



Internal displacement 2020: Mid-year update

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At a glance

We detected **14.6 million new internal displacements across 127 countries** in the first six months of 2020. Conflict and violence triggered around 4.8 million and disasters 9.8 million.

Conflict and violence displacement increased sharply in a number of countries. The half-year figures for Cameroon, Mozambique, Niger and Somalia are already higher than those for the whole of 2019. Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Syria also recorded a significant number of displacements. If such trends continue, the end-of-year figures for many countries are likely to be higher than the previous year.

Disasters continue to trigger the majority of new displacements worldwide. Cyclone Amphan was the largest single displacement event in the first half of 2020, triggering 3.3 million pre-emptive evacuations in India and Bangladesh. A number of countries in East Africa were hit by major floods and a locust infestation that aggravated food insecurity, and intense bushfires led to unprecedented displacement in Australia. Many IDPs whose homes have been damaged or destroyed face the prospect of prolonged displacement.

The UN Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire to focus efforts on tackling the Covid-19 pandemic was taken up in a number of countries, but only briefly. Some parties to the conflicts in Colombia, Myanmar and Yemen suspended their hostilities, reducing displacement in the process, but fighting soon resumed. There was no lull in many other conflicts. Instead the virus has added another layer of complexity to already highly challenging humanitarian situations.

Measures to curb the spread of Covid-19 have impeded the collection of displacement data. This limits our understanding of how the pandemic has affected IDPs, but it is clear that it has heightened their vulnerabilities as restrictions have put barriers to response and durable solutions efforts. Many in Somalia and Yemen were already struggling to access healthcare, and strict lockdowns have reduced IDPs' resilience in Afghanistan and Iraq, where many depend on the informal economy to get by. The pandemic has also aggravated protection risks, including the risk of gender-based violence.

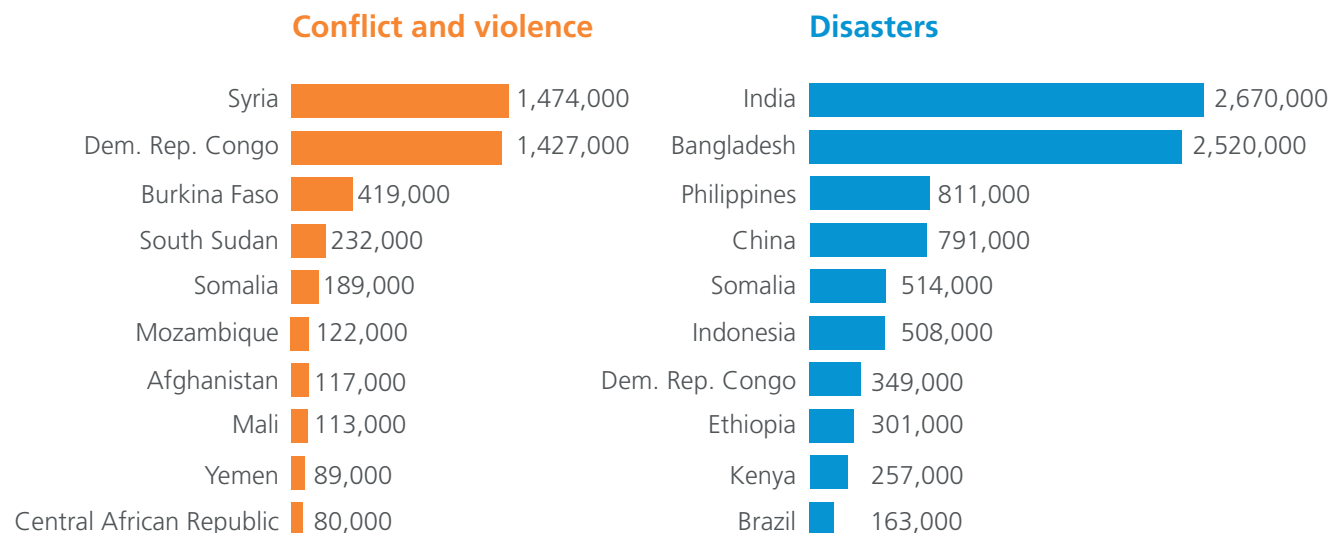
Most displacement that could happen in 2020 is still to be accounted for. Major flooding has taken place in China, Bangladesh and several countries in the Sahel region of Africa since 30 June, and monsoon rains have taken hold in South and East Asia. These events will inevitably have triggered displacement, and more is to be expected given that the typhoon season in East Asia and the Pacific is ongoing. The Atlantic hurricane season is also expected to be particularly active.

Internal displacement is one of today’s major humanitarian and development challenges. This report provides a mid-year overview of all the new displacements triggered by conflict, violence and disasters that IDMC was able to identify and triangulate. Our sources include governments, UN agencies, humanitarian organisations and the media. The report does not examine the total number of IDPs as of 30 June. Our most recent estimates for this metric, as of 31 December 2019, can be found in our latest Global Report on Internal Displacement.¹

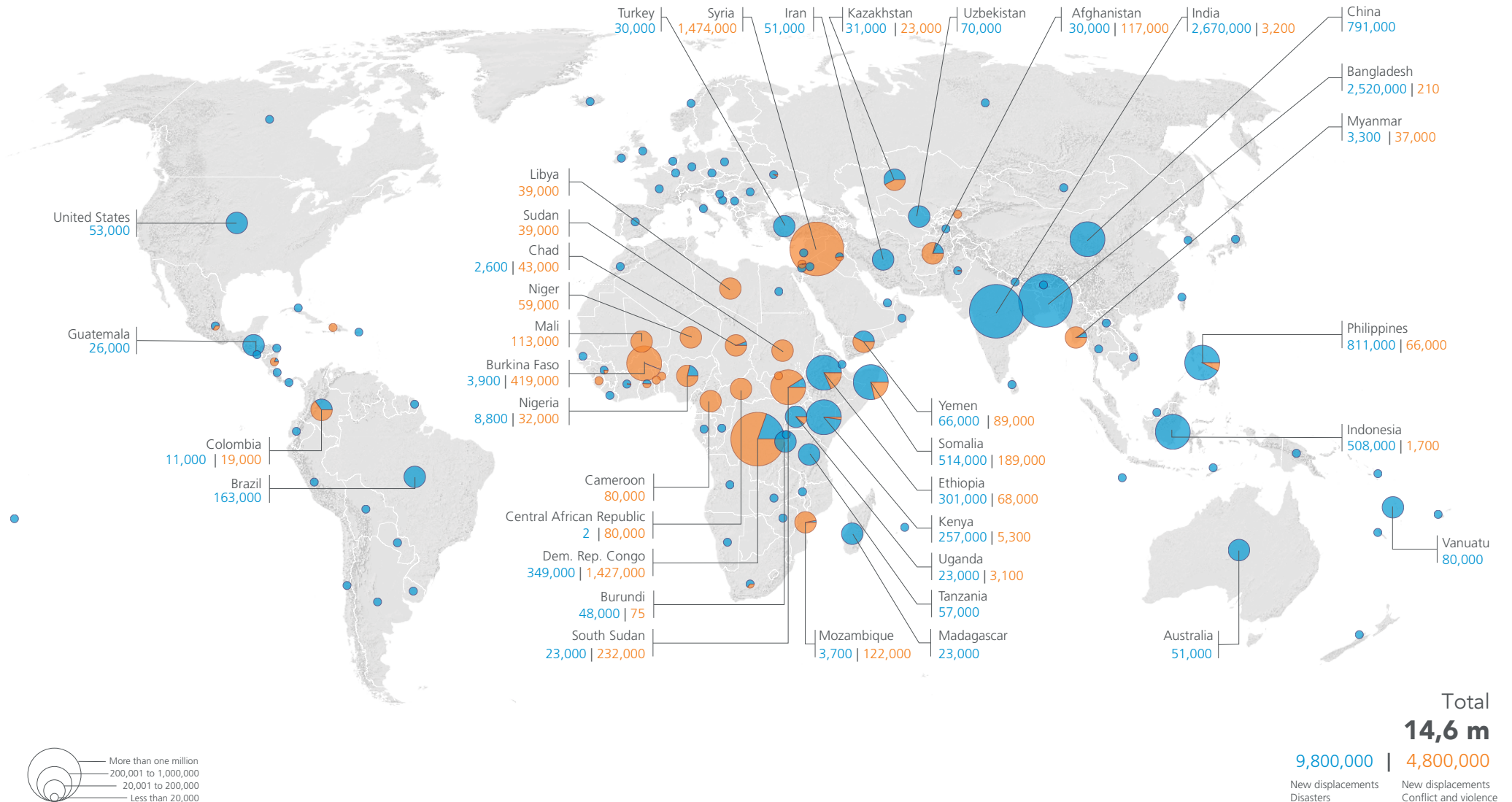
We recorded 14,6 million new displacements across 127 countries and territories between 1 January and 30 June 2020. **Conflict and violence triggered 4.8 million** and **disasters 9.8 million**. The Covid-19 pandemic has had serious implications for communities and countries worldwide. Aside from the pressure it has placed on public health systems, it has disrupted supply chains and trade, and prompted stringent measures to curb the spread of the virus. These in turn have led to freefall in consumption and employment rates.

Our full understanding of the pandemic’s impact on internally displaced people (IDPs), host communities and those who support them is still limited, mainly for lack of accurate and timely data. It is already clear, however, that it has heightened their vulnerabilities and poses new risks. These include increased poverty and food insecurity, lack of social support and greater exposure to the health risks (see In Focus: the impacts of Covid-19 on IDPs).

FIGURE 1: Countries with the highest number of new displacements in the first half of 2020



NEW DISPLACEMENTS BY CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND DISASTERS IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2020



The country and territory names and figures are shown only when the total new displacements value exceeds 20,000. Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures.
 New displacements were reported in American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga.
 Data consolidated by IDMC. Production date: 02/09/2020. For inquiries contact: info@idmc.ch Website: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/> Download data: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>
 The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC.

Regional Overviews

Sub-Saharan Africa

Middle East and North Africa

East Asia and Pacific

South Asia

Americas

Europe and Central Asia



Sub-Saharan Africa



Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)



DISASTERS

349,000

Sources: OCHA, IOM DTM, IFRC and IDMC



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

1.4 million

Sources: OCHA, UNHCR and IDMC

CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE:
2.9 MILLION

DISASTERS:
1.7 MILLION

The humanitarian situation in DRC has deteriorated considerably since the start of 2020. Conflict and violence triggered almost as many new displacements between January and June as the 1.7 million reported for the whole of 2019. The eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, Ituri, Maniema and Tanganyika continued to be most affected, but recent developments in Ituri were of particular concern. The province accounted for 627,000 new displacements, nearly half of the national total (see highlight).

Conflict also escalated in North Kivu following the government's launch of military operations against the rebel Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in November 2019, leading to 436,000 new displacements. Interethnic conflict associated with self-defence groups triggered 120,000 in Tanganyika, and similar attacks by militias,

self-defence groups and government forces led to 61,000 new displacements in South Kivu.

Heavy downpours, floods and landslides during the rainy season triggered most of the disaster displacement recorded, as in previous years. One of the biggest events was in the town of Uvira on the northern shores of Lake Tanganyika, where around 5,500 homes were destroyed when several rivers and the lake burst their banks.² The flooding triggered around 84,000 new internal displacements, most people fleeing within the town to neighbourhoods spared from its effects.³



Surging violence has displaced thousands in Ituri province, DRC, May 2020, © Lena Ellen Becker/UNHCR

Somalia



DISASTERS

514,000

Source: OCHA



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

189,000

Sources: OCHA, PRMN

Violence escalated in Somalia in the first half of 2020, triggering roughly the same number of new displacements as were recorded for the whole of 2019. The largest event was in Gedo in the southern state of Jubaland, where the outbreak of a new conflict led to 56,000 displacements in February and March.⁴ A standoff between Somalia's president, and Jubaland's leader over the control of the state and the organisation of parliamentary and presidential elections were among the factors that sparked fighting between federal troops and Jubaland's armed forces.⁵

Tensions between Mogadishu and several regions are jeopardising the country's planned elections and distracting from efforts to fight Al-Shabaab.⁶ More than 110,000 new displacements were attributed to the Islamist group's violence.⁷ Somalia's electoral commission

announced at the end of June that the elections were to be postponed, further stoking political tensions.⁸

Flooding associated with an above average rainy season triggered 505,000 new displacements in April and May.⁹ About a quarter of the people affected were living in camps having already been displaced by violence or previous disasters.¹⁰ Drought triggered significantly fewer displacements than in previous years, at around 5,000.¹¹ Bushfires in Galgaduud region also led to 4,000 displacements in June, mostly of pastoralists whose traditional grazing areas were burnt.¹²

The 2020 rains also created the conditions for a severe locust infestation that posed a significant threat to food production in Somalia and across eastern Africa as a whole.¹³ Most of the Somali population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, and those whose crops were destroyed were forced to move in search of assistance to survive.¹⁴

With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in Somalia, a number of local authorities introduced a moratorium on evictions. This was an important development because forced evictions are the main trigger of secondary displacement in the country, and their number declined in May compared with previous months.¹⁵

Burkina Faso



DISASTERS

3,900

Source: OCHA



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

419,000

Source: Government of Burkina Faso (SP/CONASUR)

Escalating violence in Burkina Faso triggered a significant increase in new displacements in the first six months of 2020, accounting for close to 80% of the 513,000 new displacements in 2019.¹⁶ The country has the highest number of new displacements in West Africa, the result of the activities of a number of armed groups that are expanding their geographic reach, particularly in the north and east. They include jihadists, bandits, and self-defence movements formed in response to the growing insecurity.¹⁷ The ensuing humanitarian crisis has deepened quickly over the past 18 months.

