

THEMATIC SERIES THE INVISIBLE MAJORITY

This thematic series addresses the gap in awareness, data and knowledge about the relationship between internal displacement, cross-border movements and durable solutions.



THE DISPLACEMENT CONTINUUM

The relationship between internal displacement
and cross-border movement in seven countries

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SUMMARY

The twentieth of June is World Refugee Day, dedicated to raising awareness of the situation of refugees. There are nearly twice as many internally displaced people (IDPs) as there are refugees, but there is no International Day of Internal Displacement.

To bring attention to the invisible majority of displaced people, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is investigating the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movement. Based on primary research conducted with refugees, returning refugees and IDPs from Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen, we arrive at the following key findings:

Cross-border movements are often a symptom of the failure to protect and assist IDPs in their country of origin. More than half of the refugees and returning refugees surveyed were internally displaced before leaving their country of origin. Many suffered multiple internal displacements and were unable to find safety in their country of origin.

Restrictive migration policies combine with the high cost of irregular migration to limit opportunities for IDPs seeking refuge abroad. Instead, IDPs are exposed to repeated incidents of internal displacement. Nearly 47 per cent of IDPs surveyed were displaced multiple times. Border closures resulting from COVID-19 act as a further barrier to international protection.

Difficult conditions abroad can push refugees to return prematurely to their countries of origin. Family reunification is the most powerful motivation behind returns, but refugees who are unable to make ends meet in their host country may feel they have no choice but to return to insecurity in their country of origin. Under such circumstances, return assistance runs the risk of encouraging premature returns.

Refugees who return prematurely to their country of origin often find themselves in situations of internal displacement. Over three-quarters of returning refugees surveyed were living outside their area of origin, often because of continued insecurity and housing destruction. Returning refugees and IDPs face similar challenges in terms of accessing durable solutions to their displacement.



INTRODUCTION

“They chased us out in the afternoon, at the time of Asr prayer. We were running until the next morning. They had burned all our possessions and we walked to Khaddamari; there was nothing left. In Khaddamari, again they chased us... Rain was pouring down on us when we ran... We didn’t know where to go to save ourselves... We walked from Khaddamari to Al-Miskin... You can’t walk to N’djamena [Chad], you know?” – Patience, IDP in Nigeria

Like Patience, the majority of people who flee their homes to escape conflict, violence and disasters do not cross an international border. Worldwide, 50.8 million people are living in internal displacement, nearly twice the number of refugees.¹

Despite these large numbers, IDPs are given sparse coverage. To put internal displacement on the agenda, IDMC has been investigating the relationship between internal displacement and cross-border movements.

We do not know how many refugees were internally displaced previously, or how many refugees and migrants become displaced when they return to their country of origin. This is a major knowledge gap which IDMC is seeking to address by painting a more comprehensive picture of the entire displacement continuum through in-depth primary research.² The objectives of this thematic series are to:

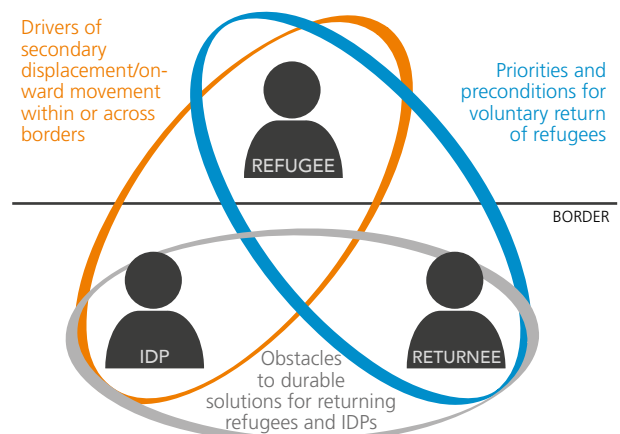
- | Examine drivers of displacement and onward movement within and across borders;
- | Provide a better understanding of priorities and preconditions for voluntary return;
- | Examine obstacles to and opportunities for durable solutions for IDPs and returning refugees.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on the results of seven studies conducted in Iraq, Colombia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen between 2018 and 2019.³ In doing these studies, we conducted more than 1,470 survey interviews with IDPs, refugees and returning refugees, complementing our findings with qualitative data shared by research participants and key informants (see Annex 1).

