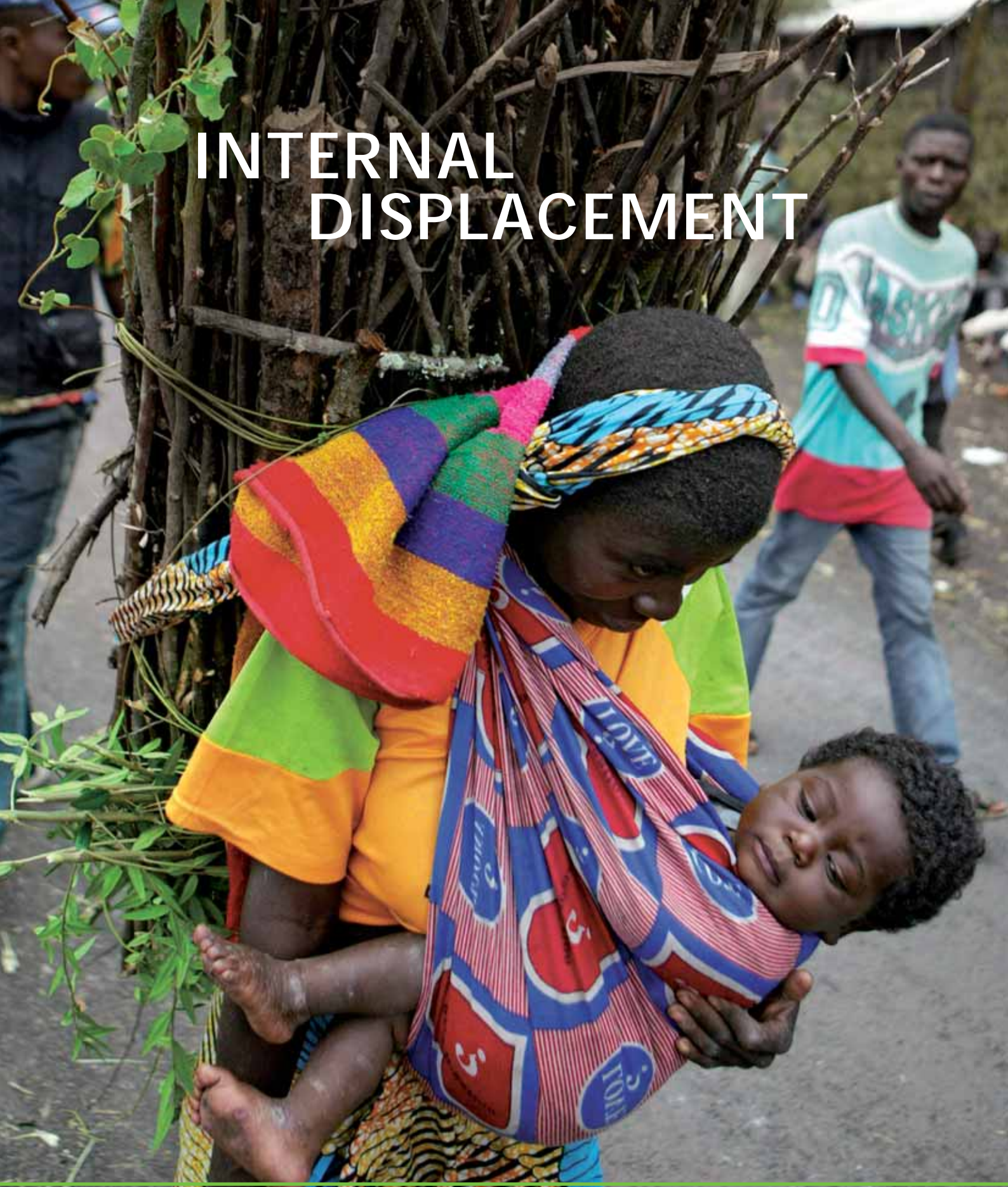


# INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT



Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2007

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Global Overview of Trends  
and Developments in 2007

April 2008

A woman carries her belongings as she moves from violence-torn Mathare in Nairobi, Kenya, December 2007.

*Photo: Julius Mwelu, IRIN*



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**Cover photo:** A woman carries a child and firewood as she flees fighting near the town of Sake in North Kivu province, Democratic Republic of the Congo, September 2007.

*Photo: James Akena, Reuters, courtesy [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)*

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# The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established by the Norwegian Refugee Council, was requested by the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee to set up an IDP database in 1998. The Geneva-based Centre has since evolved into the leading international body monitoring internal displacement in some 50 countries worldwide.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre focuses on the following activities:

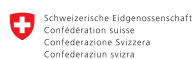
- monitoring internal displacement and maintaining an online database on IDP-related information;
- advocating for the rights of the displaced and making their voices heard;
- providing training on the protection of IDPs;
- increasing visibility and awareness of internal displacement.

This report is based on information included in the online IDP database. For more details on the displacement situations in specific countries, or references to sources used in the report, please visit the database at:

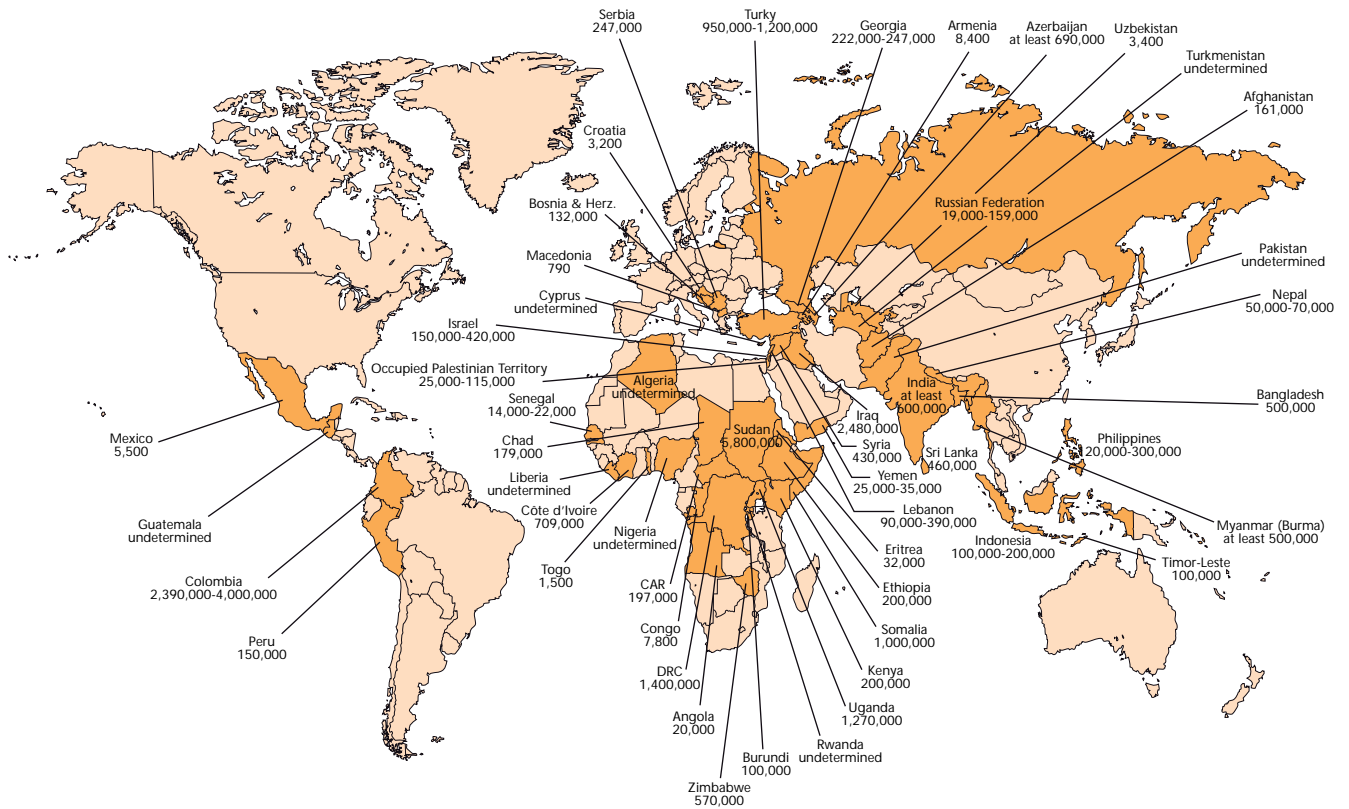
[www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

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# Internally Displaced People Worldwide 2007





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# Key Findings

## Facts and Figures

Total conflict-related IDP population in December 2007	26 million
Number of countries affected	At least 52
Most affected continent	Africa (12.7 million IDPs in 19 countries)
Countries with highest numbers of IDPs	Sudan (5.8 million), Colombia (up to 4 million), Iraq (2.5 million), Democratic Republic of the Congo (1.4 million), Uganda (1.3 million)
Number of countries with new or ongoing conflicts generating displacement in 2007	28
Countries with most new displacements (in alphabetical order) *	Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia
Countries with most returns (in alphabetical order) *	Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, Sudan, Uganda
Countries with worst displacement situations (in alphabetical order)	Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia (Gambella and Somali regions), Indonesia (West Papua), Iraq, Kenya, Pakistan, Somalia (south), Sudan (Darfur), Uganda (Karamoja), Zimbabwe
Number of countries in which all or most IDPs were exposed to serious threats to their physical security and integrity	10
Number of countries in which all or most IDPs faced obstacles to access the basic necessities of life	10
Number of countries with governments or occupation forces directly or indirectly involved in deliberately displacing people	21
Estimated number of IDPs without any significant humanitarian assistance from their governments	11.3 million in at least 13 countries
Estimated number of IDPs faced with governments indifferent or hostile to their protection needs	9.3 million in at least 10 countries

\* Including multiple and short-term displacement and related returns.

## Findings of the report

### Numbers

In 2007, the estimated number of people internally displaced as a result of armed conflicts and violence passed the 26 million mark. This is the highest figure since the early 1990s, and marks a six per cent increase from the 2006 figure of 24.5 million. The increase resulted from a combination of continued high level of new displacements (3.7 million) and a lower level of return movements (2.7 million) in 2007.

Three countries had significantly larger internally displaced populations than any others: Colombia, Iraq and Sudan. Together they accounted for nearly 50 per cent of the world's internally displaced people (IDPs).

At the end of 2007, Africa hosted almost half of the global IDP population (12.7 million) and generated nearly half of the world's newly displaced (1.6 million). Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were the African countries worst affected by new internal displacement in 2007.

The region with the largest relative increase in the IDP population during 2007 was the Middle East, where a rise of nearly 30 per cent was mainly caused by a continuing deterioration of security conditions in Iraq.

### Causes

Most forced internal displacement in the last decade was caused by internal rather than international armed conflicts. This trend continued in 2007. Some existing internal conflicts intensified during the year, partially accounting for the increase in the world's IDP population.

Many of the worst new displacement crises, including in Iraq, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan (Darfur) took place in countries where long-standing armed conflicts deteriorated during 2007.

People were mainly displaced by government forces and allied groups, as well as by rebel groups fighting them. Governments were responsible for forced displacement in 21 of 28 countries with new displacement, and rebel groups in 18 of those countries.

### Protection concerns

Often the most vulnerable as a result of conflict, internally displaced people frequently fell victim to the gravest human rights abuses. They were exposed to attacks, arbitrary arrest and detention, and had limited access to food, water, health care and shelter. Most or all IDPs in Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia (Gambella and Somali regions), Iraq, Somalia and Sudan (Darfur) were persistently faced with such abuses.

Displaced women and girls were at increased risk of sexual violence, including rape and exploitation. Perpetrators often enjoyed impunity for these violations. IDP women and girls were also exposed to significant health risks due to their lack of access to reproductive and maternal health care in areas of displacement.

A specific threat facing displaced children was forced recruitment by armed groups. Family separation and other risk factors deriving from displacement put children in danger of forced recruitment in Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Sudan (Darfur), Myanmar (Burma), Sri Lanka and else-



where. In the majority of countries affected by internal displacement, children lost access to education and were forced to work in order to survive.

The majority of the world's IDPs were trapped in protracted displacement situations in which they faced obstacles accessing essential services and securing livelihoods. Whether they were living in camps or collective centres, or seeking safety in the bush or in urban slums, their living conditions were generally poor. Displaced people relied mainly on themselves and on already strained host communities to improve their situation.

### Durable solutions

Durable solutions in the form of sustainable return or local integration were often blocked by insecurity and various forms of discrimination. Access to property, livelihoods and essential public services was frequently lacking. The worst conditions for return prevailed in Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia (Gambella and Somali-Oromiya), Iraq, Kenya, Myanmar (Burma), Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Many attempts to return, reintegrate or resettle failed. IDPs seldom received support to help them make an informed decision about the solution of their choice. The implementation of solutions was often also compromised by the lack of funding, both from national authorities and international donors (as in Uganda, Southern Sudan, Guatemala, Mexico).

### Responses

Several governments denied that they had IDP populations with specific vulnerabilities, while others lacked the capacity to respond to their

needs. These response failures were sometimes politically motivated, but in other cases resulted from an insufficient understanding of displacement crises.

In some of the countries with severe crises of internal displacement such as Afghanistan, Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territories, Somalia and Sudan, humanitarian access to IDPs and other affected populations was seriously restricted. This was a result of insecurity and deliberate targeting of aid workers. In many other countries, including Myanmar (Burma) and Zimbabwe, national authorities continued to reject offers of international support despite the evident protection and assistance needs of IDPs.

The international community extended considerable support to many affected states in order to help them fulfill their responsibilities towards IDPs. In other cases, the international community sought to fill the gap themselves where states were unable or unwilling to do so. The mechanisms for providing international support were improved as part of the humanitarian reform agenda. However, much remained to be done to adapt responses to the scale and nature of IDP assistance and protection needs. Regional and international initiatives to improve the response to internal displacement, such as those by the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, made some progress during the year.

Although international attention to the plight of IDPs continued to grow, there was no breakthrough in reducing the number of IDPs or measurably improving their situation. Displacement, in the words of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, remained "arguably the most significant humanitarian challenge that we face".

## Foreword

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council is pleased to present its annual survey of internal displacement resulting from armed conflict and violence. The Global Overview provides a comprehensive review of the internal displacement situation in 2007, based on the information gathered in the IDMC database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

In 2007, the total number of conflict-induced internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide rose by a million to the staggering total of 26 million, the highest figure since the early 1990s. Many new displacements were caused by long-standing conflicts such as in Darfur, Iraq, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka and Colombia.

These 26 million IDPs were among the most vulnerable people in the world, and their enjoyment of basic human rights was systematically blocked. Even in areas recovering from conflict, such as northern Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire or Aceh in Indonesia, durable solutions to internal displacement still seemed far off. Despite considerable progress made in recent years in raising the awareness of internal displacement and IDPs' protection and assistance needs, significant information gaps remained on the size, composition and needs of displaced populations. In many countries where such information gaps existed, governments were unwilling either to assist and protect their IDPs themselves, or to let international humanitarian agencies get on with the job. In other words, these IDPs were denied all sources of relief and protection.

The Global Overview for 2007 has a slightly different format to previous editions. A summary of global developments is followed by a series of reviews of internal displacement in Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, Asia and Europe, which presents the main issues

facing IDPs in each region. Selected thematic issues, such as child recruitment, urban displacement, and development-induced forced displacement, are this year discussed within regional chapters.

In these regional reviews, IDMC has applied a "human rights-based approach". After a review of the causes and the patterns of displacements in 2007, each chapter outlines the protection risks facing IDPs, considering their rights related to physical security and integrity, the basic necessities of life, economic, social and cultural protection needs, as well as civil and political protection needs, including issues related to land and property. The particular vulnerability of displaced women and children is highlighted, as well as the range of national and international responses to displacement.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provide the framework against which to measure the enjoyment of rights by IDPs and the fulfillment of responsibilities by national authorities and other relevant stakeholders. Ten years after their introduction, the Guiding Principles have become a reference tool for the protection of IDPs' rights, and they are increasingly referred to by governments, international organisations and local partners tasked with protecting and assisting IDPs. Nevertheless, this report highlights the stark contrast between the protection standards which the Guiding Principles reaffirm and the reality experienced by victims of forced displacement.

Most positive developments in the response to internal displacement have taken place where the dissemination of the Guiding Principles has promoted better knowledge of the rights of IDPs and of the duties inherent in their protection. This annual report seeks to further mobilise support for the protection of IDPs' rights which the Guiding Principles have so effectively placed on the international agenda.



**Arnhild Spence**  
Resident Representative of the Norwegian  
Refugee Council, Geneva



# Global developments

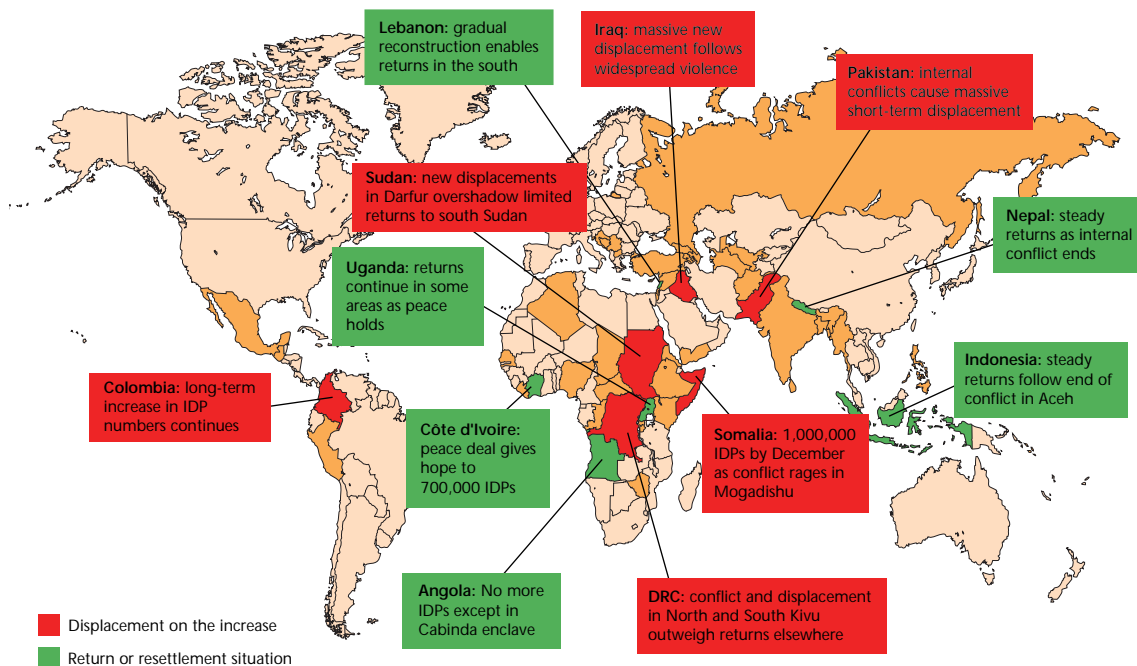
In 2007, the global internal displacement crisis continued unabated. Although international attention to the plight of internally displaced people (IDPs) has grown significantly over the past years, there was still no breakthrough in reducing the numbers and measurably improving the situation of those who had been forced to flee their homes as a result of conflict, generalised violence or human rights violations. Displacement, in the words of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, remained “arguably the most significant humanitarian challenge that we face”<sup>1</sup>.

