

## SRI LANKA

### Figure Analysis – Displacement Related to Conflict and Violence

#### CONTEXT

IDPs displaced during Sri Lanka's civil war, which ended in 2009, continued to live in protracted displacement in 2018. Reports suggest that about 36,000 people remained displaced as a result of this conflict at the end of the year. The government has been criticised for the slow pace at which land, much of which is still occupied by the military, was being returned to those living in displacement.<sup>1</sup>

In March 2018, anti-Muslim riots broke out in Kandy, displacing more than 1,100 people. The riots were sparked by an incident in which a Sinhalese truck driver was reportedly assaulted by a Muslim youth after a traffic accident and reflect the increased politicisation of religious identity in Sri Lanka.<sup>2</sup>

| New displacements  | Total number of IDPs   | Partial or unverified solutions   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
|  |  | Number of IDPs who have made partial progress towards a durable solution  | Number of IDPs whose progress towards durable solutions cannot be verified  |
| 1,100  | 37,000<br><small>(Year figure was last updated: 2018)</small>  | No data available   | No data available   |
| <i>This corresponds to new instances of internal displacement having occurred in 2018.</i> | <i>This corresponds to the total number of individuals living in internal displacement as of 31 December 2018.</i> | <i>This corresponds to the number of IDPs whom our data providers have identified as having returned, resettled or locally integrated in 2018 and for whom the evidence obtained by IDMC suggests that progress toward durable solutions is only partial given their living conditions. In a few instances this number may refer to movements rather than people.</i> | <i>This corresponds to the number of IDPs whom our data providers have identified as having returned, resettled or locally integrated in 2018 but for whom there is no available evidence to corroborate progress toward durable solutions. In a few instances this number may refer to movements rather than people.</i> |

## NEW DISPLACEMENTS

*This corresponds to new instances of internal displacement having occurred in 2018.*

### **Sources and methodologies**

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation, Northern Development and Hindu Religious Affairs leads the gathering and maintenance of data about IDPs, refugee returnees and communities affected by displacement due to the civil war. It updates displacement data each month with information about births, deaths and transfers, which is collected by district secretaries.

However, no source provides comprehensive data on new displacements linked to conflict and violence. During surges of inter-communal violence, however, such as the anti-Muslim riots in Kandy in March 2018, displacements were reported in the media.

### **Main caveats and monitoring challenges**

There is a lack of data available on new displacements associated with conflict and violence in Sri Lanka, as there is no official source reporting on the issue. New displacements triggered by intercommunal violence, political violence or other small-scale phenomena is usually covered by the media but may be underreported.

### **IDMC figure and rationale**

The estimate of about 1,100 new displacements was derived from media reports about anti-Muslim riots in Kandy in March 2018.

### **Significant changes from last year**

In 2017, no new displacements were recorded in Sri Lanka. The increase this year is linked to the escalation of religious violence in Kandy in March 2018.

## TOTAL NUMBER OF IDPs

*This corresponds to the total number of individuals living in internal displacement as of 31 December 2018.*

### **Sources and methodologies**

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation, Northern Development and Hindu Religious Affairs leads the gathering and maintenance of data about IDPs, refugee returnees and communities affected by displacement. It updates displacement data each month with information about births, deaths and transfers, which is collected by district secretaries.

### **Main caveats and monitoring challenges**

There is a lack of data about displacement triggered by conflict and violence in Sri Lanka, apart from data about displacement linked to the civil war. Displacement triggered by intercommunal violence or other small-scale phenomena may be underreported. This could affect the reliability of the figure on the total number of IDPs.

In addition, although data linked to the civil war is updated regularly by the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation, Northern Development and Hindu Religious Affairs, there is a lack of information regarding the current living conditions of these IDPs, including those who have been resettled. This therefore affects the accuracy of the estimate.

### **IDMC figure and rationale**

IDMC's estimate includes the total number of IDPs still awaiting resettlement since the civil war ended in 2009, according to the Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation, Northern Development and Hindu Religious Affairs, equivalent to about 36,000 people. To this, IDMC added a caseload identified

as displaced using event-based media monitoring, equivalent to about 1,100 people. The latter figure is also our estimate for the number of new displacements.

### **Significant changes from last year**

This figure amounts to a decrease of nearly 5,000 IDPs in comparison to the 2017 estimate of 42,000. This may be because the government has continued to resettle IDPs since 2017.

## NUMBER OF IDPS WHO HAVE MADE PARTIAL PROGRESS TOWARDS A DURABLE SOLUTION

*This corresponds to the number of IDPs whom our data providers have identified as having returned, resettled or locally integrated in 2018 and for whom the evidence obtained by IDMC suggests that progress toward durable solutions is only partial due to the conditions in which these IDPs are living.*

### **Sources and methodologies**

The Ministry of Resettlement, Rehabilitation, Northern Development and Hindu Religious Affairs keeps a record of the number of resettled IDPs as per the methodology detailed above. These could be considered to have made partial progress towards a durable solution. However, the Ministry has not shared the number of resettlements that took place in 2018 with IDMC.

### **Main caveats and monitoring challenges**

The reported number of resettled IDPs in Sri Lanka and the number awaiting resettlement, decreased between 2017 and 2018. According to government sources, this was due to a change in administrative divisions in the Northern Province. As a result, the total number of IDPs decreased between 2017 and 2018. However, it is not clear that this was solely due to resettlements. As a result of this, IDMC used this figure as its estimate for the total number of IDPs who reached partial solutions in 2018.

### **IDMC figure and rationale**

No estimate of the number of IDPs who have made partial progress towards a durable solution is available for 2018.

### **Significant changes from last year**

In 2017 IDMC estimated that about 1,700 returns took place. These returns corresponded to resettlements that classify as partial progress towards durable solutions. The fact that no corresponding estimate is available for 2018 reflects a lack of data rather than indications that the rate of returns and resettlements have decreased.

## CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

The Confidence Assessment provides an at-a-glance overview of the comprehensiveness of the data available regarding displacement associated with conflict for each country. It describes the methodologies used, frequency of reporting, data disaggregation and geographical coverage. Here two key metrics are analysed: the new displacements and the total number of IDPs.

| Displacement metric            | New displacements        | Total number of IDPs           |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Reporting units                | Households               | People, households             |
| Methodology                    | Media monitoring         | Registration, media monitoring |
| Geographical disaggregation    | Admin 2 or more          | Admin 2 or more                |
| Geographical coverage          | Unknown                  | Partial coverage               |
| Frequency of reporting         | Other                    | Upon request                   |
| Disaggregation on sex          | No                       | No                             |
| Disaggregation on age          | No                       | No                             |
| Data triangulation             | Some local triangulation | Some local triangulation       |
| Data on settlement elsewhere   | Partial                  | Yes                            |
| Data on returns                | No                       | Partial                        |
| Data on local integration      | No                       | Partial                        |
| Data on cross border movements | No                       | Partial                        |
| Data on deaths                 | No                       | No                             |
| Data on births                 | No                       | No                             |

For any additional questions please email: [data@idmc.ch](mailto:data@idmc.ch)

For the full country profile on Sri Lanka please visit:  
<http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/sri-lanka>

<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Sri Lanka: Government Slow to Return Land](#), 9 October 2018

<sup>2</sup> Aljazeera, [Sri Lanka 'on the brink' amid fresh anti-Muslim violence](#), 8 Mar 2018