

More than 13 million people internally displaced across Asia in 2018

10 May 2019, Geneva - Tropical storms, monsoon floods, conflict and violence displaced 13.4 million people across South Asia and East Asia and the Pacific last year, according to a new report from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

The Global Report on Internal Displacement reveals that 9.6 million new displacements were recorded in East Asia and the Pacific, and 3.8 million in South Asia, an overall increase compared with 2017.

“It is the same countries affected year after year and, while the relative impacts and resilience to respond varies hugely across the region, over time resources and coping mechanisms are being eroded. We must invest more heavily in strategies that reduce people’s exposure and vulnerability to the risks that cause internal displacement, said Alexandra Bilak, IDMC’s director.

East Asia and the Pacific was a disaster hotspot as in previous years, generating more internal displacement associated with natural hazards than any other region. The Philippines and China recorded 7.6 million new displacements between them, mostly pre-emptive evacuations as typhoons approached.

Geophysical events such as earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions accounted for most of the new displacement in Indonesia, and monsoon rains and flooding displaced hundreds of thousands more in Myanmar. Japan was struck by an unusually high number of disasters from storms to landslides, and small island states in the Pacific were also affected by geophysical activity and floods.

Conflict and other forms of violence triggered new displacement in the region on a much smaller scale, mostly in the Philippine region of Mindanao and Myanmar’s Kachin and northern Shan states.

In South Asia, India recorded around 2.8 million new displacements, among the highest figures in the world. Monsoon floods, particularly in the south-western state of Kerala, and cyclones were responsible for the majority. Conflict and communal violence also triggered around 170,000 new displacements. The monsoon season also brought significant flooding to both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Drought triggered 371,000 new displacements in Afghanistan, a similar number to those associated with the country’s ongoing conflict. Intercommunal violence in Pakistan also triggered a similar number of new displacements to localised floods.

Internal displacement is an increasingly urban phenomenon. Conflict, climate shocks and large-scale development projects often drive people from rural to urban areas. Dhaka, for example, is the preferred destination for many IDPs fleeing climate change impacts in coastal regions of Bangladesh.

Displacement can also originate in cities, as was the case in Marawi in the Philippines, where intense urban warfare was waged by ISIL affiliates in 2017. A year later, reconstruction has begun but around 65,000 people remained displaced as of the end of 2018.

Rapid urbanisation has increased displacement risk. Cities in East Asia and Pacific are expanding in areas highly exposed to hazards, such as the tropical cyclone belt and the Pacific Ring of Fire. Nor does urbanisation in South Asia equate with development gains, exposing already vulnerable people to the risk of secondary displacement in the form of evictions.

“The fact that cities have become sanctuary to more and more internally displaced people represents a challenge for municipal authorities, but also an opportunity. Leveraging the positive role that local government can play in finding solutions to displacement will be key to addressing this challenge in the future,” said Alexandra Bilak.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Regional press releases:

Regional press releases detailing more specific displacement within geographical areas are available for sub-Saharan Africa, the Americas, Asia and Middle East and North Africa.

About IDMC:

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the world's authoritative source of data and analysis on internal displacement. Since its establishment in 1998, as part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), IDMC has offered a rigorous, independent and trusted service to the international community. Their work informs policy and operational decisions that improve the lives of the millions of people living in internal displacement, or at risk of becoming displaced in the future.

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Live interviews can be arranged today with Alexandra Bilak, IDMC's Director and Jan Egeland, NRC's Secretary General.

Landing page:

From 10 May, visit www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019 to read and download the full report and summary; explore stories of displaced people and access a media pack, containing global and regional press releases, biographies of spokespeople, photos and b-roll.

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