Millions of people were newly displaced by conflict during 2007, chased from their homes and land by brutal government armies and militias, rebel groups or hostile neighbouring communities. They joined the ranks of IDPs who had been uprooted in previous years and

who remained unable to return to their homes or find other durable solutions, exposed to violence and severe violations even of their most basic human rights.

Despite these sobering developments, the picture was not all bleak in 2007. Hundreds of thousands of IDPs were able to go back to their homes during the year, as peace took hold in Uganda, in some parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and in a number of other countries. Some governments made progress towards meeting their obligations to protect displaced populations and provide them with assistance. And the international community moved towards establishing better mechanisms to respond to humanitarian crises (such as the UN’s humanitarian reform) and to support peace building and post-conflict recovery efforts (such as the UN Peace Building Commission).

## New displacements and returns



◀ A family flees conflict in Sri Lanka.  
 Photo: NRC

Internally displaced mothers and babies in a camp near El-Fasher, capital of the north Darfur region of Sudan, March 2007.  
 Photo: Michael Kamber, Reuters, courtesy www.alertnet.org



## Numbers of IDPs

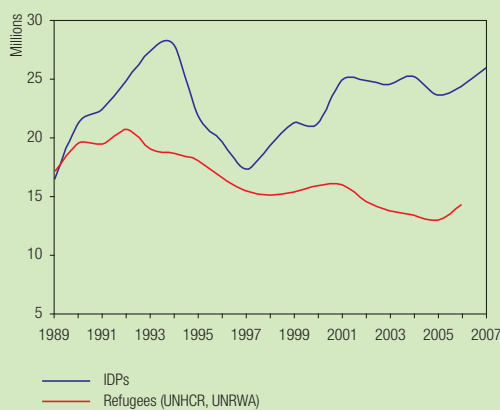
A total of 3.7 million people were newly displaced by conflict in 2007, for either short or longer periods. Although still high, this figure went down by over 400,000 compared to the previous year. But the number of returns also dropped sharply: only 2.7 million IDPs were able to go back during the year, almost 900,000 fewer than in 2006. Incidents of new internal

displacement were recorded in 28 countries, up from 23 during the previous year.

At the end of the year, the global IDP population stood at an estimated 26 million, an increase of 1.5 million, or six per cent, on the previous year. This was the highest year-end estimate since the first half of the 1990s, when the global IDP population peaked as a result of the conflicts erupting in the wake of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union (see chart). With variations such as this rise observed during 2007, the global IDP figure has been oscillating around the 25 million mark since the beginning of this decade. People in over 50 countries were affected by conflict-induced internal displacement in 2007.

### IDPs and Refugees 1990-2007

The world's 26 million IDPs continued in 2007 to outnumber refugees who had fled across an international border by well over two to one.



Sources: IDMC, USCRI (IDP figures); USCRI (refugee figures)

## Displacement hot spots in 2007

As in previous years, Africa was particularly hard hit by internal displacement in 2007. The continent hosted almost half of the global IDP population (12.7 million people) and the country with the highest number of IDPs (Sudan with 5.8 million), and generated nearly one in two of the new displacements in 2007 (1.6 million). Somalia and DRC were two of the countries worst affected by new internal displacements in 2007. In Somalia the violence that engulfed the capital Mogadishu and other parts of the country following the invasion of Ethiopian troops in December 2006 displaced some 600,000 people, while in DRC,

fighting between Tutsi rebels and the government army uprooted an estimated 500,000 people in the east of the country.

The largest percentage increase in the IDP population during 2007 was recorded in the Middle East, where the rise of nearly 30 per cent was mostly due to the sectarian violence and significant deterioration of the general security situation in Iraq. There were over 3.5 million IDPs in the region as of December 2007, some 2.5 million of them in Iraq. In 2007 alone, over 700,000 Iraqis fled their homes and sought refuge in more secure parts of the country, often in areas where their respective religious or ethnic communities formed the majority. The pace of new displacements only slowed towards the end of the year, partially due to the build-up of domestic and US-led military forces, but perhaps also because many neighbourhoods had already become virtually homogenous in their religious and ethnic composition following the massive displacements of the previous months.

Asia, too, saw an increase in the number of IDPs during 2007. Reliable information on internal displacement remained particularly scarce in Asia, as governments tended to restrict international access to IDP populations. The largest single displacement appears to have

**IDP estimates by region (2007)**

Region	Countries	IDPs (millions)
Africa	20	12.7
Americas	4	4.2
Asia	12	3.1
Europe	10	2.5
Middle East	6	3.5
Total	52	26

**New displacement**

Countries most affected by new conflict-induced displacement (and estimated numbers displaced in 2007):

Iraq (700,000)

Somalia (600,000)

Pakistan (500,000\*)

DRC (500,000\*)

\*information limited on short-term and multiple displacements

**Five countries with most IDPs**

Sudan (5.8 million)

Colombia (up to 4 million)

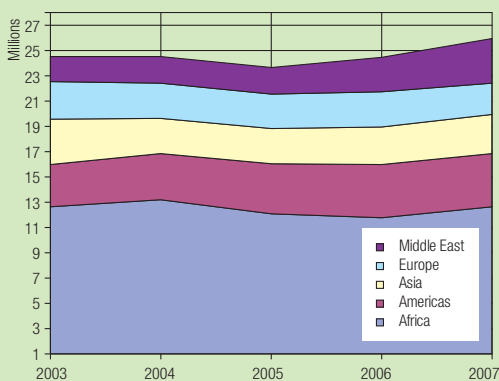
Iraq (2.5 million)

DRC (1.4 million)

Uganda (1.3 million)

**IDPs by region since 2003**

The rise in the number of IDPs to 26 million was mainly due to increases in the number of people displaced in Africa, where the total rose from 11.8 million to 12.7 million in 2007, and in the Middle East where the figure went from 2.7 million to 3.5 million, an increase of almost 30 per cent.



taken place in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province in November, when fighting between government forces and pro-Taleban militants displaced 500,000 or more people, albeit most of them only temporarily. While largely making external scrutiny impossible, the government of Myanmar (Burma) continued its campaign against ethnic minorities in the country’s east, thereby maintaining the displacement of at least 500,000 people.

In Latin America, the conflict in Colombia involving government forces and irregular armed groups forced more than 300,000 people from their homes during 2007, adding to the millions uprooted since the 1980s.



A resident of a camp for IDPs at Karamille in Ethiopia's Oromiya Region, February 2007.  
Photo: Aninia Nadig, IDMC

## Main causes: ongoing internal conflicts

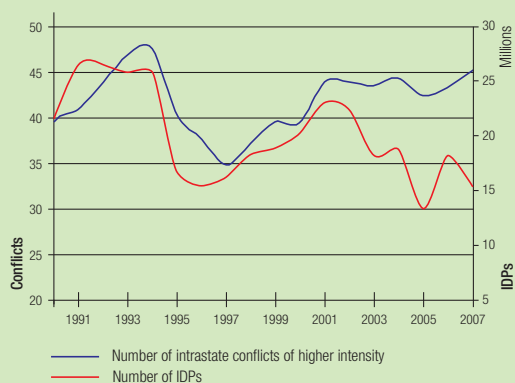
The vast majority of the new forced displacements in 2007 were observed in countries facing long-standing conflicts which deteriorated during the year. Indeed, the overall number of violent conflicts dropped from

35 in 2006 to 31 in 2007 (see table). Only a few new situations of forced displacement emerged, most notably in Kenya, where disputes over the December elections sparked ethnic violence uprooting some 100,000 people by the end of 2007, a figure which more than doubled during the first days of 2008.

Most new displacement in 2007 was caused by internal conflicts. With a few notable exceptions, such as the wars between Israel and the Lebanon-based Hezbollah in 2006 and between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998-2000, international armed conflict has not been a significant cause of internal displacement during the last decade. Nevertheless, there was some level of foreign involvement in many of the internal conflicts causing displacement, and some of the worst situations in 2007 were fuelled by such internationalised conflicts, including the ones in Somalia and DRC. Whether Iraq has suffered more from international or internal armed conflict, the immediate cause of most of the displacement in 2007 was violence between Iraqi communities.

### IDPs and Conflicts 1990-2007

The number of IDPs rose to its highest total since the early 1990s, even though the number of high-intensity conflicts continued the downward trend shown since 2001, and new displacements took place mainly in established conflict situations.



Sources: IDMC; Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research

## Targeting of civilians and deliberate displacement

The changing nature of conflict and disregard for such basic principles of international humanitarian law as distinction (between civilians and combatants) and proportionality (between military necessity and harm

Palestinian residents flee from Nahr al Bared refugee camp in northern Lebanon, May 2007. Around 30,000 long-term Palestinian refugees fled the besieged camp after a fragile truce halted fighting between the Lebanese army and militant extremists. Few of them managed to return in 2007 as the camp was almost completely destroyed during the siege.

*Photo: Ihab Mowasy, Reuters, courtesy www.alertnet.org*



to civilians) has made the civilian population more exposed to dangers arising from military operations and to infringements of their basic human rights. In his 2007 report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the UN Secretary-General concluded: "Deliberate targeting of civilians has become more widespread in places such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Somalia and the Sudan"<sup>2</sup>.

In several countries, armed groups targeted and forcibly displaced civilians as a deliberate strategy to further their military, political or economic goals. In countries like Colombia and Central African Republic (CAR), civilians were targeted in acts of collective punishment for providing real or perceived support to enemy forces. In Iraq, Sudan (Darfur), Kenya and other countries, civilians were targeted in attempts to clear areas of people with a certain ethnic, religious or political affiliation. In Colombia, people were forcibly displaced by armed groups to free up their land for economic exploitation<sup>3</sup>. In several other Latin American countries, pressure to exploit land commercially resulted in unlawful evictions of indigenous people, accompanied by killings, death threats, destruction of crops and burning of houses.

In many conflicts, brutal attacks on displaced and non-displaced civilians as well as extrajudicial executions, sexual violence, torture, destruction of property and looting were used by armed groups and government forces to quell opposition, increase control over populations, and reward their fighters.

## Agents of displacement

Throughout 2007, civilians were displaced by government armed forces, government-backed militias, rebels and other non-state armed groups, as well as by hostile communities in contexts of inter-communal violence. Despite their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, governments again were among the primary perpetrators of forced displacement in 2007. In 21 of 28 countries where there was new internal displacement in 2007, governments were responsible for forcibly displacing people, either directly through their own security forces (as was the case in CAR and DRC), indirectly through allied irregular armed groups (in countries such as Sudan, Colombia, and India) or through implementing policies which directly entailed forced displacement (such as the governments of Myanmar/Burma or of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory). Rebel groups were responsible for forcible displacements in 18 countries in 2007.

As highlighted by the crisis following Kenya's disputed presidential elections of December 2007, inter-communal violence continued to be an important driver of forced displacement. Indeed, in about one third of all countries where new displacement was recorded in 2007, inter-communal violence was a cause, often alongside the actions of security forces or other organised armed groups. This was the case in Iraq, eastern Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and



A displaced mother and daughters in northern Iraq.  
Photo: Astrid Sehl, NRC



Nigeria. Clashes between different communities usually broke out along ethnic or religious lines, but often – as the Kenya example illustrates – as a result of politicians and other local leaders manipulating existing tensions and grievances to further their own agendas.

## The range and severity of displacement situations

This report covers a wide range of internal displacement situations. There are some difficulties which most IDPs share in addition to those prevalent in contexts of conflict or generalised violence. Examples include discrimination, barriers to their freedom of movement, and obstacles to their property rights, and they must all be addressed if they are to receive effective protection.

In situations at one end of the protection spectrum, millions of IDPs are caught in ongoing conflict, facing immediate threats to their physical security and at the same time struggling to get access to the most basic necessities of life such as food, potable water, basic shelter and essential medical care. In 2007, this was the case for all or most IDPs in seven countries or regions: CAR, DRC, Ethiopia (Gambella Region), Iraq, Pakistan, southern Somalia, and Sudan (Darfur).

In addition, in Chad, Kenya and Uganda's Karamoja region, most or all IDPs faced serious threats to their physical security, while most or all IDPs in Colombia, Ethiopia's Somali region, and Indonesia's West Papua had major difficulties in meeting basic humanitarian needs in 2007.

In places such as Darfur and DRC, where an estimated 45,000 people continued to die every month as a result of the country's protracted humanitarian crisis<sup>4</sup>, displaced and non-displaced people often faced similar threats to their physical security and other human rights violations. However, in most cases, IDPs also faced specific problems linked to their displacement, such as the lack of access to land and livelihoods, deteriorated housing standards and the breakdown of communities' social networks.

Almost all of these areas were among those most affected by sexual violence against displaced women and forced recruitment of displaced children. However, these and other specific protection concerns were also

### Economic, social and political participation

In a number of situations (listed in alphabetical order), IDPs as a group faced particular recurrent obstacles in accessing their economic, social and cultural rights and also their civil and political rights:

- Central African Republic
- Colombia
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Ethiopia (Gambella)
- Indonesia (West Papua)
- Iraq
- Mexico
- Somalia
- Sudan (Darfur)
- Zimbabwe

reported in many other countries, including Myanmar (Burma), India, Burundi, Nepal, the Philippines, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda and Sri Lanka, all of which hosted IDPs facing physical security threats and unmet basic humanitarian needs.

In other countries with protracted internal displacement situations such as Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Rwanda or Serbia, integration is progressing gradually as years pass by without the possibility of return. In these countries IDPs still face a range of obstacles in exercising their rights in areas such as housing, employment, documentation, health care, education, social security and freedom of movement<sup>5</sup>. Some form of humanitarian assistance may also be required: in Azerbaijan for example, a country with considerable oil wealth, over 200,000 IDPs still depended on food aid in 2007. In Rwanda tens of thousands of displaced people continued to live in makeshift shacks made of plastic sheets a decade after their initial displacement. Generally, however, IDPs in these countries are not in life-threatening situations, and the responses required to normalise their standards of living and legal situation will have to be placed primarily in the framework of government policies and programmes, with support from international development organisations where national capacities are insufficient.

At the other end of the protection spectrum, an internally displaced person in Cyprus is hardly distinguishable from a non-displaced person, as integration in the place of current residence has been largely successful, though property claims in areas of origin may be outstanding. However in no other situation are IDPs able to enjoy the full range of their rights, without suffering discrimination resulting from their displacement.

## Return and other durable solutions

In addition to the estimated 2.7 million IDPs who were able to return to their homes in 2007, an unknown number of displaced people decided to permanently settle and integrate elsewhere, either because return was not possible or because they chose not to go back. These processes are generally not well documented, and therefore little is known about numbers, conditions in return and resettlement areas and the level of progress made in finding durable solutions.

### IDPs at serious risk

It is difficult to compare the severity of IDPs' situations in different countries, considering the diversity of the threats to their safety and wellbeing. For example, most or all IDPs faced recurrent serious risks to their physical security and integrity in Chad, Kenya, and Uganda (Karamoja), while most of those in Colombia, Ethiopia (Somali and Oromiya), Indonesia (West Papua) and Zimbabwe endured recurring obstacles in accessing the basic necessities of life.

However, in seven situations (listed in alphabetical order), most or all IDPs faced recurrent and serious security *and* humanitarian risks:

- Central African Republic
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Ethiopia (Gambella)
- Iraq
- Pakistan
- Somalia
- Sudan (Darfur)

The estimates compiled by IDMC suggest that return was not on the agenda in many countries, or was insignificant given the scale of the displacement crisis. Large-scale return movements did take place in 2007, but mostly in situations where IDPs returned soon after their displacement, as in Pakistan, the Philippines, and in parts of DRC. Return figures were generally lower in more protracted IDP situations, with the notable exception of southern Sudan, with some 260,000 returns, and northern Uganda, where increased confidence in the peace talks between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group led some 200,000 people to go back to their home areas during 2007. A large number of long-term Congolese IDPs are also thought to have gone back during the year, in Katanga and eastern DRC. Altogether the return figure for DRC may have been as high as one million (including multiple returns by IDPs who had to flee several times). Tens of thousands of IDPs also returned or resettled in countries such as Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Lebanon, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Successful return and reintegration hinges on a multitude of factors, including a favourable security sit-



A displaced family begging on a street corner after arriving in Bogotá, Colombia, December 2007.  
 Photo: Reuters, courtesy [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)

uation, absence of discrimination, access to protection mechanisms, documentation, property restitution, livelihood opportunities and possibilities for family reunification and participation in public affairs<sup>6</sup>. Measured against these indicators, the worst conditions for return prevailed in Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia (Gambella and Somali-Oromiya), Iraq, Kenya, Myanmar (Burma), Somalia and Zimbabwe. Consequently, no or very little return was recorded in these countries during 2007.

In a number of other countries return was blocked by political realities, as return areas remained under the de facto control of secessionist authorities, as was the case for example in Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), or under occupation by neighbouring countries, as

in Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh) or Syria (Israeli-occupied Golan Heights). In some countries, IDPs were forced to return by their governments despite concerns that they might face threats to their physical security. In Sri Lanka, IDPs reported during the early stages of a return programme launched by the government in March 2007 that they faced coercion to go back, either in the form of physical force, or through threats to have food supplies cut off and the provision of security denied<sup>7</sup>.

On the positive side, a number of governments have succeeded over the past years in creating more favourable return conditions, for example in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eritrea, Ethiopia (Tigray), Indonesia, Lebanon, Liberia, Senegal and Timor-Leste. In Angola, the return and integration process had reached a point where former IDPs generally no longer appeared to face difficulties linked to their displacement<sup>8</sup>.

### IDP return

Countries with the highest number of returning IDPs (estimated numbers in 2007):

- DRC (1,100,000\*)
- Pakistan (400,000\*)
- Sudan (260,000)
- Uganda (200,000)

\*information limited on short-term and multiple displacements

### National responses

National governments have the primary responsibility to protect and assist IDPs under their jurisdiction. In the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document, heads of state and government explicitly accepted their responsibility to protect their populations from

genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and resolved to “take effective measures to increase the protection of internally displaced persons”<sup>9</sup>. They also recognised the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as an important international framework for the protection of IDPs. During 2007, more states including Nepal and Georgia incorporated the Guiding Principles into national IDP legislation and policies.

The National Responsibility Framework for Situations of Internal Displacement, developed by the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, spells out the measures that need to be taken by national authorities to discharge their responsibilities towards IDPs<sup>10</sup>. It highlights important steps such as preventing new displacement and minimising its adverse affects, raising national awareness of the problem, collecting data on the number and conditions of IDPs, and supporting training on their rights.

### Response of governments to IDPs

IDPs were least likely to receive support from their governments in these countries (listed in alphabetical order):

- Bangladesh
- Israel (as occupying power in the Palestinian Territory)
- Myanmar (Burma)
- Pakistan
- Somalia
- Sudan
- Zimbabwe

In contrast, the governments of the following countries made fairly consistent efforts to improve the IDP situation and support the rights of their displaced populations:

- Azerbaijan
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Côte d’Ivoire
- Croatia
- Georgia
- Lebanon
- Liberia
- Turkey
- Uganda

The Framework also underlines the importance of developing legal frameworks and policies, designating an institutional focal point within government, encouraging national human rights institutions to work on IDP issues, ensuring the participation of IDPs in decision-making, supporting durable solutions, allocating adequate resources, and cooperating with the international community when national capacity is insufficient. Other important measures include the provision of assistance and protection, and ensuring IDPs’ access to the rights they are entitled to.

