

Thousands of displaced people seek shelter outside the UNAMID base in Um Baru, North Darfur. Photo: UNAMID/Hamid Abdulsalam, January 2015.



# PART 1

## ON THE GRID

### Internal displacement in 2015

There were 27.8 million new displacements in 127 countries during 2015, roughly the equivalent of the populations of New York City, London, Paris and Cairo combined. Of the total, 8.6 million were associated with conflict and violence in 28 countries, and 19.2 million with disasters in 113 countries.

2015 was, tragically, another record year for internal displacement associated with conflict and violence. The increases recorded during the year were driven primarily by the waves of violence that continued to spread across the Middle East following the 2010 uprisings known as the Arab spring. New displacements were recorded in all regions of the world, but by far the worst-affected country was Yemen, where 2.2 million people – or eight per cent of the population – fled their homes and sought refuge within the country's borders.

There were 19.2 million new displacements associated with disasters brought on by rapid-onset natural hazards in 2015, more than twice as many as for conflict and violence. The vast majority of this displacement was caused by extreme weather events such as storms and flooding, but the April and May earthquakes in Nepal, which forced 2.6 million to flee their homes, were a stark reminder of the potential of geophysical hazards to precipitate mass displacements.

As in previous years, south and east Asia and the Pacific regions were worst-affected by displacement associated with disasters, and the vulnerable, coastal populations of small island developing states (SIDSs) were disproportionately affected again. Low and middle income countries were hardest hit across the world as a whole.

Part 1 of this year's report presents estimates for new displacements associated with conflict and violence during 2015, and those associated with disasters over the same period.

It also reports on the "total headcount", or the overall number of people internally displaced as a result of conflict and violence as of the end of the year, including those who fled in previous years. Unfortunately such cumulative data is not available for people displaced by disasters, so it is not possible to report a total headcount in the same way.

Figure 1.1 Total number of people internally displaced by conflict and disasters

	New displacements Jan – Dec 2015	Total number of IDPs at end 2015
CONFLICT	8.6 million	40.8 million
DISASTERS	19.2 million	?

#### NOTE TO OUR READERS

In this section, we refer to "incidents" and "cases" of displacement rather than "people displaced", because some people will have been displaced more than once. When we use the term "people displaced" explicitly, it should be taken to mean single incidents or cases affecting one person.

# KEY FINDINGS AND MESSAGES

| There were **27.8 million new displacements in 127 countries** during 2015, more than the total populations of New York City, London, Paris and Cairo combined.

## New displacement: conflict

| There were **8.6 million new displacements associated with conflict and violence** in 28 countries in 2015.

| This type of displacement is on the rise, with an average of 5.2 million incidents a year since 2003. This equates to 14,000 people forced to flee every day.

| **Displacement in the Middle East and north Africa has snowballed** since the Arab spring uprisings in 2010 and the rise of the Islamic State (also known as ISIL or ISIS). There were nearly 4.8 million new displacements in 2015, significantly more than in all other regions of the world combined. **Yemen, Syria and Iraq accounted for over half of the global total.**

| Outside the Middle East, the countries with the highest numbers of people fleeing were Ukraine, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Afghanistan, Colombia, Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan.

## New displacement: disasters

| There were **19.2 million new displacements associated with disasters** in 113 countries, more than twice as many as for conflict and violence. Over the past eight years, 203.4 million displacements have been recorded, an average of 25.4 million each year.

| South and east Asian regions, countries and events again dominated in terms of the highest absolute figures, but no region of the world was unaffected. **India, China and Nepal accounted for the highest numbers**, with 3.7 million, 3.6 million and 2.6 million respectively.

| Most displacement associated with disasters in 2015 took place in developing countries.

| **Weather-related hazards triggered 14.7 million displacements** in 2015. Despite the onset of an El Niño episode, this was lower than the annual average of 21.5 million since 2008.

| 4.5 million displacements were brought on by large-scale geophysical hazards. This was higher than the annual average, driven up by the Nepal earthquake disaster.

## Total headcount

| There were **40.8 million people internally displaced worldwide** as a result of conflict and violence as of the end of 2015. This represents an increase of 2.8 million from our 2014 estimate and the highest figure ever recorded. It is **twice the number of refugees in the world.**

| As of December 2015, three-quarters of the world's internally displaced people (IDPs), or 30 million people, were located in ten countries. Five of them – **Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Sudan and South Sudan** – have featured in the list of the ten largest displaced populations every year since 2003.

| Of the other five countries, displacement in Nigeria, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen is largely the result of conflicts that erupted or escalated within the last five years. There is a risk these conflicts will become intractable, leaving the people they have displaced, who make up more than **30 per cent of the overall global estimate, to face a future of protracted and possibly multiple displacement.**

| At nearly 12 million, the number of people displaced by conflict in sub-Saharan Africa has flat-lined over the last decade, underlining the chronic nature of displacement in the region.

| There are no figures for the total number of people displaced by disasters as of the end of 2015. However, among a sample of 34 ongoing cases documented in 2015, there were **hundreds of thousands of people identified as living in protracted displacement for periods ranging between one and 26 years.**

# NEW DISPLACEMENT

## People who fled conflict and violence in 2015

There were 8.6 million new displacements associated with conflict and violence in 28 countries during 2015 (see global map, cover page fold-out).

### Displacement associated with conflict on the rise

The average number of people displaced each year by conflict and violence has risen over the last 13 years (see figure 1.2). Our figures show an average of 5.2 million displacements a year since 2003, which equates to 14,000 people forced to flee their homes every day.

Calculated over the last five years, the average rises to 7.6 million a year, or more than 20,000 people a day. This increase correlates with findings that conflict and violence intensified worldwide between 2008 and 2015.<sup>1</sup>

### The Middle East: Home to half of all new IDPs

Displacement in the Middle East and north Africa has snowballed since the wave of social uprisings known as the Arab spring in late 2010 and the rise of the Islamic State (also known as ISIL or ISIS). The region accounted for the highest numbers of people fleeing violence in 2015 by a wide margin. There were nearly 4.8 million new displacements during the year, significantly more than in all of the other regions of the world combined (see figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3: New displacements associated with conflict and violence by World Bank-defined region in 2015

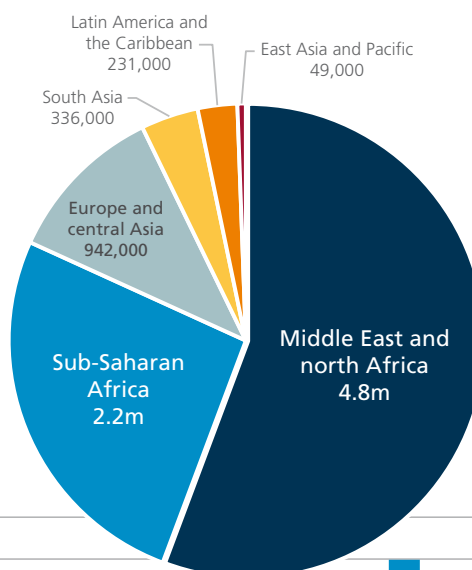


Figure 1.2: New displacements associated with conflict and violence, 2003 to 2015

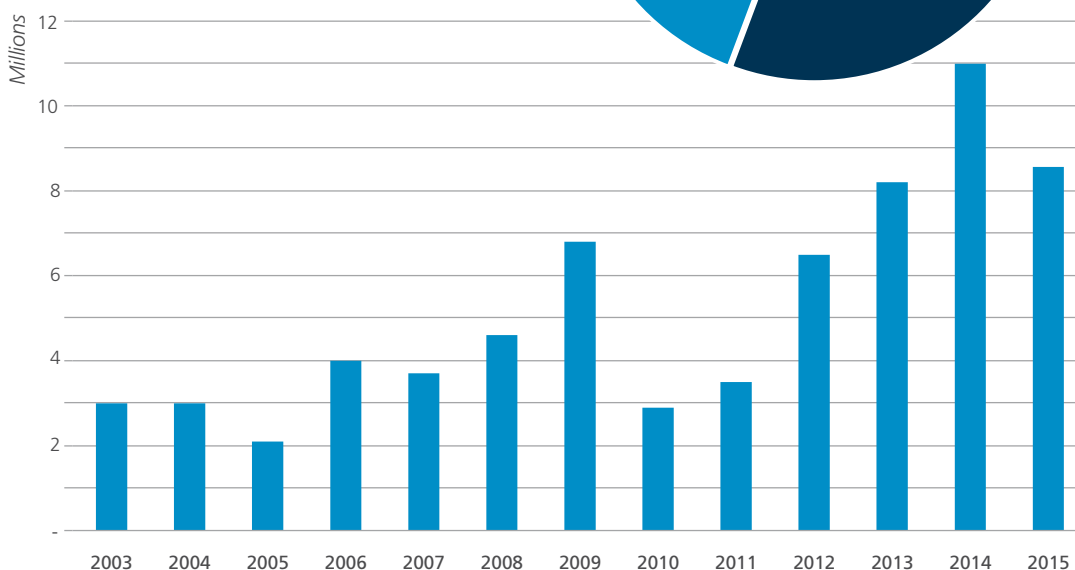
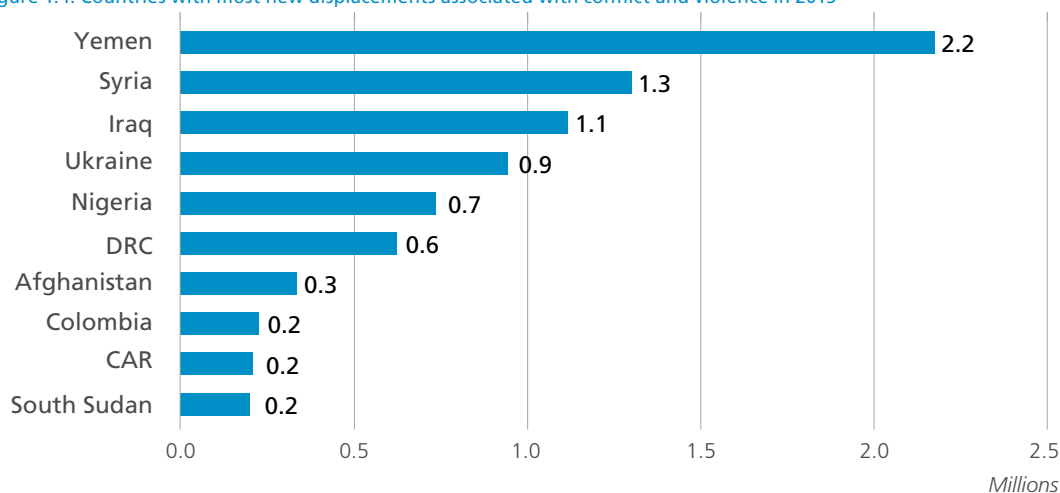


Figure 1.4: Countries with most new displacements associated with conflict and violence in 2015



Yemen, Syria and Iraq accounted for the bulk of new displacement in the region, and more than half of the global total. They were also the top three countries worldwide in terms of the number of new displacements in 2015 (see figure 1.4).

