AFGHANISTAN

Displacement associated with Conflict and Violence

Figure Analysis - GRID 2020

CONTEXT

Armed conflict displaced 461,000 people between 1 January and 31 December 2019 of which almost a third, or 192,000, are in the North-East. There was an increase of 89,000 new displacements in 2019 compared to 2018.

The two-decades-old war in Afghanistan was unabated in 2019. In March, attacks by Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) combatants on Taliban positions in Chapadara district resulted in the displacement of as many as 25,000 people within Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. Despite calls for a ceasefire by the government and peace talks between the Taliban and US representatives, the Taliban launched their yearly spring offensive on 12 April. The single most significant displacement movement of 2019, however, took place in Takhar province in June, when more than 36,000 people were displaced during fighting between the national security forces and the Taliban. Heavy fighting between the national security forces and the Taliban in Kunduz city caused further humanitarian upheaval in late August, constraining humanitarian personnel and disrupting phone lines. The fighting caused a surge in the temporary displacement in Kunduz city of 21,700 people who have since mostly returned. Another 7,000 people have been **displaced** to other provinces. July, August and September were the deadliest months for civilians in a decade. Clashes involving non-state armed groups as well as government forces were a significant displacement trigger.

The government has focused on affordable housing as a priority. On 15 October at the UN Urban Forum, it expressed its willingness to provide informal settlers with one million "Occupancy Certificates" over the next three years. This is aimed at increasing tenure security for internally displaced people (IDPs) and returning refugees, by formalising informal settlements. On 27 October, Afghan and Pakistani forces engaged in cross-border clashes as a result of the establishment of a military installation at the Pakistani border. This led to the displacement of dozens of people in the remote Nari district. In October, peace talks between US officials, the Afghan government and representatives of the Taliban resumed. Fighting between the national security forces and the Taliban in Kunduz and Baghlan provinces at the end of November displaced about 7,000 people. In December, the US and the Taliban resumed peace talks, but these talks were at risk towards the end of the year because of mutual attacks. Still by December, ISIS had been defeated in the eastern part of the country. Finally at the end of the year, the 28 September election resulted in a declared victory for incumbent president Ashraf Ghani against opponent Abdullah Abdullah despite accusations of fraud and related protests.

New displacements that occurred in 2019	Total number of IDPs as of 31 December 2019 *(Year figure was last updated: 2019)*	Partial Solutions and Unverified Conditions		
		Number of IDPs who have made partial progress towards a durable solution*		Number of IDPs whose progress towards durable solutions cannot be verified**
		Flows *(1 January – 31 December 2019)*	Stocks	Flows *(1 January – 31 December 2019)*
461,000	2,993,000	-	-	-

This corresponds to the number of IDPs whom our data providers have identified as having returned, resettled or locally integrated in 2019 and for whom the evidence obtained by IDMC suggests that progress toward durable solutions is only partial given their living conditions. In a few instances, this number may refer to movements having taken place in 2019 (flows) rather than a total number of people (stock).

**This corresponds to the number of IDPs whom our data providers have identified as having returned, resettled or locally integrated in 2019 but for whom there is no available evidence to corroborate progress toward durable solutions. In a few instances, this number may refer to movements having taken place in 2019 (flows) rather than a total number of people (stock).*

NEW DISPLACEMENTS THAT OCCURRED IN 2019

This corresponds to new instances of internal displacement that occurred in 2019.

IDMC figure and rationale

IDMC estimates that 461,000 people were displaced from 1 January to 31 December 2019 in Afghanistan. This is based primarily on the Displacement Tracking System (DTS) of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Sources and methodologies

OCHA DTS receives displacement reports via the "petition system", under which internally displaced people (IDPs) visit their local Directorate of Refugees and Repatriations (DoRR) office for assistance. It also receives information from alerts by humanitarian agencies and other partners. People reported to be internally displaced are then verified in a screening meeting attended by humanitarian organisations, as well as local authorities and occasionally community elders. OCHA started to develop an alert-based system in 2018 in order to cover areas not controlled by the government. Although a recent increase has been observed in the calls received under this alert-based system, especially in October 2019, not everyone knows about it, and the petition system remains the most widespread reporting method.