Using these elements as indicators to assess government responses to situations of internal displacement, it becomes clear that a number of governments chose not to meet their responsibilities towards IDPs, although their respective capacities varied. In Myanmar (Burma) and Sudan, the policies of government had the most severe impact on IDPs in 2007, followed by Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Israel (as occupying power in the Palestinian Territory), while the absence of government support had a terrible impact on Somalia’s one million IDPs. The governments of Rwanda, Mexico, CAR, Ethiopia and India also failed to address the IDP situations in their countries.

A number of governments demonstrated genuine political will to address internal displacement in their countries in line with their international commitments during 2007, for example promoting returns (as in Côte d’Ivoire), resettlement (in Azerbaijan) or compensation (Turkey). However their efforts were not always consistent, nor were they necessarily successful due to limitations in terms of resources or access.

### International responses

With governments in many countries unwilling or unable to assume their responsibility to protect their conflict-related IDPs, the international community has increasingly become involved in responding to the challenges of internal displacement. In some of the countries worst affected by conflict, such as DRC and Somalia, the collapse of state structures has led to the international community taking on the role of surrogate provider of vital state functions, including the provision of assistance and protection to IDPs. In other countries, including India, Algeria,

### The impact of humanitarian reform for IDPs

The ongoing humanitarian reform process – launched primarily in reaction to the international community's failure to address serious protection gaps in Darfur and elsewhere – continued to transform international response mechanisms during 2007. The process helped to bring concerns related to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of IDPs to the fore, and resulted in an increase in response capacity. The key elements of the reform process – improving humanitarian financing, strengthening the humanitarian coordinator system, introducing predictability and accountability through the designation of lead agencies for specific “clusters”, and developing more effective partnerships between UN and non-UN humanitarian actors – all had an impact on the international IDP response.

Clusters are activated in major emergencies requiring a multi-sectoral response, caused by conflict, violence or disasters. Perhaps the most important early outcome of the process for conflict-induced IDPs was the evolution of the UN refugee organisation UNHCR into the global agency with lead responsibility for their protection. While this process has not led UNHCR to take on responsibility for all IDPs worldwide, the agency's new approach, outlined in two major policy and strategy papers issued in 2007<sup>11</sup>, was a marked departure from previous practice. Despite some resistance among UN member states and also from within the organisation, UNHCR made significant efforts to take on its new role during 2007, establishing internal structures dedicated to IDP issues, bolstering field presence in several major IDP crises, and redirecting some country programmes<sup>12</sup>. Termed in a recent evaluation as “perhaps the most dramatic example” of the success of the cluster approach in improving operational capacities<sup>13</sup>, UNHCR's new approach also contributed to inter-agency policy development and standard-setting initiatives, such as the development of the IDP Protection Handbook and the Guidance on Profiling Internally Displaced Persons which provided urgently-needed guidance for field staff.

Nonetheless, the international response to the global crisis of internal displacement again failed to meet the massive needs of the affected populations. The cluster approach received a cautiously

positive overall assessment for generating “some systemic improvement in coordinated humanitarian response”<sup>14</sup>. But the humanitarian system as a whole still suffered from a number of serious weaknesses which affected the IDP response. These included the continued lack of accountability within the system, the failure of many resident/humanitarian coordinators to assume their responsibilities towards IDPs, conflicts between the humanitarian and political agendas in integrated UN operations, the challenge of deploying experienced staff quickly, and the involvement of national NGOs in cluster activities.

Did IDPs and other communities affected by conflict or violence actually benefit from the reforms? A series of real-time evaluations carried out by UNHCR in 2007 came to the sobering conclusion that the humanitarian effort generally still fell short of what was needed to ensure that basic standards were met<sup>15</sup>. It was expected that a more comprehensive external evaluation, to be published in 2008, would shed more light on the actual impact of the cluster approach on affected populations.

Another concern was the limited scope of the cluster approach, which, by the end of the year, was activated in only ten countries affected by conflict-induced displacement (CAR, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Liberia, Lebanon, Somalia and Uganda). These countries hosted nine of the 26 million IDPs worldwide. It is expected that the cluster approach will be applied to a maximum of around 20 countries considered by the UN as conflict-related humanitarian emergencies. Although the cluster approach has made a considerable contribution to an improved international response to the protection and assistance needs of IDPs worldwide, non-emergency situations, in particular protracted displacement crises, remain beyond its scope. Also, limited field capacity and confusion over lead roles, in particular of UNHCR, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNICEF in the protection cluster, compromised the consistent implementation of the approach in emergencies caused by generalised violence (for example in Uganda's Karamoja district) or disaster (as in Zimbabwe) rather than armed conflict.

Pakistan, Rwanda and Zimbabwe, governments have severely restricted international involvement, insisting on the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference.

Despite the resistance of some governments, the notion of sovereignty as responsibility, developed by the former UN Representative on IDPs Francis Deng, has gained ground in the past years<sup>16</sup>. Governments have increasingly accepted the idea that their claims to territorial sovereignty are tied to their responsibility to protect populations under their jurisdiction. The 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document recognised the responsibility of the international community to intervene through peaceful or (where necessary and in accordance with the UN Charter) military means in cases where governments manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity<sup>17</sup>.

Although the concrete application of this responsibility to protect remained controversial in 2007, some progress was made in strengthening the international protection regime for IDPs and other conflict-affected civilians. The UN Security Council set out a framework for action in Resolution 1674 (2006), and increasingly mandated peacekeeping operations to undertake activities in support of the protection of civilians. In 2007, this included the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the UN missions in CAR and Chad<sup>18</sup>. There were also plans to establish a Security Council working group on the protection of civilians to ensure that protection-related concerns are more systematically taken into account in the Council's deliberations and

decisions. However, as illustrated by the drawn-out negotiations over the deployment of an effective international peacekeeping presence in Darfur, the divisions in the Security Council remained. This limited the ability of the international community to act decisively to prevent displacement and respond to acute protection crises. Such deadlocks were a major factor in the international community's failure to end conflicts and better protect civilians from violence and displacement.

While addressing the needs of IDPs in humanitarian emergency situations must remain a primary focus of the international community, more needs to be done at the political level to prevent conflict and find lasting solutions through sustainable peace processes, for example by including IDP representatives in peace negotiations<sup>19</sup>. Conflict prevention and conflict resolution remain the most important factors in avoiding new violence-induced displacement and enabling those already displaced to return or find other durable solutions. Another continuing challenge is to sensitise international development agencies and financial institutions to the problem of internal displacement. This is essential to address more effectively the many protracted situations in which lack of infrastructure and livelihood prospects delay the process of reintegration for millions of IDPs. In the long run, progress towards development goals such as the eradication of poverty and the strengthening of good governance and the rule of law is also crucial for addressing the root causes of conflict, and thus preventing new displacement in the future.

The UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Darfur meets IDP representatives in January 2007 at the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) compound in El Fasher, North Darfur, Sudan.  
*Photo: UN Photo/Fred Noy*



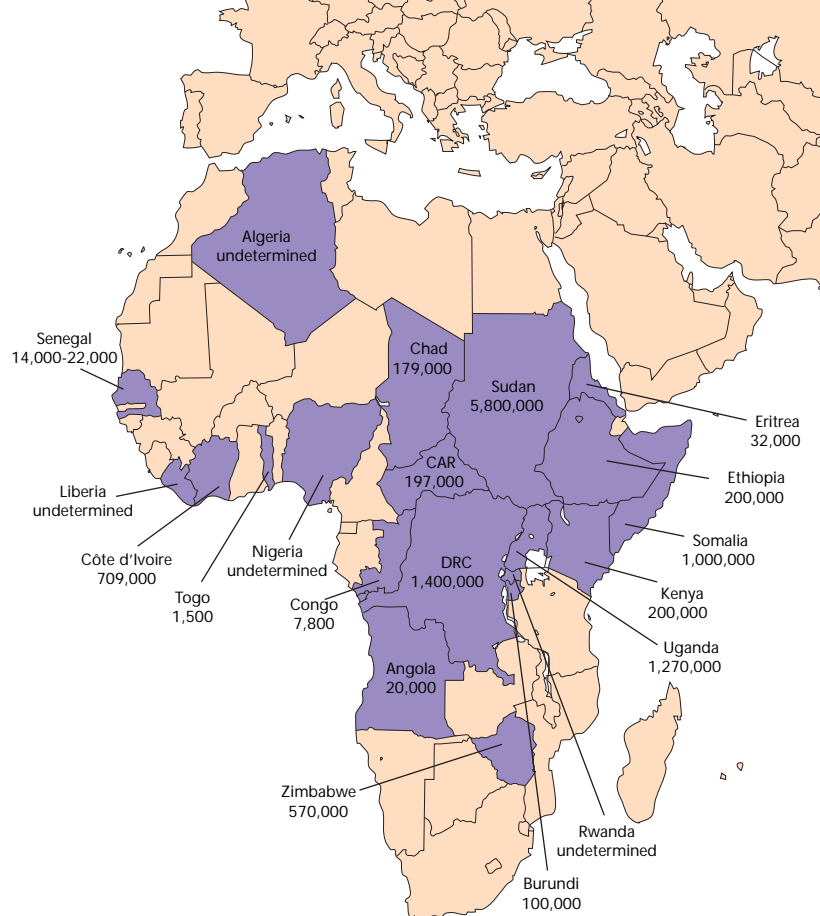


**Extremes of vulnerability  
and deprivation**

## Internal Displacement in Africa

In 2007, close to half of the people displaced worldwide by conflict were in Africa, spread across 20 countries. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and Sudan were among the five countries with most new displacements, while DRC, Somalia and Uganda each hosted a million or more IDPs by the end of the year. 5.8 million were forcibly displaced within Sudan's borders, in southern Sudan, Darfur and the capital Khartoum. Most IDPs were in Sub-Saharan Africa, where nine high-intensity violent conflicts were ongoing as governments and non-state actors battled for national, regional or local power and resources<sup>20</sup>. In many areas, absence of state structures and pervasive lawlessness combined to expose IDPs, and particularly women and children among them, to extremes of violence and abuse.

Nonetheless, a number of countries with large displaced populations witnessed a year of peace following earlier conflict, and the long-term prospects of durable solutions for IDPs in Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and other countries improved. The millions of people displaced by Angola's long civil war could by 2007 be finally considered as "former IDPs" who shared the same recovery challenges as the rest of the population. However, the examples of all these countries showed that across Africa, national contexts of poverty, adverse climate and scarcity of resources, political instability and weak governance and justice systems make the



end of displacement and the rebuilding of IDPs lives an enormous challenge for affected individuals and for those responsible for their protection and assistance.

The international community continued and in some areas intensified efforts to address displacement caused by conflict and violence across the region. Nonetheless, hundreds of thousands of people in several countries were displaced for the first time during 2007, and there were no significant improvements in the situations of millions more who were already victims of internal displacement.

### Developments in internal displacement

At the end of 2007, there were around 12.7 million IDPs in Africa, close to half of the people forcibly displaced worldwide. During the year, 1.6 million people were newly displaced across the continent, the highest number in any of the regions discussed in this report, as new or continuing armed conflicts and generalised violence caused displacement in 13 countries.

#### Situations with new displacement

Somalia had the largest number of newly displaced people, with around 600,000 people forced to flee during 2007 (including 200,000 in November alone) as the Transitional Federal Government and its Ethiopian allies and the insurgents of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) battled for power in Mogadishu. Following sustained bombardment and street battles, the number displaced from the city and other areas of Somalia rose to one million people.

Sudan had the largest IDP population in the world, with 5.8 million people forcibly displaced within its borders. In Sudan's Darfur region, over 280,000 people fled the fighting during 2007 as the security situa-

◀ A displaced woman in an IDP camp near Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, October 2007. Photo: © Nicolas Postal





Children receive donated food at Sheikh Omar IDP camp in Jowhar, Somalia, September 2007.  
*Photo: Manoocher Deghati, IRIN*

tion continued to deteriorate. 2007 ended with continuing clashes between Sudanese Armed Forces and armed rebel groups including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and escalating tension between the governments of Sudan and Chad. The conflict had over five years forced over two million people to seek refuge in camps within Darfur, while a further quarter of a million had fled over the border into Chad. The huge IDP camps in Darfur were increasingly overcrowded and insecure, and humanitarian access remained severely limited; during 2007, IDPs were in some cases forced to flee camps for their own safety and on occasion forcibly relocated by government forces. The year ended with the handover of peacekeeping authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to the "hybrid" United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

In Chad, the number of IDPs increased from 100,000 at the end of 2006 to nearly 180,000 a year later. Intensive fighting between the army and a number of rebel groups continued through the year, while cross-border raids by Sudanese militias, and spiralling inter-communal violence all contributed to the increasing insecurity and forced more civilians to abandon their villages.

In Ethiopia's Somali Region, conflict between the government and the Ogaden National Liberation Front forced an unknown number of people to flee their homes. Elsewhere in the country, in Gambella, Oromiya, SNNPR and Tigray Regions, it is believed that at least 200,000 conflict-related IDPs were living in camps and informal settlements.

Other countries which already had displaced populations saw continuing smaller-scale violence which led their number to increase. In Burundi, some 100,000 people remained in the IDP sites where they had been living for years because of continuing economic insecurity and violence in their areas of origin. Meanwhile, a branch of the Front National de Libération (FNL) rebel group continued to launch sporadic attacks around the capital Bujumbura, and an estimated 4,000 people were temporarily displaced in mid-2007, while in October an unknown number of villagers around the capital were displaced during an army offensive. In Zimbabwe, new farm invasions and forced evictions in urban areas displaced an unknown number of people, adding to the estimated 570,000 people displaced by forced evictions in 2005 and the hundreds of thousands who lost their homes as a result of the fast-track land reform programme which started in 2000.

Kenya and Nigeria experienced political and inter-communal violence, notably related to elections, in 2007. The year ended with the displacement of around 100,000 people in Kenya in the immediate aftermath of the contested outcome of the December presidential election; the figure quickly rose further during the first days of 2008. They joined the estimated 100,000 Kenyan IDPs already living in makeshift settlements, slums and abandoned buildings, and their displacement served as a reminder of the fragility of the ethnic and social balance in what has long been considered one of Africa's most prosperous and stable states.

In Nigeria, the April 2007 general elections were considered as an opportunity to help resolve internal conflicts. However the Nigerian Red Cross reported that localised violence caused the displacement of around 4,500 people. In July, fighting over a protracted land dispute between indigenous groups and settlers in the border area between Benue, Taraba and Cross River States left possibly more than 3,000 people temporarily displaced, while escalating tensions between local communities, national and local governments and oil companies in the Niger Delta region also caused new displacement.

The patterns of displacement of people fleeing human rights abuses or conflict in Africa varied. For example, most IDPs in eastern DRC and in north-central and north-western Central African Republic (CAR) in

2007 had been displaced several times as they sought refuge with host communities, in forests or the bush, or in some case in makeshift settlements, in the face of extreme insecurity and lack of resources or support. In the west of Côte d'Ivoire, local communities witnessed conflicts within and between families, between "autochthonous" (resident) and "non-autochthonous" (migrant) groups, and between different non-autochthonous groups. The villages in the region had well-defined areas for all these groups, including settlements close to plantations which the migrant workers tended to live in. In a form of "chain displacement" entire groups were forced to resettle, thus forcing other groups to flee in turn.

In some situations in which return movements were underway during 2007, including those in DRC, CAR and southern Sudan, there were also new displacements due to localised resummptions of conflict.

Despite improved security in some provinces enabling a million people to return home, the IDP situation in DRC remained among the most severe in the world. In North Kivu Province and to a lesser extent South Kivu, continuing conflict between the army, militias and dissident troops forced perhaps 500,000 people to flee their homes, often repeatedly, throughout the year. As of December 2007, there were around 1.4 million people displaced in the country, compared to 1.1 million in November

Women transport water at Gouroukoun camp, near the town of Goz Beida in eastern Chad, March 2007. Photo: Michael Kamber, Reuters, courtesy [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)





◀ Displaced children in the Central African Republic, February 2007. Over 60,000 people fled into the bush from their villages in the north-west of the country to escape repeated attacks from government forces, armed rebels and bandit groups.

*Photo: Mpako Foaleng, IDMC*

▶ Pabo IDP camp in Amuru District, Uganda, November 2007. At the end of the year over 840,000 people remained in camps in northern Uganda

*Photo: Katinka Ridderbos, IDMC*

2006. Close to Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu, four camps were home to 45,000 IDPs who were living in conditions which the UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator described as "neither normal nor acceptable"<sup>21</sup>.

The improvement of the security situation in north-east CAR encouraged 15,000 people to return home following the April 2007 peace deal between the government and the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) rebel group. However, further to the west, people fled their villages to escape continued attacks by government forces, armed rebels and bandit groups. Some 62,000 people went into hiding in the bush, beyond the reach of essential support.

In southern Sudan, where twenty years of civil war displaced up to four million people until 2005, around 140,000 IDPs returned to their homes in the first six months of 2007, adding to more than one million IDPs who had already returned. However, in contested oil-rich areas near the north-south border line, ongoing violence led to new displacements, and among the long-term IDPs who had returned to the south, some chose to go back to their place of displacement – for many the capital Khartoum – because a lack of infrastructure and conflicts over scarce resources made it impossible to re-establish themselves in their former home areas.

In Senegal's Casamance region, the struggle for territorial control between non-state armed groups and government forces caused new displacements in northern districts near the border with the Gambia.

Nevertheless, the continuous improvement of security in other areas encouraged other displaced groups to progressively return home.

### Protracted displacement and durable solutions

In some post-conflict situations during 2007, hundreds of thousands of displaced people were unable to return home, integrate in their areas of displacement or resettle to another area. After the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and rebel Forces Nouvelles leaders signed the Ouagadougou Peace Accord in March 2007, a number of the 700,000 or so IDPs started to return home; however, in a context described as "no war and no peace", a large majority remained in shanty towns around the capital Abidjan, awaiting the implementation of peaceful elections and the demobilisation of armed groups on which their longer-term security depended. In Cabinda, a strip of Angolan territory bordered by the Republic of the Congo and DRC, fighting between Angolan armed forces and separatist armed groups gave way to political dialogue, but many of the 20,000 displaced people were still afraid to return home.

Various groups needed continued attention and support to find durable solutions to end their protracted displacement. The Regional Office for Central and East Africa of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that there were around two million IDPs in Sudan's capital Khartoum<sup>22</sup>. However, a 2005 International Organization for Migration (IOM) survey found that at least 36 per



cent did not intend to return to their home areas and by 2007 Khartoum was “hosting an estimated one million permanent residents who were previously regarded as temporary”<sup>23</sup>. Nonetheless a large number of them continued to be effectively displaced, including many who had tried unsuccessfully to rebuild lives in the south and others who continued to endure desperate living conditions and few livelihood prospects.

Despite all the difficulties involved, many thousands of displaced people returned during 2007 to their areas of origin, or reintegrated in the areas to which they were displaced, in countries where the political situation stabilised or peace processes held. However, the sustainability of their return was often at risk.