For the purpose of this report, the term “refugee” is understood to include any person compelled to leave their country of origin because their life, safety or freedom are at risk. This includes not only refugees formally recognised as such, but also people in refugee-like situations, such as asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants

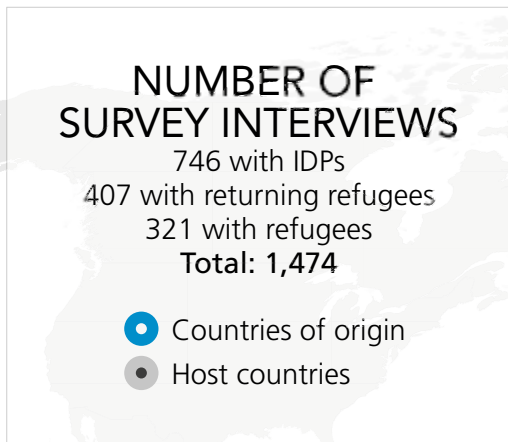
FIGURE 1: Research objectives





Markazi Settlement in Djibouti's port city of Obock, home to some 1,300 refugees from Yemen. © UNHCR/Jordi Matas, November 2018

RESEARCH CONTEXTS



Costa Rica
Colombia

Afghanistan
Sweden
Germany
Greece
Jordan
Iraq
Nigeria
South Sudan

COLOMBIA

5.57 million IDPs.
Data collection: Nov 2018
Total interviews:* 198

After decades of conflict, a peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) was signed in 2016. The country's Victims' Unit is striving to provide reparations for those affected. Other armed groups continue to cause displacement.

"They accused us of collaborating with the guerrillas. Many families had to flee." – IDP in Colombia

NIGERIA

2.58 million IDPs.
Data collection: March 2019
Total interviews: 345

Nigeria's marginalised and impoverished north-east has been the scene of Boko Haram's jihadist insurgency since 2009. The situation is compounded by competition over resources, which, in turn, is aggravated by serious climate variations and the shrinking of Lake Chad.

"We started to hear the sound of guns from all sides and we ran." – Returning refugee in Nigeria

* This includes refugees interviewed in their host countries

IRAQ

1.55 million IDPs.
Data collection: Sept 2018
Total interviews:* 313

The latest wave of displacement began in late 2013 with the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). High numbers of returns were recorded following the group's defeat in December 2017, but many people remain in protracted displacement because of housing destruction and ongoing insecurity, among other factors.

"We are from the Yazidi community. We had to flee our house because of persecution by ISIL."
– IDP in Iraq

AFGHANISTAN

2.99 million IDPs.
Data collection: Sept 2019
Total interviews: 120

Decades of conflict and violence have resulted in repeated waves of displacement. Despite peace talks with the Taliban, the number of new displacements continues to rise. An offshoot of ISIL is exacerbating insecurity, but millions of people have returned from abroad.

"There is still a war going on between the government and the Taliban in our area. It is not possible for us to return to our village."
– IDP in Afghanistan

MYANMAR

457,000 IDPs.
Data collection: May 2019
Total interviews:* 163

Most of the attention is on the Rohingya in Rakhine state, but the conflict in the south-east between Myanmar's army and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is among the world's longest ongoing ethnic conflicts. About 162,000 people remain displaced in the region.

"Soldiers came to our village, destroyed rice crops and killed our animals. Because of this we ran into the forest."
– IDP in Myanmar

SOUTH SUDAN

1.35 million IDPs.
Data collection: July 2019
Total interviews: 204

There is hope that the formation of a transitional government of national unity in February 2020 will bring peace to the world's youngest country, which has been in conflict since late 2013. A previous peace agreement collapsed, however, and many fear a repeated wave of displacement.

"We were running because of the violence that killed innocent children and destroyed our property."
– IDP in South Sudan

YEMEN

3.63 million IDPs.
Data collection: Aug-Sept 2019
Total interviews:* 147

The country has been described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Conflict escalated in 2015 after a Saudi-led coalition launched a military intervention in response to the widespread territorial gains of Ansar Allah, known as the Houthi movement.

"Bullets and shells were flying everywhere and a number of homes were hit. We were frightened."
– IDP in Yemen



FROM INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT TO CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENTS

Drivers of onward movement

FIGURE 2: Daniela's displacements



Daniela fled her home in Colombia's department of Antioquia when her brother was killed by the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) in 1991. She sought refuge in the city of Medellín. Two decades later, she decided to apply for property restitution.

Soon after initiating the process to reclaim her land, she started receiving threatening phone calls. Her land, it emerged, was now in the hands of a powerful paramilitary group. Daniela entered a national protection programme and was relocated to Valle del Cauca. There, she suffered a first assassination attempt. She moved to Nariño. A relative was murdered, and a photo sent to her new address. She fled once more, this time to Quindío. After receiving credible warnings that her bodyguard was conspiring with the paramilitaries, she finally decided to leave the country. "I didn't want to leave Colombia. I love my country," Daniela said.

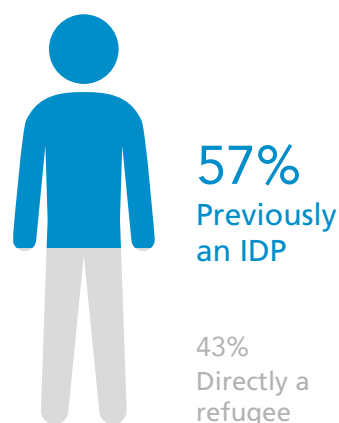
Like Daniela, many refugees cross borders only as a last resort after failing to find safety in their country of origin.

