



An aerial view of the destruction in Praia Nova in Beira, Mozambique, after Tropical Cyclone Idai destroyed and damaged homes, knocking out electricity and communications. Photo: IFRC/ Denis Onyodi, March 2019

## MID-YEAR FIGURES

# INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT FROM JANUARY TO JUNE 2019

12 SEPTEMBER 2019

## KEY MESSAGES

1. Internal displacement has spiked in porous border areas of West Africa since January 2019, where intercommunal violence has been reignited

Regional conflicts and terrorist attacks spilling across borders have reignited long-standing intercommunal tensions and led to displacement on a scale previously unseen in the region. New displacements increased almost eight-fold in Burkina Faso and almost seven-fold in Mali over the past 12 months. In Niger, new displacements in Tahoua and Tillaberi increased significantly compared to 2018 as insecurity and violence continue to spread to the south-west of the country. There is a risk that this violence might spread to neighbouring countries.

2. Persistent instability in Ethiopia, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo has driven some of the highest levels of internal displacement in 2019

Unaddressed ethnic tensions and border disputes in Ethiopia have contributed to persistently high levels of displacement, while the government has also been pushing for displaced people to return to their places of origin. Weakening state authority in north-west Nigeria has led to an increase in attacks by armed groups, criminal violence and banditry. This in turn has triggered significant new displacements. Political instability across the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has laid the ground for increased localised violence, particularly in the eastern provinces, where displacement continues to be significant. **A window of opportunity exists for the newly formed governments in Ethiopia and the DRC to address the causes and impacts of displacement sustainably and foster long-awaited stability.**



Children running along the muddy floodwater that has completely immersed the Sangaya camp in Dikwa, Nigeria, where hundreds of families have taken shelter from conflict in Borno State. Photo: NRC, August 2019

### 3. Overwhelmingly high numbers of people continue to be displaced in Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Yemen – testimony to fragmented international peace efforts

Collapsing peace deals and failed ceasefires triggered significant new displacement across all four countries. Despite the Afghan government's calls for a ceasefire and efforts at peace talks, the Taliban launched its annual spring offensive in April, displacing large numbers of people. Displacement also increased dramatically in Libya, as conflict escalated in Tripoli and violence between the forces of the country's two rival governments increased to levels unseen since the start of the civil war in 2014. The de-escalation zone in Idlib, Syria, failed in April and an offensive led by the Syrian army displaced half a million people, most of whom were already living in displacement. Despite the signing of the Stockholm agreement for peace in December 2018, there were twice as many new displacements in Yemen during the first half of 2019 than during the same period in 2018. Without strong political commitment to peace and stability from governments, regional bodies and the international community, these conflicts are likely to drive further increases in the scale and severity of displacement.

### 4. In today's changing climate, mass displacement triggered by extreme weather events is becoming the norm

July 2019 was the hottest month the planet has ever experienced, and experts predict that the year as a whole will be one of the five warmest ever. As world leaders prepare for the UN's climate action summit in New York, they should bear in mind that a record number of disaster events triggered displacement in the first half of 2019, leading to the highest mid-year figure ever reported for displacements associated with disasters. **Given the seasonal nature of this type of displacement, IDMC predicts that the end-of-year figure will also be among the highest ever recorded.**

### 5. The record displacement triggered by Cyclone Fani hides a success story, as countries learn from the past with lifesaving pre-emptive evacuations

Cyclone Fani triggered more than 3.4 million new displacements in India and Bangladesh in May, one of the largest displacement events and the largest pre-emptive evacuation we have recorded. Many of those displaced suffered losses, but they survived and were able to return to their homes once the storm had passed. Cyclone Idai, by contrast, was responsible for more than 416 fatalities in Mozambique and is likely to lead to longer-lasting displacement and other impacts to people's livelihoods. **This underscores the importance of governments having the information, knowledge and capacity they need to take early action to protect communities and make them more resilient to disasters.**

## SUMMARY– NEW DISPLACEMENTS IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2019

There were about 10.8 million new displacements worldwide between January and June 2019, 7 million triggered by disasters and 3.8 million by conflict and violence.

Many of the countries with the highest number of displacements associated with conflict and violence were the same as in the first half of 2018. **Syria** recorded 804,000 new displacements, the highest figure globally, as clashes in the border areas of Idlib and Hama governorates continued to exact a high civilian cost. The **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** recorded 718,000, the result of intercommunal violence and clashes between armed groups in nine provinces.

The number of new displacements in **Yemen** almost doubled compared with the same period in 2018 to 282,000, as people fled fighting in Hajjah, Hodeidah and Al-Dhale governorates. Figures for **Afghanistan** also increased to 213,000, mainly the result of shifting conflict dynamics and clashes involving non-state armed groups, particularly in Kunar, Nangarhar and Takhar provinces.

Africa was also particularly affected. The **DRC**, **Ethiopia**, **Nigeria** and **South Sudan** were among the countries with the highest number of new displacements in the first half of 2019. The situation also deteriorated in several West African countries, including **Burkina Faso** and **Mali**, and the conflict in **Libya** escalated with fighting in and around Tripoli. The country recorded 137,000 new displacements, a near four-fold increase compared with the first half of 2018.

New displacements were also recorded in new countries, bringing emerging conflicts to light. Land disputes between the Tchokossi and Gangan communities in the town of Gando in **Togo** triggered about 2,000, and criminal gang violence in Artibonite department in **Haiti** a similar number.

Weather-related hazards were again responsible for the highest disaster displacement figures, and the major storms of the first half of 2019 were particularly intense. Cyclone Fani triggered more than 3.4 million new displacements in **India** and **Bangladesh** in May, the majority in the form of

lifesaving pre-emptive evacuations. Cyclone Vayu also led to 289,000 in the Indian state of Gujarat in June, again mostly pre-emptive evacuations. Cyclone Idai caused devastating damage in **Mozambique**, **Malawi**, **Zimbabwe** and **Madagascar** in March and triggered 617,000 new displacements, but relatively few were pre-emptive.

Floods were similarly devastating, particularly in **Iran** where they affected around 90 per cent of the country and triggered 500,000 new displacements. Flash floods and landslides in two separate events in the **Philippines** led to 405,000 in January, and flooding that followed drought in **Ethiopia** 190,000. An exceptional rainy season in **Bolivia** also caused flooding that triggered 75,000.

Taking stock of the first half of the year, several data challenges emerge. For instance, some data for ongoing disasters that occur between June and September, such as monsoon flooding in South and East Asia, may be made publicly available at a later date, due to the time required to conduct evaluations on disaster impacts and displacement. Assessing the length and severity of displacement triggered by disasters is also a challenge.

Other challenges include a lack of reporting, access restrictions and unreliable data, particularly for displacement associated with conflict. No data was available, for example, for the areas of **Cameroon** affected by the anglophone crisis, meaning that the figure published is certain to be an underestimate.

In **Chad**, by contrast, data has become more readily available, leading to an increase in the number of new displacements recorded compared with previous years. This may reflect a worsening security situation but is also the result of more systematic data collection and reporting from the Lac province, which has been particularly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Estimates for the countries and disaster events with the highest levels of displacement are detailed below, along with their causes. Spotlights also explore four situations in more detail: the escalation of conflict and related displacement in **Libya** and in three countries of **West Africa**; and two cases of large-scale but underreported displacement associated with flooding in **Iran** and in **Bolivia**, **Brazil** and **Paraguay**. In addition, IDMC presents the estimated projection of disaster displacement for the second half of the year.



