlement and self-sufficiency, they can also be economically inhospitable to these new arrivals. Whereas in a camp setting, refugees and IDPs are afforded the ability to meet basic needs such as food and housing, many urban areas receiving refugees are characterised by scarce resources, limited employment opportunities (Haysom, 2013), and broad discrimination against refugees and IDPs seeking jobs, homes, and services (Buscher, 2013; Cardoso et al., 2016; Heller & Tomoney, 2008; Im et al., 2016; Jaconsen, Lundkvist-Houndoumadi, Levron, & Cardona, 2013; Jina; Krause-Vilmar & Chaffin, 2011; Metcalfe et al., 2011; Plan International, 2015; Washington & Rowell, 2013). In this urban context, poverty and economic strain was discussed as a driver of a broad range of violence including intimate partner violence (Cardoso et al., 2016; Wirtz et al., 2014; Martin & Sluga, 2011), early marriage (Listening to women and girls, 2015), transactional sex and sex trafficking (Jina; Krause-Vilmar & Chaffin, 2011); (International Rescue Committee, 2013; Wirtz et al., 2014); Buscher, 2013; Sanctuary in the City Syrian Refugees in Urban Jordan, 2011), community violence (Im et al., 2016), harassment (Metcalfe et al., 2012), and economic violence (Leiter et al., 2006).

Lack of legal protections is another concern of urban-residing refugees and an additional driver of a range of abuse (Earning Money, 2008; Krause-Vilmar, 2011; Karen et al. 2006). Without protected residential status, permission to work, or proper identification – none of which is guaranteed in many urban displacement settings (Kobia & Cranfield, 2009) – refugees (especially refugee women) face economic abuse and sexual exploitation at work, are subject to harassment by police, and experience forced evictions without any legal recourse.

Harmful gender norms contributed to violence experienced by displaced and refugee women and girls in a variety of cities. Specifically, shifts in the earning power and decision-making responsibilities from men to women, disrupting traditional intra-household gender norms, drove violence against women by their partners (Cardoso et al., 2016; Wirtz et al., 2014; Krause-Vilmar et al., 2011) and adolescent girls by their fathers (Qamar & Lokot, 2015). Women's transitioning economic and social roles has been documented in both rural and urban post-crisis settings and has been identified in both places as a key contributor to the violence women face in their home (Falb et al., 2014; Horn et al., 2014). These shifts are compounded, however, by the "modern norms" of the city, possibly creating a bigger risk for violence in some urban areas (Cardoso et al., 2016), while in other culturally conservative cities, tension between the traditional gender norms of a host population and more equitable norms espoused by displaced groups resulted in the harassment of women on the street (Earning Money, 2008; Cross-sectoral, 2013). The findings of the research challenge the common assumption that urban women and girls are better able to access services, employment and social opportunities than rural-residing females (Evans, 2015; Reichlin & Shaw, 2015). This review indicates that displacement to urban areas can place women and girls at disproportionate risk, living with fewer freedoms and opportunities than those they enjoyed in their natal villages or when living in other countries. Evidence gathered shows that displaced females face significantly enhanced gendered constraints to accessing education, health and employment and are vulnerable to violence in pursuit of all of these activities.

## Discussion (continued)

Community-level discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity, and nationality contributed considerably to the violence experienced by refugees and IDPs.

Facing stereotypes and prejudice, women were vulnerable to verbal, physical, and sexual assault in public (Buscher, 2013; Jina; Krause-Vilmar & Chaffin, 2011; Washington & Rowell, 2013), as well as intimidation and sexual and economic exploitation while working (Heller & Tomoney, 2008). Children faced attacks and corporal punishment at school as a result of xenophobic attitudes (Plan International, 2015; JIPS, 2013; Plan International, 2015) and men too experienced verbal and physical violence stemming from discrimination (Kraus-Vilmar & Chaffin, 2011; Buscher, 2013).

