

East Africa worst hit by internal displacement in first half of 2018

Geneva, 12 September 2018 - Latest figures from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reveal that millions of people across the world have become displaced inside their own country since January. Worldwide, there were 5.2 million new internal displacements associated with conflict and violence in the first half of 2018, based on the analysis of data from the 10 worst-affected countries.

In Ethiopia, 1.4 million new internal displacements have already been recorded, surpassing both Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Somalia and South Sudan too are among the 10 worst-affected countries for new displacement linked to conflict and violence. East Africa also accounts for five of the most significant disaster events between January and June, with flooding in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Uganda, and drought in Somalia displacing more than a million people in total.

An additional 3.3 million displacements associated with disasters were recorded in 110 countries and territories. Monsoon flooding in India in May and June caused the most significant displacement, affecting over 370,000 people. Unprecedented flooding continued in July and August, past IDMC's mid-year reporting period, with government reports indicating that over 1.4 million were displaced to relief camps in Kerala alone.

IDMC's director, Alexandra Bilak, said: "Our mid-year assessment serves as an important temperature gauge of the state of the world today. Conflict and violence in low-income countries are becoming more protracted and causing ever-high numbers of people to flee their homes, while vulnerable communities in disaster-prone regions or in areas experiencing the effects of climate change are increasingly at risk and disproportionately impacted by internal displacement."

IDMC's mid-year report shines light on Ethiopia, where new conflict broke out in Gedeo and West Guji zones in the south of the country earlier this year, triggering more than a million new displacements. Internal border disputes between Somali and Oromia regions in the east of the country that flared up toward the end of 2017 also continued.

As the conflict in Yemen enters its fourth year, relentless fighting continues to deepen the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Between January and June, 140,000 new displacements were recorded, an extremely conservative estimate. Displacement was largely concentrated in parts of western Yemen controlled by Ansar Allah, part of the al-Houthi movement, where a series of Saudi-led airstrikes hit densely populated areas including the cities of Taizz and Hodeidah.

In the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia experienced nearly a million new displacements due to unprecedented flooding in April and May after an extended period of drought in the region exacerbated by the Indian El Niño weather phenomenon.

Finally, tropical cyclone Gita left a trail of destruction in the Pacific in February, triggering 10,000 new displacements in American Samoa, New Zealand, Samoa and Tonga. The figure is relatively small compared with the 10 most significant disaster events, but the damage and displacement Gita caused shows that small island states suffer huge impacts relative to their population size.

"Failure to address the issue of internal displacement will have enormous implications, not just for the individuals, families and communities affected, but also for these countries' longer-term stability," added Alexandra Bilak.

"In addition to improving humanitarian responses to these crises, more investment must be made at the national and international level to reduce poverty and inequality, build peace and address the effects of climate change."

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Notes to editors:

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the world's authoritative source of data and analysis on internal displacement. Since its establishment in 1998, as part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), IDMC has been committed to offering a rigorous, transparent and independent service to the international community and to inform policy and operational decisions that improve the lives of the millions of people living in internal displacement, or at risk of becoming displaced in the future.

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