Yemen had the highest number, largely the result of Saudi-led airstrikes and an economic blockade imposed on the civilian population (see Yemen spotlight). Nearly 2.2 million men, women and children were forced to flee their homes during the year, a 20-fold increase on the 2014 estimate of new displacements. It was the worst year to date for displacement in the country, and the needs of those affected and the rest of the civilian population are acute.

In Syria, there were 1.3 million incidents of new displacement during 2015. The figure is an increase of 18 per cent from the 2014 estimate, and the humanitarian situation in the country deteriorated significantly during the year. The civil war is now in its sixth year, with four of the five permanent UN Security Council members actively engaged in the hostilities, and it has caused one of the largest displacement crises since World War Two.

Neighbouring countries have increasingly restricted the flow of people trying to leave Syria or have closed their borders altogether, leaving hundreds of thousands of families trapped in the country and living as IDPs (see Syria spotlight).

More than 1.1 million people were displaced in 2015 by Iraq's most recent wave of violence, which began in early 2014 with the rise of the Islamic State (also known as ISIL or ISIS) and other non-state armed groups, and has included intense counter-insurgency operations in cities

such as Ramadi. Three governorates – Anbar, Baghdad and Dohuk – host nearly half of the country's IDPs.<sup>2</sup> As the crisis deepens, the likelihood of IDPs being able to return to their homes has diminished and they are increasingly unable to meet their own needs. Many have become reliant on dwindling public and others' resources, a point of growing tension between IDPs and their host communities.<sup>3</sup>

## Displacement associated with conflict in the rest of the world

Outside the Middle East and north Africa, the countries with highest numbers of people fleeing the effects of conflict and violence in 2015 were Ukraine, Afghanistan, Colombia and a number of sub-Saharan African nations.

Now in its second year, the conflict that broke out in eastern Ukraine continued to cause significant loss of life, suffering and mass displacement. Insecurity continued in a number of areas along the contact line between government forces and pro-Russian separatist groups, despite the signing of the Minsk II agreements in February 2015.

A renewed ceasefire in September to enable the start of the school year has largely held. There has been a marked reduction in clashes and shelling, bringing partial relief to people who had been living with the threat of violence for many months.<sup>19</sup> These positive political and security developments have done little, however, to convince people that they are safe in their homes. There were more than 942,000 incidents of new displacement during the year, up nearly 50 per cent on our 2014 estimate.

# YEMEN

## An overlooked crisis with no end in sight

SPOT  
LIGHT

The political and security situation in Yemen deteriorated dramatically in 2015, and the ensuing humanitarian crisis shows few, if any, signs of abating. Violence displaced eight per cent of the country's population, or 2.2 million people, during the year – more than in any other country in the world – and people fled their homes in all but one of its 22 governorates.<sup>4</sup> Humanitarian and protection needs among IDPs and the rest of the civilian population are acute, and neither the national nor international response have gone far enough in addressing them.

The only unaffected governorate, Socotra, was hit by two freak tropical cyclones that traversed the Gulf of Yemen in November. Between them, cyclones Megh and Chapala forced 56,000 people to flee their homes across three governorates, and by the end of the month around 23,000 people remained displaced.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of the year, people were living in displacement in every region of Yemen, an unprecedented situation in the country's history.

Humanitarian needs were already acute before the conflict escalated in March 2015. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Arab world. It has few natural resources, weak governance and social services, high youth unemployment and almost 50 per cent of its population of 26.8 million lived below the poverty line in 2014.<sup>6</sup> Half of the population, of whom 70 per cent live in rural areas, had no access to safe drinking water and three-quarters no access to safe sanitation.<sup>7</sup> Gender inequality is widespread. Yemen has ranked last in the World Economic Forum's annual global gender gap report in each of the ten years it has been published.<sup>8</sup>

The escalation of violence made human suffering and the country's displacement crisis significantly worse during the year. As of the end of 2014, there were around 334,000 people displaced.<sup>9</sup> By the end of 2015, the figure had increased more than seven-fold to more than 2.5 million. The upsurge in violence has largely been attributed to the Saudi-led military intervention in the conflict. The sharp deterioration in living condi-

tions, however, is predominantly the result of sea, land and air blockades of commercial and humanitarian imports.<sup>10</sup>

Taizz, Amran and Hajjah governorates had the highest number of IDPs, between them accounting for 900,000.<sup>11</sup> Many more people may have wanted to flee, but found a range of physical, economic and social obstacles prevented them from doing so.

Flagrant disregard for international humanitarian and human rights law, and indiscriminate warfare that has targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, were the main triggers of displacement. The destruction of infrastructure including hospitals, schools, markets, shops and water supplies has left 82 per cent of Yemen's population in need of humanitarian assistance, including 14.4 million people who suffer from food insecurity.<sup>12</sup> Calls for an independent international human rights monitoring and reporting mechanism have gone unheeded.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of IDPs live in overcrowded rented accommodation, schools and other public spaces, or tents and other forms of makeshift shelter.<sup>14</sup> They face a wide range of protection needs and vulnerabilities including lack of shelter options, lack of safety and security, harassment, lack of livelihood options, gender-based violence, loss of documentation, food insecurity and limited access to healthcare, education, water and sanitation.

Displacement has also forced many families to separate, and there are large numbers of unaccompanied minors.<sup>15</sup> IDPs have few livelihood options, and most are dependent on charity or humanitarian assistance for survival.<sup>16</sup>

Cyclones Megh and Chapala brought the equivalent of five years' of rainfall to Hadramaut, Socotra and Shabwa governorates in just two days, leading to flash floods and widespread devastation.<sup>17</sup> More than half of those who fled their homes returned within a month, and the majority of the 22,970 people still displaced were living with host families or in rental accommodation.<sup>18</sup>



Internally displaced children play in front of a school in Sana'a hosting some 200 IDPs, mostly from Saada governorate. Photo: Charlotte Cans/OCHA, June 2015

The warring parties have enforced import and movement restrictions, which have led to scarce commodities, fuel shortages and price hikes, and left the country with little or no capacity to rebuild or repair damaged homes and infrastructure. The damage the cyclones inflicted is relatively small compared with destruction the conflict has caused, but people in Yemen are highly vulnerable to such shocks, which compounds the risks they already face.

The international media and political discourse have widely overlooked the human narrative and widespread suffering in Yemen, and there has been little political resolve to stop the violence and improve humanitarian access. As a result, and because of competing crises in the region such as Syria, the response is seriously underfunded. Even if a stalled peace process bears fruit in 2016, economic and political recovery will take many years.

Given that there are no prospects for return or other durable solutions in sight, there is high risk that displacement will become protracted and IDPs' resilience to future shocks, including environmental hazards, will be further compromised.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram continued to launch attacks and commit atrocities throughout 2015. In the six years since the onset of its insurgency, the group and military operations against it have forced more than a million people to flee their homes and fuelled an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the north-east of the country and the wider Lake Chad region.

Displacement trends show that as the military pushed Boko Haram back during the year, people previously trapped by the militants moved to urban centres in search of humanitarian assistance.<sup>20</sup> Inter-communal clashes fuelled by ethno-religious feuds, criminality, cattle rustling, land disputes and tensions between pastoralists and farmers also continued to flare across the Middle Belt region, but were largely overlooked. There were 737,000 incidents of new displacement in the country during the year.

Ongoing conflict and extreme violence also plagued the DRC, where there was an average of more than 50,000 cases of new displacement every month in 2015. The quarterly average has declined since 2013, but population movements could rise significantly again in 2016 if the political and security situation were to deteriorate.<sup>21</sup>

In Afghanistan, the withdrawal of most of the international troops present in the country coincided with a rise in displacement, with more than 335,000 new incidents reported. This was driven by an increase in violence by non-state armed groups and counter-insurgency operations by national and the remaining international security forces. Such operations have increasingly involved the use of mortars, rockets and grenades in populated areas.<sup>22</sup> Significant new displacement in Kunduz province and continuing instability in Helmand and central areas of the country have aggravated a displacement crisis that has been ongoing since 2001.<sup>23</sup>

Colombia's long-running armed conflict, and violence perpetrated by groups the government identifies as criminal gangs, triggered more than 224,000 cases of new displacement in 2015.<sup>24</sup> Most of the violence takes place in rural areas, but IDPs tend to flee to the country's large and medium-sized cities, where they take refuge in slums and shanty towns. Here, they and the rest of the urban poor face sporadic bomb attacks, threats, killings, forced recruitment, gender-based violence, abductions and other forms of harassment and intimidation. These cause further displacement, but the number of people affected is difficult if not impossible to gauge.<sup>25</sup>

Improved security in some areas of CAR during the first half of the year allowed many IDPs to return to their homes. The situation remained volatile, however, with violence in September and October sparking nearly 210,000 new displacements and forcing some people to seek shelter in sites that were in the process of closing.<sup>26</sup> Many IDPs were trapped in enclaves, some controlled by warlords, where they were beyond the reach of state authorities, humanitarians and French and UN peacekeepers.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the signing of a peace agreement in South Sudan in August 2015, civilians in all ten of the country's states continued to suffer violence, which caused the displacement of more than 199,000 people during the year. Fighting erupted in new areas in the second half of the year, including Western and Central Equatoria. Inter-communal violence, some sparked by cattle rustling, caused further displacement.<sup>28</sup>



# NEW DISPLACEMENT

## People who fled disasters in 2015

There were 19.2 million new displacements associated with disasters in 113 countries across all regions of the world in 2015, brought on by events such as floods, storms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, landslides and extreme temperatures (see global map, cover page fold-out).