There are significant concerns about the protection of women, who make up the majority of the country's IDPs and who tend to seek shelter in hard-to-reach areas where violence is rife.¹⁸

Floods triggered around 3,900 new displacements in the Centre Nord region in June.¹⁹ Many of the people affected had already been displaced and were forced to flee for a second or even a third time when their shelters were destroyed.²⁰



Newly displaced people in Barsalogo, Burkina Faso, January 2020. © Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC

Ethiopia



The figure for conflict displacement in Ethiopia should be considered conservative because access restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Interethnic violence in Awsi zone and Zone 3 in Afar region between the end of January and March accounted for more than half of the total as fighting between Afar and Somali Issa clans intensified.²¹

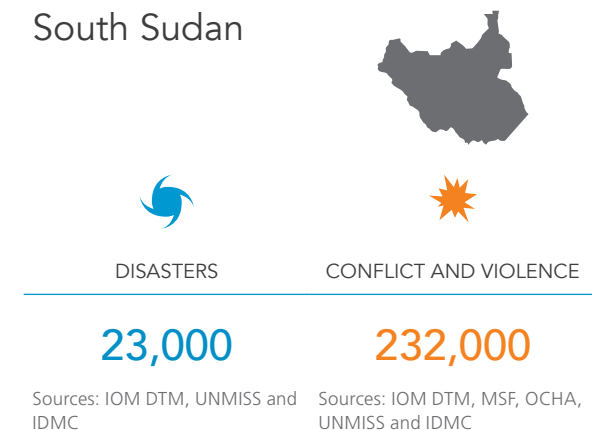
Violence also continued in Guji zone in Oromia in the form of military operations against non-state armed groups.²² Low levels of violence and displacement were reported in West Guji and across the Amhara, Gambella and Somali regions. Clashes between returning IDPs and local communities also led to secondary displacements in Bale in Oromia in May.²³

Protests and intercommunal violence triggered more than 8,400 new displacements in Oromia

at the end of June and in early July. The unrest broke out after a famous Oromo musician was killed in Addis Ababa.²⁴

Heavy flooding and landslides affected the Somali, Oromia, Afar, Dire Dawa and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's (SNNP) regions in first half of 2020. Somali accounted for around two-thirds of the disaster displacements recorded nationwide.²⁵

South Sudan



The number of new displacements triggered by conflict and violence in South Sudan rose sharply in the first half of 2020, amounting to almost 90 per cent of the 259,000 recorded for the whole of 2019. Around 46,000 were recorded in the central state of Jonglei, which has become an epicentre of intercommunal

violence.²⁶ The figure is likely to be a significant underestimate because attacks against humanitarians and general insecurity restricted access for data collection.²⁷

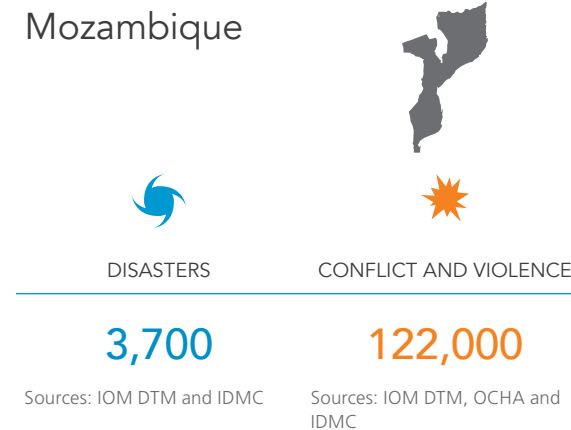
Tens of thousands more people were displaced in Jonglei in July and August.²⁸ Both farmers and herders have been affected by the upsurge in violence, which has the potential to aggravate food insecurity in an area where emergency levels, including people facing famine, have already been reported.²⁹ The violence has involved the destruction of whole villages and fields and widespread human rights violations, including sexual violence.³⁰

Continued intercommunal violence and cattle raids triggered more than 90,000 displacements in the state of Warrap, and conflict between the government and non-state armed groups and clashes between these groups continued in Central and Western Equatoria. The violence displaced tens of thousands of people and put a peace agreement signed in September 2018 at risk.³¹

The country's president, Salva Kiir, announced a nationwide disarmament programme and intercommunal dialogues in July in an attempt to address the escalating violence.³² A unity government was also formed in February, one of the pillars of the 2018 peace deal.³³ Overall

progress in the peace process is still very slow, however, and it remains to be seen whether the recent upsurge of intercommunal violence will set it back further.³⁴

Relatively little disaster displacement was recorded in the first half of 2020, but more is expected later in the year, given that the rainy season only began in June.



Displacement triggered by conflict increased sharply in northern Mozambique in the first half of 2020, and the humanitarian situation deteriorated. Data collection efforts were scaled up to match the magnitude of the crisis, and an emergency appeal was launched for Cabo Delgado, the province most affected, in June.³⁵

Islamist militants in Cabo Delgado stepped up the number and intensity of their attacks, and in March they took control of larger towns for the first time when they seized Quissanga and Mocimboa da Praia.³⁶ More than 195 violent incidents were recorded in the first half of the year, and some of those forced to flee sought refuge in the neighbouring provinces of Nampula and Niassa.³⁷ Within Cabo Delgado, the districts of Quissanga, Macomia and Ibo have the largest numbers of IDPs, many of them staying with host families.

Cabo Delgado has also had to cope with the aftermath of cyclone Kenneth, which hit northern Mozambique in April last year. Almost 6,500 people are still living in displacement sites and more than 200,000 homes are still damaged over a year after the disaster.³⁸ Humanitarians are concerned about the possible spread of Covid-19 in these sites, and are monitoring safety measures accordingly.³⁹

People in the central provinces of Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia are still contending with the consequences of cyclone Idai, which struck in March last year. About 87,000 of the people the storm displaced were still living in resettlement sites as of 27 July 2020.⁴⁰

Mali



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

113,000

Source: NRC's Rapid Response Mechanism

Most of the new conflict and violence displacements recorded in Mali in the first half of 2020 took place in the central and northern regions of the country, the result of armed attacks by jihadist groups, military operations against them and intercommunal clashes between self-defence militias.⁴¹ Most of the violence has its roots in disputes over access to land and other natural resources. Clashes between farmers and herders are also common and continue to trigger displacement.

These factors have combined with other social, economic and political issues to feed growing insecurity that has gradually spread southward.⁴² Social unrest increased in the first half of the year and violent protests broke out in many cities across the country. Most took place

in the capital, Bamako, culminating in Mali's second coup in ten years in August.⁴³

The regions of Gao, Mopti, Ségou and Sikasso, which were already affected by conflict and violence, also experienced flooding in July and August, but displacement figures were hard to come by.

Central African Republic (CAR)



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

2

80,000

Source: IDMC

Sources: CMP, OCHA, ECHO, Invisible Children, UNSC and IDMC

As in several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of new displacements triggered by conflict in CAR in the first half of 2020 was almost as high as the figure for the whole of 2019. The sharp increase is linked in part to a resurgence of conflict in the Ndélé area of Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture, in violation of

a peace agreement signed in February 2019.⁴⁴ Clashes between armed groups led to more than 20,000 displacements.⁴⁵ Most humanitarian organisations suspended their activities in Ndélé temporarily after several incidents in which aid workers were targeted.⁴⁶

A resurgence of conflict between armed groups around the towns of Bria in Haute-Kotto and Birao in Vakaga triggered nearly 30,000 displacements.⁴⁷



Young women graduate from a youth education and skills training programme in Djenné, Mali, May 2020. © Mahamadou Abdourhamane/NRC

Cameroon



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

80,000

Sources: IOM DTM and OCHA

Conflict and violence continued across the Far North, Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon in the first half of 2020. The English-speaking Northwest and Southwest accounted for around 59,000 new displacements. Violence in the two regions has escalated sharply over the last four years, the result of tensions between English-speaking communities and the government over policies to enforce the use of French in schools and public institutions.⁴⁸

Education facilities continue to be targeted, massacres have been reported, and attacks on villages and the destruction of homes forced more than 10,000 people to flee in February alone.⁴⁹ There was also a wave of attacks on polling stations during parliamentary elections held on 9 February, and some people are thought to have fled in fear of further violence.⁵⁰

Boko Haram and other armed groups intensified their attacks in the Far North region, triggering around 21,000 new displacements.⁵¹ The majority took place in Mayo Sava department, and resulted in many pendular movements of communities who were displaced several times.

Attacks on civilians and the widespread presence of explosive devices forced people to flee in Tahoua and Tillaberi, and some did so pre-emptively. Jihadist groups continue to exploit inter-communal tensions, and the ensuing violence has become far deadlier, displacing at least as many people as their direct attacks.⁵² The figure for two regions of nearly 35,000 new displacements is likely to be an underestimate.⁵³

Niger



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

59,000

Sources: Protection Cluster, OCHA, UNHCR, RRM, IRC and IDMC.

The number of new conflict and violence displacements recorded in Niger in the first half of 2020 was higher than for the whole of 2019. The majority took place in the regions of Tahoua and Tillaberi, which border Mali and Burkina Faso, and Maradi, which borders Nigeria. This also represents a significant geographical shift compared with previous years, when most displacement took place in the south-eastern region of Diffa in the Lake Chad basin.

The most significant attack, which triggered more than 10,000, occurred on 31 May and targeted a refugee hosting area in Intikane in Tahoua.⁵⁴ People fled inland to seek shelter in the town of Telemces, where a stretched humanitarian response has left many without shelter or access to basic services.

An increase in new displacement in the north-central and north-western regions of neighbouring Nigeria triggered cross-border movements into Niger's southern Maradi region. Competition for scarce resources and clashes between Nigerian refugees and Nigerian communities have also triggered internal displacement. Armed militias and jihadist groups have taken advantage of these tensions to carry out attacks and expand their reach across the Sahel.

Maradi, which is one of Niger's poorest regions but was previously peaceful, now hosts nearly

20,000 IDPs.⁵⁵ It also risks becoming a bridge of violence between the Lake Chad and Liptako Gourma regions, two previously distinct zones of instability.⁵⁶

Diffa has been battling the spill over from Nigeria of Boko Haram's insurgency since 2015. The number of new displacements has since decreased, but the region still recorded around 12,000 in the first half of 2020. Boko Haram initially used Diffa as a place to seek refuge, funds and recruits, but the region's deep cultural and economic ties to Nigeria's Borno state, where the group emerged in 2002, have made it relatively easy for it to entrench itself there.⁵⁷

No disaster displacement figures were obtained for the first half of the year, but an above-average rainy season started in June and triggered large-scale displacements in the months that followed. That period is not covered by this report, but the situation already suggests there will be more disaster displacements than in previous years.

Nigeria



DISASTERS

8,800

Sources: IOM DTM and IDMC



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

32,000

Sources: IOM DTM, OCHA, UNHCR and IDMC

Movement restrictions put in place to limit the spread of Covid-19 meant fewer assessments were conducted in Nigeria in the first half of 2020, which in turn makes the number of new displacements reported conservative. Around two-thirds of the total were recorded in the north-eastern states of Borno and Adamawa, the result of violence against civilians that included attacks on displacement camps.⁵⁸

Long-standing conflict between Fulani pastoralists and Hausa farmers in the north-western states of Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara states triggered around 7,900 new internal displacements. The violence also led tens of thousands of people to flee across the border into the Maradi region of Niger. About 23,000 such movements were recorded in April alone. Violence between farmers and pastoralists

also increased in the Nigeria's central regions, commonly known as the Middle Belt, but the lack of monitoring made it difficult to assess the number of new displacements triggered.

