



India

Quick facts

Number of IDPs	At least 500,000
Start of current displacement situation	1947 (North-East states); 1990 (Jammu and Kashmir); 2002 (Gujarat); 2005 (Chhattisgarh); 2007 (West Bengal); 2008 (Orissa)
New displacement in 2008	Over 220,000 reported in Assam and Orissa, otherwise undetermined
Returns in 2008	Undetermined
Causes of displacement	Internal and international armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations
Human development index	132

Situations of displacement were ongoing in 2008 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 in gathered 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 have fled to urban areas or to other states where they are no longer traceable.

This figure includes 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 inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic violence; victims of the conflict between Naxalite insurgents and government security forces and armed vigilantes in Chhattisgarh state, and of communal violence in Gujarat and Orissa states between the majority Hindu populations and Muslim and Christian minorities; and people displaced in West Bengal by violence related to a proposed development project.

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, while access to education, property, livelihoods and work are major concerns among those in protracted situations.

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 their status is not recognised IDPs can struggle to assert their civil and political rights; for example, after living in displacement for more than 15 years, displaced Kashmiri Pandit families risk losing their cultural identity and their status is unrecognised by the government, which 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 resettlement in a third area have not been supported, with governments of states generally unwilling to have IDPs resettle 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 from Mizoram, although the Mizoram state government is opposed.

As of 2008 there were no ministries mandated with IDP protection, but the advocacy of some national agencies and human rights bodies on conflict-induced displacement had some impact during the year. In Tripura, a visit by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights led to an investigation into why 7,000 Bru children in camps had not been included in the issuing of ration cards. The Supreme Court of India ordered the National Human Rights Commission to investigate the vigilante force that had displaced people in Chhattisgarh state, and urged the Orissa government to step down if it remains unable to protect Christians fleeing their homes.

Nonetheless a national legislative framework is needed to enable the recognition and protection of conflict-induced IDPs in India, and a national agency must be created 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.