NOTE

This is an excerpt from IDMC’s 2019 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID).
By some estimates, between 60 and 80 per cent of IDPs live in cities and “out-of-camp settings”. There is, however, no strong evidence to support such assertions, and a number of factors make understanding the true scale and characteristics of urban displacement particularly challenging.

There is a lack of common definitions and methodologies to classify urban and rural areas. Different definitions emphasise different factors including demographics, social dynamics, infrastructure, the availability and provision of services and the way land use and the built environment are structured. Nor does displacement data that includes information about the type of settlement, whether it be a camp, out-of-camp setting or spontaneous site, necessarily specify an urban or rural location.

Camps and camp-like settlements facilitate data collection because IDPs are gathered together in one place, unlike urban areas where they tend to live in dispersed settings among the local population, which makes them more difficult to identify. Some may also choose to stay under the radar to preserve their anonymity because of potential threats to their security.

IDMC was able to address some of these challenges for the first time in 2018, and disaggregate displacement associated with conflict by urban and rural location. The EU’s Global Human Settlement Layer (GHSL) was used as a basis for conducting the analysis. GHSL is a global dataset that assesses degrees of urbanisation using census data from national statistical institutes and satellite observations. It provides multi-temporal geospatial data, presented in grids of one square kilometre, enabling a globally consistent and comparable classification of rural and urban areas. By overlaying information on displacement sites with GHSL, it was possible to disaggregate the data.

More than 41.3 million people were living in internal displacement as result of conflict and violence as of the end of 2018. Information on displacement sites was obtained for 19.8 million, or 48 per cent of the total. Of 55 countries where conflict displacement was identified, information on IDPs’ specific location was available for 12. Within these 12, specific caseloads were selected where good quality geolocalised data was available, for example from site-level assessments. IDMC’s analysis concluded that 52 per cent of IDPs were living in urban settings in these twelve countries (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 13: Disaggregation of stock figures for 12 countries by rural and urban settings using GHSL as reference

* Percentages refer to the portion of the national IDP caseload that has geospatial information. In the case of Yemen, Chad, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan and Dem. Rep. Congo, more than the 90% of the caseload is published with coordinates. In other countries this proportion is lower: Libya 85%, Nigeria 55%, Cameroon 37% and Palestine 0.2%.
Iraq provides an interesting example. The use of data provided by IOM’s DTM, all of which was geolocated, helped to paint a more accurate picture of urban displacement. The analysis shows that 70 per cent of IDPs were living in urban settings as of the end of 2018. Sixty-two per cent were living with host families or in rented accommodation. Ninety-six per cent of displacement sites were also within ten kilometres of an urban area. At an even more granular level, Figure 14 illustrates urban displacement in Mosul as revealed by overlaying data with the GHSL layer.

This exercise was a first step toward filling the significant data gaps on urban displacement. Clearly, when primary collectors geolocate and share their data, a consistent methodology can be applied to illustrate the scale of the phenomenon. As long as this kind of information is not consistently collected or shared, however, it will be difficult to paint a global picture. In its absence, policies and programmes to support IDPs and host communities and to help cities cope with displacement will not be as effective as they might.

**FIGURE 14:** Iraq: IDPs’ location by distance from an urban settlement
Notes


