

# Stocktaking of Global Forced Displacement Data

*Zara Sarzin*



**WORLD BANK GROUP**

Fragility, Conflict and Violence Cross Cutting Solution Area  
February 2017

## Abstract

Conflict-induced forced displacement is receiving increased interest within the international community. However, establishing an accurate picture of its scale and dynamics is extremely challenging. Large amounts of data on forced displacement are collected and disseminated each year and used to inform policy and programming by humanitarian and development actors. However, not all of these data are credible or complete, and there are significant gaps in the data required for longer-term development planning. This paper reviews the various sources of data on forced displacement and assesses how these can be improved to enable more effective analysis and assistance by development actors. At an aggregate level, the headline figure of 65 million forcibly

displaced persons is an estimate, and the data on internally displaced persons are the least robust. There are also several significant gaps in data collection for those populations that are of concern to development actors, especially returnees, as well the substantial number of people living in displacement-affected host communities. In addition, there is little comprehensive data available on the socioeconomic vulnerabilities and needs of displaced populations, or on the social and economic impacts of displacement on host countries and communities. Significant efforts are needed to enhance the reliability, comparability, quality, and scope of data on forced displacement in general, and address the gaps in the data required for long-term development planning.

---

This paper is a product of the Fragility, Conflict and Violence Cross Cutting Solution Area with the financial support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and in coordination with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. It is part of a larger effort by the World Bank to provide open access to its research and make a contribution to development policy discussions around the world. Policy Research Working Papers are also posted on the Web at <http://econ.worldbank.org>. The author may be contacted at [zsarzin@worldbank.org](mailto:zsarzin@worldbank.org).

*The Policy Research Working Paper Series disseminates the findings of work in progress to encourage the exchange of ideas about development issues. An objective of the series is to get the findings out quickly, even if the presentations are less than fully polished. The papers carry the names of the authors and should be cited accordingly. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank and its affiliated organizations, or those of the Executive Directors of the World Bank or the governments they represent.*

# Stocktaking of Global Forced Displacement Data<sup>1</sup>

Zara Sarzin

JEL classifications: C8, F22; O15, O19, R23, F51

Keywords: forced displacement, refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs, returnees, affected host communities, UNHCR, IDMC



---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was commissioned by the World Bank's Global Program on Forced Displacement with the financial support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and in coordination with the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). The paper benefited substantially from the valuable guidance and detailed inputs provided by Xavier Devictor, Caroline Bahnson, Antoine Simonpietri, Emi Suzuki and Mona Niebuhr (World Bank), David Kipp (SWP), Justin Ginnetti, Cheng Boon Ong and Alexandra Bilak (IDMC), Petra Nahmias (UNHCR), Nuno Nunes (IOM), Natalia Baal (JIPS) and Sam Rose (UNRWA).

## Table of contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Boxes, tables and figures .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>List of acronyms .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A. Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B. Legal, statistical and development perspectives on the global data on forced displacement.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Refugees .....	8
The special case of Palestinian refugees.....	11
Asylum-seekers.....	13
IDPs.....	13
Returnees.....	15
Affected host communities .....	16
<b>C. Historical trends and patterns of forced displacement: Insights from available global data17</b>	
<b>D. Data on asylum-seekers, refugees and IDPs: sources, applications and credibility..</b>	<b>31</b>
Data collection: Sources for refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs .....	31
Registration of refugees and asylum-seekers.....	33
Registration of IDPs.....	33
Profiling of IDP situations .....	34
Population movement tracking systems.....	35
Population censuses .....	35
Sample surveys .....	36
Border crossings.....	37
Administrative records and registers .....	37
General population registers .....	37
Compilation of statistics on forcibly displaced populations .....	38
Asylum-seekers and refugees.....	38
IDPs .....	39
Disaggregated data on location, accommodation and demographics .....	40
Overall robustness of current data .....	41
<b>E. Key data required for development policy and programming .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Returnees.....	43
Host communities.....	44
Socio-economic data on displaced populations, returnees and host communities .....	44
<b>F. Options to improve forced displacement statistics .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>49</b>

## Boxes, tables and figures

Box 1: Terminology used in this Report .....	6
Box 2: Legal Definition of Refugees.....	9
Box 3: Recognition of Refugee Status .....	10
Box 4: Selected Bank-Assisted Development Responses to Conflict-Induced Forced Displacement .....	16
Box 5: Bank-Supported Socio-Economic Surveys and Assessments of Displaced and Host Populations	44
Table 1: Three Perspectives on Forced Displacement.....	8
Table 2: UNHCR Estimates of Protracted Refugee Situations, 1993, 2003, 2014 and 2015.....	28
Table 3: Alternative Estimate of Protracted Refugee Situations end-2014 .....	29
Table 4: Stocks and Flows.....	32
Table 5: Coverage of Published Data on Location, Accommodation and Demographics 2015.....	41
Table 6: Methodological Robustness.....	41
Figure 1: Forced Displacement by Category end-2015 .....	7
Figure 2: Palestinian Refugees under UNRWA's Mandate 1952 – 2015 .....	12
Figure 3: Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and IDPs 1951 – 2015 .....	18
Figure 4: Refugees and Asylum-Seekers by Migratory Path 1951 – 2015.....	18
Figure 5: Significant Historical Crises as a Share of Total Forced Displaced 1991 – 2015 .....	20
Figure 6: Top 15 Countries of Origin end-2015 .....	20
Figure 7: Top 15 Host Countries as a Share of Total Refugees and Asylum-Seekers 1991 – 2015 .....	21
Figure 8: Top 15 Refugee Hosting Countries end-2015 .....	22
Figure 9: Host Countries by Refugees to GDP (PPP) per Capita end-2015 .....	22
Figure 10: Host Countries by Refugees to 1,000 inhabitants end-2015.....	22
Figure 11: Forced Displacement by Income Level of Host Country end-2015 .....	23
Figure 12: Forced Displacement in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations end-2015 .....	23
Figure 13: UNHCR's Population of Concern by Urban/Rural Location end-2015 .....	24
Figure 14: Refugees by Urban/Rural Location end-2015 .....	24
Figure 15: UNHCR Population of Concern by Urban/Rural Location end-2015.....	24
Figure 16: UNHCR's Population of Concern by Accommodation end-2015 .....	25
Figure 17: Durable Solutions Relative to Refugee Stock 2015.....	26
Figure 18: Significant Refugee Returns by Country of Origin 1991 – 2015.....	27
Figure 19: Voluntary Returns of Refugees 1991 – 2015 .....	27
Figure 20: Returns of IDPs Protected or Assisted by UNHCR 1993 – 2015.....	27
Figure 21: Duration of Refugee Situations 1951 – 2014.....	29
Figure 22: Numbers of Refugees in Ongoing Refugee Situations end-2014 .....	31

## List of acronyms

CAR	Central African Republic
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FCS	Fragile and Conflict-affected Situations
GIDD	Global Internal Displacement Database
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRRS	International Recommendations for Refugee Statistics
JIPs	Joint IDP Profiling Service
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Study
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SKOPE	Somalia Knowledge for Operations and Political Economy
SuTPs	Syrians under Temporary Protection
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNOSAT	UNITAR's Operational Satellite Applications Programme
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSD	United Nations Statistical Commission
WFP	World Food Programme

## A. Introduction

Conflict-induced forced displacement—defined as situations where people are forced to flee their homes due to conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations—is gaining prominence as a topic of discussion, both internationally and within the World Bank.<sup>2</sup> This is partly due to the massive refugee flows generated by the Syrian conflict, but also motivated by a growing consensus that forced displacement poses a substantial threat to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially for countries of origin and host countries of refugees and IDPs. Within the Bank, the adoption of the twin goals of eliminating extreme poverty and enhancing shared prosperity requires increased attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, among whom the displaced rank highly. Support for a development approach to displacement, which promotes durable solutions based on economic opportunity and self-reliance is gaining ground.

Establishing an accurate picture of the scale and dynamics of conflict-induced forced displacement is extremely challenging. Data are collected from a multiplicity of sources, employing different definitions and methodologies, leading to variations in the comparability, quality and reliability of reported data within and between countries. Numbers can change rapidly due to ongoing conflicts and monitoring can be challenging due to the fluidity of population movements and lack of access to conflict-affected areas. In a number of contexts, statistics may misrepresent the true scale of displacement due to practical difficulties associated with data collection, political incentives to manipulate figures or methodological issues. Reported data may be incomplete due to limited coverage of data collection activities, or because collected data are not fully reflected in aggregated statistics due to poor coordination of data compilation activities. Significantly, headline figures on forced displacement do not capture affected host communities and returnees who may still face specific vulnerabilities associated with their displacement.

Despite these challenges, large amounts of data on forcibly displaced populations are collected and disseminated each year and used to inform policy and programming. Substantial amounts of data are gathered and published by national governments, international organizations, and national and international NGOs. Lacking more credible statistics, these flawed and incomplete data are often used widely to inform policy making and programming by humanitarian and development actors. While it may not be possible to obtain comprehensive and reliable data in the short-term, it is important to understand the limitations of the figures that are currently available and widely quoted.

Current data collection efforts focus on estimating the numbers of forcibly displaced and consequently there are significant gaps in the data required for longer-term development planning. There is increasing interest in identifying and addressing the gaps and deficiencies in the data on forced displacement in order to: (a) underpin a policy dialogue with affected countries on the longer-term development impacts (both positive and negative) of conflict-induced forced displacement on host countries, host communities and displaced populations, and the advantages and disadvantages of various policy options; and (b) design evidence-based policy responses and development assistance strategies to mitigate negative impacts and support positive results. An expanded evidence base would support a more informed policy dialogue with country counterparts, and would also provide more practical guidelines for development interventions.

Several initiatives are already underway to improve statistics on forced displacement, including work being carried out by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)<sup>3</sup> with support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM),<sup>4</sup> the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS),<sup>5</sup> the Inter-Agency Standing

---

<sup>2</sup> Forced displacement due to natural or human-made disasters and due to development projects are beyond the scope of this paper. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to forced displacement in this paper refer to conflict-induced forced displacement.

<sup>3</sup> IDMC, part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), is the leading provider of information and analysis on internal displacement worldwide. See <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> IOM, established in 1951, is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration, with 162 member states and nine states holding observer status.

<sup>5</sup> JIPS is an inter-agency initiative overseen by UNHCR, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), OCHA, Danish Refugee Council, IDMC and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs that supports international and national actors in collecting data on displacement situations through collaborative data-collection exercises. JIPS

Committee (IASC) Information Management Working Group,<sup>6</sup> as well as an initiative being led jointly by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Statistics Norway under the auspices of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSD).<sup>7</sup> The latter is working on: (a) preparation of a handbook for official statistics on refugees together with a refugee statistics compiler's manual that would provide practical guidance to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of refugee statistics; and (b) formation of a committee composed of experts from both national statistical agencies and international organizations, which would lead the development of the handbook (UNSD 2016). Progress on this agenda was discussed at the 47<sup>th</sup> session of UNSD held in New York in March 2016, where it was decided that the expert group should also include IDPs in its scope of work (UNSD 2016).

The objective of this report is to review the various sources of data on conflict-induced forced displacement and to assess how these can be improved to enable more effective analysis and assistance by development actors. Specifically, the report: (a) reviews the various sources of data on refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs and provides a comprehensive overview of their coverage, timeliness and reliability; and (b) assesses how the collection and compilation of data could be improved to enable more effective analysis of displacement situations and assistance by development actors. This analysis has been carried out through an examination of available data on refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs, a desk review of relevant literature, and technical inputs from key data collectors and compilers including UNHCR, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), IDMC, JIPS and IOM. While there are significant numbers of people displaced by natural and man-made disasters, as well as development projects, the focus of this report is on conflict-induced displacement only. The circumscribed focus of this paper recognizes the unique character of displacement emerging in fragile, conflict-affected and violent settings, and the need to appropriately tailor development responses to these contexts and the underlying drivers of conflict.

### Box 1: Terminology used in this Report

**Refugees:** Individuals displaced outside their country of nationality or habitual residence as a consequence of generalized violence, conflict or a well-founded fear of persecution, and are therefore in need of protection.<sup>8</sup>

**Asylum-seekers:** Individuals who are seeking international protection under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) but whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined.<sup>9</sup>

**IDPs:** Individuals who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, and who have not crossed an international border and therefore remain under the legal protection of their own government.<sup>10</sup>

---

aims at addressing gaps in disaggregated data (by location, sex, age and diversity) and promoting evidence-based responses to displacement in the context of the search for durable solutions. See: [www.jips.org](http://www.jips.org).

<sup>6</sup> IASC's Information Management Working Group, chaired by OCHA, was established in 2006 to provide a forum for humanitarian organizations to strengthen information management in order to support improved decision making in emergency preparedness and response. See <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/topics/imwg>.

<sup>7</sup> UNSD, established in 1947, is the highest decision making body for international statistical activities, bringing together chief Statisticians from member states. See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom>.

<sup>8</sup> The terminology for refugee used in this paper draws on the definitions of a refugee in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (See Box 2).

<sup>9</sup> Consistent with that used by UNHCR.

<sup>10</sup> Consistent with the definition of an IDP in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, except that it excludes internal displacement due to natural or human-made disasters.



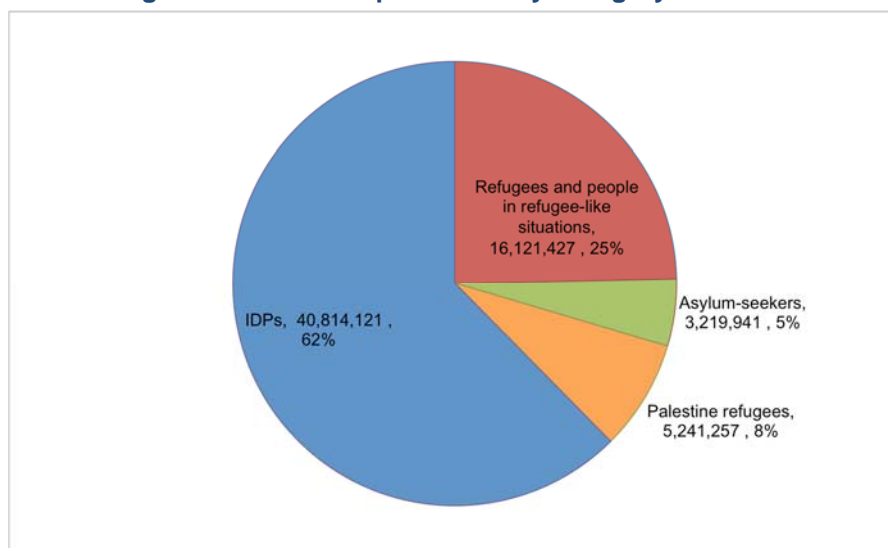
**Returnees:** Former refugees or IDPs who have returned to their countries or places of origin but have yet to achieve durable solutions, i.e. they still have specific social or economic vulnerabilities linked to their displacement.<sup>11</sup>

**Affected host communities:** Populations living in areas hosting refugees or IDPs and whose welfare is impacted positively or negatively by the presence of displaced populations.<sup>12</sup>

## B. Legal, statistical and development perspectives on the global data on forced displacement

Worldwide it is estimated that there were more than 65 million people displaced due to conflict, generalized violence, persecution and violations of human rights at the end of 2015, including 40.8 million IDPs (IDMC 2016), 16.1 million refugees and 3.2 million asylum-seekers under UNHCR's mandate (UNHCR 2016), and 5.2 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate (UNRWA 2016)—the highest total on record since comprehensive statistics on global forced displacement started to be collected in the early 1990s (see Figure 1). Significantly, these headline figures on forced displacement do not capture affected host communities and returnees who have yet to achieve sustainable solutions.

**Figure 1: Forced Displacement by Category end-2015**



Sources: UNHCR, IDMC, UNRWA

Note: Palestine refugees only include those under UNRWA's mandate. UNHCR data includes 97,973 refugees from West Bank and Gaza, and IDMC data includes 221,425 IDPs in West Bank and Gaza at the end of 2015.

Data on forced displacement reflect diverse definitions of refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs. In theory, data on forced displacement should reflect the definitions of refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs established in international and regional agreements focused on securing protection and assistance for those who flee violence and persecution. These agreements primarily emphasize legal rights, especially the right to state protection, rather than socio-economic vulnerabilities. In reality, statistics on forced displacement reflect diverse definitions employed by national governments and organizations responsible for collecting and compiling data. These statistical definitions vary within and between countries depending on the different objectives and methodologies of data collection efforts.

Political factors can determine how these definitions are crafted and applied in practice, contributing to the substantial variation in data across displacement situations. Conflict-induced displacement is inherently

<sup>11</sup> Author's suggested definition.

<sup>12</sup> Author's suggested definition.

political. Asylum countries may inflate numbers of refugees to maximize international assistance, to tarnish the reputation of countries of origin or to bolster their own. Alternatively, they may report artificially low numbers to avoid antagonizing countries of origin (Crisp 1999). In some contexts, it may be politically expedient to only recognize IDPs displaced by some parties to the conflict but not others or to only recognize IDPs of particular ethnicities in order to influence the allocation of assistance. It may also be politically expedient for governments to prolong IDP status in order to create leverage in negotiations. There may be pressure not to officially recognize informal urban settlements where the majority of displaced people in urban areas reside. For countries of origin, there may be pressure to inflate reported numbers of returnees to demonstrate political success or to maximize assistance for reintegration efforts.

From a development perspective, evolving definitions of conflict-induced forced displacement reflect consideration of the specific vulnerabilities of displaced populations distinct from their legal status or statistical measurement, and also include a strong focus on returnees, host countries and affected host communities. For development actors, forcibly displaced people are of particular concern because they have specific socio-economic vulnerabilities linked to their displacement, which constrain their ability to take advantage of economic opportunities and consequently leave them susceptible to poverty. Such specific vulnerabilities typically include: a sudden and catastrophic loss of assets (including social capital), which can have long-lasting consequences; trauma and psychological stress; a temporary legal status or loss of rights (which can result in limited freedom of movement, legal restrictions on employment, decreased access to education and health services, and vulnerability to abuse); an uncertain situation that makes it difficult to plan or invest; and being “out of place” economically (residing in an environment where there is no demand for their skills). It is because such vulnerabilities are unique to those who are displaced that traditional poverty reduction efforts may not suffice and that special interventions may be needed. The development response therefore aims to help mitigate or even eliminate these vulnerabilities, while also addressing the impact of displacement on host countries and communities.<sup>13</sup> The Bank has assisted several countries to prepare and implement development operations focused on mitigating the impacts of forced displacement, a selection of which are outlined in Box 4 below. In this sense, the “population of particular focus” for development actors is distinct from that of humanitarian agencies, although there is likely to be significant overlap.

**Table 1: Three Perspectives on Forced Displacement**

Legal perspective	Statistical perspective	Development perspective
Definitions are drawn from the various international and regional conventions on refugees and IDPs, and in some cases from national laws and regulations.	Definitions employed by governments or organizations responsible for collecting and compiling data on the forcibly displaced. These tend to vary within and between countries due to different objectives and methodologies.	Definitions reflect consideration of the economic and social vulnerabilities of displaced, host and returnee populations distinct from their legal status. Consideration is also given to the locations of displaced populations and the degree to which they can be reached by development interventions due to security conditions.

## Refugees

Refugee status is defined by a well-developed body of international law (see Box 2). However, differences between the definition of a refugee in the 1951 Convention (updated by the 1967 Protocol) and the expanded definition of a refugee in the OAU Convention and the Cartagena Declaration, means that an individual may be considered a refugee in one part of the world but not qualify for that status in another part of the world. The 1951 Convention (Article 1C) also defines the conditions under which an individual's refugee status ends including: (a) voluntary repatriation to their country of origin; (b) naturalization in their

<sup>13</sup> The arrival and inclusion of large numbers of refugees, IDPs or returnees in specific locations creates both risks and opportunities for host countries and communities. The presence of large displaced populations can transform the environment in which poverty reduction efforts are being designed and implemented by national and local authorities.

country of asylum; (c) resettlement in a third country; and (d) cessation of refugee status because there are no longer compelling reasons for an individual to refuse to avail themselves of the protection of their country of origin.

