

THEMATIC SERIES
**The ripple effect: economic impacts of
internal displacement**

This thematic series focuses on measuring the effects of internal displacement on the economic potential of IDPs, host communities and societies as a whole

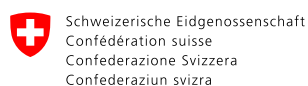


**UNVEILING THE COST OF
INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT**

2021 report

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover photo: Every morning Warsame prepares and waters his farm through the irrigation access provided by the borehole in Guriel town, Somalia, that was rehabilitated by NRC. He grows various crops, including watermelon, lemon, banana, pumpkin and onions, which has significantly improved his livelihood status. Photo: Abdulkadir/NRC.

**UNVEILING THE COST OF
INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT:
2021 REPORT**

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KEY MESSAGES

The economic impact of internal displacement in 2020 ranged from \$109 per IDP for a year of displacement in Afghanistan to \$830 per IDP in Syria.

The average cost of providing each IDP with support for housing, education, health and security, and their loss of income for one year of displacement was estimated at \$370 in 2020.

With about 55 million people living in internal displacement as a result of conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2020, this produces a total global economic impact of nearly \$20.5 billion.

Covid-19 influenced the cost of internal displacement by creating new needs, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities for IDPs and producing obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Internal displacement affects the wellbeing and the welfare of internally displaced people (IDPs) in numerous ways. It can lead to a deterioration of their health, security, social life, housing conditions, livelihoods, environment and education. People in the host community can also be affected, particularly in the case of mass, protracted displacement.

All of these impacts have repercussions not only on the lives of affected people, but also on the economy. IDMC developed an original methodology to measure the economic impact of internal displacement, including the direct cost of providing every IDP with support for housing, education, health and security, and their estimated loss of income.¹

This report applies the same methodology to assess the economic impact of internal displacement in 2020 for 18 countries (see box 1). These countries were all affected by severe internal displacement crises linked with conflict and violence in 2020, and many crises were also linked with disasters. They were selected for this analysis as they benefited from humanitarian response plans published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). These plans form the basis for the data used to estimate the financial costs and losses of internal displacement.²

The estimated cost and loss associated with displacement ranged from \$109 per IDP for a year of displacement in Afghanistan to \$830 per IDP in Syria. The variation is a result of a range of factors including differences in the level of need across affected populations and the cost of meeting those needs, as well as IDPs' estimated loss of income.

With about 55 million people living in internal displacement as a result of conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2020, and an estimated average cost and loss of \$370 per IDP, the total global economic impact in 2020 is nearly \$20.5 billion.

This figure is largely underestimated, however. It does not, for example, account for the economic impacts of displacement on host communities or communities of origin, or for longer-term consequences on the health and education of IDPs and their future economic contribution.

This estimate also overlooks the economic impact of short-term, smaller scale displacement events that do not lead to humanitarian response plans. Their repercussions may be less severe than that of massive, protracted crises. They are, however, more frequent and add up to a significant burden at the global level. Each new displacement has financial consequences, often borne by IDPs themselves. In this report, a new methodology for measuring these costs is introduced as a first step towards bridging this knowledge gap.

The world faced some of its most severe displacement crises ever as well as an unprecedented pandemic that affected everyone, everywhere in 2020. IDPs in particular saw their already difficult living conditions deteriorate as a result of Covid-19. No report on the economic impacts of internal displacement would be complete without a focus on the pandemic's consequences. A section on this issue is included, highlighting its specific costs and losses.

BOX 1: Overview of the estimates presented in this report

Country	Economic impact per IDP for 2020	Total economic impact for 2020	Total economic impact for 2020 as % of GDP ³
Afghanistan	\$109	\$509 million	2.6%
Burundi	\$203	\$20 million	0.7%
Central African Republic	\$271	\$185 million	8.3%
Chad	\$362	\$124 million	1.1%
Colombia	\$150	\$742 million	0.2%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	\$198	\$1.1 billion	2.1%
Ethiopia	\$261	\$704 million	0.7%
Iraq	\$634	\$775 million	0.3%
Libya	\$465	\$129 million	0.2%
Mali	\$333	\$111 million	0.6%
Myanmar	\$632	\$319 million	0.4%
Niger	\$342	\$88 million	0.7%
Nigeria	\$333	\$908 million	0.2%
Somalia	\$376	\$1.1 billion	23.6%
South Sudan	\$399	\$615 million	5.1%
Sudan	\$311	\$850 million	2.8%
Syria	\$830	\$5.5 billion	13.5%
Ukraine	\$462	\$339 million	0.2%

INTRODUCTION

Internal displacement affects people's lives and well-being. It can also limit their ability to contribute to the economy and generate specific needs that must be paid for by IDPs themselves, host communities, government agencies and the humanitarian sector.⁴ Understanding these economic impacts is key to planning responses.

IDMC developed an original methodology to measure the economic impacts of internal displacement in 2018. It first estimated those impacts at \$13 billion worldwide, or an average cost of \$310 per IDP.⁵ The estimate rose to \$20 billion worldwide in 2019, as a result of an increase in the number of IDPs and in the severity of several protracted crises.⁶

This report applies the same methodology to assess the cost of providing IDPs with support for housing, education, health and security, and their estimated loss of income in 2020 for 18 countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Ukraine.

These countries were all affected by severe internal displacement crises linked with conflict, violence, disasters or a combination of factors in 2020. They were selected for this analysis as they benefited from humanitarian response plans published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). These plans form the basis for the data used to estimate the financial costs and losses of internal displacement.

As a result of several methodological limitations, the figures presented in this report are underestimates of the economic impacts of internal displacement (see box 2). They do not include, for instance, the long-term consequences of displacement or impacts on host communities.

They also do not account for the costs and losses associated with smaller scale, shorter-term displacement events that do not lead to humanitarian response plans. Their repercussions may be less severe than that of massive, protracted crises, but they are also more frequent and add up to a significant burden at the global level. Each new displacement has financial consequences, often borne by IDPs themselves. In this report, a new methodology to measure these costs is introduced as a first step to bridging this knowledge gap.

Lastly, the figures presented in this report overlook the additional burden of the Covid-19 pandemic on IDPs' financial resources and on aid providers who support them. Specific appeals for funds to address the pandemic in situations of internal displacement were published in early 2020. In some countries the original humanitarian response plan published at the end of 2019 was revised to reallocate funds to fight the disease. The specific costs and losses associated with Covid-19 are highlighted in a dedicated section in this report.

BOX 2: Methodology and limitations

Our estimates focus on the direct and immediate costs and losses associated with internal displacement for 18 countries based on publicly available, quantitative data. We use impact metrics that represent the key dimensions through which displacement affects the economy: health, education, housing, security and livelihoods (see table 1). For each metric, we assess the average costs and losses per IDP for one year of displacement.

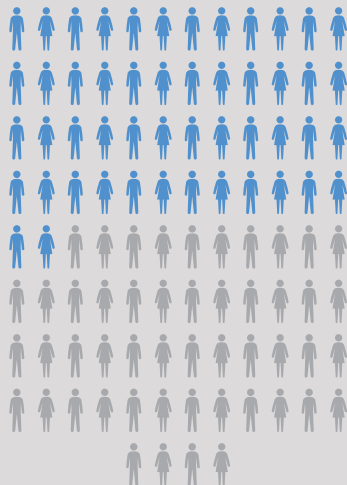
To estimate the costs associated with meeting IDPs' health, education, housing and security needs, we use information extracted from OCHA's humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans. The humanitarian response plan for each country includes estimates of the total amount of funds that would be required by humanitarian organisations to meet the needs of targeted persons in response to an ongoing crisis or crises.

For instance, OCHA has estimates of the funds needed to provide a certain number of IDPs with food security assistance. We use these to estimate the cost associated with the food security needs resulting from internal displacement for one affected person. We adjust the estimated cost per affected person to account for the fact that not all IDPs have needs for every impact dimension (see figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Estimating the cost of internal displacement's impacts on food security

Food assistance = USD 25 per recipient
Total number of IDPs = 100

Case 1: Half of all IDPs are affected and need food assistance



USD 25 x 50 affected IDPs in need of food assistance = USD 1,250

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Cost per IDP} &= 1,250/100 \\ &= \text{USD } 12.5 \end{aligned}$$

Case 2: All IDPs are affected and need food assistance



USD 25 x 100 affected IDPs in need of food assistance = USD 2,500

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Cost per IDP} &= 2,500/100 \\ &= \text{USD } 25 \end{aligned}$$

These cost estimates do not correspond to the actual amount spent by humanitarian organisations or governments in response to crises. Instead, they are estimates of the total amount that would have been required to meet the needs of all IDPs: a measure of the impacts of internal displacement in a given impact dimension, expressed in monetary terms.

