

7. Neighbourhood upgrades

Description

Neighbourhood upgrades generally shift the focus from IDPs specifically to area-based interventions integrated into broader urban and development plans. They are distinct from individual or beneficiary-based approaches, and as such help to overcome one of the main challenges faced by humanitarian organisations working in urban - how to reach dispersed IDPs who are largely invisible in broader communities that include other vulnerable people such as migrants, marginalised groups and the urban poor. In some cases, however, such as the Roma Mahalla in Kosovo, the upgrade was part of a return project specifically conceived as a durable solution for IDPs living in protracted displacement in lead-contaminated camps in second case study below). Better use of space to create more housing can also be achieved via North Mitrovicë/a (see first case study).

Neighbourhood upgrades include support for municipalities in improving associated infrastructure and services to an area, and more efficient use of space to increase the number of affordable rental properties available. This is often done by encouraging property owners to build additional rooms to accommodate IDPs' local integration, as was the case in Katye in Haiti.

The third case study describes how the Transitional Solutions Initiative involved community members in Colombia in identifying their priorities and then simultaneously addressing their humanitarian and development needs in the regularisation of their informal settlement.



Residents in new housing in Ravine Pintade, a hilly area in the center of Port-au-Prince which was previously damaged by the earthquake. An extra floor was added to address the small size of the plots. Photo: CHF/Maggie Steber, May 2012

The neighbourhood approach

“Practitioners define the Neighbourhood Approach as an area-based intervention that responds to multi-sectorial needs and is informed by community-based decision-making reflective of the social, economic, and physical features of the delineated area.

The approach is shelter-led but settlement-focussed: it shifts the attention from conventional ‘four walls and a roof’ efforts centred on households, towards a more synergistic and complementary focus on the entire community in defined spatial contexts. The process requires understanding of available local resources, emergent opportunities, and potential constraints regarding the sheltering of people, the recovery of affected economies, and the reduction of risks associated with vulnerability to natural hazards”.

Source: “The Neighbourhood approach” Improving the Delivery of Humanitarian Assistance in Urban Areas.” USAID/DCHQ/OFDA, no date

Case study 1: Katye¹ neighbourhood improvement programme in Ravine Pintade (Haiti)

Snapshot	
Practice	Katye neighbourhood improvement programme in Ravine Pintade
Main actors	CHF International (now Global Communities) Project Concern International
Context	Ninety per cent of Ravine Pintade residents, or around 2,000 people, were displaced by the 2010 earthquake
Target group(s)	The construction and infrastructure programme benefitted 574 families living in Ravine Pintade but other aspects such as medical consultations in a health centre benefitted another 1400 families living outside of Ravine Pintade.
Summary	The practice combined humanitarian assistance with a longer-term development approach that emphasised recovery and settlement upgrade. It supported IDPs' early return to their original neighbourhoods as part of their durable solutions, and contributed to an overall improvement in residents' access to adequate housing in Ravine Pintade. The project took a comprehensive and multi-sectorial approach, including the provision of transitional shelter that could be upgraded, disaster risk reduction measures, rubble removal, and initiatives in the areas of water and sanitation, health, livelihoods and the protection of vulnerable groups.
Strengths (Key elements of right to adequate housing and key programmatic elements from matrix appear in bold)	The practice involved the community from an early stage, and its participation engendered a feeling of community ownership over the project. Enumeration and mapping exercises were used to identify different forms of land rights, tenure claims and ownership, and a risk mapping exercise was also conducted. A profiling exercise helped to identify the community's priorities and needs early on in terms of housing, settlement planning and infrastructure. The practice resulted in a moderate increase in rental housing stock in Ravine Pintade (similar to the incremental housing approach in Jordan). It included disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures such as retaining walls, drainage infrastructure and wider footpaths. Technical experts helped residents to implement the measures. The practice included auxiliary programmes, such as free community health care, training programmes and protection initiatives.
Key challenge(s)	Inaccessibility of the site complicated and slowed down implementation and raised costs Tension with surrounding neighbourhoods not included in the project Lack of training on building maintenance, vertical and horizontal expansion and the re-use of materials.
Factors for potential replicability	The cost-effectiveness of this type of broad approach at different scales Community ownership and participation

Background

In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, many neighbourhoods or *katyes* were severely damaged and their residents displaced. One such area was the Ravine Pintade informal settlement situated between Port-au-Prince and Petionville, which was home to nearly 2,000 families. The settlement spans 16 acres and is built on a steep slope with precarious housing that suffered severe damage during the earthquake. Ninety per cent of the residents were displaced. Damaged roads and rubble made the settlement inaccessible.

Even before the earthquake and the displacement it caused, Ravine Pintade had problems, such as poor planning and construction practices, vulnerability to

floods and landslides, and a lack of public infrastructure including water and sanitation. Even if IDPs were to return, without disaster risk reduction measures they would be vulnerable to renewed displacement in the event of another natural hazard.

