

## PART 3

# INSIDE THE GRID

### Filling the data gaps

We continued to make concerted efforts to bring as much internal displacement as possible “on the GRID” in 2017, and to paint a more comprehensive and three-dimensional picture (numbers, duration and severity). To keep doing so we need ever more credible, validated data on the magnitude, duration and severity of displacement, its impacts on those displaced and their host communities, and the risk of it occurring in the future.

Comprehensive monitoring on a range of indicators is required to measure progress against a number of global policies and targets related to internal displacement. These include reducing the phenomenon by half

by 2030, addressing climate-related displacement and disaster risks and achieving the SDGs.<sup>282</sup> We need this data to reframe the issue in terms of displacement risk, and to equip governments with the evidence and tools to address and reduce it (see Part 2).

This need goes beyond support for global policy processes. The impacts of displacement will vary depending on its magnitude, cause and duration. The people who bear the impacts and costs will also vary, because displacement risk and resilience to it are unequally distributed. To understand these dynamics and support timely and effective responses, we need accounting to be as comprehensive as possible.



*A student at the Aal Okab school stands in the ruins of one of his former classrooms in Saada city, Yemen, which was destroyed in June 2015. Students now attend lessons in UNICEF tents nearby. Photo: UN OCHA/Giles Clarke, April 2017*

# TOWARD A MORE COMPLETE PICTURE

For this year's GRID we have analysed more data than ever before, entering more than 5,000 displacement-related "facts" in our database. We obtained information on 915 incidents of displacement associated with conflict in 2017, an increase of more than 300 per cent on 2016, and we produced estimates for 890 disasters, an increase of more than 50 per cent. We achieved this through the use of new tools and approaches and by putting greater emphasis on event-based monitoring of key flows.

Comprehensive accounting also means capturing more phenomena and small-scale events. Though these situations are often hard to identify and track, particularly when they do not prompt a humanitarian response, accounting for them is vital to our broader understanding of both displacement and displacement risk. We reported on 111 disasters that displaced 25 people or fewer in 2017, 52 of which displaced fewer than ten. Small incidents of displacement associated with conflict are even trickier to identify, but we still managed to obtain and verify information about 21 events in which 200 or fewer people were displaced.

We also increased the amount of information we recorded on returning IDPs and refugees, recording more than 165 facts in 25 countries. The issue of returns has been high on the international agenda, but the data we obtained suggests that reports of them should not be taken at face value.

We recorded 981 stock facts about the number of people displaced by conflict and 973 about those displaced by disasters, though the latter tend only to be collected during the immediate aftermath of an event. Given that our global stock figure of 39.5 million people displaced by conflict represents many separate case-loads with varying degrees of need, we also attempted to assess the severity of each situation to help direct attention and resources to where they are most needed.

Our data on new displacements comes from a range of sources, including national and local governments, the UN and other international organisations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, civil society and the media (see figure 16, p.74). In a few cases we produced figures using remote-sensing data and satellite imagery.

## UNDERSTANDING STOCKS AND FLOWS

The data we collect falls into two categories, stocks and flows, which reflect the terms used by national statistics offices and the UN Statistical Commission's Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics (EGRIS). It should be remembered that the figures in this report represent people whose lives have been uprooted and disrupted, often violently and traumatically, and who have suffered significant personal losses.

A stock figure refers to "the total number of people who match an established definition of being internally displaced in a determined location at a specific moment".<sup>283</sup> In this report, we present this figure "as of the end of 2017".

Flows refer to "the number of people who meet certain criteria within a particular time period, (as opposed to a specific reference date), and whose status as a member of the population in question changes as a result".<sup>284</sup> Displacement flows have a direction and describe the process leading to people being counted as IDPs (inflows) or no longer counted (outflows). The number of new IDPs identified between two specific dates following the event that triggered their displacement is an example of an inflow, which we refer to in this report as "new displacements". IDPs who flee abroad, or who die in displacement, are examples of outflows.

Once we obtain data, we analyse, transform and map it onto our data model (see figure 17, p.74), subjecting our findings to internal and external peer review. Despite our best efforts to collect data on all relevant inflows and outflows, the overwhelming majority of information we obtained was related to new displacements and returns.

