



# India



## Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 500,000
Percentage of total population	Undetermined
Start of current displacement situation	1947
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	Undetermined
New displacement	33,000

Situations of internal displacement were ongoing in 2009 in a number of India’s regions, with each situation having different causes and outcomes for those affected. There are no comprehensive sources of figures across the country; based on the number of IDPs living in camp-like settings and those believed to have returned but not to have found durable solutions, there are at least 500,000 conflict-induced IDPs in India. In addition, an unknown number are dispersed in urban areas or have fled to other states where they are no longer traceable.

This figure includes those people displaced since 1990 by separatist violence targeting the Hindu minority in Jammu and Kashmir, and by shelling between Indian and Pakistani forces along Kashmir’s “line of control”; those displaced in states of the north-east by conflicts ongoing since 1947 between state and ethnic or secessionist groups, and by inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic violence; victims of the conflict between Naxalite insurgents and government security forces and armed vigilantes in Chhattisgarh State; victims of communal violence between the majority Hindu populations in Gujarat and Orissa States and the States’ respective Muslim and Christian minorities; and people displaced in West Bengal by violence related to a proposed development project. In 2009, people were newly displaced by armed conflict and violence in the north-east (Manipur, Assam, and Mizoram States) and in Orissa State.

India’s IDPs share urgent protection concerns, particularly relating to access to basic necessities of life such as food, clean water, shelter and health care. Physical security remains a concern for some of the newly displaced groups. Those in protracted situations still struggle to access education, housing and livelihoods.

The various groups also face unique challenges. Tribal IDPs in camps in Chhattisgarh face the risk of attacks by both government forces and Naxalite insurgents. Muslim IDPs in Gujarat continue to endure very poor living conditions and they are increasingly at risk of losing their original homes and land, which have been taken over by Hindu extremist groups. Christian IDPs in Orissa risk being forced to convert to Hinduism if they return to their homes. Displaced women in Assam and Manipur have increasingly been forced into prostitution in order to support their families in the absence of husbands who have left in search of work.

Conflict-induced IDPs enjoy no recognition under India’s national laws. The responsibility to protect them is generally left to state authorities, who are often unaware of their rights or reluctant to offer support, particularly in cases where they played a role in causing the displacement. Where IDPs have no recognised status, they have had difficulties asserting their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights; for example, after living in displacement for more than 15 years, displaced Kashmiri Pandit families risk losing their cultural identity, while the government refers to them as “migrants”.

Prospects for durable solutions for the various displaced groups have been limited by barriers to their return home. In the absence of a national IDP policy, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country have not been supported, with governments of receiving states generally unwilling to have IDPs settle there permanently. For example, officials in Andhra Pradesh have forced IDPs to return to Chhattisgarh State, and the Tripura State government continues to promote the return of Bru IDPs to Mizoram, although the Mizoram State government is opposed.

As of 2009, there was no ministry mandated with IDP protection, but some national agencies and human rights bodies advocated on behalf of people internally displaced by conflicts. For example, in December the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights described the living conditions of IDPs, in particular those from Chhattisgarh living in Andhra Pradesh, as an issue of national concern. It called on the state authorities to provide for their basic needs.

Nonetheless, a national legislative framework is needed to enable the recognition and protection of conflict-induced IDPs in India, including a national agency to oversee the response and ensure that it is consistent across the country. The international response has been limited, with only a few agencies such as Médecins Sans Frontières and the ICRC providing protection and assistance to some IDPs; there is no overall international agency coordinating the response. To enable a fuller response, the government would have to allow more international NGOs to work with IDPs, and explore ways of engaging UN agencies mandated with IDP protection.