### Box 2: Legal Definition of Refugees

The **1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees** (1951 Convention), later amended by the 1967 Protocol,<sup>14</sup> defines refugees primarily in terms of their vulnerability due to the denial of state protection (Reid 2005) as “a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.” Individuals who fulfill the definition of refugees are entitled to the rights and are bound by the duties set out in the 1951 Convention, most significantly the rights to non-discrimination, non-penalization and non-refoulement (which prohibits the return of a refugee to a territory where their life or freedom is threatened).

In Africa, the **1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa** (OAU Convention)<sup>15</sup> expands the definition of refugees to people who are forced to flee due to “external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality.” It introduces objective criteria for determining refugee status that are based on the conditions prevailing in the country of origin (including situations beyond deliberate state action) and eliminates the requirement that a person establish an individual risk of persecution.

In Latin America, the **1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees** (Cartagena Declaration), which was heavily influenced by the OAU Convention, similarly expands the definition of refugees to include “persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.”

Statistics on refugees do not always conform to legal definitions. UNHCR leads global efforts to collect and compile data on refugees, relying on individual registration or data provided by host governments. Data are generally provided to UNHCR by host governments based on their own definitions and methods of data collection, which tend to vary across countries and can lead to substantial variations in aggregate numbers. For example, people of certain nationalities may be recognized as refugees by some host countries but not by others and some countries consider the children of refugees to be refugees themselves, while other countries accord them a different status.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, countries do not methodically report statistics on voluntary returns, naturalization and resettlement.

---

<sup>14</sup> The 1967 Protocol expanded the application of the 1951 Convention beyond the protection of European refugees following World War II.

<sup>15</sup> Adopted by the Organization of African Unity, now the African Union (AU) on September 10, 1969, and entered into force on June 20, 1974. There are 54 AU member states.

<sup>16</sup> In addition to persons recognized as refugees under the 1951 Convention, 1967 Protocol and OAU Convention, UNHCR data also include persons recognized as refugees in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, persons granted a complementary or subsidiary form of protection and those granted temporary protection. UNHCR statistics also include people in refugee-like situations, i.e. individuals outside their country or territory of origin who face protection risks similar to those of refugees, but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained, for example 200,000 undocumented Rohingya in Bangladesh originating from Myanmar.

### Box 3: Recognition of Refugee Status

Refugee status determination procedures evaluate and verify a person's claim for refugee status.<sup>17</sup> The 1951 Convention does not set out the procedures for the determination of refugee status, and host countries have developed their own procedures and standards. In general, these draw on responsibilities derived from the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, international human rights and humanitarian law, Executive Committee Conclusions,<sup>18</sup> and national judicial and administrative legal standards.

The 1951 Convention gives host countries the discretion to determine whether or not individuals meet the definition of refugees and to register asylum-seekers and refugees. Determination of refugee status requires establishing the facts and then applying the criteria in the 1951 Convention (or the OAU Convention or Cartagena Declaration as they may apply) to those facts. Recognition of an individual's refugee status does not make that person a refugee but declares them to be one.<sup>19</sup>

However policies, procedures and practices vary significantly between countries.<sup>20</sup> Despite these differences, it is generally recognized that refugee status determination procedures include the following elements: (a) access to asylum procedures at the border or within the territory of the contracting state in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement and without the imposition of time limits; (b) access to information and guidance about asylum procedures; (c) access to an interpreter if needed and opportunity to contact a representative of UNHCR; (d) a clear authority with the requisite expertise to evaluate claims and make decisions; (e) access to information on outcome of asylum claims; (f) issuance of documentation for those granted refugee status; (g) access to appeals procedures; (h) permission to remain in the country pending a decision on initial applications or appeals; (i) confidentiality; and (j) guarantees for separated and unaccompanied children.

UNHCR is mandated through its Statute of 1950 (together with other General Assembly resolutions) to lead and coordinate international action for the protection of refugees and the resolution of refugee problems, including assisting countries to establish procedures to determine whether or not a person is a refugee. Most countries provide for the involvement of UNHCR in an advisory capacity, but in some countries, UNHCR participates in the national asylum procedures including: "preparing a case for consideration by national eligibility authorities (e.g. registration, preliminary interview, file preparation, presentation to the national authority); voting on the asylum application or participating as an observer/advisor at the first instance stage; voting on the asylum application or participating as an observer/advisor at the appeal or review stage; and reviewing inadmissibility or rejection decisions of applicants who are due to be expelled." If contracting states have not yet established refugee status determination procedures and the task of determining refugee status is left to UNHCR, it can only grant an applicant 'mandate status' rather than refugee status.

In the case of mass displacement and large-scale influxes, refugee status may be granted on a *prima facie* basis (i.e. in the absence of evidence to the contrary), whereby the host country makes a determination for an entire group on the basis of readily apparent and objective conditions in the country of origin. Refugee status is presumptive and conclusive unless and until there is evidence that a person is wrongly recognized or subject to exclusion criteria.

---

<sup>17</sup> An individual is a refugee according to the 1951 Convention as soon as they meet the criteria established therein, and this would occur before their refugee status is formally determined. Therefore, refugee status determination procedures recognize someone as a refugee but do not make that person a refugee.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance Conclusion No. 8 (XXVIII) on the determination of refugee status (1977) and Conclusion No. 30 (XXXIV) on the problem of manifestly unfounded or abusive applications for refugee status or asylum (1983).

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, because of the declarative nature of refugee status, asylum-seekers are generally awarded a certain protective status on the basis that they could be a refugee.

<sup>20</sup> In a number of countries, refugee status is determined under specific procedures established for this purpose, but in other countries refugee status is determined within broader procedures of the admission of aliens, informal arrangements, or ad hoc procedures for specific purposes, e.g. the issuance of travel documents (UNHCR 2011, Ahmadi and Lakhani 2016).

The population of refugees reflected in the global statistics does not necessarily coincide precisely with the population of particular focus for development actors. Of the 16.1 million refugees and people in refugee-like situations under UNHCR's mandate at the end of 2015, 2.4 million were living in high-income (OECD and non-OECD) countries that do not qualify for assistance from development organizations.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, even within low and middle-income asylum countries, there may be pockets of refugees in protracted displacement who may not have achieved a legal solution to their displacement (i.e. naturalization in the host country, voluntary repatriation to their home country or resettlement in a third country) but who no longer have specific economic and social vulnerabilities linked to their having been displaced. They may no longer have protection or assistance needs, they may have achieved a high degree of economic and social inclusion, they may enjoy most of the privileges of citizenship, and they may have achieved a standard of living equal to that of nationals, e.g. over 300,000 ethnically Chinese refugees who fled from Vietnam to China between 1979 and 1982 (UNHCR 2007). On the other hand, there may be refugees who fall out of the global statistics when they are naturalized but who continue to be of interest to development actors because they still face specific vulnerabilities linked to their displacement, e.g. Burundian refugees newly naturalized in Tanzania.

### The special case of Palestinian refugees

The legal definition of Palestinian refugees is unique and distinct from the definition of refugees in the 1951 Convention. Palestinian refugees fall within the mandate of UNRWA,<sup>22</sup> which operates in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Gaza and the West Bank. UNRWA defines "Palestine refugees" as individuals and their patrilineal descendants whose normal place of residence was the British Mandate for Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost their homes and livelihoods as a result of the 1948 conflict.<sup>23</sup> Palestinian refugees living outside UNRWA's five areas of operation fall under the responsibility of UNHCR and are included in UNHCR statistics. There are other groups that are entitled to receive UNRWA services but are not identified as refugees in UNRWA's registration system including those displaced by the 1967 and 1982 Arab-Israeli conflicts. Some Palestinian refugees may be also reflected in IDP statistics, for example it is estimated that of 560,000 Palestinian refugees registered in Syria, 280,000 were internally displaced as of December 2015 (UNRWA 2016).

The number of registered Palestinian refugees has grown steadily from 0.9 million in 1952 to over 5.2 million in 2015 (see Figure 2). This substantial growth in the numbers of Palestinian refugees is a consequence of: (a) the uniqueness of Palestinian refugee status which, unlike refugee status granted under the 1951 Convention, is maintained even in the event of naturalization in a country of asylum (e.g. the granting of citizenship to Palestinian refugees in Jordan) or resettlement in a third country (e.g. 200,000 Palestinian refugees are thought to have left Lebanon but are still reflected in registration data); (b) registration of descendants of male Palestinian refugees; (c) high fertility rates (Khawaja 2003); (d) a voluntary system of registration and deregistration linked to the provision of UNRWA services creating an incentive to register or maintain registration in areas of UNRWA operations; and (e) an imperfect process of verification and updating of registration data which may not immediately reflect all deaths.

---

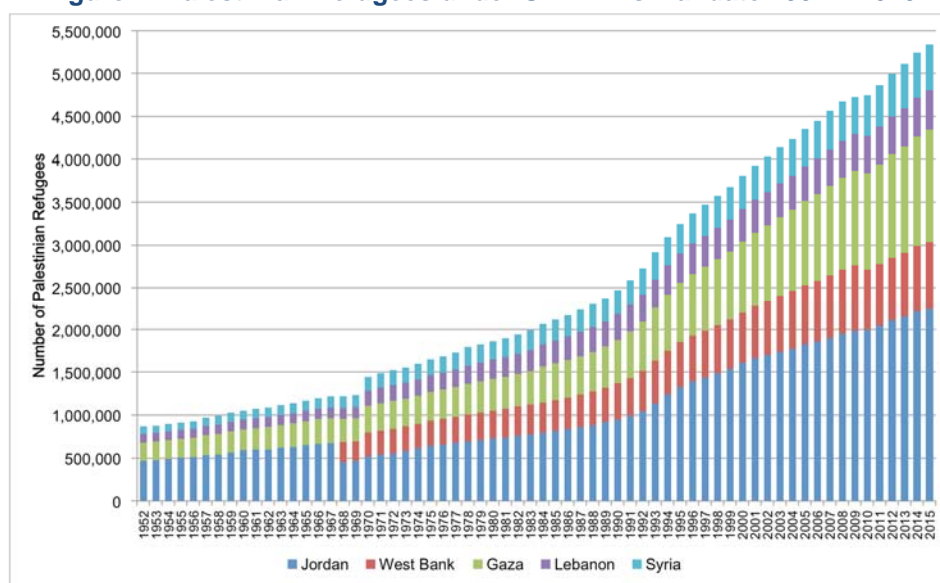
<sup>21</sup> While refugees in high-income countries are beyond the reach of development assistance provided by development actors, they may still have an impact on overall development assistance (e.g. some states report the costs of the first year of hosting asylum-seekers as ODA), on countries of origin (e.g. through remittances), and on development programs supporting return and reintegration of refugees.

<sup>22</sup> UNRWA was established by General Assembly resolution 302 (IV) of December 8, 1949 and began operation on May 1, 1950, succeeding the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees, established in 1948. Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA are excluded from the 1951 Convention, 1967 Protocol and UNHCR Statute. The UN General Assembly has repeatedly renewed UNRWA's mandate, most recently extending it to June 30, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> The UN General Assembly's Resolution 181 of November 1947 proposing the partition of Mandatory Palestine into independent Arab and Jewish states, led to armed clashes between Arabs and Jews. When the British Mandate for Palestine expired on May 14, 1948, the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel was proclaimed. Neighboring Arab states of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic invaded what had been Mandatory Palestine, leading to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. At the end of the war, Israel controlled the area that Resolution 181 had proposed for the Jewish state and almost 60 percent of the area proposed for the Arab state. Transjordan annexed the remainder of the former British mandate and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip.



**Figure 2: Palestinian Refugees under UNRWA's Mandate 1952 – 2015**



Source: UNRWA

Notes: Jordanian data included both East and West Banks until 1967. Excludes registered persons who do not fully meet UNRWA's Palestine Refugee criteria but who receive UNRWA's services.

A development perspective could focus on those Palestinian refugees that have yet to overcome the social and economic vulnerabilities associated with their displacement, recognizing that the experience of Palestinian refugees has varied significantly across asylum countries.

- (a) In the West Bank, Palestinian refugees are effectively stateless and live under both Palestinian Authority and Israeli military Civil Administration. The incomes of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, three quarters of whom are living outside of designated camps, is similar to that of the non-refugee population (Bocco, et al. 2007).
- (b) In Hamas-administered Gaza, Palestinian refugees are also stateless in the absence of an independent Palestinian state. Palestinian refugees in Gaza, more than half of whom are living outside of camps, have per capita incomes comparable to non-refugee residents (Bocco, et al. 2007).
- (c) In Lebanon, Palestinian refugees have limited freedom of movement, are barred from certain professions, cannot own property, have no access to public services, and typically live in poor, overcrowded camps, which are heavily dependent on UNRWA for assistance. They have significantly lower per capita income than the host population (Bocco, et al. 2007). Consequently, approximately 200,000 Palestinian refugees are thought to have left Lebanon, and it is estimated that only around 250,000 Palestinian refugees remain in the country.
- (d) In contrast, in Jordan the majority of Palestinian refugees were granted citizenship in the early 1950s and have equal rights to other Jordanian citizens (Palestine refugees represent approximately 20 percent of Jordan's population), however those refugees that remained in the West Bank and came to Jordan after 1967 and those from Gaza can only acquire temporary Jordanian passports; only one in six Palestinian refugees in Jordan are living in camps, which have taken on the character of urban neighborhoods.
- (e) In Syria, while Palestinian refugees did not have citizenship they enjoyed most of the same rights and similar living conditions as those of the Syrian population. Of the 560,000 Palestinians refugees registered in Syria in 2015, it is estimated that 280,000 are internally displaced and 110,000 have fled the country (UNRWA 2016),<sup>24</sup> often facing harsher

<sup>24</sup> UNRWA estimates that 42,000 Palestinian refugees have sought asylum in Lebanon and 18,000 in Jordan.

restrictions on accessing asylum compared to other refugees (Morrison 2014). Ninety percent of those who remain in Syria are reliant on humanitarian assistance (Morrison 2014).

- (f) An unknown number of registered Palestinian refugees have acquired the nationality of countries outside the Middle East.

### Asylum-seekers

The 1951 Convention does not establish an individual right to asylum, and the right to receive or to be granted asylum is left to the discretion of the host country, which has the primary responsibility for protecting refugees including determining whether or not people meet the definition of refugees in the 1951 Convention.<sup>25</sup> This requires that countries designate a central authority with the relevant knowledge and expertise to assess applications, ensure procedural safeguards and permit appeals and reviews. Consequently, statistics on asylum-seekers reflect differences between countries in the administrative rules governing the asylum process, in particular the criteria for individuals to be granted access the asylum procedure. The category of asylum-seekers excludes anyone immediately granted refugee status on a prima-facie basis, including Syrian refugees granted Temporary Protection visas in Turkey.

Not all asylum-seekers included in the global statistics would necessarily be persons of particular focus for development actors. Of the 3.2 million asylum-seekers at the end of 2015, 1.4 million are in high income (OECD and non-OECD) countries that do not qualify for development assistance or concessional financing from development organizations.

### IDPs

There is no international legal framework for the protection, assistance or solutions for IDPs and these remain first and foremost state responsibilities. Many national laws and regulations on internal displacement do not include a definition of IDPs, however those that do most often reflect the definition in the United Nation's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UN Guiding Principles) (Wyndham 2006).<sup>26</sup> The UN Guiding Principles define IDPs as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." The 2006 Great Lakes Protocol on the Protection and Assistance of IDPs (Great Lakes Protocol) and the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons In Africa (Kampala Convention) explicitly extend the definition of IDPs to include those displaced by development projects.<sup>27</sup> The UN Guiding Principles and the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs identify three ways in which internal displacement can end: (a) voluntary and sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (return); (b) sustainable local integration in areas where IDPs take refuge (local integration); and (c) voluntary and sustainable integration in another part of the country (settlement elsewhere in the country) (IASC 2010).

This stocktaking exercise focuses on data on conflict-induced internal displacement. While the UN Guiding Principles includes displacement due to natural or human-made disasters, and regional instruments such as the Great Lakes Protocol and the Kampala Convention include displacement due to development projects, this stocktaking report focuses on conflict-induced internal displacement only. Statistics on IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR only include IDPs (and people in IDP-like situations) who have been

---

<sup>25</sup> In 1967, the UN General Assembly adopted a Declaration on Territorial Asylum which reasserts the right of everyone "to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) while avoiding reference to the right to be granted asylum. Rather, the Declaration highlights the responsibility of the country of asylum to evaluate an individual's claim for asylum.

<sup>26</sup> The UN Guiding Principles are not binding but establish principles that are consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law and analogous refugee law.

<sup>27</sup> The UN Guiding Principles do acknowledge large-scale development projects as a cause of displacement, however this is not reflected explicitly in the definition of IDPs.

displaced due to armed conflict, situations of generalized violence and violations of human rights.<sup>28</sup> Data on IDPs monitored by IDMC are disaggregated and currently published separately for conflict-induced displacement and disaster-induced displacement.<sup>29</sup> At the country level the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)<sup>30</sup> provides data on IDPs in both conflict and natural disaster settings (activated in all major natural disaster contexts in recent years).

Global data on conflict-induced internal displacement reflect variations in how IDPs are defined across situations. There is no consensus on how far a person must flee in order to be considered internally displaced. The definition of internal displacement for nomadic populations, which account for a significant share of IDPs in the Horn of Africa and increasingly in the Sahel, is open to controversy.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, while some countries register IDP children born in displacement (e.g. Azerbaijan, Cyprus and Georgia), other countries do not (IDMC 2015). The crafting of a definition for IDPs and its application in a particular context may be heavily influenced by local and national politics in conflict and post-conflict countries, as well as the direct link between estimates of displaced populations and humanitarian assistance, which can lead to both over- and under-reporting. Consequently, comparing or aggregating data across displacement situations may be misleading.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, there is no consensus on when internal displacement ends. There are likely to be IDPs in protracted displacement who have no interest in returning to their original locations, are well integrated and no longer have specific vulnerabilities linked to their displacement. In particular, large numbers of IDPs have moved from rural to urban settings and their displacement is part of an urbanization process that in many parts of the world is a mega-trend that is rarely reversed. The definition of an end to internal displacement is hence complex, as it typically requires return (which may be unlikely, for example where IDPs have moved from rural to urban settings or in situations where they have spent extended time in the same place), integration (which is difficult to define) or settlement elsewhere in the country. IDPs can also become refugees if they cross an international border. In countries such as Colombia, IDP status is not attached to an individual but to a family, and is hence transmitted across generations (to facilitate the provision of reparations and other entitlements), and there is an imperfect system for removing IDPs from the register if they have achieved a durable solution or when they die. In other contexts, deregistration signifies not the achievement of a durable solution but rather the end of state or international support (IDMC 2015).<sup>33</sup> The absence of a clear and operational approach to defining the 'end' of internal displacement may be one of the factors behind the continued overall increase in the global numbers of IDPs. Lack of clarity around when displacement ends also leaves room for political manipulation. Governments may find it politically expedient to artificially prolong IDP status by deterring returns or local integration, for example in Azerbaijan and Georgia to promote claims over territory (Beau 2003). In other contexts, national

---

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR's IDP data focus only on internally displaced populations to which it extends protection or assistance. IDMC coverage of IDP data is more expansive and in 2015 included additional data on: (a) 26 countries accounting for 4.5 million IDPs including some significant IDP hosting countries (Turkey, India, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Kenya); and (b) IDPs in countries where UNHCR is active who are not protected or assisted by the agency. In 2015, IDMC's aggregate figure for conflict-induced internal displacement was 3.3 million higher than UNHCR's aggregate figure for IDPs protected or assisted by the agency.

<sup>29</sup> IDMC's 2016 report presents both data sets alongside each other. In certain contexts, there can be significant overlaps in these two groups; however data systems may be maintained separately for conflict-induced displacement and natural disasters (e.g. in Afghanistan) leading to possible gaps or double counting if these categories are combined.

<sup>30</sup> The IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is a system to track and monitor displacement and population mobility. It is designed to regularly and systematically capture, process and disseminate information to provide a better understanding of the movements and evolving needs of displaced populations, whether on site or en route. It has been active in over 40 countries since its inception in 2004. See <http://www.globaldtm.info/>.

