

**TECHNOLOGY, NATIONAL SYSTEMS AND CIVIL SOCIETY:
USING A MOBILE APPLICATION TO PROTECT THE HOUSING, LAND
AND PROPERTY RIGHTS OF DISPLACED PERSONS IN HONDURAS**

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1. Introduction

While previously considered too complicated, sensitive or the responsibility of development actors, the protection of housing, land and property (HLP) rights is increasingly recognized as pertinent for viable humanitarian responses, sustainable peace processes and the achievement of durable solutions to displacement. While this recognition may not translate into comprehensive HLP programming in every humanitarian, displacement or peacebuilding context as a result of competing priorities and limited resources, responses nowadays increasingly go beyond the provision of (emergency) shelter in areas of refuge and rehabilitation of housing in areas of origin. Interventions may include raising awareness on HLP rights, building capacity of relevant government entities to protect HLP rights and address related challenges, supporting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and improving displaced persons' security of tenure in camps and settlements, collective centres, rented accommodation, and so on.

As always there is certainly room for improvement. There are various additional efforts that could be undertaken to promote and protect the HLP rights of displaced persons, even at the onset of an emergency when peace and return prospects are dim. The most recent crises in the Central African Republic and Iraq, for instance, involve extremely complex conflict and displacement contexts but nevertheless presented opportunities to prevent further violations of HLP rights and obstacles to restitution. An example is the protection of housing and land that refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) left behind through, among others, documenting known pre-displacement tenure situations and issuing moratoriums on HLP transfers in selected areas.

In Honduras, a country that continues to witness displacement as a result of generalized violence and organized crime, a collaboration between the Government of Honduras (GoH), Caritas, local parishes and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is bringing modern technology to bear to document the housing and land that IDPs abandon when they flee to safety and to incorporate this data into a newly developed section of the national property register. This method supports the strengthening of a national system and gives the GoH the information it needs to safeguard displaced people's HLP so as to incentivize their eventual return or facilitate their integration elsewhere. This paper discusses this effort following a short overview of the forced displacement situation in the country as well as the protection risks around abandoned HLP.

2. Forced Displacement in Honduras

While most Hondurans who migrate are usually believed to do so for socio-economic reasons, recent years have seen an increase in the number of people forced to leave their homes because of generalized violence and organized crime. Reliable data on forced displacement is challenging to obtain, since the country does not have a system to register displaced persons. According to a 2014 - 2015 IDP profiling exercise led by the GoH with support from UNHCR, the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) and others, at least 174,000 people were forcibly displaced in the country between 2004 and 2014. The exercise showed that 78% of the displacement took place between 2009 and 2013 and 20% in 2014. Because this survey covered only 20 urban municipalities (out of a total of 298) and many displaced persons are reluctant to contact the authorities, the real number of affected people is likely to be much higher (CIPPDV, 2015).¹

Gangs, commonly called *maras*, are often cited as the principal cause of violence and forced displacement in Honduras. Many displaced persons flee out of fear of being considered an “enemy” by the gangs because of suspected cooperation with the security forces, justice system or rival gangs. Deciding to leave a gang without the permission of its leaders, refusing to pay extortion fees or even arguing or confronting gang members may also have serious consequences, including a death sentence. Young women who reject the advances of gang members are at risk as well. Families with young children are particularly vulnerable as gangs are known to force children into their ranks or subject them to threats. Some displaced persons are violently evicted from their homes by gangs or ordered by gangs with threat of violence to leave within hours (CIPPDV, 2015). The violence that forces Hondurans to leave their homes and seek safety elsewhere can also be attributed to the presence of three additional armed actors, namely drug smuggling structures, state security forces and private security forces. A detailed analysis of each of the armed actors is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to note that, like the gangs, their presence or influence is not limited to urban areas only (UNHCR, 2016).

Most families flee to other parts of their municipality, while some seek safety in other towns or rural areas. It should be noted that most Hondurans, in the absence of significant assistance programs, require support from friends and family in areas of refuge. Forced displacement therefore has a significant impact on a large number of non-displaced families as well. At least a quarter of the profiled IDPs reported to have been displaced at least once more following their initial flight (CIPPDV, 2015). An unknown number of Hondurans has opted to leave the country, mostly to the

¹ Another IDP profiling exercise (with national coverage) was conducted in July and August 2018. The results of this exercise are expected in April 2019.

USA and Canada. At least 59,788 Hondurans had pending applications for asylum or refugee status at the end of 2017 (UNHCR, 2018).

