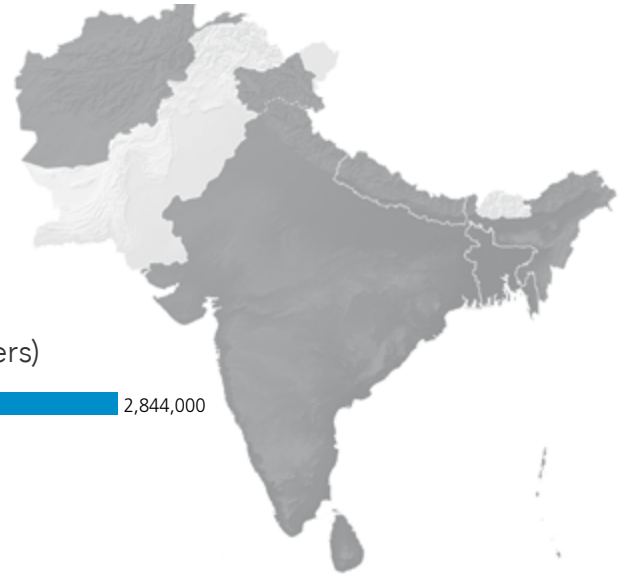
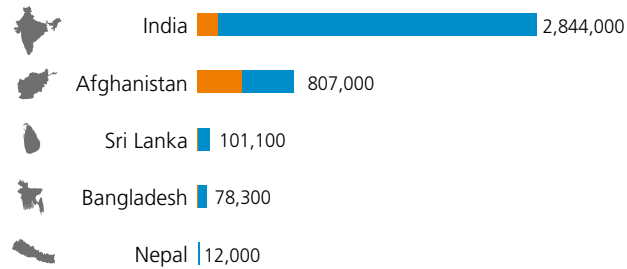


SOUTH ASIA



Conflict 544,000
Disasters 3,303,000
13.8% of the global total

5 COUNTRIES WITH MOST NEW DISPLACEMENT (conflict, violence and disasters)



Large-scale displacement in South Asia was once again triggered by a series of floods, storms and droughts as well as unresolved conflicts and violence. Countries in the region continue to struggle with managing seasonal and recurring weather-related extreme events, resulting in more than 3.3 million new displacements. In addition to tropical storms and floods in India and Pakistan, the monsoon season took a heavy toll in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka as did drought in Afghanistan. New waves of conflict and violence in India and Pakistan and ongoing fighting in Afghanistan triggered around 544,000 new displacements.

India accounted for most of the region's new displacements. Its overall total of 2.8 million was among the highest in the world, of which nearly 2.7 million were triggered by disasters across 15 states. The country was particularly hard-hit by the monsoon season, when flooding devastated the south-western state of Kerala.¹⁵⁶ Almost 1.5 million new displacements were recorded in Kerala in what were described as the worst floods in a century. Cyclone Titli struck Orissa and Andhra Pradesh states in October, triggering 400,000 new displacements, and cyclone Gaja hit Tamil Nadu in November, triggering 249,000.¹⁵⁷

More than 160,000 new displacements associated with conflict and violence were recorded in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Communal violence in Kashmir and West Bengal cast violence in Maharashtra and political violence in Tripura also triggered small-scale displacement (see India spotlight, p.38).

Years of successive dry spells and below average rainfall in **Afghanistan** led to drought conditions in 2018, particularly in the rural north-west of the country. More than 371,000 new displacements were recorded as people's livelihoods became unviable and their living conditions untenable. Conflict triggered roughly the same number, leaving around 2.6 million people living in displacement as of the end of the year, one of the highest figures in the world (see Afghanistan spotlight, p.36).

Afghanistan's four-decade conflict involves not only the country's military, international forces, the Taliban and ISIL, but also various ethnic, communal and Islamist militias.¹⁵⁸ Exact numbers are hard to come by, but military operations by the government triggered a significant portion of the new conflict displacements recorded, with a total of 372,000.