Fifty-seven per cent of refugees and returning refugees surveyed were internally displaced before leaving their country of origin, and a third suffered various internal displacements before crossing the border.

Martín fled to Bogotá after being extorted by the FARC, but the group soon made it clear he would find no safety in Colombia: "They told me that no matter which part of the country I was in, they would kill me if I refused to cooperate," he said. "I wanted to try to live in my country, but when I saw this wouldn't be possible, I made the decision to leave."

The same pattern is repeated elsewhere. Favor sought refuge in Bentiu's Protection of Civilian site (POC) when conflict broke out in South Sudan in 2013. She did not feel safe in the POC, however, and decided to cross the border into neighbouring Sudan. Zain, in Iraq, tried to flee ISIL four times within the country, but eventually crossed the border into Syria when the group took control of the whole area.

FIGURE 3: Prior internal displacement among refugees and returning refugees surveyed



Cross-border movements are often understood in terms of push and pull factors. The prospect of better wages, higher standards of living and increased opportunities for employment is commonly thought to influence human mobility.⁴ This idea has been picked up by sensationalist

media and far-right politicians, who portray refugees and asylum seekers as “economic migrants”.⁵ As our findings show, however, forced migrants face only the relentless push of conflict, violence and persecution. People often have no choice but to seek safety abroad.

SPOTLIGHT

INTERNAL FLIGHT ALTERNATIVES

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) emphasised in 1979 that “fear of being persecuted need not always extend to the whole territory of the refugee’s country of nationality.”⁶ This has resulted in the emergence of the concept of “internal flight alternatives”, according to which an asylum seeker may be refused international protection if they could have found safety in another part of their country of origin.

The concept features in the EU’s Qualification Directive.⁷ At least 15 EU member states had used this concept to deny protection to Iraqi asylum seekers by 2017.⁸ At least ten countries in Western Europe have carried out deportations to Afghanistan, where the cumulative effects of displacement and return are undermining prospects for durable solutions.⁹

UNHCR has argued that people denied asylum on the basis of internal flight alternatives should not be confronted with undue hardship in their country of origin, including the inability to earn a living or having to relocate to a slum.¹⁰ This argument should prevent internal displacement being used as a basis to deny international protection. In practice, it does not. Many host states seem to consider internal displacement to be a reasonable alternative to refugee status. The policy, as a result, “has been criticised as simply transforming refugees into internally displaced persons.”¹¹

A new proposal of the European Commission for a Qualification Regulation is expected to replace the existing qualification directive. The draft text of the regulation emphasises that the risk of undue hardship should be considered in the assessment.¹² This, it is hoped, may offer further protection against internal displacement.