Overview

To facilitate return to Ravine Pintade, it was determined that the settlement would have to be rebuilt and upgraded. CHF International (now Global Communities) and Project Concern International (PCI) developed a *katye* improvement programme that combined humanitarian assistance with a longer-term development approach emphasising recovery and the upgrading of the settlement. In effect, the programme not only supported IDPs' prompt

return to Ravine Pintade. It also contributed to an overall improvement in residents' access to adequate housing.

The project took a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to settlement improvement, including the provision of transitional shelter that could be upgraded; disaster risk reduction initiatives; rubble clearance; water, sanitation, health and livelihoods programmes; and the protection of vulnerable groups.

Community enumeration and profiling exercises identified different forms of land rights, tenure claims and ownership in the settlement. The enumeration exercise also helped to identify the community's priorities and needs regarding housing, settlement planning and infrastructure. CHF and PCI conducted a risk mapping exercise with the community and then proposed solutions based on their findings. The entire process of programme design, including the enumeration and profiling exercises, aimed to build consensus around the objectives and implementation of the initiative.

In an effort to improve living standards, two-storey housing units were proposed to make up for the small plot sizes in the settlement. In some cases, an extra floor was built on the condition that the beneficiary would offer it rent-free to a homeless or displaced person. The initiative led to a moderate increase rental housing stock in the settlement, and water, sanitation and drainage infrastructure were also installed. Drainage is particularly important in terms of disaster risk reduction.

Community participation played a significant part in the success of the project, not only identifying needs that the programme could address, but also by engendering a sense of ownership of the project, building trust and resolving problems that arose during implementation. These included dealing with threats from within and outside the community, and negotiating land concessions to incorporate disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures such as retaining walls, install sanitation and drainage infrastructure, and widen footpaths. Technical experts helped residents with the implementation of disaster risk reduction measures.

The retaining walls built to shore up Ravine Pintade's steep slopes also created platforms that increased the amount of available land by 17 per cent. The space was used to create a market, community water points, benches and other public spaces with solar lighting, helping to improve living conditions in the settlement.² Auxiliary programmes included free care at a community health centre, training programmes and protection services.

Impact

Almost 2,000 people benefited from the programme.

Beneficiaries included 574 families who had previously lived in the settlement and others on the south side of the ravine and surrounding areas, showing that some effort had been made to target the wider community.³

CHF and PCI employed community members to clear rubble, providing short-term livelihood opportunities for returning IDPs who had lost income as result of their displacement. The programme also tried to address neglected tenants' needs. Many early recovery and housing upgrade or reconstruction schemes favour property owners over tenants, who tend to be side lined. As such, the help provided to returning families in upgrading their homes and building extra floors to provide rent-free housing for homeless people and IDPs were important elements of the initiative.

Challenges and lessons learned

The community's participation and sense of ownership were the main strength in the programme, which was founded on trust. Among other things, it meant that beneficiaries waiting for housing upgrades were able to rely on the community for temporary solutions by making arrangements with friends or family, which added no additional cost to the programme.

The cash-for-work initiative was helpful, but payment by the hour rather than based on productivity was not appropriate. CHF and PCI also considered reusing the rubble for building, but it was deemed unsafe to do so. The programme would have benefited from more livelihood interventions, including vocational training and access to small business loans. It could also have conducted more outreach to surrounding areas to make it even more inclusive, and more training on building maintenance, vertical or horizontal expansion and the recycling of materials should have been included. DRR activities benefited from the presence of technical experts.

The programme helped only a small fraction of the 2.3 million people left temporarily homeless by the earthquake, but it also influenced several other projects through the organisation of field visits and the dissemination of information on its methodology, best practices and costs. IFRC, the American Red Cross, the World Bank and UN-OPS among others acknowledged that it had guided the development of their own programmes.⁴

This was a new project implemented at a relatively small scale, but it could be developed and scaled up as part of future recovery programmes. One key factor to consider, however, is how cost-effective such a multi-sectoral, community-based approach would be at different scales. It touches on the perennial question of whether it is better to assist many people with relatively little, or to help a few with high-level assistance. This is hardly a realis-

tic portrayal of the cost-efficiency trade-offs involved in programme design, but it does reflect that the fact that humanitarians and their counterparts in the development sector often have to pit quantity against quality.

Given that the focus of this report is on employing a rights-based approach to durable solutions, it is important to ask whether programmes such as the one in Ravine Pintade could be mainstreamed in a more cost-effective and time-effective way.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that this was a small and isolated programme, it provides a powerful example of how IDPs' short and longer-term needs can be addressed in a complementary way by combining humanitarian and development approaches.

