

Global Estimates 2015: People displaced by disasters

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19.3 million people newly displaced by disasters in 2014

Latest figures from IDMC estimate that more than 19.3 million people were forced to flee their homes by disasters in 100 countries in 2014. Hundreds of thousands more are still displaced following disasters in previous years.

Since 2008, an average of 26.4 million people per year have been displaced from their homes by disasters brought on by natural hazards. This is *the equivalent to one person being displaced every second*. The number and scale of huge disasters creates significant fluctuation from year to year in the total number of people displaced, while the trend over decades is on the rise.

The time is opportune for displacement to be better addressed in major global policy agenda and their implementation in the post-2015 period. A comprehensive approach to displacement will help to forge strong links and continuity between these initiatives.

Our report draws on information from a wide range of sources, including governments, UN and international organisations, NGOs and media, to provide up-to-date statistics on the incidence of displacement caused by disasters associated with rapid-onset geophysical and weather-related hazards such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and storms.

The key findings and messages from the report are summarised below.

The global picture: scale, patterns and trends

Displacement by hazard type

- 17.5 million people were displaced by disasters brought on by weather-related hazards in 2014, and 1.7 million by geophysical hazards.
- An average of 22.5 million people have been displaced each year by climate or weather-related disasters in the last seven years - equivalent to 62,000 people every day.
- The largest increases in displacement are related to weather and climate-related hazards, and floods in particular.
- Climate change, in tandem with people's increasing exposure and vulnerability, is expected to magnify this trend, as extreme weather events become more frequent and intense in the coming decades.

Displacement trend from 1970 to 2014

- Latest historical models suggest that even after adjusting for population growth, the likelihood of being displaced by a disaster today is 60% higher than it was four decades ago.

Displacement by region and country

- Asia is home to 60% of the world's population, but accounted for 87% of the people displaced by disasters worldwide in 2014.
 - 16.7 million people were forced to flee their homes in the region.
 - 11 of the 20 countries worst affected by displacement over the last seven years are in Asia.

- Europe experienced double its average level of displacement for the past seven years in 2014, with 190,000 people displaced, most of them by flooding in the Balkans.
- Displacement in Africa was three times lower than average in 2014 in absolute terms, but many African countries experienced high levels relative to their population size.
 - The highest level of displacement in relative terms in 2014 was in Sudan, where rainy season floods displaced 159,000 people.
- In Chile, one of the largest displacements of the year highlighted the benefit of investment in disaster prevention and preparedness. Around 970,000 people fled low-lying coastal areas in response to an 8.2 magnitude offshore earthquake and tsunami warning in April. Most people were able to return home the following day.
- Developing countries are consistently the worst affected, with almost 175 million people displaced since 2008, accounting for 95% of the global total. The figure for 2014 was 17.4 million, or 91% of the global total.

The big three: China, India and the Philippines

- China, India and the Philippines experienced the highest levels of displacement in absolute terms, both in 2014 and for the 2008 to 2014 period.
- Disasters related to floods, storms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in these three countries accounted for 15 of the 20 largest displacement events in 2014.
- Multiple and repeated displacements tends to occur in the same geographic locations in these three countries, pointing to areas of particularly high exposure and vulnerability.
- Large-scale evacuations prompted by two category-three typhoons in the Philippines caused the largest displacements worldwide for the second year running in 2014.

Small but significant: impacts on small island developing states (SIDS)

- Their populations are relatively small, but SIDS are disproportionately affected by displacement associated with floods, storms and earthquakes.
- Between 2008 and 2014, they experienced levels three times higher than the global average, relative to their population sizes.
- 12% of the countries where we recorded displacement related to disasters in 2014 were SIDS, of which five were among the 20 worst-affected countries worldwide in relative terms.
- Cyclone Ian in Tonga caused the second largest displacement worldwide in relative terms in 2014. Only 5,300 people were forced to flee their homes, but they accounted for 5% of the island's population.
- Haiti and Cuba have had the highest levels of displacement among SIDS over the past seven years in both relative and absolute terms, caused by earthquakes, floods and storms.

Multiple hazards in fragile and conflict-affected states

- Overlapping hazards contribute to displacement and determine patterns of movement and needs in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Countries significantly affected by displacement related to both conflict and natural hazards in 2014 included India, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Sudan and Sudan.
- All fragile and conflict-affected states, experienced displacement associated with natural hazards between 2008 and 2014. More than 750,000 people were displaced by disasters in these countries in 2014 alone.