<sup>31</sup> This is typically defined as nomads not having access to their traditional routes, but routes can vary.

<sup>32</sup> IDMC has recently adjusted their methodology to facilitate greater comparability across situations and improvements are reflected in IDMC's end-2015 data.

<sup>33</sup> This is not necessarily a problem if the purpose of the registration system is to delineate entitlements to assistance rather than to determine status.



governments may prematurely or arbitrarily impose an end to displacement to demonstrate that a conflict has been resolved or to limit entitlements to assistance.

IDPs in acute conflict zones are beyond the reach of most development actors. There are significant numbers of IDPs in acute conflict or war zones beyond the reach of development actors. Development actors are also not equipped to intervene effectively in such environments, where their programs are unlikely to have much impact. Despite the strong imperative for development organizations to involve themselves in the planning of long-term responses to displacement in acute conflict zones, it is generally only possible to provide development assistance once hostilities have ceased and access to beneficiaries and potential project sites is secured. For this reason, it may be appropriate to note that 9.6 million IDPs live in countries (Syria, Libya and Yemen) where development actors have no or only remote presence due to the intensity of the ongoing conflict.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, in countries engulfed in war and acute conflict, it may not make sense to delineate IDPs from other war-affected people who are besieged in their own homes (Crisp 1999).

## Returnees

Voluntary return is recognized as one of three possible durable solutions for both refugees and IDPs. Voluntary repatriation is recognized under the 1951 Convention as one of three durable solutions for refugees, after which the previously displaced person reacquires protection of their country of origin. In respect of IDPs, the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs and UN Guiding Principles identify voluntary and safe return to and reintegration in a person's area of habitual residence as one of three ways in which internal displacement can end.

For both IDPs and refugees, return to their area or country of origin (or settlement elsewhere) does not necessarily mean that they find sustainable solutions to their displacement. The 'voluntariness' of return programs may obscure the lack of choice for some returning refugees or IDPs.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, returnees may face continued insecurity as well as impediments towards the restitution of land and housing, accessing services, reestablishing livelihoods, social reintegration, and accessing local governance. For example, Afghan refugees who returned in large numbers from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran (many of whom were deported due to lack of documentation or returned 'spontaneously' due to pressure from security forces and local authorities) are exposed to violent conflict on their return and risk becoming displaced internally,<sup>36</sup> being recruited into violent extremist groups or criminal activities (Ahmadi and Lakhani 2016).<sup>37</sup> And in the Central African region, the vast majority of the more than 910,000 IDPs who returned to their homes continue to face challenges associated with their displacement (IDMC 2015). Ignoring the need to find sustainable solutions for returnees puts them at risk of poverty and can negatively affect development since their continued marginalization may hinder economic and social progress. Unsustainable returns can also contribute to renewed conflict and further displacement.

There is no consensus on the definition or measurement of a sustainable return.<sup>38</sup> Drawing on the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs, a sustainable return at the individual level might encompass the following elements: (a) long-term safety, security and freedom of movement; (b) an adequate standard of living, including at a minimum access to adequate food, water, housing, health care and basic education; (c) access to employment and livelihoods; (d) access to effective mechanisms that restore housing, land and property or provide returnees with compensation; (e) access to and replacement of personal and other documentation; (f) voluntary reunification with family members separated during displacement; (g)

---

<sup>34</sup> Some conflict-affected countries permit development support to IDPs in relatively safe areas.

<sup>35</sup> Even within voluntary repatriation programs there may be different degrees of 'voluntariness', and 'voluntary' might mean the absence of forced removal but the displaced person is given no choice at all (Black and Gent 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Two-thirds of returnees to rural areas suffered secondary displacement (DACAAR/Samuel Hall 2015).

<sup>37</sup> See also the 2015 Afghanistan Refugee and Return Overview.

<sup>38</sup> For example, is the objective of reintegration efforts to restore the standard of living displaced people enjoyed prior to their displacement, or to ensure that they are no worse off than they were in displacement, or to ensure that their standard of living converges with surrounding communities (which may also be dealing with the impacts of conflict) (Hammond 2014)?

participation in public affairs at all levels on an equal basis with the resident population; and (h) effective remedies for displacement-related violations, including access to justice, reparations and information about the causes of violation.<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, there are no global statistics on the success or sustainability of returns. Despite the methodological challenges, it may be useful to attempt an extremely rough estimate of returnees who have yet to achieve durable solutions in order to get a better sense of the likely order of magnitude of the problem. Several studies have suggested that it can take two or more years for returnees to reestablish themselves while others suggest that the process of ‘emplacement’ can take generations (Hammond 2014). A reasonably conservative estimate of the number of returnees facing continued socio-economic challenges might then be the cumulative number of returned IDPs and returned refugees over the last three years, i.e. a total of 5.5 million returned IDPs and 0.7 million returned refugees.

### Affected host communities

A definition of affected host communities is absent from international and regional agreements on forced displacement. There are no references to the impact on host communities in several instruments pertaining to conflict-induced displacement including the 1951 Convention, 1967 Protocol, OAU Convention, Cartagena Declaration and UN Guiding Principles. The Great Lakes Protocol includes as an undertaking of member states to extend protection and assistance to “communities residing in areas hosting internally displaced persons” and the Kampala Convention highlights the importance of including an assessment of the needs of host communities alongside those of internally displaced populations, reflecting these in strategies and policies on internal displacement, and where appropriate extending humanitarian assistance to local communities. However affected host communities are not defined in either instrument.

Estimates of the scale and character of the impact on host communities—both negative and positive—are important from both a humanitarian and development perspective. In the event of large and sudden flows of refugees and IDPs, the short-term impacts on host communities can be significant, and if they are not well managed, the impacts can be long lasting. The humanitarian community includes host communities in their plans for protection and assistance to displaced populations, however arriving at accurate figures can be challenging, and agreement on the purpose of the statistics and how they should be calculated requires an understanding of specific contexts. There are, however, some reasonably robust data on the physical location of various refugee populations that might be linked to estimates of the local population, but there are significant empirical challenges to overcome in order to estimate the scale of the impact.<sup>40</sup> In particular, the impacts of displaced people on host communities vary considerably across situations and over time, making it difficult to apply uniform assumptions about when a host community becomes affected. A forthcoming report by the Bank provides a very rough estimate of the number of people living in affected host communities, including about 48 million people for refugees living in developing countries, and about 56 million for IDPs.

### Box 4: Selected Bank-Assisted Development Responses to Conflict-Induced Forced Displacement

---

<sup>39</sup> At the level of the home country or region, return may be considered sustainable if “socio-economic conditions and levels of violence and persecution are not significantly worsened”, if returns reduce reliance on humanitarian and development assistance, or if economic, social, and political systems are more or less vulnerable to shocks (Black and Gent 2006).

<sup>40</sup> To establish an estimate of affected host communities it would be necessary to establish broad assumptions for: (a) the geographical area impacted by the displaced population, which in the case of a rural camp might only include the local communities in the immediate vicinity of the camp, but in the case of displaced people dispersed in an urban environment the impacts on the host society are likely to be more diffuse and hence more difficult to estimate; and (b) whether the impacts on host communities (both positive and negative) are significant, and over what timeframe. In the absence of comprehensive statistics on the impact of displacement on various economic and social measures of wellbeing (e.g. income/poverty, employment/wages, prices in various markets, access to services etc.), a very rough estimate might be based on the density of the refugee population within a particular locality, i.e. establish a threshold beyond which a displaced population is sufficiently large to have a socio-economic impact on host communities, e.g. when they account for 25 percent or more of the host population.

- The **Sri Lanka: Emergency Northern Recovery Project** aimed to support government efforts to resettle IDPs in the Northern Province by creating an enabling environment through: (i) emergency assistance to IDPs; (ii) a work-fare program; and (iii) rehabilitation and reconstruction of essential public and economic infrastructure. The project closed in December 2013 and was rated satisfactory.
- The **Mitigate the Impact of Syrian Displacement on Jordan Project** assisted the government to maintain access to essential healthcare services and basic household needs for the Jordanian population affected by the influx of Syrian refugees. The project closed in July 2014 and implementation was rated satisfactory.
- The ongoing **Azerbaijan IDP Living Standards and Livelihoods Project** aims to improve living conditions and increase economic self-reliance of targeted IDPs.
- The ongoing **Lebanon Municipal Services Emergency Project** addresses urgent community priorities in selected municipal services, targeting areas most affected by the influx of Syrian refugees in order to mitigate the impact on host communities, including: (i) provision of high priority municipal services and initiatives that promote social interaction and collaboration; and (ii) larger works to rehabilitate/develop critical infrastructure in the areas of solid waste management, roads improvement, water and sanitation and community infrastructure.
- The ongoing **Jordan Emergency Services and Social Resilience Project** aims to assist municipalities and host communities to address the immediate service delivery impacts of Syrian refugees and strengthen municipal capacity to support local economic development.
- The **FATA Temporarily Displaced Persons Emergency Recovery Project** in Pakistan will promote child health, and strengthen emergency response safety net delivery systems in the affected Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) by promoting the early recovery of approximately 120,000 displaced families through cash grants.
- The **Great Lakes Displaced Persons and Border Communities Program** is a regional program under preparation to target IDPs, refugee and host populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia with investments in socio-economic services, livelihood support, land access and social cohesion.
- The **Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project** in the Horn of Africa will help improve access to basic social services, expand economic opportunities, and enhance environmental management for communities hosting refugees in target areas of Ethiopia, Uganda and Djibouti. The project is the first phase of an expanded program to include other countries affected by forced displacement.

## C. Historical trends and patterns of forced displacement: Insights from available global data

This section provides an overview of the available global data on conflict-induced forced displacement, drawing largely on UNHCR's published data on asylum-seekers, refugees and IDPs.<sup>41</sup> Data are presented visually in a series of figures to highlight the scope and character of the current global forced displacement crisis and identify historical trends and anomalies. These data largely focus on the scale and trends in conflict-induced displacement (i.e. the numbers of forced displaced) with some coverage of other elements such as demographics, location and accommodation.

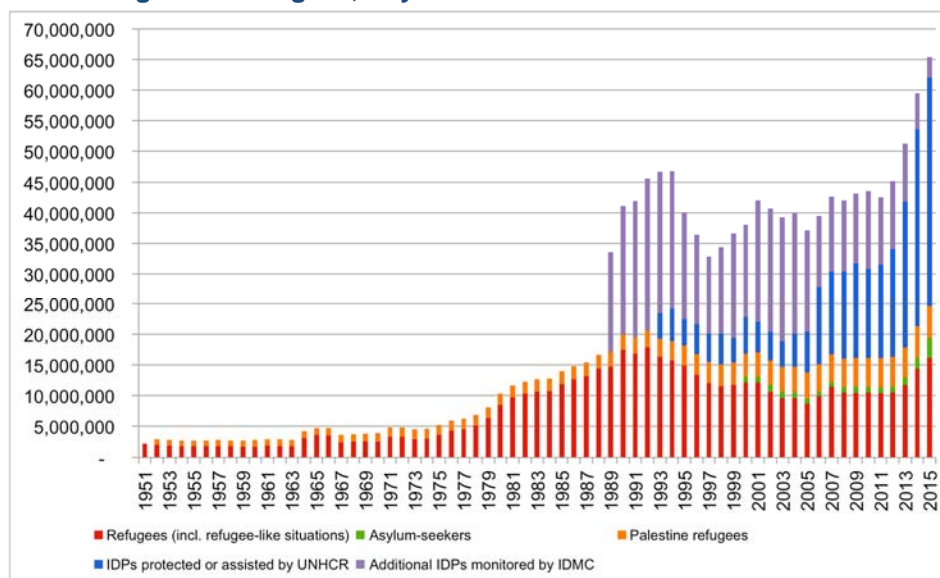
Globally, there has been an unprecedented increase in the numbers of displaced people over the last decade, largely explained by the expansion in the number of reported IDPs. Historical data show a substantial increase in the numbers of forced displaced (see Figure 3), however the expanding geographical scope and quality of displacement monitoring systems are likely to account for much of the increase in forced displacement figures. The numbers of refugees under UNHCR's mandate have recorded a number of variations over time, peaking in the early 1990s (at a level 10 percent over 2015 numbers) with the conflict and displacement associated with the end of the Cold War. The number of Palestinian refugees steadily has increased steadily over time, largely as a result of natural growth. IDP numbers (for which the underlying data are the least robust) have recorded the largest progression as a consequence of: (a) the expanded scope of monitoring efforts (IDPs were not counted before 1989 and methodologies were

---

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR's data only include IDPs protected or assisted by the agency.

adjusted after 1993 to 'capture' larger numbers of IDPs); (b) natural population growth of displaced populations (i.e. children born in displacement); and (c) a few significant conflicts.

**Figure 3: Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and IDPs 1951 – 2015**

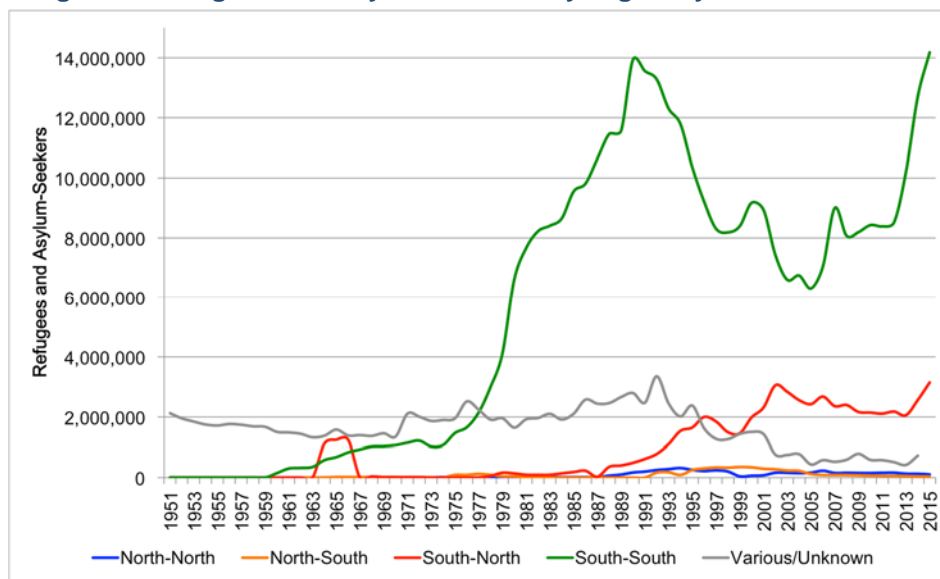


Source: UNHCR, UNRWA, IDMC

Note: Excludes IDPs displaced by natural disasters.

Most refugee and asylum-seeker flows are a South-South phenomenon. The large majority of people displaced by conflict do not have the resources or opportunities to flee beyond neighboring areas—they remain internally displaced or cross borders to neighboring countries in the region. Consequently, approximately 80 percent of combined refugee and asylum-seeker flows are between countries in the global 'South', defined as low- and middle-income countries, despite the high visibility of recent South-North flows (see Figure 4). While the numbers of first-time asylum-seekers in Europe are substantial—estimated at over 1.2 million in 2015 (Eurostat 2016)—nevertheless European asylum-seekers in 2015 accounted for approximately 2 percent of global forced displaced and half a percent of the international migrant stock.

**Figure 4: Refugees and Asylum-Seekers by Migratory Path 1951 – 2015**



Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database, UNHCR Global Trends 2015

*Note:* South is defined as low- and middle-income countries and North is defined as high-income countries according to the Bank's current income classification. Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate. 2015 data excludes refugee situations with less than 1,000 people.

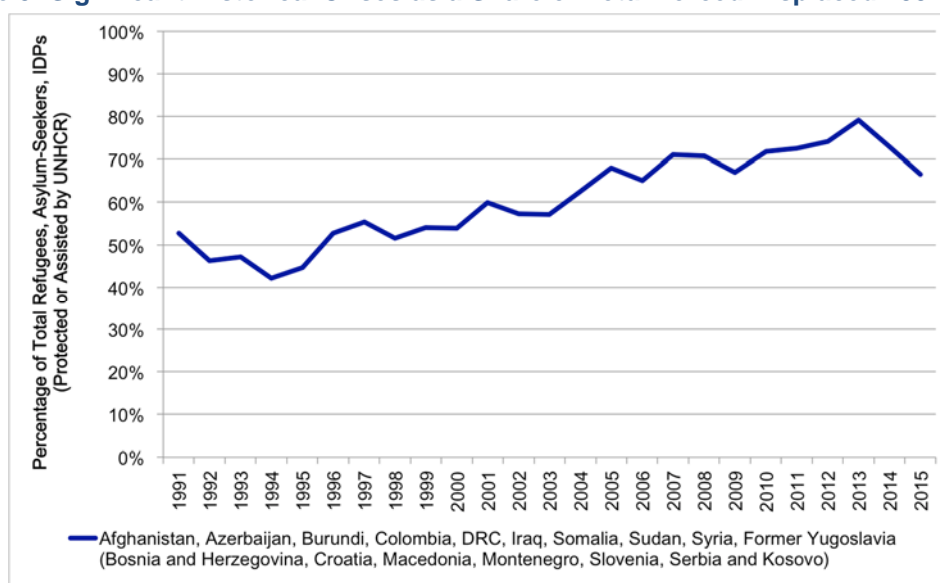
The story of global displacement can be explained largely by just a few significant historical conflicts. Data on UNHCR's population of concern<sup>42</sup> show that 10 historical conflicts accounted for the majority of forcibly displaced under the agency's mandate: around 40 to 50 percent from 1991 to 1995, between 50 and 60 percent from 1996 to 2004, and over 65 percent since 2005 (see Figure 5).<sup>43</sup> In South Asia and the Middle East, these include the prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq and the more recent Syrian crisis. In Africa, the persistent conflict and instability in Burundi, DRC, Somalia and Sudan. In Latin America, four decades of internal armed conflict in Colombia. And in Europe and Central Asia, the wars in Azerbaijan and the former Yugoslavia. By the end of 2015, the top 10 origin countries accounted for more than two-thirds of IDPs, three-quarters of all refugees (including Palestine refugees) and more than 40 percent of all asylum-seekers. The top 15 origin countries accounted for more than 80 percent of IDPs, more than 80 percent of all refugees (including Palestine refugees) and over half of all asylum-seekers (see Figure 6).

---

<sup>42</sup> Includes refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs protected or assisted by the agency. Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

<sup>43</sup> Major displacement crises are identified based on their cumulative displacement figure over the period 1991-2015.