Case study 2: Return to Roma Mahalla (Kosovo)

Overview

Roma Mahalla is a neighbourhood on the south bank of the river Ibër/Ibar in the city of Mitrovicë/a in northern Kosovo. Before the 1999 armed conflict, it had around 750 homes on at least 13.5 hectares of land and as many as 8,000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) residents,⁵ the largest community of its kind in the former Yugoslavia⁶. The entire population of Roma Mahalla was displaced as a result of the armed conflict that pitted the Kosovo Liberation Army against Yugoslav government forces and Serbian paramilitary units, the subsequent NATO bombing and the wave of retaliatory violence by ethnic Albanians. Roma Mahalla residents were targeted by Albanian Kosovars, who looted the neighbourhood and burned it down because they believed the RAE had collaborated with the Serbs⁷.

RAE who had the resources fled elsewhere in Europe, but the poorest, many of whom had previously been informal settlers, sought refuge in displacement camps near north Mitrovicë/a or fled to Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. The camps were only intended to provide temporary shelter for a few months, but IDPs ended up living there in insalubrious and harmful conditions for up to 13 years. Since the 1999 conflict, Mitrovicë/a has been politically divided. The north of the city is de facto controlled by Serbia, and the south by Kosovo. Further inter-ethnic violence displaced 4,200 people in the city in 2004.

Before the conflict, RAEs' informal settlements, including Roma Mahalla, had not been integrated into the Mitrovicë/a municipality's urban development plan. The land in Roma Mahalla was divided into three categories, each of

which required different types of solution. It had private land, much of it owned by people living in western Europe and unwilling to return and jeopardise their asylum claims; municipal land, on the majority of IDPs had been informally settled; and land administered by the Kosovo Trust Agency, on which very few IDPs had been settled.

Informal RAE settlers, tenants and those living with others tend not to have property documents. Some had never registered their property with the cadastral office, or did not record inheritance or sale transactions. To complicate matters further, Mitrovicë/a's cadastral records had been taken to Serbia during the conflict. The UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) requested and received the cadastral records, and updated vector coordinates and urban plans for Roma Mahalla to ensure that the locations of all previous plots and buildings were properly recorded before the rubble was cleared and reconstruction began. The information was essential in getting the project off the ground.

Mitrovicë/a is a highly politicised environment. In the aftermath of inter-ethnic conflict, it was particularly difficult to get land allocated for displaced minorities. The city also underwent significant urbanisation after the conflict. Its population is said to have doubled with the arrival of IDPs from other parts of Kosovo who wanted to integrate locally rather than return to areas where they would be part of a minority.

Roma Mahalla sits on prime land in the city centre and the municipality had many other potential uses for it. RAEs' return to the neighbourhood was in line with the national preference for IDPs to go back to the home areas, but it took a directive from the prime minister's office before the municipality would agree to allocate land for the process.⁸

Camp conditions

An estimated 1,500 IDPs from Roma Mahalla and elsewhere were accommodated in four camps in Cesmin Lug, Zitkovac, Kablare and Leposavic⁹. Shelter consisted of makeshift tents, huts and metal containers with cardboard insulation, outdoor plumbing and intermittent electricity. Initially meant to be temporary, the camps were managed by UNHCR from 1999 to 2001, UNMIK from 2001 to 2008 and the Ministry of Communities and Returns from 2008 until their closure. Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) managed Cesmin Lug and Osterode, another camp set up in 2007, on UNMIK's behalf.

The Cesmin Lug, Zitkovac and Kablare camps were established on land near the Trepca lead mine and smelter that was contaminated with heavy metals. The contamination affected all local residents, but the health risks to RAE in the camps were significantly higher than for the rest of the population. Many RAE engaged in informal lead smelting to earn an income, and their lead-painted