Trends in exposure and vulnerability

- The occurrence of displacement closely mirrors people's exposure to hazards around the world. Exposure is increasing because ever growing numbers of vulnerable people live in areas prone to hazards.
- Two key drivers of exposure and vulnerability are urban population growth in developing countries, and economic growth.
- The urban population in developing countries has increased by 326% since 1970. This rapid

growth has for the most part been unplanned and poorly governed, leading to high exposure and vulnerability. Middle-income countries bear the brunt of the phenomenon.

- People in low-income countries are more vulnerable, but relatively fewer people are exposed to hazards.
- Population projections suggest that exposure will increase in many low-income countries over the coming decades.
- The low vulnerability of high-income countries does not mean that they are not affected. Around 1.8 million people were displaced in high-income countries in 2014, due to three factors:
 1. All countries are vulnerable to the most extreme hazards
 2. Inequality within high-income countries makes displacement a particular concern for people less well off and those subject to discrimination and marginalisation
 3. Effective early warning systems and disaster responses save lives, but increase displacement as more survivors use it as a protective measure

Mind your assumptions: Protracted displacement following disasters

- The common assumption that displacement following disasters is short-term and temporary does not hold true in many cases. The cases we identified highlight the plight of people, some of whom have been living in protracted displacement for up to 26 years.
- A sample of 34 ongoing cases accounts for more than 715,000 people stuck in limbo, and points to the likelihood of hundreds of thousands more who have not yet been recorded.
- People in such situations receive little attention and are likely to be left behind in long-term recovery, disaster risk reduction and development processes. Better data and further research is needed to create a solid evidence base for policymakers' and responders' decisions.

Why protracted displacement occurs:

- Hazards are diverse in their nature and dynamics. Some persist for long periods and can become permanent barriers to return. The repeated impacts of frequent short-lived hazards on vulnerable communities can also lead to protracted displacement.
- Displacement following disasters is often fraught with complex and political obstacles to solutions. Obstacles frequently encountered include access to land and discrimination against vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- Most of the cases of protracted displacement we identified are in low and middle-income developing countries, but there are also significant examples in rich countries, such as the US and Japan. Vulnerable and marginalised people in high-income countries also risk being excluded from solutions.

How to prevent and address protracted displacement:

- Governments should prioritise measures to advance solutions and strengthen the resilience of people whose displacement risks becoming protracted, or has already become so. They include people whose former homes have become permanently inaccessible or unsafe, informal settlers, poor tenants and people who face discrimination based on their class, ethnicity, gender or age. Interventions should be adapted to their specific needs.
- When displaced people move on to another location during or after the emergency phase of a response, their situation should be verified. They should not be allowed to drop off the radar as "residual caseloads" when humanitarian priorities shift towards longer-term recovery and development.
- Local authorities, civil society networks and community-based organisations should be mobilised and supported to help identify and monitor cases of protracted displacement. This is important, given that many of those affected are all but invisible, because they are dispersed among wider populations and in urban areas.

The post-2015 global policy agenda

- Better addressing displacement will support the achievement of global and national commitments under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, action on climate change under the UNFCCC, the forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals and preparatory work for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.
- Displacement can no longer be considered as a primarily humanitarian issue, nor one that is specific to conflict situations. In most countries affected it has multiple and overlapping causes, and addressing it requires close coordination of humanitarian and development policy and action both within and between governments.
 - Countries significantly affected by displacement related to both conflict and natural hazards in 2014 included India, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Sudan and Sudan
- The increasing number of people displaced and at risk of becoming trapped in protracted situations following disasters underscores the urgent need to include people displaced, or at risk of becoming so, in sustainable and inclusive development measures.
- Improved monitoring and data on displacement is needed to measure the achievement of national and global policy targets for inclusive and sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and management, and adaptation to climate change.
- In order to prioritise resources and target responses to where they are most needed, a common framework for collecting, interpreting and comparing displacement data should be established between government and partner organisations and across different timeframes.
 - Special attention should be paid to collecting data disaggregated by gender, age and specific vulnerabilities, and to monitoring the situation of people caught in long-lasting or chronic displacement.

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