FIGURE 16: Data on new displacement by type of source

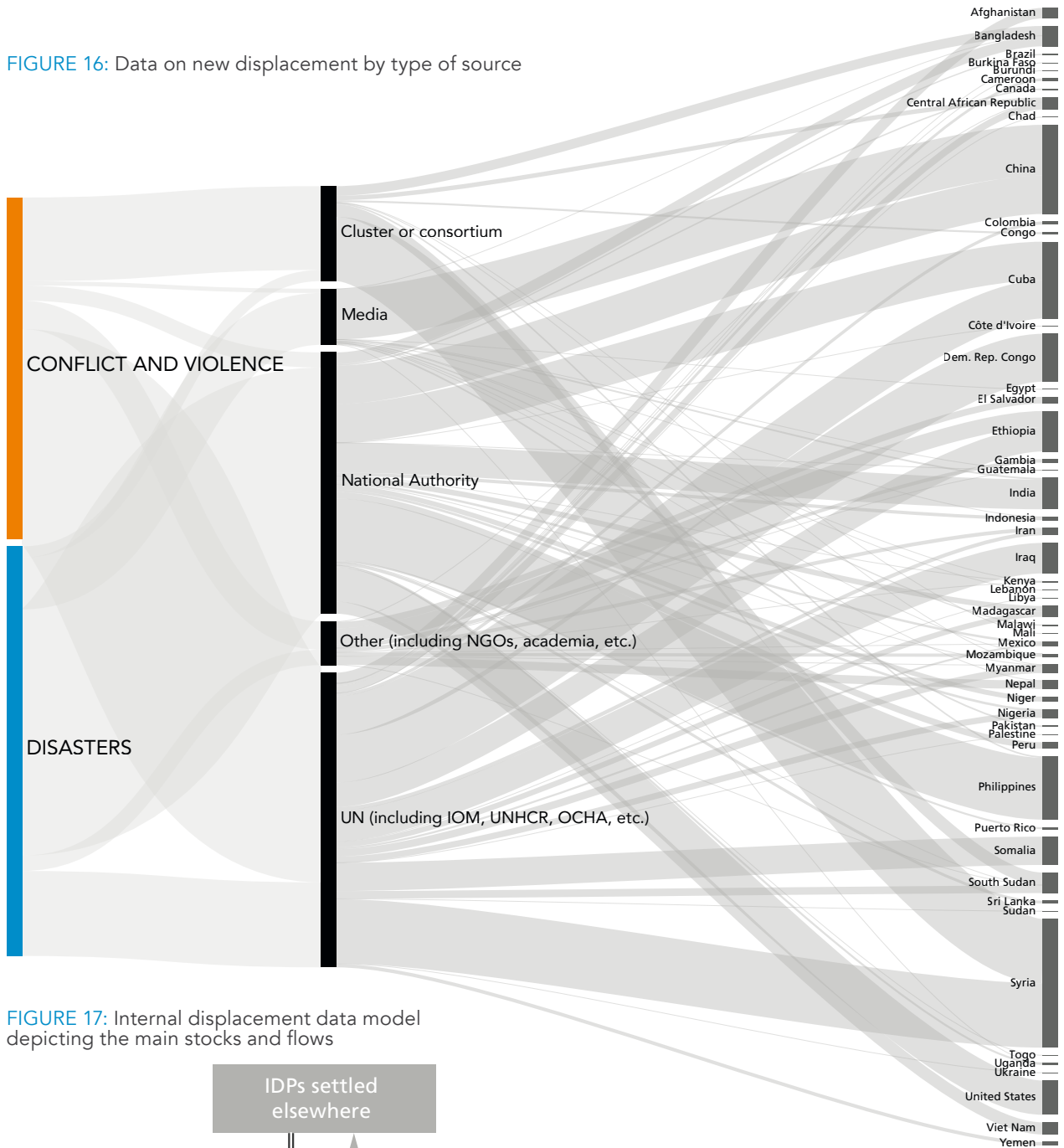
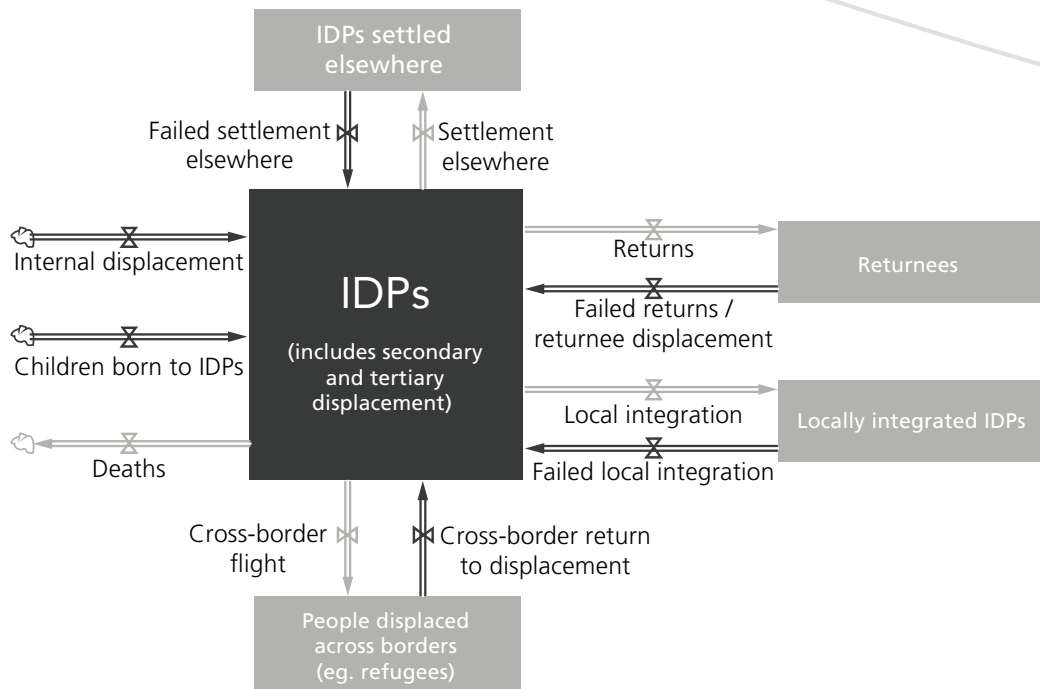