Snapshot	
Practice	Return to Roma Mahalla (2004 to 2013)
Main actors	UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Municipality of Mitrovicë/a Norwegian Church Aid Danish Refugee Council UNHCR, OSCE, Mercy Corps
Context	Around 8,000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) people fled the Roma Mahalla neighbourhood in the city of Mitrovicë/a in northern Kosovo during the 1999 conflict. The poorest settled in informal camps where they lived for up to 13 years, during which time it emerged that they were lead-contaminated. Kosovo's bid for independence meant it came under EU scrutiny. Mitrovicë/a is a divided city. The northern part is in effect controlled by Serbia and the southern part by Kosovo. Significant urbanisation has taken place in Mitrovicë/a since the conflict, and the Roma Mahalla is prime land in the town centre.
Target group	Displaced RAE families, particularly those living in lead-contaminated camps Mitrovicë/a residents and municipal authorities
Summary	After lengthy negotiations, the Return to Roma Mahalla agreement was reached by the International Stakeholders Group for the Mitrovicë/a Region and the Mitrovicë/a municipality, and was signed on 18 April 2005 by the Municipal Assembly President, UNMIK's Regional Representative, and representatives of OSCE, UNHCR and UNMIK. It outlined the right of all former residents of the neighbourhood to return and the terms under which the move was to take place. Between 2005 and 2012, the project involved temporary resettlement, soil and blood testing for lead contamination, training of public health workers, identity registration, the verification of property rights, rubble removal, infrastructure and housing construction, educational and livelihoods initiatives and strengthening the capacity of Mitrovicë/a's municipal authorities. Housing units were distributed according to family size, and former homeowners had their properties rebuilt. Those who were given new housing units signed a 99-year lease, improving their tenure security compared to their residence in the Roma Mahalla informal settlement before the conflict. Beneficiaries did not pay rent, but were responsible for all utility bills and building maintenance costs. The project helped to overcome the sense of abandonment that the IDPs felt after years of languishing in lead-contaminated camps with few if any effective initiatives to help them.
Key challenge(s)	Considerable advocacy was required regarding the urgent need to close the lead-contaminated camps and resettle the IDPs. The RAE project beneficiaries were highly vocal about some issues, but their participation in planning and implementation was limited. It was not always clear who the legitimate community leaders were, a fact which continues to create confusion for local and international interlocutors. Dealing with the effects of lead contamination, particularly in children and young people. Overcoming IDPs' mistrust of the local and international community and their fears about the possible security issues involved in returning to Roma Mahalla. Absence or inaccuracy of land registries. Some beneficiaries sold their housing in violation of their tenancy agreement, which the municipality considered illegal but approached with flexibility to keep the peace. There were not enough livelihood opportunities for beneficiaries to become self-reliant, which in turn reduced the habitability of their housing over time.
Factors for potential replicability	1. A strong legal and policy framework on durable solutions at the national, regional and municipal level 2. Stability and security after the cessation of violence and hostilities 3. Effective coordination mechanisms between local, national and international organisations and displaced and receiving communities 4. Municipal agreement to allow returnees to resettle on public land



View of the destruction of Roma Mahala after the conflict, and of a rehabilitated building. Photo: IDMC/B. McCallin, May 2009

doors and windows, substandard living conditions, poor diet and hygiene practices, and infrequent medical visits only served to make their health risks worse.

A 2004 World Health Organisation (WHO) study found elevated blood lead levels among RAE in the camps. Further studies by WHO and the Mitrovicë/a public health institute conducted each of the next four years showed similar results and led to calls for the camps to be closed.¹⁰ RAE, human rights organisations and UN special procedures and treaty bodies issued parallel statements about the dangerous health and living conditions in the camps and pressed UNMIK to address the issue.

Five years of neglecting of the lead contamination problem were followed by years of haphazard efforts to resolve the issue. RAE living in the camps were resettled to Osterode until returns to Roma Mahalla began in 2007. After more than a decade living in lead-contaminated camps, the RAE community developed significant mistrust of the international community.

Policy shifts in favour of IDPs' return

Several national, regional and local legal and policy frameworks were applied or invoked in implementing the return of the RAE community to Roma Mahalla. The key legal document, the Return to Roma Mahalla Agreement, was signed on 18 April 2005.

It outlined the terms of the right of return of all former Roma Mahalla residents. The decision would rest with individual families and be entirely voluntary. Private property in the neighbourhood would not be affected except for changes caused by the upgrading of infrastructure, in which case the municipality would compensate owners. Those who had previously lived on municipal land would be returned to municipal land in the same or adjacent areas. Those who had not previously owned land but had lived in the neighbourhood would be given 99-year leases on new apartments in small low-rise buildings with a maximum 12 units and varying floor plans.

A revised manual for sustainable returns published in July 2006 outlines the principles and procedures for implementing a rights-based approach to resettlement. It

covers the economic and social sustainability of returns, incorporates gender and age-related factors of displacement, and establishes a grassroots participatory model that integrates displaced communities. It entitles each family to a relocation package that included food, hygiene and household items, electrical appliances, firewood and an in-kind grant for income generation aligned to beneficiaries' needs and skills.

At the regional level, Kosovo signed the Vienna Declaration on Informal Settlements in South Eastern Europe in March 2005. The goal of regularising informal settlements and closing displacement camps was reinforced in December 2011 by priority 45 of the European partnership action plan for Kosovo, which determines that the state must "find sustainable solutions for accommodation and integration of Roma community living in hazardous conditions in camps and of displaced persons/groups in informal settlements".