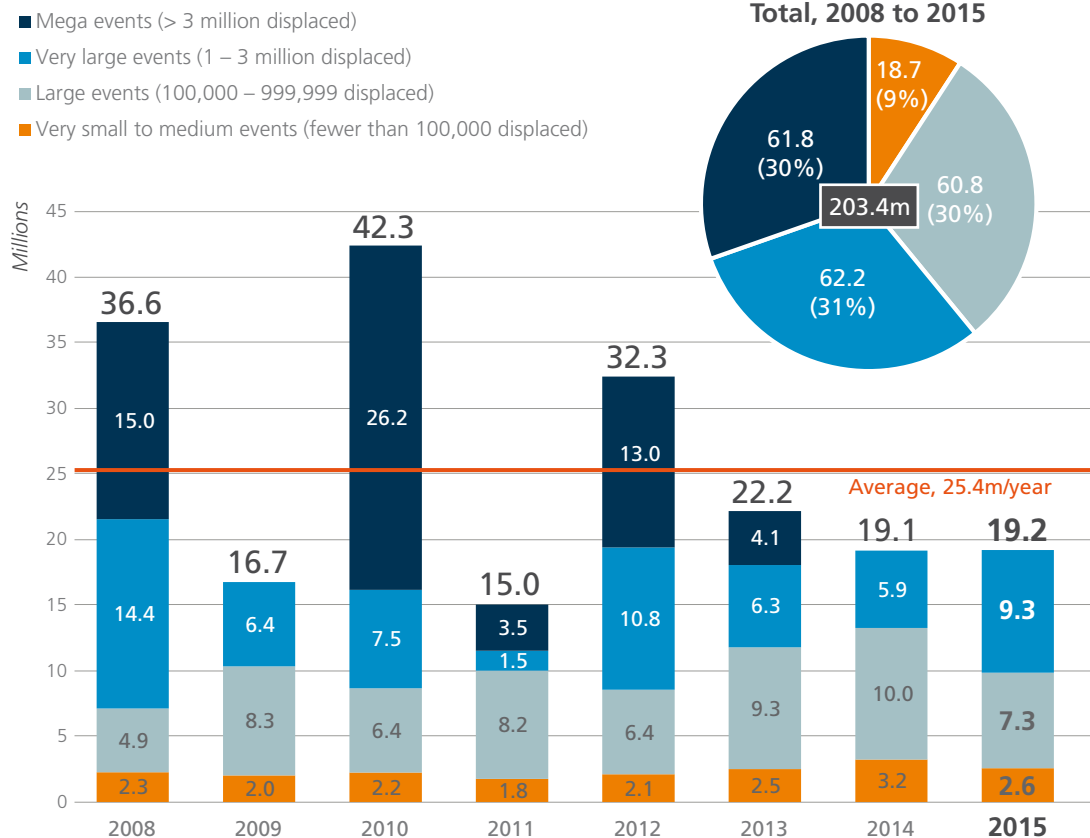
### Disasters caused twice as many new displacements as conflict

Disasters triggered by natural hazards caused twice as many new displacements in 2015 as conflict and violence. Over the past eight years, there have been 203.4 million displacements by disasters, a figure comparable to the entire

population of Brazil. The 2015 figure is lower than the average recorded since 2008 of 25.4 million displacements per year, but similar to the reported global totals for the previous year (see figure 1.5).<sup>29</sup>

The scale and frequency of large-scale disasters account for much of the variance in the total figures from year to year. Such events are less predictable because they are brought on by the most extreme hazards. As in 2014 and 2009, there were no mega-events (defined here as more than three million displacements) in 2015.

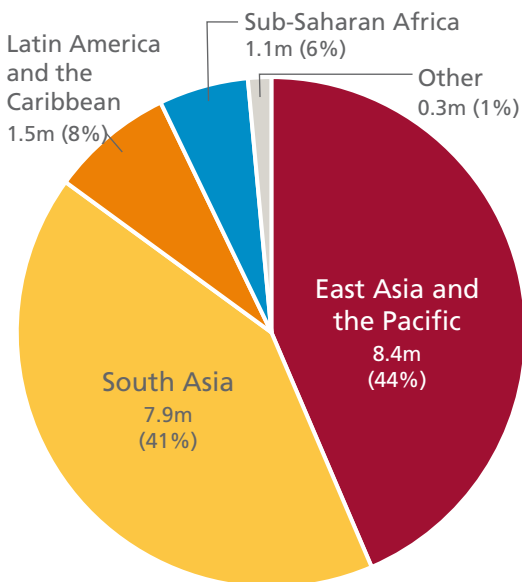
Figure 1.5: New displacements associated with disasters by scale of events, 2008 to 2015



## South and east Asia dominate the figures again

As in previous years, south and east Asian regions, countries and events dominated in terms of the highest absolute figures in 2015 (see figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6: New displacements associated with disasters by World Bank-defined region, 2015



India, China and Nepal accounted for the highest numbers of people displaced, with totals of 3.7 million, 3.6 million and 2.6 million respectively (see figure 1.7, p.16).

In India, the impact of two major flood and storm events were responsible for 81 per cent of the displacement, forcing three million people to flee their homes. Heavy rains and flash floods associated with a weak tropical cyclone that tracked across the Bay of Bengal in November displaced 1.8 million in the states of Tamil Nadu and southern Andhra Pradesh. Monsoon flooding associated with cyclone Komen, which struck neighbouring Bangladesh in late July, displaced 1.2 million, mostly in the northern and central states of West Bengal, Odisha, Manipur, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Three large-scale typhoons and a flood disaster together triggered 75 per cent of the displacement in China. Three typhoons, Chan-Hom, Soudelor and Dujan, struck four eastern provinces between July and September, destroying homes, causing landslides and flooding and, between them, displacing more than 2.2 million people. Earlier in the year, heavy rains and flooding in nine southern and eastern provinces forced another 518,000 people to flee their homes in May.

The earthquakes in Nepal in April and May, the thousands of aftershocks that followed and the landslides they triggered left 712,000 homes and much infrastructure damaged or destroyed. The disaster took a heavy toll on the developing nation, affecting almost a third of the population and killing 8,700 people. Many of the 2.6 million who were displaced have been unable to return to their homes, and recovery and reconstruction will take many years to complete (see Nepal spotlight).

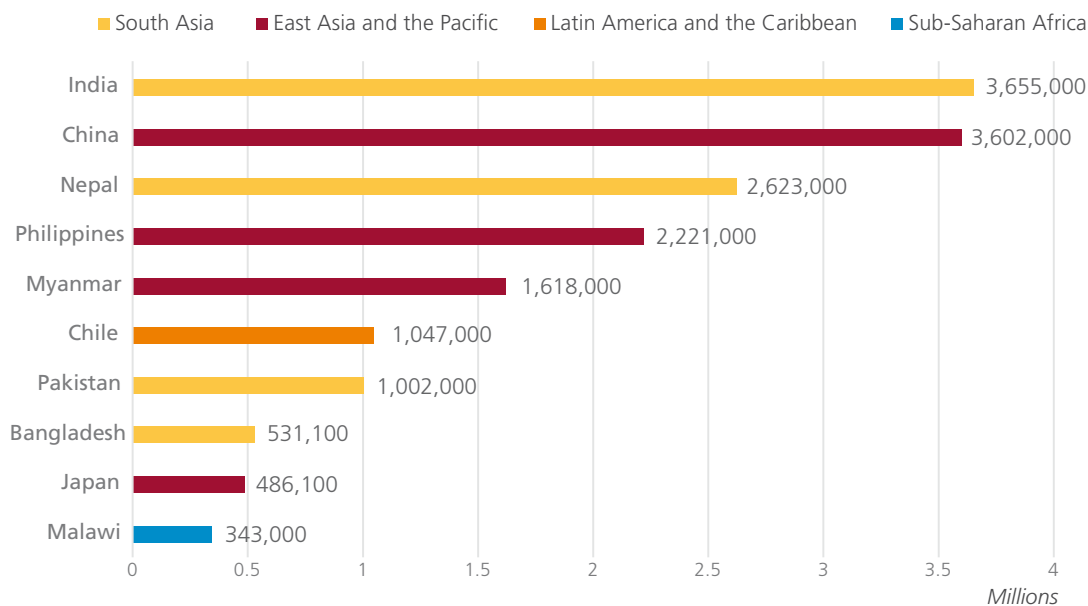
Unlike China and India, the number of people displaced in Nepal was also high relative to its population size (see figure 1.8, p.19). It recorded the third highest level of new displacement worldwide in both relative and absolute terms.

As in previous years, multiple typhoons struck the Philippines in 2015, with three of the strongest storms displacing two million people. Typhoon Koppu (local name Lando) was the most severe. It made landfall on Luzon, the country's largest and most populous island, in October, killing 54 people, displacing around 938,000 and causing severe crop damage. Typhoon Melor (local name Nona) forced 743,000 people to flee their homes in the central regions of Bicol Peninsula and Romblan Islands in December, and typhoon Goni (local name Ineng) displaced more than 318,000 in the north of the country in August.

