PHOTO: JOHAN VISSER/PANOS

Evicted

Forced displacement, exclusion, and violence in the city

It's been more than a decade since Operation *Murambatvsina*, the sweeping demolition campaign launched by Zimbabwe's government in 2005 in a crack-down on "illegal" housing and business activity. Yet many of those displaced still live precariously, in marginal housing on the outskirts of urban centres where property is derelict, transport and services are lacking, and corrupt officials routinely violate tenant's rights. According to a UN fact-finding mission, some 700,000 people lost their homes, livelihoods, or both in what many believed was an effort to punish the regime's opposition supporters.

In Hatcliffe, on the rural fringe of Harare, displaced residents remain in a constant state of insecurity, afraid to speak up for their rights, and unsure when they may be targeted by another campaign of eviction. "We don't know when the trucks will come," say local women.

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"We […] stayed 10 people to a room. Due to this we got to know what problems each person had. We used to collect 10 Euro per person and offer it to anyone who needed the money urgently."

– Displaced resident, Passaiyoor East in Jaffna, Sri Lanka

Main types of forced displacement examined in SAIC research

Development-driven

In cities across the Global South, urban development is squeezing the poor out of urban centres where land is in high demand for commercial and luxury residential use. In several cities under study, including Durban (South Africa), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), and Ahmedabad (India), land development and the subsequent displacement of slum dwellers have been justified in part under the banner of improving housing and services for the poor.

Conflict-driven

In Jaffna (Sri Lanka), Bogotá (Colombia), and Lima (Peru), displacement due to recent or historic conflict was a factor in the levels of vulnerability experienced by the urban poor, and the expressions of social cohesion within neighbourhoods.

Politically-driven

Housing and service access has been used by municipal and other levels of government to reward supporters and punish opposition members, as in Zimbabwe, where suspected opponents of the ruling party were subject to housing demolition campaigns in the 1990s. In Ahmedabad and other cities of India, political targeting has at times reinforced communal conflict, where political allegiances follow ethnic or religious divisions.

Pinpointing the drivers and impacts of displacement

The burgeoning cities of the Global South are home to large numbers of people forcibly displaced, some by disaster or political upheaval, some by development, and others by a lack of economic opportunity. Whether foreign migrants or locally-displaced people, new arrivals are often resented, and in areas plagued by poverty and crime, they can be convenient scapegoats. Yet they are more likely to be the victims than perpetrators of violence. Migrants and the displaced are overrepresented in informal settlements that lack legal status, suffer state neglect, and exist under threat of demolition.

From 2013 to 2016, researchers supported through the Safe and Inclusive Cities (SAIC) program explored the links between poverty, violence, and inequality in urban centres in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. Many examined the complex ways in which displacement can both fuel and result from urban violence and social exclusion. Despite the rapid transformation of southern-based cities, there had been little study to date on how municipalities are managing the explosive growth of informal settlements, and what the displaced are experiencing. SAIC-supported research has helped to fill the gap, shedding new light on factors driving displacement, how it interacts with poverty, exclusion, and violence in urban contexts, and what practices and policies can make the process of resettlement safer, fairer, and more sustainable.

State neglect – private sector exploitation

Across the cities studied, the informal settlements which house migrants and other displaced people are underserviced, lacking adequate transportation, energy, water, and sanitation. Where the state fails to provide for these basic needs, private sector providers fill the vacuum, often operating through threats and extortion.

Research in Ahmedabad's Bombay Hotel area, which houses minorities displaced by riots in 2002, found an almost complete lack of basic public services. In this context of state neglect, extortionate private sector providers, known as "mafias" among local NGOs, had usurped control of water, drainage, and land distribution, protected

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> **"The way that we are living is not good. Each floor has only one male and one female toilet."**
>
> – Female tenant, Mbare Flats suburb of Harare

by links to local authorities. In Vatwa, in Ahmedabad's south-eastern periphery, some 5,000 households were resettled in public housing constructed under India's Basic Services to the Urban Poor program. But the welfare intention of the program was subverted by forcibly resettling poor families out of central city areas to make way for real estate and leisure space development. They now live in areas plagued by crime.

In Zimbabwe, housing was a key entry point for looking at the links between gender, poverty, and exclusion in suburbs around Bulawayo, Harare, and Kadoma. Both development pressures and political turmoil have pushed displaced communities into marginal areas with inadequate housing and services. At Mbare Flats and Shawasha Flats outside Harare, single rooms originally built for one male occupant were sheltering families of four or more people, with rooms partitioned by curtains and overcrowded toilet facilities. Research found municipal authorities complicit in these violations, issuing rental cards and levying charges for rent and services. Corruption is rampant. Residents reported having to bribe officials to secure building lots and to stave off eviction.