Forced displacement induced by unchecked criminal violence affects people throughout Honduras, although in most situations it does not concern entire population groups that are uprooted from their homes at the same time, as may happen during armed conflicts. Because of the aforementioned dynamics, most Hondurans leave their place of origin in a gradual and discrete manner to avoid drawing the attention of the gangs and other criminal elements that they are trying to escape (CIPPDV, 2015).

3. Consequences for Housing, Land and Property Rights of Displaced Persons

Forcibly displaced Hondurans experience several violations of their basic rights, including HLP rights. About 40% of all displaced persons, according to estimates, have lost their house and/or land in one way or another (CIPPDV, 2015 and Human Rights Council, 2016). The following non-exhaustive list illustrates the types of challenges that forcibly displaced persons might face, either before or after displacement:

- Houses are damaged or destroyed by gangs to punish perceived resistance to the gang or to warn other community members of the consequences of defiance;
- Houses and land are occupied by the gangs to establish dominance and strategic control. The gangs may use the buildings to house their own families, as bases for the drugs trade and other illegal activities, or as *casas locas* (“crazy houses”) where opponents and victims are detained, tortured or killed;
- Houses and land become inaccessible because they are located in buffer zones between gang territories;
- People in rural areas are forced off their land through intimidation strategies by corrupt local authorities, security forces and drug smuggling structures in connection with infrastructure projects, extraction of natural resources and territory needed for drug smuggling-related activities;
- People are forced to sell their houses and land under threat or following persistent harassment, which in some cases has included the killing of family members;
- People are forced by circumstance and lack of financial means to sell non-occupied housing and land. Informal tenure over their housing and land (discussed below) may prevent them from doing so legally, requiring them to accept prices well below the current market value;

- Gangs or other criminals sell housing and land to third parties, who may not be aware that the seller does not actually hold the ownership rights; and
- Some displaced people continue to receive tax and utility bills for housing and land they have been forced to abandon (UNHCR, 2017).

Preventing and addressing these challenges are complicated by several factors, in addition to weak security forces and lawlessness. Many home- and/or landowners, especially in poorer neighborhoods or rural areas, do not register their property in accordance with the country's Property Law of 2004. They may have received a certificate from elected local community leaders, known as *patronatos*, that confirms their ownership and facilitates sale, but it does not constitute a registered land document. Such unregistered properties do not appear in the cadaster managed by the Property Institute, which is the national entity responsible for, amongst others, mapping and registration of housing and land throughout the country. If a registration or regularization process is carried out, unregistered and abandoned housing and land will simply be marked as property with "unknown occupants." More worrisome is the possibility that the illegal occupants of such housing and land are registered as owners.

Several of these challenges require better security and rule of law, while others might be prevented if abandoned HLP is protected against destruction, occupation or illegal sales. International laws and standards oblige states to undertake measures to protect abandoned HLP in the context of displacement and conflict. For instance, Principle 21 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement states that the "[p]roperty and possessions left behind by internally displaced persons should be protected against destruction and arbitrary and illegal appropriation, occupation or use." The Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons ("Pinheiro Principles") confirm the right of refugees and displaced persons to recover any housing, land and/or property of which they were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived. In order to ensure that displaced Hondurans are able to exercise this right, it is important that the abovementioned challenges and violations of HLP rights are prevented and addressed as quickly as possible.

Adapting existing relevant mechanisms to consider the realities of displacement could contribute to the protection of abandoned HLP in Honduras. Ensuring that the property registry includes alerts for housing and land reported as abandoned in the context of displacement could prevent erroneous subsequent registration and illegal sales. This may also facilitate the dissemination of information on the status of such properties to the wider public to deter illegal sales and to prevent purchases of abandoned property in good faith. At the very least, having abandoned housing and land documented as such can facilitate future restitution processes.

However, since forced displacement as a result of generalized violence and organised crime is a relatively new phenomenon, there was initially no law or policy on internal displacement in Honduras. In July 2013, the GoH launched Executive Decree PCM-053-2013, which recognized the situation of forced displacement as a consequence of generalized violence and organized crime. An Inter-Agency Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence (CIPPDV) was subsequently established under the leadership of the Human Rights Secretary in consultation with fourteen government entities and four national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The objective of the Commission is to develop the national system to prevent and address forced displacement and adopt the required laws and policies to protect the rights of IDPs. UNHCR was requested to provide technical support to the CIPPDV in implementing the Executive Decree.