Floods, landslides and the impacts of cyclone Komen displaced more than 1.6 million people in Myanmar in July and August, resulting in the fifth highest figure worldwide in absolute terms and the sixth highest in relative terms (see figure 1.8, p.19). Twelve of the country's 14 states and regions suffered widespread destruction. The government declared the worst-affected states of Chin and Rakhine, and the Magway and Sagaing regions, as disaster zones.

In Pakistan, two disasters accounted for almost all of the displacement that took place during the year. A 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck the Hindu Kush mountains in October. Its epicentre was in a remote area of northern Afghanistan, but north-west Pakistan suffered the worst of its impacts. Nearly 666,000 people were displaced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and Bajaur in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Snow and rainfall over mountainous terrain left many of those affected isolated and acutely vulnerable. In August, flooding in northern and central KP, Punjab, Gilgit Baltistan, Chitral and Kashmir displaced 330,000 people.

Figure 1.7: Countries with most new disaster displacements in 2015 (absolute number)



Cyclone Komen was the largest trigger of displacement in Bangladesh. It struck the south-east of the country at the end of July, displacing 331,000 people.

Asia bore the brunt of new displacements, but no region of the world was unaffected. Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for eight per cent of the global figure, with 1.5 million new displacements, and sub-Saharan Africa six per cent with just over a million. Chile and Malawi were the only countries from these regions among the ten with the highest number of people displaced in 2015 (see figure 1.7).

In Chile, an 8.3 magnitude earthquake struck the Coquimbo region in September. This earthquake and the subsequent tsunami warning led the authorities to evacuate a million people. Chile is one of only two high-income countries among the ten with the highest levels of new displacement in 2015. The other is Japan, where 486,000 people were displaced by a range of hazards, primarily typhoons Goni, Etau and Nangka, which struck in close succession between mid-July and early September (see figure 1.7).

In southern Africa, seasonal floods in Malawi in January displaced the majority of the 343,000 people who fled their homes in 2015 – the world’s tenth-largest displacement in absolute terms – and caused widespread damage to agriculture.

# NEPAL

## Obstacles to protection and recovery

## SPOT LIGHT

Two major earthquakes in April and May 2015 and thousands of associated aftershocks took a devastating toll on the already fragile nation of Nepal. They affected almost a third of the country's population of 28.2 million, killed 8,700 people, damaged or destroyed more than 712,000 houses and displaced more than 2.6 million people.<sup>30</sup> They hit both urban and rural areas hard, and triggered landslides and avalanches in high mountain areas, razing entire villages and leaving hundreds of thousands of people with acute shelter, livelihood, protection, food, water and education needs.

Most of those displaced stayed at least initially in makeshift or temporary shelters near their damaged or destroyed homes.<sup>31</sup> Those who took shelter in open spaces or public buildings began to return to their homes within a week of the first earthquake. Displacement patterns changed, however, after the second earthquake. Many people who feared their homes were structurally unsound went back to open areas such as fields. Many others fled the worst-affected rural areas toward displacement sites in the densely populated urban areas of the Kathmandu valley.<sup>32</sup>

Among the IDPs who sought shelter in collective urban sites were many poor people, including Dalits and female-headed households, whose homes had been badly damaged or destroyed, and whose access to jobs and basic services had also been disrupted. The vast majority did not own the property they lived in, and the earthquakes severely reduced the amount of rental accommodation available and inflated rents.

Around June, IDPs in just under half the sites assessed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said they had not received adequate assistance, and women and children in around half the sites felt unsafe.<sup>33</sup> Sixty-eight per cent of the IDPs surveyed said damage to their homes was the main obstacle to their return. Other issues included personal security, family separation, damage to infrastructure such as roads and a lack of food.<sup>34</sup>

In the absence of medium-term plans to settle IDPs, some lived in fear of eviction from their shelters, particularly in Kathmandu.<sup>35</sup> The monsoon and winter seasons that followed brought further

hardship. Around 200,000 households were still living in temporary shelters as of November at an altitude of over 1,500 metres.<sup>36</sup>

Since Nepal's last major earthquake in 1934, only the last decade has seen significant investment in disaster preparedness and coordination. Much of the focus, however, has been on preparing communities in the Kathmandu valley, to the neglect of less populated but highly vulnerable towns and villages in higher mountain areas.<sup>37</sup>

Over the last four years the UK government, one of Nepal's major bilateral donors, has invested more than \$30 million in earthquake resilience programming.<sup>38</sup> Despite such initiatives, the 2015 earthquakes caused large-scale destruction. The delivery of humanitarian assistance was slow and vulnerable groups were not well protected.

The country's national disaster response framework, which the Ministry of Home Affairs adopted in 2013, established coordination mechanisms that were implemented in the aftermath of the earthquakes.<sup>39</sup>

Their impact was largely determined by the poor quality of buildings unable to withstand the seismic activity, and their exposed location on steep mountain slopes.<sup>40</sup> The government approved a national building code in 2003, but when the earthquakes struck only 26 of 191 municipalities had begun implementing it.<sup>41</sup> Poverty, rapid urbanisation and weak institutional oversight have led to hasty and low-cost construction.<sup>42</sup> Enforcement has also been undermined by corruption, judicial delays and a lack of building inspectors.<sup>43</sup>

Political instability and weak institutions have also hampered the humanitarian response.<sup>44</sup> National and local government capacity had been significantly weakened by civil war and more than 12 years without local elections.<sup>45</sup> After the end of the war in 2006, Nepal struggled to adopt a federal constitution and key legislation on disaster risk management was overdue.<sup>46</sup> After the earthquake, the stalled process of finalising the constitution was expedited and it was adopted on 20 September 2015.<sup>47</sup>



Earthquake survivor sifts through the rubble of her home in Baluwa, Gorkha district. Photo: IOM, May 2015

Its content, however, sparked protests and a trade blockade on the border with India that lasted from September 2015 until February 2016.<sup>48</sup> The blockade prevented fuel and other essential supplies from entering Nepal, raised commodity prices and created a rampant black market.<sup>49</sup> Fuel shortages complicated the delivery of much-needed shelter, food and medical supplies.<sup>50</sup> Delivery was further impeded by lengthy administrative procedures and new customs duties introduced just five weeks after the earthquake.<sup>51</sup>

Feedback from affected communities on the fairness of aid distribution and reporting by international agencies pointed to discrimination associated with a failure to recognise people's specific needs and protection concerns according to social caste, ethnicity, gender, disability and age.<sup>52</sup>

Human rights advocates also raised concerns about nepotism and political favouritism, and the exclusion of certain people or groups from needs assessments.<sup>53</sup> The failure to respect the humanitarian principle of needs-based assistance made the risk of impoverishment for vulnerable groups worse.<sup>54</sup>

Resolving IDPs' ongoing needs in Nepal will require long-term financial and technical engagement by both federal and local governments and the international community. In December 2015, a new authority responsible for leading the reconstruction of more than 500,000 homes,

public buildings and infrastructure began its work with \$4.1 billion in aid donations.<sup>55</sup>

The government's reconstruction policy promises financial compensation to every homeowner whose house was damaged beyond repair. Vulnerable IDPs, however, including squatters, undocumented citizens and owners without formal title deeds risk exclusion from the policy, along with people whose homes were partially damaged and those who lived in rented accommodation. Despite progress in Nepal's social legislation in recent years, women, undocumented residents and refugees are also still denied equal inheritance and property rights.<sup>56</sup>

Rebuilding the country according to building and safety standards is of vital importance if the risk of future disasters and displacement is to be reduced. The value of retrofitting existing buildings to make them resilient to earthquakes is well proven.<sup>57</sup> Reconstruction following such a major disaster can be expected to take many years, and is likely to be delayed because of a shortage of technical and skilled labour, complex land issues and continuing political instability.<sup>58</sup>

Careful land use planning, strengthened tenure and protection for vulnerable groups, along with support for broader strategies to reduce poverty and increase community resilience will also be vital if progress is to be made and sustainable solutions for IDPs achieved.

## Small countries, big impacts

Considering new disaster-induced displacement relative to population size highlights its significant impact on Pacific small island developing states (SIDSs) including Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Micronesia and Kiribati (see figure 1.8). SIDSs face disproportionately high disaster risk because their mostly low-lying, coastal populations tend to be exposed to a range of hazards, particularly cyclones, floods, landslides, earthquakes and tsunamis. The devastation wrought on Vanuatu by tropical cyclone Pam, a category five storm, in March 2015 provides a clear case in point.

The disaster forced around a quarter of Vanuatu's population to flee their homes and left around 166,000 people on 22 islands in need of emergency assistance, including nearly 65,000 IDPs who required emergency shelter. Fifteen thousand homes were reported as damaged or destroyed, with almost the entire country severely affected. Pam also had impacts on other SIDSs in the region, including a damaging storm surge in Tuvalu that prompted a state of emergency after 55 per cent of its population of around 10,000 people were displaced, the highest relative figure worldwide (see figure 1.8).

As El Niño conditions strengthened towards the end of the year, intensified drought put further stress on countries still recovering from the impacts of cyclones and typhoons, bringing food insecurity to Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and the Northern Mariana Islands.

## Developing countries hardest hit

As expected based on patterns in previous years, the vast majority of displacement associated with disasters in 2015 took place in developing countries, defined by the World Bank as low and lower-middle income countries. High income countries, accounting for 1.8 million new displacements, were less affected than low income countries, which accounted for 3.6 million (see figure 1.9).

Low and lower-middle income countries have relatively little capacity to meet the protection and assistance needs of IDPs, or to invest in disaster risk reduction measures that would either prevent displacement or mitigate the impacts of future shocks and disasters.