In several areas under study, state and private sector development of prime urban lands is the driving force behind displacement. In cities in Brazil, India, Pakistan, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, researchers documented cases of forced eviction – and sometimes resistance – in communities that stood in the way of "progress".

In Rio de Janeiro, residents of informal settlements known as favelas faced eviction linked to two recent mega-events, heavily funded by private investors — the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 summer Olympic Games. Entire neighbourhoods were razed to make way for sports facilities and real estate development, with protestors targeted by authorities and branded "terrorists".

Grassroots community resistance achieved some small victories. In Vila Autódromo, the struggle attracted international press coverage, and united vendors, residents, NGOs, researchers, and unions to press for an agreement with the city that will see new homes and neighbourhood revitalization. But the cost for many has been overwhelming. Maria da Penha Macena and her husband, Luiz da Silva, were among the lucky few who moved into a bungalow after living in a shipping container when their Vila Autódromo home was bulldozed. As da Silva explained to Dom Phillips of *The Independent:* "This is a city being made for the elite, and it seems the social sanitising has no end."

Broken social ties

Displacement invariably strains connections with family, neighbours, schools, and other social networks that play an important role in supporting and stabilizing communities.

Research in India and Sri Lanka looked at how those displaced by conflict in and around Jaffna differed from those displaced by development in Colombo and Kochi. They found differences in the cohesion of the two groups, and how satisfied they were with their new circumstances. In Passaiyoor East, a war-affected fishing village in Jaffna, residents had to draw not only on their own resources but on community ties and overseas relatives for survival during the conflict. While they struggled with rising alcoholism, drug use, and crime, they also felt a stronger sense of "home" and "belonging" than those in Colombo who had been displaced by development.

Material circumstances improved for most of those resettled in new multistorey condominiums in Colombo, but their social ties frayed. One source of tension was the lack of consultation, and the decision to rehouse all families equally, regardless of their assets before resettlement. This led to grievances among a better-off minority who felt they had lost out. The atomization of condominium living also may have weakened their sense of belonging.

The social cohesion of established communities can weigh against the displaced, as illustrated in Santiago, Chile. In comparison with study sites in Bogota, Colombia and Lima, Peru where a high proportion of households in poor areas were migrants, Santiago neighbourhoods were very stable, with more than 80% of residents born in Santiago. As a result, the small percentage of foreign immigrants in study areas were highly visible, and more likely to be seen as "criminals" and "terrorists".

PHOTO: LANA SLEZIC/PANOS

"This is a city being made for the elite, and it seems the social sanitising has no end."

– Luis da Silva, Vila Autódromo, Brazil

The tenuous status of those seen as "others" was also evident in Pakistan, where among those most vulnerable to violence and displacement were minority groups who lack not only land tenure but national registration papers. As field research concluded in Islamabad, one district largely populated by undocumented Pashtun migrants was razed by authorities.

Disrupted livelihoods

Jobs and incomes were a frequent casualty of displacement in the study sites, ranging from vendors losing market space in Durban and Rio to women in Harare losing access to jobs as they were pushed farther out into the suburbs.

Research in Colombo, Jaffna, and Kochi found that relocation usually resulted in a weakening of work relations tied to a particular place. In Kochi, for example, displacement led to a loss of access to common property resources. Many residents who had been farming, raising livestock, or fishing lost income and security. In Colombo, however, livelihood impacts were minimal where resettlement was close to the original location. Some, such as trishaw drivers, benefited from resettlement in multistory buildings, thanks to better parking and a denser customer base.

Easing the shock of displacement through better planning

Across study cites, the lack of physical infrastructure and basic services to accommodate the poor and displaced is exacerbated by failures in governance. Research underscored how urban planning has failed to keep pace with the rapid influx and change underway in cities of the South, fuelling the sprawl of underserviced informal settlements. In several regions, cities are failed by a trend towards political decentralization, which is not matched by a transfer of resources to the local level. Research also highlighted how the poor can be exploited and excluded when planning is driven by entangled private and public interests.

Teams put forward a number of recommendations that can help uprooted communities retain dignity, social resilience, and employment along with a greater sense of security:

- Consult with affected communities ahead of site development and actively involve them in planning processes.

- Help displaced people retain or re-establish supportive employment and social connections.

- Ensure communities are resettled near job opportunities, schools, and other essential resources and have good transportation options.

- Devote resources and build skills within municipal governments for inclusive urban planning.

- Plan for the long-term governance and maintenance of basic services so that distribution is fair and sustainable.

- Tackle corruption within state agencies responsible for housing, land development, and service provision.

- Support the role of civil society in advocating for those facing eviction and state neglect.

- Increase access to legal aid for displaced and at-risk communities.