These experiences were shaped by the contours of the urban environment – ethnically diverse, densely-populated and over-crowded, and low on opportunity for social mobility. In these cities, new arrivals were considered by the local population as a threat to existing cultural ways of life and competition for scarce resources (Buryan, 2012; Pavanello et al., 2010). In this way, discrimination and stressed infrastructure, services, and resources dovetail to drive violence against refugees and IDPs. Scarce resources and discrimination also have relevance to relationship between city police and violence. In some cases law enforcement share the discriminatory attitudes of host populations and as a result target refugees and IDPs – perpetrating or threatening violence while exploiting them for bribes (Buscher, 2013; Im et al., 2016; Leiter et al., 2006; Metcalfe et al., 2011; Pavanello et al., 2010). In other cases, under-resourced police forces lack the ability to address the violence in their city,

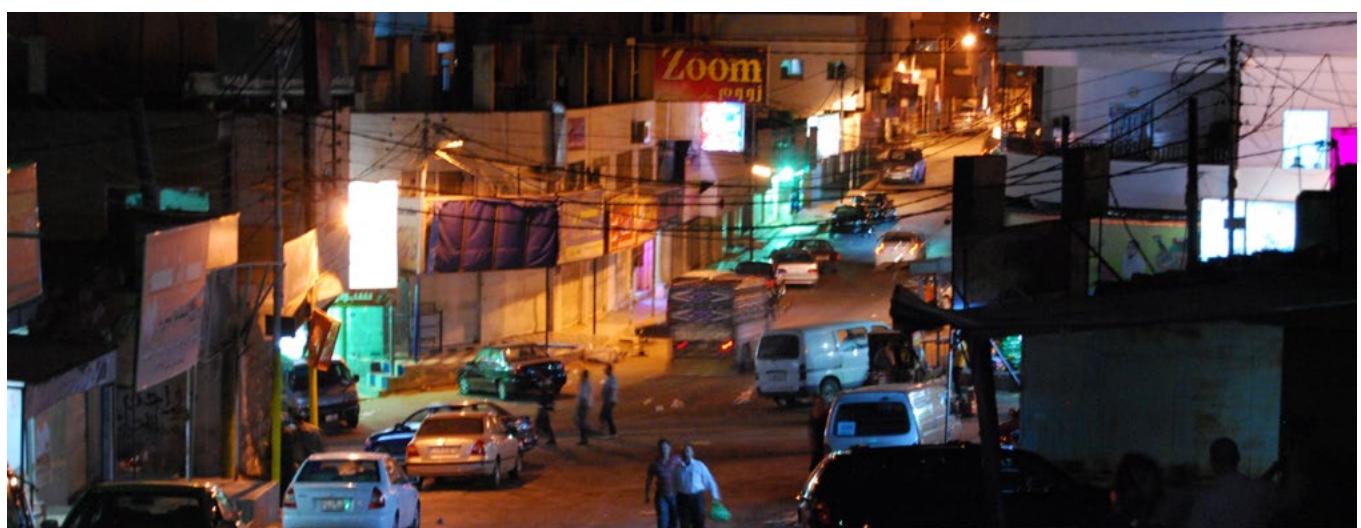
perpetuating norms of impunity where violence of all kinds, particularly against those without legal status, goes unpunished (Martin & Sluga, 2011; Metcalfe et al., 2011)

The community-level characteristics of urban areas of displacement, as described above, in conjunction with the fracturing of social networks commonly following a crisis can also lead to social isolation. In the case of particularly vulnerable subpopulations such as persons who are LGBT or have a disability (Rosenberg, 2012), or unaccompanied minors (Plan International, 2015; Hough, 2013; Metcalfe, et al., 2012), lack of social support in several cities elevated their risk of experiencing violence and acted as a barrier to seeking help.

In the last ten years, greater attention has been paid to understanding the threat of violence in crisis and post-crisis settings and generating evidence on how to address it (Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), 2004); UNHCR, 2013). More recently, humanitarian agencies have begun to shift their focus from rural and camp settings to cities, in line with the changing landscape of global displacement (Guterres & Spiegel, 2012). Findings from the first part of our review do indicate that violence against refugees and IDPs in urban post-crisis settings is a serious concern. Yet, no articles evaluating the effectiveness of a programme addressing violence in an urban crisis or post-crisis setting were identified in the second part of this review. These results indicate an urgent need for evidence on how to best address the violence urban-residing displaced populations face, particularly as protection agencies have already begun to engage in these communities.