FIGURE 17: Internal displacement data model depicting the main stocks and flows



# KEY DATA GAPS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

Although we have increased the scope of our monitoring and improved the means by which we verify and analyse our sources' data, a number of gaps remain. These increase the uncertainty of our estimates and pose a challenge for policy development and programming. Accurate measurements of displacement and displacement risk are required to measure progress toward global targets, and an accurate understanding of the dynamics of displacement situations and the needs of IDPs is required for effective action on the ground.

Some of the gaps we encountered were the same as last year, including limited geographic coverage across and within countries, difficulties in distinguishing between new, secondary or tertiary displacements, challenges in obtaining disaggregated and geospatially referenced data on IDPs and their movements, and accounting for all types of displacement.<sup>285</sup>

## LACK OF OBSERVATIONAL DATA ON FLOWS

We strive to produce our figures using verified observational data related to the metrics in question. We record the information in our database as it is collected and shared. In the best-case scenario, we are able to rely on direct measurements of each flow.

Unfortunately, we were only able to obtain comprehensive observational or event-based data on specific flows in a small number of countries. Most of the flow data we obtained was not disaggregated by type of movement, meaning that aside from the few instances in which we received information about people being displaced from camps or shelters we were unable to distinguish new, secondary or tertiary displacements.

For most countries, we had to infer the number of new displacements from net increases in nationally aggregated stock figures from one reporting round to the next. As we noted last year, this is a method of last resort because it is extremely conservative and can lead to significant under-reporting.<sup>286</sup>

The data we obtained on South Sudan demonstrates the need for comprehensive flow monitoring and illustrates the extent to which periodic collections of stock data can lead to the scale of new displacement being underestimated. Our new displacement figure is based on an analysis of 47 reported incidents supported by additional information from partners in the field. Had we arrived at our estimate based on changes in the country's relatively static stock figures, we would have reported only 189,000 new displacements instead of 857,000.

The lack of comprehensive, disaggregated flow data inhibits our ability to report accurately on the dynamics of a given situation in other ways. New displacements increase the number of IDPs whereas secondary and tertiary displacements do not. If the stock figures remain more or less steady, they make it impossible to detect repeated or short-term displacements. As was the case in South Sudan, the volume of new displacements may be offset by IDPs who return or flee onward across borders. Data on flows is also needed to determine when displacements occurred and to estimate their duration.