In Uganda, for example, the situation for IDPs progressed during 2007, though rates of return varied greatly between regions. In Acholi-land, only four per cent of IDPs returned home, while in West Nile and Teso regions the number of returnees was much higher. By November 465,000 people who had fled in fear of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) had returned to their villages of origin, but remained in need of protection and assistance to rebuild their lives. Over 840,000 people remained displaced in IDP camps, while nearly 430,000 were in smaller “transit sites” closer to their villages of origin, where the near-total lack of basic support facilities made day-to-day living extremely precarious.

With the return of the remaining registered IDPs in December 2006, the process of resolving Liberia’s internal displacement crisis was considered complete, but international agencies later recognised that some IDPs

remained. According to the July 2007 evaluation by the UN’s refugee agency UNHCR, 7,000 people still considered themselves forcibly displaced, while 16,000 had received a return assistance package but had either failed to return home or had subsequently come back to their place of displacement. Given the reconstruction challenge which Liberia still faced at the end of the year, it was also too early to suggest that other groups displaced by the war had found durable solutions to their displacement. For example, a large number of people who missed the IDP registration process were still living in public buildings in Monrovia in 2007; they had not been able to return home or integrate in the local community, and they had specific continuing support needs.

In Algeria, according to the government, practically all IDPs from earlier internal conflicts had by 2007 returned to their areas of origin. However, as most people displaced in previous years had found refuge with family and friends or in the shanty towns of nearby cities, and in the absence of monitoring by national authorities or international organisations, it remained impossible to assess the number who remained displaced with any accuracy.

In Angola, internal displacement had ended by 2007, and four million former IDPs faced no discrimination; nonetheless they shared the enormous challenges facing the majority of the population. The process of their return or local integration had often not met national and international standards, for example in terms of informed consent to return. Most were living in slums on the edges of large cities; they were generally without

relevant skills or employment; many of their children remained outside the education system; but in a national context of post-conflict reconstruction, they were widely considered to be no longer displaced. The four million or more people who had been displaced by Angola's civil war – whether returned or not – generally had no specific needs beyond those of the non-displaced population, although the manner in which returns and local integrations were carried out often did not meet national and international procedural standards, for example in terms of people's informed consent to return. Although they faced no particular discrimination in accessing justice and public services, many obstacles to their full recovery remained in 2007. Most were living in slums on the edges of large cities; they were generally without relevant skills or employment; many of their children remained outside the education system; but in a national context of post-conflict reconstruction, they were widely considered to be no longer displaced.

## IDPs' protection needs

### Threats to the physical security and integrity of IDPs

Across Africa in 2007, internally displaced people faced a wide range of threats to their physical security and integrity. IDPs were victims of summary executions, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, forced recruitment, sexual violence and looting of their property. In some countries, the lack of capacity to enforce the rule of law led to this insecurity; in northern Uganda the absence of effective policing enabled violent crime to flourish, while in southern Sudan the lack of institutional capacity to provide services, job opportunities and governance led to violence against IDPs seeking to reclaim the land from which they had been displaced.

However, in several countries, the security of IDPs was threatened more by conflict and by violence commissioned by government forces and armed groups fighting with or against them. Often bandits also took advantage of the insecurity to terrorise IDPs and other vulnerable groups. These actors combined in numerous countries to create extremely violent environments. In CAR, rebels, bandits and government security forces all committed widespread human rights abuses, including rape, kidnapping and robbery. In DRC, the army, allied armed militias and rebel troops were all responsible for widespread human rights abuses in

2007. IDPs, particularly in North and South Kivu, were subjected to killings, sexual violence, abduction, forced recruitment and robbery. In Burundi, IDPs remained subject to violence at the hands of the army as well as civilian gangs, while in Côte d'Ivoire, a wide array of actors, including armed bandits and groups based on ethnic affiliation, pro-government militias and rebel forces, all threatened the security of IDPs.

In countries where conflict was ongoing and in those where it had ended, the continuing presence of landmines and other unexploded ordnance hampered IDPs' freedom of movement. In Chad and in Angola's exclave Cabinda, their presence added to continuing fighting to make free movement impossible for displaced people, while in parts of south-eastern Angola, northern Uganda and on the border between Eritrea and Ethiopia, landmines were reported as one of the main obstacles to IDPs' return home.

Sometimes living in camps added to the insecurity of IDPs. In Chad, combatants of the Toroboro – Sudanese rebel groups and Chadian militias fighting alongside the Chadian army – lived among the displaced population, exposing IDPs to attacks by groups opposed to the government, while in Somalia, insurgent groups operating from IDP camps attracted attacks from the transitional government's forces and allies, leading to the killing and further displacement of IDPs.

Governments and armed groups allied to them were often the main agents of displacement and the main threat to IDPs' physical security. This was the case in Darfur, Ethiopia's Somali region and Cabinda enclave. In Darfur, the Sudanese army and allied militias were responsible for widespread abuses against the displaced population. Despite the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement, and numerous international political and humanitarian initiatives to stop human rights abuses and mitigate the consequences of forced displacement, civilians including IDPs in camps continued to be attacked, killed, raped and robbed by members of the army and Janjaweed militias through 2007.

### Displaced people with specific risks and needs

In numerous countries, including those where the conflict had ended, the realities of displacement impacted some sub-groups of displaced people more harshly and made them more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and deprivation. These sub-groups are heterogeneous and include boys, girls, men and women with specific risks

and needs. They often include people who have lost or become separated from their extended families such as widows, orphans, elderly people and families without a male or adult "head". They can also include people suffering from disease, mental or physical disabilities.

In northern Uganda, vulnerable groups included disabled people, and girls or women who had been abducted by members of the Lord's Resistance Army, and later returned from captivity with children from their LRA "husbands". Similarly, widows without good relations with their in-laws, and formerly abducted children who were not accepted by their family or relatives on their return from captivity, found themselves particularly vulnerable in 2007, even though the threat of violence had receded.

Children suffered in various ways from situations of displacement which led their families to separate or lose livelihoods. In 2007, displaced children were forced into labour or trafficked in some countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, and exploited in illegal "orphanages", as in Liberia (though the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, in coordination with the Child Protection Network, has established a list of over 60 orphanages for closure and

arrangements are being put into place for the placement of children whose parents cannot be traced).

### Violence against displaced women and girls

The impact of displacement on the security and integrity of women and girls was huge. In Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, Somalia, Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya, women bore the brunt of conflicts and violent environments. With the burden of care resting with the mother following the separation of families, women were frequently forced into begging or prostitution, while displaced girls were hired out for child labour or forced into early marriage.

Displaced women and children continued to endure sexual violence, at the hands of opportunists taking advantage of an environment of conflict and lawlessness, or of combatants seeking to shame and break up family units and communities. Fear of sexual violence itself caused displacement as people fled to avoid sexually-motivated attacks. The widespread sexual violence reported in DRC was an extreme but perhaps not a unique example. In DRC, 54,000 victims of sexual violence were identified from 2004 to March 2007, of whom 16 per cent

### Recruitment of displaced children by armed groups

The abduction or recruitment of children as soldiers by armed groups was still common in 2007, and reports of recruitment among displaced populations continued to cause concern. In DRC, many displaced children had been forced into the ranks of armed groups, and thousands of them remained in militias in 2007. According to local and international observers, including the UN Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict, recruitment of child soldiers by militias continued in 2007, and even increased in North Kivu.

In Chad, the army recruited children in IDP sites (IDMC interviews with traditional and religious leaders in Goz Beida, April 2007). Children there were also recruited by ethnic militia groups, or they joined these groups for their own security, particularly if armed men had killed members of their families.

Children without family support were more likely to seek security within armed groups. In CAR, young adolescents were forcibly recruited by all parties to



Displaced children in Ethiopia's Oromiya region, February 2007. Children in IDP settlements across the world are vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups.  
*Photo: Aninia Nadig, IDMC*

the conflict. Many chose to join armed groups for their own security.

The recruitment of IDP children as soldiers was also reported in countries in other regions, for example in Myanmar (Burma), Colombia and Sri Lanka.

were children<sup>24</sup>. Many were raped while displaced by government troops, rebels loyal to General Nkunda or militias: in the first half of 2007, over 2,000 cases of rape were reported in North Kivu and 4,500 in South Kivu. Most rapes took place within IDP sites and camps or on the outskirts of villages in a context of total impunity.

There was also widespread use of rape as an instrument of war in Darfur. The under-resourced African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) remained unable to prevent widespread sexual violence against women displaced into camps and forced to move gradually further to collect firewood.

Human Rights Watch reported in January 2007 on sexual violence in eastern Chad, whether “opportunistic, with attackers attacking women when they are in the fields [or] in the context of broader armed attacks”. Their findings were likely to reflect under-reporting of sexual violence, as survivors are very often ashamed or otherwise unable to come forward to seek help.

In CAR, 12 per cent of women declared that they had survived sexual violence, while well over 15 per

cent of women and girls endured gender-based violence in some conflict-affected areas in the north of the country. In Liberia, returning IDPs remained vulnerable, particularly teenage mothers, children and young girls, and a 2007 survey in displacement-affected Lofa county showed that over 60 per cent of women had been exposed to violence by intimate partners at some point in their lives. While positive steps were taken, with the adoption in December 2005 of new legislation that made rape illegal for the first time, gender-based violence was still rampant, mainly due to a persistent culture of impunity for sexual violence, and a judicial system which remained ineffective.

### Access by IDPs to the basic necessities of life

Despite the responsibility of their government to protect and assist them and the efforts of the international community to provide assistance, millions of IDPs in a



number of African countries lived in desperate conditions in 2007, whether they were relying on host communities, squatting in urban slums or disused public buildings, seeking shelter in camps or smaller IDP sites, or hiding in the bush. They also regularly suffered from reduced access to health care services, while their living conditions presented an increased threat to their health.

### Living conditions of IDPs

Despite traditional resource-sharing systems and the generosity of host communities in sharing meagre resources, IDPs continued to struggle to meet essential survival needs. In eastern Chad, before the intervention of humanitarian organisations, host communities provided shelter and food even though their own resources were very limited. Through 2007, the deteriorating security situation and the increasing number of people displaced drained the resources of host communities until they were no better off than the IDPs. Nonetheless displaced groups, and particularly those

recently displaced, faced particular difficulties in ensuring access to food, water and health care. Similarly, in rural areas of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya and Somalia, resource-sharing networks were strained by conflict and natural disasters affecting both host communities and IDPs, with the latter group almost always worse off in terms of access to basic services.

Those who were forced to flee further afield were often cut off from resource-sharing systems, and one of the first and most intractable difficulties facing IDPs cut off from host communities was to find adequate shelter. At the end of 2007, most of Somalia's IDPs were living in congested settlements (where they often had to pay significant rent for ragged shelters) with no access to clean water, sanitation facilities or social services, and subject to disease and frequent arson attacks.

In Rwanda, most IDPs were still living in inadequate housing in 2007 and many relied on plastic sheeting for shelter a decade after being displaced. In Zimbabwe, few of the people who were forcibly evicted in 2005 had

◀ A displaced family returning to Mogadishu, Somalia, May 2007. Intense fighting in Mogadishu forced some people to flee several times during the year.  
*Photo: Aweys Osman, IRIN*

▶ Distribution of government supplies to IDPs in Gassiré IDP site in eastern Chad, May 2007  
*Photo: Mpako Foaleng, IDMC*







Residents of Monrovia, Liberia salvage whatever they can after government bulldozers demolished buildings as part of a clean-up campaign in March 2007. They built the illegal structures after their previous homes were destroyed in the country's conflict.

*Photo: Eric Kanalstein, UN Photo*

found a permanent place to live. Many continued to live with relatives or friends in overcrowded conditions, or in makeshift structures made of plastic and bits of wood and corrugated iron, while others were still living in the open without any shelter. Only a small number of the low-cost houses and business units promised by the government were actually built by 2007, with those few that were built reportedly allocated on the basis of political connections rather than need.

People often took refuge in public buildings and spaces, where they often went on to face eviction. In Kenya, many IDPs fled into churches, school compounds and temporary camps on city showgrounds. In Somalia, the government evicted thousands of long-term IDPs from the public buildings they had settled in. In post-conflict Liberia, an unknown number of displaced people in Monrovia were still squatting in miserable conditions in public buildings with no sanitation facilities and little or no water supply. However, these living conditions were often shared by non-IDPs in the shattered country.

In other countries where there was hope of a foreseeable end to displacement, the challenges facing IDPs seeking to improve their living conditions remained formidable. In Uganda, IDPs continued to live in densely populated camps or were moved into transit sites or "decongestion camps", which may have been less crowded but were seldom less unhygienic: in the camps there were on average 20 to 45 people per latrine (the SPHERE Project standard is 20), but in the transit sites there were 60 or more people for every latrine. Access to water in most of the IDP camps met the minimum

standard of 15 litres per person per day defined in the SPHERE handbook, but in the return sites it was as little as nine litres per person. IDPs and returnees in peaceful areas of DRC lacked access to seeds, tools, clothes and straw to build houses and livelihoods. In Côte d'Ivoire, basic social services were inadequate or non-existent for both returnees and non-displaced people in the north and west of the country, while in and around Abidjan, as many as 500,000 IDPs continued in 2007 to endure abject living conditions with host families in shanty towns which sprang up during the war, with an average of ten people sharing each room<sup>25</sup>.

#### Access to food

IDPs in conflict areas faced serious difficulties in accessing food and ensuring food security. In a number of countries, insecurity impeding the access of humanitarian agencies further impaired their access to food assistance and other services.

For instance in Darfur, the UN estimated in May 2007 that 566,000 of the 4.1 million conflict-affected people were beyond the reach of humanitarian assistance. Consequently, malnutrition among IDPs passed emergency levels of global acute malnutrition and in 2007 child malnutrition rates reached emergency levels for the first time in three years<sup>26</sup>. Access for humanitarian organisations worsened during 2007, until up to one million IDPs were out of reach of urgently needed assistance. In Somalia, a survey carried out in November 2007 among the IDP populations in Afgoye and Merca showed critical levels of malnutrition, in a region where 15 per cent of children under five al-

ready faced a high risk of starvation. In Côte d'Ivoire malnutrition rates remained high, especially in land-locked areas and where roadblocks and checkpoints prevented free movement.

In many countries, continuing conflicts, looting, destruction of houses and food reserves, insecurity, and natural disaster led to a dramatic decrease in agricultural production in rural areas where most IDPs reside. In CAR, where many rural households lost their seed and food stocks, agricultural tools and animals, the World Food Programme's emergency food needs assessments in 2007 found a high level of chronic malnutrition in rural areas with many people eating no more than one meal a day<sup>27</sup>. In the north-west, continuous fighting prevented IDPs from accessing their crops, and many had to resort to eating wild leaves and roots. Malnutrition rates also rose in DRC's North Kivu in 2007 as IDPs could not access their fields due to ongoing fighting and so missed planting and harvesting seasons.

In Zimbabwe, national food shortages hit IDPs particularly hard, and the political conditioning of food aid in the country meant that some IDPs did not benefit from food distributions. IDPs in Uganda continued to depend on food distributions. Because of the floods in August 2007, many returnees who

had started to farm their own land lost their harvest, while some camps became inaccessible to food distribution convoys, and there were reports of people dying of starvation as convoys were delayed by a month or more.

#### Access to health care

IDPs across the continent struggled to access basic health care services during 2007, while living conditions in displacement presented an added risk to their health. As a result displaced people were more vulnerable to treatable and preventable infectious diseases including cholera, measles and bubonic plague. Diarrhoea remained a frequent killer of children and elderly people in crowded camps without adequate sanitation. Poor nutrition and a lack of disease control and immunisation coverage contributed to worsening health outcomes: in Côte d'Ivoire there was a reported increase in infant mortality rates to 690 deaths for every 100,000 live births; and in the Republic of the Congo, while the overall situation for IDPs improved, areas of displacement still showed medical needs indicative of a chronic health crisis<sup>28</sup>.

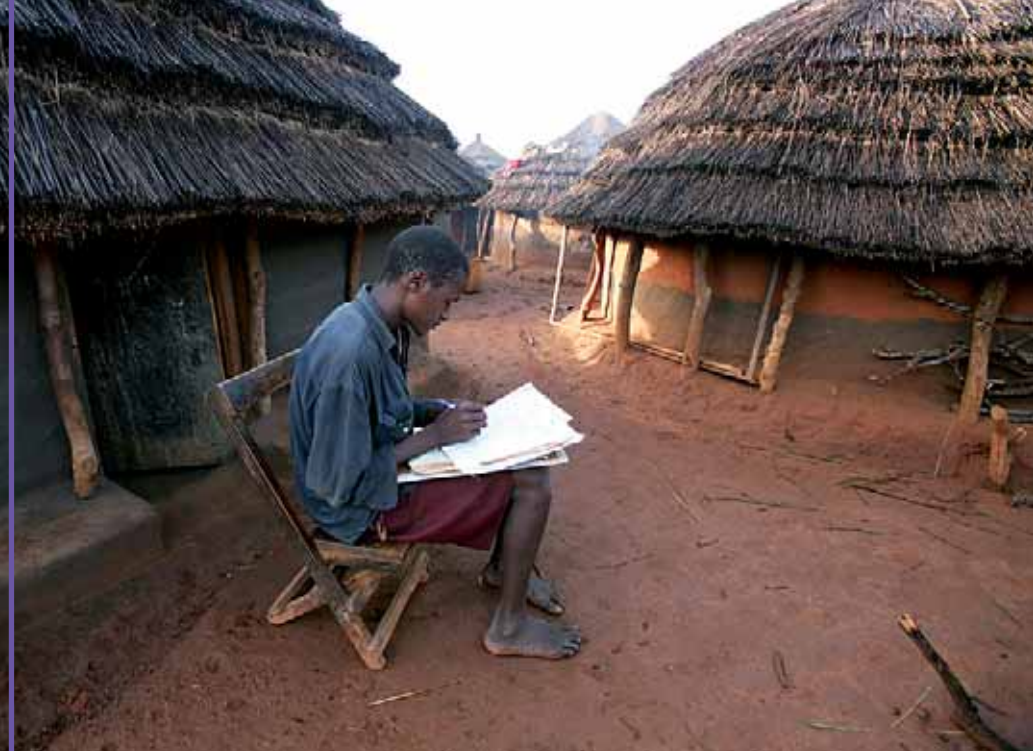
Displaced people were also increasingly exposed to HIV infection, as they often lacked the means to

Vaccination in a IDP camp, North Darfur. During 2007 health care services for IDPs in Darfur were increasingly affected by access restrictions on humanitarian organisations.

*Photo: Diego Fernandez Gabaldon*



A young boy studies in front of his hut in Oromi IDP camp, northern Uganda, May 2007.  
Photo: Manoocher Deghati, IRIN



protect themselves and get information about its transmission, and due to the rise in sexual violence against them, as for example in DRC and in CAR where HIV/AIDS prevalence was among the highest in central Africa. Displacement also made access to treatment more difficult. In Zimbabwe, an estimated 79,500 people with HIV/AIDS were displaced by the government's 2005 eviction campaign<sup>29</sup>, and many could no longer access anti-retroviral treatment.