Houses remain submersed in water in Khuzestan Province, Iran, because of the flat terrain. As a result, house foundations are in danger of permanent damage. Photo: NRC/Anne Trehondart, April 2019

# GLOBAL FIGURES FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2019

## CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

There were 3.8 million new displacements associated with conflict and violence in 38 countries and territories between January and June 2019. The countries with the highest new displacements due to conflict and violence are shown in Figure 1.

## DISASTERS

There were 7 million new displacements associated with more than 950 disaster events in 102 countries and territories between January and June 2019. The countries with the highest new displacements due to disasters are shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: Countries with the highest new displacements for different triggers in the first half of 2019

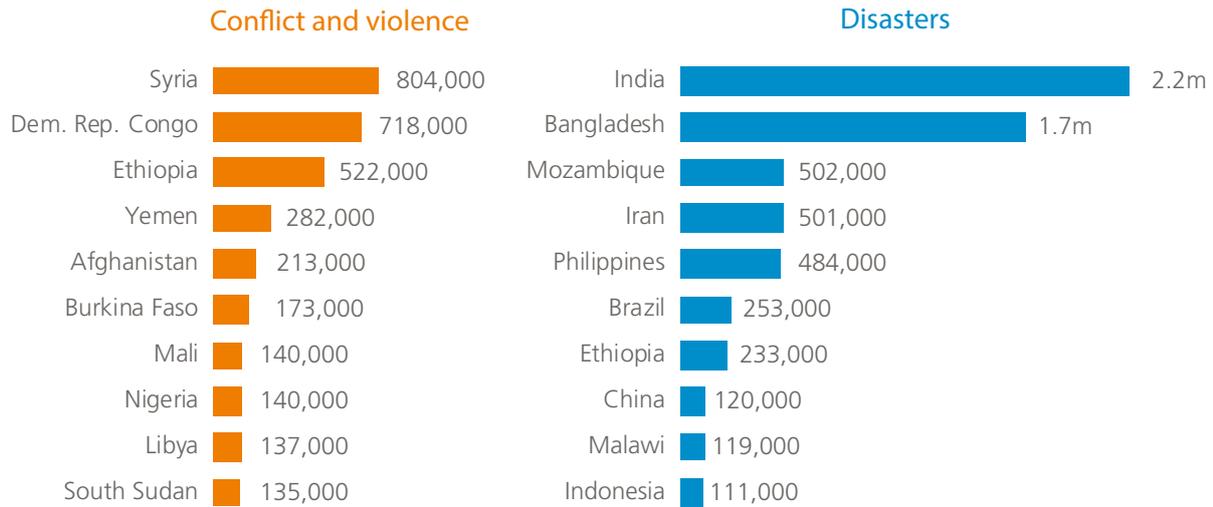
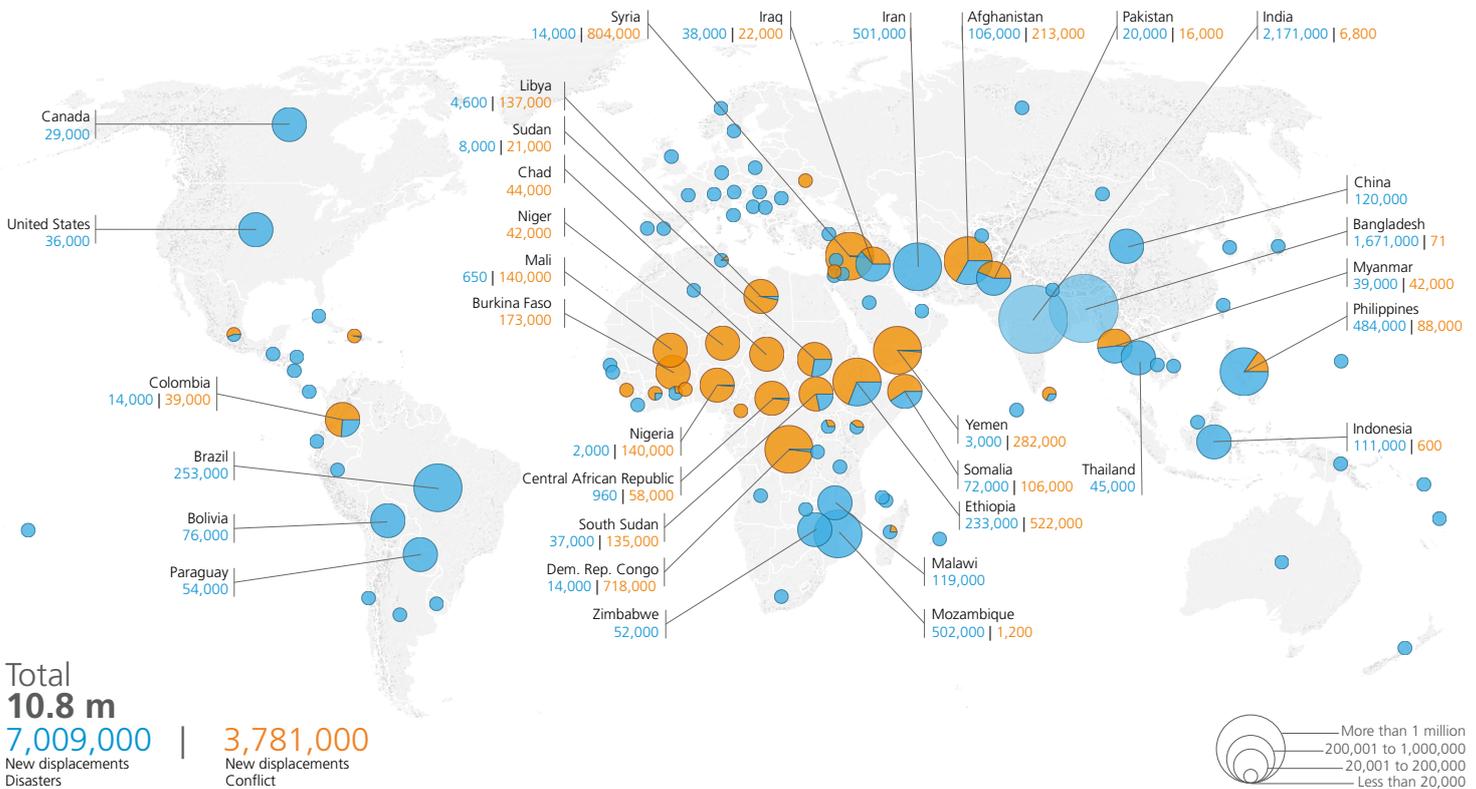


FIGURE 2: New displacements by conflict, violence and disasters in the first half of 2019



The country names and figures are shown only when the total new displacements value exceeds 20,000. Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures. The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC.

# CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

## I NEW DISPLACEMENTS

There were about 3.8 million new displacements associated with conflict and violence in 38 countries between January and June 2019.

## I COUNTRY UPDATES

### SYRIA - 804,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

High levels of violence continued in Syria in the first half of 2019. Clashes between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the Hajjin and Baghouz areas of Deir ez Zor governorate, the last pockets of territory held by ISIL in Syria, triggered more than 80,000 new displacements in January and February. More than half of those displaced fled to Al-Hol camp in Al-Hasakeh, putting immense pressure on the facility.<sup>1</sup> The camp was already struggling to operate at several times its intended capacity and many of its residents suffer severe mental and physical health conditions.

Ongoing displacement was also reported in the border areas between Idlib and Hama governorates, where a de-escalation zone was established in 2018. Increased shelling triggered more than 200,000 new displacements between January and April. The violence escalated rapidly in May, triggering more than 270,000 new displacements from the de-escalation zone. A complex web of ceasefire deals negotiated between Russia, Iran and Turkey is in place in Idlib. The three countries held another meeting in Kazakhstan on 26 April, during which they vowed to fully implement the agreements to stabilise the situation, but the Syrian government launched its offensive in the governorate days later.<sup>2</sup>

Idlib is the only area of Syria that remains beyond the government's control. If the offensive continues, it will lead to a humanitarian disaster because the Turkish border is closed, reducing people's options for flight. The governorate is currently home to three million people, half of whom are internally displaced.