A different methodology is used to assess the impacts of internal displacement on livelihoods. For this impact dimension, we use World Bank data to estimate losses resulting from the inability of IDPs to continue their income-generating activity because of their displacement. Income losses would be different for each IDP. In the absence of more precise data, however, adjusted net national income per capita is used as a proxy indicator for the average lost livelihood for all IDPs. Data sources used for these calculations are in United States dollars (USD).

The average cost per IDP for housing, education, health and security, and their estimated loss of income, are added up to calculate the overall economic impact per IDP. To estimate the total economic impact of internal displacement for that country, the economic impact per IDP is then applied to the total number of IDPs recorded in the country at the end of 2020 as a result of conflict and violence, disasters or both, depending on the focus of the humanitarian response plan.

Despite the significant financial burden these estimated impacts represent for governments and the humanitarian sector, we consider them to be conservative. This is because the limited data available means our estimates of the number of IDPs in disaster settings are conservative. The number of IDPs in conflict and violence settings, and the figures presented in the humanitarian response plans, are also likely to be under-estimates given that data collection is often restricted to the most affected or accessible areas.

The estimates presented do not account for the economic impact associated with the longer-term consequences of internal displacement, such as future reductions in income linked to disruptions in displaced children's education. The costs of adapting infrastructure and services to cope with the arrival of large numbers of IDPs in host communities are missing as well.

Research has shown that internal displacement impacts host communities and IDPs' communities of origin, but the available data does not allow us to estimate this. The figures presented in this report therefore uncover just a part of the hidden costs and losses associated with internal displacement and reveal only a portion of its overall economic impact.

The detailed calculations for each dimension are presented in the methodological annex at the end of this report, which also includes a further discussion of the current limitations of our assessment method.

TABLE 1: Data sources and indicators used to assess economic impacts of internal displacement

Dimension	Metric	What is included
Housing	Cost of providing temporary accommodation	providing emergency and transitional shelter solutions, including subsidies for rents or repairs (Shelter)
		delivering needs-based, lifesaving non-food items (NFI)
<i>Data sources: Humanitarian Response Plans and Humanitarian Needs Overviews by OCHA</i>		providing water, sanitation and hygiene services (WASH)
		coordinating and managing shelters and camps (CCCM)
Livelihoods	Loss of income	loss of income from work
<i>Data sources: World Development Indicators from the World Bank</i>		
Education	Cost of providing temporary education	restoring educational activities for children of primary and secondary school age
		ensuring healthy and secure learning environments, including psychological support for children in some cases
<i>Data sources: Humanitarian Response Plans and Humanitarian Needs Overviews by OCHA</i>		
Health	Cost of providing food assistance	providing lifesaving access to food and improving food production (food security)
		preventing and treating malnutrition among children under five, and among pregnant and lactating women (nutrition)
<i>Data sources: Humanitarian Response Plans and Humanitarian Needs Overviews by OCHA</i>		providing emergency and essential primary/secondary health services
		preventing and responding to communicable diseases
		providing immunisation coverage for children under five
Security	Cost of ensuring security in host areas	reinforcing and providing protection to IDPs, including general protection, child protection, gender-based violence protection, explosive hazards protection and protection of housing, land and property rights
		preventing and responding to human rights violations
<i>Data sources: Humanitarian Response Plan and Humanitarian Needs Overview by OCHA</i>		

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC IMPACTS

MAP 1: Countries included in 2020 estimates



The cost of providing IDPs with support for housing, education, health and security, and their estimated loss of income in 2020 was estimated for 18 countries for which data was available (see map 1). Across all countries assessed, the average economic impact is estimated at \$370 per IDP for one year of displacement.

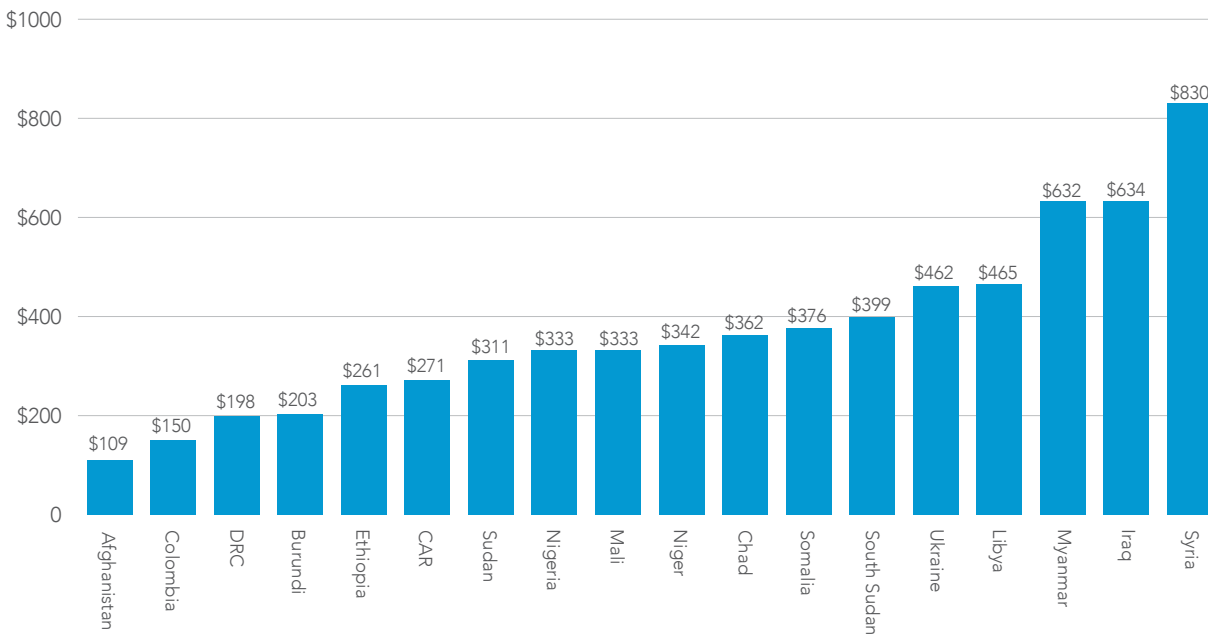
Applied to the total number of IDPs recorded in the world at the end of 2020, this would place the global financial impact of internal displacement at nearly \$20.5 billion.

The estimated economic impact for each affected person in 2020 varied from country to country, ranging from \$109 per person in Afghanistan to \$830 per person in Syria (see figure 2).

The variation in the economic impact per IDP arises from differences in the level of needs across affected populations and the estimated cost of meeting them, based on information extracted from OCHA's humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans. The type of interventions required in a country as well as operational capacity and access constraints can affect the cost of meeting affected people's needs.

For instance, the cost of providing one affected person with emergency shelter as well as non-food items (NFIs) in Afghanistan was \$78 per person, compared with \$189 per person in Syria.⁷ The 2020 humanitarian response plan for Syria notes that shelter and NFI interventions require significant materials and associated procurement, transportation and construction costs that were

FIGURE 2: Average cost per IDP for 2020 in each country

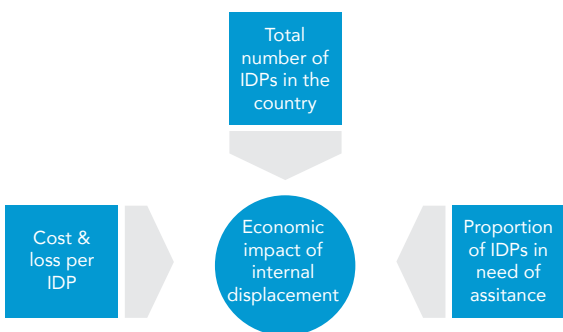


expected to increase as a result of economic policies and unpredictable price fluctuations.⁸ Insecurity in parts of the country was also projected to raise the cost of interventions, particularly for delivery and warehousing.⁹

When it comes to estimated losses, the adjusted net national income per capita is used as a proxy indicator for IDPs' loss of livelihoods. This means that in countries such as Libya, where the national income is higher than in many of the other countries analysed, the economic impact resulting from the loss of livelihoods is also greater, leading to a higher average loss per IDP.

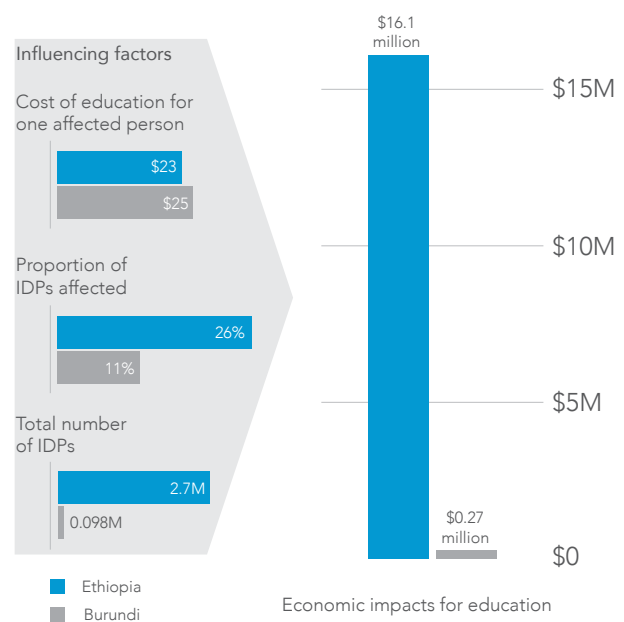
Variations in the average cost per IDP and the overall economic impact recorded for each country also depend on the proportion of IDPs in need of humanitarian assistance for each impact dimension and the total number of IDPs living in the country (see figure 3).