The need to look specifically into preventing and remedying violations of HLP rights was highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (UN Special Rapporteur) following a mission to Honduras in November 2015. He recommended, amongst others, that a “confidential system should be established to register abandoned homes or property that would enable a legal process to provide redress to such persons” (Human Rights Council, 2016). In 2016 the GoH confirmed its commitment to create such a system at a regional conference in San Pedro Sula. This conference aimed to discuss and reaffirm agreements reached in the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants regarding the Global Compact on Refugees. Besides confirming its commitment to improve the protection of IDPs, refugees, asylum seekers and other displacement-affected persons, the GoH noted that a registration system for abandoned HLP as a result of forced displacement would be established by 2020.

In order to determine how best to support the GoH in the protection of the HLP rights of displaced persons, UNHCR analyzed the legal and institutional framework of relevance in 2017. The study established that the national laws and institutions – like in most countries – contain gaps for the protection of HLP rights in irregular situations, like forced displacement as a result of generalized violence and organized crime. For instance, while the country’s Civil Code guarantees the right to restitution of HLP, claimants are required to provide evidence of eviction or dispossession within six months. This is obviously extremely difficult for displaced persons who may not be aware of this right or who may not be able or willing to file cases against gang members or other criminal elements in court due to their displacement or fear for reprisal. UNHCR’s study also found that even though many displaced people do not report their flight to the authorities out of fear of retribution, or because they lack confidence in government institutions, relevant HLP registration mechanisms did not record or respond to the abandonment of HLP as a result of forced displacement in any case (UNHCR, 2017).

4. Protecting Housing, Land and Property Rights of Displaced Persons

In response to the GoH's request for technical support in implementing the Executive Decree, GoH's commitments at the regional conference in San Pedro Sula, recommendation of the UN Special Rapporteur and the findings of its 2017 study, UNHCR designed a two-pronged response that aims to strengthen the protection of HLP rights of displaced persons, with a focus on the design and establishment of a registration mechanism for abandoned HLP.

First, the response foresees a long-term effort aimed at national institutional capacity-building, based on the identified gaps in the existing legal framework of relevance to the protection of abandoned HLP as a result of forced displacement. With the support of UNHCR, the government created a Housing and Land Working Group (Working Group) in 2017 to develop an overall strategy to address these gaps, which requires innovative responses, enhanced technical capacity and reform processes. The Working Group was composed of officials of key government entities. Second, because addressing the identified gaps takes time and HLP rights violations continue on a daily basis, UNHCR included an immediate action in its response, which will be discussed first.

4.1 Immediate Response: Documenting Abandoned Housing, Land and Property

In collaboration with the NGO Caritas, UNHCR set up a Protection Network with 56 parishes in the country in 2016. The Network has several protection-related objectives, but of interest here is the HLP part of the initiative, which aimed to identify and document abandoned HLP in the areas covered by the parishes. Because many Hondurans have been displaced for long periods and destruction, occupation and illegal sales of HLP were ongoing, there was an urgency to ensure that local community leaders' knowledge of the pre-displacement tenure situation or occupancy was captured without delay. There was also a need to collect more information on the occurrence and dynamics around abandoned HLP as a result of forced displacement.

The initiative commenced in 2016 with a mapping exercise of 56 parishes in order to identify the ones most affected by forced displacement. Twenty-three of the parishes had witnessed significant displacement as a result of extortions, forced recruitment, sexual violence, and other violence perpetrated by gangs and other criminal elements in urban and rural areas. Selected members of these parishes participated in capacity development activities organized by UNHCR in 2017, which focussed on protection of IDPs in general but also laws and procedures of relevance to the protection of HLP rights in the context of forced displacement.

Based on the exchanges with the parishes and the Property Institute's field registration form, UNHCR commenced the development of a mobile application to facilitate the recording of abandoned HLP. Out of the 23 trained parishes, UNHCR selected the ten parishes that had witnessed most displacement to commence the actual documentation of abandoned HLP. Additional, more technical, trainings were organised for the ten parishes and relevant equipment (e.g. laptops) was provided. Based on these interactions, UNHCR finalized the mobile application and the recording of abandoned HLP commenced.