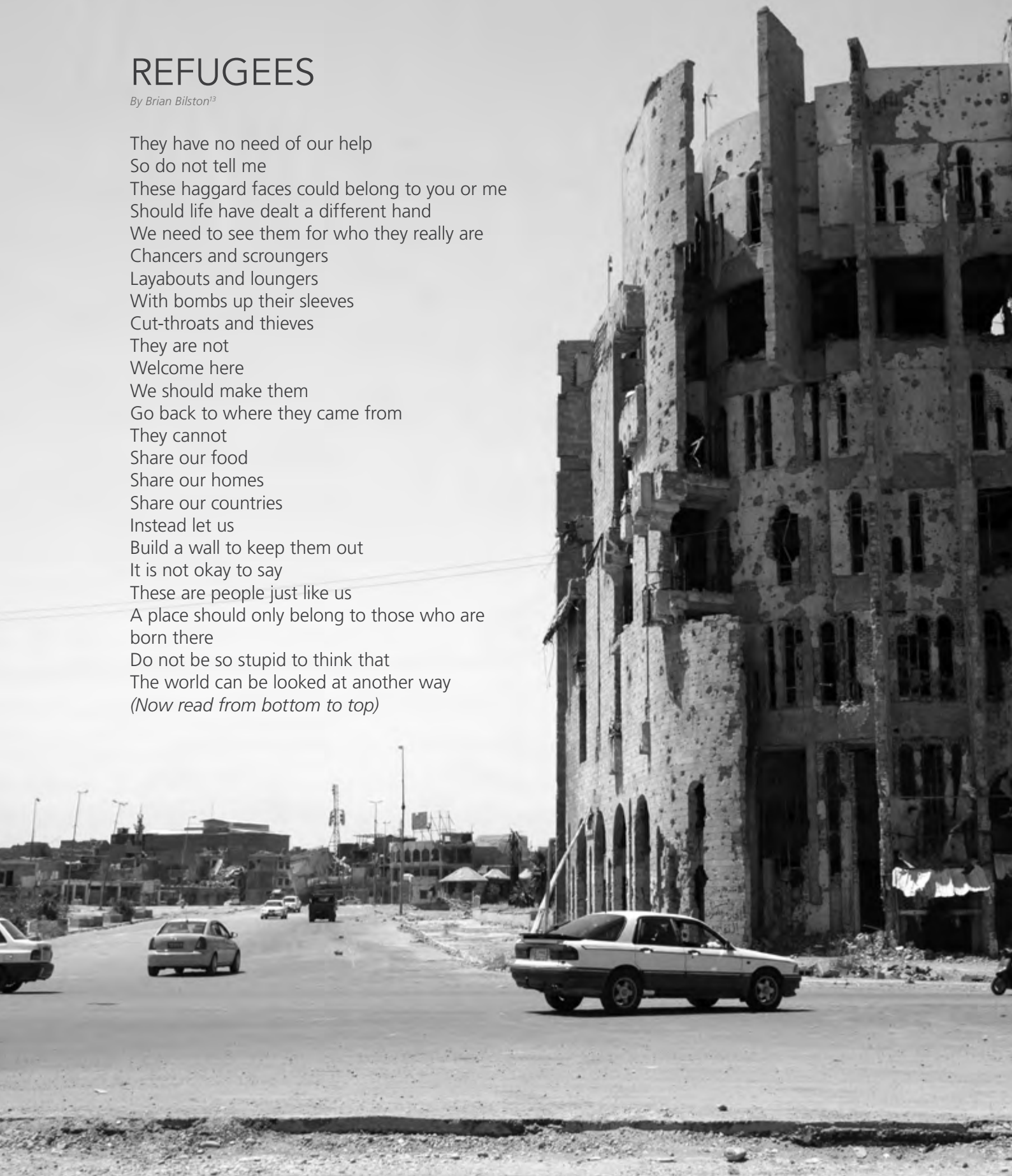


An Afghan family, just returned from 35 years in Pakistan, fled again after fighting broke out near their home, having already settled in the Chahar Dara district of Kunduz. Photo: NRC/Enayatullah Azad, January 2019

REFUGEES

By Brian Bilston¹³

They have no need of our help
So do not tell me
These haggard faces could belong to you or me
Should life have dealt a different hand
We need to see them for who they really are
Chancers and scroungers
Layabouts and loungers
With bombs up their sleeves
Cut-throats and thieves
They are not
Welcome here
We should make them
Go back to where they came from
They cannot
Share our food
Share our homes
Share our countries
Instead let us
Build a wall to keep them out
It is not okay to say
These are people just like us
A place should only belong to those who are
born there
Do not be so stupid to think that
The world can be looked at another way
(Now read from bottom to top)



BARRIERS TO ONWARD MOVEMENT

The majority of people affected by conflict, violence and disasters remain inside their country of origin. Those who seek refuge abroad, however, are not always able to do so. Just over half of IDPs surveyed cited cost as a barrier to their ability to cross a border. Having suffered financial losses during their initial displacement, many IDPs are unable to afford further travel. “I lost everything that could have earned me money for travelling,” said Joyce in South Sudan.

Restrictive migration policies contribute to the cost of cross-border movement, forcing those in need of international protection to resort to clandestine modes of migration. One Yemeni family interviewed in Berlin spent \$26,000 getting to Europe, flying first from Yemen to Algeria before engaging smugglers to help them travel onwards to Morocco, Spain and eventually Germany. Clearly, this would be unaffordable for a majority of Yemenis, more than 80 per cent of whom live in poverty.¹⁴

Displaced people who are unable to cross borders are likely to experience repeated displacement: Nearly 47 per cent of all IDPs surveyed were displaced various times. Repeated displacement was particularly high among IDPs surveyed in south-east Myanmar, 77 per cent of whom had been displaced more than three times. “We run, we come back, we run, we come back. We are very used to running in the midst of gunshots,” said Thaw Thi.

The inability to seek refuge abroad can put IDPs’ lives at risk. More than 12,000 Yemeni civilians have been killed since the start of the conflict, including an unknown number of IDPs.¹⁵ IDPs are also exposed to food insecurity: About 39 per cent of IDPs surveyed indicated that they experienced hunger various times per week, and 62 per cent said it was hard to survive on their current income. Parts of South Sudan were affected by famine in 2017, and the World Food Programme has warned that the food security outlook is still dire.¹⁶ Last year, a survey in South Sudan’s Renk county found that 24 per cent of displaced children six months to 59 months old were suffering from global acute malnutrition.¹⁷



A displaced man sits inside a makeshift tent at a displacement site in the Abs district of Hajjah governorate. Photo © UNHCR/Ibrahim Al-Ja'adi, May 2019

