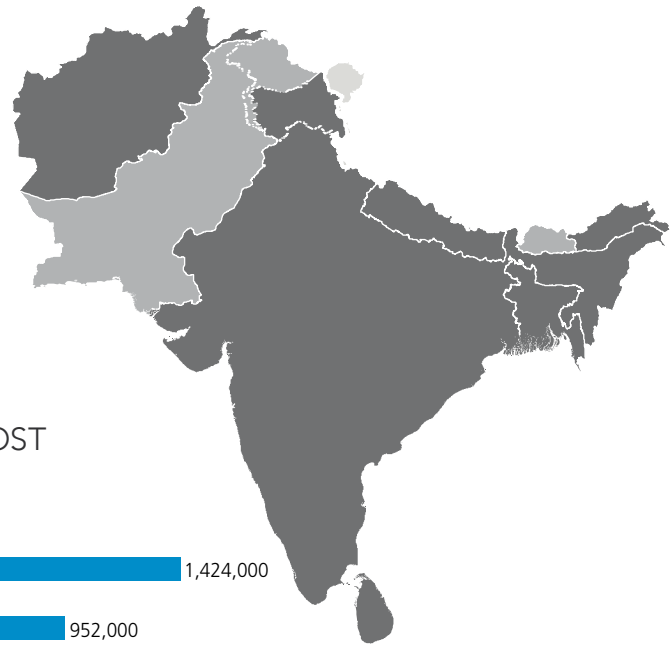
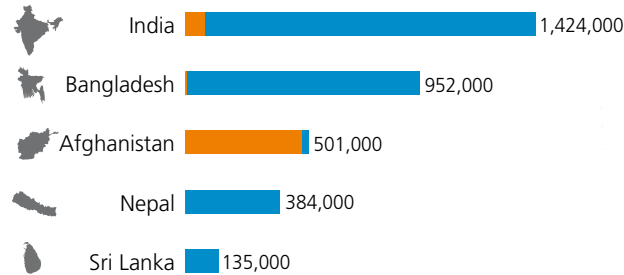


SOUTH ASIA



DISASTERS 15.1%
CONFLICT 5.4%
OF THE GLOBAL
TOTAL

5 COUNTRIES WITH MOST NEW DISPLACEMENT (conflict and disasters)



Disasters triggered most of the displacement in South Asia in 2017, with the exception of **Afghanistan** where conflict triggered 474,000 new displacements. Many of the 2.8 million new displacements associated with sudden-onset disasters took place in **Bangladesh, India, Nepal** and **Sri Lanka** during the monsoon season. Except for tropical cyclone Mora, which struck Bangladesh in May, most of the disasters were small-scale and attracted little, if any, international media coverage. Even intensive events such as Mora received relatively little coverage compared with the Atlantic hurricanes, despite displacing considerable numbers of people and creating greater needs in countries with lower income, resilience and capacity to respond.

Overall, the monsoon season was similar to those of previous years in terms of precipitation levels and the number of people displaced, but its impacts were still significant in a region of high exposure and vulnerability associated with poverty, inequality and unsustainable development. About 855,000 people were evacuated and hosted in camps in the **Indian** state of Bihar, where flooding also hit agricultural production. This harmed livelihoods and caused a sharp rise in unemployment, which in turn added to the number of people migrating from rural to urban areas in search of work.¹⁵¹

More than 436,000 people were displaced in **Bangladesh** by torrential rains that flooded up to a third of the country for several weeks. Poor communities in the

capital of Dhaka, which is home to more than 18 million people, were particularly hard hit.¹⁵² The city is one of the fastest growing in South Asia, and is expanding over marsh lands, leaving no space for water run-off.¹⁵³ Korail, its largest slum, is growing across a lake.

Recurrent flash floods and landslides destroyed nearly 89,000 homes and displaced 381,000 people across 35 districts of **Nepal**, including some, such as Biratnagar and Monrang, where flooding is relatively unusual. The Nepal Red Cross Society said the rains were the worst in 15 years.¹⁵⁴ In **Sri Lanka**, seven disaster events, mainly floods and landslides, triggered more than 135,000 new displacements. The country's Disaster Management Centre recorded widespread floods in May in the southern districts of Galle, Matara, Kalutara and Ratnapura, which forced 127,000 people to take refuge in official shelters.

