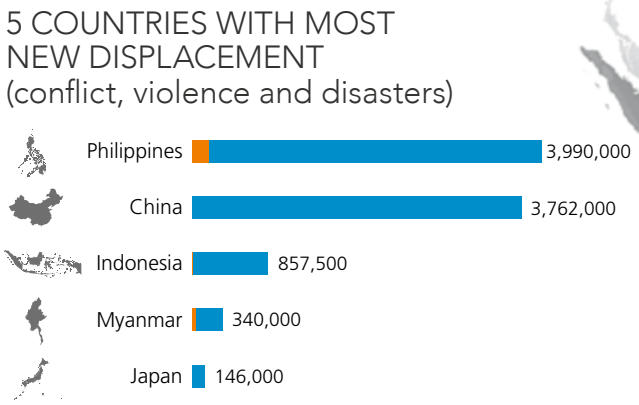
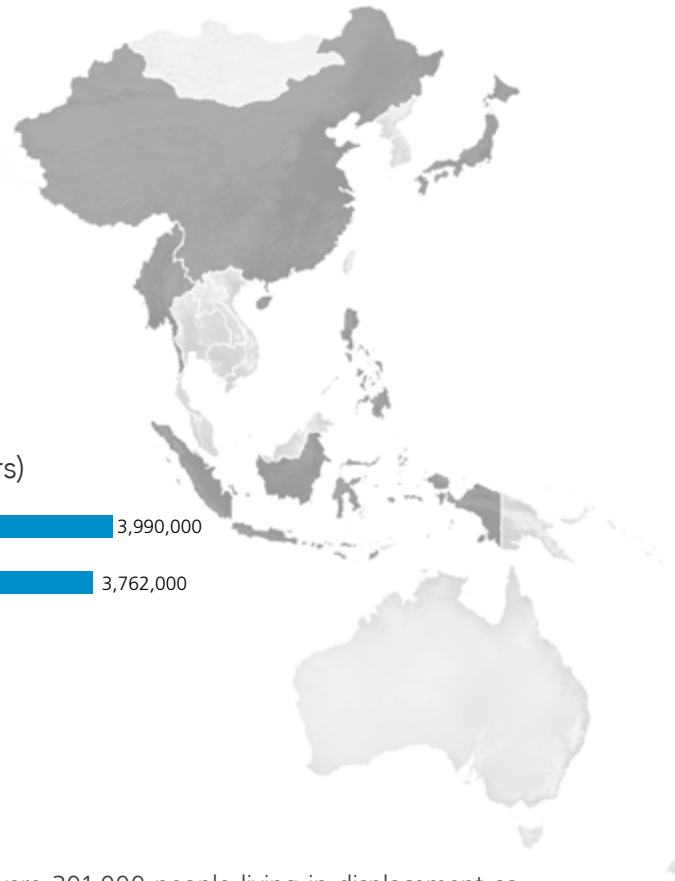
EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC

Conflict 236,000
Disasters 9,332,000
34.2% of the global total





As in previous years, the East Asia and Pacific region accounted for most of the internal displacement associated with disasters recorded worldwide in 2018. Typhoons, monsoon rains and floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions triggered 9.3 million new displacements. From highly exposed countries such as the Philippines, China, Indonesia and Japan, to small island states and territories such as Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and Vanuatu, the impacts varied significantly across the vast region.

The **Philippines** alone recorded 3.8 million new displacements associated with disasters, more than any other country worldwide. Pre-emptive evacuations organised by the government to mitigate the impacts of typhoons between July and December accounted for a significant portion. The most powerful, typhoon Mangkhut, triggered 1.6 million new displacements or around 40 per cent of the national total. Monsoon flooding, volcanic eruptions and landslides also triggered displacements during the year.[119]

Armed conflict between the Filipino military and Islamist groups, and other violence including clan feuds and land disputes, triggered 188,000 new displacements in 2018, the majority in Mindanao region. There was also a positive development in efforts to bring peace to the region with the signing of the Bangsamoro Organic Law in July. The new legislation is intended to address some of the longstanding grievances that have fuelled conflict in Mindanao for decades.[120]

There were 301,000 people living in displacement as a result of conflict in the Philippines as of the end of the 2018. They include around 65,000 in Marawi who have been unable to return to their homes more than a year after the country's military retook the city from affiliates of ISIL, because of the extent of the damage and presence of unexploded ordnance (see Philippines spotlight, p.32).