SPOTLIGHT

COVID-19, A NEW BARRIER TO INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Border closures as a result of Covid-19 have prevented people from seeking international protection. This could increase internal displacement as people struggle to find safety inside their country of origin. Travel restrictions worldwide increased between March and May 2020.¹⁸ Globally, 36 per cent of all points of entry assessed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and 48 per cent of land border crossings were closed as of 30 April 2020.¹⁹ Asylum applications in the EU dropped by almost half between February and March 2020 as a result of border closures.²⁰

South Sudanese who attempted to enter Uganda after the country's borders were closed have been returned to South Sudan, where they are exposed to the risk of repeated displacement.²¹ Some Venezuelans in Colombia, conversely, are reported to be returning to Venezuela because of income losses they suffered as a result of measures to curb the pandemic; upon their return, many are likely to find themselves in situations of internal displacement.²² Many Afghans who have lost their jobs because of Covid-19 are also returning from Iran.²³



Food voucher distributions in Sana'a, done with precautionary measures to prevent COVID-19. Photo: Nasser Abdulkareem/NRC, April 2020

RETURNS TO INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

INTERNAL RETURNS

Nearly half of all IDPs surveyed indicated that they intended to return to their area of origin, although fewer than a quarter of these were planning to return within the next month.

Security improvements, a desire to reclaim their property and rebuild their livelihoods were the principal motivations for IDPs. “If my village were safe now, I would pack and go back there immediately,” said Daniel, in Nigeria. “I feel much freer in my village. I have my farmland, I have an occupation, and I go fishing.”

Ongoing conflict and violence, however, are a core barrier to return. IDPs attributed a mean safety score of 6.5/10 to their host communities, but safety in their areas of origin was rated only 3.1/10 (see figure 4). “I want to go back to my old village, but I’m afraid of military troops and I’m afraid of landmines,” said Tee Ser Paw in Myanmar.

MOTIVATIONS FOR RETURN

Only 10 per cent of refugees surveyed for this study sought to return to their country of origin (see figure 5). Large numbers of refugees worldwide, however, go back against their will. About a quarter of returning refugees surveyed considered their return to have been involuntary. Cameroon forcibly sent some 100,000 refugees back to Nigeria in 2017; the previous year, deportation threats and police abuses in Pakistan pushed out around 365,000 registered Afghan refugees and an additional 200,000 undocumented Afghans.²⁴ More than 1,700 Colombians were deported from Venezuela in 2015, and an additional 22,000 returned “voluntarily”, fearing deportation and abuse.²⁵

Even among those who return voluntarily to their country of origin, returns are rarely free of coercion. UNHCR acknowledges in its handbook on voluntary repatriation that “the issue of ‘voluntariness’ as implying an absence of any physical, psychological, or material

FIGURE 4: IDPs’ perception of security (score from 1 to 10, with 10 being very safe)

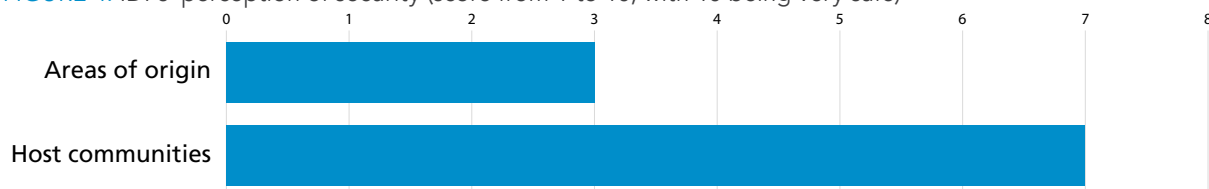
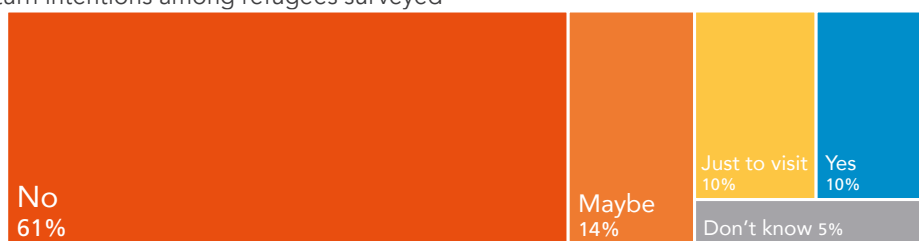


FIGURE 5: Return intentions among refugees surveyed





An Afghan family departed from Iran makes their way to the border town of Zaranj, Nimroz province

pressure is, however, often clouded by the fact that for many refugees a decision to return is dictated by a combination of pressures due to political factors, security problems or material needs.”²⁶

| Negative push-factors

Positive pull-factors in their country of origin can encourage refugees to return, but push-factors in the host country are often the precipitating factor behind that decision.²⁷ Some South Sudanese refugees, for example, returned to South Sudan because of the anti-government protests in Sudan. “I wouldn’t have returned if it hadn’t been for the threats to South Sudanese people that arose from the Sudanese protests,” said Ibrahim. “The situation here is still far from normal.”