The operational implications are significant. People who have been displaced for a few weeks will have different needs and vulnerabilities to those who have been living in displacement for months or years. The same is true for people who have been displaced only once compared to those displaced several times. As we reported in Off the GRID last year, IDPs who have been displaced repeatedly within their own country may also be more likely to cross an international border.<sup>287</sup>

Measuring new displacements and understanding the factors that drive them is required for effective policy design and implementation. The policy discourse has begun to shift away from an exclusive focus on response in recent years and toward managing and reducing displacement risk (see Part 2). Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation agendas explicitly frame displacement from the perspective of risk reduction and risk management, and the goal of halving the number of IDPs by 2030 will not be met unless the risk of new displacement is reduced.

The UN goal of halving the number of IDPs has renewed attention on returns and collective outcomes.<sup>288</sup> This underscores the need for better monitoring and understanding of these flows. We obtained data on returning IDPs and refugees for 25 countries in 2017, and for some, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria, we also obtained information about the conditions people were returning to. The evidence suggests, however, that few if any returnees should be “taken off the books” as IDPs because many returned to conditions of high vulnerability, remain displaced in their areas of origin or became displaced again (see spotlight, p.36).

Comprehensive monitoring and reporting on the flows related to the end of displacement remains difficult because of conceptual and data challenges. The definition of an IDP is relatively clear, but the notion of when displacement ends is more complex and harder to determine. We consider that a person ceases to be an IDP when they have sustainably returned to their habitual place of residence, integrated locally or settled elsewhere in the country, provided this happens voluntarily, in safety and with dignity. Even such outcomes, however, do not necessarily imply an end to the negative consequences of displacement.

Many initiatives, including EGRIS, aim to define the end of displacement and establish associated metrics. In doing so it is important to consider former IDPs’ rights and ongoing situations until they no longer have needs or suffer discrimination related to their displacement in line with the IASC framework on durable solutions.<sup>289</sup> The process of achieving a durable solution can be long, complex and take many forms, which means that obtaining accurate and reliable data on it poses many challenges.

What qualifies as a durable solution varies significantly from one country to another, particularly when displacement triggers and impacts are very different. Defining each of the stages in the process and tailoring it to each situation is also an enormous endeavour from a practical and technical perspective. Establishing clear thresholds, and collecting time-series data on the corresponding indicators in a consistent way is equally challenging.

As a result, data on returns is often unavailable or unusable because definitions vary within and between agencies. Reporting on returns may also lead to people being “taken off the books” as IDPs, despite the fact that may

not have been able re-establish their lives sustainably or achieve a durable solution.

The path toward durable solutions is not a one-way street. Our data shows that people get stuck or return to a situation of displacement (see Part 1). Ongoing monitoring and longitudinal data are needed to identify policies and measures that reduce the risk of repeated displacement, and of IDPs returning to situations of chronic vulnerability. To bridge such gaps, interoperable data on forced displacement is essential.

## UNCERTAIN, GEOGRAPHICALLY LIMITED AND DECAYING STOCK DATA

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Most of the data we receive on displacement associated with conflict is in the form of stock figures, enabling us to estimate the total number of people displaced as of the end of the year. As in previous years, we were unable to obtain enough up-to-date data on displacement associated with disasters to generate a global end-of-year estimate, but we have made progress toward filling this gap by using models and analysing proxy indicators such as data from social media.

As with the flow data, the stock figures we receive are seldom what they seem. In Colombia and Ukraine, for example, official government counts are just the starting point of our analysis, and both cases illustrate why we publish lengthy annotations to all of our figures for displacement associated with conflict in addition to our online methodological annex.

Our estimate of the number of IDPs in Colombia as of the end of 2017 is based on data in the government’s victims registry (RUV). The RUV database, however, keeps a record of everyone who fled their homes during decades of civil war, regardless of whether they are still displaced or not. As such, it is not a true reflection of the country’s stock of IDPs. Our estimate is lower than the government figure because we subtracted people who have died in displacement or overcome their vulnerabilities based on seven dimensions of vulnerability: housing, family reunification, identification, nutrition, health, education and income.<sup>290</sup>

Our estimate of Ukraine’s stock of IDPs refers to those living relatively permanently in government-controlled



*Villagers from government-controlled Novotoshkivka, Ukraine, transport non-food items back to their homes. Photo: NRC, January 2016*

areas. It is based on data published by OCHA, which in turn derives its figures from a number of sources including IOM, the Ministry of Social Policy's database on IDPs, the State Statistics Service and the country's pension fund. Many returned IDPs who live in non-government controlled areas remain in the ministry's database in order to access their pensions and other benefits and services, but unfortunately the exact number of people in this category is unknown.