Flooding in Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Benue, Borno, Delta, Lagos, Kano and Kebbi states triggered at least 8,800 new displacements. Some of those forced to flee in Adamawa and Borno had already been displaced by conflict.⁵⁹ Many people who flee disasters in Nigeria return to damaged or destroyed homes unable to withstand further rains and floods.⁶⁰ Disasters also increase the risk of diarrhoea, respiratory infections and water-borne diseases such as cholera in displacement camps. Covid-19 was also reported in some camps in Borno.⁶¹

Sudan



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

- 39,000

Sources: IOM DTM, OCHA and IDMC

About 35,000 of the new conflict displacements recorded in Sudan in the first half of 2020 were triggered by an increase in violence in the Darfur region and South Kordofan, Kassala and Gezira states as peace talks were delayed.⁶² The remainder were the result of border skirmishes between Ethiopia and Sudan.⁶³

The most significant event was a flare up of ethnic violence around Kadugli, the capital of South Kordofan, in May. More than 20,000 displacements and significant damage to public and private infrastructure were recorded.⁶⁴ Many of the people affected were already living in a displacement camp and were forced to flee for a second time.⁶⁵

The UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) was approved in June 2020

with the objective of helping the government to conduct peace negotiations and supporting a political transition. It is also intended to provide a degree of protection to civilians as a follow-up to its predecessor, the UN-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).⁶⁶ This is an important development given the increase in violence and displacement in Darfur, which has been attributed in part to UNAMID's withdrawal.⁶⁷



A group of women at a temporary gathering point following intercommunal conflict in West Darfur, Sudan, January 2020. © UNHCR /Modesta Ndubi

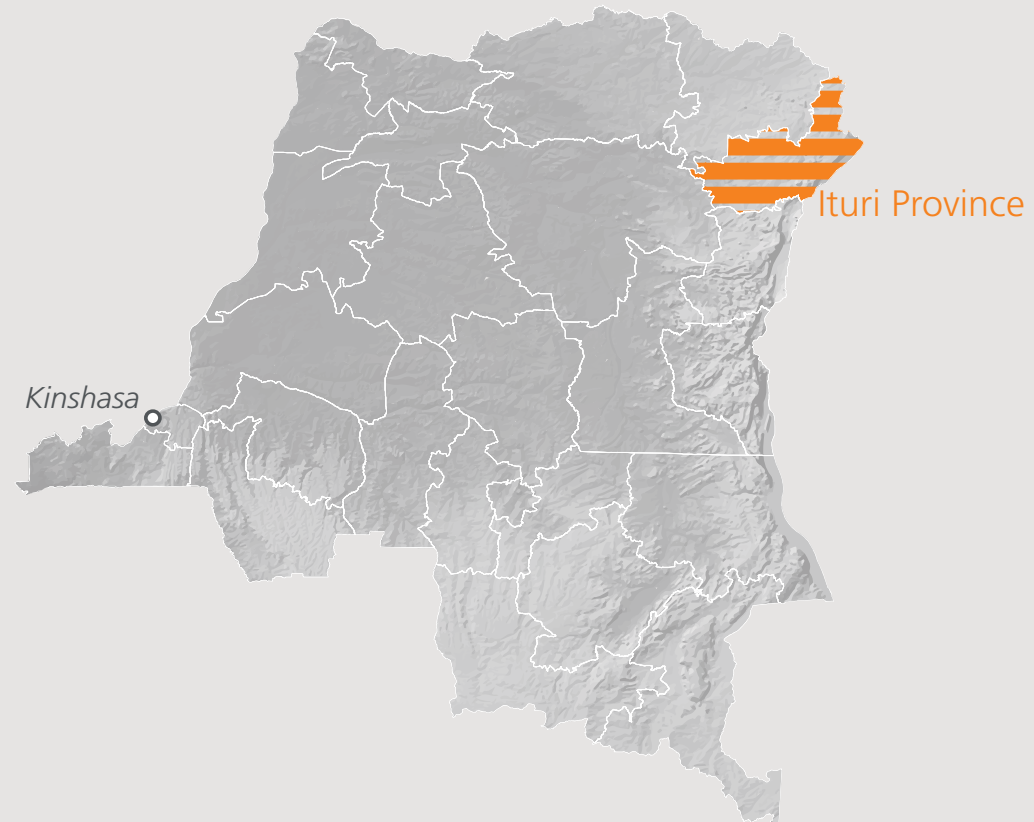
Ituri province in eastern DRC has been affected by intercommunal violence for decades, and clashes between different ethnic groups are common. Developments in the first half of 2020 were cause for new concern, however, particularly because of the aggravation of long-standing tensions between the Hema, Lendu and Alur, Ituri's main ethnic groups.⁶⁸ Other local conflicts, including in the province's border areas, have also triggered significant displacement.

Growing tensions and violence between different communities have led to increased militarisation of the conflict and recruitment into armed groups since late 2017. New armed groups and self-defence militias have emerged more recently, existing groups have splintered and hostilities have increased.⁶⁹

The national government launched military operations in December 2019 in response to violence perpetrated by CODECO, an armed faction of the Lendu community, and other affiliated groups such as URPDC. Retaliatory attacks, including indiscriminate attacks on civilians, have led to mass displacement.⁷⁰

Ituri is also surrounded by ongoing conflicts in neighbouring provinces and countries that have increasingly spilled over onto its territory. The South Sudanese army has made various

DRC – Ituri province: An internal displacement hotspot



- Borders of provinces (Source: Natural Earth 2020)
- Capital city (Source: Natural Earth 2020)

The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC.

incursions across Ituri's porous northern border, provoking fear and displacement in Aru territory.⁷¹ The southern border with North Kivu province has been affected by the territorial expansion of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Many people fleeing northern areas of North Kivu have sought refuge in Irumu territory in Ituri. There are concerns that ADF is gradually gaining territory in southern Ituri as well, which could deepen the province's displacement crisis.⁷²

All of the above factors combined to trigger 627,000 new displacements in the first half of 2020, almost 50 per cent of the national total of more than 1.4 million.⁷³ Those displaced tend to stay with host families or in spontaneously formed settlements, many of which have few if any basic services.⁷⁴ Many were forced to flee again to the provincial capital of Bunia when

villages and displacement sites were attacked and burned.⁷⁵ Some cross-border displacement into neighbouring Uganda also took place. Uganda was hosting more than 415,000 Congolese refugees as of June 2020.⁷⁶

Children in Ituri have been displaced, raped and killed.⁷⁷ Many more face malnutrition and diseases such as cholera and measles. Around 160 schools were damaged or looted between January and May, and around 22 health facilities destroyed.⁷⁸ Around 70 per cent of humanitarian workers in the province had to stop their activities in April because of threats and ongoing violence.⁷⁹

There are also concerns about the spread of disease in overcrowded displacement sites without adequate latrines and clean water supplies.⁸⁰ Landslides and floods during the

rainy season further increased the risk of water-borne diseases and triggered around 3,400 new disaster displacements in the first six months of the year.

DRC's health ministry declared the end of an Ebola outbreak in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri on 25 June.⁸¹ Ituri has also largely been spared the impacts of Covid-19. IDPs' poor living conditions and their limited capacity to cope with the current crisis are more concerning.

Emergency distributions in Ituri province conducted with Covid-19 precautions, DRC, March 2020. © Anacleto Kolekwa/NRC



Middle East and North Africa



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE:

1.6 MILLION

DISASTERS:

128,000

Syria



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

1.5 million

Source: IDP Task Force Syria (OCHA)

Syria's conflict escalated in the first three months of 2020 as the country's military renewed its offensive against armed opposition groups in Idlib governorate.⁸² The operation triggered the most intense period of displacement since the outbreak of civil war in 2011.⁸³ It took place in a small area home to 1.1 million IDPs who had fled earlier conflict and whose needs were already acute.⁸⁴

The Idlib offensive triggered more than 959,000 new displacements between early December 2019 and 5 March 2020, when a ceasefire was agreed.⁸⁵ Eighty per cent of the people who fled were women and children.⁸⁶ The humanitarian situation was aggravated by the fact that options for refuge were limited, particularly because the border with Turkey is closed.⁸⁷ For

more than half of those displaced it was the second or third time they had been forced to flee.⁸⁸

As the army gained ground, people took shelter in increasingly overcrowded settings. Around 550,000 people moved north-west within Idlib to sites that were already hosting hundreds of thousands of IDPs.⁸⁹ A number of fires broke out in the cramped conditions, burning people's tents and triggering further displacement.⁹⁰



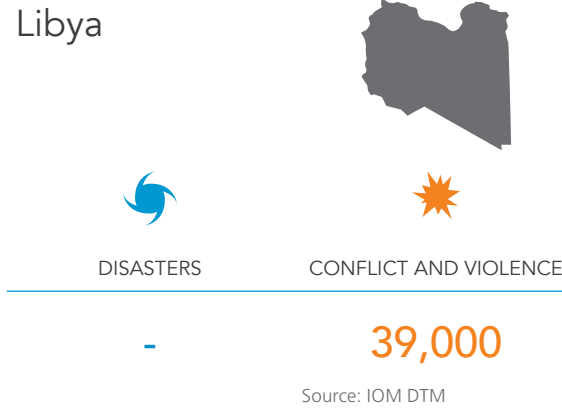
Syrians flee during a renewed offensive on Idlib governorate on February 26, 2020. © Karam Almasri/Shutterstock.com

Around 410,000 people moved to northern areas of Aleppo governorate, where services were also already overstretched.⁹¹ By the time the ceasefire was agreed, around 70 per cent of Idlib's population of 2.8 million were IDPs.⁹²

More than 200,000 of those displaced by the latest offensive returned between March and July, but the destruction in many areas was such that they were all but uninhabitable.⁹³ Returnees also face dire economic hardship, a volatile security situation and a struggle to access humanitarian assistance.⁹⁴

No other major offensives took place in the first half of 2020, but Syria is also mired in a deepening economic crisis. Currency devaluations have pushed up the price of food and fuel, making them increasingly unaffordable to many IDPs, and measures to curb the spread of Covid-19 have reduced cross-border trade, meaning fewer goods are available in markets.⁹⁵

Covid-19 cases have been reported in densely populated areas of Idlib and the Al Hol displacement camp in the north-east.⁹⁶ The spread of the disease in camps is a major concern, given the country's already overstretched health system.⁹⁷



Most of new displacements recorded in the first half of 2020 were triggered by intense fighting between the UN-backed government of national accord (GNA) and troops led by General Khalifa Haftar, who tried to capture Tripoli in April 2019. GNA finally managed to repel Haftar's offensive on the capital in June 2020 and also retook other areas. As conflict in and around Tripoli subsided, many IDPs sought to return to their homes, but unexploded ordnance left behind by Haftar's forces posed a major risk to their safety.⁹⁸

Fighting also broke out in and around cities including Al Jafara, Al Jufra, Al Murqub, Azzawya, Misrata, Sirte, and Tarhuna.⁹⁹ The event that led to most new displacements took place between 4 and 18 June, when military operations around Tarhuna and Sirte trig-

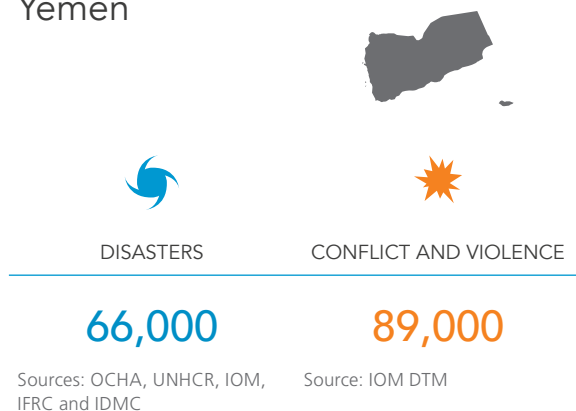
gered around 27,000.¹⁰⁰ The majority of those displaced fled to eastern towns and cities, where many stayed with relatives or host families. Others sought shelter in schools.¹⁰¹

Libya's conflict has been fuelled by growing international interference, which has also undermined the arms embargo that the UN Security Council unanimously renewed on 10 June.¹⁰² Turkey increased its military support for GNA, which helped it to repel Haftar's offensives. The Egyptian parliament responded by authorising direct military intervention, claiming there was an imminent threat to the security of its border.

Libya has also been hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the number of cases rose in May and June. Restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the virus have increased unemployment and reduced access to livelihoods, factors that have heightened the vulnerability of IDPs, host communities and migrants.¹⁰³



Yemen



Despite a reduction in the number of new displacements recorded in the first half of 2020 compared with the same the period last year, Yemen’s conflict is far from over.¹⁰⁴ A number of offensives and attacks took place, the civilian death toll continued to climb and many homes were damaged or destroyed. Displacement data, however, was only available for 13 of the country’s 22 governorates.¹⁰⁵

The frontlines of the conflict began to shift in January toward Marib and Al Jawf governorates, triggering waves of displacement in areas that had previously been relatively safe. Most IDPs moved to Marib city, and to the Marib Al Wadi, Medghal and Sirwah districts of Marib governorate. New rivalries also emerged in the south among forces loyal to the international-

ly-recognised government, leading to further new displacements.¹⁰⁶

In response to the UN Secretary General’s call in late March for a global ceasefire in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Saudi-led coalition unilaterally suspended its hostilities on 9 April. Ansar Allah, however, refused to reciprocate and fighting soon resumed.¹⁰⁷

Disasters, mainly floods, triggered twice as many new displacements in the first half of the year as in the whole of 2019. Heavy rains fell in several governorates in March and April, and flooding destroyed the shelters and property of IDPs who had already fled the country’s conflict.¹⁰⁸ The overlapping triggers, drivers and impacts of conflict and disasters continue to make Yemen’s crisis the world’s most acute, aggravated still further by the Covid-19 pandemic (see highlight).

Iraq



DISASTERS

1,200

Source: Iraqi Red Crescent Society



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

2,800

Source: IOM DTM

The number of new conflict displacements in Iraq fell significantly in the first half of 2020 from the 51,000 recorded in 2019. The decrease is largely the result of a reduction in militant attacks and military responses, particularly after the official defeat of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2017, but the country’s security situation remains fragile.