The economic and political crisis in Venezuela has prompted more than 300,000 Colombian refugees to go back to Colombia since 2010.²⁸ After many years struggling to make ends meet in Costa Rica, Antonella is also considering returning to Colombia. “Life has got really difficult for us here,” she said. Iraqis in Jordan, unable to work, face a similar dilemma. “It’s a gamble, security versus financial stability,” said a community leader. “In Iraq there’s no security, but there’s financial stability to support your future. In Jordan, it’s the opposite.”

Difficult living conditions in displacement are another reason why refugees opt to return to their country of origin. “The situation in the camp was very bad,” said Dilshad, who had fled from Iraq to a camp in Syria. “We were living inside a prison. The camp officials treated us badly. We had to have many demonstrations to demand our return to Iraq because of the poor living conditions inside the camp.” Grace had similarly petitioned to return to Nigeria from Cameroon, where conditions were dire. “We stayed in an empty field. [...] We were almost always starving,” she said. “Those of us who could afford it bought SIM cards and called home and told them about the situation we were in. Somehow the complaints were heard, and the government brought us home.”

For those who have attempted to seek international protection in Europe, disheartening delays in asylum processing can also encourage returns. “I lived in an apartment in a small village in Norway, two and a half hours outside of Bergen,” said Karam, who chose to return to Iraq. “I was living with other asylum seekers waiting for their interviews. I wasn’t working, just waiting for the interview for eleven months, but nobody called me.” Nearly half a million cases were awaiting a decision of first instance as of March 2020, over half of which had been pending for more than six months.²⁹

| Negative pull-factors

Alongside push-factors from the host country, UNHCR acknowledges the existence of negative pull-factors, such as threats to property in the country of origin.³⁰ This has been the case for refugees from Myanmar in Thailand: In addition to the negative push-factor of decreasing humanitarian assistance in camps, many refugees are afraid of losing their land if they do not return to their country. “Lands abandoned for many years can be taken by either the Karen National Union or the government,” said a member of the Karen Refugee Committee.

Misperceptions of security in refugees’ countries of origin can also encourage returns. “We came back to South Sudan after we heard rumours that the security situation in South Sudan was stable,” said Rita, “but to our surprise when we reached Juba we found that security was not good, so we had to go to a protection of civilian site for safety.” Likewise, Isabella was surprised by conditions in Colombia when she returned from Argentina. “I thought things were a little better,” she said. “When you’re abroad you hear about the peace agreement, but actually a lot is still happening.”

| Positive pull-factors

Not all pull-factors are negative, of course. Among refugees surveyed, family reunification was the most important motivation for those considering going back to their country of origin: Nearly 32 per cent of refugees said this would be their main reason, compared with less than 8 per cent for whom difficult living conditions were the deciding factor (see figure 6). “My mother used to cry every day on the phone,” said Amjed, who returned to Iraq to be with his family.

Others hope to return to support development and reconstruction in their country. “If we’re not going to fix it then who will?,” questioned one Yemeni refugee in Germany. The potential of returnee populations to support development in their countries of origin has been widely demonstrated, in particular when they have acquired savings and skills during their displacement.³¹

FIGURE 6: Main motivation for return among refugees who do or may wish to return



SPOTLIGHT

RETURN ASSISTANCE, A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE PULL-FACTOR?

A number of programmes cover travel costs and provide cash assistance or in-kind reintegration support, such as vocational training and start-up funding, to prospective returnees. For those who are struggling to make ends meet in their host country, this can appear tempting even if insecurity persists in their country of origin. Many refugees returning to Somalia from Kenya, for example, are motivated by the high levels of debt they have accrued in displacement.³²

Karam, from Iraq, said delays in his asylum application combined with family pressure influenced his return, but the promise of \$3,000 and a free plane ticket also helped to sway his decision. Michelle returned to Colombia from Ecuador after being promised free transportation, cash assistance, housing assistance, support for income generation and financial compensation for her displacement. The transport ended up being free,

but it took her nearly six months to get the cash assistance. Three years later, no other support had arrived. “They promised me many things and didn’t keep their promises,” she said. She has been unable to go back to her former home and continues to feel unsafe.

Neither is return assistance always sufficient for those who receive it. The amounts often pale in comparison with the thousands, or even tens of thousands of dollars, spent to finance their journeys.³³ The United Kingdom’s Assisted Voluntary Return programme has offered a cash grant of up to US\$3,100 for families to return to Afghanistan.³⁴ Travel from Afghanistan to Europe, however, can cost upward of US\$25,000.³⁵ Registered refugees who return to Afghanistan from neighbouring Pakistan or Iran receive repatriation cash grants of about US\$200 per person.³⁶

As one study noted, “there is a rather fine line between facilitating voluntary return and encouraging it. The latter at times appears to run the risk of being perceived as shading towards involuntary return.”³⁷ Voluntary or not, returns prompted by the promise of financial support are often premature, and can result in further displacement.

