AFGHANISTAN

Figure Analysis – Displacement Related to Conflict and Violence

CONTEXT

In 2018, the conflict in Afghanistan was the most lethal of those monitored by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), with nearly as many reported fatalities as Syria and Yemen combined.[1] It continued to display a high degree of complexity with numerous armed actors involved, including not only the government, the Taliban and the Islamic State, but also ethnic, communal and Islamist militias.[2]

Instances of conflict-induced displacements were recorded and verified in 33 of the country's 34 provinces. Intimidation by armed actors was widely reported as a displacement trigger. Displacement surged when the Taliban launched an assault on Ghazni city in August, generating as many as 36,000 displacements. In November 2018, armed conflict between Hazara militias and Taliban fighters extended to the previously safe districts of Malestan and Jaghuri in Ghazni, generating as many as 6,400 displacements.

Based on the available data, as many as 372,000 conflict displacements are estimated to have occurred in 2018. Despite the historically high levels of violence, this number is lower than the estimated displacements in 2017 (about 474,000 displacements).

New displacements	Total number of IDPs	Partial or unverified solutions	
		Number of IDPs who have made partial progress towards a durable solution	Number of IDPs whose progress towards durable solutions cannot be verified
372,000	2,598,000 (Year figure was last updated: 2018)	No data available	No data available
This corresponds to new instances of internal displacement having occurred in 2018.	*This corresponds to the total number of individuals living in internal displacement as of 31 December 2018.*	*This corresponds to the number of IDPs whom our data providers have identified as having returned, resettled or locally integrated in 2018 and for whom the evidence obtained by IDMC suggests that progress toward durable solutions is only partial given their living conditions. In a few instances this number may refer to movements rather than people.*	*This corresponds to the number of IDPs whom our data providers have identified as having returned, resettled or locally integrated in 2018 but for whom there is no available evidence to corroborate progress toward durable solutions. In a few instances this number may refer to movements rather than people.*

NEW DISPLACEMENTS

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

Sources and methodologies

IDMC estimates that 372,000 displacements due to conflict occurred in Afghanistan in 2018, based primarily on OCHA Displacement Tracking System (DTS) data.

OCHA DTS receives displacement reports via the 'petition system', under which 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.

We have added a small number of displacements to our estimate, based on OCHA reports on evictions reported in the 2019 Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview. We also added a very small number of displacements reported by the IOM Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP), as these concerned IDPs had returned after short-term displacement and had never been included in the OCHA DTS data.

Main caveats and monitoring challenges

OCHA's DTS data includes only newly registered IDPs and not secondary displacements in 2018 of people who were already displaced. In addition, although it occasionally captures short-term displacement, many IDPs who are displaced temporarily are never registered within the OCHA DTS data. Access constraints may also affect IDPs' ability to register within the OCHA DTS system. Our figure is therefore a conservative one and likely underestimates the true scale of new displacements in 2018.

IDMC figure and rationale

The IDMC figure includes the total number of displaced people registered in Afghanistan in 2018 and verified by OCHA DTS (364,000 people). It also includes 7,000 people whose displacement was triggered by drought and who were secondarily displaced due to arbitrary evictions in Herat in September 2018, as well as 326 people displaced for short periods who were identified by the above-mentioned IOM HAP data.

Significant changes from last year

The new displacement recorded in 2018 shows a decrease compared to that recorded in 2017.

It is difficult to determine the precise cause behind this decrease in numbers. This is not thought to be due to a change in the methodology as last year's figure was based on the same sources, and this year's estimate has a greater geographical coverage. It is also not due to a decrease in conflict severity, as sources from the field report the intensity of conflict stayed high or even increased in many locations in 2018.

TOTAL NUMBER OF IDPS

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

Sources and methodologies

IDMC's figure, 2,598,000 IDPs, is based on IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) baseline mobility assessment data collected between December 2017 and December 2018 and includes IDPs displaced between 2012 and 2018.

The data covers the whole country and is disaggregated at settlement level.

IOM DTM's mobility baseline assessment methodology relies on key informant (KI) and focus group interviews conducted by field enumerators at settlement level. The number of people displaced by conflict is based on the estimated percentage of the IDPs displaced due to conflict by IOM in a given location.

Main caveats and monitoring challenges
This figure is based on key informant (KI) interviews, and as such therefore likely overestimates the number of IDPs in some parts of Afghanistan. An additional complexity was the high rate of displacement linked to disasters (primarily drought and floods) reported in Afghanistan in 2018. While KIs report on the number of IDPs by cause of displacement (disaster or conflict) these are based on estimated proportions of IDP populations and is therefore not an exact measure.

As IOM DTM collected the data between December 2017 and December 2018, it may no longer accurately reflect of the situation in the country as of December 2018. There is also a risk that IDPs who move between provinces may be counted multiple times.

IDMC figure and rationale
Our estimate includes the total number of IDPs staying in each settlement, as well as cross-border movements reported as returns of individuals staying in tents or in open air, as these people are considered to still be in displacement.

The figure does not include cross-border movements reported as returns to Afghanistan, related to people now staying with host communities, since there is a high degree of uncertainty about whether these people are displaced or not.

Significant changes from last year
Last year, IOM DTM data was not available for the entire country. Therefore, our estimated total number of IDPs was based on REACH data as well as the number of reported cross-border returns estimated to have led to further displacement during 2017, based on various sources. This estimate (more than 1,286,000 IDPs) was significantly lower than in 2018, in large part due to a smaller geographic coverage but also due to the change in source and methodology.

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

This corresponds to the number of IDPs whom our data providers have identified as having returned, resettled or locally integrated in 2018 and for whom the evidence obtained by IDMC suggests that progress toward durable solutions is only partial given their living conditions. In a few instances this number may refer to movements rather than people.

Although IOM DTM records data on IDPs reported to have returned, we lack a reliable estimate of the number of conflict-related IDPs who have made partial progress towards durable solutions by returning to their home communities in 2018. This is because the IOM DTM data does not separate between reported movement of returns for IDPs initially displaced by conflict and disaster. Thus, IDMC does not have a current estimate for people who were displaced by conflict and made partial progress towards durable solutions in 2018.

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	People
Methodology	Key informants, registration, other	Key informants
Geographical disaggregation	Admin 2 or more	Admin 2 or more
Geographical coverage	All relevant areas covered	All relevant areas covered
Frequency of reporting	More than once a month	Every 3 months
Disaggregation on sex	Partial	No
Disaggregation on age	Partial	No
Data triangulation	Contradictory data	Contradictory data
Data on settlement elsewhere	Partial	No
Data on returns	Partial	Partial
Data on local integration	No	No
Data on cross border movements	Partial	Partial
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

[1] ACLED, ACLED 2018: The Year in Review, 11 January 2019
[2] ACLED, Afghanistan, 23 April 2019