**BETWEEN:** The Jordanian border city of Ramtha at night. Tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have disappeared into urban Jordan since anti-government protests began in Syria at the start of 2011. Over-crowding of cities as a result of forced displacement often leads to discrimination against the displaced.

Ned Collet/IRC



# Recommendations

Based on the findings of this review, a number of recommendations are offered for further research and programming.

## Research Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

#### **Researchers should conduct a study focused explicitly on the drivers of violence in urban areas.**

Most of the studies in this review sought to investigate the urban displacement/refugee experience in general and drivers of violence were discussed, though often not at length, in this context. Studies that ask explicitly and solely about violence and that allow participants to identify drivers via open ended or qualitative methods as well as measurement of known or suspected drivers would provide a more accurate and robust landscape of the range of violence experiences and factors contributing to abuse. Future research should explicitly endeavour to rigorously evaluate how violence disproportionately affects women, children, and youth residing in urban areas. In particular, as gender norms drive violence at every socio-economic level (structural, community, familial, individual), there is a need to better understand violence against women and girls in urban areas and how it may differ from rural or camp settings.

### Recommendation 2

#### **Future research should utilise more rigorous research methodologies.**

The majority of studies in this review were derived from grey literature. While the research produced by organisations working on the ground in urban humanitarian settings provided critical evidence on contributing factors of violence, the methods were mostly qualitative and not always fully described, and respondents were generally from non-random convenience samples such that organisations surveyed and interviewed people already in their network, thus potentially missing the voices of the most vulnerable IDPs and refugees. More rigorous studies subject to academic peer review may not be able to overcome all of the sampling constraints, but they could utilise more rigorous methodologies, like respondent-driven sampling, to connect with harder-to-reach populations. This is important because the drivers of violence and experiences of vulnerable subpopulations such as people with a disability or the LGBT population, as well as ethnic and religious minorities, elderly populations, and those urban residents living in acute poverty who



ABOVE: Zainab, formerly a nurse in Somalia, now survives in Kenya by cooking food and selling it to nearby market traders. Her 'kitchen' is a tiny space between the outside wall of her concrete room and some makeshift iron sheeting. Such work brings a little income for her family, but she struggles to pay her rent.

John Gyovai/CineTrek

were under-represented in the literature. More evidence on the unique risks of these groups, as well as refugee populations facing multiple vulnerabilities, is needed.

### Recommendation 3

#### **Future research on the drivers of urban violence should involve a greater breadth of urban displaced and host residents.**

Research involving women, adolescents, children, men, and community leaders from both the displaced and host populations would provide a more dynamic understanding of the factors contributing to violence in these settings, particularly as it pertains to discrimination, exploitation, and violence between urban community groups residing in the same areas.

## Recommendations (continued)

### Adhering to IASC Research Guidelines

While these research recommendations are important to an advanced understanding on the drivers of and interventions to prevent urban violence, humanitarian actors responding to urban crises should ensure that they adhere to the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*. The IASC Guidelines state that humanitarians should respond to crisis-affected settings with the assumption that GBV is taking place (i.e. prior to doing an assessment) and the same assumption should be made in response to urban crises.

### Recommendation 5

#### Incorporate violence indicators in evaluations of economic empowerment interventions.

Cash transfer programmes and other livelihoods interventions are currently being implemented in urban post-crisis settings, but they do not measure or intend to address violence (Saliba, 2016). We know from other settings that when incorporated with components challenging inequitable gender norms, economic interventions can be effective in reducing violence committed by men against their intimate partners (Gupta et al., 2013) or, as standalone interventions, they can exacerbate violence within the home (Murshid, Akincigil, & Zippay, 2016). Given the historical link between economic empowerment programmes and violence, it is recommended that humanitarian agencies conducting these interventions consider incorporating violence and gender equality indicators in their evaluations.