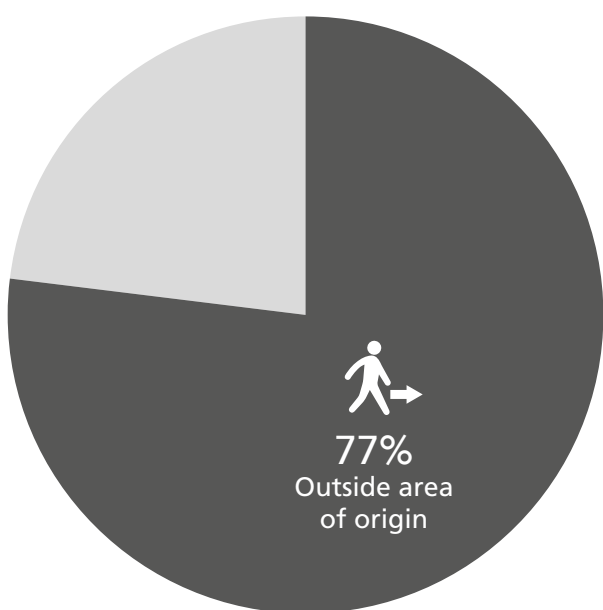


Tabakika registration centre at Chios island, Greece. Photo: Tiril Skarstein, NRC

PREMATURE AND UNSUSTAINABLE RETURNS

Many returning refugees become internally displaced again after their arrival in their country of origin.³⁸ Nearly 77 per cent of all returning refugees surveyed were not living in their area of origin at the time of this research. “We’re unable to go back home for fear that the war might break out again,” said Patrick in South Sudan.

FIGURE 7: Current location of returnees surveyed



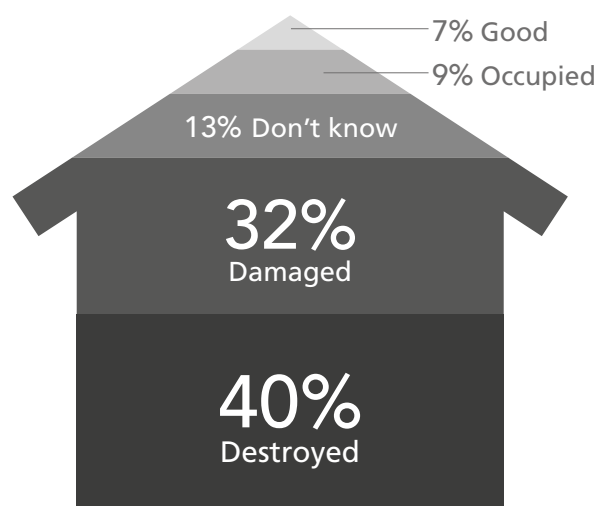
I Obstacles to return

Like Patrick, many returning refugees are unable to go back to their former homes because of continuing insecurity. Others are forced to flee again upon their return. Dadvar went back to Afghanistan in 2010 and settled in his area of origin, but last year was displaced to a settlement for IDPs. “I am not living in Sherzad district anymore because of the war between the Taliban and Islamic State,” he said. Miguel settled in a new city after returning to Colombia because of continued insecurity in his village of origin. Despite his attempts to maintain a low profile, he received new threats from the ELN and was forced to move again.

Lack of housing is another important barrier to return: 40 per cent of returning refugees who owned property prior to their displacement said it had since been destroyed, and an additional 32 per cent said their

property had been damaged (see figure 8). “My house is destroyed and there is nowhere to go back to,” said Tahid in Iraq. In Nigeria, Grace is facing a similar challenge: “We don’t have shelter, our homes were burned down. If we go back now, we will have nowhere to stay.”

FIGURE 8: Condition of returnees’ former property



I Obstacles to durable solutions

As a result of these barriers to return, some returning refugees find themselves living alongside IDPs. In Iraq, we interviewed 15 returning refugees in Hammam Al-Alil IDP camp. “After I returned to Iraq, I found that my house was destroyed, so I had to go to Hamam Al-Alil,” Hacen said. In South Sudan, we spoke to 40 people living in protection of civilian sites after returning from abroad.

Many other returning refugees find themselves living in situations of acute vulnerability in informal settlements in urban areas, confronted with tenure insecurity, poor access to services and other challenges common to the urban poor.³⁹ The absorption capacity of host communities is often stretched, undermining prospects for durable solutions. “You can see the pressure on local host communities,” said an official of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation in Afghanistan. “If you visited the schools six or seven years ago, you would find 40 students in a class, but after these massive returns you see 70 to 80.”

Returnees also face challenges re-establishing their livelihoods. Hala and her husband used to own a shop in



Juba protection of civilians site, South Sudan, 2018. Photo: Ingrid Prestetun/NRC

Mosul, but it was destroyed in the battle against ISIL. Her husband passed away, and she now depends on her son's income as a taxi driver. Nearly 83 per cent of returning refugees surveyed were finding it difficult or impossible to survive on their current income. Close to 30 per cent of them said they went hungry several times a week.