Based on the available data and contextual information provided by partners in the country, we estimate that there were around 800,000 IDPs in Ukraine as of the end of 2017. This is roughly half of the figure we reported last year (1,653,000). The main reason for the decrease is the absence of concrete evidence concerning the exact status of claimants registered as IDPs living in non-government-controlled areas, a significant proportion of whom are suspected to travel back and forth across the contact line to receive benefits.

Most organisations working in Ukraine have indicated that the previously reported figure was consequently an overestimate, which has also led to government efforts to adjust its registry.

We also note that people who have returned to their former homes may still have vulnerabilities and face risks associated with their displacement. In this sense, their return does not imply the achievement of a durable solution. Furthermore, figures about returns were not available at the time of data collection. Overall, IDMC estimates are conservative in that they do not include unregistered IDPs living in non-government controlled areas, nor do they include returnees who achieved provisional solutions, since we were unable to obtain figures for both categories (see spotlight, p.47).

# DEALING WITH DECAYING STOCK DATA

As in previous years, decaying data was one of the main challenges we faced in 2017 despite our best efforts to obtain the most current and updated information. We were able to capture recent data on most of the situations we monitor, but there were still a number of caseloads, including Bangladesh, Myanmar and Turkey, for which it was significantly out-of-date, resulting in figures in which we have low confidence (see figure 18).

## BANGLADESH

Bangladesh's stock of 432,000 IDPs consists of two old caseloads. About two-thirds are members of tribes displaced in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area in the south-east of the country between 1977 and 1997. The remainder are Urdu-speaking Biharis displaced in 1970s who are still presumed to be living in camps across the country. The last surveys of the two caseloads were nine and 12 years ago respectively. This year we reached out to 38 institutions and individuals in an attempt to update our figures. Our contextual analysis and the limited, conflicting new information we obtained did not, however, enable us to revise our previous estimate.

## MYANMAR

Our stock figure for Myanmar is around 635,000 IDPs, but about two-thirds of the data relates to people displaced at an undisclosed time in the past by conflict, development projects and disasters in the south-east of the country.<sup>291</sup> The figure is based on a survey conducted by The Border Consortium (TBC) in 2012 and

partially replicated in 2014.<sup>292</sup> The data does not allow us to determine when these people were displaced, or whether or not they remain so.

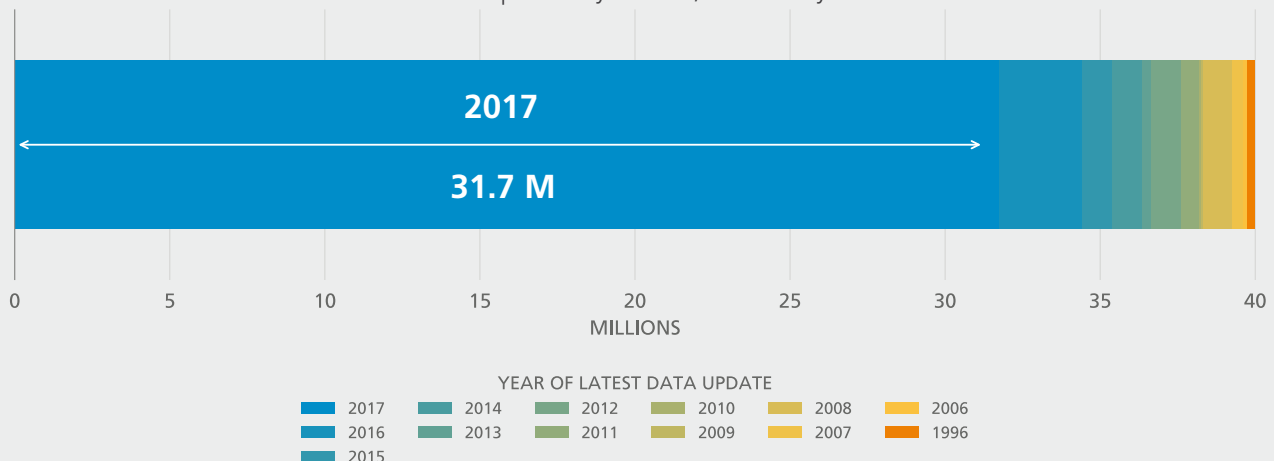
Displacement has historically been an important coping mechanism in the south-east, but many IDPs may have settled permanently in their areas of displacement.<sup>293</sup> As such, our figure may capture the cumulative flow of new, secondary and repeated displacements rather than the number of people displaced as of the end of 2017.