The recording process consisted of three steps. First, each parish committee identified areas where they have observed significant forced displacement and abandoned land and housing. Second, the parish committee developed community maps to identify the specific location of the abandoned housing and land and gathered all information for each HLP. Such information could include names of occupants/owners, relevant dates, cause of displacement and current state of the housing and land. It should be noted that persistent insecurity and the need to go about the documentation of abandoned HLP in a discrete manner prevented the parish committees from conducting proper documentation visits. They only recorded the information that they were able to remember or had collected earlier. Lastly, a data specialist assisted each parish committee to enter the data into the mobile application. All HLP that was witnessed as abandoned was recorded in the mobile application – the parish committees did not look into or make a distinction between houses and land that could be officially registered with the Property Institute and those that were probably not. A conscious decision was made to avoid setting up an ad hoc mechanism and instead design a process that could eventually be incorporated in the existing national mechanisms for the protection of HLP rights, principally the national registration system based on the Property Law.

By the end of 2018 almost 300 abandoned HLP had been recorded by use of the mobile application. These results are, first and foremost, preserved by UNHCR for future restitution and protection processes. Secondly, the information was analyzed to understand the dynamics around the abandonment of HLP. Following initial consultations with the Property Institute, the results also provided insights into the registration trends among displaced persons as well as minor discrepancies between the documentation method used in this effort and the Property Institute's registration system. The findings filled a serious information gap and are used to inform the ongoing longer-term response.

4.2 Long-Term Response: Enhancing National Capacity to Protect Housing, Land and Property Rights

The long-term response to violations of HLP rights consist of several parallel efforts:

4.2.1 Exchanges, Coordination and Technical Capacity-Building

UNHCR coordinated exchange missions between members of the Working Group and the Land Restitution Unit in Colombia in 2017. The missions consisted of working sessions with relevant government entities, including the Victim's Unit and magistrates working on restitution cases. Members of the Working Group also conducted field visits to restitution programs in both urban and rural areas of the department of Antioquia - a region that witnessed significant displacement during the country's armed conflict - in coordination with relevant municipalities. These missions aimed to facilitate understanding of the restitution processes, legal frameworks and cadastral systems in that country.

Based on this experience, the Working Group transitioned into the Cadastral Committee in 2018. It functions under the leadership of the Property Institute with participation of the National Municipalities Association of Honduras (known by its Spanish acronym AMHON), National Agriculture Institute and the Forest Conservation Institute and technical support provided by UNHCR. Following its establishment and validation by relevant government departments, the Cadastral Committee drafted a workplan for 2018 that included the development of: 1) a special form to request the protection of abandoned property; 2) a protocol for the registration process at the national level; and 3) a special module for the registration of abandoned HLP in the national registration system.

To facilitate this work, UNHCR organized two regional training sessions in Honduras in 2018 with the participation of 60 functionaries from the national entities that make up the Cadastral Committee. Technical support was provided by the Land Restitution Unit and the National Land Agency in Colombia. The sessions focused on the relevant international human rights instruments, Honduras' commitments towards responding to forced displacement in the country and helped to refine the HLP strategy developed between the Cadastral Committee and UNHCR. More general issues related to land administration and management were discussed as well. Technical and legal consultancies were conducted in coordination with the AMHON for the analysis of existing cadastral tools at the local and national levels as well as the recommendations of 48 local authorities regarding proposed actions

on the Cadastral Committee's workplan as well as more generally the draft law on forced displacement and the HLP strategy.

Technical capacity building efforts also included the judicial branch. In 2018 UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Supreme Justice Court and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. It conducted three regional trainings for 127 judges and magistrates from different legal areas (e.g. criminal, civil, child protection, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence) to enhance their understanding of the causes and consequences of forced displacement as well as the international and inter-American protection system for displaced persons. A module on the protection of HLP rights was included in each training session, which included discussions on the gaps in and opportunities for the effective protection of abandoned housing and land and resulted in the drafting of a workplan for 2019 as part of the follow-up of the MoU.

At the end of 2018, UNHCR organized an International Exchange on Mechanisms for the Protection and Restitution of Abandoned Land and Housing due to Forced Displacement in the capital of Honduras, Tegucigalpa, with the participation of 100 delegates from the four entities (local and national levels) represented on the Cadastral Committee. Judges and magistrates, NGOs, civil society, the CIPPDV and the National Commissioner for Human Rights (known by its Spanish acronym CONADEH). Five experts from Guatemala, Salvador and Colombia led the panels and bilateral sessions that exchanged on the various urban and rural, institutional and ethnic experiences on the protection of abandoned housing and land and resulted in a set of specific recommendations for the HLP strategy in Honduras. Memoirs of the exchange will be launched in the second semester of 2019.