Intercommunal violence triggered localised, small-scale displacement in neighbouring **Pakistan**, but this is not systematically reported on, so the figure of 1,800 is likely to be a significant underestimate. Numbers are not available for Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, but frequent cease-fire violations and cross-border shelling in 2018 strongly suggest that displacement must have taken place. For disasters, more than 2,100 new displacements were recorded, mainly triggered by localised floods.

The monsoon season also brought significant flooding to both **Sri Lanka** and **Bangladesh**. Around 75,000 new displacements were recorded in Sri Lanka in the second half of May, and nearly 16,000 in the first

half of October, though the latter figure is likely to be conservative. Riverine floods in Bangladesh triggered 12,000 new displacements in Moulvibazar district and riverbank erosion around 44,000 in Shariatpur, mainly in September. Flooding was also reported in Cox's Bazar district, which is currently home to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees who have fled violence in Myanmar.

While relatively few new displacements associated with floods were recorded in Bangladesh in 2018, IDMC's flood displacement risk model shows that the country has the third-highest flood displacement risk in the world. Around 1.8 million people are likely to be displaced at any given year in the future, with more than 96 per cent of the risk concentrated in urban and peri-urban areas (see Part 3).

Urban perspectives

Rural to urban migration and natural population growth in the region's towns and cities give South Asia one of the highest annual urbanisation rates in the world at 2.5 per cent.¹⁵⁹ This does not, however, equate with economic growth and higher levels of human development.¹⁶⁰ Major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata in India, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Karachi in Pakistan are among the most densely populated in the world, but high numbers of people live in informal settlements in peri-urban areas that lack adequate housing, infrastructure and services.¹⁶¹ Recent data shows 30 per cent of the urban population across the region as living in informal settlements.¹⁶²

Urban infrastructure development is unable to keep up with the pace of population growth in the region. In countries such as India, complex political structures, capacity gaps, corruption and funding shortfalls, hamper infrastructure development as well as basic service provision.¹⁶³ Such challenges generate widespread and growing socioeconomic inequality.¹⁶⁴

Many urban plans are devised without involving locals in decision-making, and new investments in infrastructure and the upgrade of informal settlements have the potential to push the most vulnerable into displacement and isolate them from their livelihoods.¹⁶⁵ That said, in-situ initiatives to upgrade informal and unserved settlements in several Indian cities have been effective in reducing the risk of evictions and displacement.¹⁶⁶

As in the rest of the world, the true scale of urban internal displacement in South Asia is essentially unknown, which

makes it difficult to estimate how the phenomenon is contributing to urbanisation trends. The evidence that is available, however, suggests that disasters, climate change impacts and conflict trigger displacement both to and within urban areas. A study conducted in Bangladesh suggests that a significant proportion of people who live in informal urban settlements may have been displaced from rural areas by riverbank erosion, a major hazard in the country, projected to increase in the coming years.¹⁶⁷

IDPs are also drawn to urban areas by the prospect of better livelihood and income-generating opportunities.¹⁶⁸ Many, however, struggle to adapt and find themselves living in deepening poverty. They are also vulnerable to secondary displacement triggered by urban disasters and evictions.¹⁶⁹

The Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka, has been identified as the country's main destination for people fleeing disasters and climate change impacts, and local authorities have been unable to cope with the influx. New approaches to develop the potential of secondary cities to host IDPs, however, hold the promise of alternative durable solutions and a reduction in the risk of repeated displacement.¹⁷⁰

People who flee to urban areas to escape conflict face similar challenges to those displaced by disasters. IDPs in the Afghan capital of Kabul struggle to secure tenure over adequate housing, which puts them at constant risk of secondary displacement, mainly in the form of evictions. Kabul's IDPs tend to have significant protection concerns and often live in sub-standard housing in marginalised areas of the city.¹⁷¹ Policy initiatives such as a 2006 white paper on tenure security and community-based upgrading and a 2013 policy on the upgrading of informal settlements point in the right direction, but adoption and implementation remain a challenge.¹⁷²