## TURKEY

Lack of access to conflict-affected areas in Turkey make it difficult to paint a comprehensive, up-to-date picture of internal displacement in the country. Our stock figure of 1,113,000 aggregates three caseloads, representing two main waves of displacement.

The first, of around of 954,000 people, was reported by Hacettepe University's Institute of Population Studies in research carried out between December 2004 and June 2006. Its goal was to estimate the number of IDPs in Turkey's Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia regions, mainly people of Kurdish ethnicity displaced by the conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) between 1984 and 1999.<sup>294</sup> The study highlighted the barriers IDPs faced in integrating locally or otherwise achieving durable solutions, but it has never been updated, making it difficult to estimate the size of the current displaced population.

FIGURE 18: Source data on stocks of IDPs displaced by conflict, ordered by date



The second caseload is made up of people displaced by the resurgence of the same conflict in 2015 and 2016, and the third is an update of our GRID 2017 figure. Based on the analysis of satellite imagery, it accounts for people displaced by military operations in the south-east of the country since 2016.

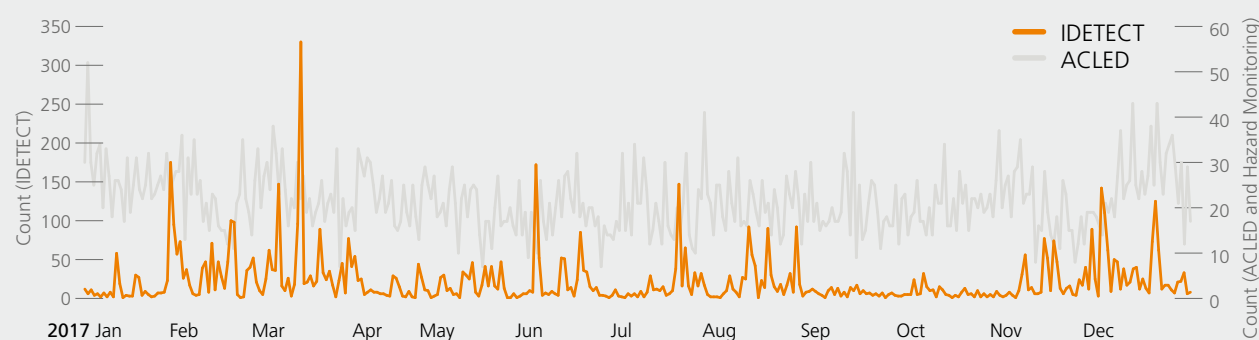
## SYRIA

Despite the fact that the displacement situation in Syria is one of the most dynamic we monitor, we struggled to produce a robust end-of-year estimate of the number of people displaced by the conflict. This was because one of our key data providers stopped publishing and sharing its data at the end of November, and our remaining sources cover less than half of the country. As a result, our estimate is a mix of data last updated in November and December.

## YEMEN

The most recent data from the country's Task Force on Population Movements was published in September 2017 and included some which had not been updated since May. Complicating matters further, the task force's data was collected by two different partners, each with its own methodology and verification standards. Given the events that took place in the second half of the year and the fact that conflict became more frequent in December, it is reasonable to assume that the displacement figures, particularly the number of new displacements, would have been significantly higher had the data been updated (see figure 19).

FIGURE 19: Reported incidents of conflict and displacement associated with conflict in Yemen in 2017



Sources: ACLED and IDMC-IDETECT

With the exception of Colombia, relatively little stock data we obtain speaks to the impacts of displacement on IDPs. We obtained information about IDPs' location and type of shelter for several countries, but information about their needs was aggregated into broader assessments or funding appeals. As a result, our assessment of the severity of each displacement caseload is limited and based on contextual analysis and the expert opinions of our team and data sources.

Assessing the severity and impacts of displacement is vital for focusing attention and political will and for allocating resources where they are most needed. The lack of understanding of the medium- and long-term impacts on IDPs and their host communities is an obstacle to providing the funding, services and other

resources needed to resolve displacement once it has occurred. Without knowing the amount of time and resources required to achieve collective outcomes, it will remain challenging for both donors and governments of countries affected by displacement to take responsibility and help IDPs achieve durable solutions.