The lack of comprehensive maternal health programmes threatened the health of mothers and babies. In CAR the maternal mortality remains one of the highest in Africa. In Liberia's Lofa County, a 2007 reproductive health survey showed that people who had been displaced and returned home were at high risk of reproductive health problems due to low use of contraceptives, lack of skilled medical professionals to assist with delivery and high rates of physical and sexual violence, particularly domestic violence. In Somalia, Ethiopia, and northern areas of Kenya, the absence of basic social services and health personnel in most IDP sites put women's health at particular risk. A number of reports described pregnant mothers losing unborn babies due to their own malnutrition.

In return situations where the rebuilding of health care systems progressed, returnees' health levels continued to show the impact of their displacement. In Uganda's areas of return, the erratic supply of drugs including ARV and anti-malarials was compounded by low staffing levels in health centres.

## Accessing economic, social, cultural, and civil rights

### Coping mechanisms and livelihoods

In many cases IDPs were absolutely dependent on humanitarian assistance, such as in Darfur and some areas in eastern Chad where there were barely any employment opportunities in camps or sites. In other situations, displaced people tended to rely, on farming and small trading activities for their survival and livelihoods.

To avoid destitution, IDPs deprived of access to their own land accepted what work they could get, including small trade or labouring on the farms of others. In DRC, the only source of revenue for most people displaced in 2007 was daily labour and small trading. In Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya, displaced women and children worked as domestic servants. Some young boys engaged in shoe shining or were employed to look after livestock, and some women ran small businesses selling tea or small quantities of essential commodities like sugar, rice and kerosene, or illicit alcohol. Men were either employed to work on farms as daily labourers, or in a sharing arrangement whereby they were paid for their labour with animal products. In Somalia's Puntland, it was common to see IDP women collecting household rubbish for disposal at a small fee, or selling charcoal and firewood as a coping strategy.

In Côte d'Ivoire, a 2005 survey by the United Nations Population Fund showed that while some IDPs engaged in small trade activities and others in agriculture, IDPs

were twice as likely to be unemployed as their local hosts. In Uganda, the growing number of IDPs who had access to their land survived by subsistence farming in addition to humanitarian assistance, while others earned a little income by working other people's land or from food-for-work programmes. In Burundi, those IDPs who found refuge close to their fields continued to work their land, but others had to find someone they trusted to work their land, and many risked having their land occupied by strangers.

In many cases, IDPs faced discrimination in accessing work opportunities. While comparatively well-off host families in DRC used IDPs as a cheap source of labour, poorer ones were in direct competition with IDPs for work. In Sudan's capital Khartoum, IDPs faced violence as they were considered to undercut non-displaced labourers. In Somalia and Ethiopia, access to formal employment in a given area depended on ethnicity. Employment in the informal sector was more flexible, but IDPs were often exploited for lower wages.

### Displaced children's right to education

Displaced children's rights are threatened by the impact of displacement on their families and their chances of an education, already limited in some of the countries discussed here, recede as their vulnerability to exploitation and the imperatives of security and income force them into paid or unpaid work or into the ranks of armed groups. Displaced children across Africa were denied access to education in 2007, because they could not get to schools due to insecurity, because the school buildings had been seriously damaged and there were no teachers, or because the economic factors keeping them away were magnified by their displacement.

The continuing conflicts in CAR, DRC, Darfur and Chad hit education systems which were already weak. In north-west CAR, many children who fled into the bush with their families continued in 2007 to have no access to school. UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and international NGOs supported the implementation of a bush schools programme which reached about 23,000 children out of a targeted population of at least 50,000. However, an estimated 27,000 displaced children and 70,000 children whose families had returned to their villages could not access education.

In eastern Chad and Darfur, the difficulties in accessing food and fuel forced many children to contribute to the family effort, fetching water and firewood or

contributing through paid manual labour. In contrast, school costs including fees, the cost of uniforms and contributions towards volunteer teachers discouraged enrolment and forced children to drop out. In eastern Chad, where communities traditionally moved with the seasons, the school rate was as low as seven per cent. The challenge for humanitarian organisations in 2007 was to create a school system in IDP camps with parents' participation, with the long-term aim of replicating them if communities eventually return to home villages.

In DRC, due to the continuing conflict, most displaced children have been deprived of formal and informal schooling since 1998. Enrolment rate in the first grade of primary school was no higher than 17 per cent in February 2007.

In all the IDP areas in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, where conflict and droughts had eroded households' livelihoods, many families increasingly relied on child labour. In Somalia's Puntland region, 60 per cent of children did not attend school in 2007, and the figure for IDP children was higher. In other areas of Somalia and in Ethiopia, few schools existed in IDPs' areas of origin; in Afar, Somali and Gambella regions of Ethiopia, education facilities were minimal and children normally attended semi-formal Alternative Basic Education schools.

Decisions about their children's education also shaped some IDPs' return and resettlement choices. In Uganda, most of the schools were relocated during the war, and reopened to some extent in IDP camps. Parents moving back to transit sites or to their land frequently decided in 2007 to leave their children behind in the camps to stay in school. Children were left on their own, vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. There was, however, hope that the 2008 school year would see more schools opening in return communities and more children rejoining their parents.

### Access to justice and resolution of property disputes

In many countries the rule of law was feeble and conflict had further caused justice systems to break down, impunity for crimes was widespread, and IDPs (and possibly also non-displaced people) were simply denied access to justice. In Somalia, formal justice institutions proved ineffective in prosecuting individuals responsible for crimes against IDPs. In early 2007, displaced people died when a camp was burnt down

in Galkayo; in this case and several others involving alleged rapes, the presumed perpetrators were not tried despite efforts by UNHCR and NGOs to have the case brought to justice. However, in cases where Islamic and traditional institutions were considered to have jurisdiction, the law was more regularly applied as issues became communal rather than individual.

Across Africa IDPs sought to assert their rights of ownership of homes and land, which were often denied both during their displacement and on their return to areas of origin. Many former IDPs in Liberia who settled close to former camps had no security of tenure in their new places of residence. Similarly, in Khartoum, urban IDPs had no secure tenure, in spite of the long periods that they had occupied property. In Zimbabwe, people evicted in 2005 received no restitution or compensation, and even the few people who benefited from new building schemes had no security of tenure. On a more positive note, the government of Côte d'Ivoire started a land registration exercise to collect people's requests for restitution and compensation for damages to property, but no law had been passed by the end of the year to guide this process.

In the west of Côte d'Ivoire, where complex patterns of local displacement prevailed, village committees for peace and reconciliation were created in many villages to facilitate people's peaceful return to their original homes.

In Ethiopia, local authorities donated land for IDPs, but it was typically far from urban areas and offered few livelihood opportunities. In Kenya, land rights were highly contested and managed through local authorities. In both countries, political patronage – enjoyed by few IDPs – was essential.

In some countries, such as Liberia, property disputes arose between members of different ethnic groups in areas of return, where properties had been occupied and there were no valid ownership documents. One of the most significant causes of communal violence in Nigeria was the entrenched division throughout the country between people considered indigenous to an area, and those regarded as settlers who were frequently prevented from owning land or businesses, and accessing jobs or education.

In Darfur, the Sudanese government invited Arab tribes from Chad to settle on land formerly occupied



## Experiences of return processes

by displaced Darfurians, so that these IDPs would have no land to return to. In southern Sudan, access to land and its ownership became increasingly fraught as the number of returnees increased. In some areas, there were conflicts over land between returnees and receiving communities. In Uganda, apart from disputes between people who are returning to their land, there was increasing tension between IDPs and the owners of the land on which IDP camps are situated, who had not received any compensation for the use of their land, and in some cases started trying to evict camp residents. As more IDPs in Uganda sought to recover land from which they had fled, efforts were made to codify some elements of customary law, though understanding of some customary provisions relating to land ownership had been lost during the long war.

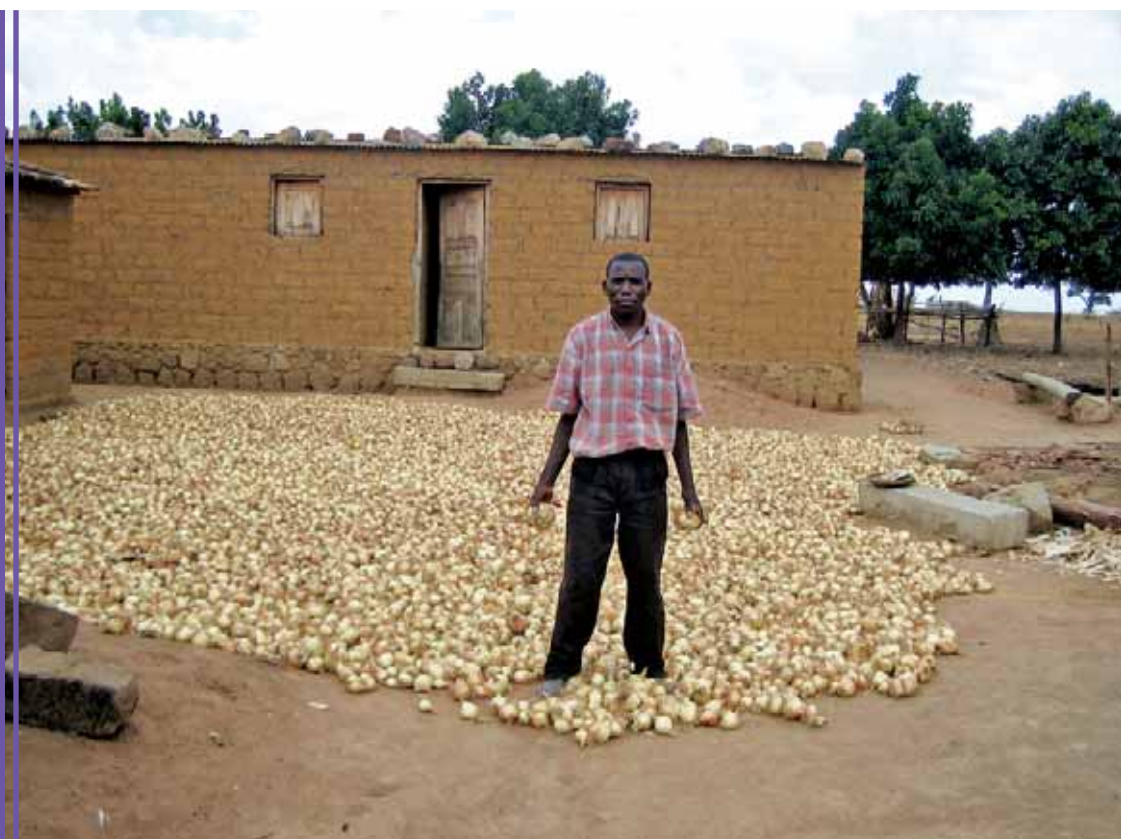
Women often bore the brunt of property disputes. In Uganda for example, returnee widows faced difficulties in reclaiming property: under customary law, widows are entitled to the land of their deceased husbands, but in a significant number of cases the family of the deceased husband denied them access.

In a number of countries, IDPs were able to return home spontaneously following security improvements in 2007; in areas of CAR, Senegal and the Republic of the Congo, IDPs returned to their areas of origin without support. In these and other situations, the extent to which returns led to a durable solution to their displacement depended largely on how the process was handled.

In Liberia, despite the continued decrease in the number of IDPs, the timing of returns was criticised, as they took place during the rainy season in the middle of the school year. Few IDPs received the support given to returning refugees, who reportedly benefited from better transportation assistance and return packages. Most of the people interviewed for the Jesuit Refugee Service's assessment of the refugee return process said that they had headed home voluntarily after being well informed by the UN of the situation in their communities of origin. However IDPs generally received more information through the media, friends or "go and see" visits which they had paid for themselves.

◀ A returnee woman and her baby in Khartoum peep through the window of a bus taking them back to their home of origin in Southern Kordofan State, Sudan, May 2007.  
*Photo John Nyaga, IRIN*

▶ A former IDP who has returned to his home in Huambo Province, Angola, shows off his harvest of onions, October 2007.  
*Photo: Mpako Foaleng, IDMC*





Arms being destroyed during a ceremony in Bouake, Côte d'Ivoire, to signify the beginning of the country's disarmament and reconciliation process in July 2007. Despite the new peace, most people forced from their homes by the country's four-year civil war remained away from their areas of origin.  
*Photo: Basile Zoma, UN Photo*

The return of IDPs in northern Uganda was mostly voluntary, apart from those cases where there was pressure from the owners of land on which IDP camps are located. The lack of information about conditions in return areas often made it difficult for IDPs to make an informed decision about whether and when to go home. However, despite all the difficulties, tens of thousands of IDPs who returned in 2007 began to cultivate their land.

In Côte d'Ivoire most IDPs wished to return and some did so independently. In other cases, humanitarian organisations organised "go-and-see" visits to return areas to help the IDPs make an informed choice. In the west, IDPs were reportedly pressed to leave their places of refuge, and communities in areas of origin were forced to accept the return of the IDPs.

The return of IDPs in DRC was generally spontaneous, and in 2007 more people seemed to benefit from assistance packages than in previous years. From January to June 2007, over 1.1 million IDPs were estimated to have returned to their places of origin, mostly in the east of the country<sup>30</sup>.

In Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, there was no evidence of consultation with IDPs in planning their return, in contrast with Eritrea, where some consultation was reported. In Ethiopia, some areas of return were considered security areas by the government and off-limits to humanitarian organisations. In Khartoum, there was evidence of IDPs being pressured to return to southern Sudan, sometimes through false promises of assistance. Conversely,

there were also cases of IDPs being pressured to stay in Khartoum, mostly by those who benefited from the IDPs as a cheap source of labour. Within southern Sudan, return was mostly voluntary, but IDPs based in the south and in Khartoum often lacked information about the conditions in their areas of origin, and some returnees returned to their places of displacement after having failed to re-establish themselves in their home areas.

Elsewhere there was no opportunity for IDPs to consider returning home. In many countries it was impracticable as areas of origin were still unsafe, whether due to landmines as in Senegal or Angola's Cabinda, or because of the continuing risk of attack. In Burundi, there were no significant return movements in 2007, as IDP camps were considered more secure than areas of origin. Bandits still terrorised populations in areas of origin, and for those from around the capital Bujumbura, sporadic attacks by FNL rebels continued. Similarly, in Chad, Darfur, CAR and Somalia, there was no question of return due to the ongoing conflicts in areas of origin.

In Rwanda, displaced people remained in settlement sites into which they had been relocated by the government in 2000, while in Zimbabwe there was no chance of return for people whose homes had been destroyed in 2005.

In the case of Algeria, it remained difficult to assess the extent to which durable solutions had been found by IDPs in 2007. A number of development projects facilitated their return movements, but delays in housing

projects were regularly reported in newspaper articles. The presence of landmines may have prevented sustainable returns; the government, with UNDP's support, was planning to undertake a landmine impact assessment survey in 2008.

Frequently, areas to which IDPs returned had little public infrastructure following the end of a period of conflict. In southern Sudan, IDPs returned to experience high levels of poverty, and very low levels of service provision and basic infrastructure, which sometimes caused conflicts between returnees and receiving communities, each already stretched and struggling to survive. In DRC and the Republic of the Congo, returning IDPs often found health centres and schools as well as their houses destroyed. Liberia's Lofa County, where many of the country IDPs came from, was almost entirely devastated in the war.

## National and international responses to internal displacement

The scale and severity of internal displacement in Africa continued to merit a very large international presence on the ground. Indeed, significant international efforts were made to improve humanitarian responses and provide better protection to victims of armed conflicts. The cluster approach, one of the four pillars of UN humanitarian reform, was implemented in nine conflict-related emergencies. Seven UN peace-keeping operations were deployed or approved in eight African countries with internal displacement.

However, some governments' policies of obstruction and refusals to acknowledge internal displacement crises prevented initiatives to protect IDPs. In Ethiopia, the government generally refused to recognise the phenomenon of conflict-induced displacement, and instead included in the 2007 Humanitarian Appeal "populations affected by ... localised conflicts". In the absence of a coherent national IDP policy, national and international responses to internal conflict-induced displacement in the country remained unpredictable. Only some conflict-displaced populations, as in Tigray and in Gambella, received any assistance or protection, while many small-scale conflict situations were still unrecognised. In Zimbabwe, where the government referred only to "mobile and vulnerable

populations" (MVPs), the particular vulnerabilities of IDPs were ignored, and humanitarian agencies were in some cases denied access to displaced communities. In Khartoum, the Sudanese government allowed humanitarian agencies only very limited access to the displaced population.

Insecurity on the ground also continued to block the access of humanitarian organisations to internally displaced populations. In Darfur, where 14 UN agencies, some 75 NGOs and the Red Cross/Crescent Movement contributed to the largest humanitarian operation in the world, government forces, militias and rebel groups increasingly threatened and attacked aid workers. As a result, the reach and quality of humanitarian interventions deteriorated, and some organisations were forced to stop operations in 2007. In Darfur and DRC, the level of international commitment to peace-keeping operations proved insufficient to prevent the deterioration of civilians' security.

In Chad, violent hijackings of humanitarian vehicles by militias and rebels became more frequent. Overland humanitarian field visits were increasingly replaced by quick in-and-out air missions. In Somalia, fighting, violence and kidnappings also limited access to IDPs in many areas, with Mogadishu remaining beyond the reach of international aid workers.

In contrast, there were also positive cases of national authorities demonstrating willingness to provide protection to IDPs, as they adopted targeted policies and strategies, and established coordination mechanisms to ensure a more efficient, comprehensive response to internal displacement. Unfortunately, the lack of resources or expertise often limited the effectiveness of these efforts.

In Côte d'Ivoire the government's response to internal displacement was hampered by its lack of experience in tackling humanitarian crises. The government drafted a national strategy document to facilitate the return of IDPs in 2007, but remained silent on the option of voluntary resettlement elsewhere in the country. In mid-2006, the Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims officially took the lead role on IDP issues, while the government set up a number of bodies to coordinate protection and assistance for the country's IDPs, but their lack of resources limited their effectiveness. Indeed, the acute lack of funding for humanitarian programmes was a major constraint, largely as a result of the country's "no war no peace" situation and the perceived lack of



transparency and governance, but also due to difficulties in simultaneously addressing humanitarian and development needs. In Chad the government allocated funds to aid IDPs in a number of sites, but no legislative or institutional framework was put in place to ensure their protection.

Some governments acknowledged their lack of capacity and allowed international humanitarian organisations to provide them with the necessary support. In Kenya, where national authorities had long provided an ad-hoc response to IDPs or “victims of clashes”, the international humanitarian community had open access to the displaced populations in order to alleviate the worse effects of the displacement crisis following the December 2007 elections. The international response to the situation of IDPs in CAR also improved with more international NGOs and UN agencies present in conflict-affected areas. However, the planned deployment of the EU peacekeeping force solely to the north-east of the country represented a

missed opportunity to provide greater protection for the majority of IDPs, who were located in the north-west.