South Asia's high urbanisation rate presents both major challenges and opportunities.¹⁷³ The meaningful participation and engagement of local communities in urban planning and development will be paramount if the region is to meet sustainable development targets under international frameworks and reduce the risk of future displacement.¹⁷⁴

SPOTLIGHT

AFGHANISTAN

Drought displaced as many as conflict

Afghanistan has been plagued by four decades of armed conflict, undermining development efforts across the country and triggering displacement every year. In 2018, drought added to the existing crisis and triggered more than 371,000 new displacements, a similar number to those associated with conflict. After four years of below average rainfall in the north-western provinces of Badghis, Ghor and Herat, the situation became critical as a lack of rain and snow melt caused crops to fail and livestock to perish. Large numbers of people began to move from rural to urban areas in April, in search of livelihood opportunities, basic services and humanitarian aid.

In reality, the drivers of displacement in Afghanistan are intertwined. The impact of the drought was the final straw for many families who had been living in rural areas underserved after years of armed conflict. Their resources and coping mechanisms had been eroded over time, and 2018 marked a tipping point when conditions became unbearable, leading to the country's largest disaster-related displacement in at least a decade.

North-west Afghanistan is primarily rural, and the drought has decimated the livelihoods of tens of thousands of households dependent on livestock and rain-fed agriculture.¹⁷⁵ Eighty-four per cent of landowners surveyed in IDPs' areas of origin said production was down by half compared with 2017. Those who owned livestock said they had lost almost all of their poultry, camels and horses and 90 per cent of their large and small ruminants. Respondents also said the lack of water for domestic use was a significant concern. Rain-filled reservoirs are used not only for irrigation but also for drinking water, because groundwater from hand pumps and wells is unpotable.

As of September 2018, more than 250,000 IDPs were living in scattered informal camps on the outskirts of Qala-e-Naw and Herat, the capitals of Badghis and



Herat provinces, respectively.¹⁷⁶ Conditions in the camps are deplorable and protection issues rife. Shelters are overcrowded and provide little privacy, and with the onset of winter and sub-zero temperatures members of different families were huddled together in one tent in an effort to keep warm. People are destitute and have resorted to harmful coping mechanisms, including child labour and early marriage. There were 161 reported cases of child marriage in Herat and Badghis provinces between July and October 2018.¹⁷⁷

There is a misconception that people who flee slow-onset disasters have time to pack their belongings and organise their departure, putting them in a better position than those displaced by sudden-onset disasters or conflict. The situation in Afghanistan disproves this. People fleeing the drought had already sold many of their assets and left their areas of origin with almost nothing.

Humanitarian response teams in the country have extensive experience in dealing with displacement triggered by conflict, which affects the entire country but tends to be localised and relatively small-scale. Their usual response mechanisms have not been able to cope with the mass movements concentrated in the north-west of the country associated with the drought. Some humanitarians may also have been influenced by the reluctance of host communities and authorities to allow IDPs to settle in their areas, due in part to ethnic and tribal differences, but also security concerns; this caused delays in the initial response to the displaced. Given that the drought has predominantly affected areas that are contested or beyond government control, authorities fear the new arrivals may include members of non-state armed groups.

The response has been further complicated by the fact that people living in protracted displacement

As winter approached in Afghanistan, many families displaced by drought and conflict were still living in makeshift tents. Photo: NRC/Enayatullah Azad, November 2018



and vulnerable host community members have set up makeshift shelters among the new IDPs in an attempt to secure humanitarian assistance, making it challenging for humanitarians to target the most vulnerable recently displaced households. As drought is a slow-onset phenomenon, it is also unclear who has the responsibility to respond: at the outset of the drought-induced displacement crisis, there was much debate about which agencies had the mandate to respond, with many humanitarian agencies suggesting that the emphasis of the response should be on development in the places of origin, and thereby fall to development agencies rather than humanitarians.