FIGURE 3: Factors affecting the economic impact per country



For instance, the cost of providing an affected child with education in Ethiopia and Burundi was virtually the same. The proportion of internally displaced children in need of educational support and the total internally displaced population were significantly higher in Ethiopia, however, than in Burundi. As a result, the total economic impact for education was about \$16.1 million in Ethiopia, compared with \$268,500 in Burundi (see figure 4).

FIGURE 4: Factors influencing the economic impact of internal displacement on education in Ethiopia and Burundi in 2020



With about 6.6 million people living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence at the end of 2020, Syria recorded the highest overall economic impact of displacement, at \$5.5 billion. The economic impacts in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo were also among the highest of the countries analysed, at about \$1.1 billion each (see figure 5).

The overall economic impacts in Colombia and Iraq were also high, at \$742 million and \$775 million, respectively. The economic impact of \$150 per IDP in Colombia was one of the lowest among the countries analysed, but Colombia was home to one of the largest internally displaced populations at the end of 2020, with nearly five million people still displaced by conflict, violence and disasters. By contrast, although Iraq’s internally displaced population of 1.2 million people was lower than many of the other countries analysed, the average cost and loss per IDP was one of the highest, at \$634 (see figure 6).

The figures presented in this report are likely to be underestimates, but in some cases, they already amount to a substantial share of the affected country’s GDP. This is particularly the case in large-scale, protracted displacement crises that occur in countries with smaller economies (see figure 7).

FIGURE 6: Factors influencing the economic impact of internal displacement in Colombia and Iraq

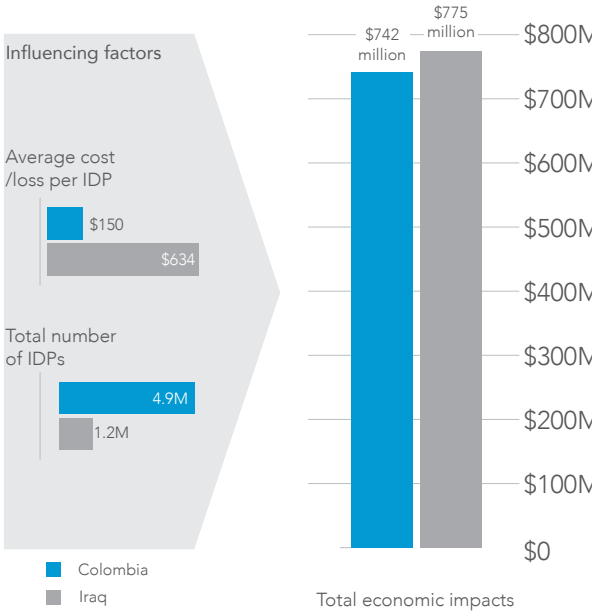


FIGURE 5: Total annual economic impact of internal displacement for 2020 for each country

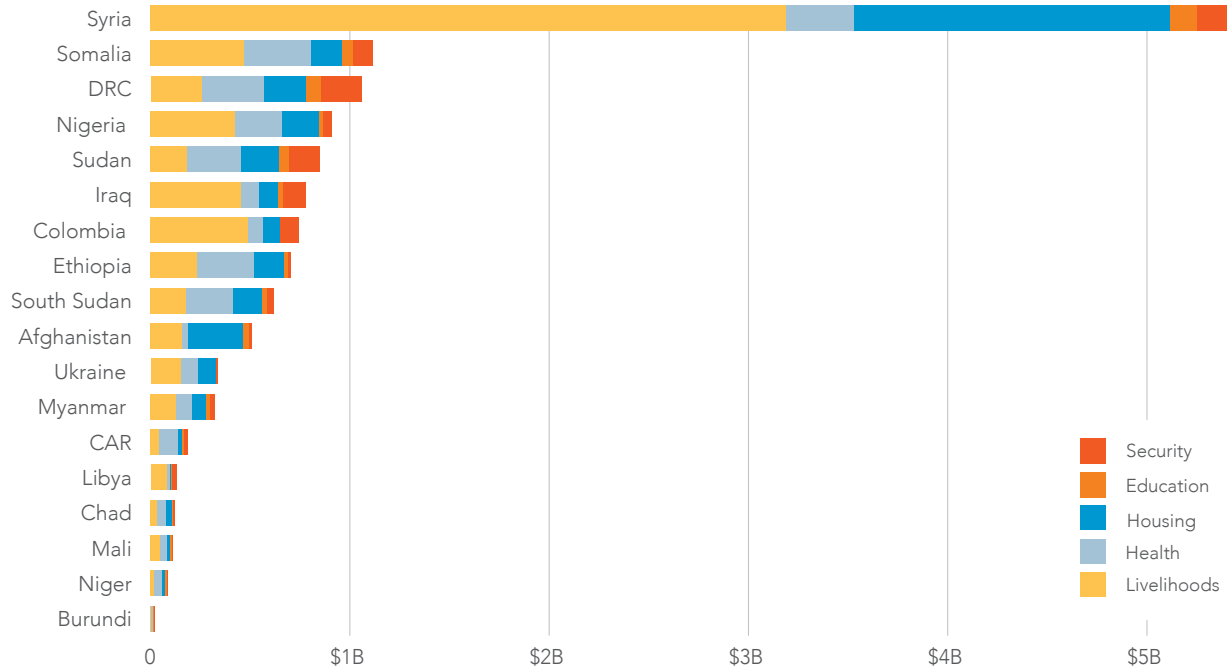
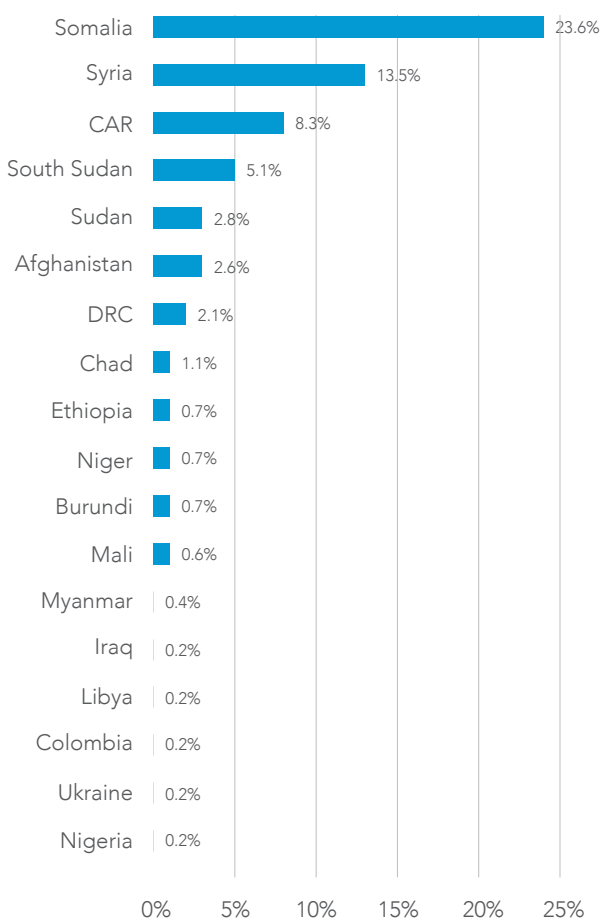


FIGURE 7: Total annual economic impact as percentage of GDP

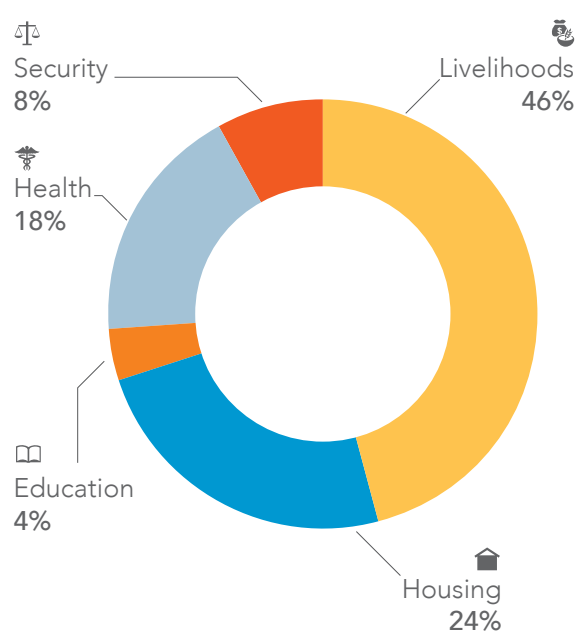


In the case of Somalia, the total cost of meeting the needs of the country’s three million IDPs and the estimated loss of income for one year of displacement represented nearly 24 per cent of the country’s GDP in 2018.¹⁰ In the Central African Republic, which saw a resurgence of conflict and a sharp increase in the number of new displacements in 2020, the economic impact of displacement represented more than eight per cent of its 2019 GDP.¹¹

The greatest financial burden associated with internal displacement across the 18 countries stemmed from loss of livelihoods and housing costs. Together these accounted for 70 per cent of the total economic impact recorded (see figure 8).