In situations of protracted displacement, national authorities often overlooked the specific needs of IDPs, and made insufficient efforts to involve displaced people in the planning and implementation of durable solutions. This was the case in Burundi, where the government did not focus on IDPs, whose continuing needs remained unevaluated. In Algeria, although the local media raised the problem of violence-induced internal displacement on several occasions, the actual situation of IDPs was still largely unassessed. The displacement situation was rather viewed in the wider contexts of urban migration and rural poverty. While the government encouraged the return of IDPs, it had no comprehensive strategy for them and there was no publicly available survey of their number and location or of their specific needs and intentions regarding return or resettlement. In Angola, where it was

### Regional responses to internal displacement

During 2007 the African Union (AU) was involved in a number of initiatives to address internal displacement, including efforts to draft a “Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa”. Following consultations with selected stakeholders including the UN Secretary-General’s Representative on the Human Rights of IDPs, UNHCR and other UN agencies, ICRC and non-governmental partners, the draft was discussed by member states’ representatives in December. In 2008, member states are expected to produce comments on the draft and to meet again to discuss the scope and provisions of such a Convention.

In 1996, the UN and the AU established the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR) to formulate a framework for the economic and social transformation of the region. In December 2006, the eleven member states of the IC/GLR (Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) signed a Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region. The

“Great Lakes Pact”, which is expected to come into force in 2008, contains several important instruments that aim to guarantee IDPs their rights, including a Protocol on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons, and a Protocol on the Property Rights of Returning Populations.

The three objectives of the IDP Protocol are to establish a legal framework through the adoption and implementation of the UN’s Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in national law, to ensure legal protection of the physical and material needs of IDPs, and to commit member states to prevent and eliminate the root causes of displacement.

The four core objectives of the Property Protocol are to set out core legal principles for the recovery of property by displaced persons, to create a legal basis for resolving disputes relating to property including both judicial and local traditional mechanisms, to guarantee special protection for returning women, children and “communities with special attachment to land in the Great Lakes Region”, and to ensure access to legal remedies for loss or destruction of property by the forcibly displaced.

generally understood that no one remained forcibly displaced following the civil war, national authorities had nevertheless failed to implement consistently international and national standards pertaining to freedom of choice, participation and transitional assistance to returning IDPs. There was also no support provided to the many IDPs who chose to resettle in areas where they had been displaced for many years.

The post-emergency phase was also a critical period where the transition from relief to development left gaps in the protection and assistance of IDPs, and lack of sustained funding often compromised the implementation of durable solutions to internal displacement. With the peace negotiations in Uganda continuing to make faltering progress, the government and the international community were increasingly planning the transition from humanitarian emergency to early recovery and development. In October 2007 the government launched the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP), promising much-needed investment in a region that had long been marginalised. At the same time, however, the implementation of the National IDP Policy of 2004 was still struggling with a continuing lack of funds,

leading to limited assistance packages to returning IDPs and the absence of compensation to landowners on whose land the IDP camps were situated.

Although the implementation of durable solutions remained a fragile process, essential humanitarian services to displaced populations were often ended prematurely, before they had had a chance to become self-reliant. In Liberia, the international response still faced several challenges, despite the fact that the situation was considered to be improving and no Consolidated Appeal Process was launched in 2007. However, funding was still needed to avoid gaps in the provision of much-needed assistance to vulnerable groups, as humanitarian actors began to withdraw or scale down their operations. The reduction in emergency health funding and provision through the year meant a worrying gap in services was looming.

International donors also failed to meet commitments to provide funding during this transitional phase. In Southern Sudan, the international community had pledged about \$4.5 billion in reconstruction assistance in 2005, but much of the promised support had yet to materialise by the end of 2007, with direct implications on the sustainability of solutions for IDPs.



Displaced children in a camp near Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, October 2007.  
Photo: © Nicolas Postal

# Controlling indigenous and rural majorities



## Internal Displacement in the Americas

Latin America's conflicts forced millions of people, mainly indigenous or marginalised rural groups, from their homes over the past five decades. Uprisings in response to extreme structural inequality led to brutal responses by national armies and allied militia groups, causing a massive wave of displacement that peaked in the 1980s and then gradually receded in the first half of the 1990s. By 2007 most of those conflicts had ended, paving the way for the return or resettlement of the uprooted people.

Colombia was in 2007 the only country in the region with a growing internal displacement problem. The second-largest IDP population in the world, after that of Sudan, continued to endure a protection crisis that remained largely unmeasured. In other countries such as Peru, Guatemala and El Salvador, armed conflict ended more than a decade ago. Most of the estimated five million people uprooted over forty years had either returned to their areas of origin, resettled

in new locations, or blended in to the impoverished populations of fast-growing slums around cities. In a number of countries where peace agreements were made, structural and social inequalities persisted and the implementation of provisions to enable durable solutions to displacement crises was poor. It hinged on political will as well as capacity, and both were still broadly lacking in 2007.



### Patterns of conflict and displacement

The conflicts in the Americas primarily affected indigenous populations and the rural masses. Widespread human rights abuses by government forces, paramilitary groups allied to them and rebel groups principally resulted in the forced displacement of rural, indigenous and landless majorities, in contrast to many other regions where marginalised ethnic and religious minorities were more affected. Few IDPs in Latin America ended up in camps, with most being instead forced from rural areas into towns and cities.

Many of the regions' armed groups initially emerged in the 1960s and 1970s from indigenous and other marginalised groups in response to repressive govern-

ment policies perceived as perpetuating the extreme inequality in land distribution. In Colombia, the major armed group FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) grew out of small groups of largely landless peasants. In Guatemala, several minor guerrilla groups emerged from indigenous populations to fight for agrarian reform. In Chiapas, Mexico, the Zapatista armed rebellion had significant popular support as access to land for dispossessed indigenous people was one of its principle objectives.

These real or perceived associations between armed groups and the civilian population led state-sponsored paramilitary groups and national armies to adopt counter-insurgency tactics targeting civilians and combatants alike. The perpetrators, with the covert or open support of state agents, in many cases used extreme violence, carrying out massacres, killings and forced displacement policies aimed at cutting off armed groups from potential civilian support. As a result of these brutal responses, hundreds of thousands of people were killed and millions were forced to flee. In Peru,

◀ An indigenous Guatemalan boy whose family had been able to return to their area of origin, after being displaced by the internal conflict which ended in 1996.  
*Photo: Arild Birkenes, IDMC*

The IDP community of Soacha, outside Bogota, Colombia, November 2007  
Photo: Arild Birkenes, IDMC



indigenous peasant populations, primarily from the departments of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Apurímac and Central Sierra, represented a disproportionate 70 per cent of people displaced by the conflict.

Indigenous people were also disproportionately affected by internal displacement in Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Guatemala. In El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, national armies justified the killing of civilians on the grounds of eliminating insurgents among them. In Guatemala, a National Truth Commission found the army responsible for more than 90 per cent of the human rights violations during the conflict, including the killing of an estimated 200,000 mainly indigenous people and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands more. In Colombia, paramilitaries with close ties to the army have been responsible for the majority of human rights violations and the bulk of forced displacements. IDPs were in 2007 often still branded as guerrilla sympathisers and treated accordingly by host communities, state bodies or paramilitary groups.

### Continuing displacement situations

The ongoing internal armed conflict in Colombia has forced an average of more than 200,000 people from their homes every year for twenty years; in 2007 around 320,000 people were newly displaced. Although the country boasted one of the most advanced bodies of legislation in favour of displaced people, the total number of IDPs reached a staggering four million after climbing steadily since 1985, according to one credible local estimate<sup>31</sup>. The government and UNHCR on

the other hand recognised at least three million IDPs, while only around 2.3 million people had registered as displaced<sup>32</sup>, as they were discouraged by a lack of faith in government institutions and the fear of being branded as guerrilla supporters.

In Chiapas, Mexico, up to 40,000 people were displaced as a result of the “Zapatista” land rights rebellion in 1994, around half of them indigenous farmers supportive of the government. In 1995, the army launched a counter-attack which caused the displacement of up to 20,000 more Zapatista supporters, and at the same time paved the way for the return of displaced supporters of the government. Failure to implement the 1996 peace agreement led to renewed violence in 2007, with paramilitary groups forcibly displacing or evicting indigenous people affiliated with the Zapatista movement<sup>33</sup>. As of November 2007, Zapatista institutions had registered 5,500 IDPs from the 1994 uprising, while at the same time recognising that an unknown number of Zapatista-affiliated indigenous people had more recently been forcibly displaced or unlawfully evicted<sup>34</sup>.

### Protracted displacement after the end of conflict

In Peru, conflict between extreme-left rebel groups and government forces supported by local militias forced between 500,000 and one million people from their homes, mainly towards urban areas, from 1980 to 2000. While perhaps 75 per cent of IDPs had by 2007 returned or settled permanently in areas of displacement, the

### Development and forced displacement

The forced displacement of civilians which was ongoing in 2007 in the Americas resulted less from fighting between armed groups than from actions serving political and economic ends. In Colombia, armed groups have forced millions of civilians from their homes, ostensibly to separate them from armed guerilla members. Yet paramilitary groups have in many cases exploited this strategy to extend their political, economic and territorial control. The links between these armed groups and private companies have been reported by a number of national and international organisations. In December 2007, the Colombian Attorney General's office opened formal investigations against an alliance of African palm companies in Chocó, accusing them of having "commissioned forced displacements" to clear the land to cultivate African palm plantations for biofuel production.

This trend echoes other economically motivated armed evictions which took place in the region during 2007. In Brazil, human rights abuses, including forced evictions and killings of indigenous or tribal people, were in most cases perpetrated by mercenaries hired by mining or logging companies. In Guatemala, indigenous communities struggled to preserve their way of life despite displacements caused by large-scale mining projects.

Resistance to state-sponsored economic projects continued in a number of countries long after the declared end of conflicts. The low-level conflict and displacement in Chiapas, Mexico, triggered in 1994 by the adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the USA and Canada, continued in 2007. NAFTA enforced the privatisation of communal land which was legally owned by large-scale absentee owners but had long been farmed by small-holders whose rights of use were protected by the 1917 Constitution. Contrary to the predicted outcome of more jobs, growing prosperity and competitive advantages, NAFTA is credited with increasing impoverishment of indigenous populations and the animosity between them, by sharply reducing their access to land. It was estimated in 2007 that two million



African palm trees ready for planting in Colombia. In December 2007 the Colombian Attorney General's office accused companies of having commissioned forced displacements to clear the land to grow African palm as a source of biofuel.

*Photo: Arild Birkenes, IDMC*

agricultural jobs had been lost in Mexico since the adoption of NAFTA, causing an exodus of traditional small farmers from rural areas to cities and to the USA.

Across the region, indigenous communities' rights to self-determination and a distinct way of life, enshrined in the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 of 1989 and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, were directly threatened by development projects linked to these free trade objectives. It was feared that another free trade project, Plan Pueblo-Panama, would displace indigenous communities from their land in Mexico and Central American countries. The project involves the construction of highways, harbours, railways, airports and gas pipelines, mainly in rural areas, to integrate the region's infrastructure. In the past similar developments have been associated with killings and forced displacements: in Guatemala brutal state-sponsored massacres and displacements followed resistance by local communities to the internationally-funded construction of the Pueblo Viejo-Quixal Hydroelectric Project (Chixoy Dam) between 1980 and 1982.



◀ A displaced mother and her five children in Tumaco, Colombia, November 2007. The children's father left because he could not support the family. Most displaced families in Tumaco were headed by single women or widows, who depended on each other's support to meet the daily needs of their families.  
*Photo: Refugees International*

▶ A displaced father and daughter shelter from the rain in Choco, Colombia, December 2007.  
*Photo: Arild Birkenes, IDMC*

government had registered only 3,000 of the estimated 150,000 remaining within its process to compensate victims of the conflict. The low number was mainly due to lack of IDP participation and coordination, according to the Ombudsman's Office<sup>35</sup>.

In Guatemala, which experienced one of the most devastating internal armed conflicts on the continent between 1960 and 1996, and where over 200,000 people were killed or disappeared between 1981 and 1983 alone, between 500,000 and 1.5 million people were internally displaced or fled the country<sup>36</sup>. In 2003, the government set up a reparation programme to register and compensate victims of the conflict including IDPs. Yet, four years later, the programme had still failed to establish a list of IDPs eligible for compensation. As a result, there was no updated or reliable number of internally displaced people in Guatemala in 2007.

In Haiti the forced displacement of more than 200,000 people drew significant international attention

in the 1980s. By 2007 most people had returned or settled in areas of displacement. Further political violence in 2004 forced new President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to leave the country, but no survey of the possible resulting displacement had been carried out since and there was little information available as of 2007.

## IDPs' rights and protection needs

### Threats to the physical security and integrity of IDPs

The security of IDPs in Colombia remained under threat four years on from a 2004 Constitutional Court decision ordering the state to provide integral and comprehensive rights-based protection to IDPs. Despite the official demobilisation of the paramilitary groups in 2006, the Organization of American States (OAS) and other in-



## INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE AMERICAS

the Americas, large numbers of the most vulnerable sections of the population were recruited by criminal gangs; while official figures suggested in 2007 that there were some 70,000 gang members in Central America, estimates by NGOs and academics suggested that the number could be as high as 200,000<sup>37</sup>. Violence between gangs, often replicating allegiances and divisions at the national level, has reportedly led in recent years to intra-urban displacements in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Haiti. These were often carried out with impunity, and sometimes with the acquiescence or collaboration of law enforcement personnel.

### **IDPs' access to basic necessities and social services**

Colombia is the only country in the region with an active conflict and an ongoing humanitarian crisis. While millions of people in Latin America suffered in 2007 from chronic poverty and poor access to socio-economic rights, the IDPs in Colombia were particularly hard-hit. Often living in poverty in cities without official registration and identity documents, they faced significant difficulties in accessing social assistance, employment, health care, and education. Their civil and political rights, such as the right to vote, were restricted and their property rights limited.

Loss of work as a result of forced displacement blocked Colombian IDPs' access to food, health care, education and a dignified life. Newly displaced people relied on short-term emergency assistance from the government which was delayed in 80 per cent of the cases and was then generally inadequate to meet their needs. According to a national survey at the end of 2007, displaced children performed systematically worse than other children at school. Loss of income as a consequence of displacement also reduced families' means to buy uniforms and schools materials, which is a frequent reason given by schools for not accepting IDP children.

### **The specific risks and needs of displaced people**

As time passes and economic and social trends have affected displaced and non-displaced groups alike, the characteristics and consequences of internal displacement in the Americas have become increasingly hard to isolate from those of other types of migration related to evictions, economic deprivation and development

stitutions believe many of them continue to operate, forcibly displacing people or preventing IDPs from returning. In the north-western Chocó region, bordering Panama, this demobilisation did not enable the return of displaced people, and in September 2007, two IDP leaders were shot and seriously wounded by members of a supposedly demobilised group. IDPs living in urban areas across the country continued to be victims of "social cleansing" by paramilitary groups, while in rural areas, the presence of armed groups presented daily risks to people moving between areas to go to school, visit a market or a health centre. In 2007, there were frequent reports of armed groups harassing, threatening and killing civilians who had gone to or come from neighbouring areas controlled by other groups.

In Colombia, poor prospects and living conditions made IDP children and adolescents particularly vulnerable to forced recruitment by armed groups, including the army. Increasingly in cities throughout





Children in a remote community in Guatemala where IDPs were resettled several years ago. In 2007, the community continued to contend with infertile land and limited access to markets while struggling to repay home loans.

*Photo: Arild Birkenes, IDMC*

projects – again with Colombia as the main exception. Internal armed conflicts in El Salvador, Peru, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala all ended, but the region's unresolved structural inequalities left them with pervasive poverty, political and social instability and some of the highest rates of homicides and generalised violence in the world. Almost half of the region's 600 million people live in poverty, with more than 80 million in extreme poverty. As a result, most of the people forcibly displaced during the conflicts were by 2007 indistinguishable from the rest of the region's populations. This made it hard, both methodologically and for practical humanitarian or human rights reasons, to justify attempts to single out IDPs as a group with identifiable specific needs.

In Chiapas, indigenous people were displaced to the outskirts of San Cristóbal de las Casas, but no longer appeared or sought recognition as IDPs. A similar situation reigned in Guatemala and Peru, where IDPs had settled in or around urban areas, but had stopped seeking recognition of their displaced status.

Yet the absence of surveys and data on the long-term consequences of the forced displacement, particularly related to restitution of land and property, may in fact have hidden significant challenges that IDPs faced in the enjoyment of their rights, even if those consequences had not been measured in 2007.

## National and international responses

Although governments in the Americas acknowledged the problem of internal displacement during the height of the conflicts and set up national bodies to deal with the issue, they often failed to mobilise political will and resources to ensure effective implementation. In Peru, Guatemala and Colombia, the governments attempted in 2007 to implement reparation programmes for victims of armed conflict including IDPs, but they all faced significant difficulties. In Peru, there was reportedly limited political will to fund a reparation budget which also targeted IDPs. Out of an estimated 150,000 IDPs eligible for compensation, only a few thousand had been registered by the end of the year.

In Guatemala, the national reparation programme set up in 2003 lacked criteria to identify victims, and by the end of 2007 it had still not established a list of IDPs to be compensated. However, despite the difficulties, the programme marked a step forward from previous governments' policies which failed to recognise restitution rights for dispersed IDPs. Concern was also expressed over the socially divisive impact of a programme targeting individuals rather than communities.

In Colombia, the government of President Uribe continued to make efforts in 2007 to address the plight

of the growing number of IDPs, but the results were mixed, and its willingness to pursue durable solutions rang hollow in the face of the presence of armed groups and in view of the fact that the original causes of displacement remained unchanged. A high-profile National Reconciliation and Reparation Commission tasked to compensate victims of the conflict failed to decide in 2007 whether IDPs were eligible. The work of the Commission was marred by lack of funds and procedural clarity. The internal armed conflict continued at full tilt, and so attempts to ensure security and enable durable solutions to displacement had little impact. Victims of violations at the end of 2007 still had to bring court actions to gain reparation, creating a further barrier to the implementation of the programme.

The demobilisation process further complicated the pattern of violence, with new armed entities

emerging from the old paramilitary groups. In response to the apparent gap between a comprehensive national legislation on IDPs and implementation of policies, the Constitutional Court requested support from civil society groups to measure government compliance with the Constitution in that regard.

Elsewhere in the region, commendable efforts were in most cases overshadowed by the obstacles and overt resistance to implement agreed commitments, while in other countries, no efforts were made to address the IDP issue. In Mexico, the San Andres Accord of 1996 granted autonomy to indigenous communities in Chiapas, but it was never implemented and the low-intensity conflict worsened in 2007. Paramilitary groups continued to forcibly displace indigenous farmers, mainly those affiliated to the Zapatista movement. After the elections in late 2006, the authorities also

A displaced community living in a reclaimed mangrove swamp near Tumaco on Colombia's Pacific coast, November 2007. Houses and bridges are built on stilts to stay above the mud. As the bridges rot, people (most frequently children) fall through the planks and break bones. Elderly people are often effectively confined to their homes.

*Photo: Refugees International*



### Collective responses to displacement

In the Americas there is a long history of collective responses by victims of armed conflicts and internal displacement. The armed Zapatista uprising of 1994 in Chiapas, Mexico was a collective response to constitutional reforms permitting the privatisation of communal land. Recent tensions showed that this privatisation had progressively divided communities that were previously united by collective ownership and land use. According to local observers, Mexican authorities had deliberately fuelled intra-communal violence between supporters of some state-affiliated political parties and Zapatista sympathisers by giving access to land and preferential treatment to certain indigenous communities at the expense of others. This process was scaled up from 2006, culminating in unlawful evictions and killings in 2007.