Kosovo's strategy for the integration of RAE communities for 2009 to 2105 sets out the state's duty to take steps to provide them with legal tenure security, integrate their settlements into municipal urban development plans and improve their access to housing and other public services. In May 2011, the need to allocate land for return was further reinforced by the European Commission and Kosovo's Ministry of European Integration in their proposals to advance the integration of RAE communities.¹¹

Kosovo's legal framework does not specify the term "social housing" and the only legislation that regulates such programmes is the 2010 law on housing financing specific programmes (Law No. 03/L-164), which aims to create "possibilities for a sustainable housing for the families or individuals that are not in such economically state to endure the offers of free market of dwelling". Article four stipulates eligibility for such programmes. It includes families that do not own an "apartment or house", who are "homeless as a result of house destruction during the last conflict in Kosovo" and whose current accommodation does not comply with "housing standards defined for social and economical category".

Coordination mechanisms and IDPs' participation

After the signing of the Return to Roma Mahalla Agreement in 2005, a project management steering group was established. It was co-chaired by the Mitrovicë/a municipality and UNMIK's minority rights adviser who served as executive officer. It included units on legal and protection issues, community development and technical implementation, which were co-chaired by the municipality and UNHCR, OSCE and UNDP respectively. RAE representatives were not formally included. Interpretation was provided at all meetings, and minutes were published in English, Albanian and Serbian.

The steering group and implementing agencies made several efforts to foster a participatory process for return to Roma Mahalla. They conducted regular individual and group consultations with beneficiaries and separately with RAE leaders, hired RAE staff and held regular community meetings. There were, however, five main challenges to IDPs' participation to overcome.

First, the RAE community had developed significant mistrust of the international community after more than a decade of unmet promises while living in lead-contaminated camps. Second, and very much related, community participation was low in activities such as the Roma Mahalla task force, community meetings and tripartite agreements with implementing agencies and the municipality.

Third, communication was made more difficult by RAE speaking mainly Albanian or Serbian. Mercy Corps hired an external legal firm to explain the content of the tripartite agreements to beneficiaries in their respective languages before they signed.

Fourth, it was not always clear who the legitimate RAE leaders were. Over the years, different people have claimed to lead the Roma Mahalla community, which created confusion for local and international interlocutors.¹² In an effort to better understand the situation, the municipality hired a Roma woman who had returned from lead-contaminated camps to be their representative in the neighbourhood.

Fifth, power relations were unequal when negotiations took place between community leaders and national or international agencies. The steering group executive officer, Laurie Wiseberg, described the situation on 14 March 2005 during talks between the municipality and Roma residents on the urban plan for Roma Mahalla:

"On one side of the table were the Roma leaders, including representatives from Serbia – largely uneducated, with little knowledge of national or international law, in shabby second-hand clothes and nervous; on the other side were the municipal officials and professionals (an urban planner, a lawyer, an architect, a political leader) in suits, well-versed in negotiations, and at ease."

That said, RAE representatives were still able to make themselves heard. They were, for example, vehemently opposed to living in apartments, because the vast majority had only ever lived in individual family homes with a yard. The steering group tried to address the fact that

apartment buildings were not considered culturally appropriate by making modifications to their design. They limited each building to 12 apartments and included measures to accommodate RAE traditions. Each apartment was allocated basement storage space, a woodstove for cooking and a balcony. Residents who moved in during the first phase of the project were given apartments, but the steering group redesigned the accommodation for the second phase to provide terraced housing.

While Roma Mahalla was being reconstructed, UNMIK's civil affairs department and the UN secretary general's special representative for Kosovo proposed relocating IDPs in the lead contaminated camps to vacant army barracks. The RAE community, however, was emphatically opposed. Its sentiments were captured by one camp leader, Skender Gusani, who said: "International organisations are not doing a good job ... people only want to return to the same houses as they had before ... the camps do not want another temporary relocation as they do not want to be forgotten". Camp residents were still offered the relocation and though not all chose to accept it, most eventually did.

When UNMIK and NCA left Kosovo in 2009, Mercy Corps took on a more prominent role in the reconstruction of Roma Mahalla, and in April 2010 it entered into a bilateral memorandum of understanding with the municipality. The agreement set out the duties and responsibilities of each party, and regular meetings were held with the municipality, the Ministry of Communities and Returns, UNHCR, DRC, OSCE, the Kosovo police, NATO's Kosovo force (KFOR) and the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS). The meetings helped to coordinate the closure and demolition of the camps, resettlement procedures, and the addressing of education and protection concerns.

Mercy Corps was not able to sign a memorandum with RAE community leaders, because of their mistrust of external organisations and their feeling that their resettlement requests were not being met. It did find, however, that they "were more comfortable signing limited and specific agreements such as the list of beneficiaries or the contents of the food resettlement packages". This was ultimately viewed as a more productive way to engage community leaders in implementing resettlement, rather than a symbolic memorandum demonstrating general support for the project.

