



NOTE

This is an excerpt from IDMC's 2019
Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID).

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.

Notes

182. International Federation of the Red Cross, "Swathes of South India underwater after worst floods in a century", August 20, 2018.
183. Sphere India, "Kerala Floods 2018 Joint Detailed Needs Assessment Report", September 2018.
184. Ministry of Home Affairs, India, "Situation report on Heavy Rain fall in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Assam, Odisha, Nagaland and Punjab", October 10, 2018.
185. NDTV, "Over 11,000 Evacuated In Odisha As Cyclone Phethai Hits Andhra", December 18, 2018.
186. Hindustan times, "Cyclone Gaja leaves 40 dead, over 80,000 stranded; TN seeks Central funds", November 17, 2018; Times of India, "Tamil Nadu announces relief package of 1,000 crore for cyclone relief", November 20, 2018.
187. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.
188. Hindustan Times, "India, Pakistan hold flag meet to discuss Jammu and Kashmir border firing", June 4, 2018.
189. Firstpost, "Incessant ceasefire violations by Pakistan derail life in Kashmir's border towns as India struggles to protect locals", May 28, 2018.