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO - 718,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

There were about 718,000 new displacements associated with conflict and violence between January and June, the result of intercommunal violence between different ethnicities and clashes between armed groups and government forces.

Most new displacements took place in Ituri province, where an upsurge in violence between the Hema and Lendu communities forced large numbers of people in Djugu and Mahagi territories to flee internally.<sup>3</sup> Hundreds more fled across the border into Uganda, adding to pressure on the country's refugee camps.<sup>4</sup> Conflict between armed groups also escalated in South Kivu, particularly in Fizi and Mwenga territories, and clashes between armed groups and the armed forces were reported in North Kivu's Masisi and Oicha territories.<sup>5</sup>

A number of public health crises, including outbreaks of Ebola, measles and cholera, deepened in the first half of the year, further complicating the humanitarian situation in areas of displacement.<sup>6</sup>

### ETHIOPIA - 522,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

The number of new displacements in Ethiopia decreased from its high point in 2018, when almost 2.9 million were recorded, but the humanitarian situation remains severe and 522,000 new displacements were recorded between January and June 2019. Ongoing ethnic clashes triggered nearly 140,000 in the East Harerge and Borena zones of Oromia region, more than 100,000 in Amhara region, more than 85,000 in the Siti, Fafan and Dawa zones of Somali and more than 70,000 in the West Guji zone of Oromia and the Gedeo zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's (SNNP) region.

The figures are likely to be underestimates, because most are derived from an analysis of variations in the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in different zones, and may not account for short-term or repeated displacements.

Despite the continued insecurity, a national steering committee led by the Ministry of Peace approved a three-phase plan in March to organise the return of all IDPs within four months.<sup>7</sup> Implementation began almost immediately, and by the end of May about 1.5 million people had gone back to their areas of origin. Most displacement sites in East and West Wollegas and West Guji and Gedeo zones, where the majority of IDPs had sheltered during the 2018 crisis, were dismantled.

Returnees encountered many obstacles, including little if any assistance in their home areas, destroyed homes, disrupted livelihoods and ongoing insecurity. Many secondary displacements were reported as a result.<sup>8</sup> Many return areas are not fully accessible, making it difficult to verify the figures reported by the national and local authorities, and to deliver humanitarian assistance to returnees in need.<sup>9</sup>

### YEMEN - 282,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

The parties to the conflict in Yemen signed an agreement in Stockholm in December 2018 to de-escalate the situation. No substantial progress was made until mid-May, however, when forces of the Houthi movement, officially known as Ansar Allah, began to withdraw from the ports of Hodeidah, Salif and Ras Issa.<sup>10</sup> More than 282,000 new displacements were recorded between 1 January and 23 June, a higher figure than for the whole of 2018. Hajjah, Hodeidah and Al-Dhale governorates were worst affected, accounting for more than 95,000 new displacements between them.<sup>11</sup>

Conflict in Hajjah between Houthi forces and those of the internationally recognised government supported by the Saudi-led coalition intensified between January and April. Clashes between the Houthi movement and the Hajour ethnic group in the eastern district of Kushar also triggered more than 33,000 new displacements, including some repeated displacements. The number of people displaced overwhelmed local organisations' capacity to respond to their needs.<sup>12</sup>

### AFGHANISTAN - 213,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Armed conflict in 31 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces triggered more than 213,000 new displacements between January and June in 2019, compared with 168,000 recorded during the same time period in 2018. Clashes involving non-state armed groups such as ISIL-Khorasan and the Taliban and the Afghan military triggered widespread displacement in Kunar, Nangarhar and Takhar provinces.

The most significant event took place in Takhar in June, when fighting between the army and the Taliban triggered more than 36,000 new displacements. In addition, attacks by ISIL-affiliated fighters on Taliban positions in the Chapadara district of Kunar province triggered as many as 25,000 new displacements in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces in March.

Many IDPs fled with few if any belongings, leaving them with significant needs in terms of clothing, shelter, hygiene and cooking materials.<sup>13</sup> A lack of access to potable water in displacement areas increased the likelihood of water-borne diseases, and meant people had to travel in search of safe sources, exposing them to protection risks.<sup>14</sup>

Afghanistan's political instability shows no sign of abating, and it is likely that similar levels of displacement will continue to take place into the foreseeable future. Presidential elections have been delayed following a Supreme Court ruling and provincial council elections are also overdue, with a date yet to be announced.<sup>15</sup>

## BURKINA FASO - 173,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

More than 173,000 new displacements were recorded in Burkina Faso between January and June, almost five times the figure for the whole of 2018. Most took place in the North, Centre-North and Sahel regions. The increase in displacement is linked to an escalation in conflict in the northern province of Soum, which has experienced insecurity since the founding of a local Islamist group called Ansarul Islam in late 2016.

The insecurity has spread as the militants tap into local grievances in the north and north-east, and Burkina Faso's security forces have launched counterinsurgency operations in response. These have led to accusations of abuses against civilians, including summary executions and arbitrary arrests.<sup>16</sup> A growing number of self-defence militias have also emerged.<sup>17</sup>

IDPs have sought refuge in other communities and villages, and are in urgent need of shelter, food, water and health services. Many are struggling to survive, but are afraid to return given the ongoing conflict and insecurity in their home areas. The violence has also affected host communities. Around 119,000 children are out of school following attacks or threats and 250,000 people have no access to health services because medical staff have fled their posts.<sup>18</sup>

*Find out more about displacement associated with conflict and violence in West Africa in the spotlight.*

## MALI - 140,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Violence in central Mali, which had been escalating since early 2018, spiralled out of control in the first half of 2019. Around 140,000 new displacements were recorded between January and June, more than in the whole of 2018. Most took place in the Gao, Menaka, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu regions.

The recent increase in displacement is linked to an escalation in conflict between Fulani militias and those of the agriculturalist Dogon community. The links, real or perceived, between the Fulani and the northern Islamist militants have fuelled distrust among the Dogon, who have set up self-defence groups.<sup>19</sup> Some of the violence is over access to land and water, but many attacks are part of Dogon efforts to root out individuals linked to extremist groups.<sup>20</sup>

IDPs have sheltered with host families, who are also struggling to meet their basic needs, and in camps. The unprecedented displacement has put further strain on already scarce



*Aigachatou, a single mother and her children, stand in front of their makeshift tent after fleeing violence in Timbuktu, Mali. Photo: NRC/Togo Moise, February 2019*

resources, camps are overcrowded and there is an urgent need for safe water and sanitation facilities.<sup>21</sup>

*Find out more about displacement associated with conflict and violence in West Africa in the spotlight.*

## NIGERIA - 140,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Around 140,000 new displacements were recorded in Nigeria between January and June, though this figure is likely to be an underestimate.

An emerging conflict in the north-western states of Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara rooted in banditry and criminal violence led to more than 74,000 internal displacements, and more than 35,000 across the border into Niger's Maradi region.

The ongoing conflict in the north-eastern states of Adamawa, Borno, Gombe and Yobe triggered around 42,000 new displacements. Boko Haram's insurgency is now in its 10th year, and its fighters launched a large-scale attack on the city of Rann in Borno in January. The assault triggered more than 30,000 displacements across the border to Cameroon and thousands more internally.<sup>22</sup> The Nigerian military also forced the relocation of around 10,000 people from the Borno town of Jakana to a camp in the state capital Maiduguri in April.<sup>23</sup>

Violence between herders and farmers in the country's central states, known as the Middle Belt, triggered 23,000 new displacements, and small-scale displacements triggered by land disputes and communal violence were also recorded in the southern states of Osun and Rivers.