Remaining ISIL pockets mounted small-scale attacks against government and civilian targets throughout the first half of the year, and operations against them continue to take place.¹⁰⁹ New and secondary displacements were reported in the first six months of 2020.¹¹⁰ These were far from the scale recorded at the peak of the conflict, but the risk of an ISIL resurgence still lingers.

Regional tensions, conflicts in neighbouring countries and tensions between the US and Iran, which have carried out targeted attacks against each other on Iraqi territory, have also contributed to the country’s instability.¹¹¹

IDPs continued to return to their homes, particularly in the northern governorate of Ninewa but also in Anbar and Salah al-Din. They were encouraged by improved security, the clearance of unexploded ordnance and the reconstruction of public infrastructure.¹¹² There are concerns,

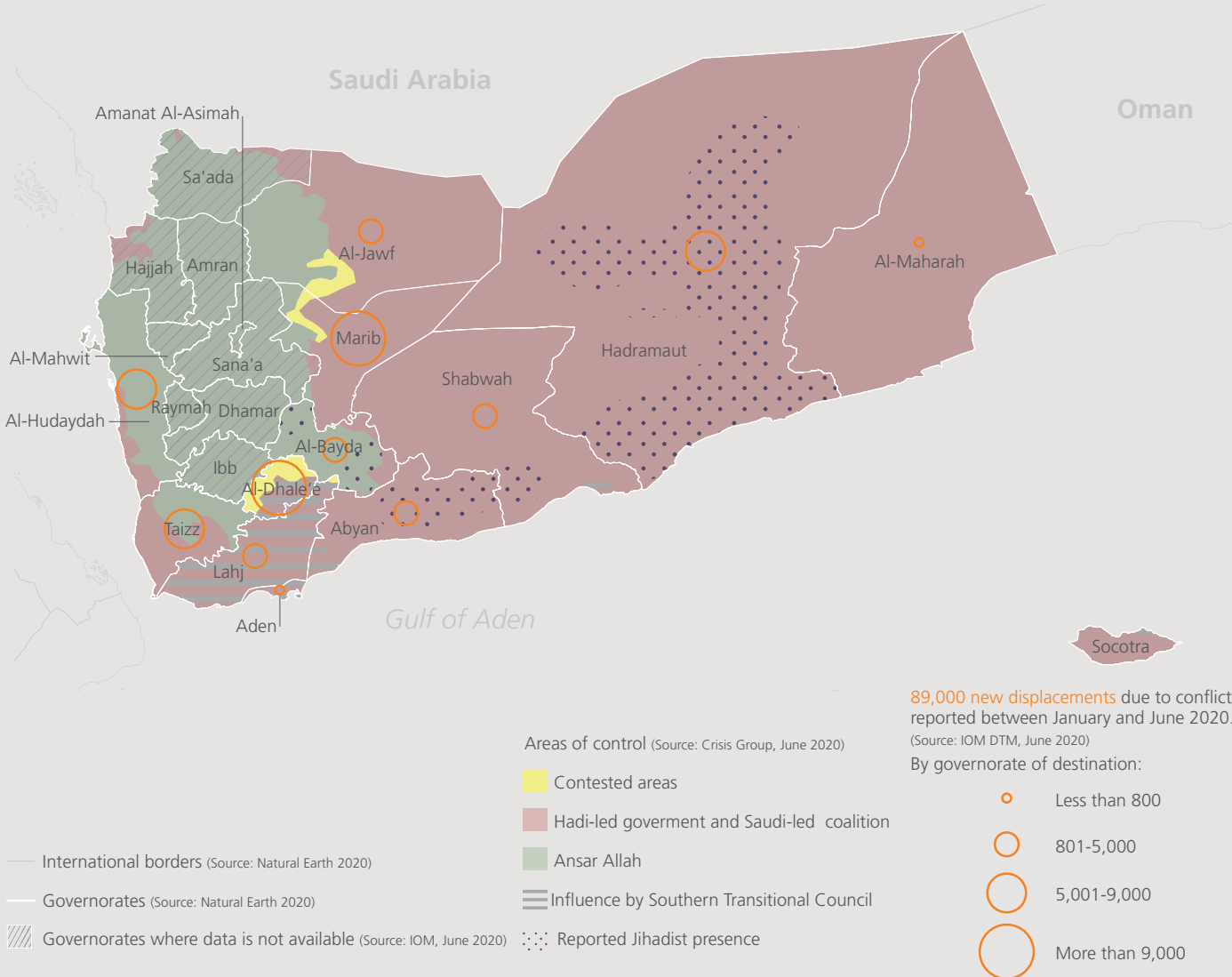
however, about the sustainability of many returns, given the volatile security situation and lack of social cohesion.

Others are hampered from returning, primarily because their homes have been damaged or destroyed, but also by security concerns and a lack of livelihood opportunities and basic services.¹¹³ In pursuit of its stated aim of returning all IDPs to their places of origin by the end of 2020, the government meanwhile has closed and consolidated a number of camps, complicating the situation of many IDPs.¹¹⁴



A mother and her children in an IDP camp in Mosul, Iraq, February 2020. © Helen Baker/NRC.

Yemen: Covid-19 adds a third layer to the world's most acute crisis



Yemen’s humanitarian crisis continued to deepen in the first half of 2020, as ongoing conflict, some of the worst flooding in years and the Covid-19 pandemic combined to trigger new displacement and heighten IDPs’ vulnerabilities.

The conflict, which pits the internationally recognised government and a coalition of Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia against Ansar Allah, also known as the Houthi movement, accounts for the vast majority of new displacements.¹¹⁵ It triggered around 89,000 displacements between January and June.

In response to the UN Secretary General’s call in late March for a global ceasefire to focus attention on curbing the spread of Covid-19, the Saudi-led coalition unilaterally suspended its hostilities on 9 April.¹¹⁶ Fighting, however, soon resumed. Lack of access and restrictions linked to Covid-19 made it difficult to collect data on internal displacement, which was only available for 13 of the country’s 22 governorates.

The frontlines of the conflict began to shift in January and fighting spread into areas that had previously been relatively safe, such as the central governorate of Marib, where more than 60,000 new displacements were recorded.¹¹⁷ Fighting in Hodeidah governorate on the west coast continued, triggering 9,300, despite the signing of an agreement in Stockholm in December 2018 that was intended to end the conflict in the area.¹¹⁸ Yemen's northern border with Saudi Arabia was also turbulent, particularly in Sa'ada governorate, but no displacement figures were available.¹¹⁹

New rivalries among forces previously loyal to the internationally recognised government emerged in the south, and the Southern Transitional Council declared self-rule in April.¹²⁰ This led to fighting and displacement in other areas that had previously been relatively safe, such as in Zingibar district in Abyan governorate.¹²¹

Disasters, mainly in the form of floods, triggered 66,000 new displacements between mid-March and the end of June. This is twice the number recorded for the whole of 2019 and second only to the figure for 2015, when two cyclones hit the country. Many of those displaced by the floods were IDPs living in displacement sites who were forced to flee again, often taking refuge in crowded conditions with a higher risk of contracting Covid-19.¹²²

Heavy rains fell in southern parts of Yemen on 24 and 25 March, badly affecting the governorates of Lahj, Aden, Abyan, Taiz, Al Dale'e, Al Mahrah and Hadramaut. More than two-thirds of the 19,000 displacements recorded involved people who had already been forced to flee at least once before. A tropical storm also struck the south coast on 21 April, undermining people's recovery from the floods the previous month.¹²³

Heavy rains continued throughout April, causing flash floods in other parts of the country. Marib governorate, already home to many IDPs, accounted for almost 70 per cent of the 37,000 new displacements that took place during the month.¹²⁴ Around 8,000 were recorded in Abs district in Hajjah governorate, the vast majority people already displaced by conflict.¹²⁵

The floodwaters also overwhelmed sewage systems and contaminated water sources, and waste flowed into the streets, raising the risk of waterborne diseases in a country already dealing with a significant cholera outbreak.¹²⁶ Roads and water networks in urban areas were destroyed, and in rural areas livestock drowned and severe crop damage was reported.¹²⁷ Authorities in the city of Aden, which is home to almost 60,000 IDPs, declared a "disaster area".¹²⁸

Yet more heavy rain fell in early June, this time associated with the remnants of cyclone Nisarga, which had previously affected India and Oman. It led to further floods in southern and eastern governorates, triggering almost 11,000 new displacements. Roads were cut off, which disrupted relief supplies and hampered efforts to contain Covid-19. A sandstorm that preceded the floods also damaged displacement sites in Hadramaut.¹²⁹

Covid-19 added to the challenges brought on by the country's conflict and disasters. Yemen recorded its first case in April, and the virus has since spread rapidly. It has also triggered displacement as people flee for fear of contagion, particularly in Aden, but little information is available on such movements.¹³⁰ There are also concerns that IDPs might be targeted with misinformation on the pandemic to redirect them to certain areas of the country, based on discrimination.¹³¹

Covid-19 has also heightened IDPs' vulnerabilities. There is less work available, and food prices have risen steeply. Since the virus was first identified in the country, a quarter of vulnerable families have lost all of their income and half have lost more than 50 per cent. The cost of staples such as flour have climbed by as much as 40 per cent.¹³² In a country already grappling with the world's most acute humanitarian crisis, the pandemic and its impacts threaten to overwhelm many people's capacity to cope.



Displaced families are in dire need of food as prices rise. Al-Malika camp in Taiz' Al-Kadaha area where some hundred families live under tents, July 2020. © Khalid Al-Banna/NRC

East Asia and Pacific



China



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

791,000

-

Sources: Government of China (Ministry of Emergency Management) and IDMC

Rainy season floods and landslides triggered about 90 per cent of the disaster displacements recorded in China in the first half of 2020. Forest fires and earthquakes accounted for the other 10 per cent. The flooding continued well into July, affecting more than 38 million people across 27 provinces and triggering over 2.2 million evacuations, but many of these fell outside the reporting period for this update. Around 29,000 homes were destroyed, and direct economic losses reached at least \$12 billion.¹³³

Seasonal rains and floods are common in China, but this year's were particularly intense. More than 440 rivers burst their banks, and 33 swelled to their highest level on record. Average precipitation along the Yangtze river basin was at its

highest since 1961.¹³⁴ The floodwaters in some areas reached levels not seen since 1998, when they took three months to recede.¹³⁵ Many of the regions hardest hit by Covid-19 were among the worst affected, just months after they had emerged from strict lockdowns.¹³⁶

The flooding also raised growing concerns about the safety of the country's dams and reservoirs, including the Three Gorges dam, the world's largest power station.¹³⁷ Authorities in eastern Anhui province blew a hole in one dam on the Chuhe river to discharge the floodwaters that had built up behind it.¹³⁸ Given that more than 400 million people live along the Yangtze River basin, increasingly severe floods and aging dam infrastructure combine to increase the risk of disaster displacement.

CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE:

105,000

DISASTERS:

2.3 MILLION

The Philippines



DISASTERS

811,000

Sources: Government of the Philippines (DSWD/DROMIC), UNHCR and IDMC



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

66,000

Sources: Government of the Philippines (DSWD/DROMIC), UNHCR and IDMC

The eruption of the Taal volcano in January triggered about 60 per cent of the new displacements recorded in the Philippines in the first half of 2020. The National Institute of Volcanology and Seismology issued an alert on 12 January, advising the complete evacuation of Volcano Island and further evacuations from areas at high risk of lava, ash and rock flows and a possible volcanic tsunami on Taal's crater lake. The eruption, which lasted for two weeks, led to 506,000 evacuations in all.¹³⁹

Typhoon Vongfong, known locally as Ambo, made landfall on 10 May, when the country was already dealing with the impacts of Covid-19. The first typhoon of the year to hit the Philippines, it triggered almost 300,000 displacements and destroyed more than 8,000 homes.¹⁴⁰

All of the new conflict displacements recorded were in the region of Mindanao. Clashes between the military and various armed groups, including the New People's Army and the ISIL-inspired Abu Sayyaf, continued to force people from their homes. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao was established in early 2019 and has the potential to reduce tensions, but the situation remains fragile. The Covid-19 pandemic also triggered around 200 displacements when people in Lanao del Sur were forced to leave their homes in May because they had violated quarantine protocols.¹⁴¹

Indonesia



DISASTERS

508,000

Sources: Government of Indonesia (BNPB), state authorities and IDMC



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

1,700

Source: IDMC

Almost 100 disasters took place in Indonesia in the first half of 2020 in the form of floods, storms, landslides and earthquakes. Floods trig-

gered almost all of the displacement recorded. By far the most significant event took place in the greater Jakarta region in January, after torrential rains that began on New Year's Eve led to widespread flooding and more than 397,000 displacements in and around the capital.¹⁴² It was the worst flooding in the city since 1996.¹⁴³

Further heavy rain and floods in the same area, and in Karawang, Bekasi and Banten regencies, triggered another 46,000 displacements between 24 and 27 February. Jakarta, which sits on a swamp, is sinking fast - mainly the result of sea level rise and construction on land prone to subsidence - and there are long-term plans to move the city to a new location.¹⁴⁴

Attacks by armed separatist groups caused 1,700 new displacements between 26 February and 9 March in Papua.