## LIMITED REPORTING ON DISPLACEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH DROUGHT AND OTHER COMPLEX PHENOMENA

More than 686 million people across Africa and Asia have been affected by drought since 2008, more than earthquakes, storms and floods combined.<sup>295</sup> We have not, however, been able to obtain verified data on more than a handful of displacement situations associated with the phenomenon. We have documented the difficulties in monitoring and reporting on this type of displacement in detail in previous reports, but they include:

- | Inconsistent definitions of both drought and related displacement
- | Distinguishing displacement from other migratory patterns
- | Attributing displacement to drought when a number of overlapping stressors - often drought, conflict and food insecurity - occur simultaneously or in rapid succession.<sup>296</sup>

Our inability to account for displacement associated with drought and other complex and slow-onset phenomena amounts to a major blind spot with global consequences. Drought is the most visible and pressing natural hazard in some regions of the world, and our lack of reporting on these situations represents a geographical bias in our global figures. More importantly, it means that we are missing opportunities to improve humanitarian responses to complex emergencies and inform national, regional and global policy processes that aim to reduce drought risk.

This year we were able to estimate new displacements associated with drought for the first time thanks to a determined effort to collect data and extensive outreach to a number of partners. Across Burundi, Ethiopia, Madagascar and Somalia we put the figure at 1.3 million. This is based on our analysis and that of our partners on the ground. It refers to people who reported drought as the primary cause of their displacement when data collected on other indicators was consistent with our conceptualisation of the phenomenon.<sup>297</sup>

*A displaced woman and her son walk their two surviving animals in Ferdigab, Somaliland. They spend the day on the lookout for grass and water for the weak animals, cutting tree branches to feed them. Photo: NRC/Adrienne Surprenant, April 2017*



In Ethiopia and Somalia, for example, displacement came about as a result of drought and the consequent deterioration of pastoralists' livelihoods. In Burundi and Madagascar, the displacement came about because of crop failure and farmers' food insecurity. We did not include other countries, such as Angola, Chad, China, Mauritania and Niger, where EM-DAT reported that 10 million people were affected by drought, because of a lack of accessible and verified data.<sup>298</sup>

In Burundi, Ethiopia and Somalia we recorded new displacements associated with both drought and conflict. When people cited drought as a factor that fuelled the conflict which led to their displacement, we recorded them as displaced by conflict. Given how many other countries experienced both drought and conflict in 2017, we expect that the former played a role in other new displacements attributed to the latter, particularly in Chad and Niger, where we recorded around 46,000 new displacements associated with conflict.<sup>299</sup>

We continue to struggle to produce displacement figures for other complex phenomena, including different forms of development activities, gang and generalised violence and the gradual impacts of climate change and desertification. Our new figures for people displaced by, or at risk of being displaced, by recent and ongoing dam construction represent a small fraction of the overall scale of displacement associated with development projects. We have focussed initially on this type of displacement because the phenomenon was relatively easy to describe, detect and measure, and because some data on dams at least was readily available (see Part 1 and online methodological annex).

Our figures for the three countries in the Northern Triangle of Central America reflect displacement associated with gang violence. We still struggle to report on these situations comprehensively, however, because data is severely lacking. As with drought, we and our data providers face challenges in identifying these movements and obtaining data on them, often because the people displaced chose to remain off the radar for fear of reprisals.<sup>300</sup> Recent inter-governmental initiatives to address and respond to this type of displacement require a more rigorous evidence base to develop more coherent solutions to what is essentially an invisible crisis.

We will continue to highlight our most significant data gaps and challenges, and illustrate why they matter to both policymaking and operations. The issues we face not only add uncertainty to our figures. They also pose a more fundamental impediment to a fuller understanding of internal displacement, how it comes about, its impacts and how it can be resolved. Such data is needed to reframe the phenomenon, encourage national governments to take responsibility for it and help them to address it by implementing a range of relevant policies and plans.

By calling attention to the challenges we face and describing the ways in which we are working to overcome them, we are making an explicit appeal to our data partners to share ownership of the issue. As stated at the most recent UN General Assembly, our global internal displacement database serves as the primary reference and central repository for others' reliable data that we have analysed and validated, and which is needed "to improve policy and programming, preventive measures on and response to internal displacement and to promote the achievement of durable solutions".<sup>301</sup>