Income losses were particularly high in Colombia and Libya, representing 66 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively, of the total economic impact of internal displacement in each country.

FIGURE 8: Financial burden of internal displacement by dimension across the 18 countries analysed



Housing costs, at \$146 million, represented nearly a quarter of the economic impact in South Sudan. According to the 2020 humanitarian needs overview, about 1.3 million IDPs living in camps and spontaneous sites were in need of camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) in 2020.¹²

In Mali, the costs associated with meeting IDPs’ housing needs rose from \$28 per IDP in 2019 to \$57 for 2020. This climb in costs was a result of both the increase in funds required to meet the needs of affected people and the proportion of IDPs in need of housing assistance. Multisectoral evaluations indicate that shelter and NFIs are major concerns for IDPs in Mali, second only to the need for food. They also show that 96 per cent of IDPs live in areas where access to drinking water is below the national average.¹³

The cost of meeting the health needs of IDPs, including food, nutrition and essential healthcare, also represented a significant financial burden linked to displacement. In the Central African Republic, where the scale and intensity of the crisis has exacerbated IDPs’ health needs, health costs represented just over half of the overall economic impact of displacement.¹⁴

In Ethiopia, health costs represented 41 per cent of the overall economic impact of displacement and totalled

\$286 million. The majority of people displaced by conflict and drought in Ethiopia are highly food insecure because of severe disruptions in their livelihoods. They also require health services for pre-existing and new disease conditions.¹⁵

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the economic impact of displacement on security amounted to more than \$200 million, or nearly a fifth of the total economic impact of displacement in the country. IDPs are still the group most affected by severe human rights violations, including gender-based violence and violence against children.¹⁶ In Sudan, where IDPs are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of intercommunal clashes and land mines, the cost of providing IDPs with security amounted to \$157 million.¹⁷

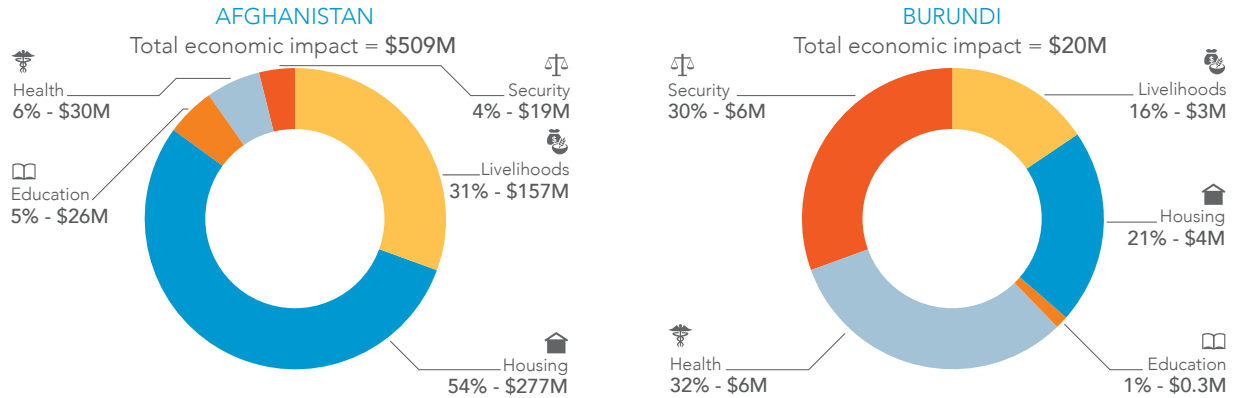
As in 2019, the financial burden associated with education in 2020 represented just four per cent of the total economic impact across the 18 countries analysed. The average cost of providing one affected child with education for a year was \$78, ranging from \$23 in Ethiopia to \$127 in Myanmar. Restrictions on movement imposed by armed forces have compounded the impacts of protracted displacement in Myanmar and limited IDPs' access to essential services such as education.¹⁸ Overcrowded temporary learning spaces and a shortage of teachers and materials continue to affect the quality of education provided to displaced children.¹⁹ For this reason, improving access to temporary education services was a key objective of the country's 2020 humanitarian response plan.²⁰

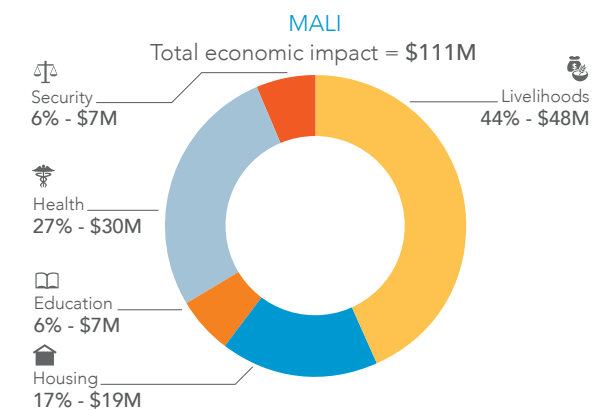
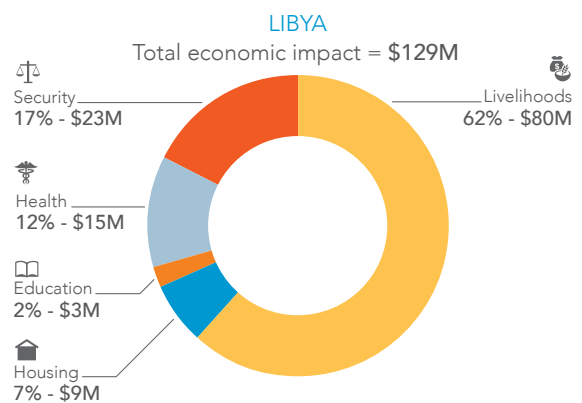
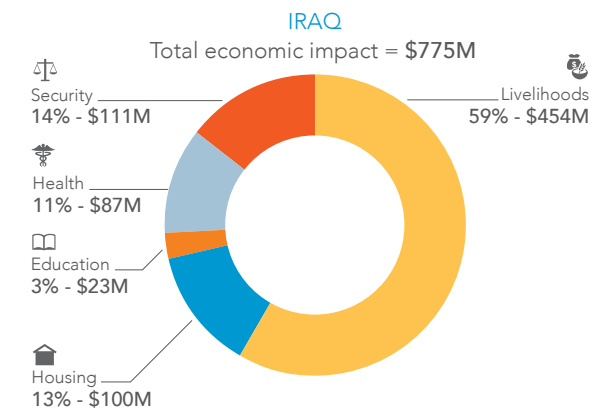
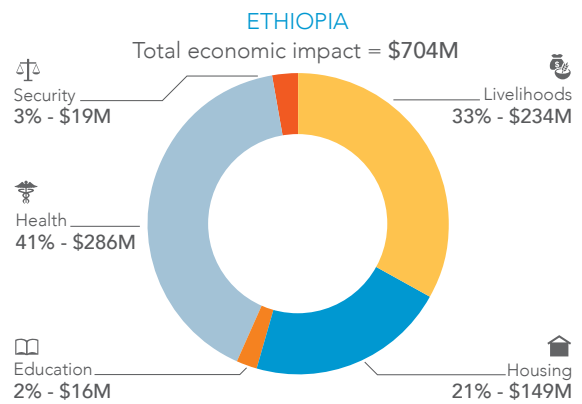
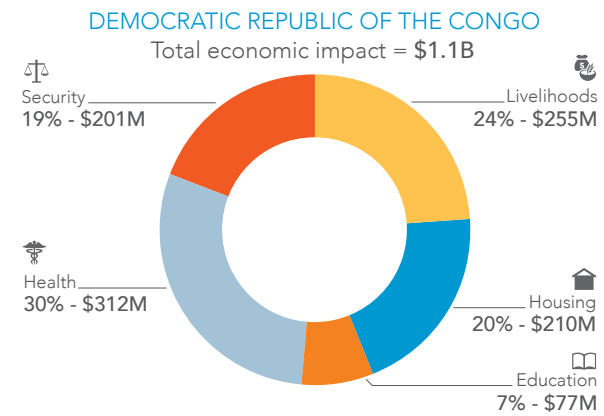
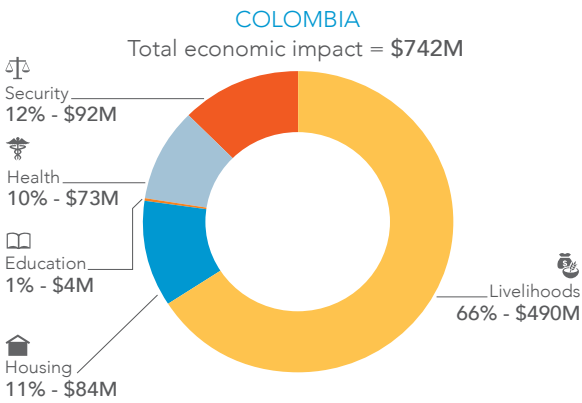
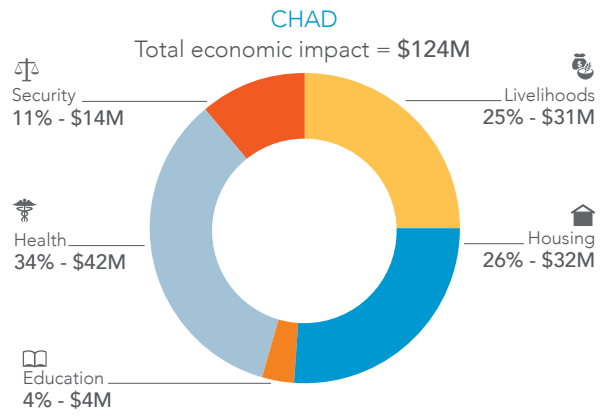
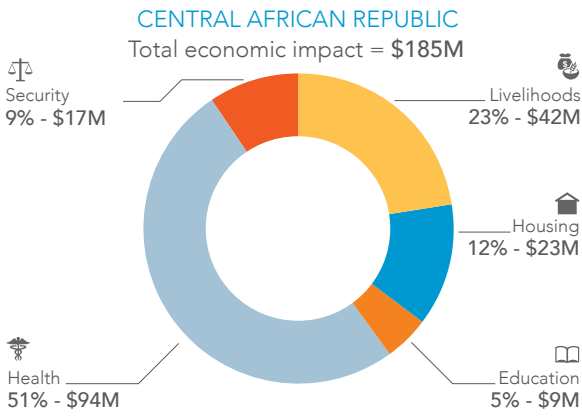
More details on the economic impacts of internal displacement in each of the 18 countries analysed for 2020 are presented in figures 9 to 26.