Flooding in Jakarta, Indonesia, January 2020. © IFRC

Myanmar



DISASTERS

3,300

Sources: AHA Centre, IFRC, Myanmar Red Cross Society, and IDMC



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

37,000

Sources: OCHA, Rakhine State Government, Karen Peace Support Network, and IDMC

Intra-state armed conflict remained a significant cause of displacement in Myanmar during the first half of 2020. The military announced a nation-wide ceasefire to support the response to Covid-19 in May, but the states of Rakhine and Chin were excluded.¹⁴⁵ Conflict between Myanmar’s military and the Arakan Army, an ethnic nationalist armed group, triggered around 35,000 new displacements in both states, an increase compared with the same period last year.¹⁴⁶

In contrast, the number of new displacements recorded in Shan state fell significantly to about 1,700 from 11,000 during the same period last year. The decrease was the result of a lull in fighting as the parties to the conflict took steps toward cooperating in efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19.¹⁴⁷

A storm that destroyed 600 homes in Sagaing region in early May accounted for the vast majority of new disaster displacements, triggering 2,800 movements. Cyclone Amphan caused small-scale damage and caused about 78 displacements later in the same month. Monsoon rains in the second half of July led to floods as rivers burst their banks, led to about 31,000 displacements, but these were outside the reporting period for this update.

Heavy flooding in Queensland and New South Wales triggered 4,000 displacements in February, the bulk of them in Sydney, and Cyclone Blake led to 200 in Western Australia in January.

Australia



DISASTERS

51,000

Source: Australian Red Cross



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

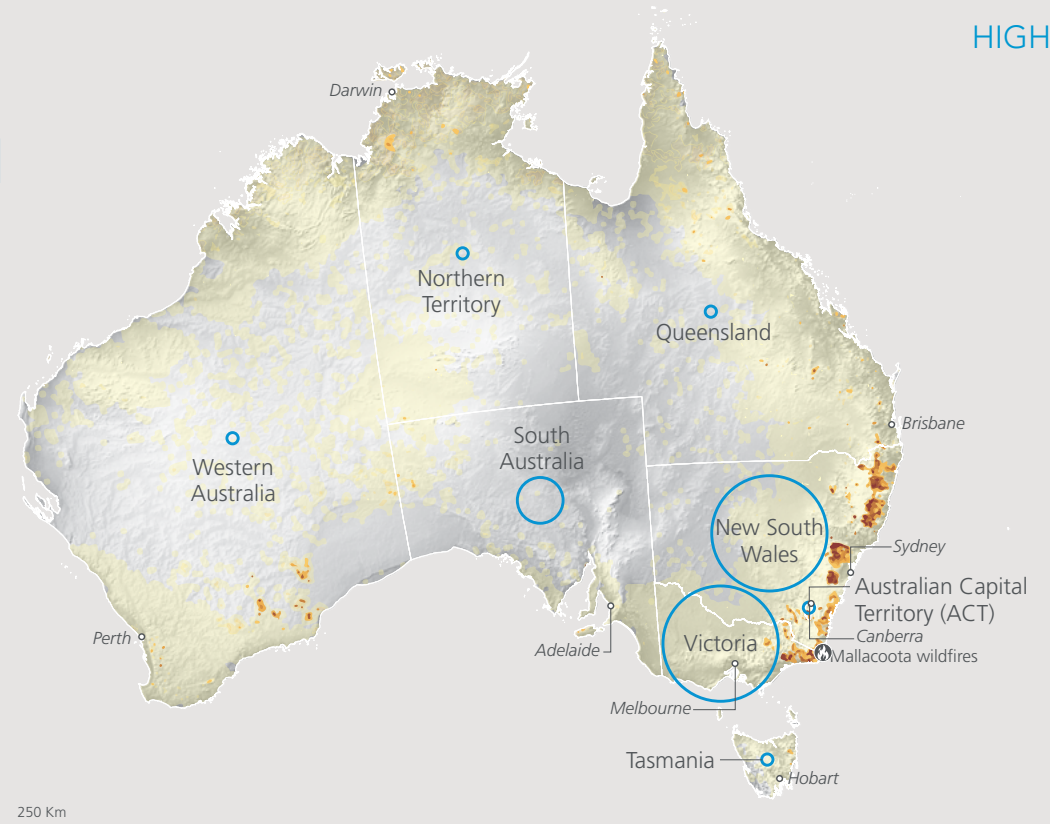
The number of new displacements recorded in Australia in the first half of 2020 was double the figure for the whole of 2019. The majority took place in the form of evacuations during an unusually intense bushfire season that started in late 2019. The fires triggered at least 47,000 displacements in January and February (see highlight).

Australia's unprecedented bushfire season

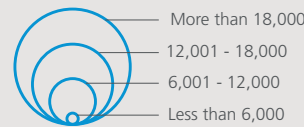
Bushfires of unprecedented scale and intensity raged in Australia between July 2019 and February 2020, triggering at least 65,000 new displacements. Almost three-quarters took place in early 2020. Nearly 17 million hectares of land were burnt, mostly in the states of New South Wales (NSW), Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.¹⁴⁸

A number of overlapping factors, including record temperatures, prolonged drought and strong winds contributed to making the 2019-2020 bushfire season so intense.¹⁴⁹ There is also evidence linking the fires to climate change. One study suggests it increased the risk of the weather conditions that fuelled them by at least 30 per cent.¹⁵⁰ Poor planning policy is also said to have allowed urban suburbs to encroach on areas prone to fires, exposing residents to a high risk of displacement.¹⁵¹

The majority of displacements took the form of evacuations, with many people receiving early-warning alerts to leave their homes via text messages or phone calls.¹⁵² NSW authorities declared a state of emergency various times during the season, giving relief teams



65,000 New displacements during the bushfire season July 2019 – February 2020



Frequency of bushfires during the bushfire season July 2019 – February 2020 based on remote sensing
(Source: NRT VIIRS 375m Active Fire, product from NOAA and NASA)

The 2019-2020 Australian bushfire season: new displacement by year, state and territory

	July-December 2019	January-February 2020
Total	18,000*	47,000*
Victoria	2,000	26,000
New South Wales and ACT	9,000	17,000
South Australia	4,000	4,000
Queensland	2,000	130
Western Australia	610	330
Tasmania	2	5

(Sources: Australian Red Cross, fire and emergency services of states and territories and media monitoring)

— Borders of States and Territories (Source: Natural Earth 2020)
○ Capital cities (Source: Natural Earth 2020)

*Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures. Data consolidated by IDMC. The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC.

extraordinary powers to evacuate people by force if deemed necessary.¹⁵³ The emphasis on pre-emptive evacuations and the use of mandatory orders reflected a change in the policies of states and territories in comparison to previous bushfire seasons, when residents were advised to choose to “stay and defend” their homes or “leave early”.¹⁵⁴


More than 100 evacuation and relief centres were set up, but people were encouraged first to find alternative accommodation, including with friends and family.¹⁵⁵ As huge numbers of people tried to evacuate by car at the same time, heavy traffic and road closures prevented many from reaching any temporary shelter at all. Thousands ended up sleeping in their cars or in tents or laying out bedding on the roadside.¹⁵⁶ Evacuees’ work, schooling and access to services were also disrupted.¹⁵⁷

States and territories are responsible for emergency management in Australia, but they are able to request federal government support for large-scale events. This occurred in Victoria on New Year’s Eve when the navy was called to help evacuate as many as 5,000 residents and tourists trapped on a beach as fires threatened the coastal town of Mallacoota during the peak holiday season.¹⁵⁸ At least 26,000 new displacements were recorded in Victoria in January and February.

Government agencies, fire services and aid providers have been commended for their efforts in responding to the 2019-2020 bushfires, but areas where evacuation processes could be improved have also been identified. These include the establishment of more child-friendly spaces in evacuation centres and embedding

doctors and other service providers into future emergency plans to ensure people continue to access the support they need during their displacement.¹⁵⁹

These recommendations and others have arisen from several government-led inquiries examining responses to the 2019-2020 fires.¹⁶⁰ Given that bushfires are predicted to become more intense and frequent in the years to come, the lessons learned could play a vital role in improving preparedness, planning and responses for future disasters, and minimising the negative impacts of displacement.¹⁶¹



Milton New, South Wales during the bushfire emergency in January 2020. © Australian Red Cross/Felicity Calvert.

South Asia



India



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

2.7 MILLION

3,200

Sources: West Bengal State Inter Agency Group, IFRC, State Disaster Management Authority and IDMC

Source: IDMC

As one of the world’s most populous countries, and one that is exposed to a range of natural hazards, India records some of the highest disaster displacement figures globally each year. That trend continued in the first half of 2020, when Cyclone Amphan was the world’s largest single displacement event.

The storm triggered about 2.4 million new displacements in India. Of these, about 818,000 were pre-emptive evacuations. About 2.5 million people were displaced in neighbouring Bangladesh. The storm made landfall on 20 May, causing widespread destruction in the state of West Bengal and to a lesser extent in Odisha (see highlight).

Cyclone Nisarga hit the country’s west coast two weeks later, triggering 170,000 displacements. Most were also in the form of pre-emptive evacuations in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. More disaster displacement took place during the south-west monsoon season, which had its onset in late June, but no figures are presented here as it falls outside the mid-year reporting period. The north-west monsoon, which will begin later in the year, is also likely to cause more displacement.

Intercommunal violence, particularly in Delhi, triggered the majority of new conflict displacements in the first half of 2020. Tensions began to rise at the end of 2019 after the adoption of the Citizenship Amendment Act, which provides an easier naturalisation pathway for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians who came to India from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before 2014.¹⁶² Muslim communities felt disadvantaged by the law and there were widespread protests, many of which turned violent.

Anti-Muslim violence broke out in Delhi in February too, triggering at least 1,800 new displacements. Those affected fled to relief camps.¹⁶³ Accusations that people were failing to comply with measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 also sparked intercommunal violence, including the destruction of homes, which in turn led to some localised displacement.¹⁶⁴

CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE:

121,000

DISASTERS:

5.2 MILLION

Bangladesh



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

2.5 MILLION**210**

Sources: UN country office, Network for Information Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster (NIRAPAD), and IDMC

Source: IDMC

Cyclone Amphan prompted 2.4 million pre-emptive evacuations to government shelters in Bangladesh in late May.¹⁶⁵ Another 100,000 people self-evacuated.¹⁶⁶ The vast majority of the people affected were able to return to their homes relatively quickly, but an unconfirmed number were displaced to host families and face the prospect of prolonged displacement.

Monsoon rains triggered widespread floods that inundated about a quarter of the country a month later.¹⁶⁷ Almost 5.4 million people had been affected by the time the flooding reached its peak in early August.¹⁶⁸ Some of the people displaced took refuge in government shelters, others on high ground, roadsides and embankments. The scale of displacement

is all but certain to have been significant, but numbers are still to be confirmed.¹⁶⁹

The economic impacts of Covid-19 mean that those affected by the floods will have more difficulty than usual in recovering.¹⁷⁰ Social-distancing measures to limit the spread of the virus have also made the disaster response more challenging.¹⁷¹



A family makes their way through flood waters after severe floods struck Bangladesh during the last week of June 2020. © IFRC

Afghanistan



DISASTERS

30,000

Sources: IOM and IDMC



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

117,000

Source: OCHA

Clashes between the Taliban and the Afghan Armed Forces continued to force people to flee their homes in the first half of 2020. The number of new displacements was down significantly from the 213,000 movements recorded in the same period last year, but remains high despite recent efforts to end the armed conflict.

More than half of the new displacements took place in January and February. A Taliban offensive in Kunar province on 20 February, on the eve of the announcement of a deal between the group and the US, triggered nearly 9,800 new displacements in a single day.¹⁷² The Taliban and the US signed their agreement a week later, which led to a drop in violence and displacement in March and April.¹⁷³ The initiative also prompted negotiations leading to intra-Afghan peace talks, that started mid-September.¹⁷⁴

Conflict, meanwhile, has continued. The Taliban announced a three-day ceasefire in late May to coincide with Eid al-Fitr, only its second since the start of the war in 2001. But violence resumed almost immediately, triggering 7,700 new displacements across the northern and north-western provinces of Badghis, Balkh, Faryab, Ghor, Jawzjan and Takhar. Further offensives took place throughout June in Faryab, Takhar and Baghlan provinces, that displaced around 9,000 people.

Taliban attacks and clashes with the Afghan Armed Forces accounted for the bulk of conflict displacements in the first half of 2020, but fighting between the Taliban and the Islamic State-Khorasan (ISK), which is affiliated to ISIL, forced some people to flee. Reliable figures, however, are not available. ISK and Afghan forces have also clashed. ISK was officially defeated in its stronghold in Nangarhar province last November, but attacks against civilians occurred intermittently in the eastern provinces around Nangarhar, and the group has claimed responsibility for attacks in Kabul.¹⁷⁵

Flooding, including flash floods, triggered as many as 24,000 new displacements across eastern Afghanistan between March and June. Extreme winter conditions, including avalanches and hailstorms, led to more than 6,000 across the country.