Figure 1.9: New displacements associated with disasters by World Bank-defined income group, 2015

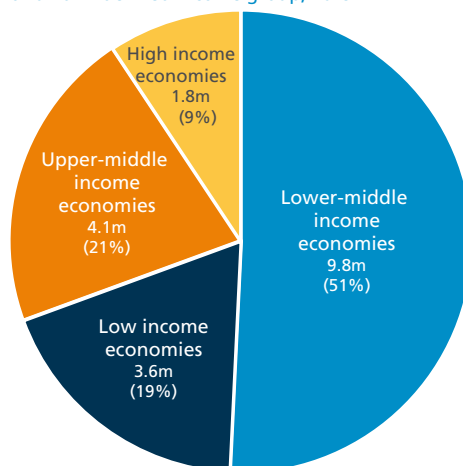


Figure 1.8: Countries with most new displacements associated with disasters in 2015 (relative to population)

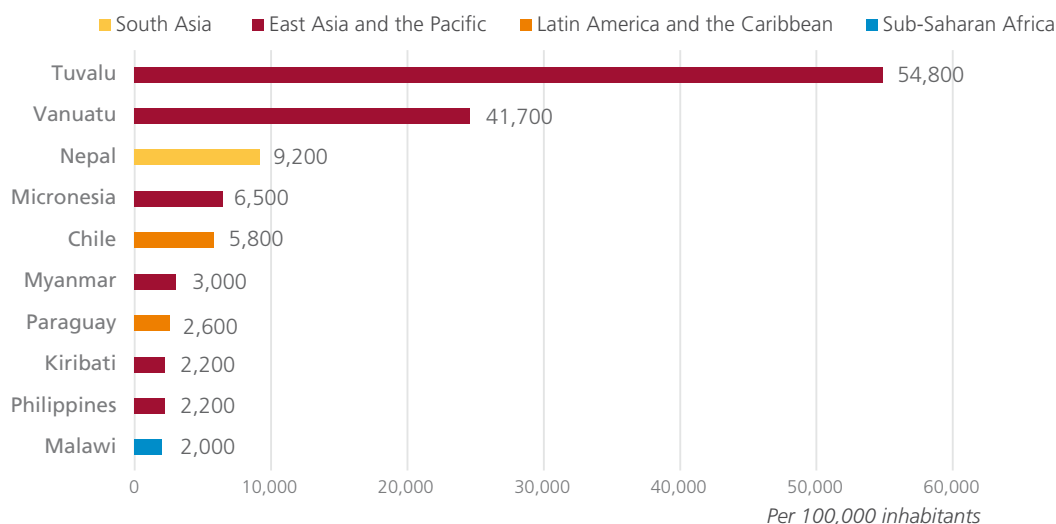
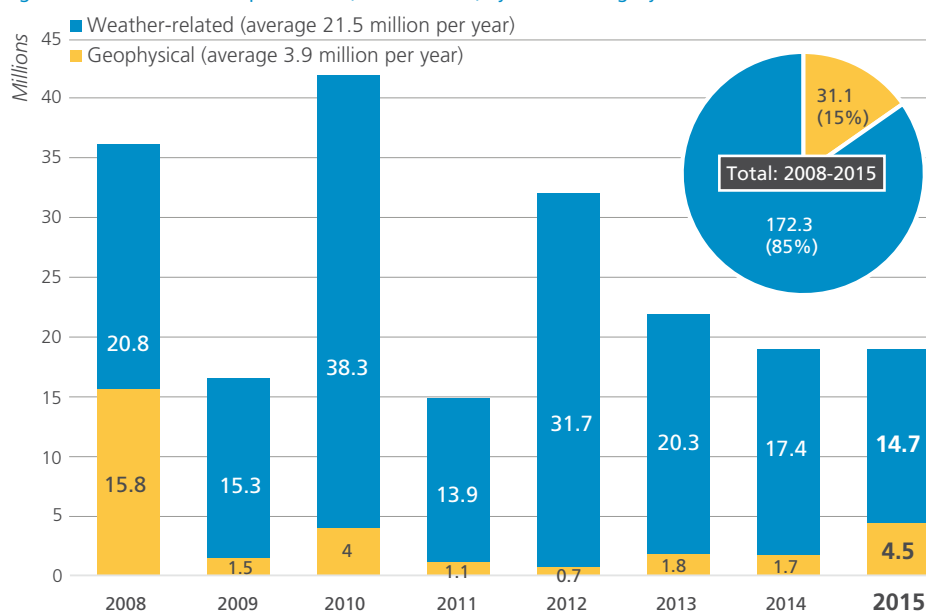


Figure 1.10: Annual new displacements, 2008 to 2015, by hazard category



## Exposure to weather extremes

Disasters triggered by weather-related hazards tend to displace far more people than those brought on by geophysical hazards. They accounted for almost three times as much displacement in 2015, forcing 14.7 million people to flee their homes compared with 4.5 million for geophysical disasters (see figure 1.10).

The same pattern was also seen in the size of displacements in 2015. Disasters triggered by weather-related hazards caused seven of the ten largest events, both in absolute terms and relative to the populations of the countries in question. The main exception was Nepal, where the April and May earthquakes together caused the largest displacement of the year associated with a disaster (see figure 1.11).

Within the category of weather-related hazards, floods and storms led to the vast majority of displacements. Disasters brought on by floods forced 8.3 million people to flee their homes, and storms 6.3 million. Around 87,000 people were displaced by wildfires (see figure 1.12).

There were no mega-scale weather-related events, defined here as those which cause more than three million displacements, but flooding in the southern Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh caused 1.8 million displacements. Cyclone Komen and monsoon floods triggered disasters in both Myanmar and India, causing 1.6 million and 1.2 million displacements

respectively, the majority of the latter in West Bengal, Odisha and Manipur states (see figure 1.11). Eight of the ten largest displacements of the year in relative terms were also caused by weather-related disasters, with cyclone Pam's impacts on Tuvalu and Vanuatu topping the list.

Displacement associated with weather hazards was lower in 2015 than the annual average level of 21.5 million people for the period since 2008, despite the onset of the natural global weather phenomenon known as El Niño (see spotlight).

During the short rainy season in equatorial east Africa from October to December, local weather systems and sea surface temperature patterns in the Indian Ocean also played an important role in 2015. Most of Kenya received higher than average rains, which caused localised flooding and mud and landslides. More than 240,000 people were affected, infrastructure was damaged, livestock lost and cholera spread across at least 21 counties. Around 103,500 people were displaced, according to the Kenya Red Cross Society.

That said, the scale of displacement was significantly lower than expected and the rains benefitted arid and semi-arid parts of the country, helping crop development, livestock productivity, the replenishment of water sources and the recovery of rangeland in pastoral areas.

Some of the strongest El Niño effects are on rainfall deficit and agricultural drought, whose indirect impact on displacement is not captured in our global statistics (see part 3 of this report).

Figure 1.11: The ten largest displacement events of 2015, absolute and relative to population size

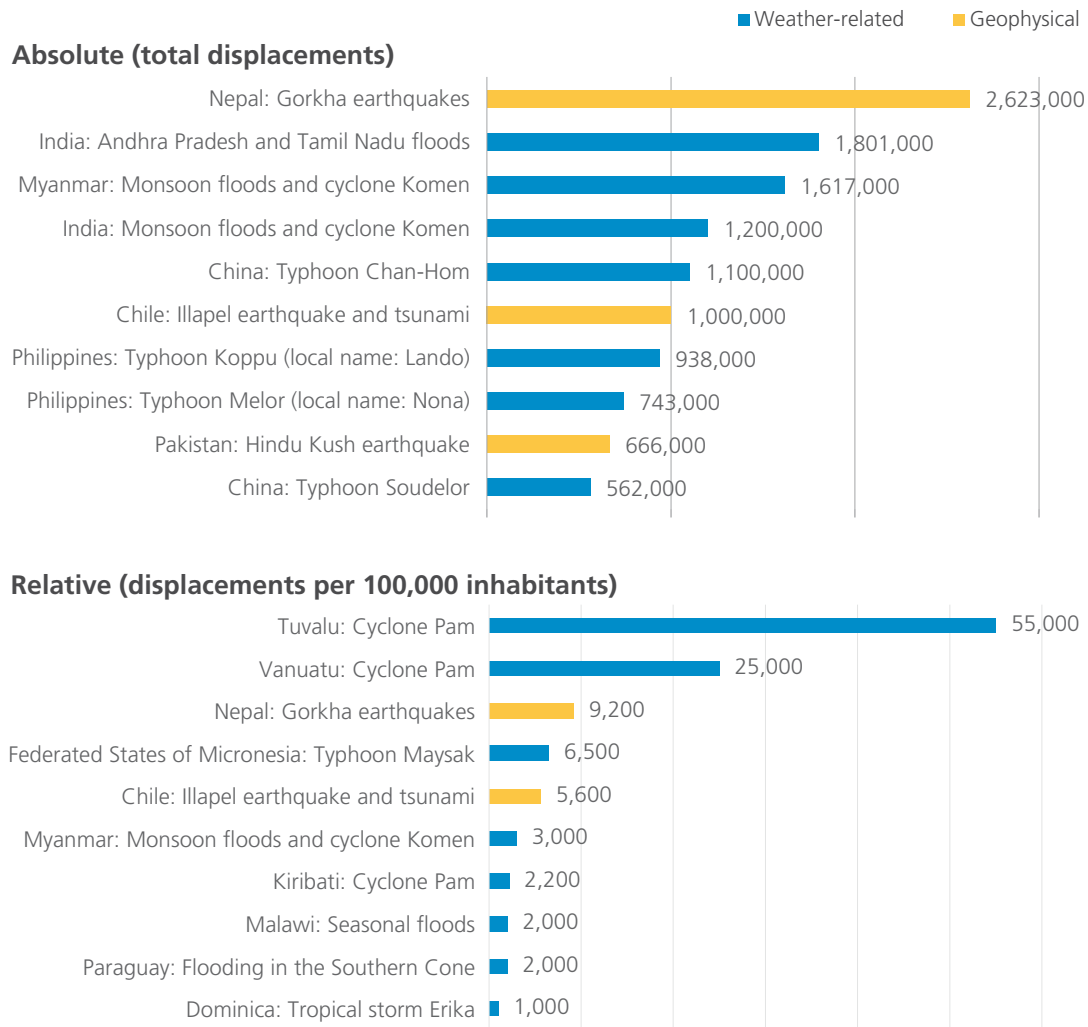
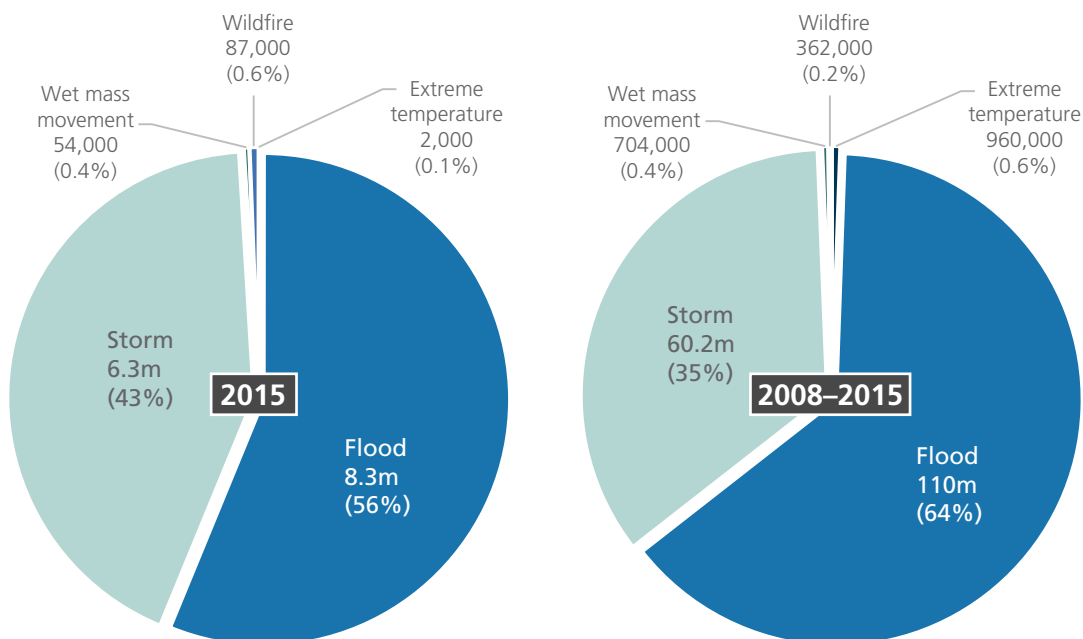


