

## **The Problem of Forced Evictions: Migration, Development, and Displacement in African Cities**

A Conference convened by the Heinrich Böll Foundation's African Migration Hub

28<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Park Inn by Radisson Nairobi Westlands

**Nairobi, Kenya**

### **Introduction**

Most migration in Africa is internal, and rarely governed by migration policies, which tend to focus on cross-border movement. It includes 'voluntary' and forced rural-to-urban migration, often related to agrarian distress; it also includes displacement caused by conflict, development and/or environmental factors. These kinds of dislocation may occur slowly, due to the incremental degradation of ecosystems, or abruptly due to disasters or political violence. The level of concern and resources dedicated to addressing policy issues arising from these types of movement varies greatly, with refugees receiving much higher levels of attention than IDPs. Migrants, for their part, are also treated very differently depending on perceptions of their value to receiving societies and localities. What each of these various forms of mobility have in common, however, is that they are in some sense recognized as forms of migration and/or displacement by governmental authorities, humanitarian agencies, experts and civil society.

This is in stark contrast to displacement caused by infrastructural development projects and/or gentrification in cities. Individuals and entire communities may be dispossessed of land and/or property and forcibly evicted from dwellings multiple times over the course their lifetimes without being classified or thought of as migrants/displaced persons. Development-induced displacement (D-i-D) is rarely acknowledged as a form of migration or displacement by government authorities and migration agencies, even – indeed especially – in cases where thousands of families are forcibly expelled from their homes within short spaces of time. The reasons for this are largely political. The expulsion of populations from their dwellings is a form of forced movement that often results directly from stated or unstated policy decisions and/or actions taken by government authorities in alliance with private interests. Such combinations of powerful actors are well positioned to shape media coverage, policy agendas and broader narratives about what constitutes a 'migration issue' on the one hand, and on the other, constitutes an issue of urban governance. Forced evictions, which fall in-between the gap between these two overlapping spheres of policy, are generally perceived as neither. This is evident in the fact that despite the growing interest in urban migration governance within cities led by excellent, pioneering initiatives of the Bosch Foundation, Samuel Hall Foundation and other thought leaders, the problem of forced evictions is rarely treated as a topic worthy of focused attention by think-tanks and policymakers. As for migration and displacement agencies, these rarely prioritize or even recognize D-i-D in their operational work and data collection.

Development-induced displacement can be devastating in its consequences for tens of thousands of individuals and families, leaving former habitats and commercial areas looking like war zones. However, it often occurs away from the spotlight of media coverage and at a smaller scale than disaster or conflict-induced displacement. The consequences of forced evictions are thus relatively easy to obfuscate. Populations that bear their brunt tend to be politically voiceless constellations of the urban poor who are grappling with many other challenges; people who lack resources and the kinds of capital and access required to influence decision-makers and journalists. Apart from a handful of dedicated local and international civil society organizations such as the Housing and Land Rights Network/Habitat International Coalition, nobody maps or [counts](#) the numbers of people affected by land and property rights violations. As for the chaos unleashed and misery inflicted by D-i-D and forced evictions, this too is neglected by all except a handful of human rights organizations and, to their credit, individual bodies within the UN system that have commission and produce [reports](#) that demonstrate beyond doubt what should be obvious: forced evictions are an unnecessary evil; one that is preventable, and whose consequences must be addressed under the gamut of 'durable solutions' increasingly directed towards protracted displacement crises.

### **Tackling Forced Evictions in Nairobi and Beyond**

This conference brings together civil society organizations, stakeholders, experts and researchers concerned with identifying problems and solutions relating to forced evictions in African cities. The purpose of the gathering is to exchange knowledge on specific instances of displacement that have been documented, but also patterns in the causes and consequences of such occurrences. Questions addressed include:

- Why and how do certain familiar scenarios keep playing out in the same, predictably violent ways, from Nairobi to Lagos, and Addis Ababa to Dakar?
- Which organizations are monitoring, contesting and alleviating the fall out of forced evictions? Should migration agencies play a greater role in supporting them as IDPs? What would be the consequence of viewing forcibly evicted persons as IDPs in a more formal sense?
- How can compensation, dignified and rights-based resettlement or remedial action for populations displaced by development be pursued?
- Which experts are formulating alternatives to forced evictions and how can these be made part of campaign agendas?
- Where, within the international system, should protest and/or calls for change be directed?
- How does the issue of forced evictions reflect a larger problem of the way in which cities are planned and governed in Africa and beyond?
- What is the current role of institutions such as the World Bank and external sponsors of infrastructure-led development such as China?