Home destroyed by flash flood in Afghanistan, August 2020. © Enayatullah Azad/NRC

Cyclone Amphan: the largest displacement event in the first half of the year

At its peak, Cyclone Amphan had sustained windspeeds of a Category-5 storm. While it weakened to Category-2 ahead of its landfall, its strength was sufficient to prompt about 3.3 million pre-emptive evacuations across India and Bangladesh.¹⁷⁶ Evacuations on this scale are possible thanks to the huge undertakings of authorities and civil society organisations to ensure they are able to move people in exposed areas to safety before a hazard strikes. They also highlight the success of early warning systems and prevention protocols in the two countries, which have pursued a zero-casualty policy.¹⁷⁷

The Covid-19 pandemic complicated the Amphan evacuations in several ways, however, not least because social-distancing measures reduced the capacity of shelters to 40 per cent.¹⁷⁸ Many people were also hesitant to evacuate for fear of being infected in the shelters.¹⁷⁹ Maintaining distance became difficult as the disaster unfolded, and disaster response teams made repeated visits to raise awareness of the importance of wearing masks.¹⁸⁰

Despite such challenges, approximately 2.5 million people were evacuated in Bangladesh and 818,000 in the Indian states of West Bengal

and Odisha. That said, the cyclone also left an estimated 1.7 million people displaced outside shelters. Many people were compelled to take refuge in tents and on embankments, putting them at high risk of secondary displacement by flooding associated with the monsoon, which tends to begin in early June and continue into September.¹⁸¹

Amphan devastated the Sundarbans, a low-lying delta area that straddles the border between India and Bangladesh. Almost all standing crops were destroyed, and guaranteeing food security was an immediate priority.¹⁸² Seventy-eight per

cent of respondents to a needs assessment in Bangladesh and 86 per cent in West Bengal said they had less than a week's supply of food.¹⁸³ Around a quarter of those surveyed in West Bengal had lost livestock, and drinking water was contaminated.¹⁸⁴ Thousands of health centres were also damaged, adding to pressure on a health system already beset by the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁸⁵

Many evacuees will have been able to return to their homes relatively quickly, but housing destruction data suggests that a significant number of people will be displaced for a longer time. Preliminary estimates in West Bengal indi-

cate that more than 2.8 million homes were damaged or destroyed, affecting more than 13 million people.¹⁸⁶ Around 100,000 people in Bangladesh are also thought to have been left homeless.¹⁸⁷

IDPs and others affected by Amphan face a double challenge of trying to recover from the storm while dealing with the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and measures put in place to limit the spread of the virus. This will be a long-term process, and they will require the support of an integrated response that takes both factors into account.

With a 60 per cent probability of an unusually active Atlantic hurricane season in 2020, there are important lessons to learn from the response to Amphan.¹⁸⁸ They include repurposing public spaces that could serve as shelters to reduce crowding and enable more evacuations, engaging different stakeholders in providing supplies, logistics and back-up shelters, protecting responders from the risk of infection and increasing access to shelters for high-risk groups such as elderly people.¹⁸⁹



Americas



Colombia



DISASTERS

11,000

Source: Local government



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

19,000

Source: UARIV (government)

Conflict continued to trigger displacement in Colombia in the first half of 2020, despite a countrywide lockdown to limit the spread of Covid-19 and the UN Secretary General’s call for a global ceasefire. Several armed groups fighting over land and drug smuggling routes have taken advantage of the pandemic to impose tighter control over the population and expand their territory.¹⁹⁰

The 19,000 displacements reported by the government’s Unit for the Assistance and Reparation of Victims (UARIV) represent a 50 per cent reduction compared with the same period last year. This may be the result of a decrease in displacement, but the figure could also be influenced by victims’ inability to register because of Covid-19 restrictions. OCHA recorded a 13 per cent increase in new displacements from 14,330 to 16,190.

The Pacific coast departments of Nariño, Cauca and Chocó continued to be the most affected.¹⁹¹ Nariño and Chocó alone accounted for 77 per cent of the new displacements OCHA recorded, with 7,500 and 4,300 respectively. People were also forced to flee their homes in Antioquia, Caquetá, Meta and Norte de Santander.

The single largest event, which took place in Tumaco, Nariño, in January accounted for 3,500 displacements. They were triggered by an escalation in clashes between dissident fronts of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) over territorial control.¹⁹² Nariño has been a hotspot of conflict and displacement given its strategic location on drug-trafficking routes.¹⁹³

The government imposed countrywide Covid-19 restrictions on 17 March that lasted until the end of August, but UARIV still registered 23 displacement events and 10 confinement events that affected 17,000 people.¹⁹⁴ The National Liberation Army (ELN) was the only group to heed the UN Secretary General’s call for a ceasefire. It suspended its hostilities for a month on 1 April but resumed them on 1 May. Clashes between FARC dissidents, ELN and paramilitary groups triggered 73 per cent of the displacement reported by OCHA.¹⁹⁵

Colombia recorded lower than average rainfall in the first half of 2020, but floods and other

CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE:

24,000

DISASTERS:

329,000

disasters still forced people from their homes, albeit on a smaller scale than in 2019.¹⁹⁶ Floods triggered 5,500 new displacements, but the figure is likely to be an underestimate because information was either lacking or unclear for several events. The Timbiquí river in Cauca, for example, burst its banks in March and again in May, flooding people's homes. At least 4,000 people were reported as affected in March and 6,000 families in May.¹⁹⁷

Landslides and wildfires in other parts of the country triggered 800 and 300 new displacements respectively.



Violence in Mexico has risen sharply in recent years and continued to trigger displacement in the first half of 2020. At least 14 displacement events were recorded in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo and Sinaloa. Violence perpetrated by criminal and drug-trafficking groups accounted for about 83 per cent of the new displacements, but communal and territorial conflicts triggered 795.

More than 70 per cent of the new displacements took place in Guerrero. The state is currently the epicentre of organised crime with more than 40 groups fighting for control of illicit economies.¹⁹⁸ Clashes in January between Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación and Familia Michoacana in Zirándaro municipality forced people from eight communities to flee. All 700 inhabit-

ants abandoned the town of San Rafael.¹⁹⁹ The fight for control of the smuggling routes that run through Zirándaro continued the following month, triggering 1,200 displacements.²⁰⁰ Another 800 were recorded in March in Leonardo Bravo municipality, also in Guerrero.²⁰¹

Disaster displacement also increased, with 10 events recorded in the first half of the year. A wildfire in Hidalgo state prompted 1,400 pre-emptive evacuations and left 60 families homeless.²⁰² The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season began early, with tropical storms Arthur and Bertha developing in May. A third, Cristobal was named on 2 June.²⁰³ It formed over the bay of Campeche from the remnants of tropical storm Amanda in the East Pacific. It tracked across the states of Campeche, Tabasco, Chiapas and Yucatan, triggering as many as 6,000 displacements.²⁰⁴ Given that this year's hurricane season is forecast to be more active than usual, disaster displacement may be higher in 2020 than in previous years.²⁰⁵

Brazil



DISASTERS



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

163,000

Sources: Government of Brazil
and IDMC

Brazil recorded 295,000 new disaster displacements in 2019, the highest figure since 2009, and the upward trend continued in the first half of 2020.²⁰⁶ Flooding in Minas Gerais destroyed 974 homes and triggered more than 75,000 displacements after the state received its heaviest rainfall on record in a 24-hour period on 25 January.²⁰⁷

Floods also triggered displacement in the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Para, Bahia, Amazonas and Espírito Santo in February. More than 100 municipalities declared states of emergency and more than 60 people drowned or were buried in land and mudslides. Significant damage to infrastructure was also reported, including the collapse of homes, canals and shopping centres.²⁰⁸

A cyclone with gusts of over 120 km/h struck several southern states on 30 June, including Santa Catarina, Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul. At least nine people were killed in Santa Catarina, and more than 2,100 new displacements were recorded.²⁰⁹



Flooding in Minas Gerais, Brazil, February 2020, © Ronaldo Almeida/Shutterstock.com

United States



DISASTERS

53,000



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

Sources: Federal government (FEMA), state authorities and IDMC

Wildfires triggered the majority of the new displacements in the US in the first half of 2020. Persistent hot, dry and sometimes windy conditions in western states fuelled large fires in Colorado, Utah and southern California, particularly in June.²¹⁰ Around 26,000 new displacements were recorded, half of them pre-emptive evacuations triggered by the Knolls fire in Utah.²¹¹

Flooding triggered 17,000 new displacements. Around 12,000 were recorded in the state of Michigan after heavy rainfall on 19 and 20 May caused the Edenville and Sanford dams to fail.²¹² The two dams are among at least 170 in the state that the US Army Corps of Engineers has classified as having “high” hazard potential, meaning that a failure could result in loss of life and displacement.²¹³

Haiti



DISASTERS

-



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

360

Source: IDMC

Haiti’s social, economic and political crisis deteriorated in the first half of 2020.²¹⁴ Discontent with the government over falling living standards and price increases caused by the devaluation of the currency have fuelled nationwide protests and civil unrest since January 2019.²¹⁵ Last year, and for the first time, about 2,100 new displacements associated with criminal violence were reported in the country.²¹⁶

Security conditions have worsened and gang violence has flourished. Though the number of displacements in the first half of 2020 was lower, the number of events increased to seven. Violence also spread further across the country from the metropolitan area of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and Artibonite department.

Local media reported on clashes among armed groups, as well as between them and security forces, triggering displacement including in Port-au-Prince and the departments of Nord and Ouest. However, the lack of systematic monitoring of displacement hampers a comprehensive assessment of the situation.

Europe and Central Asia



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE:

23,000

DISASTERS:

147,000

Uzbekistan



DISASTERS

70,000

Source: IDMC



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

The Sardoba reservoir dam on the Uzbek side of the Syr Darya river failed on 1 May, causing major flooding in Uzbekistan and neighbouring Kazakhstan. The floods triggered more than 70,000 evacuations from 22 Uzbek villages and 50 people were taken to hospital with injuries. A severe storm brought heavy rain to the city of Bukhara a few days earlier, damaging more than 5,000 buildings.²¹⁷

Kazakhstan



DISASTERS

31,000

Source: IDMC



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

23,000

Sources: ICG and IDMC

The flooding caused by the dam burst in Uzbekistan also triggered around 31,000 new displacements in Maktaaral district in the Kazakh region of Turkistan. A third of the district was under water and people were displaced from five villages that suffered significant damage.²¹⁸ They were displaced for at least two weeks and needed assistance for more than four months.²¹⁹

Clashes between Kazakh and Dungan communities in the southern region of Jambyl triggered more than 23,000 new displacements in February.²²⁰ Most of those who fled were Dungans, a Muslim minority of Chinese origin. About 30 homes and 15 commercial properties were destroyed and around 168 homes were damaged.²²¹

Turkey



DISASTERS

30,000



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

Sources: AFAD (Government), Support to Life (STL) / Hayata Destek and IDMC

A 6.8 magnitude earthquake struck near Sivrice district in Turkey's eastern province of Elazığ on 24 January. It was followed by more than 1,400 aftershocks. The quake mainly affected Sivrice and Maden districts in Elazığ and Pütürge district in Malatya province, triggering more than 25,000 displacements.

Nearly 550 houses collapsed, about 6,250 were severely damaged and 180 had to be demolished.²²² Most of the people displaced in urban areas sought shelter in schools, mosques and sports facilities. Others moved in with relatives, and some households were overcrowded as a result.²²³

A 5.7 magnitude earthquake hit the eastern province of Bingöl on 13 June, destroying 10 homes and triggering around 36 displacements.²²⁴

France



DISASTERS

2,500



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

Source: IDMC

Storm Gloria struck France and Spain early in the year, and France was placed on high alert before it made landfall on 20 January. The storm caused flooding in southern departments triggering more than 2,000 evacuations. Around 1,500 were recorded in Pyrénées-Orientales, 250 in Aude and 250 in Roussillon, where as much as five months' rain fell in 72 hours.²²⁵

United Kingdom



DISASTERS

1,200



CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

-

Sources: Meteorological Office (Government) and IDMC

Two severe storms hit the UK within a week of each other early in the year. Storm Ciara struck on 7 February, and storm Dennis caused flooding that triggered more than 1,000 displacements in the West Midlands, Yorkshire, the Humber and South Wales on 15 February. Eight people were killed, hundreds of homes were inundated, and commercial buildings and other infrastructure suffered widespread damage.²²⁶ Dennis was described as the second-most intense winter storm on record in the North Atlantic.²²⁷

The Meteorological Office reported that February 2020 was the wettest February and the fifth-wettest month on record. More than 3,400 properties were flooded during the month, and insurance losses were estimated at around £300 million (\$385 million).²²⁸ Floods trigger most of displacement recorded in the UK, and many areas are at risk. Climate change, decaying infrastructure and unsustainable urbanisation increase the risk of displacement.²²⁹

In focus:

The impacts of Covid-19 on IDPs

The Covid-19 pandemic that began to emerge at the beginning of 2020 has brought new risks and challenges to populations across the globe. Its consequences for IDPs have been particularly severe, given that displacement carries its own unique risks and they have more difficulty in accessing livelihoods, decent housing and essential services than the general population.²³⁰

The pandemic broke out when a record 50.8 million people were living in internal displacement. Whether they had fled disasters or violence or were sheltering in areas of active conflict, many were already highly vulnerable and had significant needs. Large numbers had been displaced more than once. Covid-19 has added another layer of complexity to highly challenging humanitarian situations.²³¹

It is too early to fully assess the effects of this unprecedented crisis on IDPs' lives, but here we examine six ways in which it has already had an impact, based on examples from displacement situations around the world.