Almost 3.8 million new displacements associated with disasters were recorded in **China**, particularly in south-eastern provinces that were hit by typhoons. Despite the fact that some of the storms were severe, including the category five typhoon Maria, disaster management authorities successfully reduced the risk of loss of life by evacuating people from high-risk areas. China and the Philippines between them accounted for much of the increase in both regional and global figures for disaster displacement in the year.

Most of the 853,000 new displacements associated with disasters recorded in **Indonesia** were triggered by geophysical events. A number of earthquakes struck the island of Lombok in July and August, triggering 445,000 new displacements, and an earthquake and tsunami in Central Sulawesi province a month later triggered 248,000. The event caused soil liquefaction and extensive damage and destruction of housing, particularly in the coastal city of Palu and the surrounding area. At least 1,754 people were killed. Another tsunami following a volcanic eruption in the Sunda Strait resulted

in 47,000 new displacements in Lampung province in December.

In **Myanmar**, monsoon rains and flooding triggered most of the 298,000 new disaster displacements recorded during the year. All fourteen of the country's states and regions were affected, and a dam breach caused by a swollen river in Bago region in August triggered almost 79,000 new displacements.[121] Around 42,000 associated with conflict and violence were also recorded. Many of these were triggered by an escalation in fighting between the military and the Kachin Independence Army in Kachin and northern Shan states.[122] Inter-ethnic violence over disputed resource-rich areas of Shan state also triggered displacement, as did other events in Karen, Chin and Rakhine states.[123]

Around 146,000 new displacements were recorded in **Japan**, the result of typhoons, storms, monsoon rains and floods, earthquakes and landslides. The country was hit by an unusually high number of disasters in 2018 and though it is generally well prepared, some weaknesses in local disaster risk management and early warning systems were exposed, particularly in terms of ensuring citizens' responsiveness (see Japan spotlight, p.30).

In the Pacific, an earthquake triggered more than 58,000 new displacements in **Papua New Guinea.** Volcanic activity triggered most of the 13,000 recorded in **Vanuatu** and floods most of the 12,000 in **Fiji**. A series of deadly bushfires aggravated by record drought conditions in **Australia** caused significant damage and triggered around 10,000 new displacements.[124]

A number of countries have made significant progress in reducing disaster displacement risk, and regional monitoring, preparedness and response initiatives have also been strengthened.[125] Many countries including Japan, the Philippines and Indonesia have put disaster displacement high on their political agendas by developing and implementing disaster risk management laws and policies. Pre-emptive evacuations carried out by national and local authorities are among the measures which, while they cause displacement, save lives and reduce the impacts of disasters.

Some Pacific small island states have adapted their laws and policies to emerging climate change risks. Fiji, for example, has developed planned relocation guidelines that take into account future risk.[126] Vanuatu also developed a national policy on displacement associated with climate change and disasters last year, an initiative that other countries facing similar challenges would do well to emulate.[127]

URBAN PERSPECTIVES

The East Asia and Pacific region has undergone rapid urbanisation in recent decades.[128] Often hailed as a success for reducing poverty and improving people's access to markets and basic services, urban growth has also brought challenges, including inequality that fuels social tensions.[129]

The expansion of the region's cities has also increased disaster displacement risk, particularly in areas ill-planned to withstand hazards' impacts.[130] Many are located in the tropical cyclone belt and the Pacific Ring of Fire, which is the world's most active seismic and volcanic zone.[131] Given this degree of exposure, the combination of early warning systems and robust urban planning, building regulations and land management will be key to reducing risk as cities continue to expand.

IDMC's global disaster displacement risk model suggests that an average of more than 5.4 million people are likely to be displaced by floods in the region in any given year in the future, the highest level of flood displacement risk globally (see Part 3). Many Pacific small island states and territories such as Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Palau rank among the highest in the world in terms of risk relative to population size. Many Pacific cities have expanded in recent years, including informal settlements on river banks and estuaries, peri-urban areas, waste disposal sites and mangrove swamps. This has increased not only exposure to hazards but also the vulnerability of populations and assets, which in turn drives up the risk and potential impacts of displacement.[132]

The policy developments mentioned above point in the right direction, but it is important to strengthen capacity for implementation. Urban development planning that takes disaster and displacement risk into account will also be key, particularly given that East Asia and Pacific's annual urban growth rate is projected to be three per cent, among the highest in the world.[133]

SPOTLIGHT

JAPAN

Disaster evacuations and the importance of resilience

Located at the intersection of three tectonic plates and in the path of seasonal typhoons, Japan is prone to a range of hazards that have the potential to trigger large-scale displacement and cause significant damage to homes and infrastructure. Last year was no exception. Storms, floods, flash floods, landslides, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions triggered more than 146,000 new displacements.

