

SRI LANKA

Displacement associated with Conflict and Violence

Figure Analysis – GRID 2020

CONTEXT

There were about 1,700 new internal displacements associated with conflict and violence in Sri Lanka in 2019. This figure includes an estimated 300 people displaced during anti-Muslim riots in Minuwagoda, Negombo and Kurunegala in May 2019. It also includes more than 1,400 people who were evacuated during military operations in Ampara district in April. Both displacement events were caused by violence following the simultaneous suicide attacks on churches and hotels on Easter Sunday, 21 April, by Islamist militants. Those attacks killed more than 250 people and led to deteriorating relations between ethnic and religious groups.

IDMC continued to report on 1,100 people who were displaced in March 2018 as a result of anti-Muslim riots that broke out in Kand. The [riots were sparked by an incident](#) in which a Sinhalese truck driver was reportedly assaulted by a Muslim youth after a traffic accident and reflect the increased politicisation of religious identity in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka’s civil war ended in 2009. IDPs displaced during that conflict continued to live in protracted displacement in 2019. Reports suggest that at the end of 2019 there were about 25,889 people still displaced as a result of the war. The [government has been criticised](#) for being too slow in returning land, much of it still occupied by the military, to those living in displacement.

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)	Stock	Flows (1 January – 31 December 2019)
1,700	27,000	-	-	11,000

*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's estimate of new displacements associated with conflict in 2019 is based on two instances of displacement identified through media monitoring. The first population flow was estimated using as a proxy the number of houses destroyed during anti-Muslim riots following the Easter bombings. As a result of those attacks, 300 people were displaced and about 86 houses were destroyed, according to official estimates. The second flow of displacements occurred between 26 April and 27 April when 1,400 people were evacuated to a Sainthamarudhu college as a result of military operations launched in response to the Easter bombings.

Sources and methodologies

IDMC's estimate for new displacements is based on data from the media outlets the Daily Mirror and the Daily FT. For the first caseload, the Daily FT reported official estimates from the government, while the Daily Mirror sourced local residents.

Main caveats and monitoring challenges

There is no official source on new displacements associated with conflict and violence in Sri Lanka and a lack of available data. New displacements triggered by intercommunal violence, political violence or other small-scale phenomena are usually covered by the media. These media reports provide the best available estimates, but they may be underreported, and their reliability is relatively low because of the lack of systematic reporting.

Significant changes from last year

The estimate of new displacements for 2019 is slightly higher than that for 2018 when 1,138 displacements were recorded. That is because there was an increase in violence following the Easter bombings.

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

IDMC's estimate of the total number of IDPs in Sri Lanka includes all those that the country's Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Hindu Religious Affairs has reported as still awaiting resettlement since the end of the civil war in 2009. This figure was supplemented by reports from four different media outlets on people identified as displaced in 2018. Some of the reports were used for triangulation and validation. No information was available to determine whether people displaced in 2018 had made progress towards a durable solution. The figure also includes new displacements in 2019 that were identified using event-based monitoring. IDMC was unable to obtain information on potential returns or progress towards durable solutions for those displacements.

Sources and methodologies

IDMC's estimate of the total number of IDPs is based on data shared by the government's resettlement ministry, the official authority on IDPs displaced since the end of the civil war. The ministry takes the lead in developing and maintaining comprehensive information with disaggregated data on IDPs, refugee returnees and communities affected by displacement. This requires the consolidation of information gathered from the provincial level to the *grama niladhari*, a higher,

fourth level of administration. Displacement data is updated with information from district secretaries.

The two other caseloads are based on media monitoring. The one from 2019 was published by the local outlet Media Daily FT, sourcing the government, while the one from 2018 was reported by the online media outlet DBSJERAY.COM.

Main caveats and monitoring challenges

Data is lacking about displacement triggered by conflict and violence in Sri Lanka, apart from that linked to the civil war. Displacement triggered by intercommunal violence or other small-scale phenomena may be underreported. This could affect the reliability of the figure on the total number of IDPs.

Data linked to the civil war is updated regularly by the resettlement ministry. Information is lacking, however, regarding the current living conditions of those IDPs, including those who have been resettled. This also affects the accuracy of the estimate.

Significant changes from last year

The figure for 2019 represents a decrease of 8,599 from the 2018 estimate of the total number of IDPs in the country. This is mainly a result of the reduction in the number of IDPs still waiting for resettlement as of 30 September 2019 as the government continues to resettle IDPs. There has been no change in the methodology used to collect the data or to calculate the estimate.

NUMBER OF IDPS WHOSE PROGRESS TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS CANNOT BE VERIFIED

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 that occurred in 2019 rather than a total number of people

IDMC figure and rationale

IDMC's estimate for IDPs whose progress towards durable solutions cannot be verified includes 10,000 people displaced since the end of the civil war in 2009, estimated to have been resettled in 2019. This figure is based on a comparison of the number of IDPs as of November 2018 and as of September 2019 as reported by the country's Ministry of Rehabilitation, Resettlement and Hindu Religious Affairs. We consider it unverified since we have no proof that these people actually returned to their place of origin or that they overcame vulnerabilities linked to displacement when they resettled. This estimate also includes the 1,400 people who were evacuated in 2019 as a result of a military operation in Sainthamarudhu, launched in response to the Easter bombings. Contextual information allows us to assume that the evacuation was temporary and that they have now returned, but there is no tangible evidence of this.

Sources and methodologies

IDMC's estimate for IDPs whose progress towards durable solutions cannot be verified is based on its analysis of the data provided by the government's resettlement ministry. The ministry compiles its data from reports by the district authorities. The estimate of 1,400 evacuated people is based on the Daily Mirror, a local media outlet.

Main caveats and monitoring challenges

IDMC would have another estimate if it took into account the increase in the number of resettled IDPs between 2018 and 2019. Given uncertainty around the reason for the increase, which is potentially a result of demographic factors, however, and because the resettlement ministry does not

report on flows of newly resettled IDPs, IDMC decided to use the difference between the number of IDPs as of November 2018 and September 2019. This is a more conservative figure.

Significant changes from last year

IDMC did not report on this metric for this country in previous years.

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	Households, People	Households, People
Methodology	Media monitoring	Registration, Media monitoring
Geographical disaggregation	Admin 2 or more	Admin 2 or more
Frequency of reporting	No update	Upon request
Disaggregation by sex	No	No
Disaggregation by age	No	No
Data triangulation	No Triangulation	Some local triangulation
Data on settlement elsewhere	No	Yes
Data on returns	No	No
Data on local integration	No	No
Data on cross border movements	No	No
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 Sri-Lanka please visit:
<http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/sri-lanka>