The 2017 monsoon season highlighted again the negative consequences of poor planning and lack of preparedness. National and local authorities struggled to provide aid to millions of people in need.¹⁵⁵ The expansion of slums is an integral part of urbanisation in South Asia, which also heightens people's exposure, vulnerability and displacement risk. **Bangladesh, India** and **Nepal** have relatively low levels of urbanisation, at 35, 33 and 19 per cent respectively compared with the global average of 54 per cent.¹⁵⁶ This, however, is starting to change. India has 25 of the 100 fastest growing cities in the world, and Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata are among the ten fastest.¹⁵⁷

Our global model puts **Bangladesh, India and Pakistan** among the ten countries in the world with the highest disaster displacement risk, and the region as a whole has the highest number of people at risk of displacement by sudden-onset hazards relative to its population size. An average of 240 out of every 100,000 people might be expected to be displaced during any given year in the future, not including pre-emptive evacuations.¹⁵⁸

Some countries in the region have taken policy steps to address displacement associated with disasters. **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka** have begun to report against the Sendai framework by conducting data readiness reviews. Some also mention the need to assist and prioritise IDPs and other vulnerable groups in their DRR policies. Bangladesh has a specific policy on the management of displacement associated with disasters, and India has one that protects the rights of people displaced by development projects.¹⁵⁹

With 474,000 new displacements associated with conflict and violence, **Afghanistan** accounted for the majority of the conflict figures for the region (633,000). No major offensives took place during the year, but the security situation deteriorated to such an extent

that the country was reclassified from post-conflict to one in active conflict again.¹⁶⁰ The US and its allies also stepped up their bombing raids, including the US' use of the world's most powerful non-nuclear weapon to target groups affiliated to ISIL in the Achin district of Nangarhar province, close to the border with Pakistan.¹⁶¹

The number of displacements directly associated with the increased bombing is not clear, but the eastern and southern provinces most affected also had the largest number of displacements. The voluntary and involuntary return and deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and the EU added to the number of IDPs in the country and will continue to do so in 2018 (see spotlight, p.36).

Periodic violations of the ceasefire between **India and Pakistan** in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir led to at least 70,000 new displacements in Indian-controlled areas and at least 53,000 in Pakistani-controlled areas.



A woman affected by the floods wades through the waist-deep water in search of clean water. Photo: BDRCSI/ Aminul Shawon, August 2017

SPOTLIGHT

AFGHANISTAN

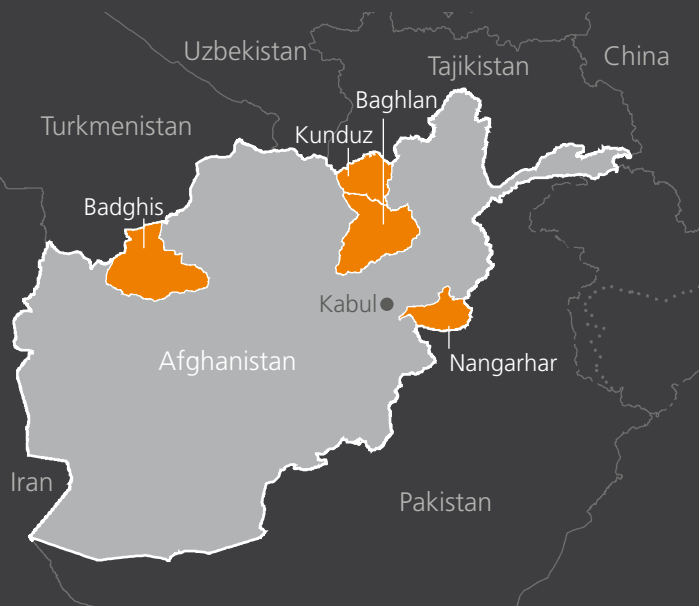
Moving from humanitarian to development planning

