Preventing displacement is obviously a worthwhile objective. Being displaced puts people at a higher risk of being both impoverished and unable to enjoy their human rights. Such a situation is worth preventing – but not at any cost.

People know that displacement brings with it risks and vulnerabilities such as loss of land and work, homelessness, food insecurity, health risks, loss of access to common resources such as education, and possibly destruction of social networks upon which people depend, particularly during a crisis. “The effects of displacement can last a lifetime and beyond, damaging the prospects of future generations,” says Valerie Amos in the opening article. “We can do more to prevent displacement and the suffering it brings.”

It is important, however, to preserve the possibility of displacement when that is a choice, or indeed a necessity, and it is also worth remembering that two of the three traditional durable solutions – return and resettlement – both involve further displacement.

Addressing the causes of displacement – such as violent conflict, housing that cannot withstand a natural disaster, or a government that cannot guarantee a sustainable infrastructure – is the focus of some of the articles in this issue of FMR. Others look at how to manage situations that might cause displacement so as to make staying a better option. And yet others look at the legal and institutional context within which all this occurs.

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This issue of FMR also includes a number of articles about disparate aspects of forced migration: North Koreans in China, slum evictions in Tanzania, East Africans adapting to the UK, the Nansen Initiative, cultural orientation for resettlers to the US, making work safe for refugee women, the Rohingya, new initiatives in communications technology, and a new methodology for assessing the costs and impacts of displacement.

The full issue is online at www.fmreview.org/preventing in html, pdf and audio formats.

A 4-sided expanded contents listing, FMR41 Listing, with introductory sentences and links to each article online, is available in print and online at www.fmreview.org/preventing/FMR41listing.pdf.