The country has, however, developed significant resilience to the disasters natural hazards can cause.[134] Most new displacements recorded were pre-emptive evacuations, which are an effective measure to reduce loss of life when people are exposed to hazards. Japan's ability to manage disaster risk via early warning systems and evacuation schemes is generally effective at reducing impacts, but last year showed that citizens are not always as responsive as they could be.

Disaster displacement events in 2018 ranged from two people displaced by a landslide in Oita prefecture in April to more than 30,000 by typhoon Prapiroon in early July.[135] Less than three weeks after Prapiroon's rains triggered widespread flooding and landslides in south-west Japan, the same region was struck by typhoon Jongdari. The government issued pre-emptive evacuation orders for Jongdari, but research conducted in Hiroshima city suggests that less than four per cent of people heeded them.[136] Some of those who stayed put became trapped by landslides and rising floodwaters and more than 170 people died, making Jongdari Japan's deadliest weather-related disaster in decades.[137]

When typhoon Jebi hit in August, citizens' responsiveness was similarly low. Japan's Cabinet Office ordered around 30,000 people to evacuate, but studies conducted in Kobe prefecture after the disaster showed that less than 10 per cent had followed the order. Power cuts prevented some people from receiving the order, while others were unable to hear it over the sound of

the wind and rain. In some areas the order to evacuate was issued after flooding had begun.[138] Jebi was the most powerful typhoon to hit Japan in 25 years, and the magnitude of the disaster did help to raise awareness about the importance of pre-emptive evacuations among affected communities.[139] Around half of the respondents in Kobe said they would evacuate next time if they received a similar order.[140]

Evacuations associated with earthquakes appear to paint a very different picture. A pre-emptive order to evacuate issued to 100 people before a 6.6 magnitude earthquake that struck Hokkaido in September was heeded by 12,000.[141] The earthquake triggered landslides that caused casualties and significant damage, including a power cut that affected 5.3 million people.[142] The evacuation order was issued early enough, however, to allow people in the city of Sapporo to flee to safer areas before it struck. This suggests that the Japanese public is more sensitised to the dangers of earthquakes than those of flooding, in part perhaps because of the amount of media attention the former receive.

The government took steps to improve its disaster response in 2018 with the pre-positioning of supplies in evacuation centres, as opposed to sending them after the event at the request of municipal authorities.[143] It also recognised the phenomenon of "at-home evacuees", people who remain in their damaged homes after a disaster but use facilities at evacuation centres because of the disruption caused to the supply of water, electricity and other basic services. Some may also have

A man in an evacuation centre in Okayama Prefecture, organised by the Japanese Red Cross. Photo: Japanese Red Cross Society, July 2018

to rely on humanitarian assistance for food and non-food items.[144]

Others seek shelter outside officially designated evacuation areas, and these "self-evacuees" tend not to be included in disaster recovery efforts. Some people who evacuated by their own means during the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake, for example, faced significant challenges in accessing housing and other basic services earmarked for evacuees because they did not figure in official government records.[145] Addressing the issue of at-home and self-evacuees would be an important step in ensuring that all displaced people are able to achieve durable solutions. Not having provisions for those who evacuate on their own can create inequalities in compensation mechanisms and increase the risk of protracted displacement.

The disasters that struck Japan in 2018 showed that even in a well-prepared country there is still room for improvement. With the very high level of exposure of people and assets to hazards, the country will need to continuously invest in reducing disaster risk further and responding more comprehensively to those displaced. A number of challenges remain, including raising disaster risk awareness at the local level and ensuring that early warning systems are effective so that timely and well-disseminated evacuation orders are issued and heeded. More comprehensive data on the movement of people during and several months or even years after the event is also needed. Beyond pre-emptive evacuations, there is a lack of information on how long displacement lasts, when people return or where they resettle or integrate locally.