Figure 1.12: New displacements by type of weather hazard, 2015 and 2008 to 2015





# EL NIÑO

## Aggravated risk associated with extreme weather

From March 2015 to the first half of 2016, a new phase of the naturally occurring climatic cycle known as the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) contributed to the highest average global temperatures on record, about 1°C above those of the pre-industrial era, and disrupted weather patterns worldwide.<sup>59</sup>

El Niño's effects depend on the season and vary from one cycle to the next, but evidence from past events suggests that the most likely impacts tend to be lower than average rainfall over Indonesia and northern South America, and the opposite in south-eastern South America, the southern US and eastern equatorial Africa.<sup>60</sup>

A strong El Niño also tends to increase the number of cyclones in the Pacific and reduce

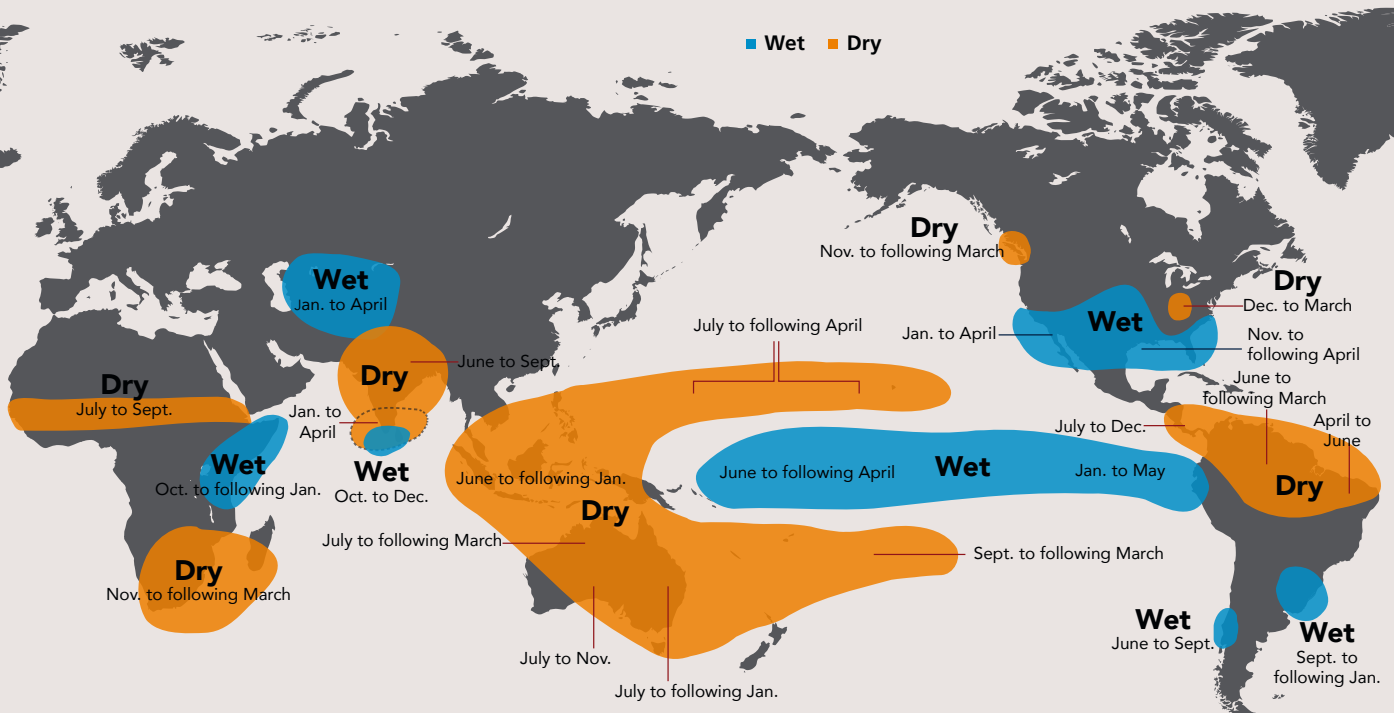
the number of hurricanes in the Atlantic. Both were true in 2015, with an unprecedented 21 category four and five storms in the north Pacific, breaking the previous record of 17 set in 1997.<sup>61</sup>

El Niño episodes are associated with above average sea surface temperatures in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific, while the opposite phase of the cycle, known as La Niña, is associated with cooler than average waters. El Niño episodes typically occur every two to seven years. They last for anything from nine months to two years, reaching their maximum strength between October and January and then continuing for some months before decaying.

The latest El Niño peaked in November and December 2015, but its impacts on agriculture

## El Niño and Rainfall

El Niño conditions in the tropical Pacific are known to shift rainfall patterns in many different parts of the world. Although they vary somewhat from one El Niño to the next, the strongest shifts remain fairly consistent in the regions and seasons shown on the map below.



Original map: International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Earth Institute, Columbia University  
Sources:  
1. Ropelewski, C. F., and M. S. Halpert, 1987: Global and regional scale precipitation patterns associated with the El Niño Southern Oscillation. *Mon. Wea. Rev.*, 115, 1606-1626;  
2. Mason and Goddard, 2001. Probabilistic precipitation anomalies associated with ENSO. *Bull. Am. Meteorol. Soc.* 82, 619-638



and deteriorating food and livelihood security will continue to be felt throughout 2016 and longer in some parts of the world. As of February 2016, the phenomenon was expected to transition to a neutral ENSO state during the second quarter of the year.<sup>62</sup> Evidence then points to a possible La Niña setting in later in the year, though at the time of writing it was too early for experts to be certain.

Climate patterns, however, are more complex than El Niño and La Niña alone can account for. Other local or regional tropical weather systems also affect rainfall patterns. The Indian Ocean dipole and the Tropical Atlantic sea surface temperature, for example, may affect the climate on adjacent land masses, and winter conditions in the northern hemisphere are influenced by the so-called Arctic and North Atlantic oscillations.<sup>63</sup>

Across decades, changes in the global climate brought on by human activity also play a part.

Some studies suggest that El Niño episodes are becoming more intense as a result of changes in the global climate,<sup>64</sup> but there is no scientific consensus on the extent to which this may be the case. It is simply not known how past and

future interactions between El Niño, La Niña and long-term climate change will play out.<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, as the World Meteorological Organization's secretary general has put it: "El Niño is turning up the heat even further."<sup>66</sup>

For the people most exposed and vulnerable to rainfall extremes and higher temperatures associated with the phenomenon, its effects have been devastating and have led to displacement in many parts of the world.

People dependent on agriculture in the Philippines who were initially displaced by conflict in 2015 also faced effects from El Niño and later flooding, leading to crop production losses estimated at more than 24,000 metric tonnes. Photo: © M, Navales/FAO, July 2015

## Large-scale geophysical hazards: few in number, many displaced

The average number of people displaced during disasters triggered by geophysical hazards was 3.9 million a year between 2008 and 2015 (see figure 1.10, p.20). The 2015 total of 4.5 million was higher than average, driven up by the Nepal earthquakes, which alone caused the displacement of around 2.6 million people. The scale of displacement they caused was also very high relative to the size of the country's population, of which 9.2 per cent were displaced (see figure 1.11, p.21 and Nepal spotlight).