4.2.2 Legal Development and Reform

Efforts to strengthen the prevention of and response to forced displacement in Honduras were challenging in the absence of relevant legislation. Since 2016 the CIPPDV has therefore been leading the drafting of a law on forced displacement. The GoH has indicated that the draft law, entitled the Law for the Prevention, Attention and Protection of Forcibly Displaced Persons, will be presented to Congress in March 2019. The CIPPDV has organised two consultations with IDPs on certain aspects of the law. Contents of the law have been found to be in compliance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The law foresees the establishment of a National System for the Response to Forced Displacement, which facilitates inter-institutional coordination, exchange of information, registration procedures and coordination on issues such as budgeting. The law also establishes an Early Warning System to improve the prevention of forced displacement and facilitate the development of contingency plans, both of which assist the prevention of HLP-related challenges in the context of forced displacement. Besides including a comprehensive response to forced

displacement, the draft law includes specific measures to protect the most affected groups of the population (e.g. children, women, teachers).

The law also includes three articles concerning the protection of abandoned housing and land in accordance with the aforementioned recommendation of the UN Special Rapporteur and the commitment of the GoH made at the regional conference in San Pedro Sula. Besides reference to a registration system for abandoned HLP, the law includes a provision on a one-year suspension of debts that displaced persons may owe authorities as a result of non-payment of taxes over HLP. This is meant as an incentive to register abandoned HLP once such protective measures have been put in place. Finally, the law's chapter on durable solution elaborates on restitution processes for IDPs, including restitution of HLP.

4.2.3 Institutional Development and Reform

While the law on forced displacement will facilitate the reform and creation of relevant institutions to enable an effective response to forced displacement, several steps in this direction have already been taken in the meantime. In November 2017, Executive Decree PCM-055-2017 was launched which redefined the roles of and separation between the Justice, Decentralization and Governance Secretary and Human Rights Secretary. This resulted in a redefinition of their mandates towards a more concise role of the Human Rights Secretary with regards to the design and implementation of human rights policies, including the national response to forced displacement.

The Executive Decree also charged the Human Rights Secretary with setting up a Directorate for the Protection of Displaced Persons, which would include four technical units covering issues related to reception, analysis, protection mechanisms and registration of displaced persons. Since the law on forced displacement has not yet been adopted, no specific resources have been assigned for the functioning of the Directorate although in anticipation of the law's enactment the various teams have been constituted at the end of 2018. The CIPPDV also already commenced a response to forced displacement in 2017 in three of the most affected municipalities of the country (Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula and El Progreso). This consisted of the development of a contingency plan for the response to massive displacements in these areas and a national quantification exercise in coordination with the Finance Secretary in order to identify the required budget for the implementation of the law on forced displacement. Technical and financial support for these efforts has been provided by UNHCR.

4.2.4 Adapting the National Property Registration System to Include Information on Abandoned Housing, Land and Property

The results of the data collection efforts of the parish committees as well as the various institutional and legal reforms facilitated the design of a specific module in the national property system in which abandoned HLP could be recorded. The process works as follows:

Development of a Form to Register Abandoned Housing, Land and Property and Request Protection

Based on the information collected by use of the mobile application, the Cadastral Committee and UNHCR developed a special form that displaced persons could complete to request the protection of the HLP that they were forced to abandon. Following a sensitization campaign (discussed below), it is hoped that displaced persons will obtain the forms from and submit completed copies to various designated entities, such as the Ombudsman's Office, Cadastral Offices, Municipal Offices, Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights, and so on.

The form includes the location of the HLP and various housing and land tenure and classification categories (e.g. ownership, rental, residential, commercial) as prescribed by the Property Law. The types of abandoned HLP that may be recorded is, again, not limited to those that are owned and housing and land over which other types of rights were held are included as well. In addition, information, when available, on the current state of the HLP and causes of displacement (including alleged perpetrators) can be recorded as well. The form is aligned with the existing registration forms of the relevant entities.

A draft version of the form was piloted in December 2018 with a group of IDPs under the leadership of delegates of the four entities of the Cadastral Committee. Following the pilot the form was revised to clarify several questions and include additional information. The final version of the form will be validated by the Directors of the Cadastral Committee in March 2019. Following the validation, additional pilot sessions with a broader group of IDPs will be conducted. Based on the final approved version of the form trainings will be conducted in the second semester of 2019 for the officials of different designated entities that could receive forms completed by displaced persons.