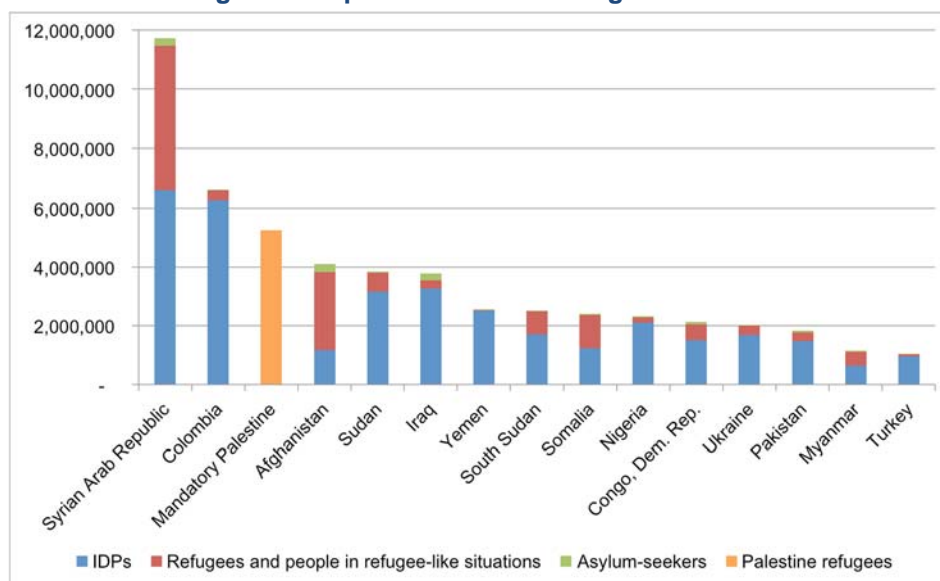
**Figure 5: Significant Historical Crises as a Share of Total Forced Displaced 1991 – 2015**



Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database, UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: Includes IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR, asylum-seekers and refugees. Excludes IDPs not protected or assisted by UNHCR and Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

**Figure 6: Top 15 Countries of Origin end-2015**



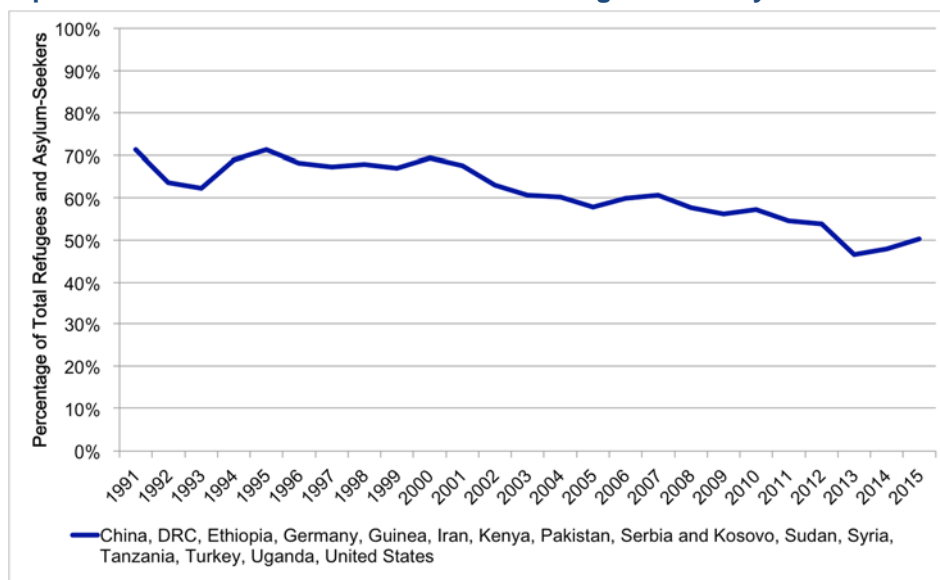
Source: IDMC Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016, UNHCR Global Trends 2015, UNRWA

A small number of countries carry the burden of hosting the majority of refugees. Historically since 1991, 15 asylum countries, overwhelmingly in the developing world, have hosted more than 50 percent of refugees and asylum-seekers (see Figure 7).<sup>44</sup> By the end of 2015, while almost all countries in the world were hosting refugees, the burden was unevenly shared (see Figure 8). Only seven countries hosted more

<sup>44</sup> Major host countries are identified based on the cumulative number of refugees and asylum-seekers over the period 1991-2015.

than 500,000 refugees, together accounting for half of all refugees and people in refugee-like situations (excluding Palestine refugees). Major refugee hosting countries are typically the neighbors of countries of origin. For example, Syria's neighbors (Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan) together accounted for 27 percent of total refugee numbers; Afghanistan's neighbors (Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran) together accounted for 16 percent; and Somalia's and South Sudan's neighbors (Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) together accounted for 11 percent. Some countries (Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey) are hosting a particularly large share of refugees relative to their population (see Figure 10).<sup>45</sup> However, in all other countries, the number of refugees as a percentage of the population is 3 percent or lower, and most often below 1 percent.

**Figure 7: Top 15 Host Countries as a Share of Total Refugees and Asylum-Seekers 1991 – 2015**



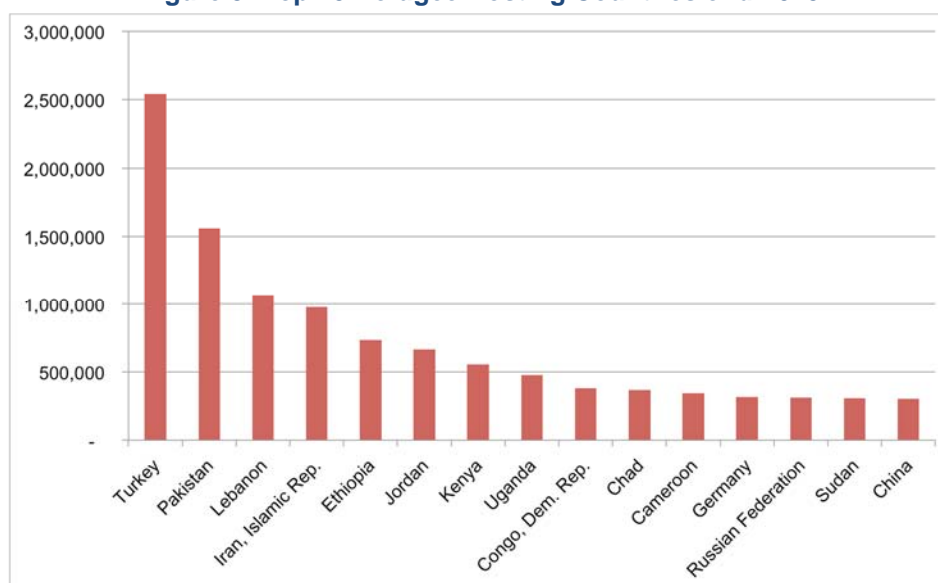
Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database

Note: Includes refugees, people in refugee-like situations and asylum-seekers. Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

<sup>45</sup> Nauru is a special case since the Australian government funds the offshore processing center where refugees and asylum-seekers intercepted at sea are detained pending determination of their status.



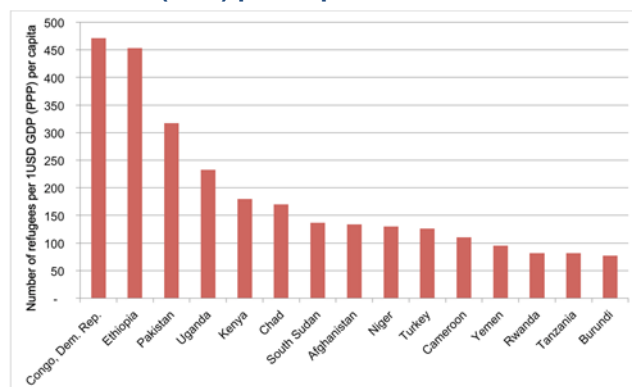
**Figure 8: Top 15 Refugee Hosting Countries end-2015**



Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: Includes refugees and people in refugee-like situations. Excludes asylum-seekers and Palestine refugees.

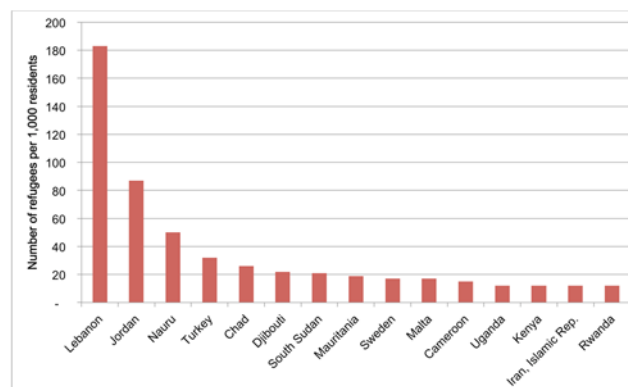
**Figure 9: Host Countries by Refugees to GDP (PPP) per Capita end-2015**



Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: Excludes asylum-seekers and Palestinian refugees

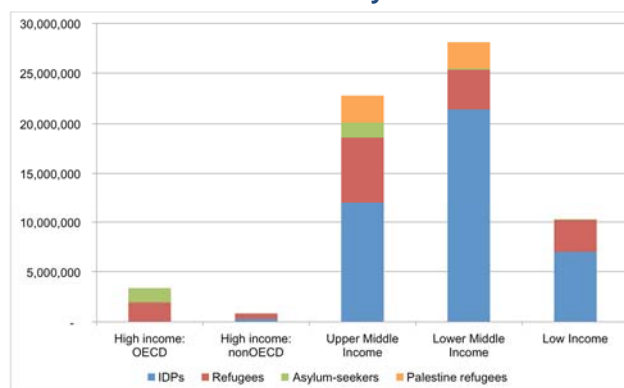
**Figure 10: Host Countries by Refugees to 1,000 inhabitants end-2015**



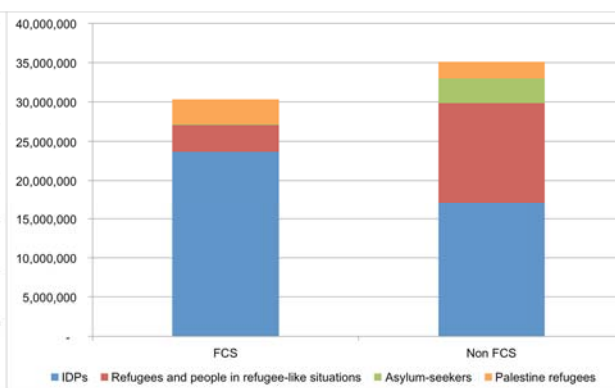
The majority of displaced people are hosted by developing countries and almost half are in fragile and conflict-affected situations. It is estimated that developing countries hosted 99 percent of all IDPs and 89 percent of all refugees (including Palestinian refugees) at the end of 2015 (see Figure 11). These statistics highlight the significant imbalance in the burden of hosting refugees between developed and developing countries, both in terms of absolute numbers and also in relation to GDP. Additionally, almost 60 percent of IDPs and 30 percent of refugees (including Palestinian refugees) were in FCS at the end of 2015 (see Figure 12). Of the IDPs living in non-FCS countries, most are either in situations of protracted displacement in post-conflict countries such as Azerbaijan and Cyprus, or are displaced in countries such as Colombia, Nigeria and Ukraine, where conflict is not widespread.



**Figure 11: Forced Displacement by Income Level of Host Country end-2015**



**Figure 12: Forced Displacement in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations end-2015**



Source: IDMC Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016, UNHCR Global Trends 2015, UNRWA

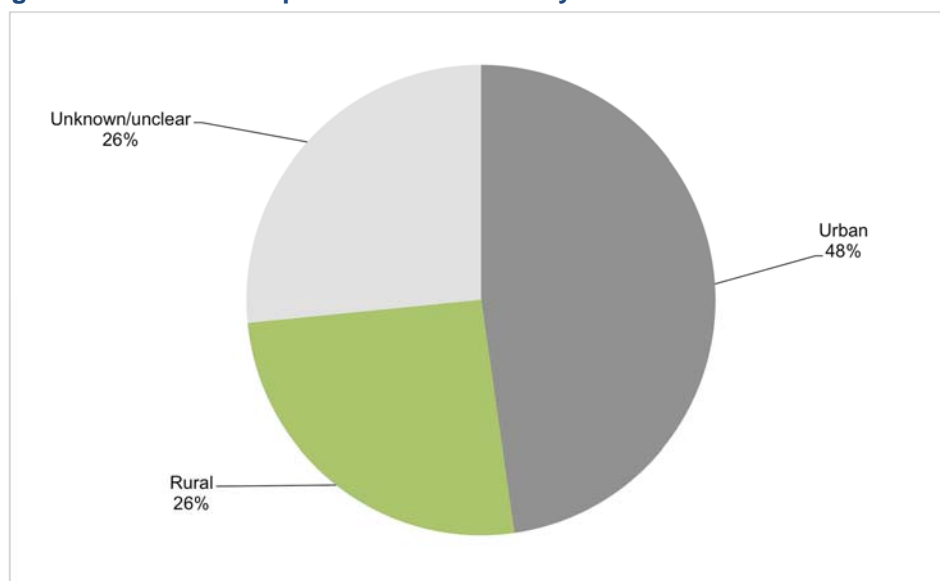
Forced displacement is increasingly an urban phenomenon—approximately half of the world's displaced people are known to be living in cities and towns (compared with a quarter in rural areas) (see Figure 13) displaced from other urban areas or drawn to cities and towns by the prospect of security, anonymity, better access to services and better opportunities to make a living (UNHCR 2015).<sup>46</sup> However, this figure masks substantial variation in the urbanization of forced displacement across regions—displaced populations are typically living in urban areas in the Middle East and North Africa, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America, but they are still largely in rural settings in Sub-Saharan Africa (see Figure 14 and Figure 15).<sup>47</sup> Given the projected increase in urbanization globally, and the projected rapid urbanization of Africa and Asia in particular,<sup>48</sup> it is likely that in future increasing numbers of displaced people will seek refuge in cities and towns. Returning refugees may also prefer to settle in urban areas, having become accustomed to urban life in refuge, having lost access to their land, wishing to avoid ongoing insecurity in rural areas, or in some cases, lacking the inclination or skills to farm.

<sup>46</sup> This figure may underestimate the numbers of forcibly displaced living in urban areas due to the challenges associated with identifying and estimating the numbers of displaced living outside of camp settings. In 2015, location was not known for 27 percent of UNHCR's Population of Concern.

<sup>47</sup> Urbanization rates by region for displaced populations reflect urbanization rates for the general population (82 percent in North America, 80 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 73 percent in Europe, 48 percent in Asia and 40 percent in Africa) (United Nations 2015).

<sup>48</sup> At the end of 2014, 54 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas, and this is projected to rise to 66 percent by 2050; Africa and Asia are urbanizing faster than the other regions and are projected to become 56 and 64 percent urban, respectively, by 2050 (United Nations 2015).

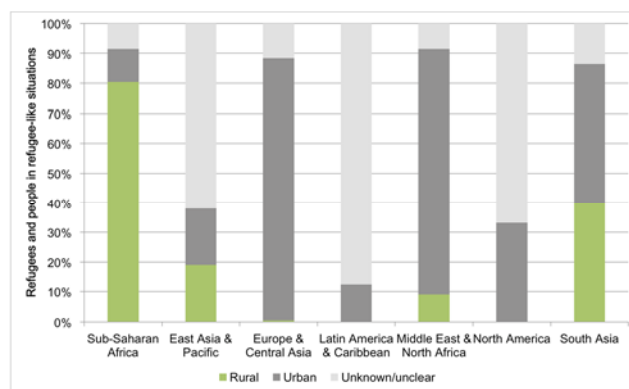
**Figure 13: UNHCR's Population of Concern by Urban/Rural Location end-2015**



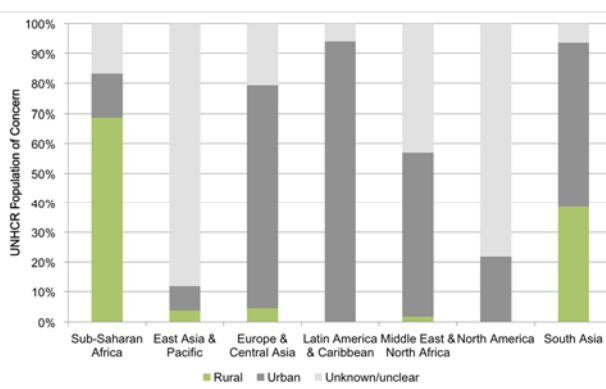
Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: UNHCR's Population of Concern includes refugees and people in refugee-like situations, asylum-seekers, IDPs and people in IDP like situations protected or assisted by UNHCR, stateless people and other people of concern to UNHCR. Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

**Figure 14: Refugees by Urban/Rural Location end-2015**



**Figure 15: UNHCR Population of Concern by Urban/Rural Location end-2015**



Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2015

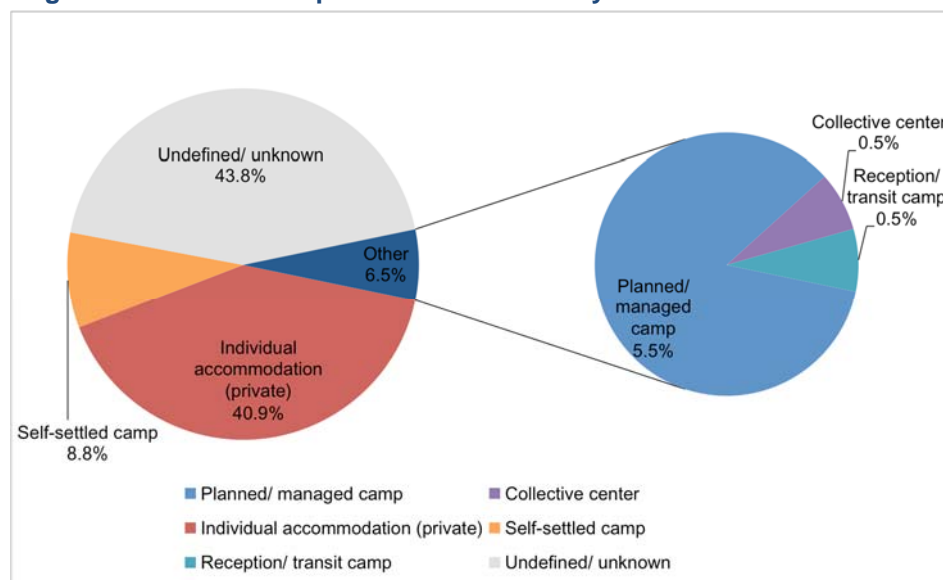
Note: Excludes Palestinian refugees

Displaced people are overwhelmingly seeking accommodation outside of camp environments. At the end of 2015, only 6 percent of UNHCR's population of concern was known to be living in organized camps (including collective centers, reception/transit centers and planned/managed camps), while 94 percent was living in either self-settled camps (i.e. areas hosting a high concentration of displaced persons), individual accommodation or their location was unknown (see Figure 16).<sup>49</sup> At the end of 2015, the largest managed camps for refugees included: Dadaab in Kenya (with almost 350,000 refugees, mainly from Somalia); Dollo Ado, in Ethiopia (with about 200,000 refugees, mainly from Somalia); Kakuma in Kenya (with about 160,000

<sup>49</sup> Approximately a quarter of all refugees and people in refugee-like situations were known to be living in organized camps at the end of 2015.

refugees, mainly from Somalia and South Sudan); and Zaatari in Jordan (with about 80,000 refugees, mainly from Syria). There are also a relatively large number of smaller (managed) refugee camps in many countries, which account for about 2.7 million people.

**Figure 16: UNHCR's Population of Concern by Accommodation end-2015**



Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: UNHCR's Population of Concern includes refugees and people in refugee-like situations, asylum-seekers, IDPs and people in IDP like situations protected or assisted by UNHCR, stateless people and other people of concern to UNHCR. Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

Over the last decade, women, youth and children have tended to account for at least two-thirds of displaced people—but there is substantial variation across host countries.<sup>50</sup> Demographics of displaced populations have consequences for development in both countries of origin and asylum, affecting the availability of skilled and unskilled workers to the labor market, the age structure of the population, and demand for services (e.g. children requiring education services etc.). At the end of 2015, approximately 75 percent of displaced people were women, youth and children, i.e. 24 percent adult women and 51 percent youth and children below the age of 18 (UNHCR 2016).<sup>51</sup> The gender profile of displaced populations is consistent with that for the global population, but the available data suggests that displaced populations may be younger on average than the global population.<sup>52</sup> This apparent inconsistency is likely to reflect the significant variation in the demographics of forced displacement across host countries. For example, in Georgia just over a quarter of IDPs are under the age of 18 and in Germany just over a quarter of refugees and asylum-seekers are under the age of 18, compared with host countries where almost 60 percent of the displaced are youth and children, e.g. Afghanistan, DRC, Uganda and Tanzania (UNHCR 2016). There are also significant variations in gender across countries, for example 65 percent of IDPs in Ukraine are women and 60 percent of IDPs in CAR are women, while only 34 percent of refugees and asylum-seekers in Germany are female (UNHCR 2016). Differences in the demographics of displaced populations across host countries also reflect variations in the overall demographics in countries of origin, particularly age structure, as well as the specific context for forced displacement.