While Nigeria's president, Muhammadu Buhari, was elected to serve a second term in elections on 23 February, it is unclear how many IDPs were able to exercise their voting rights.<sup>24</sup>

## LIBYA - 137,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Libya experienced a sharp increase in conflict and violence in the first half of 2019. Conflict between two rival governments – the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), and the Libyan National Army (LNA), escalated in and around Tripoli on 4 April after LNA announced an offensive. By the end of June, it had triggered more than 130,000 new displacements. Other episodes of violence forced thousands more people to flee across the country, leading to a near four-fold increase in the number of new displacements compared with the first half of 2018.

*Find out more about displacement associated with conflict and violence in Libya in the spotlight.*

## SOUTH SUDAN - 135,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Despite the signing of a new peace deal in September 2018, based on its collapsed 2015 predecessor, conflict has continued unabated in several parts of the country.<sup>25</sup> The number of new displacements more than halved compared with the first half of 2018, but IDMC has low confidence in this figure because insecurity and access restrictions limited reporting.

The activities of the National Salvation Front, which did not sign the peace deal, triggered almost 20,000 new displacements around Yei in Central Equatoria.<sup>26</sup> More than 16,000 were recorded in Western Bahr el Ghazal between early March and mid-May, the result of conflict and insecurity in Jur River county associated with the arrival of pastoralists from Tonj in search of pasture for their livestock. They have attacked villages in the area and there have been reports of killings, rape, beatings and looting.<sup>27</sup>

Violence decreased in other parts of the country, but more than 60 per cent of the population faces severe food insecurity, caused by interlinked factors such as late rainfall, livelihoods eroded by conflict and the country's macroeconomic crisis.<sup>28</sup>

### SPOTLIGHT

## DETERIORATING SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA SPARKS COMPLEX DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

Border areas between central **Mali**, northern **Burkina Faso** and south-western **Niger** have been plagued by violence since 2018. The violence has its roots in the activities of several local but globally oriented jihadist groups that have spent years laying the groundwork for armed insurgencies that are now wreaking havoc across the three countries.

Some of the disputes involve access to land and water, but many attacks are part of efforts to root out individuals linked to extremist groups or to take revenge for previous attacks. Jihadist militants contained in northern Mali in 2012 have gained ground in central areas of the country and across the border in Burkina Faso and Niger by recruiting from the Fulani community, pastoralists who have been marginalised by governments and development programmes that favour agriculture.<sup>29</sup>

This situation has spawned a growing number of self-defence militias, and as the violence spirals out of control, armed groups have burned homes, destroyed the livelihoods of whole communities,

laid siege to villages and perpetrated severe human rights violations. Many of those displaced are left traumatised, and governments and humanitarian organisations struggle to meet their urgent needs for shelter, food, water and healthcare.<sup>30</sup>

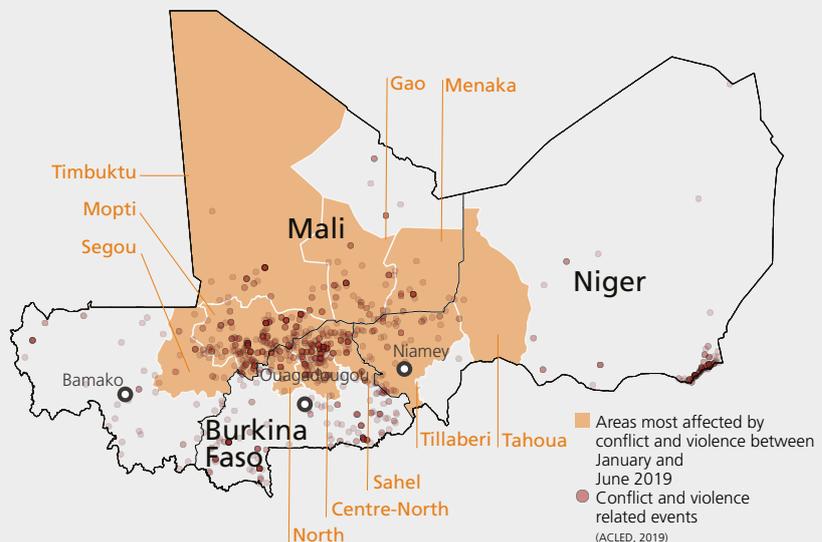
More than 140,000 new displacements were recorded in Mali in the first half of 2019, a higher figure than for the whole of 2018, and about 173,000 were recorded in Burkina Faso, the highest figure ever reported.

The violence has also spilled over into the Tahoua and Tillaberi regions of south-west Niger, triggering an increase in displacement. Across the country as a whole, 42,000 new displacements were

recorded between January and June, which represents more than 80 per cent of the total for the whole of 2018. The government passed a law in December 2018 which is intended to protect the country's displaced people.<sup>31</sup>

As the security situation deteriorates in the three countries' border areas, they face the difficult task of providing those displaced with adequate protection and assistance. The ultimate aim must be to ensure that they are able to achieve durable solutions to their displacement, but as of today most are afraid to return home because of prevalent insecurity and scarce resources. Instead, they struggle to get by in over-stretched host communities.<sup>32</sup>

**FIGURE 3:** Areas most affected by conflict and violence between January and June in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger



## SPOTLIGHT

# ESCALATING CONFLICT IN LIBYA LEADS TO HIGHEST DISPLACEMENT IN FIVE YEARS

Conflict in **Libya** escalated significantly in the first half of 2019, triggering 137,000 new displacements, the highest figure since 2014.

Political power has been split since 2014 between two rival governments: GNA, which is based in the north-west with Tripoli as its capital; and LNA, which holds eastern parts of the country with Tobruk as its capital. LNA controls two-thirds of Libya's territory, including major oilfields.<sup>33</sup> Conflict between GNA, LNA and ISIL displaced hundreds of thousands of people between 2014 and 2018, and included significant battles for Tripoli, Derna and Sebha.

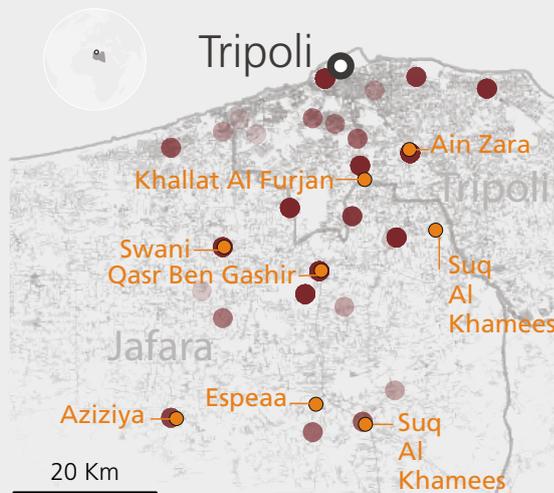
Just before a planned national reconciliation conference in Tripoli in April this year, LNA launched an offensive to wrest control of the capital and the north-west of the country from GNA.<sup>34</sup> Heavy fighting broke out south of Tripoli, marking a new phase in Libya's conflict and the worst violence since the start of the civil war.<sup>35</sup>

The clashes in and around Tripoli displaced about 130,000 people between April and June. They fled to more secure neighbourhoods of the capital, the Nafusa mountains and various locations along the north-west coast. Almost a half of those displaced were under 18, and most sought shelter with host families.<sup>36</sup> The fighting also severely affected migrants and asylum seekers in detention centres near the frontlines. The Tadjourah detention centre was hit by an airstrike on 2 July, which killed 53 people and injured 130.<sup>37</sup> Those in other detention centres were cut off from essential services for days and their evacuation to safer locations was delayed.