Programme design

After broad and lengthy consensus building, negotiations and coordination, the Return to Roma Mahalla initiative was established as a series of projects across various sectors implemented by international organisations and funded by international donors and, to a lesser extent, the Ministry of Communities and Return. Between 2005 and

2012, it consisted of temporary resettlement, soil and blood testing for lead contamination, training of public health workers, identity registration, property rights verification, rubble removal, infrastructure and housing construction, educational and livelihoods assistance and efforts to strengthen the capacity of the municipal authorities.

The municipality agreed to donate 10 hectares of land to RAE residents under a 99-year lease.¹³ The concept of land donation was reinforced in April 2010, when the prime minister issued a letter advising all municipalities to allocate land for resettlement and return as a show of support of the Kosovo operational plan for displacement.¹⁴

The leasehold agreement stipulates that no rent shall be paid, but beneficiaries are "responsible for paying all utilities and for the maintenance" including repairs to water pipes, windows and roofs. Beneficiaries had to pay a nominal fee of €1 to enter into the agreement.

The Return to Roma Mahalla Agreement stipulated that 20 per cent of the labour force would come from the RAE community. Most materials were also bought from local vendors in Kosovo, although they were manufactured elsewhere. As such, the project contributed to the local economy and provided livelihood opportunities for IDPs and the receiving community. Roma Mahalla residents confirmed that RAE were hired to rebuild the settlement.¹⁵

Apartments and housing units were distributed according to family size. The minimum space allocated was 3.5 square metres per person. The houses built during the second phase took the needs of disabled returnees into account, and families with disabled members were entitled to an individual private room for them and, in some cases, additional housing options. The apartment buildings had various floor plans, such as ground floor plus two storeys (P+2) or ground floor plus three (P+3), with a maximum of 12 apartments per building. The P+3 buildings had commercial or social space on the ground floor, which was intended to help generate income to pay for the maintenance of common infrastructure and areas.

The second phase houses were built using clay bricks, a concrete façade and polystyrene insulation for external walls. The roofs were clay tiled and attics were also insulated. As lead contamination is an issue throughout the region, the land was ploughed deeply before the building work began to minimise lead content in the soil. Wood-burning stoves and portable electric heaters were also provided.

In an effort to avoid friction between returnees and the receiving community, social integration activities were run before, during and after the process. These includ-

ed "cultural and religious events, as well as multi-ethnic trainings on conflict mitigation, gender issues, advocacy and negotiation". The receiving community appears to have accepted the return of RAE to Roma Mahalla, though some have expressed envy at the housing they received.

Community board meetings have been ongoing since 2009. The municipality chairs the meetings and minutes are published in Albanian, Serbian and Romani. They are also disseminated orally for those who are illiterate. Returnees are simultaneously integrated in that they shop in south Mitrovicë/a, and not in that their children go to school in the north of the city.

Impact

Around 280 RAE families, or 1,100 people, have returned to Roma Mahalla. More than 400 had already done so by 2007, thanks in large part to intense efforts by NCA and DRC. The municipality allocated land for NCA to construct four apartment blocks for 48 families. Following the lengthy and complicated process of verifying ownership, DRC reconstructed 54 private homes. The remainder of the 1,100 were settled in terraced houses built under Mercy Corps' leadership in the following years.

Residents who did not previously hold title deeds received new apartments or terraced houses with 99-year leases providing tenure security. As the beneficiaries moved in, they signed acceptance forms to confirm that they were happy with their new homes. Professional removal companies helped them move, and they also received a resettlement package of food, non-food items, furniture, home appliances, firewood and income generation assistance. Returnees acknowledge the improved housing conditions in Roma Mahalla.¹⁶

Residents have access to a range of health facilities, such as the Roma Mahalla clinic, the south Mitrovicë/a family medical centre, the hospital in north Mitrovicë/a and the Institute of Public Health in Pristina.¹⁷ The clinic, or *ambulanta*, was equipped with lead testing equipment and local healthcare workers were trained in its use and the treatment of those with high blood lead levels. This benefits Roma Mahalla and other local residents alike, particularly given that Mitrovicë/a is a heavily polluted area, and because the medication to treat lead contamination is not listed as essential, meaning recipients would otherwise have to pay for it.

To deal with the issue of lead poisoning, NCA constructed a medical clinic with DRC's support. Around 150 RAE children from the camps were found to have high levels of lead in their blood, which in some cases dropped to acceptable levels naturally when they moved out. Between 2010 and 2012, 45 children were treated with chelation therapy, vitamin supplements and a healthy diet, and by

December 2014 only two children – whose families continue to smelt - still had high blood lead levels.

The neighbourhood received an infrastructure makeover. Roma Mahalla residents and their neighbours have benefited from the installation of mains water, electricity supplies, sewers and street lighting, and the laying of asphalted roads and pavements, making it one of the most developed neighbourhoods in the city. Ten of the project's houses were built for members of the receiving community identified by the municipality as living on social assistance without their own homes. They also received vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities. Municipal officials were trained extensively in various topics, including Roma employment, public-private partnerships and foreign investment.