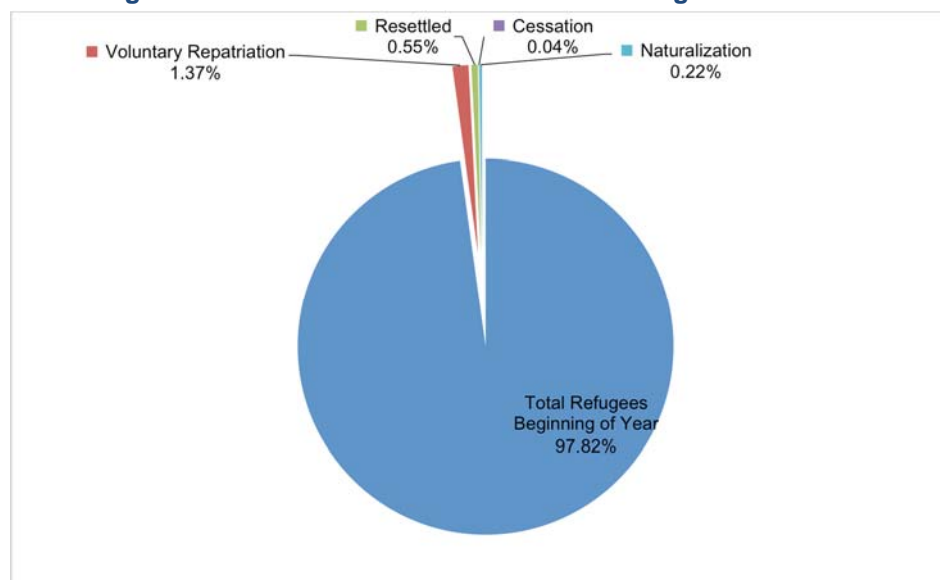
<sup>50</sup> Based on historical data covering UNHCR's population of concern for which demographic data are available.

<sup>51</sup> Based on UNHCR's Population of Concern for which demographic data are available.

<sup>52</sup> According to the United Nations, in 2015 49.6 percent of the global population was female (United Nations 2015) and 30.9 percent of the global population was under the age of 18 (United Nations 2015).

In the case of refugees, host countries rarely facilitate naturalization, only a minority of refugees ever gets resettled in third countries and voluntary repatriation is frequently not a realistic option for several reasons. International law provides for three possible durable solutions for refugees, including integration within the area of displacement, repatriation to their home country or resettlement in a third country; refugee status can also cease when there are no longer compelling reasons for an individual to refuse to avail themselves of the protection of their country of origin. In 2015 only 119,265 refugees under UNHCR's mandate were either resettled, naturalized<sup>53</sup> or ceased to be refugees; and there were only 201,415 voluntary returns, mostly Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia and CAR (see Figure 17). These statistics highlight the significant gap between the unprecedented numbers of refugees and the capacity of the international community to provide durable solutions. For the 85 percent of refugees hosted in developing countries, there are only minute prospects for resettlement.

**Figure 17: Durable Solutions Relative to Refugee Stock 2015**



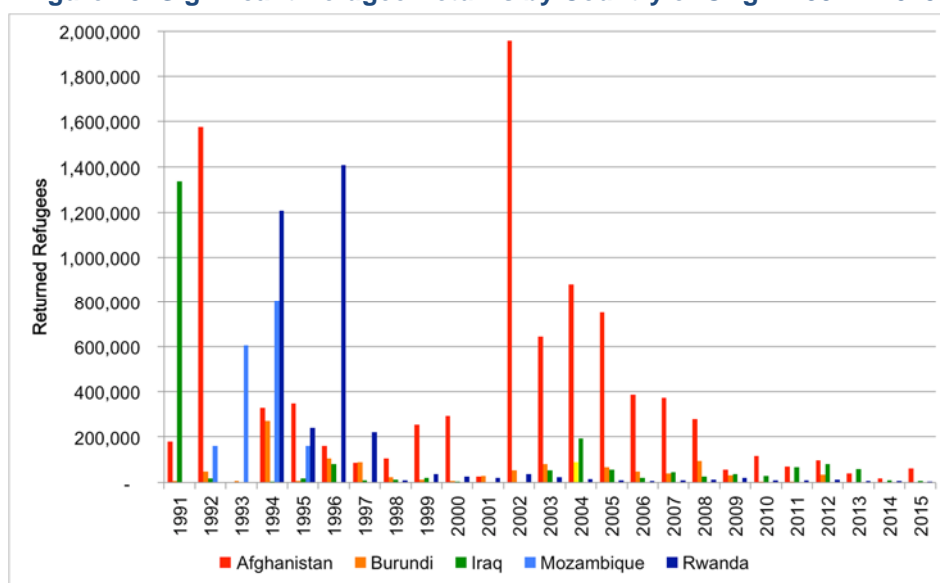
Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Global statistics that show the low rate of refugee returns masks the variation in returns over historical periods and across displacement crises—with significant voluntary returns for some countries. There are, in fact, some countries that have experienced significant episodes of voluntary returns since 1991 (Figure 18). A significant portion of these return movements took place in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War, during which hundreds of thousands of refugees returned to Afghanistan, Burundi, Iraq, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Serbia and Kosovo, Somalia and Sudan. In the last decade, significant numbers of refugees continued to return to Afghanistan, Burundi, DRC, Iraq and Sudan. Data on return movements may conceal the temporary or permanent geographical dispersal of family members between exile and return locations to maximize access to livelihoods or services in different locations at the same time, a strategy pursued by many returning Afghan and South Sudanese refugees (World Bank 2015).

Estimates of IDP returns and other solutions are incomplete, since return movements are not adequately monitored. Analogous to refugees, IDPs have the possibility to integrate within the area of their displacement, return to their homes or resettle in another part of the country. They may also flee the country becoming refugees. Impediments to return can include ongoing insecurity in areas of origin, the absence of socio-economic support in return areas, growth in family size, loss of land and protracted displacement (especially among second or third generations).

<sup>53</sup> The most significant example of naturalization over the last decade is the granting of Tanzanian citizenship to 155,000 refugees from Burundi.

**Figure 18: Significant Refugee Returns by Country of Origin 1991 – 2015**

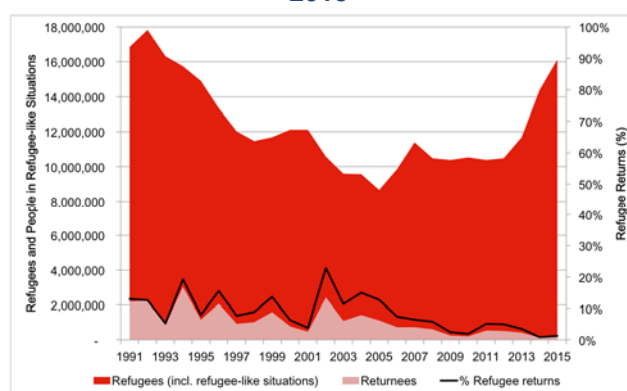


Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database, UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: Countries selected based on their cumulative returns of refugees over the period 1991-2015.

Return does not necessarily lead to the full reintegration of a person into their home country or area of origin. In the absence of global data on the success of reintegration following return, data on returns appear to be taken as indication of sustainable return. In reality, many returnees face impediments to reintegration and continue to have specific economic and social vulnerabilities linked to their displacement. They may not be able to reclaim land, access sufficient financial resources (e.g. accumulated during their displacement) or reestablish social networks in areas of origin, which are critical factors for successful reintegration (World Bank 2015). Sustainable refugee return is therefore not a one-off event but a process that provides returnees with adequate safety, housing, livelihoods and services that address their specific vulnerabilities and reduce the likelihood of secondary displacement (World Bank 2015).

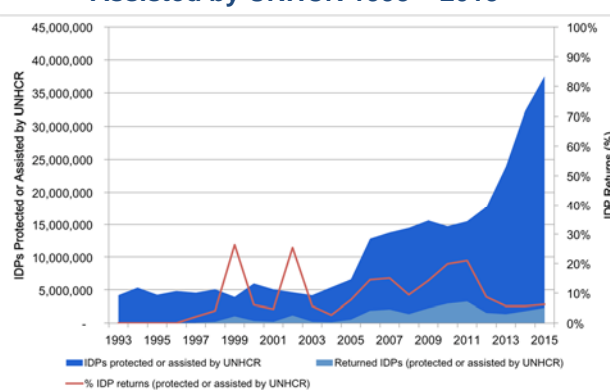
**Figure 19: Voluntary Returns of Refugees 1991 – 2015**



Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database, UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: Includes returns of refugees and people in refugee-like situations protected or assisted by UNHCR.

**Figure 20: Returns of IDPs Protected or Assisted by UNHCR 1993 – 2015**



Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database, UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: Includes returns of IDPs and people in IDP-like situations assisted and protected by UNHCR.

Consequently, the average length of protracted refugee situations has increased over the past two decades according to UNHCR estimates (see Table 2). UNHCR estimates that the average length of ongoing

protracted refugee situations was 26 years at the end of 2015, up from 9 years in 1993 and 17 years in 2013, where protracted refugee situations are crudely defined as those where 25,000 refugees or more have been in exile for five years or more after their initial displacement (UNCHR ExCom, 2009). According to this definition, at the end of 2015 there were 32 protracted refugee situations in 27 asylum countries, accounting for 6.7 million refugees or 41 percent of the global refugee population.<sup>54</sup> They comprise a range of settings including camps and individual accommodation in both rural and urban environments. The majority is in developing countries, several of which are also FCS.

**Table 2: UNHCR Estimates of Protracted Refugee Situations, 1993, 2003, 2014 and 2015**

	1993	2003	2014	2015
<b>Number of protracted refugee situations</b>	27 situations (45 percent of all refugee situations)	38 situations (90 percent of all refugee situations)	33 situations in 26 countries	32 situations in 27 host countries
<b>Number of refugees in protracted refugee situations</b>	7.9 million (48 percent of all refugees)	6.2 million (64 percent of all refugees)	6.4 million (45 percent of all refugees)	6.7 million (41 percent of all refugees)
<b>Average duration of protracted refugee situations</b>	9 years	17 years	25 years	26 years

Protracted displacement of IDPs is also a significant phenomenon. IDMC reported that people were living in internal displacement for more than 10 years in 53 of 60 countries/territories that it monitored in 2014 (IDMC 2015). Countries experiencing conflict-related displacement have reported IDP figures for 23 years on average, suggesting protracted IDP situations. At the end of 2014 at least 50 percent of IDPs had been displaced for more than three years in countries monitored for conflict-induced displacement (Crawford, et al. 2015).

There are several methodological issues associated with estimates of average duration of displacement situations. First, there can be significant movements of people into and out of displacement situations and therefore estimates of average duration of displacement situations overstate the average length of time that an individual person is in displacement.<sup>55</sup> Second, the choice of timeframe beyond which displacement is considered protracted is an arbitrary one.<sup>56</sup> Third, the list of protracted refugee situations includes situations that do not present clear development challenges, e.g. the 300,000 Vietnamese refugees in China who are well integrated, but excludes other protracted refugee situations that fall below the arbitrary threshold of 25,000 people. Fourth, some of the larger displacement crises can significantly skew the average duration of protracted refugee situations. For example, the Afghan refugee crisis significantly lengthens the average duration of displacement situations, while in 2016 the Syrian refugee crisis will become protracted according to UNHCR's definition and consequently it will substantially reduce the estimate of average duration. Fifth, estimates of average duration exclude IDPs due to conceptual problems of defining an end to internal displacement as well as data constraints. And finally, there are some discrepancies in the available displacement data that further distort estimates of average duration, for example South Sudanese

<sup>54</sup> Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate and refugees in high-income OECD countries.

<sup>55</sup> Calculations are not based on individual data, which would provide a truer estimate of how long an average person is in displacement, but on 'situations' (i.e. refugee populations in host countries grouped by country of origin, e.g. Ethiopia currently hosts refugees from Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan and so has four refugee situations). Calculations do not take into account fluctuations in refugee numbers if the size of the situation remains over 25,000 people. Moreover, since population estimates are annual snapshots, they cannot take into account increases and decreases within years, which can also be substantial.

<sup>56</sup> Arguing that few refugee crises are resolved quickly, a 2015 ODI report proposes broadening the definition of protracted displacement to situations where refugees and/or IDPs have been in exile for three years or more, which increases the number of refugees in protracted displacement situations in 2014 from UNHCR's estimate of 6.4 million people to 12.9 million people (two-thirds of all refugees) (Crawford, et al. 2015).

displacement is not considered to be protracted because disaggregated data on South Sudan is only available from the country's independence in 2011.

Addressing some of these methodological issues produces an estimate of average duration that is lower than those published by UNHCR. A recent study by Devictor and Do, "How many years do refugees spend in exile" (2016), estimates the average duration of all refugee situations in 2014 (excluding Palestinian refugees) at 10.7 years, and the median duration at about 3 years, i.e. half of people who are currently refugees have spent 4 years or more in exile.<sup>57</sup> Since 1991, the average duration of all refugee situations has fluctuated between about 8 years in 1991 and a peak of 15 years in 2006. The study also finds that among current refugees, 5.3 million may have been displaced for five years or more (i.e. in protracted situations). The number of refugees in protracted displacement has been remarkably stable since 1991, at 5 million to 7 million throughout most of the period. At the end of 2014, the average duration of protracted refugee situations is estimated at 18 years.<sup>58</sup>

**Table 3: Alternative Estimate of Protracted Refugee Situations end-2014**

	All Situations	Refugee Situations	Refugee Situations
<b>Average duration</b>	10.7 years	18.3 years	
<b>Number of refugees in protracted refugee situations</b>		5.3 million	

Source: Devictor and Do (2016).

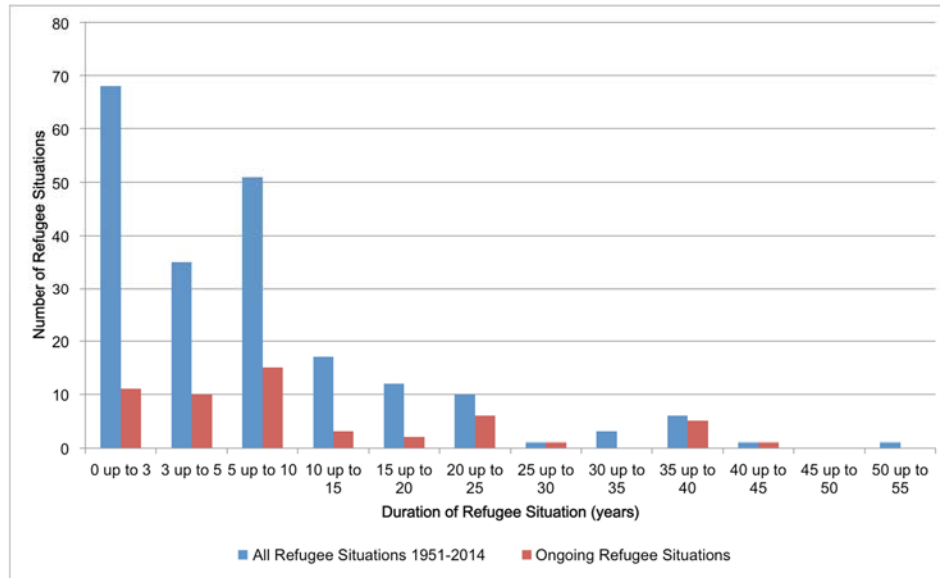
Nevertheless, estimates of average duration, however flawed, do provide insights into the extent of the burden on host countries and communities and the impacts on the displaced themselves. The average duration of forced displacement influences public perceptions of the likely burden on host countries and communities. And as duration of displacement lengthens and people remain in limbo for longer, recovery becomes more challenging. Figure 21 gives an indication of the historical and current distribution of refugee situations by duration. Figure 22 shows the number of refugees in ongoing displacement situations by duration. The most recent cohort of refugees who have been displaced for less than three years include refugees from South Sudan, Pakistan, Ukraine, Syria and the Central African Republic (CAR). The extremely large numbers of refugees displaced for three up to five years is largely accounted for by more than 3.5 million people fleeing the Syrian conflict, as well as refugees from Sudan, South Sudan and Mali. Another relatively large cohort of 1.8 million has been displaced for five years up to ten years and includes significant numbers of refugees from Colombia, Somalia, Myanmar, CAR, DRC and Iraq. The next large cohort of refugees has been displaced between 35 and 40 years and is largely accounted for by refugees from Afghanistan and Vietnam.

**Figure 21: Duration of Refugee Situations 1951 – 2014**

<sup>57</sup> These numbers are very sensitive to specific situations. For example, if Afghan refugees are excluded from the calculation, the average duration of exile for current refugees drops to 5.3 years. If Syrian refugees are excluded, it goes up to 14.5 years. Yet, if both Afghanistan and Syria (the large numbers on both ends of the spectrum) are taken out, the average goes back to about 11.3 years, and the median to about 4 years.

<sup>58</sup> This estimate is very sensitive to a specific situation: if Afghanistan is excluded the average drops to 10.5 years.



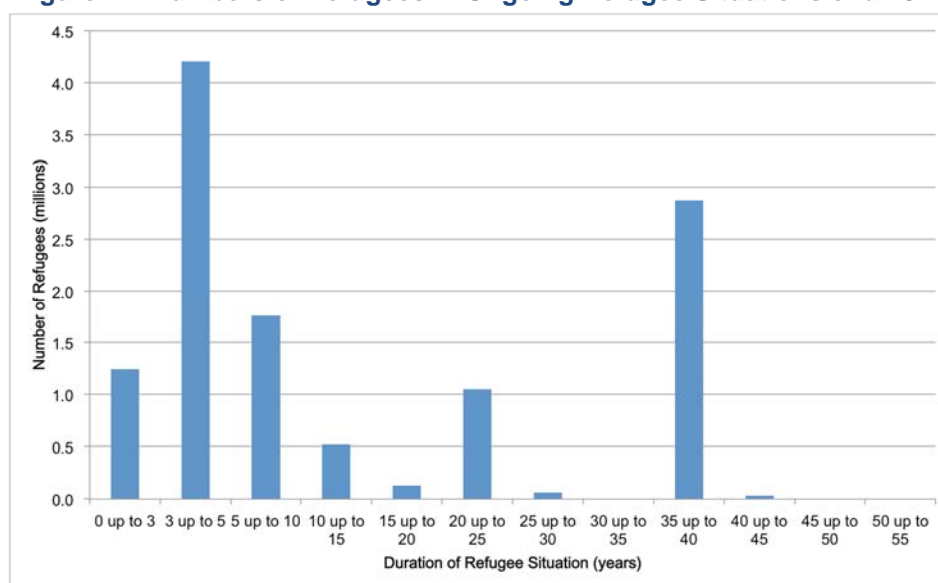


Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database

Note: Only includes refugee situations greater than 25,000 people. Excludes high-income (OECD and non-OECD) countries. Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate.



**Figure 22: Numbers of Refugees in Ongoing Refugee Situations end-2014**



Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database

Note: Only includes refugee situations greater than 25,000 people. Excludes Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

## **D. Data on asylum-seekers, refugees and IDPs: sources, applications and credibility**

In this section, a distinction is made between: (a) the *collection* of source data; and (b) the *compilation* of data across sources (within a country or across countries). In general, there is a delineation of roles between data collectors and data compilers, however there are organizations, such as UNHCR, IOM and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (OCHA),<sup>59</sup> that are involved in both data collection and compilation activities.

### **Data collection: Sources for refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs<sup>60</sup>**

Collection of primary data on forcibly displaced persons is generally undertaken by national governments through their national statistical offices, line ministries or immigration agencies. However, where countries lack the capacity to undertake this work, they may rely on international organizations as well as international and local NGOs to collect data or undertake estimates.<sup>61</sup> In general, governments tend to collect data on refugees in developed countries, while UNHCR and NGOs tend to collect data on refugees in developing countries. Humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR and OCHA as well as international organizations such as IOM are also involved in the collection of data on IDPs, often involving international and local

<sup>59</sup> OCHA is the part of the United Nations Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. See <http://www.unocha.org/>.

<sup>60</sup> This section draws heavily on the "Report of Statistics Norway and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on statistics on refugees and IDPs" presented at the UNSD in March 2015.

<sup>61</sup> The number of countries where UNHCR exclusively collects data on refugees declined from 76 in 2010 to 72 in 2014, while the proportion of countries where refugee data were exclusively provided by governments gradually increased over the same period from 33 to 38 percent. In 2014, the proportion of countries where data were provided through collection conducted jointly by governments and UNHCR was 15 percent, while in the remaining proportion (13 percent), refugee data were provided exclusively by NGOs and other organizations. In 2014, more than 173 countries and territories provided data on refugees.