### Recommendation 4

#### Programmes designed to address violence in urban post-crisis setting should be rigorously evaluated.

Given that this review did not find any evaluated programmes designed to address violence in urban post-crisis settings, empirical evidence on effective programming is urgently needed and should be disseminated widely. Specifically, programmes designed as gender inequality, child protection, protection within the rule of law, and/or women's empowerment programmes should be evaluated with an emphasis on how they address the intersection of inequalities in urban areas and how successful they are at reaching the most vulnerable displaced urban residents, such as GBV survivors with disabilities, ethnic minorities, or other vulnerable persons.

RIGHT: In 2012, tens of thousands of people in and around Goma, the capital city of North Kivu Province, DRC, were forced to flee surging violence between rebels and the military. This woman managed to get some beans for her family of seven; they had not eaten for more than two days.

Sinziana Demian/IRC



## **Programmatic Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 6**

#### **Programmatic interventions aimed at reducing violence should consider drivers across the social ecological model.**

As this review indicates, factors contributing to violence in these settings are multi-level and interact in complex ways across the various levels of the social ecological model. Any programmes that intend to address violence need to consider the co-mingling of drivers and co-occurrence of different types of violence. For example, based on our results, economic strain and discrimination are two important and related drivers of violence. Any interventions that utilise an economic empowerment component to reduce violence should also take into account the discrimination refugees and IDPs face in low-resource urban areas where they are perceived as contributing to the deprivation of the local urban poor by competing for jobs and services. It is important for humanitarian actors to recognise that programmes that seek to achieve multiple humanitarian outcomes are particularly needed in urban areas.

### **Recommendation 7**

#### **Legal status, documentation, and assistance should be prioritised as a violence reduction strategy.**

Many of the vulnerabilities to violence refugees face in urban displacement settings are contingent on their precarious legal status. Advocating for domestic policy that meets international standards and provides refugees with permission to reside and work legally and the provision of documentation would be an important step towards ensuring the safety of urban-residing refugees. Furthermore, humanitarian actors should increase their provision of legal assistance (including advice and representation) for refugees and displaced persons in urban areas. Their focus should be on supporting refugees and displaced persons on legal status, civil documentation, access to employment, GBV issues, and housing, land and property (HLP) issues. Information sharing, such as through activities at community centres, community outreach, or through mobile technologies, is crucial to supporting urban displaced on a number of issues, including tailored information at the local level issues and how access basic services.

Legal support should have a particular emphasis on supporting urban displaced residents overcome challenges related to HLP, such as forced eviction due to their migration status. Appropriate strategies include increasing awareness and communication between tenants and landlords to improve their understanding of their rights and obligations while strengthening the relationship between parties, managing expectations, and preventing evictions by providing a platform for resolving any HLP disputes.

### **Recommendation 8**

#### **Humanitarian actors should recognise the disproportionate risk of violence against women and girls in urban areas.**

They should work to identify strategies to reduce the risk of violence while at the same time providing them with improved access to services that are more readily available in cities, such as education, health, and livelihood opportunities. Humanitarian actors should ensure that the "opportunity of the city," as it relates to accessibility and diversity of public and private services, extends to women and girls in equal manner.

Furthermore, humanitarian actors should recognise the greater opportunity for exploitation, gender-based violence, and child abuse given the anonymity of displaced persons in urban areas. Identifying such cases is especially difficult and the humanitarian community should work to develop risk-averse methodologies to preventing violence, treating victims of violence, and doing so while respecting the desired anonymity of urban displaced persons wherever it exists.

### **Recommendation 9**

#### **Humanitarian actors should strengthen protection monitoring and analysis on exploitation and abuse against refugees and migrants in urban areas.**

Their priorities should be on data collection and trends analysis on exploitation, harassment and abuse against refugees in urban areas. This information should be used for discrete and targeted advocacy with the local authorities on access to justice, legal status and employment, while combating forced eviction and exploitation from host community members.