The same trend is present in Colombia, where collective land is under threat from companies wishing to exploit the land commercially. African palm plantations on collectively-owned territories have divided communities and families as some members have accepted offers to sell land or else they have stopped resisting land-grabbing. However some groups of IDPs have set up “humanitarian zones” on small patches of land, in a desperate bid to protect themselves and remain in their area of origin. Sometimes acting with international support, the inhabitants of these zones have sought to protect themselves by denying access to all armed groups and individuals, thereby preventing accusations of support for combatants.

This heritage of resilience in the face of conflict, human rights violations and forced displacements was itself under threat in 2007. Supported by a broad network of church-based and human rights groups, IDPs have been able to articulate demands, bring governments to the negotiating table and draw international attention, including that of the inter-American human rights system, to their plight. This work usually ran counter to the interests of the armed groups and their financial and political supporters, mirroring in many respects the nature of the conflicts. Defending the interests of IDPs or other victims of conflict in more than a purely humanitarian way is often perceived as an attack on the perpetrators of displacement or other abuses.



A sign denoting a self-declared autonomous Zapatista community in Chiapas State, Mexico. These communities were in 2007 providing health care, education and social services as a response to the perceived inadequacy of state provision, but residents faced an increased risk of forced displacement by paramilitary groups or eviction by the authorities.

*Photo: Arild Birkenes, IDMC*

Consequently, organisations defending victims in general (and more particularly IDPs' right to return and have their land rights restored) were among the primary targets of armed groups.

Attacks against leaders of peace communities and displaced or landless people in the region continued throughout the year. Hundreds of leaders of human rights organisations and displaced communities were assassinated, and violent attacks remained a major threat to their work and their existence. In Guatemala and Colombia, peace communities and indigenous groups which asked armed groups to respect their neutrality were not spared, and endured attacks ranging from food blockades and restrictions on freedom of movement to the killing of leaders. In Colombia, leaders of IDP organisations and indigenous communities, human rights advocates, social workers, teachers, trade unionists and church leaders were the targets of attacks in 2007.

In response to the difficulties of separating the struggles to restore the respect for their rights and to address general social inequalities, IDP organisations in Guatemala also engaged in wider struggles for economic and political equality. In other Latin American countries, such as Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina, indigenous communities and landless peasants struggle to achieve economic and political equality after centuries of exclusion. These struggles contributed significantly to defending the rights of people who lived in situations similar to those of conflict-induced IDPs.

reportedly started to systematically evict indigenous populations from land they had occupied in the uprising in 1994, adding official weight to the illegal measures used by paramilitary groups to force people from their homes.

In other countries such as El Salvador, Honduras and Haiti, all marred by armed conflicts and forced displacements in the past, there were not even attempts to establish the numbers of IDPs, let alone to initiate effort to compensate them for violations of their rights.

### International responses

What little international attention there was on the issue of internal displacement in Latin America was mainly concentrated on Colombia in 2007. Despite the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis triggered by the armed clashes and forced displacements in various parts of the country, international attention did not reach the levels required to have a positive impact on IDPs' security or humanitarian situation. International attention and support to IDPs was mainly channelled through state institutions. In Mexico, national and international attention to the conflict and displacement had almost completely dried up. The lack of interest in the conflict and its consequences for the civilian population was reflected in the complete absence of a

national and international response with humanitarian or peace-building goals.

The OAS was the first regional body to endorse the UN Guiding Principles and apply them to its work. In addition, the 1989 International Conference on Central American Refugees, the UN multi-agency Development Programme for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees in Central America and the San Jose Declaration on Refugees and Displaced Persons of 1994 all focused on the protection, assistance and reintegration of uprooted populations in the region. In addition, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS established the innovative Permanent Consultation on Internal Displacement in the Americas in 1992.

The response to forced displacement of people and communities in Latin America was further complicated by the parallel phenomenon of economic migration from rural to urban areas. The lines between the two were increasingly blurred, throwing into question traditional responses to humanitarian situations. While the Colombian IDP situation stood out as the largest and most pressing in the Latin American region, the protracted situations in Mexico, Peru and Guatemala deserved renewed attention. Peace agreements had promised durable solutions and a willingness to address structural disparities, but these promises had not been realised.

Returnee community in Guatemala, October 2007. After eleven years, most people displaced by the country's internal armed conflict were still struggling to rebuild their lives.  
*Photo: Arild Birkenes, IDMC*



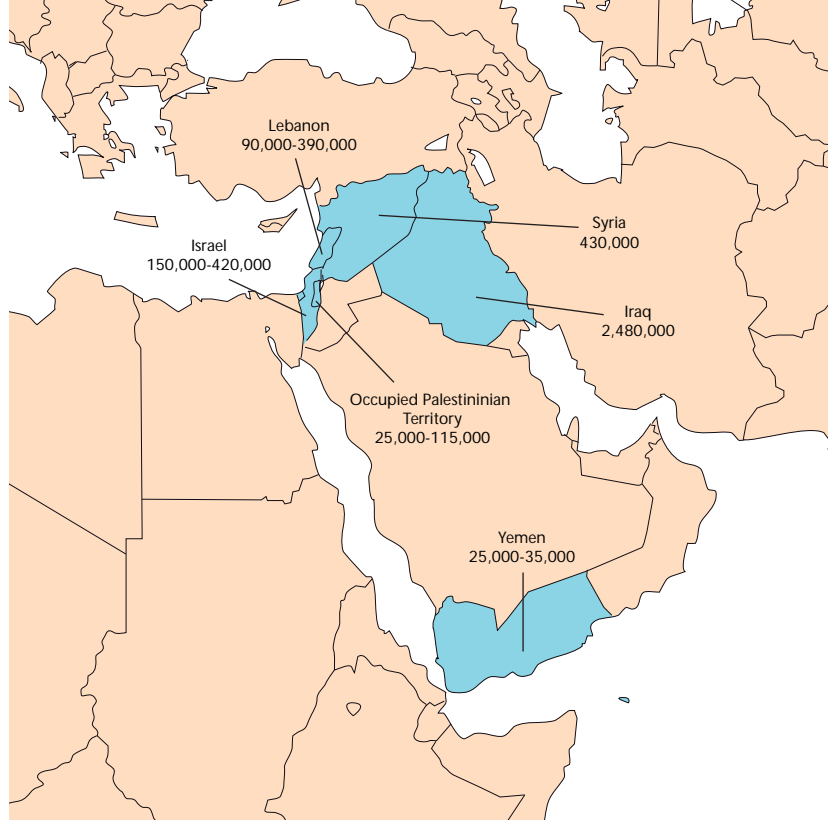
Political stalemates and  
deepening humanitarian  
crises



## Internal Displacement in the Middle East

The Middle East region continued in 2007 to host diverse groups of internally displaced people with differing levels of humanitarian needs, some newly displaced by conflict and violence, and others who had been waiting for generations for a durable solution to their plight. It was a year in which continuing violence and deepening humanitarian crises brought international attention to displacement across the region. Ongoing conflicts and accompanying widespread human rights violations causing large-scale forced displacement included the internal conflict and sectarian violence across Iraq, intermittent fighting in northern Yemen, generalised violence and the continued effects of occupation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), and internal conflict between the Lebanese army and militant extremists based in the Nahr al Bared camp in northern Lebanon.

In a number of countries, people were displaced in a context of regional political instability, poverty and underdevelopment. New displacements overshadowed situations of longer-term displacement in Syria, Iraq, OPT, Lebanon, and Israel. In these countries people



were unable to return home or find other durable solutions due to numerous factors, including the disputed sovereignty and occupation of their areas of origin; difficulties in accessing compensation for lost property and asserting property ownership; the continuing heritage of conflict including damaged infrastructure and unexploded ordnance; and obstructive regional and international policies.

### Developments in internal displacement

At the end of 2007, the Middle East was home to an estimated IDP population of 3.5 million, including 2,480,000 in Iraq, 430,000 in Syria and up to 390,000 in Lebanon, 115,000 in OPT, 35,000 in Yemen, and between 150,000 and 420,000 in Israel. The region hosted nearly twice as many refugees, with the refugee population passing seven million as over one million people fled across the border from Iraq. The figures for many of these countries, however, were not based on systematic national IDP assessments during the year, and in many instances they remained subject to dispute.

### New displacements and ongoing conflicts

During 2007, up to 900,000 people in the region were newly internally displaced, as existing conflicts intensified and new ones flared up. In some cases the displacement was only temporary, and in others more long-lasting.

700,000 of these new displacements were in Iraq, where large numbers of people continued throughout 2007 to be forced to leave their homes and communities. Violations of international humanitarian law were perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, and inter-communal violence following the February 2006 attack on the Al-Askari shrine in Samarra continued through much of 2007. There were signs that the massive rate of displacement began to abate towards the end of the year, and some families were reported to have returned home. However it was unclear whether this was due to improved security in certain areas resulting from the "surge" strategy of the US-led Multi-National

◀ A displaced girl in Northern Iraq.  
*Photo: Astrid Sehl, NRC*



Force and Iraqi Security Forces, or because IDPs had exhausted their funds and coping mechanisms and the sectarian homogenisation of previously mixed areas had been completed<sup>38</sup>. Estimated numbers of these early returnees varied. The Iraqi government reported the return of 6,000 displaced families, principally back to the governorate of Baghdad. Though there was a measurable improvement in the security situation in late 2007, the considerable level of ongoing violence cast doubt on the sustainability of any widespread return process, and UN agencies and the Iraqi authorities generally agreed that the conditions were not yet appropriate for large-scale returns. Particularly intense displacement due to sectarian violence continued in mixed areas, for example in Baghdad and Diyala, as both Shiite and Sunni Arabs fled their homes for safety in areas where their sect was in the majority. Other groups, including Kurds, Christians, Palestinians, and Sabean-Mandean, also continued to be forced from their homes by intimidation and threats.

There were also situations of secondary displacement in areas of Iraq from which 1.2 million people had been displaced by Saddam Hussein's government. For example, the return of Kurds to Kirkuk and surrounding areas led to the displacement of the Arabs who had originally been relocated there, while some Kurdish returnees were displaced for a second time. In December 2007, Turkish military incursions against the Kurdish PKK in northern Iraq provided another source of displacement for around 4,500 people in the north-

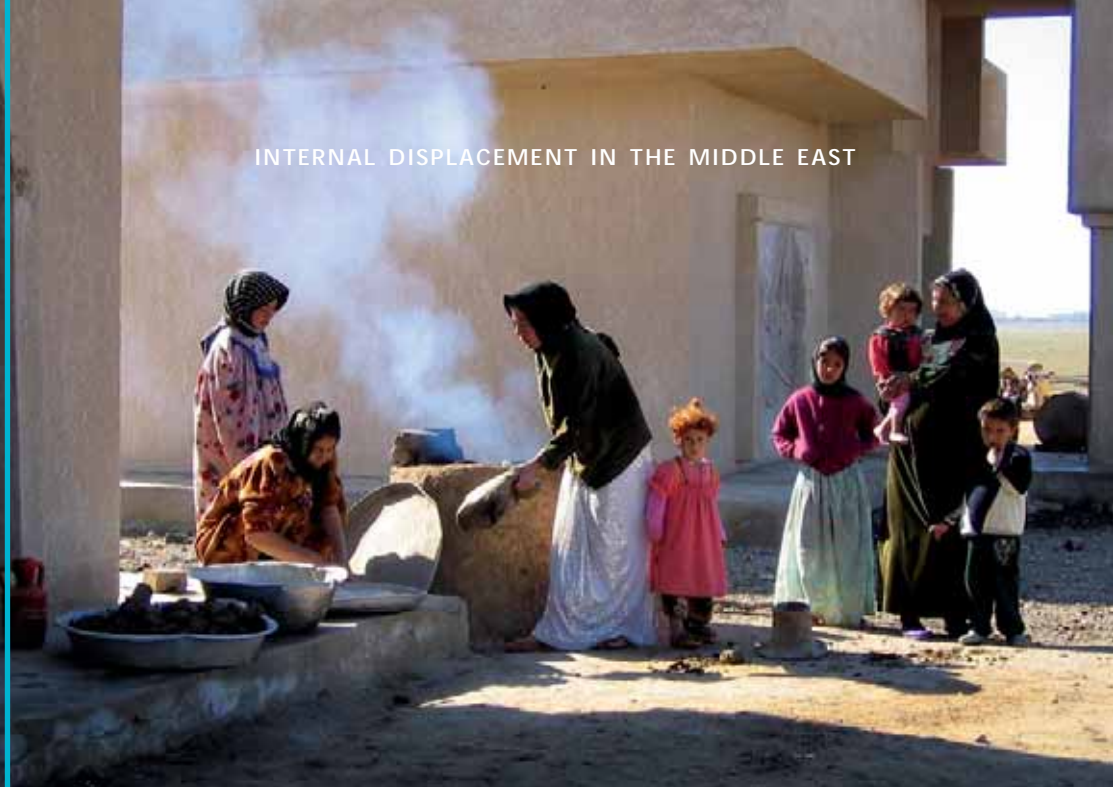
ern governorate of Dohuk, and highlighted the risk of further displacement in Iraq's Kurdish regions.

Elsewhere, fighting in Yemen between the government and followers of the late Shi'ite dissident Sheikh Badr Eddin al-Houthi displaced tens of thousands of people in the northern province of Saada. The number of people affected was difficult to gauge as the conflict made the remote mountainous area even more inaccessible, but a UN assessment suggested between 25,000 and 27,000 people displaced in late 2007.

In northern Lebanon, the army's siege of Nahr al Bared camp for Palestinian refugees in the summer of 2007, which aimed to force out members of the militant Fatah al-Islam group, led more than 30,000 residents to flee into other camps including the nearby Beddawi camp. Nahr al Bared was virtually destroyed by the fighting, and the vast majority of its displaced inhabitants remained at the end of 2007 in other camps, with overcrowding and competition for scarce resources exacerbating tensions between communities. By early November, between 700 and 1,000 families had returned to Nahr al Bared, of which only 500 families were considered to have returned permanently. Meanwhile, in southern Lebanon and in Beirut, perhaps 100,000 people remained displaced from the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbollah which at the time had forced up to one million people from their homes, or in some cases from the civil war which ended in 1990.

Insecurity continued to cause displacement in Israel and OPT. Sporadic rocket attacks from Gaza struck

◀ Informal IDP settlements  
in Diyala Province, Iraq,  
October 2007.  
*Photos: NCCI*



Israeli towns through the year, and in May forced around 10,000 inhabitants of Sderot to seek refuge in Eliat. They returned after the immediate threat had receded, although Sderot remained subject to continuing rocket attacks up to the end of 2007.

Policies implemented by the government of Israel led to the displacement of two distinct groups. Bedouin communities in the Negev region living in “unrecognised villages” (making up about half of the Negev’s Bedouin population of 140,000) continued to risk displacement due to the government’s five-year plan to move them into permanent settlements. In May, some 100 residents of the village of Al Twazil were made homeless when the authorities demolished their tents and shacks.

In OPT, the deteriorating security situation and policies of occupation including restrictions on people’s movement, the demolition of homes and appropriation of land continued to cause displacement. There are no reliable figures on the number of people displaced in this way, but over 44 per cent of respondents to a 2006 survey seriously feared losing their home or their land and being displaced or uprooted<sup>39</sup>. The construction of the West Bank Wall, and its associated regime of land and property confiscations, permit systems, check-points and gates, also continued during 2007 to force people to move as their lives and livelihoods became untenable. More than 56 per cent of the Wall was built by November 2007, including 64 per cent in Jerusalem. The Palestinian Bureau for Statistics had estimated that

at the end of May 2005 nearly 15,000 people had already been displaced since the start of construction in 2002, and it was predicted in 2006 that the continued construction of the Wall would affect 27,520 Palestinian residents west of the Wall, 247,800 people east of the Wall who would be completely or partially surrounded, and 222,500 in East Jerusalem<sup>40</sup>.

### Ongoing displacement and return

Return movements of those displaced prior to 2007 remained limited throughout the Middle East in 2007. Insecurity, destruction of homes and infrastructure in areas recovering from conflict, and difficulties in re-establishing livelihoods have remained significant obstacles for many.

Virtually all the Israelis displaced in mid-2006 by rocket attacks from Gaza had returned by the end of 2006, as had the 300,000 who fled Hizbollah rocket attacks on northern areas. In Lebanon, people displaced by the 2006 war continued steadily to return to their homes in the south of the country. By late 2007, an estimated 90 per cent had returned leaving between 40,000 and 70,000 people still displaced. A significant percentage of those who returned though were at risk of being displaced again due to the devastation caused by the war, and the continuing presence of unexploded cluster bombs. In Beirut and its suburbs, most people displaced since the 2006 war or before were living in overcrowded areas without essential health and social services, with the poorest in makeshift shelters.



The West Bank Wall dividing the Palestinian community of Abu Dis in East Jerusalem, June 2007.

Photo: Anne Paq, Activestills



### Minority groups, discrimination and displacement

Throughout the region minorities faced a greater risk of being displaced, on the basis of their identity. In Iraq, minorities were singled out. As well as Sunni and Shi'a families living in communities in which they were a minority, Palestinians, Christians, Assyrians, Sabeen Mandean, Shabaks and Feali Kurds all became victims of violent displacement. Inter-ethnic tensions increased between some groups, for example between Arab, Turkoman, Kurdish and Yezidis communities, while others such as the Marsh Arabs remained particularly impoverished and marginalised.

In Yemen, certain minorities were particularly affected by the ongoing conflict in the north, such as a small Jewish minority which was evacuated from Saada to the capital Sanaa following threats by the Houthi tribe, while in Israel, displaced Arab Israeli and Bedouin communities continued to be affected by discriminatory policies.

### IDPs' rights and related protection needs

#### Security and freedom of movement

New or continuing conflict in several countries in the region severely restricted the physical security and freedom of movement of displaced people and people at risk of displacement. In Iraq, the widespread violence affected the personal security of Iraqis across the country, and most displaced people cited the general violence and sectarian attacks and intimidation as the

primary reasons for their displacement. Local armed groups maintained a climate of fear, and kidnappings, extra-judicial killings, and destruction of properties led to large-scale movements of communities. Violence between Sunni and Shiite groups predominated, while attacks against members of minorities including Christians and Palestinian refugees were reported. There were continued reports of members of the Multi-National Force and Iraqi security forces using excessive force and committing human rights violations, enforcing severe restrictions on civilian movements, evicting residents and demolishing their homes during military operations.

The fighting in Yemen's northern province of Saada in mid-2007 gave rise to concerns for the security of affected communities. There were also concerns for humanitarian workers in the area, particularly after an ICRC/Yemeni Red Crescent convoy carrying relief supplies for displaced families was attacked in May 2007.

In northern Lebanon, the army's siege of the Nahr al Bared camp, which aimed to force out Fatah al-Islam militants, presented immediate danger to thousands of residents inside the camp, who were for periods unable to escape the bombardment as the casualty count grew. Eventually they were able to seek refuge in other overcrowded refugee camps in Saida and Beirut. When they sought to return to Nahr El Bared many faced harassment at army checkpoints.