NGOs. Initiatives such as JIPS, a collaborative project of UN and NGO actors, have also been established to support governments and operational organizations to design and implement data collection processes.

There are a variety of data sources for generating statistics on forced displacement, each of which has strengths and weaknesses. Despite the significant challenges, large amounts of data are collected and disseminated every year. The main data sources and methods for the generation of statistics on forcibly displaced populations include: (a) registration of refugees and asylum-seekers; (b) registration of IDPs; (c) profiling of IDPs; (d) population movement tracking systems; (e) national population censuses; (f) sample surveys; (g) border crossings; (h) administrative records and registers; (i) general population registers; and (j) a variety of estimation methods for producing statistics when adequate and reliable data on individuals are unavailable (UNSD 2014).

Several of these data sources might be used together to triangulate estimates of stocks and flows for a particular displacement situation. Some data sources (such as registration systems and population censuses) are more appropriate for estimating stocks of asylum-seekers, refugees and IDPs at a particular point in time, while other data sources (such as population tracking systems and border crossings) are more appropriate for estimating flows over a specific period. In general, there is a lack of comprehensive and up-to-date data available on all stocks and flows for a particular displacement situation (see Table 4). Consequently, data on flows might be used to estimate stocks, for example in the absence of government data, the stock of refugees in many industrialized countries is estimated by UNHCR based on 10 years of individual asylum-seeker recognition. And, especially in the case of IDPs, changes in the total population combined with some contextual analysis, may be used to deduce estimates of new internal displacement or returns. However, these approximations are flawed unless data on all other flows (births, deaths, repatriation etc.) are also available, which is not usually the case. Even a static figure for the stock of IDPs in a particular location might obscure substantial flows including new displacement and returns. Moreover, there are no common definitions of the various stocks and flows, and therefore the risk of double counting or gaps cannot be discounted. For example, IDPs who subsequently cross international borders may be counted as both IDPs and refugees (e.g. in the case of the Syrian displacement crisis).

**Table 4: Stocks and Flows**

Stock	Increases	Decreases
<b>Asylum-seekers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New applications for asylum, separately identifying individuals who were previously IDPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive decisions (convention status, complementary protection status)</li> <li>Rejected</li> <li>Otherwise closed</li> </ul>
<b>Refugees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spontaneous arrivals (group recognition, temporary protection, individual recognition), <i>separately identifying individuals who were previously IDPs</i></li> <li>Resettlement arrivals</li> <li>Births</li> <li>Administrative corrections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repatriation</li> <li>Resettlement</li> <li>Cessation</li> <li>Naturalization</li> <li>Deaths</li> <li>Administrative corrections</li> </ul>
<b>IDPs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New internal displacement</li> <li>Births</li> <li>Administrative corrections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross border flight, becoming an asylum-seeker or refugee</li> <li>Return</li> <li>Settlement elsewhere in the country</li> <li>Local integration</li> <li>Administrative corrections</li> </ul>

Source: UNHCR Global Trends, IDMC Forced Displacement Data Model

### *Registration of refugees and asylum-seekers*

Registration is the most common method of collecting data on refugees and asylum-seekers, accounting for 77 percent of UNHCR's data on refugees at the end of 2014.<sup>62</sup> Asylum-seeker and refugee statistics are generally based on government and/or UNHCR registration records (UNRWA maintains registration records for Palestinian refugees).<sup>63</sup> Individual registration of refugees and asylum-seekers is the first step towards establishing a person's identity, legal status and protection needs. Registration involves the collection of information including, but not limited to, name, sex, date of birth, country of origin, marital status, and place of displacement, and the issuance of documentation.<sup>64</sup>

Refugees living outside of camps, sometimes irregularly, are underrepresented in registration exercises. While the majority of refugees in camps have been registered on an individual basis, refugees outside of camp environments are difficult to identify and capture in registration activities. In fact, refugee registration is used almost exclusively in camps established by or in collaboration with UNHCR (UNHCR 2015). Moreover, some refugees may not register because they are unaware that they should, and others may be reluctant to do so because they are skeptical of the integrity of the registration process (e.g. fair access to entitlements or opportunities for durable solutions) or lack confidence in protection measures. Individuals in irregular migration flows may also choose not to apply for asylum due to fear of declaring themselves to the authorities.

A significant challenge with refugee registers is keeping them up to date. Individual registration can provide a robust snapshot of the stock of refugees and asylum-seekers, but registers need to be updated regularly to reflect flows, i.e. increases in refugee and asylum-seeker numbers (births, new arrivals) and decreases (deaths, departures, durable solutions). In situations of sudden mass influxes, existing registration capacity may not be adequate and the scope of registration data is then rationalized.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, it may not be possible to capture all demographic changes in the case of highly mobile populations. If registration is linked to the provision of services or other entitlements, there may be strong incentives to register births and new arrivals and weak incentives to deregister, leading to the inflation of the register over time or even instances of fraud and abuse (e.g. multiple registration, "borrowing children" etc.) (UNHCR 2003). Consequently, data from a refugee register may overestimate the number of refugees, requiring periodic corrective action through the verification of records. For example, in 2014 a verification of registration records for Somali refugees in the Dadaab camps in Kenya led to the deactivation of tens of thousands of records for individuals that are believed to have returned spontaneously to Somalia (UNHCR 2015). Additional problems with refugee registers include security concerns or inclement weather preventing refugees from accessing registration sites (UNHCR 2003) and the application of data protection principles.

### *Registration of IDPs*

Individual registration is not as common a method of estimating numbers of IDPs as it is for refugees. In principle, individual registration of IDPs is not used to determine the 'status' of an IDP, since IDPs have the same rights and entitlements as other citizens and do not need to apply or be granted a special legal status.<sup>66</sup> Rather, registration of IDPs can provide a basis for: (a) establishing the number, location, and key demographic characteristics of displaced populations; (b) providing protection and assistance; (c) keeping track of family relationships; (d) preventing fraudulent access to scarce humanitarian assistance; (e) facilitating the issuance of temporary identity cards to replace lost personal documentation (Brookings 2008); and (f) providing social security benefits.<sup>67</sup> Full IDP registration by international organizations is not

---

<sup>62</sup> By the end of 2014, individual refugee registration was the source of about 77 percent of the data on refugees; estimation accounted for 13 percent of data, combined estimation and registration for 5 percent and other sources for 5 percent (UNHCR 2016).

<sup>63</sup> UNHCR may undertake registration activities when national governments do not have the capacity to do so.

<sup>64</sup> Additional data can also be recorded such as education and occupation.

<sup>65</sup> Insufficient budgetary resources, staff, training or materials.

<sup>66</sup> Countries with national legislation that provides a legal status for IDPs are an exception to this international standard.

<sup>67</sup> The scope of data collected depends on the objectives of the registration exercise, for example in Kenya, registration of individuals displaced by the 2007 and 2008 post-election violence excluded 'integrated' IDPs, i.e. those who had

the norm, and registration of IDPs is undertaken in most cases by national or local authorities,<sup>68</sup> civil society groups or by individual organizations, particularly UNHCR and IOM, although the World Food Programme (WFP) might keep records of individuals and communities provided with food assistance.

Registration data for IDPs present an incomplete or misleading picture. While registration of IDPs can be helpful in estimating the numbers of IDPs in camp and camp-like settings, such data presents an incomplete picture since in many contexts the majority of IDPs reside in dispersed settings where they are not registered or counted (UNSD 2014). IDPs may deliberately avoid registration activities to avoid drawing attention to themselves due to security concerns and reluctance to provide personal information (especially when the authorities are perceived as contributing to the causes of displacement) or because they are not motivated to register (e.g. registration does not confer a special legal status, no assistance is given or assistance is given in a discriminatory manner) (Brookings 2011). Additionally, IDPs might not be able to physically reach the registration location because of insecurity, medical reasons, limited mobility, distance and cost. When national or international actors provide assistance, there may be an incentive for people to register in camps even if they are staying elsewhere, or to register in multiple locations (Brookings 2011).<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, registration data provide only a snapshot of the stock of IDPs at a particular point in time and may be out of date if registers are not maintained regularly.

Registration methodologies can vary across displacement situations. For example, families may be registered rather than individuals and the population estimated based on an assumption of average family size, which can differ among organizations (UNSD 2014). IDPs may be required to present documentation, meet specific criteria or re-register periodically to maintain their benefits, which affects aggregate numbers (IDMC 2015). For example, in Ukraine, pre-requisites for IDP registration (including valid documentation, arrival from a recognized conflict zone and permanent residence registration in recognized conflict zone) means that people displaced within a non-government controlled area, people displaced from a non-recognized conflict zone in a government controlled area, unaccompanied children or people without current/valid identification are not counted as IDPs (IDMC 2015). Furthermore, in some contexts, registration as an IDP can expire after a prescribed timeframe without regard to whether the person achieved a durable solution (e.g. after five years in Russia).

The accuracy of IDP registers is greatly impacted by political considerations, particularly a government's willingness to acknowledge internal displacement and to enable the humanitarian community to respond. Some countries may be reluctant to acknowledge the presence of IDPs, or may be inclined to understate numbers to demonstrate progress in military operations or limit assistance provided to IDPs. For example, in Kenya, registration of individuals displaced by the 2007 and 2008 post-election violence excluded 'integrated' IDPs, i.e. those who had sought refuge with host communities or rented accommodation in urban areas, as assistance was limited to registered IDPs. Alternatively, aggregate numbers of IDPs in particular countries may be inflated to suggest a deterioration of the situation or to maximize humanitarian assistance. Therefore, access to IDP areas and the willingness of IDPs to be counted may be largely dependent on government policies. These political considerations can lead to disagreements on the data, undermine cooperation and in some cases even lead to reduced humanitarian funding.

### ***Profiling of IDP situations***

Profiling of IDP situations is a collaborative process aimed at generating reliable data that can be broadly agreed upon. As a collaborative process, it can be a crucial tool for generating agreement on persistent questions such as who is recognized as internally displaced within a given context, what are the most prevalent vulnerabilities caused by displacement, and how do IDPs fare compared to host populations. In

---

sought refuge with host communities or rented accommodation in urban areas, as assistance was limited to registered IDPs.

<sup>68</sup> However, in many conflict-affected countries, governments lack the basic capacity to maintain Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems including the registration of births and deaths in non-displacement situations, let alone the registration of IDPs displaced due to natural disasters or conflict.

<sup>69</sup> IOM has introduced biometric registration systems in South Sudan, Sudan, DRC and Nigeria to circumvent these problems.

this way, profiling of IDP situations aims to underpin advocacy, protection and assistance activities as well as support the achievement of durable solutions by informing joint strategies between government, humanitarian and development actors.

Profiling provides an overview of displacement-affected populations through the collection and analysis of minimum core data (number of IDPs, disaggregated by location, age and sex) and where possible additional quantitative and qualitative data (causes of displacement, patterns of displacement, protection concerns, humanitarian needs, vulnerabilities, and aspirations and prospects for durable solutions). Profiling may utilize data collection techniques at individual, household and community levels, often combining population estimation methods, a review of secondary data, focus group discussions, household surveys and key informant interviews targeted specifically at forcibly displaced populations (UNSD 2014).<sup>70</sup> Profiling methods focus on displacement situations, rather than only on displaced populations, and therefore includes comparisons to conditions in the host population. IDMC estimates that humanitarian profiling data forms the basis for 18 of their 60 country estimates and around 63 percent of their annual estimates (IDMC 2015), with the largest volume of data on conflict-induced internal displacement provided by OCHA followed by IOM.

There are several practical challenges associated with IDP profiling exercises in displacement situations. Insecurity or terrain may impede access to displaced populations in conflict-affected or hard to reach areas. For example, profiling exercises in Pakistan do not cover all IDPs or areas affected by displacement due to insecurity, and in Afghanistan profiling of IDPs by UNHCR underestimates the scale of the initial displacement as IDPs are only interviewed once displacement sites are accessible, if they are profiled at all (IDMC 2015). Additional challenges include unwillingness of IDPs to participate due to fear of persecution, and mobile populations (IDMC 2008). There may also be political pressures to inflate or reduce numbers.

### **Population movement tracking systems**

In situations where the movement of displaced populations is fluid or continuous, a movement tracking system can be a useful tool for providing rough estimates of population flows, including recurrent displacements. Movement tracking systems are useful for monitoring fluid population movements (including spontaneous and organized, internal and cross-border, and returns and resettlement) in remote or inaccessible routes and locations (including displacement sites, places of origin, and places of return and resettlement). UNHCR, IOM and other organizations have developed methods for tracking and monitoring movements of IDPs in over 30 countries, particularly in cases of disaster-induced displacement, but also in some cases of conflict-induced displacement (UNSD 2014). These systems employ a combination of data collection techniques including key respondent interviews, focus group discussions, registration, observations and physical counts, samplings and other statistical methodologies. For examples, UNHCR's population tracking systems identifies and trains local NGOs to monitor key locations such as IDP settlements, bus stations and roads to report on movements.

The accuracy of data from movement tracking systems is subject to several caveats. These include: limited access to locations and routes due to insecurity; vast geographical areas to monitor; mixed population flows that include refugees, IDPs, pastoral and seasonal movements and economic migrants; massive population flows that overwhelm monitoring capacity; disinclination of individuals to provide information when there is no assistance being offered; pressures from communities to inflate figures to maximize future assistance; and political pressures to suppress accurate reporting on IDP movements. Additionally, due to the fluid nature of displacement in many contexts and the likelihood of recurring displacements, it is not possible to use movement data to provide estimates of population stocks.

### **Population censuses**

National population and housing censuses often provide the most comprehensive source of population data and offer the potential for estimating numbers of forcibly displaced people. To estimate the size of displaced populations a census would need to include questions on country (and/or place) or birth, year of (internal)

---

<sup>70</sup> Other data collection methods may be used such as movement tracking systems, registration, big data etc.



migration, and reason for movement including asylum/refugee protection (or conflict-induced internal migration) (UNHCR 2016), or a specific question to identify IDPs or refugees. However, not all censuses cover refugees and asylum-seekers (if foreigners are considered outside the scope of the census or because they are considered a special category),<sup>71</sup> nor is it common practice for national censuses to include questions related to forced displacement.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, there are several examples of national censuses that have included relevant questions on forced displacement.<sup>73,74</sup> In the case of protracted internal displacement situations, IDPs are likely to be included in national censuses; however, census instruments may be subject to manipulation for political purposes.

There are several drawbacks of population censuses including their cost, the significant training required for enumerators to ensure consistent answers to questions on forced displacement, impediments to field operations and data processing (such as weather conditions and technical problems), the relative infrequency with which they are carried out, and the long processing time before data and statistics become available, which have consequences for the timeliness of data. Moreover, often censuses are not conducted in contested territory or conflict zones where many displaced persons reside, and this limits the completeness of the data. Nevertheless, censuses are the only nation-wide source of population data for potentially providing estimates of displaced populations, especially those in non-camp settings, and often provide a basis for sampling frames for survey instruments (UNHCR 2016). Capturing displacement situations in official statistics also increases their visibility.

### Sample surveys

Sample surveys can potentially provide a rich source of data on forcibly displaced populations. Compared with censuses and registers, sample surveys allow more detailed questions to be asked about the characteristics and situations of households. If survey instruments identify displaced populations based on individuals' and households' self-reported migration history (including patterns and causes) they can enable the disaggregation of detailed data by displacement status (UNSD 2014).

There are opportunities to mainstream forced displacement into international survey instruments, but this has only been done in a handful of cases. Several standardized international sample surveys have been designed for special purposes including the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS),<sup>75</sup> Labor Force

---

<sup>71</sup> The UN census recommendations for the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme stipulate that refugees and IDPs living in camps should be counted and their numbers disaggregated in population statistics, however there is no requirement to separately distinguish displaced people living outside of camps (UNHCR 2016). The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) guidelines include a question on reason for migration, population with a refugee-like background and IDPs as non-core topics/questions (UNHCR 2016).

<sup>72</sup> While most countries include questions on country of birth and citizenship, only about 40 percent include a question on year of migration, less than a quarter include a question on reason for international migration, and about a fifth include a question on the reason for internal migration (UNHCR 2016).

<sup>73</sup> E.g. Kyrgyz Republic 1999 (refugee status), West Bank and Gaza 2007 (refugee status), Zambia 2000 and 2010 (purpose of stay), Germany 1970 (federal refugee identity card), Greece 2001 (reason for settling in Greece), Sudan and South Sudan 2008 (type of household including IDP and refugee), Liberia 1990 (ever displaced by war since 1990), Uganda 2014 (refugees).

<sup>74</sup> UNHCR is collaborating with the Statistics Norway on systematically embedding forcibly displaced peoples in national statistics exercises and collaborates with national authorities and with UNFPA in various countries on the design of census exercises that include refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless persons.

<sup>75</sup> LSMS is a household survey program housed in the Bank's Development Research Group that provides technical assistance to national statistical offices in the design and implementation of multi-topic household surveys covering household behavior, welfare and interactions with government policies. All data gathered through the LSMS is published online in the Bank's Central Microdata Catalog.

Surveys,<sup>76</sup> Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS),<sup>77</sup> and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).<sup>78</sup> The advantage of these surveys is that they cover a wide range of countries and are conducted in a regular or systematic manner (UNSD 2014). There are only a few cases where modules or questions on forced displacement have been integrated into survey instruments (most notably in Somalia, Uganda, West Bank and Gaza, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Ghana, as well as health surveys in Albania, Ukraine and Moldova).

There are several challenges associated with 'mainstreaming' forced displacement into household surveys: (a) there is huge demand for adding sector-specific or thematic modules to international surveys; (b) it is relatively difficult to convince national statistical agencies to modify their country-specific surveys; (c) disaggregating survey results by specific vulnerable groups (e.g. refugees, IDPs, migrant populations) requires these distinctions to be integrated into the sampling frame and sometimes there is insufficient information to do this or a lack of resources to expand the sample size; (d) lack of access to displacement-affected areas; and (e) difficulties associated with integrating an inherently political topic into less controversial surveys.

### ***Border crossings***

The registration of people crossing international borders is conducted in many countries, and in some cases these data are used to estimate migration flows. Identifying refugees among people crossing borders is a significant challenge, particularly if individuals decide not to apply for asylum or refugee status (UNSD 2014). Additional problems associated with the collection of data on border crossings include: (a) difficulties distinguishing migrants from other people crossing a border, such as tourists, commuters, traders and truck drivers; (b) lack of capacity of many border posts and officials to handle large migration flows; (c) less scrutiny and diligence of emigration flows compared with immigration flow; and (d) lack of tight controls at most borders and the high incidence of undocumented or irregular crossings (UNSD 2014).

### ***Administrative records and registers***

Many countries have administrative records or registers of immigrants that could generate statistics on asylum-seekers and refugees. In particular, data on residence permits issued to refugees or asylum-seekers could be used to generate statistics on both flows and stocks of refugees.<sup>79</sup> For example, Eurostat collects and disseminates data on residence permits granted to those with refugee status and subsidiary protection (UNSD 2014).

### ***General population registers***

In a small but growing number of countries, information from the central population register is the main source of migration statistics.<sup>80</sup> While population registers may generate statistics on both internal and international migration (if they record changes of residence, and international arrivals and departures) they do not typically record reasons for movement. However, it may be possible to link data from the central population register to those from immigration or border authorities to identify refugees and asylum-

---

<sup>76</sup> Using standard ILO definitions, Labor Force Surveys collect data on work-related issues and provide a basis for measuring employment and unemployment indicators. They are typically conducted monthly in developed countries and quarterly or annually in developing countries.

<sup>77</sup> Supported by USAID and implemented by ICF International, the DHS Program has collected, analyzed and disseminated data on population, health, HIV and nutrition through more than 300 surveys in over 90 countries.

<sup>78</sup> MICS is an initiative of UNICEF that assists countries in collecting and analyzing health and education data in order to fill data gaps for monitoring the situation of children and women.

<sup>79</sup> Many refugee hosting countries issue a form of identification, either specific to refugees or based on national identification documents or those issued to non-national residents. In many cases where such documents are not issued, refugee identity cards are issued in collaboration with UNHCR.