They may also face barriers in terms of access to services. Returning refugees in Myanmar noted that the education they received in refugee camps in Thailand is not recognised in their country of origin. Similar challenges were reported elsewhere. Carla's son, who studied civil engineering in Venezuela, now works as a handyman in Colombia.

Lack of documentation compounds the problem, affecting freedom of movement, access to services and employment rights. "When we were fleeing, we didn't have the mind to look for an identification card," said Patience in Nigeria.

SIX LESSONS LEARNED

Just as IDPs risk becoming refugees in the absence of progress towards durable solutions, today's returning refugees run the risk of becoming tomorrow's IDPs. Based on the findings of studies conducted in Iraq, Colombia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen, we propose the following six lessons learned.⁴⁰

- 1. Cross-border movements are often a symptom of the failure to protect and assist IDPs in their country of origin.** Only by addressing causes and drivers of internal displacement will we prevent further refugee flows. This will require investing in peacebuilding and socioeconomic development in countries affected by conflict and violence.
- 2. Restrictive migration policies combine with the financial cost of irregular migration to prevent IDPs from seeking refuge abroad.** Overcoming these barriers to cross-border movement through alternative pathways to international protection could reduce the risk of repeated displacement, which exacerbates vulnerability and undermines prospects for durable solutions.
- 3. Internal displacement is not a reasonable alternative to international protection.** Denial of asylum on the basis on internal flight alternatives is contributing to internal displacement. Countries should take into consideration UNHCR's concept of undue hardship when considering whether asylum seekers could have been reasonably expected to seek protection elsewhere in their country of origin.⁴¹
- 4. Refugees' basic needs should be met to prevent premature and unsustainable returns.** This includes access to basic services, livelihoods and freedom of movement as recognised in the Global Compact on Refugees. In the absence of opportunities for income generation, refugees require additional humanitarian assistance, although global budgets for that are already overstretched.
- 5. Promises of return assistance should facilitate, not encourage return.** There is a risk that economically vulnerable refugees may be convinced to return to their country of origin by available cash grants. Yet premature returns are likely to result in further internal displacement. Meagre financial support does not serve, as a standalone measure, to ensure durable solutions.
- 6. Returning refugees and internally displaced people face similar obstacles to durable solutions.** A holistic response is needed to address the vulnerabilities of communities affected by displacement irrespective of their displacement status. Planning and policy for IDPs should be integrated with that for returning refugees.

ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

MIXED METHODS

A survey tool was designed to be replicated across study locations, incorporating questions for IDPs, returning refugees and refugees. The overall structure of the survey was as follows:

- | Demographics: personal characteristics of the respondent, such as age, education, religion and marital status.
- | Displacement: overview of why and when people were displaced, and the journeys they have undertaken.
- | Host conditions: conditions in the host community, including living conditions, economic opportunities and security.
- | Origin conditions: conditions in the community of origin, including living conditions, economic opportunities and security.
- | Search for solutions: barriers and opportunities faced in terms of reaching durable solutions, including personal aspirations and access to mechanisms for property restitution.

The survey was conducted by local enumerators on mobile phones using KoboToolbox, developed by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative for research in challenging environments, including humanitarian crises. Prior to the data collection, enumerators were trained on the objectives and wording of the survey, use of the software and qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques.

In addition to survey responses, researchers recorded a wealth of qualitative information from the stories shared by respondents. The respondent ID was recorded in the notes to ensure that additional qualitative information could be associated with survey responses. This was complemented by key informant interviews conducted with community leaders, local authorities, civil society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders.

SAMPLING

Given that research was expected to take place with IDPs, returning refugees and refugees in cities, rural



An interview in Borno State, Nigeria. Photo: Micah Mendie, 2019

areas and camps in diverse host countries and countries of origin, we opted against probability sampling methods in favour of convenience sampling.

To identify our respondents, we drew upon the local knowledge and social networks of researchers, partners and participants. For example, in Costa Rica, we cooperated with a local NGO to identify Colombian refugees and asylum seekers. In Sweden, neighbourhoods known to have a high Iraqi population were identified, alongside amenities such as Middle Eastern grocery stores. In Nigeria, our consultant travelled to IDP camps and informal settlements with logistical support from NRC.

The survey data collected in these different settings was compiled to provide descriptive statistics. Because convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method, no statistically valid inferences can be drawn from our findings: Our studies do not claim to be representative. The data provides useful insight, however, into the experiences and aspirations of participants, offering valuable insight into attitudes and aspirations along the displacement continuum. The majority of the report's findings are based on the qualitative portion of the interviews, which provided a richness of detail not captured in the survey. All names in the report have been changed.

ENDNOTES

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