The conflict in and around Tripoli also aggravated humanitarian needs in the south of the country. The presence of combatants along major trade routes obstructed the transport of food and other key goods, and access to electricity, cash and health services was disrupted. The parties to the conflict also moved some of their forces from the south to the frontlines, creating a vacuum in which lawlessness increased.<sup>38</sup> IDMC identified more than 400 displacements associated with this insecurity.

The conflict showed no signs of abating as of the end of July, with attacks on the only functional airport in the Tripoli area and both sides still believing they are able to achieve their objectives by military force.<sup>39</sup>

**FIGURE 4:** Battle and conflict locations and associated areas of origin of IDPs in and around Tripoli, Libya



 Between April and June 2019 alone, the clashes around Tripoli displaced more than **130,000** people.

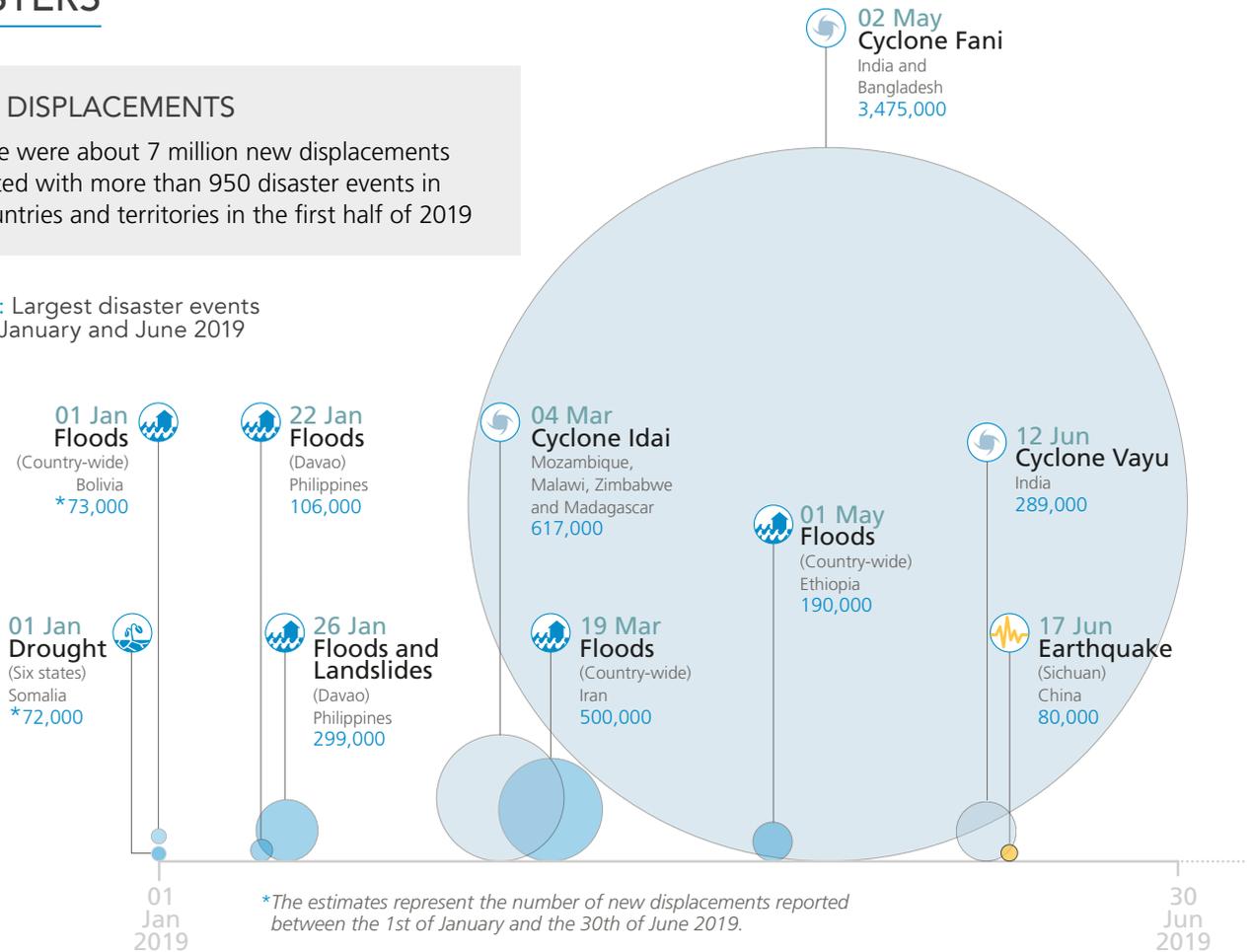
- Primary areas of origin of IDPs (IOM, 2019)
- Battles or other conflict related events (ACLED, 2019)
- ~ Routes (OSM)
- ~ Districts

# DISASTERS

## NEW DISPLACEMENTS

There were about 7 million new displacements associated with more than 950 disaster events in 102 countries and territories in the first half of 2019

FIGURE 5: Largest disaster events between January and June 2019



## KEY DISASTER EVENTS IN 2019

### CYCLONE FANI, INDIA AND BANGLADESH, MAY: 3,475,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Cyclone Fani, a category 4 storm, triggered more than 3.4 million new displacements and killed 89 people as it tracked across parts of India and Bangladesh between 2 and 4 May. Around 1.8 million evacuations were recorded in **India**, the vast majority in the state of Odisha, but also in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. It was the strongest tropical cyclone to hit the Indian state of Odisha since the 1999 Odisha Cyclone, which at a death toll of over 15,000 people was one of the deadliest of the region.<sup>40</sup> About 1.7 million people were also evacuated across 23 districts in **Bangladesh**, most of them in coastal areas such as Bhola, Khulna, and Putaukhali.

The high number of evacuations and relatively low death toll for such a powerful storm were the result of extensive preparations on the part of both governments.<sup>41</sup> In India, the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority set up after the 1999 cyclone, ensured that several thousand shelters were made ready before landfall, and schools and airports were shut. Bangladesh also put contingency plans in place based on forecasts from the country's meteorological department, pre-positioning relief items and opening shelters.<sup>42</sup>

### CYCLONE IDAI, MOZAMBIQUE, MALAWI, ZIMBABWE AND MADAGASCAR, MARCH: 617,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Cyclone Idai triggered around 617,000 new displacements in **Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Madagascar**. The storm was active at different levels of intensity between 4 and 21 March and killed more than 1,000 people, making it the deadliest recorded in the south-west Indian Ocean basin.

Idai made two landfalls in Mozambique, which bore the brunt of the damage and destruction. The first was on 4 March as a tropical depression, when it brought a week of heavy rains, and the second on March 15 as a category 2 storm near the coastal city of Beira. Based on the extensive destruction of homes recorded in Imhanbane, Manica, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia provinces, IDMC estimates that Idai triggered around 478,000 new displacements in Mozambique. Ninety per cent of the housing in Beira was destroyed.<sup>43</sup>

The storm also caused extensive flooding in Malawi where, based on the number of people staying in shelters in Chickwawa, Malanje, Nsanje, Phalombe and Zomba provinces, IDMC estimates that it triggered around 87,000 new displacements. It then tracked across eastern Zimbabwe as a tropical depression, triggering a further 51,000, a figure based on assessments of people staying in shelters and with host families in Manicaland and Masvingo provinces. Idai also passed close to the north-east coast of Madagascar, where it caused flooding and triggered 500 new displacements in Besalampy village in Antananarivo province.