A frontline physician at one of IOM's Health Centers in Cox's Bazar. Along with a team of trained staff, she manages suspected COVID-19 cases at the Isolation Treatment Facility. May 2020, © International Organization for Migration.

The virus has heightened IDPs' vulnerabilities and created new risks

Health

The lack of precise data on IDPs and limited testing capacity in many areas affected by crises have hampered assessments of how displaced people have been affected by the coronavirus, and how this compares with host communities and non-displaced people.

Camp leaders and NGOs in Somalia have reported deaths as a result of Covid-19, but no tests were carried out to confirm this.²³² The same can be said for areas held by Ansar Allah in Yemen, where the de-facto authorities have refused to share any figures on infections.²³³ These examples suggest that Covid-19 is very likely to be going undetected in many displaced populations.

There have been some exceptions. IMPACT's Reach initiative has conducted assessments to examine how vulnerable populations, including IDPs, have been affected.²³⁴ IOM's DTM has also produced updates on the spread and impact

of Covid-19 among IDPs in some countries. It recorded 31 active cases as of 30 June, with seven cases each in South Sudan and Iraq.²³⁵ The figures do not, however, include cases that IOM is unable to detect, those in countries where it is not present or those that go unreported in the media. As such they should be considered significant underestimates.

While it is still early to draw conclusions, there is increasing evidence that IDPs are more vulnerable to Covid-19 than the general population.²³⁶ Estimates indicate that displaced youth make the majority of the internally displaced globally. Some of the challenges brought on by displacement including overcrowded living conditions, poor nutrition and underlying and often untreated health conditions and diseases, would appear to heighten the risk not only of contracting Covid-19 but also suffering severe symptoms among IDPs of all ages.²³⁷

Healthcare provision in many countries mired in crises and hosting large numbers of IDPs was limited even before the pandemic.²³⁸ Many Iraqi IDPs and returnees, for example, were already struggling to access the services they needed.²³⁹ More than 90 per cent of those surveyed in the city of Basra in 2019 said the price of consultations, medicines and treatment was prohibitively expensive.



Food market in Taiz city, Yemen. There has been an increase in food prices since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, July 2020. © Khalid Al-Banna/NRC



Covid-19 hygiene measures at a camp for displaced people in Nigeria, April 2020. © NRC

Poor housing conditions also heighten IDPs' vulnerability to infection.²⁴⁰ Basic prevention measures such as social distancing and frequent handwashing are difficult to adhere to in crowded camps and informal settlements where IDPs often lack access to water and sanitation.²⁴¹ A study in the city of Kaya in Burkina Faso showed that because displaced households have less space per person, 87 per cent said they would be unable to isolate an ill member, compared with 64 per cent of non-displaced households.²⁴²

Almost half of Somalia's confirmed Covid-19 cases as of July were recorded in Banadir region, which hosts about 500,000 IDPs in around 700 informal settlements.²⁴³ Health services in the country's camps have also been scaled back. Some clinics are only seeing between 10 and 15 patients a day, as opposed to 50 before the pandemic.²⁴⁴

It is not only the spread of the virus that poses a health concern. In DRC, which is home to the second highest number of displaced children under five, immunisation has declined significantly in 2020. This is partly the result of delays in families seeking healthcare and partly because services are overstretched as they try to respond to Covid-19.²⁴⁵

In a country that was already struggling with measles and cholera before the pandemic struck, this has heightened the risk of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illnesses, some of which may be more serious for children than the coronavirus.²⁴⁶

IDPs are also at greater risk of anxiety, depression and other forms of distress, and these may be aggravated by the psychological impact of lockdowns and other measures designed to rein in the pandemic.²⁴⁷

Livelihoods

What began as a health emergency quickly also became an economic crisis. Lockdown measures and the economic downturn that has accompanied the spread of Covid-19 around the world have affected the finances of all population segments, and will have significant long-term repercussions for economies at the local, national and global level. The recession is hitting the most vulnerable hardest, and global poverty levels and inequalities are expected to increase further because of the pandemic.²⁴⁸

How many IDPs have lost their livelihoods or some of their income-generating capacity is not known, but it is clear that displaced people tend to depend more on insecure and informal employment than their non-displaced counterparts.²⁴⁹ Nor may IDPs in low and middle-income countries be able to access government safety nets.²⁵⁰

Eighty-nine per cent of respondents in a recent survey to measure the effects of Covid-19 on internally displaced communities in Iraq cited loss of employment and/or livelihoods as the main impact.²⁵¹ Another survey conducted in displacement sites in Mogadishu, Somalia, found that more than 65 per cent identified

inflation as one of the main impacts on their daily lives, second only to school closures.²⁵²

One in four vulnerable families in Yemen have lost all their income since April, and half have lost more than 50 per cent.²⁵³ The need to make a living has also prompted some IDPs in Afghanistan to abandon quarantine measures, exposing themselves to greater risk of infection.²⁵⁴

Movement restrictions and income loss are expected to lead to a global drop of \$109 billion in remittances, which are a vital source of income for many IDPs.²⁵⁵ In Somalia, where around 40 per cent of the population receives remittances from relatives and friends abroad, they may fall by as much as 50 per cent.²⁵⁶

Housing and food security

The economic impacts of the pandemic may also heighten some of IDPs' other vulnerabilities. Those living in rented accommodation are exposed to a heightened risk of eviction. Rent is one of IDP's most significant costs, and many were already struggling to keep up with their payments before the pandemic.²⁵⁷ A rapid needs assessment conducted in Iraq in May found that more than half of the IDP and returnee households living in rented accom-



Food market at IDP camp in Puntland, Somalia, April 2020. © Mukhtar Nuur INRC

modation were worried they would be unable to pay their rent in the next three months.²⁵⁸

Authorities in some countries have taken measures to reduce displaced tenants' risk of secondary displacement. Several areas of Somalia have introduced a temporary moratorium on forced evictions, leading to a decline in their number in May and June compared with previous months.²⁵⁹ This is significant in a country where evictions are the main trigger of secondary displacement.

Food distribution to displaced people in Yemen during the Covid-19 pandemic, April 2020. © Abdullah Hussein/NRC



Economic hardship has also fuelled food insecurity. Organisations that work with homeless children and young people around the world, many of whom are internally displaced, reported that one of the main challenges they faced was finding food and money when the streets were empty and the shops closed.²⁶⁰

The number of people in need of emergency food assistance in Latin America has already nearly tripled since the start of the pandemic.²⁶¹ In the municipality of Soacha on the outskirts of Bogotá in Colombia, which is said to host around 56,000 IDPs, residents began hanging red cloths outside their windows during lockdown to signal that they were in need of food.²⁶² Covid-19 has also led to a drastic devaluation of many currencies, pushing the price of basic items to record levels out of reach of already struggling families.²⁶³

Protection

There is already some evidence that the acute levels of stress caused by Covid-19 and people's associated loss of income has led to an increase in gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence. Many displaced women and girls were already at heightened risk of such violence.²⁶⁴ The Global Protection Cluster reported at the end of June that Covid-19 was

linked to an increase in gender-based violence rates in 90 per cent of the humanitarian field sites in which it was working.²⁶⁵

Fears about the pandemic and associated tensions in displacement sites in Syria have increased the risk of violence against women and girls and their vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse.²⁶⁶ Movement restrictions and lockdown measures in Palestine have also limited life-saving care and support for gender-based violence survivors, despite a reported increase in the frequency and severity of domestic violence as families have been forced to spend more time at home.²⁶⁷

Violence against children, which is also more prevalent among IDPs, may have increased too. Out-of-school children are at higher risk of abuse in the home, and the disruption of their education also undermines their psychosocial wellbeing and potentially harms their long-term employment prospects.²⁶⁸ The economic crisis that Covid-19 has unleashed could also prompt struggling IDPs to adopt negative coping strategies, including child labour or early marriage.²⁶⁹ Around 11.7 million school-age children were living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence at the end of 2019.²⁷⁰

Responses to emerging displacement crises have been impeded

The pandemic has posed challenges in responding to new displacement events. When cyclone Harold hit the Pacific islands of Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga and the Solomon Islands in April, flight restrictions delayed the delivery of humanitarian support to those displaced and led to shortages of safe water at a time when handwashing was so critical.²⁷¹

Movement restrictions similarly hampered the response to a magnitude 5.4 earthquake that struck Zagreb in Croatia on 22 March, and the pandemic meant fewer financial resources and staff were available for it.²⁷² The economic impacts of Covid-19 for a country that relies heavily on tourism will also prevent rapid reconstruction and recovery.²⁷³

The pandemic also affected the response to cyclone Amphan, which triggered the evacuation of around 3.3 million people in India and Bangladesh in May.²⁷⁴ Reports suggest that many people living in exposed areas were reluctant to leave their homes for fear of being infected in evacuation centres, and shelters had to reduce their capacity by 40 per cent to accommodate social-distancing measures.²⁷⁵

Emergency food deliveries in areas affected by conflict in Norte de Santander, Colombia, April 2020. © NRC





Destruction after Cyclone Amphan in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, May 2020. © BDRCS

Given that more disasters will occur in what remains of the year, it is vital that emergency response protocols are adapted to deal with hygiene, social distancing and other measures that reduce the spread of Covid-19. Japan's government issued recommendations to this end in May, backed up by a manual and online videos.²⁷⁶ It urges evacuees to shelter with relatives or neighbours to reduce the number of people in official centres, and encourages local authorities to expand their arrangements with private facilities such as hotels and shopping centres that might serve as shelters or supply depots.²⁷⁷ People evacuated to official centres must wear face masks, use disinfectant and check their temperature regularly.²⁷⁸

The pandemic has affected displacement dynamics

There is evidence that the virus has contributed to new displacement, though its scale is hard to ascertain. At least 10,000 people have fled Covid-19 hotspots in Yemen, either for fear of infection or because of the pandemic's impact on services and the economy.²⁷⁹ Some host communities have exposed IDPs to fake news about the pandemic, making them turn away from their preferred destination.²⁸⁰ There have also been reports from India, Myanmar and the

US of health workers being evicted because their local communities perceived them as a contagion risk.²⁸¹

People who might normally evacuate from areas at risk of disasters have refused to do so for fear of contagion. Communities in the James Bay Coast area of Canada normally move out every year during the flooding season, but many now say they would prefer to stay put and risk the floodwaters rather than Covid-19 infection.²⁸²

Lockdown measures have restricted people's movement, both internally and beyond. The closure of borders between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger caused a significant shift in cross-border displacement patterns. Where people might normally have fled abroad, escalating violence in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions of Niger triggered more internal displacement instead.²⁸³ Nomadic families in Afghanistan have been stuck in Laghman province because of movement restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the virus.²⁸⁴

Return movements have also been affected, in some cases with potentially dangerous consequences. Fear of infection prompted some IDPs in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, to go back to their homes in the English-speaking

regions, even though the situation there is still highly unstable.²⁸⁵ Movement restrictions have also pushed displaced families in Iraq to return to their communities of origin where they can access assistance more easily.²⁸⁶

Conflict displacement has continued as Covid-19 spreads

The UN Secretary General, António Guterres, called for a global ceasefire on 23 March as the scale of the pandemic began to become clear. His intervention raised hopes of a reduction in conflict, violence and displacement, and the creation of corridors for the provision of life-saving aid.²⁸⁷ There were initially promising signs in many of the world's regions, but they were short-lived.

The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen declared a unilateral ceasefire on 9 April that led to a brief pause in its hostilities, but Ansar Allah refused to reciprocate and fighting soon resumed. A separatist group in Cameroon announced a two-week ceasefire in late March, but it failed to stop the fighting.²⁸⁸

Colombia's National Liberation Army (ELN) announced a one-month unilateral ceasefire

on 1 April, but despite calls for an extension it resumed hostilities on 1 May.²⁸⁹ Other armed groups did not respond to ELN's ceasefire and instead have taken advantage of the national lockdown to reorganise and expand their territorial control. Conflict and violence have continued to trigger new displacements across the country as a result.²⁹⁰

Guterres warned in early May that "terrorist groups are taking advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic to intensify their attacks and to challenge state authority" in the Sahel region of Africa.²⁹¹ Evidence has emerged of families being targeted in their homes in northern Nigeria, and the country's human rights commission also reported that the security forces had killed at least 18 people during the enforcement of curfews and other confinement measures.²⁹²

The pandemic also heightened intercommunal tensions in India, where accusations of people not following quarantine protocols led to violence against minority groups and some localised displacement in West Bengal.²⁹³

In short, despite repeated calls for a global ceasefire and the hopes raised, the pandemic has aggravated the situation in many countries where conflict displacement is rife.