<sup>80</sup> A population register provides a mechanism for the continuous recording of selected data on the resident population including a unique identification number, date of birth, sex, marital status, place of birth, place of residence, citizenship and language and possibly also socio-economic data, such as occupation or education.

seekers<sup>81</sup> There are several challenges associated with using central population registers to estimate refugee and asylum-seeker populations, including: consistency of the definition of refugees with the definition in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol; difficulty and cost of establishing and maintaining a population register (UNSD 2014); and confidentiality safeguards.

### Compilation of statistics on forcibly displaced populations

Several international organizations are involved in the compilation, analysis and dissemination of statistics on forced displacement including UNHCR,<sup>82</sup> Eurostat, IDMC, OCHA, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC),<sup>83</sup> WFP<sup>84</sup> and IOM. Each of these actors has their own thematic focus and specific objectives, and applies their own methodologies.

### Asylum-seekers and refugees

UNHCR is the principal organization responsible for the compilation, analysis and dissemination of data on asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR maintains a publicly available statistical online database<sup>85</sup> with data for the period 1951-2014 on refugees (including people in refugee-like situations), asylum-seekers (pending cases), returned refugees, IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR, returned IDPs previously protected or assisted by UNHCR, stateless persons and others of concern to UNHCR, disaggregated by country of origin and asylum.<sup>86</sup> Data are also provided on demographics, location, asylum-seekers (refugee status determination and monthly data) and resettlement. UNHCR regularly publishes statistical reports, including “Global Trends”, “Mid-Year Trends”, “Asylum Trends” and “Statistical Yearbook”. Additionally, UNHCR hosts interagency information sharing portals for significant emergencies.<sup>87</sup> These portals provide data on populations of concern at regional and country levels, including time series data, demographics, location and accommodation information.<sup>88</sup>

Eurostat compiles and publishes data on asylum (applications and decisions) and managed migration in European Union member countries. Countries and national and international NGOs also publish these statistics, based on sources of various completeness, quality and timeliness (UNSD 2014). There are sometimes substantial inconsistencies between the numbers published by different organizations for the same country, including high-income countries with good statistical systems, usually due to differences in definitions, times and statistical methods, including the mixing of data on flows and stocks (UNSD 2014).

There are several challenges associated with the compilation of data on asylum-seekers and refugees. Significant among these are: (a) the lack of capacity of national statistical agencies in many developing countries to collect robust data on refugees; (b) weak or incomplete monitoring of refugees dispersed within host communities; (c) lack of capacity to maintain up to date information on refugees (reflecting new arrivals,

---

<sup>81</sup> General population registers may also provide opportunities for more elaborate analysis of the integration of refugees in asylum countries, as the data could be linked to other administrative registers, for example on labor and education (UNSD 2014).

<sup>82</sup> UNHCR collects, compiles and publishes data on asylum-seekers, refugees and IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR, including populations in refugee-like or IDP-like situations.

<sup>83</sup> Established in 1863, the ICRC's mission is to ensure humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. ICRC's work is based on the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocols, its Statutes—and those of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement—and the resolutions of the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

<sup>84</sup> WFP is the food assistance branch of the United Nations and the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security.

<sup>85</sup> See: [popstats.unhcr.org](http://popstats.unhcr.org).

<sup>86</sup> IDP data are only included from 1998 onwards.

<sup>87</sup> See: <http://data.unhcr.org>. Currently the Burundi situation, Yemen (regional refugee and migrant response plan), DRC regional refugee response, Mediterranean (refugees/migrants emergency response), CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, Syria Emergency, Sahel Emergency, South Sudan Situation, Horn of Africa Emergency, and the Liberia Portal.

<sup>88</sup> IOM's new Global Migration Data Analysis Centre provides limited data on global migration trends such as data on asylum application in Europe and selected countries (including demographics, country of origin, and country of asylum).



achievement of durable solutions, births and deaths) so that data on the size and composition of refugee populations can quickly become outdated; and (d) data protection and privacy issues.

## *IDPs*

Data on IDPs are compiled, analyzed and disseminated by a number of organizations, including IDMC, UNHCR,<sup>89</sup> OCHA, ICRC, WFP, IOM, JIPS, as well as NGOs and research institutes. IDMC is the lead organization responsible for aggregating sources and establishing estimates of new and cumulative displacements that are as reliable as possible. IDMC relies on a wide range of secondary sources of information, including national governments, international organizations, national and international NGOs, human rights organizations, the media and IDPs themselves (IDMC 2015). It publishes estimates of internal displacement caused by conflict, generalized violence, and human rights violations in over 60 countries.

IDMC candidly acknowledges the challenges associated with data compilation and the corresponding limitations in terms of the completeness, quality, reliability and comparability of aggregate numbers. IDMC's aggregation and analysis is constrained by the scope and quality of its source data. Significant challenges include:

- (a) The lack of consistent definitions and methodologies (across locations and over time), in particular the lack of consensus on when internal displacement ends (IDMC 2015). Consequently, data may be aggregated across situations and countries even though the source data were generated for different purposes and using different methodologies.
- (b) Very few national governments collect or report up-to-date data on IDPs. Political will as well as the resources and capacities to carry out effective and timely data collection vary across countries. In 2015, only five governments responded to IDMC requests for data.<sup>90</sup> Consequently, data on internal displacement is outdated in several countries and is at risk of becoming outdated in others, including countries like Afghanistan with large IDP populations (IDMC 2016).<sup>91</sup> Problems of outdated and 'decaying' data are especially problematic in protracted displacement situations—international organizations reallocate resources to more visible or pressing displacement crises (IDMC 2016).
- (c) Limited official standards and guidance on how to collect data on IDPs in the field. IDMC may rely on more than one source in some countries (each gathering data for different purposes and using different definitions and methodologies with little or no coordination) and so double counting and gaps cannot be excluded (IDMC 2015). IDMC reported that changes in the way their sources collect and analyze their data led to dramatic adjustments in 2014 figures, e.g. in Côte d'Ivoire a profiling exercise led to a four-fold increase in IDMC's estimate, and in Nigeria improvements in the national capacity to collect information led to a 70 percent decrease in IDMC's estimate (IDMC 2015).
- (d) The lack of complete data for most countries. The fluidity of population movements, insecurity and other access restrictions (lack of transport infrastructure, high logistical costs and government restrictions) make primary data collection almost impossible in many areas (IDMC 2015). Consequently, data collectors often focus on IDPs in relatively stable, secure and accessible places (e.g. camps) and estimations in the most difficult areas rely on 'local informers' (e.g. local authorities, NGOs etc.) who may or may not have the capacity to provide adequate numbers, or which leaves data collection and reporting subject to the influence of parties to the conflict (IDMC 2016). Figures do not always capture 'invisible' IDPs that are living in individual accommodation dispersed in host communities, and therefore figures are

---

<sup>89</sup> The statistics of UNHCR on IDPs are limited to countries (numbering 24 in 2013) where the organization is engaged in assisting or protecting IDPs.

<sup>90</sup> Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Ireland and Mexico (IDMC 2016)

<sup>91</sup> IDMC notes that outdated or 'decaying' data are a problem in 12 of the 53 conflict- or violence-affected countries it monitors (Armenia, Bangladesh, Congo, Cyprus, Guatemala, Macedonia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Togo, Turkey and Uganda), accounting for approximately 20 percent of IDPs worldwide (IDMC 2016).

likely to understate the true scale of internal displacement in some situations (e.g. Afghanistan, Sudan) (IDMC 2015). On the other hand, in contexts with multiple displacements, there may be people who are counted more than once, e.g. DRC. Additionally, crises that are smaller or less visible tend to be underreported, e.g. displacement due to criminal violence in Central America (IDMC 2015).

- (e) Difficulties obtaining figures on IDP flows, i.e. new displacement, returns, integration, settlement elsewhere, numbers who have fled across an international border (becoming refugees) and those who have been born or who have died in displacement (IDMC 2015). Data on flows may not be collected or sufficiently disaggregated. Often, less data on flows are available once the initial emergency phase of a displacement crisis is over, especially if there are no humanitarian agencies present (IDMC 2015). IDMC reports that of the 52 countries it monitored in 2015, it was only able to obtain data on new displacements in 20 countries,<sup>92</sup> on returns in 20 countries, on integration in one country, on resettlement in two countries, on children born in displacement in two countries and on deaths in one country; no data was obtained for any country on cross-border flight in 2015 (IDMC 2016). Moreover, existing systems for collecting data on refugees and asylum-seekers make it difficult to know how many were formerly IDPs, and it is possible for some people to be simultaneously counted in both categories, e.g. in the case of the Syrian displacement crisis (IDMC 2016). If no data on returns are available, IDMC risks overstating the number of IDPs (IDMC 2015). On the other hand, in many countries returns are subtracted from population estimates without knowing if sustainable solutions have been achieved.
- (f) The potential to manipulate data for political purposes, for example to show that a humanitarian situation has been resolved and direct attention elsewhere (e.g. in Armenia, the Russian Federation and Turkey) (Walicki 2009) or alternatively still requires attention and resources.
- (g) Aggregation of data from different locations/crises within a country makes it difficult to estimate how long groups have been in displacement.

### Disaggregated data on location, accommodation and demographics

Disaggregated data on location, accommodation and demographics are incomplete. UNHCR publishes disaggregated data for 60-80 percent of refugees and people in refugee-like situations, however the coverage is much lower for other populations of concern to UNHCR who are largely IDPs (see Table 5). Disaggregated data on IDPs who are not protected or assisted by UNHCR are collected by other agencies, including IOM, but data are not comprehensive and therefore not published in IDMC's global reports.<sup>93</sup> The difficulties of collecting disaggregated data on locations of IDPs are compounded by the fluidity of IDP movements—IDPs might suffer multiple displacements or they might resort to changing locations as a coping strategy (e.g. moving between their homes and place of displacement or testing different locations before deciding where to stay) (Brookings 2011). In recent years, efforts have been made to improve data collection for IDPs living outside of camps by employing a range of techniques including: (a) profiling; (b) household surveys; (c) collecting information on IDPs who come to camps to visit family members or collect relief items; and (d) community outreach programs (Brookings 2013). However, there is no consensus or agreed best practices on the use of these methods in different contexts or stages of displacement (Brookings 2013).

---

<sup>92</sup> The absence of data on new displacement may simply mean that no displacement has taken place (IDMC 2016).

<sup>93</sup> IDMC reports that data, disaggregated by age and sex, were available for 15 of the 60 countries it monitored in 2014, however these data were not comprehensive and are not published. Additionally, in some countries there are data provided by IOM on IDP populations by location from which the urban or rural character of the population may be inferred (e.g. if the camp is located in the capital), but data are not comprehensive and not published. While the majority of humanitarian profile data does not typically cover IDPs living outside of camp or camp-like settings (the large majority of IDPs), IOM's DTM in countries such as Nigeria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya do include information about those residing in host communities.

**Table 5: Coverage of Published Data on Location, Accommodation and Demographics 2015**

	Population end-2015 (millions)	Urban or Rural Location	Accommodation	Age	Sex
<b>Refugees and people in refugee-like situations</b>	16.1	85%	83%	58%	68%
<b>Other people of concern to UNHCR</b>	47.8 (including 37.5 IDPs)	70%	47%	25%	39%
<b>UNHCR's total population of concern</b>	63.9 <sup>94</sup>	73%	56%	33%	46%
<b>IDPs monitored by IDMC but not included in UNHCR's data</b>	3.3	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2015

Note: Other people of concern to UNHCR include asylum-seekers, IDPs and people in IDP-like situations protected or assisted by UNHCR, stateless persons, and 'other'.

### Overall robustness of current data

The robustness of data is difficult to estimate. A review of data collection and compilation methodologies shows broad variations in terms of the accuracy and reliability of the global estimates of forced displacement that are widely used. Headline figures on forced displacement are significant in shaping public opinion and are critical for sound decision making, both to inform the allocation of resources and to design effective humanitarian and development responses. However, the available estimates are potentially misleading and should not be referred to without appropriate caveats and qualifiers. They may provide reasonably solid insights on trends at the level of individual crises or countries, assuming no significant methodological change over time, but in most cases, they provide an incomplete picture and are often not comparable across displacement situations. Table 6 provides an estimate of methodological robustness using a simple rating system that takes into account, among other factors, whether data are based on an actual counting of persons (registration) by a national or international institution, whether some or all data are based on an estimation, the coverage of data, and whether data are up to date.

**Table 6: Methodological Robustness**

Methodological Robustness		Refugee Situations (%)	IDP Situations (%)	Refugees and IDPs (%)
<b>A (highest)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual registration by a national or international institution</li> </ul>	88		22
<b>B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual registration by a national or international institution for a portion of the population combined with an estimate for the other portion; or</li> <li>Data originate from different sources including statistical ones and a review process is in place</li> </ul>	12	2	5
<b>C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No information on parts of the country</li> </ul>		46	34

<sup>94</sup> UNHCR's total population of concern includes refugees and people in refugee-like situations, IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR, asylum seekers, returned refugees, returned IDPs, person's under UNHCR's statelessness mandate, and others of concern to UNHCR. This figure does not include Palestinian refugees, who fall under UNRWA's mandate.

<p><b>D</b></p> <p><b>(lowest)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No single institution in charge of monitoring and different undocumented methodologies are used for available data; or</li> <li>• No information on large parts of the country; or</li> <li>• Only outdated data are available</li> </ul>		52	39
--	--	--	----	----

*Note:* Assessment of methodological robustness was based on a review of end-2014 data and associated methodologies.

At an aggregate level, the headline statistic of 65 million forcibly displaced persons is an estimate, and the data are the least robust for IDPs (who represent the bulk of the forcibly displaced and the largest part of the recent growth in numbers). Based on existing data, it is not possible to assess how close it may be from the actual situation on the ground, nor whether it provides an over- or an under-evaluation. In the absence of accurate data, existing figures provide the only source to determine orders of magnitudes, relative numbers, and trends. They may provide important insights into the forced displacement crisis, but they ought to be taken with a great degree of caution. Data users should be aware of their limitations and of the corresponding error margins.

## **E. Key data required for development policy and programming**

Conflict-induced forced displacement is increasingly being recognized as a development issue by both humanitarian and development actors. Forced displacement poses significant challenges to achieving the SDGs and the Bank's own goals of eradicating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. Displaced people are often (though not always) more likely to be poor than non-displaced people and they also have unique vulnerabilities that are impediments to achieving higher incomes. Additionally, the burden of hosting displaced populations is overwhelmingly carried by developing countries, which can undermine their efforts to reduce poverty and promote development. In particular, sudden inflows of displaced people can create short-term disequilibria across a number of markets (including the labor market), and place additional strain on infrastructure and local services such as education, health, solid waste management, water services and urban transport. The presence of displaced populations can also increase the risks of conflict diffusion, instability, and further displacement.

Traditional responses that focus only on the immediate needs of the newly displaced or on durable solutions are often inadequate. Given the protracted nature of many forced displacement situations and the limited immediate prospects for durable solutions for most displaced people, short term humanitarian responses are insufficient. Even the achievement of one of the three durable solutions does not automatically eliminate the vulnerabilities associated with having been forcibly displacement. In particular, many returnees continue to face impediments to their sustainable reintegration in countries/places of origin. There are also significant, varied and long-term impacts of forced displacement (both positive and negative) on host countries and communities that need to be understood and managed. A development engagement, anchored in a medium to longer-term perspective, can therefore complement a humanitarian engagement throughout the entire period of a forced displacement situation.

Currently, there is a very weak link between the collection of forced displacement statistics and the analysis required to inform an effective development response.<sup>95</sup> For development actors, several analytical questions may be considered, such as:

---

<sup>95</sup> A development response to forced displacement may encompass several elements including: (a) policy adjustments to encourage greater inclusion of displaced populations within mainstream economic and social development processes; (b) medium-term interventions to lessen the dependency of displaced populations on humanitarian assistance and mitigate tensions between displaced people and their host communities; (c) support to mitigate the potential negative socio-economic impacts of refugee and IDP populations on host communities and to maximize the social-economic benefits; (d) support to mitigate any negative macroeconomic and financial impacts of forced displacement on host countries and to enhance positive impacts on the economy over the longer term; (e) support to

- (a) What are the scale (stocks, flows and locations) and nature of the socio-economic vulnerabilities, welfare and needs of displaced people (including those that are unique to displaced people as well as those shared with host communities), and how are these evolving over time?
- (b) What are the scale (numbers and locations) and nature of impacts (both positive and negative) on host communities, e.g. in terms of service delivery, welfare, jobs and social cohesion, and how are these evolving over time?
- (c) What are the fiscal and macroeconomic impacts on host countries, and how are these changing over time?
- (d) What has been the scale of returns (numbers and locations), how successful have these returns been, and what are the impediments to sustainable reintegration including the socio-economic vulnerabilities, welfare and needs of returnees (both those that are unique to returnees as well as those shared with communities in return areas)?
- (e) What have been the impacts of previous interventions in various contexts to address the development challenges posed by forced displacement, and what lessons can inform the design of future interventions?

These analytical questions require data collection efforts that go beyond the information requirements to support humanitarian responses in the areas of protection and assistance. Very broadly, the additional data requirements include: (a) estimates of the numbers of returnees that have yet to be successfully/sustainably reintegrated and data on their locations; (b) estimates of the size of affected host populations and data on the impact of displacement on host countries and communities; (c) data on the socio-economic vulnerabilities, welfare and needs of displaced and returnee populations; and (d) rigorous impact assessments of interventions in various contexts to address the development impacts of forced displacement.

## Returnees

Data on returns of refugees and IDPs are incomplete. UNHCR provides data on refugees who have returned to their host countries (39 countries during 2015) and some data on returned IDPs (i.e. only former IDPs that were protected or assisted by UNHCR) including both assisted and unassisted returns. IDMC provides very rough estimates of returns of IDPs (in 20 of 52 countries it monitored in 2015). However, there are significant challenges associated with obtaining figures on IDP returns and actual return figures may be considerably higher (IDMC 2015). In practice, the quality of data is more solid for those who have returned with assistance from UNHCR or other international agencies than for unassisted returns.

There is limited data on the success or sustainability<sup>96</sup> of reintegration following return. In many situations returns are not sustainable leading to onward migration or secondary displacement. Even when returnees resettle permanently in their areas of origin, they may continue to face obstacles to their full reintegration. However, publicly available data on returns do not extend to an assessment of the success or sustainability of return and reintegration, making it difficult to assess the degree to which specific groups of returnees still have vulnerabilities and needs linked to their displacement. A starting point for this kind of assessment may be the eight criteria for sustainable returns set out in the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs.<sup>97</sup>

---

conflict-affected countries to address some of the drivers of forced displacement and promote returns; and (f) support to returnees and communities in return areas to facilitate successful and sustainable reintegration.

<sup>96</sup> UNHCR conducts protection monitoring in return areas that informs programming, as well as communication with refugees and IDPs about conditions so as to inform their decisions; this information should complement all statistics about returns – both assisted and spontaneous.

<sup>97</sup> JIPS, under the leadership of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs, is developing a methodology and tools to apply the IASC Framework's eight criteria for durable solutions (Beyani, Baal and Caterina 2016).

## Host communities

There is currently no global estimate of affected host communities. Clearly defining and identifying affected host communities is critical from a development perspective to provide them with the support they need to absorb the shock caused by an influx of forcibly displaced persons. However, there is no agreed definition of what constitutes an affected host community. And while there are some anecdotal estimates of host populations for specific displacement situations at given times, there is no systematic aggregation. Yet, the number of people living in host communities and affected by forced displacement (positively or negatively) is likely to be large.

There are significant methodological issues in making such calculations. A very rough estimate may be based on the density of the forcibly displaced population within a particular area. UNHCR has data on the physical location of various groups of forcibly displaced persons that can be linked to estimates of the local population to calculate such densities. Yet, such detailed estimates are difficult to collect accurately. Furthermore, this approach requires some important assumptions on the threshold density above which a community is considered affected, as well as on the area that is included in the calculation: in the case of a rural refugee camp, the impact might be significant but geographically limited to the immediate vicinity while for forcibly displaced people dispersed in an urban environment it may be more diffuse. Despite such empirical challenges, identifying affected host communities is critical from a development perspective.