## FLOODS, IRAN, MARCH AND APRIL: 500,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Iran experienced some of its worst flooding in 20 years between mid-March and late April. Ninety per cent of the country, including 2,000 towns and cities were affected, particularly in the provinces of Golestan, Khuzestan and Lorestan.<sup>44</sup> Mass evacuations were ordered, many of them to temporary shelters, amounting to about 500,000 new displacements nationwide. The floods are estimated to have caused more than \$2.5 billion in damages, including the destruction of roads and 77 schools.<sup>45</sup> The Iranian government issued an official request for assistance on 8 April.

*Find out more about flooding in Iran in the spotlight.*

## FLOODING AND LANDSLIDES, DAVAO, PHILIPPINES, JANUARY: 299,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

The tail end of a cold front brought about several days of continuous rainfall to the **Philippines** in late January, causing flooding and landslides in various areas of Davao, also known as Region XI.<sup>46</sup> These in turn triggered more than 299,000 new displacements between 26 and 30 January, a conservative estimate based on data gathered by the Philippines' Disaster Response Operations Monitoring and Information Center (DROMIC) in February.<sup>47</sup>

Most new displacements occurred in the province of Davao del Norte where more than 260,000 people were evacuated to temporary shelters or stayed with family and friends. The worst affected areas included the municipalities of Asuncion, Braulio E. Dujali, Carmen, New Corella, Santo Tomas, and the City of Tagum. All of those displaced were able to return their homes by 1 February as the floodwaters receded.

## CYCLONE VAYU, INDIA, JUNE: 289,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Cyclone Vayu triggered about 289,000 new displacements in **India** in June. People in coastal areas of the western state of Gujarat were pre-emptively evacuated on 12 June in preparation for the expected landfall of a category 3 storm the following day.<sup>48</sup> In the end Vayu turned abruptly west and moved away from the coast, but heavy rainfall and wind speeds equivalent to a category 1 storm were still recorded, causing disruption in the regions of Saurashtra and South Gujarat.<sup>49</sup>

## FLOODS, ETHIOPIA, MAY AND JUNE: 190,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

**Ethiopia's** highly variable weather appears to be becoming more extreme, with some areas prone to frequent drought and others regular flooding. Heavy rains in May and early June caused flooding and triggered more than 190,000 displacements in 38 districts across seven out of nine regions. There was also widespread damage to property and many head of livestock were lost. Afar and SNNP regions were worst affected. SNNP also suffers conflict, which aggravated the impacts of the flooding.<sup>50</sup>

## FLASH FLOODS, DAVAO, PHILIPPINES, JANUARY: 106,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Flash floods triggered more than 106,000 new displacements in the province of Davao Oriental in the **Philippines** between 22 January and 3 February. The floods were caused by continuous downpours brought on by tropical depression Amang passed through the region.<sup>51</sup> The storm made landfall on Siargao Island on 20 January and affected nearby provinces in the following days. A seasonal creek burst its banks, leaving one person dead, and the rains also caused a landslide in Tarragona town and flooding in Caraga town.<sup>52</sup> Eighty-six homes were destroyed, and 167 damaged.

## EARTHQUAKE, SICHUAN, CHINA, JUNE: 80,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

A 6.0-magnitude earthquake struck Sichuan province in **China** on 17 June, killing 13 people and injuring 199.<sup>53</sup> The epicentre was in Changning county. The national Ministry of Emergency Management sent a team to the area to rescue survivors and manage the relief effort.<sup>54</sup> The quake triggered more than 80,000 new displacements, and local authorities set up 27 temporary shelters to accommodate those affected. More than 110,000 homes were damaged, and 46,000 severely damaged.<sup>55</sup>

## FLOODS, BOLIVIA, JANUARY TO APRIL: 75,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

A series of floods and landslides triggered about 75,000 new displacements in **Bolivia** between January and April 2019. The El Niño weather phenomenon contributed to unusually heavy rainfall during the rainy season, causing rivers to burst their banks, landslides and flash floods. The Bolivian government declared a national emergency on 27 February.<sup>56</sup> Displacement was recorded in nine departments, of which the worst affected were La Paz and Cochabamba, where about 29,000 and 16,000 new displacements respectively were recorded.

*Find out more about flooding in Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil in the spotlight.*

## DROUGHT, SOMALIA, JANUARY TO JUNE: 72,000 NEW DISPLACEMENTS

Somalia has been affected by the East African drought since 2015. The number of new displacements associated with drought in the first half of 2019 was less than half the figure for the same period the previous year, but many of the million-plus people who fled an extended episode in 2016 and 2017 have been unable to achieve durable solutions and are still living in displacement.<sup>57</sup> Most of the 72,000 new displacements recorded in 2019 took place in the Bakool, Bay and Saanag regions. Those displaced have significant needs in terms of water, food and livelihood support.

## SPOTLIGHT

# WORST FLOODS IN 15 YEARS CAUSE NATIONWIDE DISPLACEMENT IN IRAN

Some of the worst flooding in Iran for 15 years triggered around 500,000 new displacements between mid-March and the end of April. Some provinces are thought to have received almost a year's rainfall in 24 hours. At the peak of the flooding more than 10 million people in 2,000 towns and cities across nearly 90 per cent of the country were affected.<sup>58</sup> The provinces of Golestan, Lorestan and oil-rich Khuzestan were worst affected, and large areas of agricultural land and crops were damaged or destroyed.<sup>59</sup>

The Iranian Red Crescent (IRC) was among the first responders, providing shelter, food and other essential items

to those affected. Those displaced sought refuge with relatives and friends, or in collective shelters such as schools and sport clubs equipped by IRC and the authorities, including the army.<sup>60</sup>

The severity of the floods and the disaster they triggered are likely to have been the result of a combination of natural and human factors. Rampant deforestation and rapid and poorly planned urbanisation, particularly along or near rivers, has also increased the number of people exposed.<sup>61</sup>

There are also indications that the lack of an adequate response meant the impacts of the disaster were worse than they needed to be. The floods, which developed rapidly after a long drought, caught the authorities and the public by surprise.<sup>62</sup> Those affected criticised the government for not responding quickly enough to the threats posed by the torrential rains, and for emergency releases of water from dam reservoirs that flooded farmland and in some cases reached highly populated areas.<sup>63</sup> Street protests broke out

in Khuzestan as people accused the authorities of prioritising the protection of oil infrastructure at the expense of their livelihoods.<sup>64</sup>

Full recovery will be slow. Around 269,000 people were still displaced two months after the onset of the emergency.<sup>65</sup> The government has promised to compensate flood victims for their housing and livelihood losses, but the cost of the damage has been put at more than \$2.5 billion and Iran's economy is already struggling under the weight of international sanctions.<sup>66</sup>

The disaster highlights the fact that a combination of factors tends to lead to the greatest losses. The ability to prevent, manage and respond to such events relies on the collective efforts of different sectors, from urban planning to civil engineering, and from local authorities to central government.<sup>67</sup> With better preparation, the duration and severity of displacement can be drastically reduced.