Our event takes place against the backdrop of a worsening cost-of-living crisis; at which there is an urgent need to address the particular problems faced by forcibly displaced persons in order to develop durable policy solutions. The cases presented include the Heinrich Böll Foundation's own projects with communities in Nairobi since late 2021,

which began amidst the Covid 19 pandemic and its aftermath. The conference aims to bring this work into dialogue with that of Amnesty International, Kituo cha Sharia, Pamoja Trust, Maseno University School of Law, Kenya Land Alliance, and others who have monitored forced evictions and their consequences in recent years. The outcome of discussions should include recommendations for policymakers that should be advocated for within the growing number of initiatives on urban migration governance in the context of climate change.

## **Objectives**

The main objectives of the workshop are as follows:

- To raise awareness about the causes and consequences of D-i-D and forced evictions in Nairobi and other African cities.
- To develop actionable strategies for mitigating and addressing the challenges resulting from D-i-D and forced evictions in Nairobi and other African cities.
- To foster dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, policymakers, NGOs, urban planners, and affected communities across the African continent on the issues surrounding D-i-D and forced evictions.

## **Participants and Target Audiences**

The workshop is intended for policymakers, urban planners, NGOs, researchers, academics, community leaders, and individuals interested in Nairobi's urban development and social justice issues.

## **Format**

The conference will adopt an interactive format, including presentations, panel discussions, and a roundtable discussion. The sessions will encourage active participation and engagement from all participants.

## **Topics**

Infrastructure and Development-Induced Displacement in urban settings:

- Understanding the root causes and implications of development-induced displacement.
- Analyzing role of the state and other actors in urban infrastructural development and its impact on individuals and communities.
- The specific case of the Nairobi Expressway/Mukuru wa Njenga; cases from the Horn of Africa and West Africa.

Climate Change and Urban Displacement:

- Identifying the way in which climate change risks and vulnerabilities intersect with D-i-D in urban areas.
- Identifying adaptive strategies for building urban resilience and protecting vulnerable populations to the risks of climate change and D-i-D.

## Expected Outcomes

- Through engaging presentations, discussions, and collaborative workgroups, the workshop aims to achieve the following outcomes:
- Increasing awareness among participants about the complexities of urban displacement, a form of internal migration, in Nairobi.
- Generate policy recommendations on urban displacement and forced evictions in Nairobi and other African cities.
- Identify innovative solutions and approaches to urban displacement while prioritizing human rights and social justice.
- Contribute to ongoing efforts for the establishment of resilient and equitable cities in the context of climate change-induced displacement.
- Enhance collaboration and networking among stakeholders for future initiatives on migration, displacement and inclusive, sustainable urban development.

## Logistics

The workshop will take place on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023 from 9 am to 4 pm at Park Inn by Radisson Nairobi, Westlands.

Please direct inquiries to:

[fabianoriri@gmail.com](mailto:fabianoriri@gmail.com) ; [ali.nobil@hoa.boell.org](mailto:ali.nobil@hoa.boell.org) ; [Linah.Kinya@hoa.boell.org](mailto:Linah.Kinya@hoa.boell.org)



The Problem of Forced Evictions: Migration, Development, and Displacement in African Cities

28<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Park Inn by Radisson Nairobi Westlands

Time		Speakers
<b>08:30-09:00</b>	<b>Arrival and Registration</b>	
<b>09:00- 9:30</b>	Welcome & Introductions (All participants introduce themselves)	Ali Nobil and Linah Kinya; Heinrich Böll Foundation; Fabian Oriri (Project Consultant)
<b>09:30-10:00</b>	Researching Urban Displacement in Nairobi: What we learn from lived experience	Irene Asuwa, Researcher/Ecological Justice
<b>10: 00-10:30</b>	Development-induced displacement: Legal, policy, and political perspectives on drivers and impacts on the social fabric of communities	Pamoja Trust Samuel Olando, Executive Director
<b>10:30-11:00</b>	Strategic litigation: preventing/mitigating forced evictions and D-i-D through the courts	Kituo Cha Sheria Dr. Annette Mbogoh
<b>11:00-11:20</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
<b>11: 20-11:50</b>	The impact of Climate change on urban displacement and development: intersections and threat multiplications	Maseno University, School of Law- Professor Nicholas Orago, Founding Dean
<b>11:50-12:20</b>	The nexus between forced evictions and other migration patterns and protections: is forced eviction a form of displacement under law?	Amnesty International-Victor Nyamori
<b>12: 20-12: 50</b>	Examining states' and other actors' role in urban infrastructural development: towards public accountability	University of Cape Town- Leah Kanyangi- Migration and Human Researcher
<b>12:50-14:00</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
<b>14:00- 15:00</b>	<i>Round Table Discussion: Policy Recommendations on Development-induced-displacement in African Cities</i>	Prof Taibat Lawanson- <i>University of Lagos</i> Faith Alubbe- <i>KLA</i> Damaris Opilu- <i>Green Oasis</i> Joseph Schelchla- <i>HIC</i>
<b>15:00-15: 30</b>	Plenary and Open Questions	All
<b>15:30-16:00</b>	Networking session and tea	