

## 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

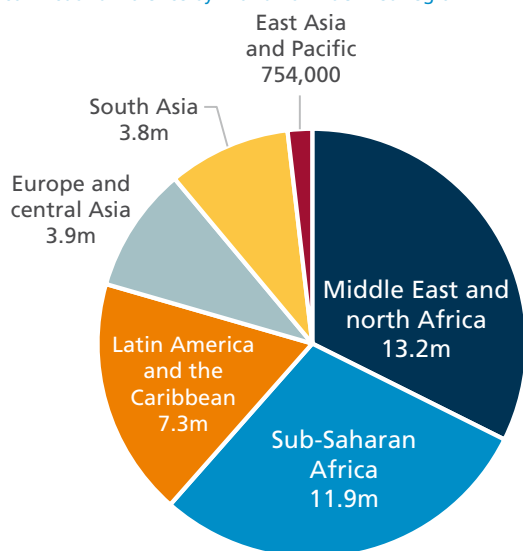


Of the other five countries on the list, displacement in Nigeria, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen is largely the result of armed conflicts that erupted or escalated within the last five years. Pakistan is the exception. If history is any indication, there is a risk these relatively new conflicts will also become 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).