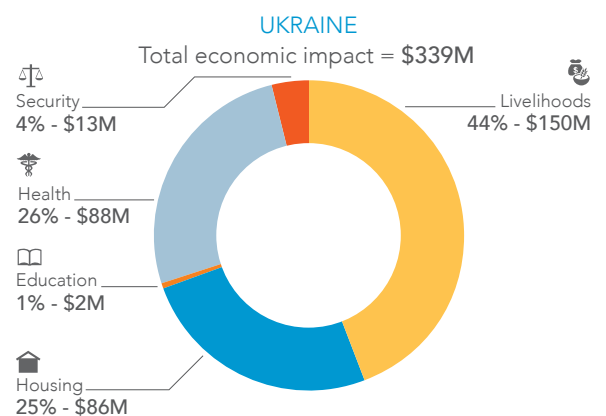
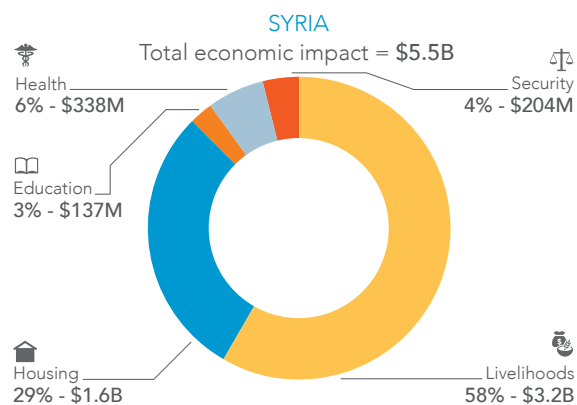
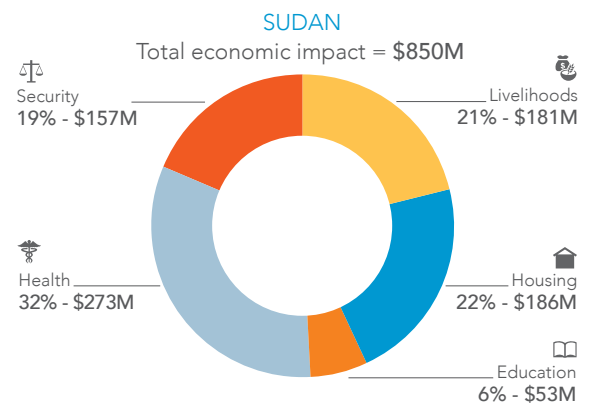
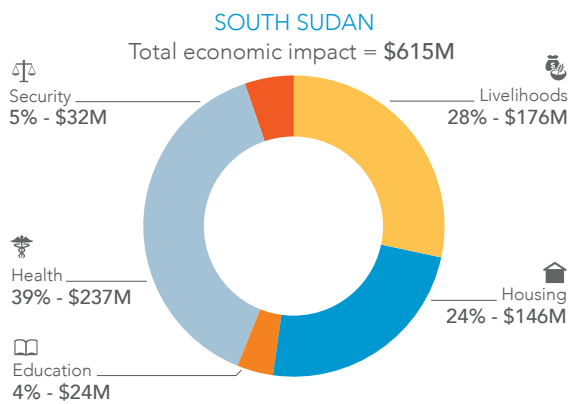
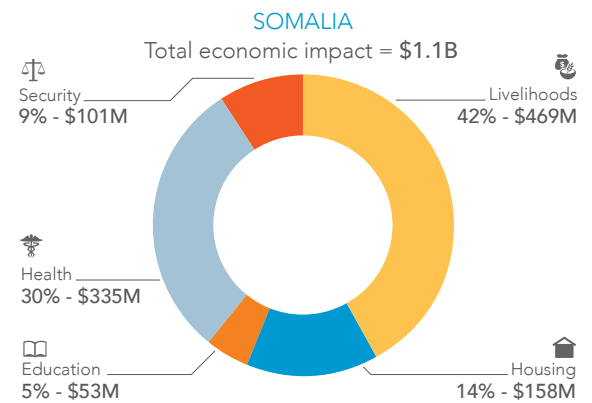
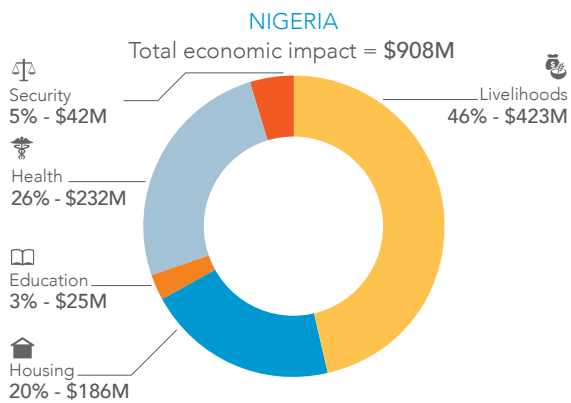
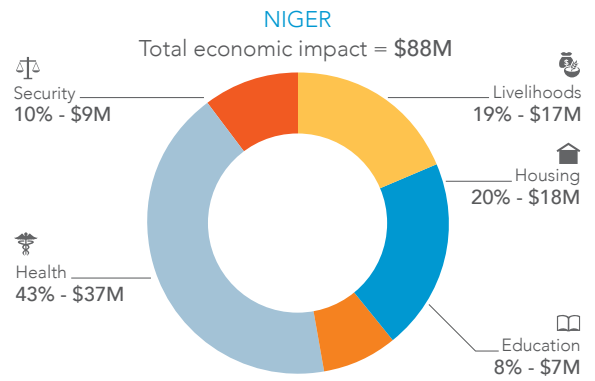
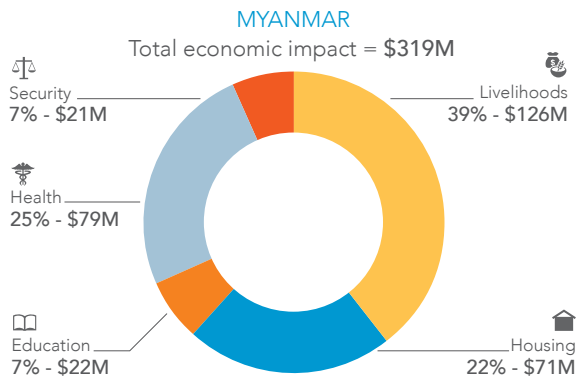
These figures illustrate the financial burden internal displacement can place on already fragile or struggling economies, and the need to consider the issue not only as a humanitarian one but also as a component of longer-term development strategies.