After almost four decades of conflict and violence, the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated in 2017 and the country was reclassified from post-conflict to one of active conflict again.¹⁶² The year was marked by a shift in conflict dynamics as the military moved to secure urban areas.¹⁶³ This left a vacuum in rural areas that allowed the Taliban to consolidate control over 16 new districts.¹⁶⁴

Large numbers of people fled these areas toward urban hubs in search of safety, aid and government services. At the same time sectarian violence surged in Kabul, where a truck bomb in May and a string of smaller attacks in June killed hundreds of civilians.¹⁶⁵ The attacks triggered protests against an already fragmented government and led to the announcement of elections set for July 2018.¹⁶⁶

Displacement has become a familiar survival strategy and in some cases even an inevitable part of life for two generations of Afghans faced with continuous violence and insecurity and recurrent disasters. There were 474,000 new displacements in 2017, and as of the end of the year there were 1,286,000 IDPs in the country.¹⁶⁷ Nangarhar province was hosting the highest number as of mid-November, followed by Kunduz, Badghis and Baghlan.¹⁶⁸ More than 50 per cent of people displaced by conflict in Afghanistan have now been forced to flee twice or more, compared with seven per cent five years ago.¹⁶⁹

Despite the worsening security situation, more than 560,000 refugees and undocumented migrants returned from neighbouring Iran and Pakistan.¹⁷⁰ The voluntary nature of these movements is questionable, however, and many of these returnees went back to a life of internal displacement because insecurity prevented them from returning to their place of origin or achieving a durable solution elsewhere.¹⁷¹



This trend will grow while insecurity and a struggling economy continue to make it difficult for the country to absorb and reintegrate returnees.¹⁷² Afghanistan's 2014 policy on IDPs grants returning refugees the same right to petition for assistance as their internally displaced counterparts, but like other IDPs they tend to lack information on the process or are unable to afford to travel to government offices to register.

Responsibility for putting the policy into operation has been largely decentralised to provincial Directorate of Refugees and Repatriations (DoRR) offices, but they receive little or no support from stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation.¹⁷³ With 30 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces affected by renewed or ongoing conflict in 2017, many DoRR offices have also had to switch their focus from development and planning for durable solutions back to meeting immediate needs.¹⁷⁴

IDPs' needs have changed little over the past five years, and returnees who go back to life in internal displacement face similar challenges.¹⁷⁵ Some aspects of their situation have improved, but their most important reintegration needs remain the same: safety and security from conflict and violence, housing and shelter, and decent jobs.¹⁷⁶ Many, however, continue to struggle to meet even their most basic needs for food and water, the result in part of significant aid reductions. Many also lack the information and documentation required to access education and other services.¹⁷⁷

Without safe and reliable job opportunities or the information needed to make well-informed and dignified choices about their future, displaced people in Afghanistan are unable to lift themselves out of cycles of vulnerability and poverty.¹⁷⁸ It is also clear that these challenges



An internally displaced man from Ghor Province collects scraps and clothes to burn during the winter to keep his home warm and cook food in Police Rah camp on the outskirts of Herat city, Afghanistan. Photo: NRC/Jim Huylebroek, May 2017

cannot be addressed by humanitarian interventions alone.¹⁷⁹ A shift from humanitarian to development planning, and from national to local implementation is not just a generic recommendation but an urgent priority.¹⁸⁰

The country made some policy progress in 2017. It was one of 43 to present a voluntary national review of its implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that year, which echoed the need for the localisation of development efforts.¹⁸¹ It also raised challenges associated with data availability and management, and the need for a comprehensive database that pools all information related to the SDGs and facilitates disaggregation.¹⁸²

The review also gave specific mention to internal displacement as an impediment to the economic growth and poverty reduction envisaged under SDG 1. As it stands, the national policy framework considers measures to include returnees and IDPs in local community development councils, handled by the national Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR).

Once IDPs' immediate assistance needs are met, transitions already underway toward localised and longer-term development planning should be bolstered as the foundation for a stronger collective response with rights-based outcomes.¹⁸³ This also means spreading awareness of returnees' and IDPs' rights under the constitution and the national policy on displacement, so they are better positioned to pursue durable solutions.