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OPPOSITE: Urban refugees from Syria in their flat in Bebnine, northern Lebanon. P. Biro/IRC

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# Annex: Summary of Results

Authors (publication year)	Title	Violence Type(s)	Study Design				Major Results
			Methodology	Location(s)	Population	Sampling for Recruitment	
Cardoso, L.F., Gupta, J., Shuman, S., Cole, H., Kpebo, D., Falb, K.L. (2016)	<i>What factors contribute to intimate partner violence against women in urban, conflict-affected settings? Qualitative findings from Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire</i>	IPV	<b>Qualitative</b> 10 focus groups: 3 non-IDP FGs with women (n=26); 2 IDP FGs with women (n=20); 3 non-IDP men (n=26); 2 IDP men (n=19)	Post-conflict Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	n=91 French-speaking women and men at least 18 years of age	Non-probability	<b>Structural Drivers</b> Urban poverty, male unemployment, food insecurity, financial stress, cramped housing <b>Social Drivers</b> Fractured social networks, changing gender roles, tensions between traditional gender norms and city gender norms <b>IDP-specific Drivers</b> Displacement and discrimination based on status
Im, H., Caudill, C., Ferguson, A.B. (2016)	<i>From victim to perpetrator of trauma: Lived experiences of gang-involved urban refugee youth in Kenya</i>	Gang violence	<b>Qualitative</b> Semi-structured interviews	Kenya	n=20 Somali youth	Non-probability	<b>Individual Drivers</b> Unmet basic social needs (employment, education), safety challenges, substance use, poor quality of life and feelings of hopelessness/helplessness <b>Interpersonal and Family Drivers</b> Grief over loss of family motivating revenge, loss of parents <b>Community Drivers</b> Discrimination from host community, police brutality, community blame of refugees for problems

OPPOSITE: In the Jordanian city of Zarqa, Iraqi boys set off for school in the morning. Jordan opened its public schools to Iraqi youngsters in August 2007, paving the way for eager refugee children to finally resume their disrupted education. But reportedly thousands of Iraqi children are unable to take advantage of the policy because their families cannot afford the cost of transportation and other expenses; these children largely stay indoors – isolated, despondent and longing for a normal life.

Jiro Ose/IRC

## Annex: Summary of Results (continued)

Authors (publication year)	Title	Violence Type(s)	Study Design				Major Results
			Methodology	Location(s)	Population	Sampling for Recruitment	
Leiter, K., Voravit, S., Ingrid, T., Iacopino, V., Beyrer, C. (2006)	<i>Human rights abuses and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS: The experiences of Burmese women in Thailand</i>	IPV	<b>Qualitative</b> Interviews	Thailand	n=68  Key stakeholder informants (NGOs, law enforcement, researchers, government officials);  n=68  Female forced migrants from Burma at least 18 years old	Non-probability	<b>Structural Drivers</b> Thai exploitation of immigrant workers and/or use of physical violence, police corruption (trafficking immigrants in custody)  <b>Policy Drivers</b> Lack of legal protection for immigrants, "social order campaign" preventing sex workers from accessing healthcare, enforcement of immigration law
Gupta, J., Acevedo-Garcia, D., Hemenway, D., Decker, M.R., Raj, A., Silverman, J.G. (2009)	<i>Premigration exposure to political violence and perpetration of intimate partner violence among immigrant men in Boston</i>	IPV perpetration	<b>Quantitative</b> Cross-sectional survey	Boston, USA	n=379  Immigrant men at three community health centres	Non-probability	<b>Structural Drivers</b> Previous exposure to political violence [AOR]=2.84; 95% confidence interval [CI] =1.41, 5.74
Wirtz, A. L., Pham, K., Glass, N., Loochkartt, S., Kidane, T., Cuspoca, D., Vu, A. (2014)	<i>Gender-based violence in conflict and displacement: Qualitative findings from displaced women in Colombia</i>	IPV, sexual work, trafficking	<b>Qualitative</b> Interviews and focus groups	San Jose de Guaviare; Quibdo, Colombia	n=35  IDP urban and rural females at least 18 years old seeking help for GBV;  n= 31  Providers in 6 focus group interviews	Non-probability	<b>Individual and Familial Drivers</b> Alcohol use, infidelity, family separation, financial instability  <b>Structural Drivers</b> Power differences between men and women, changing gender norms, financial instability
Rosenberg, J. (2016)	<i>Mean streets: Identifying and responding to urban refugees</i>	GBV, sex work	<b>Qualitative</b> Interviews and focus groups	Quito, Ecuador;  Delhi, India;  Beirut, Lebanon;  Kampala, Uganda	n=509  Refugees of diverse backgrounds (gender, sexual orientation, disability status)	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Lack of employment opportunities, poor transportation, late night working conditions, lack of secure tenure, refugee status, legal status