The estimates of the economic impacts of internal displacement in 2020 are largely based on humanitarian response plans published in December 2019. Humanitarian actors appealed through these plans for funds to address crises they expected to continue in 2020. But as everyone knows, 2020 did not go as planned, even when it comes to displacement crises. The Covid-19 pandemic that shook the world affected already vulnerable people, including IDPs, especially severely. The following section of this report highlights the specific economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on IDPs and the aid providers that support them.

FIGURES 9-26: Distribution of economic impacts of internal displacement in 2020 for each country







ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The world faced some of the most severe displacement crises ever in 2020. It also confronted an unprecedented pandemic that affected everyone, everywhere. IDPs in particular saw their already difficult living conditions deteriorate as a result of Covid-19. The Global Covid-19 Humanitarian Response Plan published by the UN in March 2020 called for \$2 billion to address urgent needs in 54 countries.²¹ That amount increased to \$9.5 billion for 63 countries a few months later.²²

In the first months of 2020, all the humanitarian response plans prepared at the end of 2019 were revised to account for the pandemic's consequences.

Across all countries, these revised plans came with higher funding appeals, but not always a higher cost per IDP. Often, the number of people targeted for humanitarian assistance grew, but these additional people were not necessarily IDPs. IDPs, in most cases, were already included in the pre-COVID plans. In some countries where the number of IDPs in need of humanitarian assistance rose, this was mostly linked with an increase in their number because of disasters or conflict, rather than an increase in their needs as a result of Covid-19.

The pandemic, however, did influence the economic impacts of internal displacement. It did so in three ways: by creating new needs such as hand washing facilities, face masks and distance learning tools; by worsening the conditions in which IDPs lived and increasing the severity of their needs; and by generating obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid, which in many cases boosted its cost or prompted a significant reorganisation of resources.

COVID-SPECIFIC NEEDS

Additional costs directly linked with Covid-19 include an increase in all previously planned budgets to account for

sanitary measures. These include the use of face masks and hydroalcoholic gel by humanitarian workers, and the costs of epidemiological monitoring, communication, prevention, testing, analyses and medical treatment for those infected. These costs vary from country to country. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo for instance, the increase in all budgets was set at seven per cent, and the cost of the Covid-19 response was estimated at \$166.82 per person.²³

Physical distancing requirements also led to an increase in costs linked with housing. In Burkina Faso, additional funds were requested to allow IDPs to rent houses to limit overcrowding in collective shelters and among host families, who often shared their modest homes with more than ten others.²⁴ In Burundi, the number of beneficiaries targeted for semi-permanent shelters rose for the same reasons. The cost of assistance also grew as aid distributions became more frequent to avoid large gatherings.²⁵

In Cameroon, Covid-19 sensitization and response were integrated into all humanitarian activities. This was particularly the case for IDPs, who tended to lack access to clean water, soap and masks. As a result, the revised plan increased the number of beneficiaries targeted for shelters and non-food items from 419,000 to 668,000.²⁶ In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the need for masks, gloves, hydroalcoholic gel and thermometers was incorporated into the revised plan for all IDPs.²⁷ Additional plots of land were also identified to help limit overcrowding in displacement sites, and temporary desks were set up for psychosocial support and information.²⁸

The closure of schools throughout the world also resulted in specific expenditures to ensure the continuity of education. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the cost for the remote education of displaced children was estimated at \$5.40 per child for three months

of school. Child-specific information on Covid-19 was included at an additional cost of \$0.5 per child.²⁹

INCREASING SEVERITY OF IDPS' NEEDS

Several revised humanitarian response plans highlighted an increase in food insecurity linked with the pandemic and the greater need for food and nutrition support among IDPs. Food became less available as a result of movement restrictions within and across countries. This was particularly the case where food tended to be imported or came from agricultural land worked by internal or international migrants.

In Burundi, shortages led to a 39 per cent increase in the price of beans and a 37 per cent increase in the price of corn.³⁰ In Cameroon, the revised plan warned that food insecurity resulting from market disruptions would likely affect the quality of diets and nutrition practices. This, it warned, could lead to greater mortality, morbidity and malnutrition among the most vulnerable, including IDPs.³¹ In Colombia, the May 2020 update took into account an expected twofold rise in the number of food insecure people, including IDPs, as a result of the pandemic's socioeconomic impacts.³²

The revised plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo referenced the repercussions of school closures on displaced children's education and health.³³ With children at home instead of school, they were no longer exposed to information on hygiene and health and were more exposed to communicable diseases, including Covid-19. The plan called for an increase in access to water, sanitation and hygiene in schools after their re-opening and for more nutritional support to cope with the deterioration in children's health during the pandemic.

Overall, these revisions led to a reduction in the cost of educational support per displaced child as activities initially planned for school were cancelled. In Afghanistan too, the shift towards distance-learning and the scale-back of in-school activities led to a decrease in the cost of educational support per child.³⁴

In Afghanistan, the revised plan warned that the pandemic could lead to a greater need for protection. This was particularly the case for women and children,

as an expected worsening in poverty forced more IDPs to resort to negative coping strategies, such as early and forced marriages, child labour and begging, putting them even more at risk of abuse and violence.³⁵

OBSTACLES TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Travel constraints, the disruption of supply chains and sanitary measures adopted to limit the spread of Covid-19 have prevented humanitarian workers and aid from reaching IDPs in many countries. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, confinement, quarantine and restrictions on internal flights limited the ability of humanitarian actors to access IDPs and support them as usual.³⁶

In Nigeria, government restrictions on travel in and out of the capital blocked the delivery of aid and other logistic supplies, affecting IDPs' access to essential items, including food.³⁷

The need to maintain social distancing and curb the spread of the virus has also affected service delivery and led to the suspension of humanitarian programmes aimed at IDPs. In Iraq, camp management services have been affected in all camps for IDPs, the result of a reduced staff presence, the implementation of remote management and the suspension of non-essential activities. As of July 2020, humanitarian workers were unable to reach 30 per cent of the IDPs they had previously been supporting in informal settlements.³⁸

The mandatory closures of schools and the suspension of temporary learning classrooms and child-friendly spaces in Myanmar also reduced the ability of humanitarian actors to engage with displaced children and perceive their protection needs.³⁹

These obstacles have negative consequences on the lives and wellbeing of IDPs. They also have an economic impact. In many cases, adjustments made in response to access and operational constraints have increased the cost of providing humanitarian assistance to affected people, including IDPs.

In Afghanistan, an international airbridge was established between Kabul and Doha, Qatar, to allow personnel to rotate and bring in surge staff and critical



Stella, a community mobiliser with NRC in Juba, South Sudan, demonstrates the seven steps of handwashing as a preventive measure to protect IDPs from Covid-19. Photo: Egily Hakim George/NRC

humanitarian cargo. This resulted in an additional \$7.5 million expense.⁴⁰ In Ukraine, humanitarian organisations have delivered goods “door-to-door” to minimise beneficiaries’ exposure to Covid-19. That also increased operational and logistical costs.⁴¹

In other cases, however, there has been a reduction in the cost per IDP, particularly where obstacles have led to a suspension of planned activities or a reprioritisation of funds. For instance, in Somalia, the cost of providing one child with education fell from \$120 to \$40 in the revised humanitarian response plan because of the closure of schools and the cancellation of planned construction works.⁴²

In addition to these operational challenges, the economic downturn associated with the pandemic has put pressure on donor governments to prioritise their domestic needs. This has limited the funding available for assisting IDPs.⁴³ The Global Covid-19 Humanitarian Response Plan was only 39 per cent funded as of February 2021.⁴⁴ Underfunding directly affects immediate and longer-

term responses to displacement. Humanitarian organisations in South Sudan, for example, warned that declining funds and a steady increase in the country’s IDP population would force humanitarian actors to scale back activities focused on durable solutions in favour of lifesaving interventions for newly displaced people.⁴⁵

A SILVER LINING?

These short-term economic impacts do not encompass the full range of consequences wrought by restrictions on people’s livelihoods, health, security and education. At the time these revised humanitarian response plans were published in mid-2020, the world had undergone only a few months of crisis. The socioeconomic repercussions of the pandemic are now expected to endure for years, and those repercussions have to be taken into account.

For all the negative impacts of the pandemic on IDPs’ lives, including in the economic realm, there may be

a silver lining. Several revised plans mentioned that Covid-19 had forced an acceleration of the New Way of Working – the UN Secretary General’s call for greater collaboration among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding stakeholders.⁴⁶

The revised plan for Cameroon stated that with the arrival of Covid-19, the humanitarian-development and peace nexus had become more necessary than ever to decrease vulnerabilities and create durable solutions for IDPs. Policy and operational frameworks were modified, and humanitarian actors engaged with other stakeholders to prioritize activities that complemented each other.⁴⁷

A case study in Somalia highlights how humanitarian, development and peace actors are already collaborating to address IDPs’ risks and their vulnerability to the impacts of Covid-19, including through more flexible funding arrangements.⁴⁸

The unprecedented scale of needs linked with the pandemic has made clear that, in spite of billions invested in aid year after year, current resources are not enough to generate the necessary changes. Longer-term investments have to be made, for instance in water, sanitation and more permanent shelters. These investments may cost more initially, but they will reduce aid dependency and eventually prove beneficial both for recipients and donors.