Earthquakes have caused 97 per cent of the displacement associated with geophysical hazards since 2008, and for 2015 the figure was 99 per cent. Volcanic activity and eruptions caused around 32,000 displacements in 2015, and dry mass movements and landslides a residual number.

The ten largest displacements associated disasters in 2015 also include earthquakes in Chile and Pakistan (see figure 1.11, p.21). A magnitude 7.5 earthquake struck the Hindu Kush mountains in October. Its epicentre was in a remote area of northern Afghanistan, but north-west Pakistan suffered the worst of its impacts, including the displacement of nearly 666,000 people. Khyber



Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, where human development is low compared with the rest of the country, was hardest hit, particularly the districts of Chitral, Dir Lower, Dir Upper, Swat, Shangla, Malakand and Buner.

Chile appears on the list for the second year in a row. The 8.3 magnitude Illapel earthquake and five-metre tsunami it triggered affected the Coquimbo region of the country in September 2015. Most people were evacuated in good time, but several coastal cities and ports suffered extensive damage.

The country's disaster preparedness framework, adopted after a catastrophic earthquake in 2010,

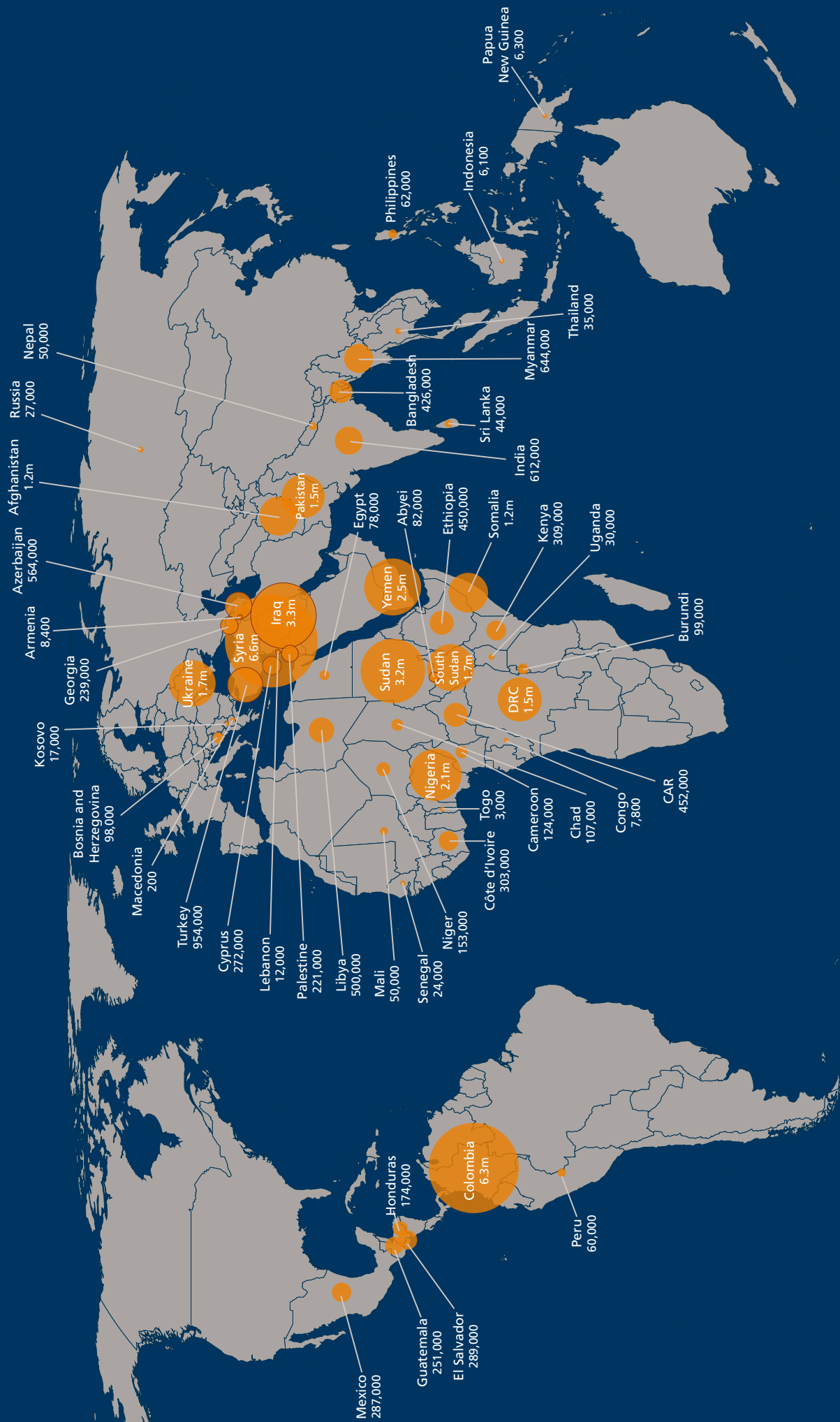
meant that early warning systems were effective and response planning was good. Around a million people were evacuated pre-emptively, saving many lives. The enforcement of better construction standards and codes also meant that recently constructed buildings were better able to withstand the seismic activity. Traditionally built adobe homes, however, tend to be very vulnerable and further efforts to strengthen the resilience of poor rural communities would help to reduce the disproportionate affects of such events on them.

An internally displaced man waits for a winter shelter pack in the Malakand District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province as part of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society's emergency response to the 2015 earthquake. Photo: Sajid Qayyum/ IFRC, April 2015



# People internally displaced as a result of conflict and violence

as of 31 December 2015 (Total: 40.8 million)



# TOTAL HEADCOUNT

## People living in displacement as of end 2015

There were 40.8 million people internally displaced worldwide as a result of conflict and violence as of the end of 2015 (see map, opposite page). This represents an increase of 2.8 million on 2014 estimates and the highest figure ever reported since IDMC began monitoring internal displacement in 1998. It is also twice the number of refugees in the world.

of the ten largest internally displaced populations every year since 2003.<sup>67</sup> Their persistent inclusion points to a depressing reality of intractable conflict in which many people may have been forced to flee more than once. These five countries alone accounted for almost 40 per cent of the world's IDPs, or nearly 16 million people, as of December 2015.

### Protracted crises swell unprecedented numbers

The total number of IDPs has doubled over the past 15 years. From below 20 million in the 1990s it rose to 27.5 million by 2010, the result of new and protracted displacement caused by long-running internal conflicts (see figure 1.13). Five years later, it has reached more than 40 million, in large part the result of conflict and violence in the Middle East following the Arab spring uprisings that began in late 2010.

Of the total, around three quarters, or 30 million people, were located in just ten countries (see figure 1.14). Half of them – Colombia, DRC, Iraq, Sudan and South Sudan – have featured in the list

Figure 1.14: Number of people internally displaced by conflict and violence as of the end of 2015 (millions)

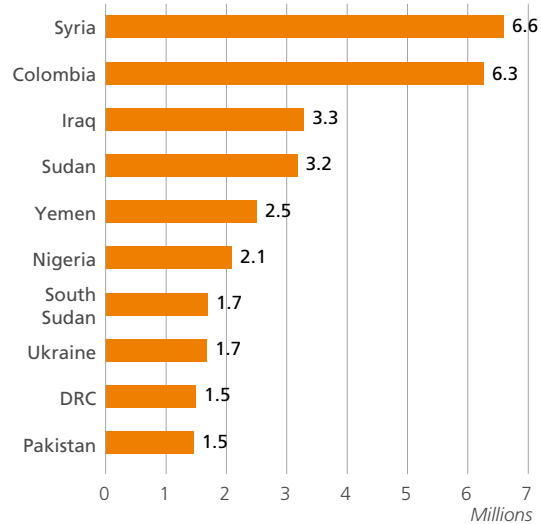
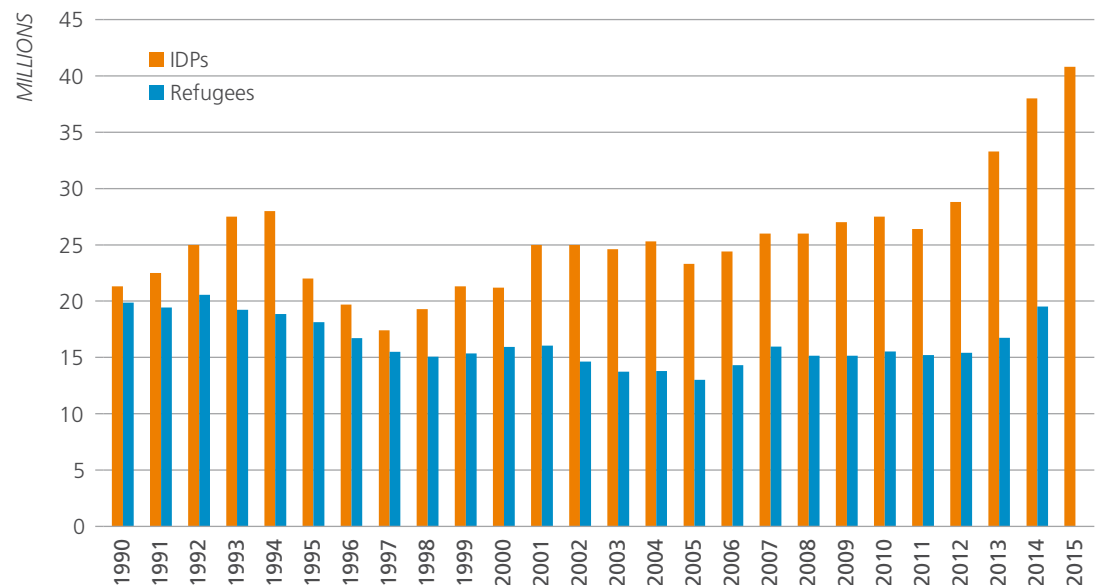


Figure 1.13: Refugees and IDPs displaced by conflict and violence, 1990 to 2015



Sources: UNHCR, UNRWA for refugee figures; IDMC and USCR for internal displacement figures  
 Note: Refugee data for 2015 was not available at the time of writing

## DRC

## Multiple and chronic displacement

Conflict in DRC is intractable, and the internal displacement crisis it has caused is multifaceted. Despite apparent similarities among the waves of displacement, their causes, dynamics and perpetrators vary from one situation to the next. Our estimates show that over the past 15 years, there have consistently been more than a million IDPs in the country, and in peak years such as 2003 more than three million.