Development of a Protocol to Define Roles and Responsibilities

While enactment and implementation of the abovementioned law will confirm the exact roles and responsibilities of those involved, an initial protocol has been developed in 2018 in consultation with delegates of the four entities of the Cadastral Committee. The draft protocol includes procedures for the reception, analysis, verification and registration of information submitted by displaced persons and clarifies the responsibilities of all entities involved. It should be noted that this process includes

the verification of ownership claims, for instance. The various measures to be taken to protect the abandoned HLP that has been recorded will be discussed with relevant entities, such as the CIPPDV, once the law has been approved by the National Congress in 2019.

Development of Special Module for the Registration of Abandoned Housing, Land and Property

For the development of a special module on abandoned HLP as a result of forced displacement within the national registration system (known by its Spanish acronym SURE) that is managed by the Property Institute, UNHCR signed an MoU with the Property Institute in 2018. Since the collaboration on the development of this module required the sharing of information collected by the parish committees in the immediate response discussed above, a detailed confidentiality clause was included in the MoU.

The special module is currently being finalized and will record all the information provided on the forms submitted by displaced persons by following the aforementioned protocol. The Property Institute will also establish procedures to identify abandoned HLP itself. UNHCR will assist with the design of these procedures, taking into account lessons learned from the experience with the parish committees. The eventual recording of abandoned HLP will constitute official registration. Following its completion, the special module will be presented for validation to the Directors at the Cadastral Committee and thereafter the CIPPDV for final approval.

Following the approval of the special module, the Property Institute will triangulate and register the data collected by the parish committees. UNHCR and Caritas will support this effort by facilitating technical sessions between the Property Institute and the parish committees.

Sensitization of Displaced Persons

It is hoped that the Human Rights Secretary will proceed with the full establishment of Directorate for the Protection of Displaced Persons, especially the unit responsible for the registration of displaced persons. This would enable the Cadastral Committee and UNHCR to implement activities aimed at informing displaced persons of the aforementioned efforts to document abandoned land and housing. Awareness raising activities, such as sensitization campaigns, have been included in the MoU between the Property Institute and UNHCR. Reaching out to displaced persons for registration purposes constitutes a major challenge, given security concerns, lack of trust in the authorities as well as fear of reprisals. The careful design of information campaigns, confidentiality procedures and protection mechanisms will be key to ensure a positive response by displaced persons. Consultations will have to take place to obtain their inputs and ensure effective participation in the dissemination process.

5. Conclusion

While few displaced Hondurans intend to return to their places of origin at present, it is important to address challenges for restoring HLP rights and remove other obstacles that may hinder their return and reintegration in the future. Implementation of protection measures for the protection of abandoned HLP of displaced persons contributes to the prevention of destruction, occupation and illegal sale of abandoned HLP and represents a step towards restitution. It is hoped that the abovementioned efforts will collectively improve the levels of trust of the population in the authorities, which is a critical step to rebuild societies affected by prolonged situations of violence. Even if the majority of displaced people eventually opt for other solutions (such as integrating in their new homes), protecting their land rights enables them to make use of these assets in their new environments.

The entities of the Cadastral Committee have demonstrated great interest and commitment to the protection of HLP that displaced persons were forced to leave behind. Coming together and confronting the various technical differences between the entities linked to the cadastral system, data collection methodologies and operational mandates has been challenging but a focus on the need to protect abandoned HLP assisted them in overcoming the challenges. The capacity building element of the long-term response has ensured that the protection of HLP rights is part and parcel of all considerations going forward, which contributes to the sustainability of the response as well as to creating the conditions for the achievement of durable solutions to displacement.

While the Cadastral Committee has already commenced efforts to broaden its focus on the protection of abandoned HLP to the protection of HLP rights more generally, there is a need to take further determined steps towards advancing the long-term effort to enhance national capacity to protect abandoned HLP. The establishment of a registration system for abandoned HLP remains a specific commitment of the Honduran national chapter of the Global Compact on Refugees for 2020, as is the submission of the law on forced displacement to the National Congress. While the delay in enacting the law, which was drafted in 2016, has allowed UNHCR, the Cadastral Committee and others to design a sustainable approach, further delays will be problematic and prevent the finalisation and implementation of various follow-up activities. Activating the envisaged Directorate for the Protection of Displaced Persons, especially the unit responsible for the registration of displaced persons, is also very urgent.

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