MEASURING THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF NEW DISPLACEMENTS

The methodology developed by IDMC in 2018 and used in the first section of this report to measure the economic impacts of internal displacement focused on protracted crises in which IDPs remain displaced for at least a year.⁴⁹ As the methodology relies heavily on humanitarian response plans for proxy indicators on financial costs and losses, it can only be applied in cases of severe crises for which the plans were created.

Most internal displacement, however, occurs in situations that do not lead to humanitarian response plans. These are smaller-scale events for which the duration of displacement can be measured in months, weeks or even days, rather than years.

The repercussions of this type of displacement on affected people and on economies may be less severe than those of longer-term displacement. Their frequency, however, means they can add up to a significant economic burden at the global level. IDMC's estimates of the economic impact of internal displacement have, so far, overlooked this burden.

Each new displacement has financial consequences, largely borne by IDPs and their families and friends. If a displacement case goes unrecorded because it only affects a few families, these families will likely receive no support from government authorities or humanitarian actors. Understanding the impacts of each new displacement can help in the planning of more comprehensive assistance and ensure that no one is left behind.

In the immediate aftermath of a displacement event, particular needs arise. These include the need for transportation to safety and to a place of temporary refuge;

shelter; food and essential items. Displaced people during such a time are also likely to lose their income for a few days or a few weeks.

Uncovering the costs and losses that occur in this period is particularly useful for assessing the impacts of disaster displacement. Such information is rarely available, and most humanitarian response plans focus on conflict settings. So the economic impacts of disaster displacement have remained almost entirely invisible. The ability to assess them at least for the known period of evacuation would represent a first step towards bridging this knowledge gap.

Preliminary assessments of the economic impacts of new displacements show that the highest costs stem from impacts on housing while the highest losses result from the inability of IDPs to continue their normal income-generating activities. Impacts on health, education and security tend to become visible over longer periods of time.

ACCOUNTING FOR ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON HOUSING

The economic impacts of new displacements on housing include the cost of setting up and running evacuation shelters and of renting hotel rooms or other short-term accommodation for IDPs. Housing IDPs can also result in a financial cost for the families that host them temporarily. This can happen, for example, when utility bills rise or the families have to buy more bedding and supplies.



Berrara, NSW, during the bushfire emergency in January 2020. Photograph: Australian Red Cross.

When there are large numbers of new displacements, the price of hotel rooms or short-term rentals in the host area may also increase.

These impacts should ideally be measured on a case by case basis, through primary data collection, as was the case after flooding in Beledweyne, Somalia (see box 3). Proxy indicators may also be used, however. That is especially the case when the area is inaccessible because of an acute crisis, or when funds are focused on emergency response rather than data collection. Publicly available information on the average cost of renting a hotel room in the host area can serve to estimate a daily cost. This can then be applied to the known duration of the displacement event and the number of new displacements.

About 65,000 new displacements were recorded across Australia between July 2019 and February 2020 during the Black Summer bushfires.⁵⁰ People who were displaced sought refuge in the homes of friends and relatives, designated evacuation centres, makeshift shelters, hotels and other rental arrangements.⁵¹ More detailed information on where people sought refuge and for how long, however, is lacking.

The cost of renting a house in Australia in March 2020 was around \$270 a week in regional areas and \$320 in metro areas.⁵² In the state of New South Wales, which together with the Australian Capital Territory recorded about 26,000 new displacements, the average daily rate for a hotel during the March 2020 quarter was about \$162.⁵³ If data were available on how many people rented houses or stayed in hotels while they were displaced, this could highlight the considerable economic impact of meeting just their short-term housing needs.

In many cases, the cost of providing IDPs with temporary accommodation is absorbed by the government, aid providers, the private sector and host communities. In Australia, some insurance policies covered the cost of temporary accommodation. Several hotel chains also offered free lodging for up to seven nights for those whose homes had been destroyed.⁵⁴ Through home-sharing platforms, like Airbnb's Open Homes initiative and Find a Bed, members of the local community hosted IDPs for free.⁵⁵

ACCOUNTING FOR ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON LIVELIHOODS

Displacement can prevent a person from continuing their normal income-generating activity. This can happen, for instance, if their place of refuge is too far from their workplace. In such cases, the resulting loss of income can be considered an economic impact on livelihoods of displacement.

Loss of income as a result of internal displacement is very frequent. IDPs may eventually be able to find new income-generating activities in their host area, but this takes time. A survey conducted with IDPs in Ethiopia in 2021 showed that 47 per cent of those who worked for money in their home communities became unemployed after their displacement.⁵⁶ Of those, 14 per cent were unemployed for seven to 12 months, while 81 per cent were still unemployed at the time of the survey.

Among those who continue to work for money after their displacement, reductions in monthly incomes are common. In a similar survey conducted in Nigeria in 2021, the average monthly income for displaced households that continued to earn money from work was \$47, down from \$111 in their home communities. This would represent an average loss of income of about \$768 for households displaced for one year.⁵⁷

Social security or insurance schemes sometimes compensate IDPs for their lost income. Still, the economic impact is the same, either borne by IDPs, by the government or by the insurers. It can be measured as the average daily income per person in the affected area, multiplied by the known duration of displacement and the estimated number of previously working IDPs. In the absence of more precise information, the latter can be estimated by applying the percentage of the employed population in the affected area to the number of new displacements.

Another way to quantify the disruptions to livelihoods from displacement is to measure the loss of economic production. This is lost production in goods and services resulting from large numbers of people missing work because of displacement. It can be estimated using national GDP data.

In a survey conducted by Facebook in two regions affected by the Black Summer bushfires, 55 per cent of respondents who were displaced for more than one night said that their displacement had prevented them from working as usual.⁵⁸ The loss of economic production as a result of missing just one day of work was estimated at about \$510 per person.⁵⁹ If each person missed just two days of work, the estimated loss could amount to more than half a million dollars.

LIMITATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Accounting for these economic impacts on housing and livelihoods is a first step to uncovering the costs of new displacements. It will, however, result in underestimates. When data is available, the estimates can be improved by taking into account the cost of running collective shelters and providing cash-based assistance and immediate relief to IDPs. This information is sometimes published by authorities or aid providers, as part of humanitarian response plans or post-disaster needs assessments. When these are not available, information on the cost of living or minimum expenditure basket (MEB) and survival MEB (SMEB) may be considered as proxies.⁶⁰

These assessments do not encompass all the financial consequences of displacement, but only the most frequently reported and severe ones. Uncertainty regarding the duration of displacement is another obstacle. When this duration is unknown, economic impact estimates may be presented per day or week of displacement.

Highlighting the cost of new displacements can provide a more comprehensive assessment of the impacts of internal displacement on the economy beyond the most visible crises. Added to assessments of the risk of future displacement, this type of information can also help authorities and aid providers plan improved responses.

As a first step to understanding these impacts better and improving our knowledge of their scale, IDMC is collecting primary data in several locations affected by short-term, repeated displacement linked with floods and other natural hazards. Preliminary findings from one such study conducted in Beledweyne, Somalia, are presented in box 3 (p.26).

BOX 3: The economic impacts of recurring displacements linked with flood in Beledweyne, Somalia

Beledweyne is a town in central Somalia located in the Beledweyne District of Hiiraan province. It is regularly affected by flood-related displacement. These floods have become more severe over the past few years, and now occur once or twice a year, affecting a large part of town. Some inhabitants link this increase with climate change, others with urbanisation and land management issues.

Most inhabitants have been displaced at least once in recent years. In a survey conducted in early 2021, more than 75 per cent of the respondents reported having been displaced three, four or five times.⁶¹ Nearly 20 per cent said they had been displaced seven times or more.

Displaced people find refuge in parts of Beledweyne or in villages nearby that are on higher ground. About 45 per cent of them were displaced for between two weeks and one month during their last displacement, and 43 per cent between one and three months. Nearly all of them were able to return to their homes.

Although this displacement is relatively short lived and people remain nearby, its economic consequences are significant. About half of the displaced respondents reported having to buy a tent to live in during their displacement. Some rented an apartment or a hotel room. On average, they spent around \$80 on shelter during their last displacement, an amount representing about 30 per cent of their households' average monthly income.

At the same time, many displaced people are unable to pursue their normal income-generating activities when floods occur. About 10 per cent of the respondents said they either lost their income entirely or had to find another income source the last time they were displaced, and 15 per cent said the income of another member of their household was affected. Most people can, however, resume their previous activities as soon as the floods end.

Non-displaced inhabitants of Beledweyne also face the cost of displacement, as nearly all of them end up sharing their home with those who have lost theirs. Sixty-seven per cent of them said they faced additional expenses, linked with a rise in utility, food and rent prices, as well as the support they provided to the displaced people they hosted. On average, they estimated this additional cost at \$60 a month, around 20 per cent of their household's average monthly income.