Authors (publication year)	Title	Violence Type(s)	Study Design				Major Results
			Methodology	Location(s)	Population	Sampling for Recruitment	
Krause-Vilmar, J., Chaffin, J. (2011)	No place to go but up: Urban refugees in Johannesburg, South Africa	Physical abuse, exploitation	Mixed methods  <b>Qualitative</b> Interview/focus groups  <b>Quantitative</b> Secondary data analysis	Johannesburg, South Africa	n=162  Interviews with forced Somalis, Congolese, Zimbabweans migrants;  n=45  Interviews with black South Africans living in poverty;  n=30  Interviews with government officials, service providers, etc.	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Xenophobia, lack of legal status and legal resource, police corruption
Krause-Vilmar, J. (2011)	The living ain't easy: Urban refugees in Kampala	GBV	<b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups, semi-structured discussions, household interviews, project site visits	Kampala, Uganda	n=251  Refugees with a focus on Congolese, Somali and Burundi refugees;  n=30  Interviews with urban poor city officials, and service providers	Non-probability	Increased female earning may strain relationship and increase risk of GBV;  Poverty drives transactional or survival sex and/or staying in abusive relationships;  Women who have to sell their wares business to business or on the street are exposed to harassment and sexual assault;  Government officials ask for sexual favours to overlook sellers not having a licence;  Changing gender norms of women working leave men emasculated and increase domestic violence.

## Annex: Summary of Results (continued)

Authors (publication year)	Title	Violence Type(s)	Study Design				Major Results
			Methodology	Location(s)	Population	Sampling for Recruitment	
<b>Qamar, B., Lokot, M. (2015)</b>	<i>Adolescent girls assessment needs, aspirations, safety and access</i>	GBV	<i>Mixed methods</i>  <b>Quantitative</b> Surveys with systematic sampling  <b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups, interviews	Jordan	n=881  Surveys with girls aged 13–17 years old with (n=697) and without (n=184) services from the IRC  79% of sample Syrian	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Exploitation by service providers, changing gender roles
<b>International Rescue Committee (2013)</b>	<i>Cross-sectoral assessment of Syrian refugees in urban areas of South and Central Jordan</i>	GBV, sexual exploitation	<b>Qualitative</b> Key informant semi-structured interviews, focus groups	Aqaba, Ma'an, Karak and Tafileh in Jordan	Syrian refugees  14 FG with men (n=58), male youth (n=13), women (n=134), female youth (n=5), and children (n=15)  n=25 key informant interviews	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Conservative host community, local and foreign men taking advantage of young Syrian women for cheap dowry, early marriage, lack of economic opportunity
<b>Heller, L., Tomoney, J. (2008)</b>	<i>Earning money/ staying safe: The links between making a living and sexual violence for refugee women in Cairo</i>	GBV, exploitation	<b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups, interviews, site visits	Cairo, Egypt	n=54  FGs with refugees and asylum seekers;  10 interviews with service providers;  7 Darfuri women, 25 Ethiopian/Eritrean women, and 22 Iraqis (9 men, 13 women)	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Racism, xenophobia, cultural clashes with host community (re women's dress), changing gender roles, lack of work permits, language barriers, lack of economic opportunities drive to sex work
<b>Plan International (2015)</b>	<i>Refugee rights assessment in Egypt</i>	Harassment, discrimination	<i>Mixed methods</i>  <b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups, interviews  <b>Quantitative</b> Survey	Three cities in Egypt	Displaced populations in Egypt (primarily Syrian)	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Anti-Syrian sentiment from host communities, unaccompanied youth