A view of the damage caused by the floods in Lorestan, Iran. Photo: NRC, May 2019

## SPOTLIGHT

# FLOODS DISPLACE MANY THOUSANDS IN THE AMAZON AND RIO DE LA PLATA BASINS

Flooding in the Amazon and Rio de la Plata basins triggered 400,000 new displacements in **Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay** and **Uruguay** in the first half of 2019. Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay recorded the highest figures. The unusually heavy rains in Bolivia and Paraguay were linked to El Niño.<sup>68</sup>

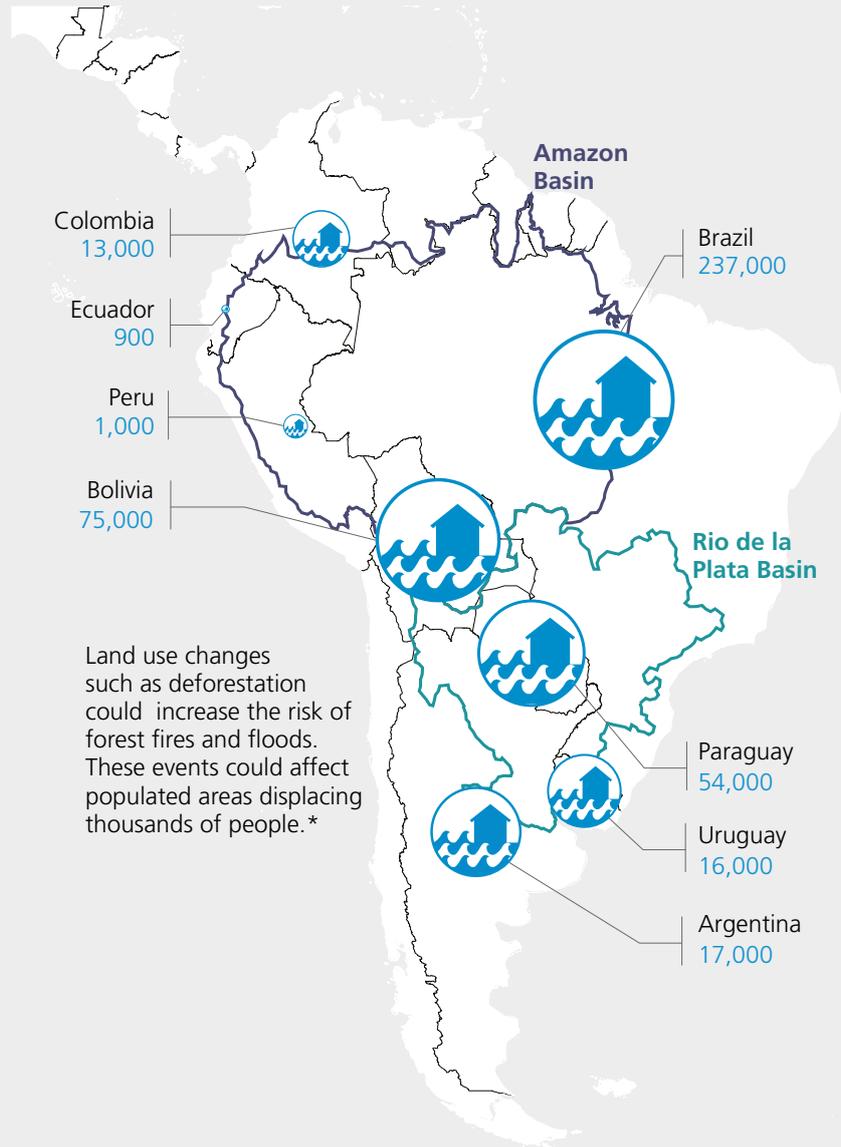
The Amazon basin is the largest watershed on Earth, drawing run-off from parts of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. There have been a number of extreme hydrological events along the Amazon river and some of its tributaries over past decade, punctuated by worsening droughts.<sup>69</sup> Changes in land use such as deforestation and the construction of hydroelectric dams may also contribute to the severity of flooding.<sup>70</sup>

The Rio de la Plata basin includes areas of south-eastern Bolivia, southern and central Brazil, all of Paraguay, most of Uruguay and northern Argentina. Floods are a major concern because of the extensive damage they cause in the basin, leading to human and material losses, particularly in urban areas.<sup>71</sup>

Heavy rains and floods triggered more than 237,000 new displacements in Brazil between January and June.<sup>72</sup> The worst-affected states were Amazonas with more than 47,000, Para with more than 43,000 and São Paulo with less than 36,000.<sup>73</sup> Some reports suggest that areas flooded in Amazonas state were among the largest on record.<sup>74</sup>

Floods in Bolivia triggered around 75,000 new displacements between January and April. The worst-affected departments were La Paz with 28,000, Cochabamba with more than 16,000 and Chuquisaca with more than 7,000. The floods damaged crops, homes and water and sanitation infrastructure, and thousands of people were reported as homeless.<sup>75</sup> Argentina and Uruguay also reported thousands of new displace-

FIGURE 6: New displacements associated with floods in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Brazil, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay



Land use changes such as deforestation could increase the risk of forest fires and floods. These events could affect populated areas displacing thousands of people.\*

\*Marengo *et al* 2018, Nobre and Borma 2009 Displacement data was published by different national organizations such as disaster management agencies and the Red Cross national societies. Basins dataset (Harvard Center for Geographic Analysis, n.d.)

ments in the first six months of the year. Flooding in the Chaco region of Argentina was described as the worst in 30 years.

Paraguay's national emergency secretariat reported atypical flooding of the Paraguay river between 15 March and 8 May following months of torrential rain.<sup>76</sup> The Paraguay river rose from its usual height of four metres to 6.92 metres.<sup>77</sup> Around 54,000 new displacements were recorded across seven of the country's 17 departments between January and April, of which 90 per cent took place in Distrito Capital. The other

departments affected were Central, Concepción, Cordillera, Ñeembucú, Presidente Hayes and San Pedro. The floodwaters were still to recede as of July, meaning that many families may not be able to return to their homes until the end of the year.<sup>78</sup>

# SEASONALITY OF DISASTERS: USING HISTORICAL DATA TO BUILD FUTURE PROJECTIONS

## LOOKING BACK

IDMC has improved the monitoring of displacement associated with disasters over the years by detecting and reporting on more small-scale events and capturing more information about them, such as precise dates and locations. Since 2013, we have recorded the start and end dates of each event, which enables us to analyse general trends, patterns and dynamics of seasonal hydrometeorological disasters and the displacement they trigger.

As Figure 7 shows, when data for 2013 to 2018 is aggregated by month, seasonal trends come to light. Most disaster displacement takes place between June and September, with a peak in July. This trend is linked to the seasonal nature of hydrometeorological disasters such as monsoon floods, cyclones and severe storms.

These trends are even clearer when we look at the data by region (see Figure 8). Most of the displacement in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America occurs during the rainy seasons from April to May and October to November. In the US and the Caribbean, South Asia and East Asia and Pacific, the cyclone and typhoon seasons, as well as the monsoon season, tend to take place between June and September and in November and December.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Our trend analyses based on historical data may be affected by reporting biases and data gaps, but we have collected information on enough events to understand historical trends and make future projections.

Looking ahead to the second half of 2019, a projection based on recent trends indicates around 22 million new displacements by the end of the year, an increase of around 25 per cent on the figure for 2018. The real numbers may very well come to match this prediction, given that there were mass displacement events in July and August which are not reflected in our mid-year figures.