Estimating such numbers, however, is distinct from measuring the impact itself, which can be either positive or negative, and in most cases, is a combination of positive and negative impacts that vary over time. In the event of large and sudden flows of refugees and IDPs, the short-term impacts on host communities can be significant, and if they are not well managed, the impacts can be long lasting. A central question is how development organizations can support host countries to promote positive impacts and mitigate negative ones. The welfare of host communities also plays a critical role in the political economy of asylum and integration.

## Socio-economic data on displaced populations, returnees and host communities

Data from socio-economic assessments of displacement crises can usefully inform the design of recovery and development policies and associated assistance programs. However, currently there is little comprehensive data available on the socio-economic vulnerabilities and needs of displaced populations or on the social and economic impacts of displacement on host communities. Data on refugees are rarely captured in poverty statistics, which rely on national household surveys usually covering the resident population only, although there are some examples of displacement related questions on IDPs and migrant populations being incorporated into household surveys. Rather, data on the socio-economic impacts of this kind tend to be collected for specific displacement crises (see Box 5).

### Box 5: Bank-Supported Socio-Economic Surveys and Assessments of Displaced and Host Populations

- The “Socio-Economic Impact of the Crisis in North **Mali** on Displaced People” [completed in 2015] analyzes the impact of the 2012 crisis on IDPs in Bamako, refugees in camps in Mauritania and Niger, and returnees in the regional capitals of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal, using data from a face-to-face household survey and follow-up interviews using mobile phones.
- In **Kenya**, a Bank study [ongoing] on the dynamics of the Kakuma refugee camp investigates price effects in food, labor, cattle and housing markets, relying on an original survey across Kakuma and another town<sup>98</sup> to collect data on household demographics, remittances, employment opportunities and trends, wages and prices.
- The Bank with UNHCR is undertaking a regional assessment of social, economic and environmental impacts of forced displacement in the **Lake Chad Basin** [ongoing] to consider the extent, causes, character and socio-economic impact of forced displacement in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon and possibly CAR.

---

<sup>98</sup> Recognizing that there are other factors impacting on the welfare of host communities over the 20-year lifespan of the Kakuma refugee camp, the analysis aims to construct a counterfactual to isolate the changes caused by the presence of refugees.



- In **Somalia**, the Mogadishu Household Survey covered both residential areas and IDP camps, collecting data on expenditures, demographics and living conditions [survey completed; analysis forthcoming]. As part of the Somalia Knowledge for Operations and Political Economy (SKOPE) initiative, the Puntland Household Survey will also cover both residential and IDP populations [ongoing].
- An IDP study in **South Sudan** [ongoing] aims to assess the economic needs of IDPs and host communities in urban areas, covering livelihoods, water and sanitation, infrastructure as well as intentions and conditions to return. Basic information about education, employment and general health variables will also be collected.
- The **Iraq** Crisis Response Study [ongoing] will assess the impact of the Islamic State and oil price-related crises on IDPs and households left behind in IS controlled areas. The study will conduct an ex-ante micro-simulation using pre-crisis household data (IHSES 2012) and macroeconomic projections for 2014 to gauge the distributional impact of the crises across groups (e.g. individuals and/or households, sectors, IDPs and host communities) and space (e.g. urban/rural, governorates).
- The Economic and Social Impact Assessment for **Kurdistan Region of Iraq** [completed in 2015] provides an analysis of the impact of displaced people on access to and quality of service delivery across several sectors.
- The **Lebanon** Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Syria Conflict [completed in 2013] provides an analysis of the impact of displaced people on access to and quality of service delivery across several sectors.
- The Bank and UNHCR undertook a welfare assessment of Syrian refugees living in **Jordan and Lebanon** [completed in 2016] focusing on welfare, poverty and vulnerability. The study: (i) compares the socio-economic profile of refugees with that of the Syrian population before the crisis and with the hosting populations of Jordan and Lebanon; (ii) provides a welfare and vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees including a poverty profile, the socio-economic characteristics of higher poverty and where pockets of deep poverty are located; (iii) analyzes key drivers of welfare and poverty; and (iv) models monetary and non-monetary vulnerability.
- In **Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq**, the Bank is leading an initiative to evaluate the socio-economic impact of the regional crises on the welfare of Syrian refugees and host communities in neighboring countries [ongoing]. Data on living conditions, access to services and economic opportunities, coping strategies and economic status are to be collected via a specialized household survey and a sub-component of the survey will be carried out on a semi-annual basis to continue to monitor and adapt support as needed.
- A recent Bank paper, “**Turkey’s Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Road Ahead**” [completed in 2015] assessed the impact of Syrian refugees on host areas in various sectors. It found that the presence of Syrian refugees is placing a strain on municipal services, housing rental markets, social relations, and education services for Turkish households. Impacts on the labor market are unclear; initial research suggests that there has been a supply shock to informal labor markets. This has had a large-scale impact on the employment of natives in the informal sector. At the same time, research suggests there has been a boost to formal employment for the Turks, but this has been uneven: the low educated and women experience net displacement from the labor market and, together with those in the informal sector, declining earning opportunities.
- The “**Socio-economic Assessment of the Impact of Syrians under Temporary Protection (SuTPs) on Turkish Hosting Communities**” [ongoing], to be undertaken in partnership with the Government of Turkey, will include a nationally representative household survey with SuTP and local Turkish households including camp and non-camp environments. The questionnaire will cover welfare (assets, income, expenditure), municipal services, labor and employment, education, social networks and quality of life.

## F. Options to improve forced displacement statistics

Significant efforts are needed to enhance the reliability, comparability, quality and scope of the global data on forced displacement. In particular, more robust estimates are needed of the scale (stocks, flows and locations) and typology (demographics, location and accommodation) of forced displacement crises. This requires substantial improvements in the rigor of data collection and compilation methodologies including:

- (a) Harmonization of definitions and methodologies used in the collection and analysis of statistical data on forced displacement—covering stocks and flows of refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs—to ensure comparability across regions and countries;



- (b) Disaggregation and geo-mapping of data by location (current location and location of habitual residence; urban, peri-urban or rural location), accommodation (organized camp versus non-camp), and demographics (age and sex);
- (c) Expanded coverage of data collection exercises to include all areas of affected countries (security permitting);
- (d) Improved coverage and detailed data on displaced populations living outside of organized camps;
- (e) Improved coverage of 'flows', i.e. new displacement, durable solutions (returns, integration, resettlement), births, deaths, and in the case of IDPs, the numbers that flee across international borders becoming refugees;
- (f) Systematic data collection beginning from the earliest moment following displacement, following up as populations disperse, and continuing until sustainable/durable solutions have been achieved; and
- (g) Better aggregation, analysis and presentation of forced displacement data currently compiled separately by UNHCR, IOM, IDMC and UNRWA.

Additional efforts are required to address the gaps in the data required for development policy and planning. These data are critical for informing the design of development policies and assistance programs. Specifically, additional data is required in the following areas:

- (a) Data on the socio-economic welfare, specific vulnerabilities and needs of displaced populations (broadly consistent with data collected and analyzed for poverty work, i.e. demographics, income and expenditure data, prices, living standards, access to infrastructure, services and local governance etc.);
- (b) Estimates of the size of affected host populations and data on the impact of displacement on host communities;
- (c) Estimates of the numbers of returnees yet to overcome the socio-economic vulnerabilities associated with their displacement, as well as data on their socio-economic welfare (broadly consistent with data collected and analyzed for poverty work, i.e. demographics, income and expenditure data, prices, living standards, access to infrastructure, services and local governance etc.); and
- (d) Rigorous impact assessments of interventions in various contexts to address the development impacts of forced displacement.

There is a significant opportunity to address some of these gaps by mainstreaming forced displacement into household surveys, focusing on international survey instruments.<sup>99</sup> Sample surveys can potentially provide a rich source of data on displaced populations. Survey instruments enable detailed questions to be asked about the characteristics and situations of households, and if they identify displaced populations based on self-reported migration history (including patterns and causes) they can enable the disaggregation of detailed data by displacement status.

Additionally, more innovative tools and technologies for data collection, analysis and compilation should be explored and leveraged. For example, new methodologies (such as high resolution satellite imagery and unmanned drones) may expand the coverage of data collection efforts in insecure or inaccessible areas. Additionally, new techniques could be explored to improve the collection of robust data on flows of refugees and IDPs. Organizations such as the World Bank, UNHCR, IOM and IDMC are already exploring and in some cases are beginning to use more innovative data collection tools. These techniques include:

---

<sup>99</sup> Several standardized international sample surveys have been designed for special purposes including Living Standards Measurement Studies, Labor Force Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys, and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. The advantage of these surveys is that they cover a wide range of countries and are conducted in a regular or systematic manner

- (a) High frequency sample surveys using smartphone and cellular technologies. For example, a high-frequency survey initiative in Somalia employs a dynamic questionnaire loaded onto smartphones, which enables data to be collected from household interviews in 60 minutes. This approach was developed to overcome the challenges of insecurity, limited data gathering capacity and budgetary constraints.
- (b) The use of mobile phones to conduct surveys or follow up interviews following face-to-face household surveys. For example, a Bank paper on the impact of the 2012 crisis in Mali on IDPs, refugees and returnees used information from a face-to-face household survey as well as follow-up interviews with its respondents via mobile phones. This combination provided a mechanism to monitor the impact of conflict on hard-to-reach populations who at times live in areas inaccessible to enumerators. And in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the Bank supported the use of mobile phones to collect key socio-economic data on the effects of the Ebola virus.
- (c) Crowdsourcing data on displacement. Platforms such as the Kenyan Ushahidi has crowd-sourced data on displacement in Kenya and eastern DRC by encouraging IDPs and host communities to report incidents using their mobile phones or the internet, including information about living conditions. The platform references these reports geo-spatially.
- (d) Geo-mapping of data on displaced populations and affected host communities. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and geospatial analysis can be used to map, monitor and analyze data on forced displacement. Triangulation of this information with socio-economic and other indicators can provide a rich source of data and enable insights into underlying patterns and trends over time.
- (e) Use of big data (mobile phone data, news scraping, social media). IDMC is pursuing big data approaches to capturing displacement data in real time in order to report on displacement situations as they are happening and to provide updates on how they are evolving (IDMC 2015). These data are not necessarily representative but can be used in conjunction with other methods to triangulate trends. For example, the Swedish NGO, Flowminder, has pioneered the use of de-identified data from mobile operators to track population displacement caused by natural disasters such as earthquakes in Haiti in 2010 and Nepal in 2015, and these techniques may also have applications in conflict-induced displacement crises.<sup>100</sup>
- (f) High-resolution satellite imagery and unmanned drones. High resolutions satellite imagery can be used to map physical structures in refugee and IDP camps including changes to the number and type of these over time, support the remote detection of displaced populations in hard to reach or insecure settings; and conduct rapid assessments during or immediately after a mass displacement (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative 2014). In settings with clearly distinguishable individual structures, these methods can also be reasonably accurate for the purposes of rapid estimation of displaced population (Checchi, et al. 2013).<sup>101</sup> The use of unmanned drones is also becoming more popular as the cost of this technology falls. This technique has been used by UNHCR to update its estimates of IDPs in Somalia's Afgooye corridor (IDMC 2015) and by IOM to monitor disaster-induced displacement in Haiti, including the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in collaboration with UNOSAT.
- (g) Open data initiatives. There are several initiatives to provide free and open data that enable Internet users to independently mine and analyze data and generate customized summaries, charts and visualizations. For example, the Bank has provided free, open access to its development data since the launch of its Open Data Initiative in 2010, however there is little open data on asylum-seekers, refugees and IDPs. JIPS has developed a web-based platform that allows users to explore, analyze and visualize profiling data online, and IDMC has

---

<sup>100</sup> See <http://www.flowminder.org/>.

<sup>101</sup> These methods are not effective in settings with connected structures, a complex pattern of roofs or multi-level buildings, as are prevalent in urban areas. Additionally, cloud cover and dense foliage can also obscure structures.

recently introduced the first version of their Global Internal Displacement Database (GIDD) that allows users to explore, filter and sort IDMC's data to produce graphs and tables, and export underlying data.<sup>102</sup> Such platforms need to incorporate safeguards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals' data.

UNHCR and Statistics Norway are currently leading an initiative to improve forced displacement statistics with the participation of national statistical agencies. This process began with the presentation of the "Report on Statistics on Refugees and IDPs" at the 46th session of the UN Statistical Commission in March 2015,<sup>103</sup> followed by an international conference in Turkey in October 2015.<sup>104</sup> The conference set in motion a process for national statistical agencies to collaborate to develop a set of recommendations that both countries and international organizations can use to improve data collection, reporting, data disaggregation, and overall quality, including the preparation of International Recommendations for Refugee Statistics (IRRS). Progress on this agenda was discussed at the 47<sup>th</sup> session of UNSD held in New York in March 2016, where it was recommended that the expert group should also include IDPs in its scope of work (UNSD 2016).<sup>105</sup>

The current initiative is focused on refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs but would ideally be extended to host communities and returnees. Assistance might be directed to one or more of the following areas:

- (a) Support for addressing the lack of data and statistics on affected host communities and returnees.
- (b) Support for improving the scope of data collection activities to include data requirements for long-term development planning, in particular the mainstreaming of data on forced displacement in household surveys; and
- (c) Support to test and mainstream the use of more innovative mechanisms for data collection, analysis and dissemination.

For such efforts to be successful and sustainable, it is important to ensure they are appropriately institutionalized and that they reflect the expertise and comparative advantages of the organizations involved. This can be achieved within the broader context of ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening statistical capacity at the country level, and enhancing cooperation across countries to ensure comparability of data. Considering the number of actors involved in data collection and compilation, each with their own objectives and agendas, coordination is crucial. This would also require engaging with host governments (at national and local levels), international organizations (e.g. UNHCR, IDMC, IOM), international and local NGOs, and research organizations, through awareness raising, capacity building and the development/improvement of effective and timely data collection systems (Brookings 2013). Institutional arrangements would need to delineate data collector and data compiler roles, as well as reflect the following principles to ensure sustainability:

- (a) Pursue additional activities within the overall framework of existing initiatives to ensure coherence with the activities of other actors.
- (b) Primary responsibility for data collection rests with national statistical agencies (with adequate arrangements in the case of IDPs to mitigate political risks).
- (c) Definitions and methodologies should be harmonized across countries, through a process managed under the auspices of the UN Statistical Commission.
- (d) Agencies such as UNHCR and IDMC can play a leading role in ensuring quality, providing technical assistance as may be needed, and aggregating data for global analyses.

---

<sup>102</sup> See <http://www.internal-displacement.org/database>.

<sup>103</sup> See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc15/2015-9-RefugeeStats-E.pdf>.

<sup>104</sup> See conference documentation at <http://www.efta.int/seminars/refugee>.

<sup>105</sup> See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-14-Refugee-statistics-E.pdf>.

- (e) The Bank could provide a link between data collection and analysis to enhance/inform/underpin operational design (i.e. what do we need to know about displaced populations, host communities and returnees to design effective development responses, and how can these requirements be mainstreamed into data collection systems).

As an initial step, interested parties could support the formation and facilitation of a working group of technical experts including representatives of national statistical agencies, regional statistics committees and international organizations (such as UNHCR, IDMC, IOM and the Bank), including annual meetings. This technical working group would provide a forum for discussing and harmonizing the current patchwork of existing initiatives across the spectrum of forced displacement statistics. Consistent with the principles outlined above, it would be beneficial if the proposed technical working group were established as an integral addition to, or an expanded version of, the committee of experts being led by UNHCR under the auspices of UNSD. Assistance might then be offered to: (a) provide technical assistance for the development/harmonization of statistical definitions and methodologies; (b) pilot data collection activities to test/hone methodologies (either specific surveys or additional modules of existing surveys) including training and technical assistance provided to national statistical agencies; and/or (c) the definition of a data analysis framework and/or support to national statistical agencies to undertake their own data analysis.

## References

- Ahmadi, Belquis, and Sadaf Lakhani. "The Forced Return of Afghan Refugees and Implications for Stability." *Peace Brief*, January 2016: 1-5.
- Beau, Christophe. "National legislation." *Forced Migration Review*, May 2003: 16-18.
- Black, Richard, and Saskia Gent. "Sustainable Return in Post-conflict Contexts." *International Migration* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd.) 44, no. 3 (2006): 15-38.
- Bocco, Riccardo, Matthias Brunner, Jalalal Hussein, Frederic Lapeyre, and Elia Zureik. *The Living Conditions of the Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank: A Synthesis Report*. IUED and UCL, 2007.
- Brookings. *From Responsibility to Response: Assessing National Responses to Internal Displacement*. The Brookings Institution - London School of Economics Project on Internal Displacement, 2011.
- Brookings. *Protecting Internally Displaced Persons: A Manual for Law and Policymakers*. Brookings Institution—University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 2008.
- . "Under the Radar: Internally Displaced Persons in Non - Camp Settings." 2013.
- Checchi, Francesco, Barclay T Stewart, Jennifer J Palmer, and Chris Grundy. "Validity and feasibility of a satellite imagery-based method for rapid estimation of displaced populations." *International Journal of Health Geographics* 12, no. 4 (2013).
- Christensen, Asger, and Niels Harild. *Forced Displacement: The Development Challenge*. Social Development Department, The World Bank, The World Bank Group, 2009.
- Crawford, Nicholas, John Cosgrave, Simone Haysom, and Nadine Walicki. *Protracted displacement: uncertain paths to self-reliance in exile*. Humanitarian Policy Group Overseas Development Institute, London: Overseas Development Institute, 2015.
- Crisp, Jeff. "Who has counted the Refugees? UNHCR and the Politics of Numbers." *New Issues in Refugee Research* (UNHCR) 12 (1999).
- Devictor, Xavier, and Do, Quy-Toan. *How Many Years Have Refugees Been in Exile?* Policy Research Working Paper 7810, The World Bank Group, 2016.
- Eurostat. *Asylum statistics*. 2016. [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics) (accessed June 10, 2016).
- Hammond, Laura. "'Voluntary' Repatriation and Reintegration." *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, 2014.
- Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. "Satellite Imagery Interpretation Guide: Displaced Population Camps." Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2014.

IASC. *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*. Brookings Institution, 2010.

IDMC. *Displacement figures in Ukraine fail to reflect a complex reality*. September 3, 2015. <http://www.internal-displacement.org/europe-the-caucasus-and-central-asia/ukraine/new-archive/displacement-figures-in-ukraine-fail-to-reflect-a-complex-reality>.

IDMC. *Global Overview 2015: People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2015.

IDMC. *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2016.

IDMC. *Guidance on Profiling Internally Displaced Persons*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2008.

IDMC. *Innovation at IDMC: Evidence to prevent and respond to internal displacement*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2015.

Khawaja, Marwan. "The Fertility of Palestinian Women in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan and Lebanon." 2003.

Morrison, Leah. "The vulnerability of Palestinian refugees from Syria." *Forced Migration Review*, September 2014.

Reid, Claire. "International Law and Legal Instruments ." 2005.

UNHCR. "Handbook and Guidelines on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status." 2011.

UNHCR. "Handbook for Registration." 2003.

UNHCR. "Statistical Yearbook 2014." 2015.

UNHCR. "Statistical Yearbook 2015." 2016.

UNHCR. "UNHCR Global Trends 2015." 2016.

UNHCR. "UNHCR Mid Year Trends 2015." 2016.

—. *Vietnamese refugees well settled in China, await citizenship*. May 10, 2007. <http://www.unhcr.org/464302994.html>.

UNHCR. "World at War: Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2014." 2015.

UNRWA. "Historical Refugee Registration Data From Year 1952 - 2005." 2016.

UNRWA. "Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal 2016." 2016.

UNSD. "Decisions (Rapporteur's text, subject to editing)." 2016.

UNSD. "Report of Statistics Norway and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons." United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2014.

UNSD. "Report of Statistics Norway, the Turkish Statistical Institute, Eurostat and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on progress in the work on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons." 2016.

Walicki, Nadine. "Europe's IDPs still marginalised." *Forced Migration Review*, 2009.

World Bank. "Sustainable Refugee Return: Triggers, constraints, and lessons on addressing the development challenges of forced displacement." 2015.

Wyndham, Jessica. "A Developing Trend: Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement." *Human Rights Brief* (Brookings Institution) 14, no. 1 (2006): 7-37.