SPOTLIGHT

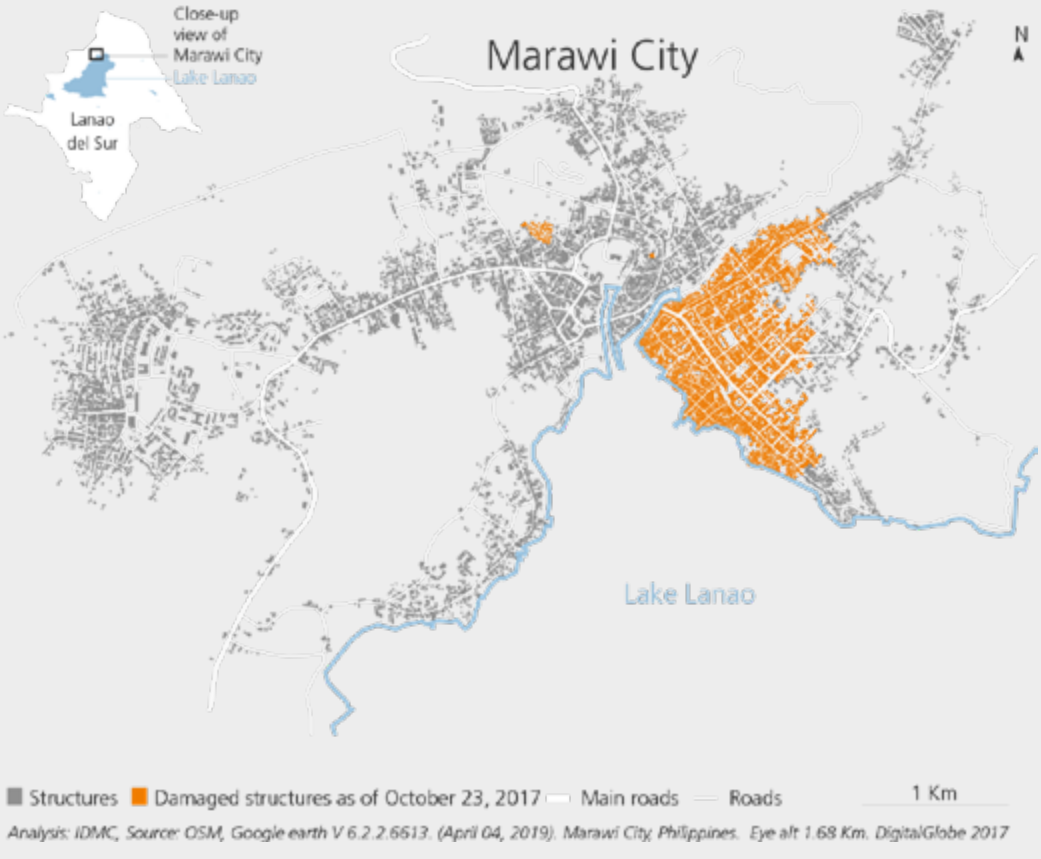
PHILIPPINES

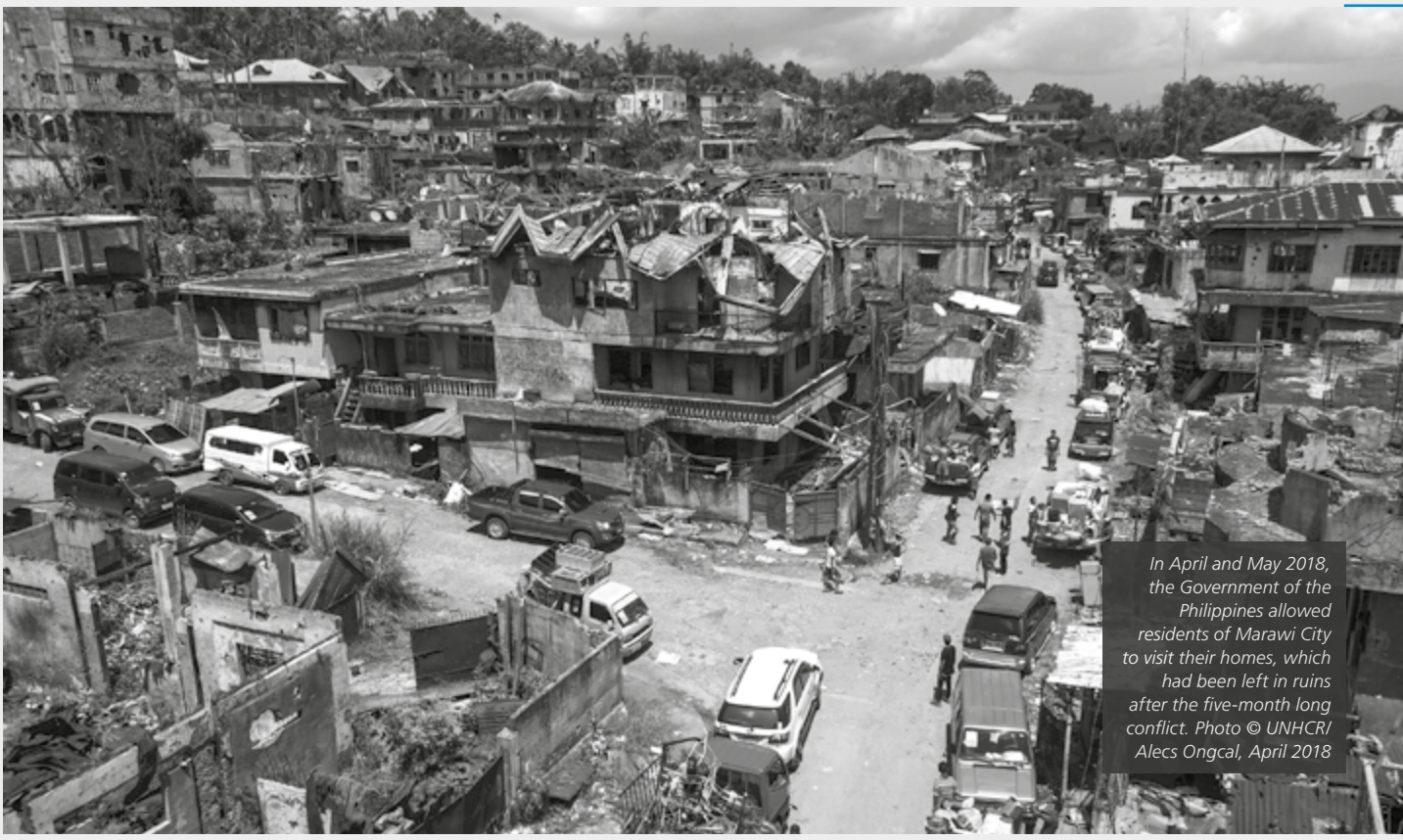
Solutions still a distant prospect in Marawi, one year on