A learning centre was established in Roma Mahalla to address the issue of Roma children being stigmatised because they did not do their homework. The centre also provides extra-curricular support, activities and supplies. Of the 300 or so children in the neighbourhood, around 250 go to school in north Mitrovicë/a to continue to access to Serbian language instruction. The remainder do not go to school and dropouts are common.

Livelihood support evolved over time. Skills and market assessments were conducted to determine the most appropriate and lucrative types of assistance, and returnees were given equipment ranging from chainsaws and masonry tools to musical instruments. Some received business and vocational training, and internships that in some cases led to employment.

When it became apparent that some families were selling the equipment they received, the approach shifted to providing skills rather than goods. Some organisations gave grants to businesses and factories to hire returnees, which helped some gain full-time employment. Others, however, gave up working under the arrangement, arguing that they wanted to be paid daily rather than monthly and preferred short-term labour.

A social business incubator was also set up in Roma Mahalla. It is a depot that offers space for workshops, offices and tools, and the services of a mentor. Those wishing to use the facilities have to provide a business plan. Four out of 12 businesses started in the incubator are active and profitable, with the collection of plastics for recycling the most successful. Roma Mahalla's central location and commercial value have the potential to attract both consumers and investors.

Challenges

Some returnees sold or exchanged their new housing, or transferred it to someone else in transactions that were formalised by a lawyer.¹⁸ Mercy Corps monitors

the occupancy of the terraced houses it built, and as of August 2014, 25 of the 182 units were unoccupied and 15 had been sold, for €2,000 (\$2,100).

The municipality is aware of these transactions, and considers them illegal. The terms of the leases do not permit them, but the authorities have not abrogated them, opting rather for leniency to keep the peace. The wording of the leases on the terraced houses built during the second phase of the project was changed to forbid their sale after it emerged that earlier returnees had sold their apartments.

Some instances of damp were reported in the first terraced houses to be built. The damp was treated and the housing design revised to include exterior wall insulation and improved heating and ventilation systems.¹⁹

Roma Mahalla residents have not always paid their utility bills. As of the end of 2014, the neighbourhood owed water companies around €70,000 and electricity firms €100,000, and power had been cut off.²⁰ OSCE liaised with utility companies to have the electricity reconnect. There was also a huge pile of rubbish at one end of the neighbourhood, because residents had not paid for waste disposal.

Few people frequent the laundry, hair salon and kiosks established on the ground floor of the apartment buildings, and some customers keep debts with shopkeepers. The outdoor market space currently serves as a car park.

As of the end of 2014, the sustainability of most returnees' livelihoods remained questionable. Those without full-time jobs survive on income earned through collecting plastics and other recyclables, odd jobs such as cutting wood, moving furniture and cleaning, and social assistance. Two families continue to smelt lead from batteries. Some returnees work in north Mitrovicë/a where there are more jobs, but many wish to emigrate as a result of their bleak economic outlook.²¹

Many returnees in terraced housing have erected fences around their yards to increase privacy and built sheds to store scrap, recyclables and other items RAE typically collect. They did so without planning permission and at their own expense. Municipal officials carried out an inspection in 2014, leaving many worried that their sheds would be demolished despite their insistence that their leases does not forbid such constructions. Concerned residents are preparing a petition to hand to the mayor of Mitrovicë/a during discussions aimed at finding a compromise.

Conclusion

The Return to Roma Mahalla project is a good example of a rights-based, inclusive approach to the provision of land and housing for the return of a minority community,

most of whose members had not previously owned their own homes or land. The public outcry over the lead-contaminated camps and Kosovo's bid for independence, which meant it was under EU scrutiny, were instrumental in pushing the initiative forward.

The project also shows that persistent attempts to foster IDPs' participation, however challenging, can lead to important modifications or the reformulation of national and international plans and priorities for their return. It also shows that access to livelihoods and establishing self-reliance can be a major challenge for IDPs in protracted displacement, particularly for marginalised groups such as the Roma, and that over time it reduces the habitability of their housing.

Case study 3: Transitional Solutions Initiative (Colombia)

Programme design

Colombia is a pilot country for the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI), an international project involving the World Bank, UNHCR and UNDP that was launched in 2010 with the aim of achieving durable solutions for people living in protracted displacement. In Colombia, the initiative is run by UNHCR and UNDP with the support of national and local authorities, and focuses on IDPs in 17 communities. Since its inception in 2012, it has set a precedent in terms of UNHCR and UNDP co-leading programmes aimed at the achievement of durable solutions in Colombia.