This year's monsoon season also started in late June rather than in late May in highly exposed countries such as India,

FIGURE 7: Seasonality of new displacement figures, 2013 to 2018

Number of new displacements from disaster events, in millions

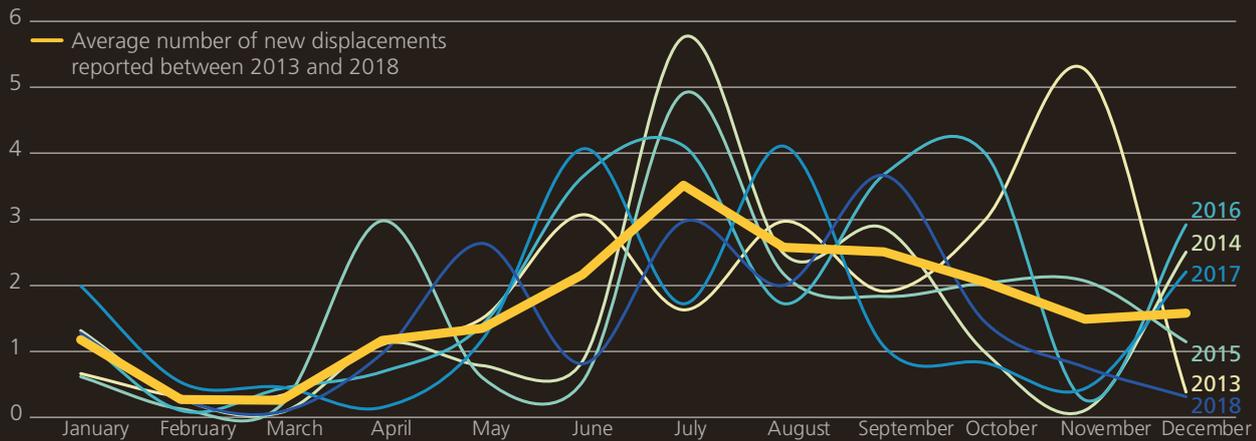


FIGURE 8: Average seasonality of displacement associated with disasters by region, 2013 to 2018

Average values of new displacements from disasters per region

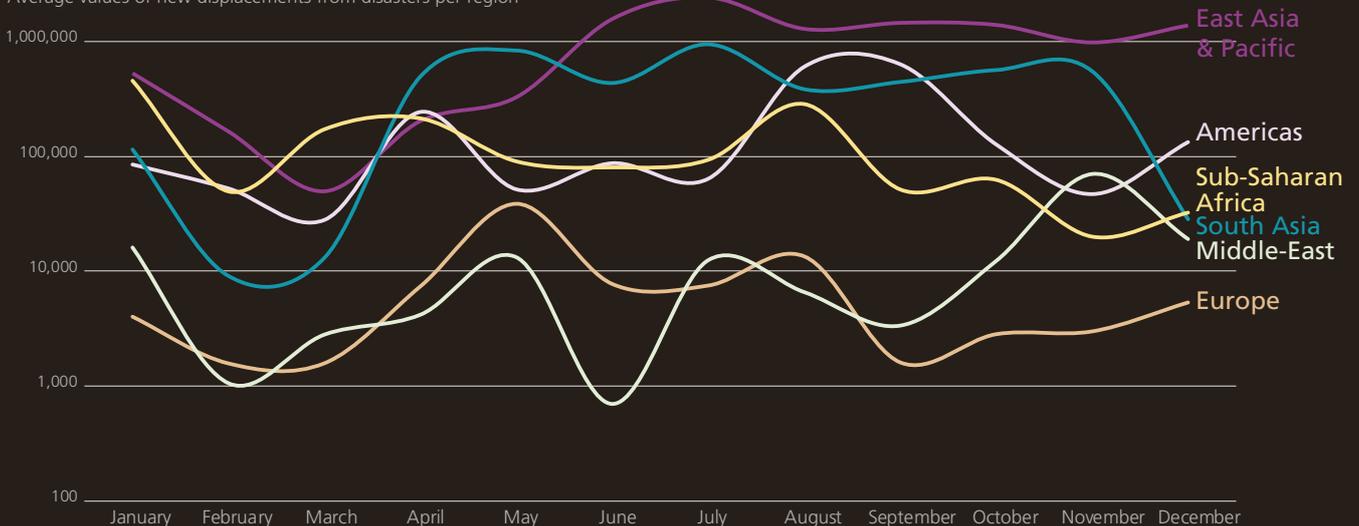
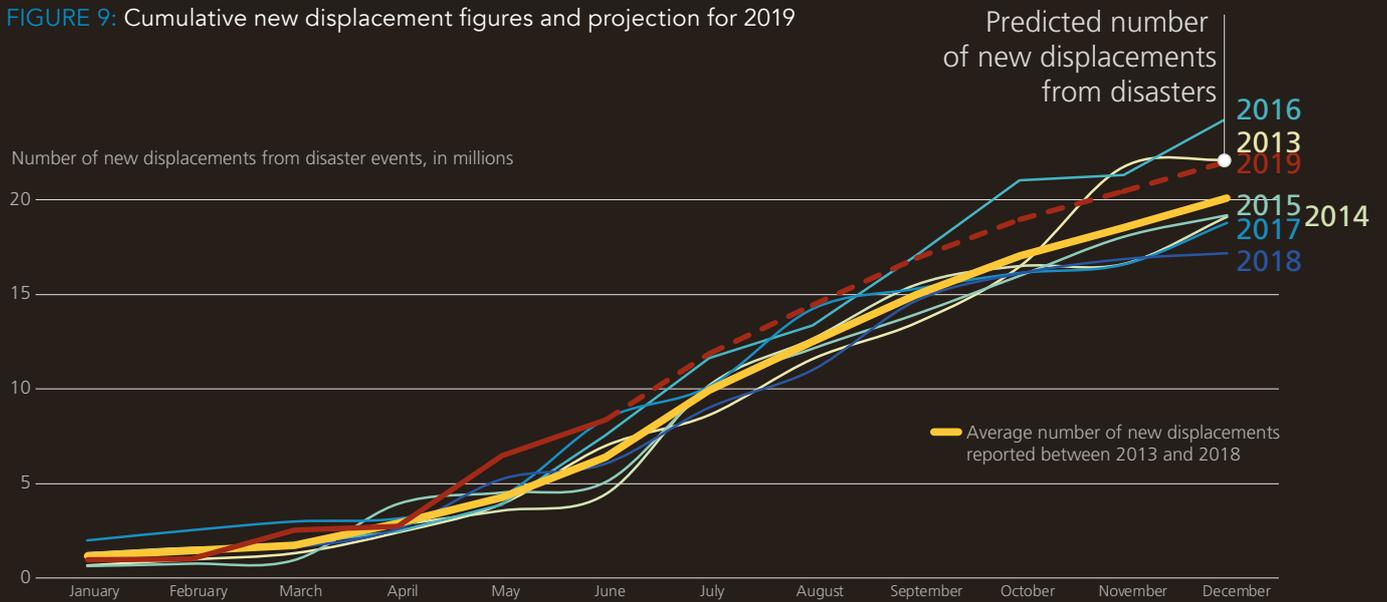


FIGURE 9: Cumulative new displacement figures and projection for 2019



which means the rains and floods may continue to trigger mass displacement in the months to come. The hurricane season in the Caribbean and the US has just started, as has the typhoon season in south-east Asia.

Given that hydrometeorological hazards account for about 90 per cent of the disaster displacement we record each year, we have some confidence that 2019 will be an “above average” year.

Figure 9 shows the projection of cumulative displacements for 2019, represented by the dotted blue line, which is in keeping with our observations in previous years. The extrapolation may only give a general idea, but it allows us

to understand when displacement is more likely to happen, which is valuable information for disaster preparedness and the reduction of future disaster displacement risk.

Geophysical hazards constitute a significant source uncertainty in our extrapolations. They are difficult to predict because they occur on a geological rather than seasonal timescale. If a major geophysical event were to occur in the second half of the year, our cumulative figure for 2019 might be even higher than our current forecast.

## DISCLAIMER

The figures in this publication represent provisional estimates for the number of new displacements between 1 January and 30 June 2019. They are based on data IDMC was able to verify by the time of publication, and will be updated in the coming months to account for new information received and to include displacements that occur during the second half of the year.

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