The implication is that DRC is faced with a range of both protracted and new displacement situations, sometimes in the same places, which in

turn means IDPs have varying needs and challenges. Both national and international responses need to take this complexity into account if all IDPs are to achieve durable solutions.

There were an estimated 1.5 million IDPs in the country as of December 2015, the ninth highest figure worldwide. Most have fled violence and human rights abuses committed by armed groups and the military, but inter-communal tensions and disputes over land and the control of natural resources have also caused displacement, as have natural hazards. Conflict and violence are concentrated in eastern DRC, as are the country's IDPs. More than half live in the provinces of North and South Kivu, and the remainder in Orientale, Katanga, Maniema and Equateur.

Multiple and chronic displacements are commonplace, particularly in the Kivus but also in other provinces. Many IDPs in North Kivu have been displaced two, three or even more times in the last 18 months alone, and surveys suggest that a significant majority in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri have been displaced more than once since 1993.<sup>68</sup>

Each time people flee, they lose almost everything and are forced to start rebuilding their lives from scratch. They lose their homes, material assets and often their jobs and livelihoods. Their children's education is interrupted, and they become separated from their communities and support networks. Their sense of cultural identity may suffer, and the trauma and upheaval of fleeing conflict and violence leave many with psychological and physical scars.

Whether it is the first or the fifth time that a person is displaced in DRC, they face a long struggle to try to recover their assets, access basic services and re-establish their social and psychological wellbeing. The longer and more often they are displaced, the more difficult these challenges become, and the more their ability to cope is eroded.

Displaced women living with host families take part in a focus group discussion in Swima, South Kivu. Photo: IDMC, March 2015

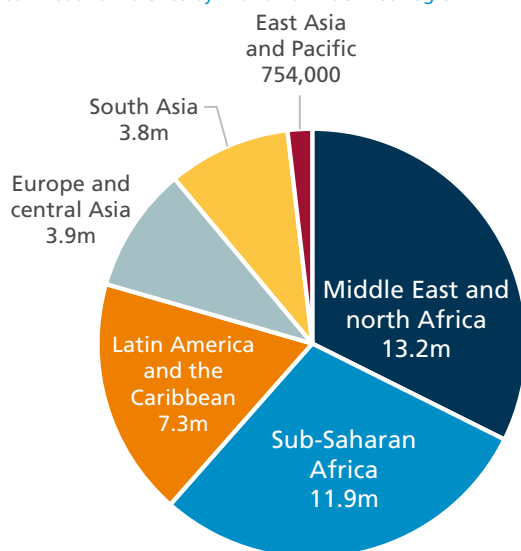


Of the other five countries on the list, displacement in Nigeria, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen is largely the result of armed conflicts that erupted or escalated within the last five years. Pakistan is the exception. If history is any indication, there is a risk these relatively new conflicts will also become intractable, and that the people they have forced to flee, who make up roughly a third of the overall global estimate, face a future of protracted and possibly multiple displacement.

## Sub-Saharan Africa: Chronic displacement keeps figures stubbornly high

A regional analysis provides a different perspective on the same point (see figure 1.15). As of the end of 2015, the Middle East and north Africa accounted for around a third of the world's IDPs, or 13.2 million people, largely the result of the surge in new displacements over the last few years in Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Figure 1.15: Number of people internally displaced by conflict and violence by World Bank-defined region



Meanwhile, at close to 12 million, the number of IDPs in sub-Saharan Africa has more or less flat-lined over the last decade, underlining the chronic nature of displacement in the region. Failure to address the causes of protracted displacement is one of the main factors behind the ever-increasing number of IDPs worldwide, and the stubbornly high figures for Africa. Finding the right solutions requires a better understanding of the phenomenon, from clarifying concepts to recognising its complexity and diversity (see DRC spotlight).

## Invisible IDPs: protracted displacement following disasters

The estimates for displacement associated with disasters presented in this report are aggregated incidents of new displacements over the course of 2015. There is very little information on people still displaced in December 2015 following disasters during the year or in previous years, which means it is not possible to give cumulative figures for the total number of people displaced by disasters as of the end of the year, as there are for IDPs displaced by conflict and violence.

Data that monitors IDPs' situations over time, whatever the causes of their displacement, tends to become more scarce the longer they are displaced. In the aftermath of disasters, the assumption that displacement is generally temporary makes such information scarcer still. The assumption is made based on observations of displacement over short distances and the fact that a significant proportion of those who flee return quickly to their homes. It is also influenced by the fact that people displaced by disasters tend to flee to diverse locations and undertake complex movements that make them difficult to identify and track.

These factors increase the risk that some of the most vulnerable IDPs will be left behind in long-term recovery, disaster risk reduction and development processes.<sup>69</sup> Among a sample of 34 ongoing cases of displacement following disasters documented in 2015, there were hundreds of thousands of people identified as living in protracted displacement for periods ranging between one and 26 years.<sup>70</sup> This points to the likelihood of hundreds of thousands more yet to be recorded.

People displaced for long periods of time are particularly difficult to identify and access for a variety of practical and political reasons. They may also be relatively fewer in number compared with the overall or peak number of IDPs, but such "residual caseloads" following major disasters, and people displaced by recurring local or smaller disasters, are some of the most vulnerable.

The capacity of governments, civil society and affected communities to achieve solutions varies widely. The cases of Japan and Haiti highlight some of the human impacts of protracted displacement, its disproportionate effect on some of the most vulnerable people and common challenges in resolving it (see Japan/Haiti spotlight).



## For richer or poorer PROTRACTED DISPLACEMENT IN JAPAN AND HAITI

Most of the protracted displacement associated with disasters is in low and lower-middle income developing countries, but there have also been significant cases in some of the world's richest and poorest countries which reveal some striking similarities and differences.

### Japan's Fukushima IDPs

In March 2011, a devastating magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami struck Japan's Tohoku region, triggering the meltdown of three reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant and major radiation leaks. The disaster displaced around 470,000 people.

Five years later, tens of thousands of people whose homes and villages were destroyed across three prefectures have yet to re-establish their lives in new or former homes and communities. Plans to rebuild destroyed homes and relocate displaced communities to higher ground or other areas have been reduced by 30 per cent over the past three years and in some cases abandoned, the result mainly of soaring construction costs and the time local authorities have taken to overcome land issues and prepare plots on new sites.

Those able to afford it, most often younger families, have rebuilt their lives elsewhere, but others have been unable to afford reconstruction and have moved into rental accommodation provided by the government.<sup>71</sup>

In Fukushima prefecture, 99,000 of the 160,000-plus people evacuated from contaminated areas around the crippled nuclear plant are still living in displacement.<sup>72</sup> They face a difficult decision in whether to return home or not to areas where government evacuation orders have been lifted, but where radiation risk remains a concern, particularly for younger generations. Those affected also worry about the lack of basic infrastructure such as schools and hospitals in their former home areas, and about becoming isolated given that few of their family members, former neighbours and friends plan to return.<sup>73</sup>

A lack of trust in official information and poor consultation with affected communities have also delayed solutions for IDPs unable or unwilling to return, and social tensions with host communities have left social and psychological scars. A 2015 survey of evacuees revealed that many were suffering from anxiety, loneliness and depression.<sup>74</sup> In Fukushima, the number of people who have killed themselves or succumbed to health problems related to the disaster exceeds the death toll from its direct impacts.

Temporary housing complexes such as this one are still a common sight one in Iwate prefecture. Photo: IFRC, March 2016 <https://flic.kr/p/E9K941> (edited contrast and brightness)





## Haiti's earthquake IDPs

In January 2010, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti, killing more than 160,000 people and displacing nearly 1.5 million. Six years later, there were still nearly 62,600 people living in deteriorating conditions in 36 displacement camps in and around Port-au-Prince. IDPs in 16 of these camps are highly vulnerable to the impact of future natural hazard events.<sup>75</sup>

Living conditions in the camps were always poor, but have become worse still as basic services are wound down. There is ever less humanitarian funding available and fewer organisations providing assistance.

People living in the camps are exposed to criminal gang violence, abuse, exploitation and forced eviction that displaces them again. Women and girls have been particularly susceptible to increasing insecurity and health hazards. IDPs' lack of civil documentation also continues to hamper their access to basic services, their children's enrolment for school exams, and their right to own land, vote and open bank accounts.<sup>76</sup>

Obstacles to urban integration and other solutions for camp residents include the poor conditions in the neighbourhoods where they lived before the earthquake and high unemployment levels. Unemployment among IDPs is estimated at 83 per cent, more than double the rate for the urban work force.<sup>77</sup> Some, meantime, are gradually turning their temporary shelters into more permanent, unplanned informal settlements.

Ultimately, real solutions for Haiti's remaining IDPs and as many as 3.5 million others living in urban poverty with similar vulnerabilities will depend on reducing socio-economic deprivation, insecurity and disaster risk. Improving national capacity to plan and manage land issues to complement the implementation of the 2013 National Housing and Habitat Policy would enable access to safe, affordable housing and tenure security for Haiti's poorest people, including IDPs.<sup>78</sup> Political instability and declining development assistance, however, have wide-reaching implications for the responses required, without which the risk of another major disaster is high. As the head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the country has said: "Haiti cannot afford to become a forgotten crisis."<sup>79</sup>

One of the victims of the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, waiting to be relocated. Photo: © Frédéric Loward, April 2015