TSI has three components: the improvement of living conditions - access to land, housing, basic services and local economic development; institutional and organisational strengthening; and the protection of victims' and their communities' rights. It employs a community-focussed participatory approach that simultaneously engages communities, authorities and institutions. It aims to strengthen communities' leadership, giving them agency to identify their own solutions on the assumption that stronger communities require less external support.

Regularisation of informal settlements

TSI's living conditions component includes the regularisation of informal urban settlements, where most IDPs live whether on private or public land. The settlements have expanded significantly over five decades of conflict and some make up a large part of the cities in which they were established. That said, they tend not to be officially connected to water and electricity supplies or sanitation services, and residents are at risk of eviction. The settlements have become an increasingly serious issue, which authorities acknowledge needs to be resolved.

Regularisation is a highly complex legal process in Colombia, and competing claims over land make it more complicated still. TSI has succeeded in identifying a legal pathway towards regularisation, but each settlement has its own history shaped by different factors, and as such has to be treated separately and without assumptions. Municipal authorities have different reasons for agreeing to regularisation, though most acknowledge that the sheer scale of their informal settlements warrants intervention. Private landowners

also have mixed interests, but some have realised that residents are there to stay and that it would be more straightforward and lucrative to sell their land rather than trying to reclaim it.

Implementation and monitoring is still going on, but as of mid-2014 13 communities were in the process of regularising their land and one had finalised it. A profiling exercise with focus groups, participatory assessments and household surveys was conducted to review progress made in 2014 and the results are due for publication. JIPS provided technical expertise in developing TSI's set of indicators, based on a range of variables and UNDP's and UNHCR's existing monitoring tools. JIPS has also helped to establish a broader monitoring and evaluation process for multi-sectorial approaches to durable solutions, helping to bridge the humanitarian and development divide between the two agencies.

Challenges and strengths

Continuing violence and armed conflict, a lack of technical capacity and political will and the prohibitive cost of studies to determine the feasibility of legalising settlements in areas prone to natural hazards all constitute obstacles to the regularisation process. That said, the TSI programme has numerous strengths. It goes beyond the narrow approach of targeting individuals and households, and establishes the community as a whole as the beneficiary of housing and economic development activities that are planned and reviewed by the public and private sector through local leadership committees. It also goes beyond housing to support livelihoods and protection initiatives, and the strengthening of institutional capacity. It is an example of fruitful coordination and cooperation at the inter-agency level between UNHCR and UNDP and their respective partners.

Colombia's political context offers a good foundation for the implementation of TSI. The government endorsed the Victims' Law in June 2011, and began peace talks with the country's largest rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2012. It has also taken numerous measures in recent years to make the transition from humanitarian aid to pursuing durable solutions for IDPs. TSI reinforces and continues this work.

Notes

1. Katye means “neighbourhood” in Haitian creole
2. World Bank, Priscilla Phelps, Analyzing the Haiti Post-Earthquake Shelter Response and Housing Recovery, Results and Lessons from the First Two Years, Part 2: case studies and annexes, 28 October 2013, p.139
3. Earl Kessler, Katye Neighborhood Improvement Program, Funded by USAID/OFDA – Haiti, Final Evaluation, August 16, 2012
4. World Bank, Priscilla Phelps, op cit, p.142
5. In Kosovo, Roma are mainly Serbian and Romani speakers, while Ashkali and Egyptians are Albanian speakers. Separate Ashkali and Egyptian identities emerged from the main Romani identity during Yugoslav times between 1946 and 1992, and the divisions were cemented in the 1990s
6. HRW, Kosovo: Poisoned by Lead, June 2009, p.22
7. *Ibid.*, p.4.
8. IDMC Interviews, Pristina, 8-12 December 2014
9. HRW, Kosovo: Poisoned by Lead, June 2009, p. 26.
10. US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch, Recommendations for Preventing Lead Poisoning among the Internally Displaced Roma Population in Kosovo, 27 October 2007
11. EC and Ministry of European Integration, Forty Actions to Boost the Implementation of the RAE Integration Strategy and Action Plan, May 2011
12. IDMC interviews in Mitrovicë/a, 10 December 2014
13. IDMC interview with Mitrovicë/a municipality, 9 December 2014
14. Government of Kosovo, Prime Minister, Letter to all Mayors of Kosovo, 6 April 2010
15. IDMC interviews in Roma Mahalla, 10 December 2014
16. *Ibid*
17. The hospital in North Mitrovicë/a require documentation issued by Serbia
18. IDMC interviews in Roma Mahalla, 10 December 2014; NCA, Survey of NCA Constructed Buildings Roma Mahalla, 14 July 2009
19. IDMC interview with Mercy Corps, 11 December 2014
20. IDMC interviews in Mitrovicë/a and Roma Mahalla, 9-10 December 2014
21. IDMC interviews in Roma Mahalla, 10 December 2014