We have added a very small number of displacements that were detailed by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in a forced eviction monitoring report published in December 2019. The document details displacements resulting from housing destruction by the police, which is probably not counted in the OCHA reports. That is because it relates to secondary displacement and indirect violence, meaning that the IDPs did not come directly from an area affected by fighting.

Main caveats and monitoring challenges

The current estimate is based on the most recent figure as per OCHA's DTS system. Because OCHA's verification of displacements in 2019 may continue for several months into 2020, however, it is possible that OCHA's figure will increase after IDMC's internal finalization of the 2019 figures.

OCHA's DTS data only includes newly registered IDPs, and not secondary displacements (people who were displaced more than once) in 2019. It also occasionally captures short-term displacement. Many IDPs who are displaced temporarily, however, are never registered within the OCHA DTS data. Access constraints may also affect IDPs' ability to register within the OCHA DTS system.

OCHA's latest DTS dataset for Afghanistan covers all 34 provinces of the country at the destination level, but only records 32 provinces as displacement origin locations. IDMC's confidence in coverage for some districts is limited.

Significant changes from last year

New displacement recorded in 2019 represents an increase of 89,000 over that recorded in 2018.

It is highly likely that the increase in the figures is related to the growing intensity of the conflicts in Afghanistan in 2019, where we also observe a rise in the number of civilian injured and dead compared with the two previous years. This is not a result of a change in the methodology as last year's figure was also based on OCHA DTS data and this year's estimate covers less regions than last year's (33 in 2018 but only 32 in 2019).

TOTAL NUMBER OF IDPS

This corresponds to the total number of individuals living in internal displacement as of 31 December 2019.

IDMC figure and rationale

Our estimate of 2,993,000 IDPs is based on baseline mobility assessment data from the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This data was collected between 31 December 2017 (Logar province) and 30 June 2019 and includes IDPs displaced between 2012 and 2019.

Sources and methodologies

The IOM DTM's mobility baseline assessment methodology covers the whole country and relies on key informant and focus group discussions conducted by field enumerators at the settlement level. The number of people displaced by conflict is based on the estimated percentage of IDPs displaced as a result of conflict in a given location.

The figure does not include cross-border returnees who have come back to Afghanistan and are now staying with host communities because there is uncertainty about whether these people qualify as displaced or not.

Main caveats and monitoring challenges

Our figure is not exact, but an estimate because it is based on key informant interviews. It may overestimate the number of IDPs in some parts of Afghanistan. An additional complexity is the high rate of displacement linked to disasters, primarily drought and floods, in Afghanistan in 2019. While key informants report on the number of IDPs by cause of displacement (disaster or conflict) these reports are based on estimated proportions of IDP populations and are not precise. Surveys are also still carried out using paper forms. This is likely to lead to more mistakes than using digital forms.

IOM DTM collected its data between December 2017 and June 2019. Some of it may no longer be relevant to the current situation. There is also a risk that IDPs who move between provinces may be double counted, though this is unlikely. DTM baseline mobility assessments are highly dependent on funding and are now published twice a year instead of every quarter. Less regular assessments prevent us from keeping track of the figures, spotting the mistakes and establishing time-series data.

Significant changes from last year

The methodology has not changed significantly compared with last year, so the net increase compared to 2018 (2.993,384 - 2.597,897 = 395,487 IDPs) should be principally a result of new displacement resulting from violence exceeding the "outflows" from the IDP stock (e.g. returns, cross-border flows).

One smaller change, however, is that IDMC counted refugee returnees living in the open air as "de-facto" IDPs for the GRID 2019. We did not do so for the GRID 2020 owing to changing directives regarding how and when to count refugee returnees as de-facto IDPs.

CONFIDENCE ASSESSMENT

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

Displacement metric	New displacements	Total number of IDPs
Reporting units	People, Households	People, Households, Percentage of population
Methodology	Registration, Other, Media monitoring	Key informants
Geographical disaggregation	Admin 2 or more	Subnational - admin 1
Frequency of reporting	More than once a month	Every 6 months
Disaggregation by sex	Partial	No
Disaggregation by age	Partial	No
Data triangulation	Some local triangulation	Some local triangulation
Data on settlement elsewhere	No	No
Data on returns	No	No
Data on local integration	No	No
Data on cross border movements	Yes	Yes
Data on deaths	No	No
Data on births	No	No

For any additional questions please email: data@idmc.ch

For the full country profile on Afghanistan please visit:

http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/afghanistan