Despite the reticence of local authorities and hosts to let IDPs settle, many intend to stay. Only about one per cent of IDPs interviewed in Herat and eight per cent in Badghis said they would consider an assisted voluntary return, and 71 per cent in Herat said they would not consider returning regardless of the assistance on offer.¹⁷⁸ They cite factors such as insecurity, lack of food and livelihoods, and poor access to water and basic services as reasons for not wanting to return to their places of origin.¹⁷⁹

This raises the question of how to secure suitable, long-term housing, land and livelihoods for people displaced by the drought.¹⁸⁰ Most have pitched their shelters on private land where landlords only grudgingly accept their presence, which leaves them vulnerable to eviction. The Afghan Land Authority has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation to allocate state-owned land to IDPs for five years, but this is on the assumption that they will eventually return to their areas of origin so does not constitute a durable solution.

The Afghan government is already struggling to facilitate durable solutions for the 2.6 million people displaced by conflict in the country. Strong political will and substantial support from the international community will be needed to make real progress towards durable solutions for those displaced by conflict and drought in the country.¹⁸¹

SPOTLIGHT

INDIA

Monsoon and conflict displaced millions

India is not unfamiliar with heavy monsoon rains and floods, but the 2018 season was particularly intense. Above average rainfall triggered flooding and landslides nationwide between June and August. Tropical cyclones also struck the country's east coast between October and December, severely damaging homes and affecting millions of people in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu and Puducherry territory. Disasters triggered as many as 2.7 million new displacements during the year, nearly double the figure for 2017. The poverty and vulnerability of many of the households affected was a significant factor in aggravating the losses, damage and displacement caused.

The monsoon season was the world's second largest disaster displacement event in 2018 after typhoon Mangkhut, triggering almost two million displacements between May and October. The impacts were widespread, but most media attention focussed on the state of Kerala, where severe flooding in 13 out of 14 districts was described as the worst in a century.¹⁸²

The Kerala floods accounted for more than half of India's new displacements in 2018. As many as 1.5 million people were recorded as displaced in about 5,600 camps set up by the authorities. That figure is a significant underestimate of the overall scale of displacement, given that an unknown number of IDPs stayed with friends and family or in rented accommodation.¹⁸³ By the end of the monsoon season, as many as 2,000 homes had been destroyed and as many as 22,000 damaged, hampering return for many people.¹⁸⁴

Three cyclones struck India's eastern seaboard during the year. Cyclone Titli triggered around 300,000 pre-emptive evacuations in Odisha and around 100,000 displacements in Andhra Pradesh in October, the latter figure calculated using housing destruction as a proxy. Communities living in affected coastal areas tended to live in mud and bamboo homes or dwellings with corrugated tin sheets, which were unable to withstand the



storm. When cyclone Phethai hit two months later, many were still living in damaged homes.¹⁸⁵ Phethai triggered as many as 32,000 displacements in the two states in December. Cyclone Gaja triggered 249,000 displacements in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry in November. It also destroyed homes and livelihoods, potentially hindering return for many of those displaced.¹⁸⁶

Though dwarfed in scale, conflict also triggered displacement in India in 2018. Cross-border shelling led to more than 160,000 displacements in Indian-controlled Kashmir.¹⁸⁷ Heavy fire from Pakistani forces triggered about 54,000 in January, when people deserted a number of border villages, and as many as 100,000 from Jammu, Samba and Kathua districts in May.¹⁸⁸ The intensity of cross-border shelling and subsequent displacement has increased in recent years, but it repeats past patterns of short-term but recurring movements that disrupt daily life, education and the provision of other basic services.¹⁸⁹

The events of 2018 serve as a reminder that displacement is an everyday reality in India, and one which has the potential to drag down the country's emerging economy if measures to reduce displacement risk are not taken. The authorities have made commendable efforts in improving early warning and disaster management systems, but they continue to face challenges when it comes to preventing and responding to crises. The last 12 months also showed that poverty and vulnerability, which are key drivers of risk, need to be better addressed. Given ever more frequent and intense weather events and continuing tensions along the country's disputed border with Pakistan, these challenges may only get more severe in the future.