Recurring displacement in Beledweyne was also found to significantly affect the health and education of displaced and, to a lesser extent, non-displaced people. The deterioration in both realms could have further repercussions on the wellbeing and welfare of those affected in the years to come, even after displacement ends.

CONCLUSION

Preventing and reducing internal displacement and its impacts is not only important to the protection of individuals, but also to economies at large. The estimates presented in this report are conservative and limited by the data available. They do, however, offer insights for national policymakers and global actors responding to displacement crises.

Whether it is short-term or protracted, the financial burden displacement places on IDPs, host communities, governments and the humanitarian sector highlights the unsustainability of relying on emergency humanitarian responses to address displacement. Taking pre-emptive action by investing in peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction and early warning systems, could prove to be far less costly in the long term.

More needs to be done to ensure this is translated into effective action, but promising practices are emerging. Germany's Transitional Development Assistance instrument employs a people-centred, multi-sectoral approach to assist vulnerable populations, including IDPs.⁶² By linking humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peacebuilding in a single budget line, it aims to strengthen resilience and contribute to crisis prevention.⁶³

France's Minka Peace and Resilience Fund, which finances medium-term interventions in the Sahel, Lake Chad, Central African Republic and the Middle East, seeks to address the root causes of crises and conflicts, and may hold useful lessons for fostering more sustainable solutions to internal displacement.⁶⁴

The fact that the greatest financial burden of internal displacement stems from the loss of livelihoods also highlights the need to ensure IDPs can participate in the economy and achieve solutions to their displacement. Examples from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Colombia show how IDPs were able to add value to the local economy and create new markets, benefiting the wider community through entrepreneurship, innovation and tailored support.⁶⁵

Building new partnerships and fostering innovative approaches to funding will be essential as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to place additional demands on both lower- and higher-income countries.

Identifying areas in which internal displacement has the highest economic impact can help governments and aid providers in tailoring their interventions for greater efficiency. Our understanding of the full scale of the costs and losses associated with displacement is still limited by the data available, however. The new methodology presented in this report to measure the cost of short-term displacement represents a first step towards addressing existing knowledge gaps.

IDMC will continue to expand and improve these methodologies to raise awareness about the negative consequences of displacement and ways to reduce them.

METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX

Economic impacts of internal displacement are estimated in five dimensions: housing, livelihoods, education, health and security. They are expressed either as additional costs required to meet the needs of IDPs or as losses compared with their pre-displacement situation.

For housing, education, health and security dimensions, our estimates are based on funds required in OCHA's Humanitarian Response Plans to meet IDPs' needs. In particular, we compute the cost per affected person (C_{cap}) in each metric (m) as the total budget (R_{tot}) required by humanitarian organisations to meet IDPs' needs in that metric divided by the number of targeted IDPs (N_{target}):

$$C_{cap}(m) = \frac{R_{tot}(m)}{N_{target}(m)}$$

$m = \text{Food security, Health, Education, etc}^{66}$

This is computed for one year of displacement. When information on specific requirements for IDPs is not available, the cost per affected person is computed based on total requirements for the targeted population, including people affected, whether displaced or not. The economic impact of internal displacement on **housing** is represented by the cost of providing shelters, temporary accommodation or other forms of housing support to IDPs. We use several metrics from the humanitarian response plans to account for this cost:

- | Provision of emergency/transitional shelter solutions or support (e.g., camps, collective centres, informal settlements), and of non-food items (kitchen sets, blankets, clothes, etc.). In some countries, this can also include monetary support for rent, or home repair and return.

- | Providing or improving access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation and hygiene items.

- | Camp coordination and camp management. This is applied only to IDPs living in camps or collective centres.

The economic impact of internal displacement on education refers to the cost of providing temporary education to internally displaced children living in camps or in host communities. This includes the costs of providing or restoring educational activities for them in healthy and secure learning environments. Psychological support for children is explicitly included in a few cases. In our analysis, the cost per affected person associated with this metric is applied to displaced children/youth of primary and secondary school age, between five and 14 years of age.

Our figures for education are largely underestimated. This is because they are based on the funds humanitarian organisations requested for education, an area which has consistently been among the most underfunded in displacement crises. Our figures also do not take into account the presumably significant impacts of barriers to education on internally displaced children's future income, consumption or income taxes or the effects of displacement on children left behind in communities of origin or in host communities where classrooms may be overcrowded.

The economic impact of internal displacement on **health** is represented by the cost of providing IDPs with food assistance, including food security and nutrition, and healthcare. Food security refers to the cost of providing IDPs with lifesaving access to diverse foods and improving food production, while nutrition includes providing nutritional assistance to internally displaced children under five as well as to pregnant or lactating women.

Healthcare consists of the cost of providing emergency or essential primary health services to IDPs, including prevention and response for communicable diseases and immunisation coverage for children under five. Emergency healthcare is typically provided by humanitarian organisations, especially in conflict situations.

The economic impacts of internal displacement on **security** are represented by the cost of ensuring security in camps and host areas. This includes ensuring general protection services for IDPs, as well as child protection, gender-based violence protection, explosive hazards protection, and protection of housing, land and property rights. It also includes protection monitoring, advocacy and response, as well as strengthening community-based mechanisms for identifying and responding to protection concerns and human rights violations; legal assistance and advocacy for access to services and documentation provision, and psychological support and material assistance for survivors of violence.

Economic costs per affected person are then translated into economic costs of displacement (*EC*) in the following way:

$$EC(m) = C_{cap}(m) * n_{IDP} * f_{need}(m)$$

where $C_{cap}(m)$ is the cost per affected person for each metric, $f_{need}(m)$ is the fraction of IDPs in need of assistance for each metric, and n_{IDP} is the total number of IDPs in the country. The number of IDPs in a country can change over the course of a single year. As it is only partially possible to track the number of IDPs over time, however, represents the number of IDPs recorded in the country at the end of the year.

Information on $f_{need}(m)$ is taken from OCHA's Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans. For instance, if a Humanitarian Needs Overview indicates that only 25 per cent of the country's IDPs are in need of housing assistance, the cost per affected person is only applied to a quarter of the total internally displaced population. The total economic impact per dimension is the sum of the economic costs for each of the relevant metrics.

For **livelihoods**, we estimate losses resulting from the inability of IDPs to continue a work activity because of their displacement (*EL*). This is computed by multiplying

the average lost livelihood among IDPs (*all*) with the number of IDPs that lost their income as a result of displacement:

$$EL = all * n_{IDP} * f_{15+} * f_w * f_{lost}$$

where f_{15+} is the fraction of the working-age population, f_w is the fraction of the working-age population employed before displacement or among the non-displaced population, and f_{lost} is the fraction of IDPs that lost their income. Following the World Bank and International Labour Organization's definition, the working-age population is all people 15 and older.

Information on f_{15+} and f_w is taken from the World Bank database, while the value of f_{lost} is obtained from humanitarian needs overviews, humanitarian response plans or other relevant sources.

Our figures for this dimension are limited by a lack of knowledge of the actual loss of income linked with internal displacement. For most countries, the adjusted net national income per capita (current \$US) is therefore used as a proxy indicator for the average lost livelihood among IDPs.⁶⁷ This is obtained from the World Bank database. In cases where such information is not available (Somalia and Syria), average lost livelihood is estimated using the average adjusted net national income per capita across neighbouring countries.⁶⁸

Estimates of the value of f_{lost} are obtained from humanitarian needs overviews, humanitarian response plans or other relevant sources, including assessments from UN agencies. Information on the proportion of IDPs that lost their incomes as a result of displacement, however, is limited. If there is no relevant data available for a country, we apply the average value of f_{lost} based on the countries for which there is data.

Another limitation is that loss of income can be caused by other factors, such as the destruction of production facilities by conflict or disasters. Lastly, accounting only for lost income does not include other economic impacts of internal displacement on livelihoods, such as loss of savings or other assets that may have been left behind in the area of origin.

It is important to stress that the data we use to assess economic costs and losses sometimes applies to all

affected people, including IDPs and their hosts. For lack of better information, we assume that these costs and losses are distributed evenly between IDPs and hosts.

Another limitation is the distinction between costs and losses associated with internal displacement and those associated with the displacement triggers, such as destruction caused by a natural hazard.

NOTES




- 1 IDMC, [Unveiling the cost of internal displacement](#), February 2019.
- 2 Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Haiti, Palestine, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe also benefited from a humanitarian response plan in 2020 but were not included in our estimates. This is either because the humanitarian response plans already included Covid-19 adjustments or because they did not contain sufficient information about the needs associated with internal displacement for the calculations.
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- 10 Somalia's GDP in 2018 was approximately \$4.7 billion: International Development Associated & International Monetary Fund, [Somalia - Joint World Bank-IMF Debt Sustainability Analysis](#), August 2019.
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Every day, people flee conflict and disasters and become displaced inside their own countries. IDMC provides data and analysis and supports partners to identify and implement solutions to internal displacement.

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