

SUMMARY

The approach adopted for providing humanitarian assistance in towns tends to be instinctive rather than strategic. In an emergency context, humanitarian projects are often sectoral, focusing on pre-defined zones. Furthermore, NGOs, local authorities and donors have certain preconceived ideas about urban environments, which may limit the number of projects benefiting urban populations. The interaction between towns, camps and rural areas is rarely taken into account and efforts to coordinate interventions targeting multiple sites are scarce.

An analysis of affected populations' coping mechanisms highlights the temporary and multipolar nature of population displacement towards and in towns. Integration is dictated above all by individual, economic and cultural choices, a relatively new and complex concept for humanitarian actors. Providing emergency relief in an urban context is by no means simple, yet it plays a key role in alleviating tension, thus minimising the risk of future urban conflicts.