Authors (publication year)	Title	Violence Type(s)	Study Design				Major Results
			Methodology	Location(s)	Population	Sampling for Recruitment	
<b>Metcalfe, V., Haysom, S., Martin, E. (2012)</b>	<i>Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Kabul</i>	Community violence, discrimination, child labour	<b>Mixed methods</b>  <b>Qualitative</b> Interviews, focus groups  <b>Quantitative</b> Demographic survey	Kabul, Afghanistan	n=27  Key informant interviews;  n=166  Focus groups (elders, men, women, young adults, both recently displaced and longer-term residents);  n=166  Surveys	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Settlement/land disputes (between displaced and non-displaced), strains on already weak services and infrastructure, employment/discrimination among Pashtun males, women/children begging for money, unemployment/poverty among recently displaced, under-resourced/poorly paid law enforcement, lack of land titles for refugees, unemployment
<b>Martin, E., Sluga, N. (2011)</b>	<i>Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Yei, South Sudan</i>	IPV, street harassment	<b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups, interviews, and desk review	Yei, South Sudan	n=160  Key informant interviews representatives of local community organisations and NGOs, government officials, judicial authorities, church institutions, international aid representatives (including NGOs, UN and donors) and private sector actors  Key informant interviews supplemented data	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Women's low social status, poverty, lack of male employment and substance abuse by husbands, poor security infrastructure (police)

## Annex: Summary of Results (continued)

Authors (publication year)	Title	Violence Type(s)	Study Design				Major Results
			Methodology	Location(s)	Population	Sampling for Recruitment	
Buryan, E. (2012)	<i>Analysis of host community-refugee tensions in Mafraq, Jordan</i>	Community violence, labour exploitation, forced marriage	<b>Qualitative</b> Key informant interviews	Mafraq, Jordan	n=unknown  Key informant interviews with Jordanian and Syrian communities (non-specific)	Non-probability	<b>Community Drivers</b>  Tension between displaced and host community competing for jobs and resources; cultural disagreement.  <b>Other Drivers</b>  Labour exploitation of children, forced marriage and prostitution of girls resulting from economic hardship
Pavanello, S., Elhawary, S., Pantuliano, S. (2010)	<i>Hidden and exposed: Urban refugees in Nairobi, Kenya</i>	Community violence, harassment	<b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups and interviews	Nairobi and refugee camps in Kenya	n=398  203 male and 195 female;  141 Somalis, 60 Kenyans, 45 Ethiopians, 38 Rwandans, 45 Sudanese, 49 Congolese, 18 Burundians, and 2 Eritreans.	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b>  Police extortion of refugees, gang activity exposure, xenophobia and poor relations with host community, media portrayal of Somalis as terrorists/smugglers, receiving aid from an NGO
UNHCR (2016)	<i>Displacement as challenge and opportunity</i>	Community violence	<b>Mixed methods</b>  <b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups  <b>Quantitative</b> Surveys	Kurdistan Region, Iraq	n=403 IDPs  379 Syrian refugees;  121 people from the host community	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b>  Economic constraints and lack of written rental contracts drive forced evictions of IDPs and refugees; cultural differences/ strain on local infrastructure/ services as contributor to "tensions"
Schmeidl, S., Typer, D. (2015)	<i>Listening to women and girls displaced to urban Afghanistan</i>	Domestic violence, forced marriage, community violence	<b>Qualitative</b>	Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar, Afghanistan	n=446  IDP and non-IDP;  Women (49%) and men	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b>  Economic constraints, early marriage, strict cultural norms, Taliban laws/rules, lack of housing