Covid-19 hygiene awareness in Afghanistan, March 2020. © Marziyeh Rafiee/NRC





School children continue their learning through radio broadcast in Burkina Faso after schools were closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, August 2020. © Innocent Parkouda INRC

The pandemic has impeded the collection of displacement data

Data on internal displacement is rarely comprehensive, and Covid-19 has made this shortfall more pronounced. Lockdown restrictions and shifting priorities among government and humanitarian agencies have hindered the collection of accurate and timely data on IDPs, making it more difficult to track their movements and needs, and to understand how the pandemic has affected them, their host communities and those working to support them.

We have reported a decrease in new displacements in a number of countries in the first half of 2020 compared with the same period last year, but in some cases this appears to be the result of less data being available rather than a reduction in the number of people fleeing their homes. In Nigeria, for example, we recorded around 32,000, down from 140,000, despite an increase in criminal and intercommunal violence in the north-central and north-western regions of the country.²⁹⁴

Covid-19 has created new barriers to durable solutions

By heightening IDPs' needs and vulnerabilities and delaying responses, the pandemic has impeded efforts to bring displacement to a sustainable end. Durable solutions initiatives in Ethiopia and Somalia have been put on hold, and human and financial resources have been redirected to respond to major floods and a locust infestation.²⁹⁵

Efforts to contain the spread of the virus have also delayed recovery and reconstruction in high-income countries. This has been the case in Australia after the 2019-2020 bushfire season, with implications for people's ability to return to their homes.²⁹⁶ Social-distancing measures also led to the closure of relief centres, isolating many IDPs from social networks that are important not only to their general wellbeing but also their efforts to achieve durable solutions.²⁹⁷

Many IDPs, host communities and those working to support them have shown themselves able to adapt to unusual circumstances and new norms, but there is no doubt that the road ahead will be challenging.²⁹⁸ It is vital to recognise IDPs' unique vulnerabilities and the ways in which the pandemic has affected them disproportionately, and with more time and better data these will become ever clearer.

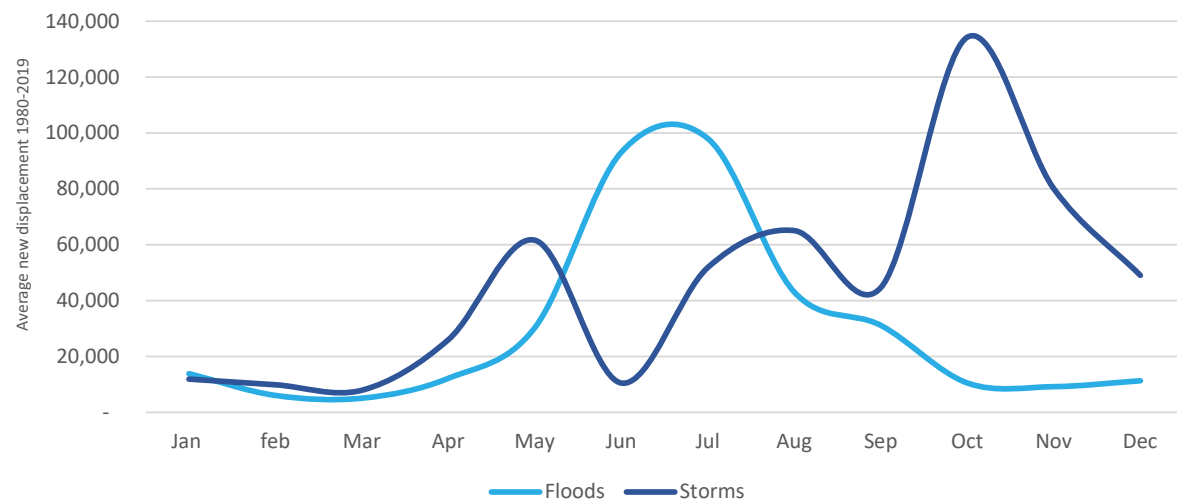
Assessing the seasonal nature of disaster displacement

Floods and storms are the hazards that trigger most internal displacement globally. Using historical data to assess their seasonal nature yields a useful sense of the displacement we might expect across different countries and regions in the future.

We conducted such an assessment for this mid-year update, which reveals that floods and storms are likely to trigger significantly more displacement in the second half of 2020 than we recorded in the first. Using data to understand its variations over space and time informs better decisions to reduce displacement risk.

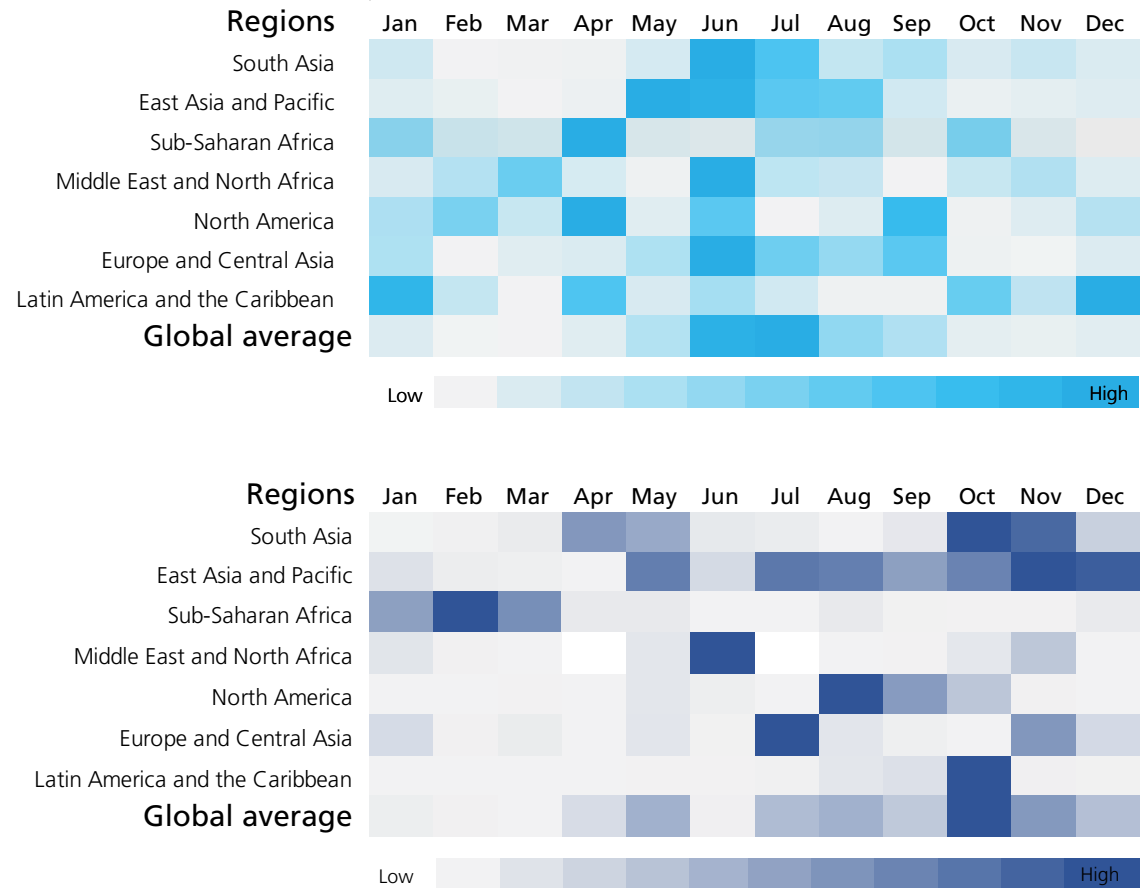
The historical data shows that most flood displacement takes place during the northern hemisphere's summer months. Much of it is the result of the monsoon season in South Asia, which begins in May and runs until September, and the rainy season in highly populated countries such as China and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa in June and July (Figure 2, light blue line).

FIGURE 2: Seasonal flood and storm displacement trends at the global level, 1980-2019



The data also sheds light on displacement associated with three main storm seasons: the cyclone season in South Asia and southern Africa, which tends to take place between March and May; the hurricane season in the Americas, which usually begins in June and lasts until November; and the typhoon season in East Asia and Pacific from September to December (Figure 2, dark blue line). Figure 3 shows how the seasonality of disaster displacement across different regions influences global trends.

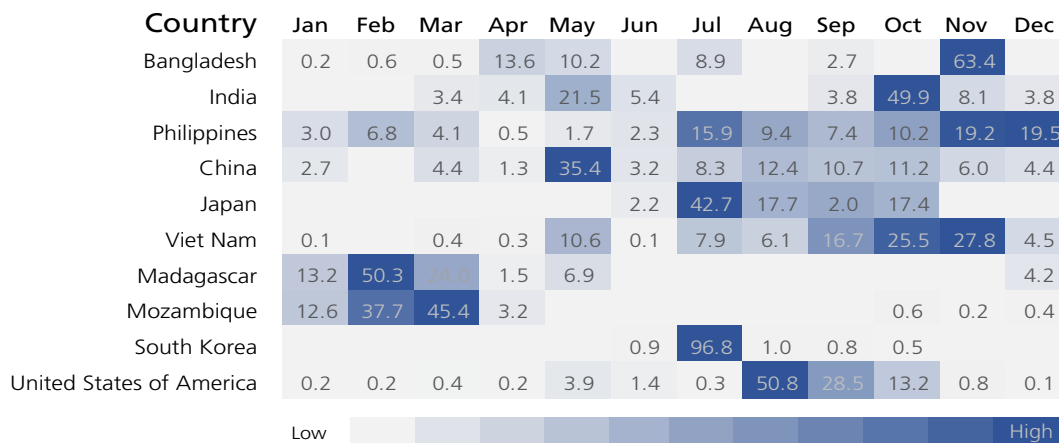
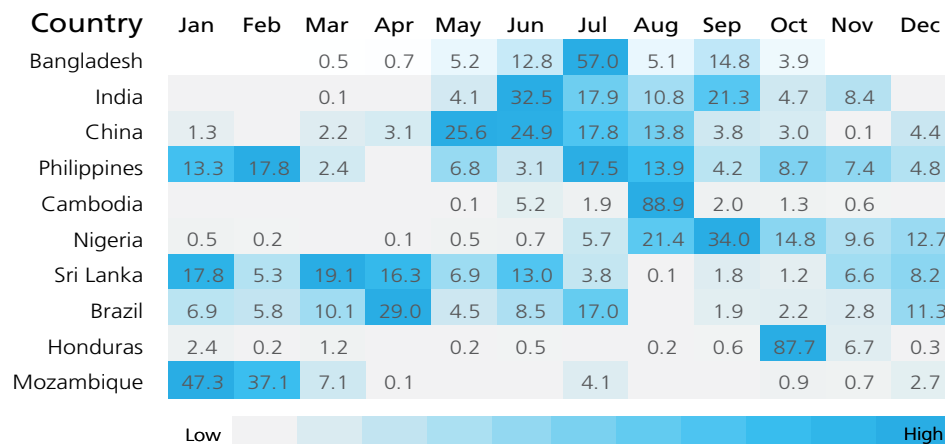
FIGURE 3: Seasonal flood (top) and storm (bottom) displacement trends by region, between 1980 and 2019 Country-



level data reveals that disaster displacement is concentrated in certain months of the year, and that these vary from one country to another (see figure 4).²⁹⁹ In Nigeria, for example, the data reveals that most flood displacement takes place in August and September. In the Philippines, where typhoons trigger a high number of displacements every year, most displacements triggered by storms take place in the months of November and December.

This analysis of historical data gives only a general idea, but it provides useful baseline information that helps to understand when displacement is more likely to happen in different countries and regions. Such information enables disaster management agencies prepare and plan. It also helps to improve measures to prevent displacement and to support recovery that speeds up the achievement of durable solutions. Most disaster displacement that could happen has not happened yet, highlighting the importance of using data for preparedness and risk reduction.

FIGURE 4: The ten countries with the highest average number of new flood displacements (top) and storm displacements (bottom) by month, showing the percentage of annual displacement that occurred each month, between 1980 and 2019



About the methodology

Climate variables such as El Niño and natural decadal or multi-decadal fluctuations affect the occurrence of floods and storms across different regions. There is also evidence to suggest that climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity and duration of hazards and the spatial distribution of their impacts.³⁰⁰ Growing urbanisation and population density also increase the number of people exposed to disasters.³⁰¹

We have only been recording monthly data on disaster displacement since 2013, and such a short timespan does not allow a thorough review of the seasonal nature of the phenomenon. For these reasons, we also used other data sources, including the international EM-DAT database on disasters, UNDRR's DesInventar Sendai and the Global Active Archive of Large Floods Events, for our analysis.³⁰² The datasets use indicators such as destroyed housing that serves as a proxy for displacement, which we then cleaned, standardised and consolidated so they could be harmonised with our own displacement data. This gave us a 40-year dataset covering

the period from 1980 to 2019, which in turn enabled a more accurate analysis of the seasonal nature of disasters and the displacement they trigger.

A similar type of analysis could be conducted for conflict displacement. It may not necessarily correlate with the seasonal nature of natural hazards, but there may be a correlation between disasters, conflict and the displacement they trigger in countries such as Myanmar, Somalia and South Sudan.

Inside of a home after severe floods struck Bangladesh during the last week of June 2020, © IFRC.



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