Marawi, a majority Muslim city of 200,000 people, is the capital of Lanao del Sur province and the economic hub of the southern Philippines. Between May and October 2017, it was also the scene of the country's longest urban conflict, during which more than 1,000 people were killed and 350,000 displaced. A year later, reconstruction of the city has begun and most people have returned. Around 65,000 remain displaced, however, of whom around 14,000 are still living in evacuation and transitional shelters.[146]

The conflict erupted on 23 May 2017 when the Filipino security forces raided the home of the leader of the Abu Sayyaf group, a local affiliate of ISIL. The Maute Group, another local radical Islamist organisation and an Abu Sayyaf ally, was called in to provide reinforcement. The militants waged urban warfare unseen in the region but similar to that of ISIL in Mosul and other Iraqi and Syrian cities. They created a maze of improvised tunnels in the densely-built city centre to evade airstrikes, engaged the security forces and resisted a siege for five months. The city's roads were choked with traffic during the first three days of the battle as residents attempted to get out. Between 80 and 90 per cent eventually fled, some of them on foot.[147]

By the time the fighting was officially declared over, after the leaders of both Abu Sayyaf and the Maute Group had been killed, the city had suffered extensive damage. The financial and business district, which accounted for 30 per cent of the urban area, was completely destroyed.[148] The military escorted residents





In April and May 2018, the Government of the Philippines allowed residents of Marawi City to visit their homes, which had been left in ruins after the five-month long conflict. Photo © UNHCR/ Alecs Ongcal, April 2018

in to retrieve what they could from the rubble of their homes before the area was cordoned off. It remains uninhabitable, and reconstruction will not begin until the debris has been cleared and roads rebuilt, which is expected to take at least 18 months.[149]

As many as 70 per cent of those displaced, or more than 270,000 people, were thought to have returned as of the end of 2018.[150] In some areas deemed habitable, however, returnees still have no electricity or running water, nor access to education or livelihood opportunities, which prevents them from rebuilding their lives.[151] Others have had to go back to evacuation centres while they wait for their homes to be repaired. The majority of those still displaced are living with family or friends, but almost 2,000 families live in 21 government-run evacuation centres where they face sanitation and waste management issues.[152]

The government intends to transfer the people still living in evacuation centres to temporary shelters, but those already transferred say that families of six or more members have had to share a single room, which barely constitutes an improvement on their previous conditions.[153] Food security is another major concern, because many IDPs have been unable to find work since they fled. Lanao del Sur was the country's poorest province even before the fighting, and malnutrition levels were among the highest with half of its young population affected.[154]

Resolving displacement in cities decimated by urban warfare is a long and complex process that governments in many regions are grappling with. The cost of rebuilding Marawi has been put at around $1.2 billion, of which the international community had pledged around $670 million as of November 2018.[155] Reconstruction is likely to take years, however, leaving thousands of people displaced in the meantime. Their protracted displacement has the potential to fuel further conflict as the young and working-age, in particular, may grow tired of slow and inadequate progress. A transparent reconstruction process that includes community consultation will be key to quelling residents' fears and frustration.