Authors (publication year)	Title	Violence Type(s)	Study Design				Major Results
			Methodology	Location(s)	Population	Sampling for Recruitment	
<b>Hough, C. (2013)</b>	<i>Newcomers to Nairobi: The protection concerns and survival strategies of asylum seekers in Kenya's capital city</i>	Community harassment, GBV	<b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups	Nairobi, Kenya	n=394 refugees; 262 women, 131 men; 55% from Somalia, 3% Burundi, 25% Ethiopia, 2% Eritrea, 12% DRC, 2% Rwanda, 1% South Sudan (representative of registered refugees and asylum seekers)	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Lack of proper documentation results in police harassment and extortion, threat of deportation, arbitrary detention, lack of social or social networks for recent female arrivals contributes to GBV as they often rely on strangers for accommodation or employment, lack of food, housing, and money place unaccompanied minors at greater risk of abuse/economic exploitation
<b>Buscher, D. (2013)</b>	<i>New approaches to urban refugee livelihoods</i>	GBV	<b>Quantitative</b>	Kampala, Uganda; New Delhi, India; Johannesburg, South Africa	n=251 refugees in Kampala; n=361 refugees in New Delhi n=162 refugees in Johannesburg (including gay and lesbian refugees)	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Xenophobia, police seeking bribes or sexual favours, traveling along after dark for work, livelihood strategies, lack of economic opportunities
<b>Metcalfe, V., Pavanello, S., Mishra, P. (2011)</b>	<i>Sanctuary in the city? Urban displacement and vulnerability in Nairobi</i>	Sexual abuse, harassment, exploitation, sexual abuse	<b>Qualitative</b> Interviews	Nairobi, Kenya	n=456 with IDPs; n=384 with urban poor; n=99 interviews with key stakeholders	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Ethnic tensions/historical grievances between ethnic groups, lack of jobs, poverty, substance use, women's vulnerability on the street and at home, domestic work, sending children to urban areas, forced (often violent) evictions, landlord exploitation

## Annex: Summary of Results (continued)

Authors (publication year)	Title	Violence Type(s)	Study Design				Major Results	
			Methodology	Location(s)	Population	Sampling for Recruitment		
<b>Washington, K., Rowell, J. (2013)</b>	<i>Syrian refugees in urban Jordan</i>	GBV, family violence	<i>Mixed methods</i>  <b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups, stakeholder interviews  <b>Quantitative</b> Household survey	Five urban locations in Jordan	n=240  n=8	Household mixed method interviews;  Focus groups; Stakeholder interviews	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Lack of gainful employment opportunities, overcrowded houses, decreased food intake, lack of positive social interaction, and lack of activities outside of the house, poor relationship with host communities (boys, girls, men, women)
<b>Joint IDP Profiling Service (2013)</b>	<i>Urban profiling of refugee situations in Delhi</i>	Harassment and discrimination, community violence, child labour	<i>Mixed methods</i>  <b>Qualitative</b> Focus groups  <b>Quantitative</b> Household surveys	Delhi, India	n=1,063  n=12	Household surveys;  Focus groups with men, women, boys, girls	Non-probability	<b>Drivers</b> Unfair payment at work, discrimination by landlords, inability to pay rent, forced evictions, racial/ethnic discrimination, economic constraints (especially girls), harassment at school (boys and girls)

OPPOSITE TOP: On the surface, urban centres in Afghanistan appear to be thriving; streets are packed and construction is booming. But in much of Afghanistan security problems abound and jobs are scarce. The government in Kabul remains reliant on foreign aid. *Ned Colt/IRC*

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Kor Lung Ta (left), a Burmese migrant worker, has worked on Thai building sites for 20 years. Employers never issue workers protective equipment, such as helmets. "I have seen many people die," he says. *P. Biro/IRC*



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**URBAN  
C R I S E S**

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All photographs are taken for the IRC unless otherwise noted. People depicted in photographs do not relate to the case studies discussed in this report, nor are they necessarily victims of violence. Photographs are used primarily for illustrative purposes.

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