Policies driven by authorities' quest for security in some cases increased the insecurity of IDPs and people at risk of displacement. Displaced communities in

Iraq faced increasing restrictions to their movements, and by the end of 2007, at least 11 governorates had restricted the entry of IDPs, and in certain cases governorates refused to register IDPs coming either from within their territory or from other areas. These restrictions coincided with growing tensions over increasingly scarce resources between displaced and host communities. In some cases, these measures were reportedly designed to control the demographic make-up of governorates and hence the outcome of future elections. In OPT, where security continued to deteriorate during 2007, restrictions on move-

ment between sections of the West Bank and between the West Bank and Gaza were unprecedented in their "scope, duration and in the severity of the damage"<sup>41</sup>.

Mines and other unexploded ordnance continued to plague the region. Unexploded ordnance affected the security and movements of civilians in Yemen, in south Lebanon, in the area of separation between the occupied Golan and Syria proper, and in Iraq where an unknown number of unexploded munitions presented a lethal legacy of conflicts dating back to the Second World War.

### The Middle East's protracted displacement situations

Various groups in the Middle East had in 2007 been living in displacement for many years, and in some cases several decades, and their prospects of returning or finding other durable solutions remained limited.

In Lebanon, significant numbers of people had still found no durable solutions since being displaced during the civil war which ended in 1990 or the Israeli occupation of parts of the south until 2000; their return was blocked by a lack of adequate compensation and reconciliation processes. In the absence of any reliable survey, estimates of their numbers ranged from less than 17,000 to as many as 600,000.

In Iraq an estimated 1,200,000 people remained internally displaced after being forced from their homes during the forty-year rule of Saddam Hussein. The policy of "Arabisation" had led to the expulsion of non-Arabs including Kurds, Assyrians and Turkmen from the oil-rich region of Kirkuk, while the government had also uprooted Shiites in southern provinces, including Marsh Arabs and groups who had opposed the government during the 1991 Gulf War. The 2003 invasion and the subsequent collapse of the government enabled some of these people to return home, but many people's hopes were still frustrated in 2007 due to lack of housing and infrastructure in their areas of origin and the general deterioration of security in the country.

Other groups were still trapped in displacement forty years or more after they were first forced from

their homes. In Syria the situation of Syrian Arabs displaced from the Golan Heights during the Six Day War in 1967 remained unresolved, with their eventual return tied to political developments in the region. The Syrian government estimated that around 430,000 people remained displaced in 2007, including the descendants of the original IDPs. They had largely integrated in their current places of residence across Syria, but many continued to express a wish to return to the Golan, while contact with their relatives still living in the occupied Golan became increasingly restricted.

Another largely undocumented group was the 120,000 Syrian Kurds who had lost their nationality rights in the early 1960s, of whom many also lost rights to their property, which was seized without compensation. The nature of the displacement and the current IDP status of these stateless people remained uncertain, but it was clear that they had only limited freedom of movement and irregular access to public services, livelihoods, political and legal processes and property ownership.

There was no change in the situation of the tens of thousands of Arab villagers in Israel displaced since the 1948 war. Many still wanted to return to their original homes, but their prospects of return were dim. In the south of the country, Bedouin communities, many already displaced for several generations, endured continuing pressure to leave their land. Based on various considerations, estimates of their numbers ranged between 150,000 and 420,000.



Distributing water bottles to IDPs in Baghdad, September 2007.  
*Photo: NCCI*

### Security of displaced women

Displaced women and girls in the Middle East faced particular risks and challenges in Yemen, OPT and Lebanon, and particularly in Iraq. Female headed households were extremely vulnerable, with many displaced after fathers and husbands were killed, as witnessed in Iraq as well as in Lebanon. The situation for women in OPT continued to deteriorate through 2007, with the increased level of violence between political factions contributing to the further “collapse of women’s protection”<sup>42</sup>. There was a notable rise in unattended births and miscarriages. Primarily owing to closures and delays at checkpoints and the barrier, almost 30 per cent of pregnant women in the West Bank had difficulties accessing appropriate medical care, with at least 68 pregnant Palestinian women giving birth at checkpoints since 2000, leading to the death of four women and 34 miscarriages<sup>43</sup>.

Displaced women in Lebanon reportedly suffered from poor access to health services, psychosocial support and legal assistance, and they continued to be exposed to various forms of violence, and principally domestic violence, after the 2006 war ended<sup>44</sup>. Palestinian women in Nahr al Bared camp also indicated poor access to support services and high exposure to violence including harassment by members of the army<sup>45</sup>.

Protection of women’s rights in Iraq continued to deteriorate, as their legal status and protection mechanisms were undermined by increasing religious extremism in some areas. There was an increase in reported incidents of intimidation and displacement of women and children linked to sectarian and generalised violence. Violence against women included “honour crimes”, rape, domestic violence and sexual exploitation, while reports in some governorates indicated that groups of displaced women had been forced into prostitution as a source of income for their families. In Basra alone, Iraq’s second largest city, 133 women were killed by late 2007 as a result of “honour killings” or by religious extremists for “violating Islamic teachings”<sup>46</sup>.

### Violence towards displaced children

Across the region, displaced children were exposed to violence and trauma during their displacement with little access to psychosocial support. Those that could still access education endured overcrowding and in some cases discrimination in schools.

Many of Iraq’s displaced children witnessed extreme violence and intimidation towards parents, families and friends. An average 25,000 children per month were displaced in 2007, and by the end of the year, approximately 75,000 children were living in camps or temporary shelters. Hundreds of children lost their

lives or were injured, and thousands more were drawn into child labour, association with armed groups or homelessness as their family's wage-earner was kidnapped or killed.

In Lebanon, children bore the brunt of the 2006 war, with over 400,000 displaced, while the siege of Nahr al Bared alone caused the displacement of over 5,000 children. They continued to show signs of trauma and stress in 2007, as did children exposed to conflict related violence in Israel and OPT. Children returning to their homes in the south of Lebanon were also at risk from unexploded ordnance, and by the start of 2007, at least 90 children had been injured and four killed in explosions since the war ended. Similarly, children in families who had returned to Nahr al Bared camp were at high risk due to unexploded ordnance and collapsing buildings.

## IDPs' access to the basic necessities of life

The access to basic necessities such as food, drinking water and shelter of the Middle East's displaced populations varied widely in 2007. While in OPT, and most notably Iraq, the humanitarian crisis facing IDPs deepened, some long-term displaced groups, such as Syrians displaced from the Golan, shared the living conditions of their non-displaced neighbours. Meanwhile, IDP communities such as those in Yemen and Lebanon faced specific challenges in achieving adequate living conditions.

It was only in March 2007 that the UN acknowledged the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, through the Secretary General's opening remarks to a meeting on the International Compact with Iraq<sup>47</sup>. Military operations and the escalation of sectarian conflict following years of sanctions and war led to a continuing deterioration of living conditions, and the public health, water, sanitation and electricity infrastructure were insufficient to meet the basic needs of the population. Many Iraqis had been forced to flee to areas where public services were limited or non-existent, and as displacement lengthened, host communities increasingly struggled to share limited resources with displaced populations. Displaced people reported that a wide range of their needs were unmet, including shelter, food and employment, followed by water, proper sanitation, and health care, legal assistance and

education. One of the priority needs identified by IDPs across the country was housing, with many living in temporary housing which left them extremely vulnerable to homelessness and secondary displacement. The threat of eviction grew for those renting housing whose resources were dwindling, and for those in public buildings or property, and in some areas groups of IDPs continued to be evicted to make way for the return of others, despite the lack of alternative shelter. The effects of the lack of income grew more acute throughout Iraq and particularly in the south, and IDPs increasingly faced destitution.

14 per cent of Iraqi IDPs assessed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) through 2007 reported having no access to health care services, and one in three could not access medicines that they needed, while specialised care was even more difficult to obtain since many specialists had fled the country. The lack of sanitation and water forced some communities to rely on lakes, rivers or irrigation ditches for drinking water<sup>48</sup>; the cholera outbreak which affected 11 governorates in spring 2007 illustrated the impact of the deteriorating conditions. Much of the Iraqi population depended upon the government's Public Distribution System (PDS) food rations, but access to these distributions was especially difficult for displaced families unable to transfer ration locations. Only 22 per cent of all IDPs assessed by IOM in 2007 had regular access to PDS food rations, while only 56 per cent had even irregular access.

In Lebanon the cessation of hostilities in 2006 prompted large-scale returns, but in many affected areas, the unsafe and unsustainable conditions led to further displacements which reportedly affected 60 to 70 per cent of returnees. The widespread destruction in south Lebanon and in areas of Beirut made living conditions untenable, and unexploded munitions presented a constant danger and prevented farmers from accessing fields and collecting harvests. Though significant rebuilding took place through the year, much remained to be done by mid-2007.

There was no significant improvement in the living conditions of Israel's IDPs. The 70,000 Arab Bedouins residing in unrecognised villages continued to have difficulties in access to health services, water and electricity supplies and sewage facilities. In many towns and villages, long-term IDPs continued to live according to their original village, and many lived in the most impoverished and overcrowded neighbour-

hoods and received lower quality of services than those in other villages. The policy of maintaining separate “sectors” for Jewish and Arab people, in particular in the areas of housing and education, continued to heighten the divide in living standards; the lower level of education for Arab citizens continued to be a barrier to their employment, and their average income was significantly lower than that of Jewish citizens.

In OPT, there was little information on the specific living conditions of the displaced population; however 2007 witnessed continued decline of the economy, rising unemployment and poverty. The World Bank reported in mid-2007 that close to 30 per cent of all households in OPT were by 2007 living below the national poverty line, while in Gaza, 67 per cent lived below the official poverty line. In Gaza, 80 per cent relied on UN food aid<sup>49</sup>.

The World Food Programme reported that by the end of 2007, just over half of OPT’s food needs had been met. Access to medical care for Palestinians was limited due to several factors including the checkpoint and closure regime<sup>50</sup>. Shortages of essential drugs and other medical supplies were recurring and in mid-November the World Health Organization reported that Gaza had less than one month’s supply of essential drugs and necessary medical supplies. Owing to a lack of fuel and spare parts, public health conditions declined steeply as water and sanitation services struggled to function. A clear testimony to the severity of the crisis was attested in March 2007 when waste water from a treatment plant flooded the nearby Bedouin village of Um al Nasser, killing five, injuring 25 and causing the temporary displacement of over 2,000 people<sup>51</sup>.

Health care in Israel is among the most advanced in the region, yet access for displaced communities varied. Emergency services were quick to assist the communities displaced in May 2007 by rockets attacks from Gaza, including IDPs suffering from anxiety and panic attacks. The services provided to Arab Israeli towns were generally inferior, and many lacked emergency facilities. Health indicators reflect wide disparities, for example in infant mortality and life expectancy rates<sup>52</sup>, while Arab Bedouins also reported continuing government neglect of their health needs.

### Displaced children’s right to education

Throughout the region, displaced children’s access to education proved difficult if not impossible. In Iraq,

many of the 220,000 displaced children of primary school age had their education interrupted, as lack of infrastructure, cost and insecurity kept attendance low. Accessing schools in areas dominated by the opposing sect was nearly impossible; registration remained subject to availability of documentation; and the cost of supplies, books and transport from remote camps was often prohibitive. Schools were overcrowded and reportedly unable or unwilling to let IDP children attend.

In Lebanon, though most if not all children returned to school by 2007, the ongoing reconstruction meant that the capacity of the few undamaged buildings to host schoolrooms was strained. Children displaced from Nahr El Bared camp had to attend overcrowded temporary schools in Beddawi camp or near Nahr El Bared.

In Israel, Sderot’s schools were closed only temporarily following the rocket attacks in mid-2007 from Gaza, with some students leaving the town and others afraid to leave their homes, but access to education in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to be seriously affected by the occupation. Meanwhile, concerns and claims of discrimination persisted over the low investment in education in “unrecognised” Bedouin villages in Israel’s Negev.

## Documentation and property rights

The lack of documentation and means to assert property rights presented immediate problems to IDPs in the Middle East. However, access to land and property for many in Iraq, OPT, Syria and Israel continued to depend on elusive political solutions.

Throughout Iraq, displaced people faced difficulties in obtaining the documentation they needed as legal advice centres struggled to meet huge demand. Their most immediate challenge was to obtain the necessary documentation to access government food rations and schools. Property and housing issues remained salient for IDPs, with IOM surveys in early 2007 revealing that over 40 per cent had had their property occupied, destroyed or used by the military.

These surveys did not address the needs of the several hundred thousand people evicted prior to 2003. The government began to address the concerns of this latter group through the Commission for the Resolution of Real Property Disputes (CRRPD) established in March

2006. By the end of 2007, despite the prevailing insecurity and its limited resources, the CRRPD had received over 132,000 claims and arrived at 37,000 decisions, though many were still subject to review. However, attempts to address current property concerns were marred by a certain degree of inconsistency, and there remained an outstanding need for a comprehensive approach to the property and housing issues facing Iraq's millions of displaced people.

In Israel, land and property issues remained central to displaced Arab and Bedouin communities. Israeli Palestinians constitute about one fifth of the population of Israel, but they own less than three per cent of land. Most of the properties of displaced Bedouins were originally confiscated through a legal process which did not recognise their traditional ownership mechanisms, as the Bedouin generally held no land titles. In 2007, Bedouin IDPs, supported by local organisations, continued to appeal to Israeli courts against land confiscation or inadequate compensation. In OPT, the UN registry set up in 2006 to handle claims of property damage resulting from the construction of the West Bank Wall was yet to begin functioning, with the Board being selected only in mid-2007 and a number of outstanding questions on eligibility criteria for compensation and modalities for assessing and validating claims<sup>53</sup>.

In Lebanon, the durable return of people displaced by the 2006 war and the earlier civil war continued to largely depend on land and property issues. Returns of those displaced in 2006 were facilitated with com-

penensation and reconstruction assistance set up by the Lebanese government as well as Hizbollah. Government figures revealed significant headway with compensation made for 94,000 out of 109,000 damaged homes, but the extent of reconstruction remained unclear, and the signs of the destruction of southern Lebanon remained apparent. This lack of progress since the end of the civil war was attributed to a number of factors, including mismanagement of funds and political rivalries, budgetary problems, the absence of suitable economic and social conditions in rural areas as well as tensions between displaced and host communities in certain areas, dating back to the civil war.

## Durable solutions for IDPs in the Middle East

Throughout the region, IDPs expressed their desire to return to their place of origin, including Arab Israelis and Bedouins in Israel, Syrians from the Golan Heights, and Palestinians displaced in OPT. In late 2007, the overwhelming majority of Iraqi IDPs surveyed said they intended to return to their place of origin.

Ultimately, the identification of durable solutions for these groups of IDPs depended on political processes enabling stability and security across the region. The conflicting parties in Iraq and northern Yemen were still far from possible reconciliation. In Israel, Syria and OPT return and sustainable solu-

A woman surveys the ruins of her home in the Old City of Jerusalem following its demolition, December 2007.  
Photo: Anne Paq, *Activestills*



tions for the displaced remained unattainable in the absence of political progress on the broader Arab-Israeli conflict.

Returns in various parts of the region remained limited, uncertain, and subject to an ever changing political landscape. In the absence of greater political consensus, displacements similar to those witnessed in Lebanon and Israel in the past two years are liable to be replicated. In a number of countries in the region, durable solutions also depend on reconciliation between different communities, ethnicities and sects.

In Iraq, the families reported to have returned at the end of 2007 represented only a small fraction of the displaced, with many of those risking secondary displacement if they found their homes occupied or destroyed. The general environment remained un conducive to return and neither the government nor the international community advocated for larger scale returns. Any eventual return would need to address a vast array of issues which remain as yet difficult to reconcile, including addressing humanitarian needs associated with any return, settlement of legal disputes over property, and particularly reconciliation in light of the sectarian violence that had taken place.

The end of hostilities in Lebanon in 2006 prompted large-scale returns, yet in many affected areas, the extent of the devastation caused doubts as to whether they could be safe and sustainable. Although compensation and reconstruction programmes were in place, the signs of devastation remained apparent at the end of 2007 and many IDPs struggled to reestablish a livelihood. For those displaced from the Nahr al Bared camp, the level of destruction offered no possibility of feasible return and they continued to rely on host communities, mainly in other refugee camps.

## National, regional and international responses

The national, regional and international responses to internal displacement in the Middle East remained uneven, their effectiveness undermined by factors including the lack of capacity, the absence of political will, and insecurity. Governments in the region struggled to put together the resources to provide effective protection of and assistance to people displaced

within their territories, including those which hosted significant refugee populations. At a regional level, the League of Arab States addressed displacement issues only indirectly as they affected the prevailing crisis in OPT and reconstruction in Iraq.

National initiatives had mixed results. The Lebanese government, with the support of the international community, undertook the implementation of a broad range of assistance, recovery and reconstruction activities throughout 2007. Nonetheless, the government estimated that around 50,000 people were still displaced by the 2006 war at the end of the year. In Syria, the government continued, albeit slowly, to carry out housing projects in Quneitra, which could eventually lead to the return of some 50,000 people to the town at the boundary of the occupied Golan. In Yemen, the government's policies to support the return of internally displaced people to Saada and undertake reconstruction of the war-torn region were rendered redundant when renewed fighting in mid-2007 put an end to the peace accord. In Iraq, the Ministry of Displacement and Migration assisted the displaced, and continued to work on national policy and legislation, yet remained overwhelmed by the insecurity and level of needs.

Israel's government effectively met the protection and housing needs of Israelis displaced from Sderot, while at the same time pursuing development policies in the Negev which entailed the eviction of displaced Bedouin communities from "unrecognised villages". The severity of the closure of Gaza Strip led to a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented scale and the continued construction of the West Bank Wall and associated restrictions continued to cause further displacement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but there was no response by the Israeli government to the plight of those internally displaced as a result.

In Iraq, international agencies, including the United Nations, continued programmes on behalf of displaced populations, though the UN continued to operate only at a minimal level because of the high insecurity. While the UN did not address the situation of the internally displaced populations in Israel or Syria, and though no international agency has an explicit mandate to protect internally displaced Palestinians, the UN provided substantial emergency assistance to vulnerable people in OPT, including those falling under the mandate of the UN Relief

and Works Agency (UNRWA). This group includes many, but not all, of those internally displaced within the Palestinian Territories. In Lebanon, UNRWA and other international agencies responded to the displacement of Palestinian refugees in the Nahr al Bared camp, and led the early reconstruction of the camp.

The plight of IDPs in the region drew some international scrutiny during the year. The UN recognised Iraq's humanitarian crisis in early 2007 – despite clear indicators during 2006 – and initial efforts were made to respond to this crisis with emergency funding and assistance. In mid-2007, the report of the UN Secretary General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict criticised Israel on disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force against civilians and civilian property, and noted the particular devastating impact of the widespread use of cluster bombs in southern Lebanon<sup>54</sup>. The UN repeatedly called on Israel based on Security Council Resolution 1701 to provide maps of the locations of remaining landmines and cluster bombs in order to facilitate their removal.

In several countries in the region, local and international non-governmental organisations, and political groups played a critical role in assisting IDPs and in advocating for their rights. In Iraq, the government struggled to meet the needs of overwhelming numbers of displaced people, which forced many to

rely on the widespread support of local aid groups, organisations and political actors. In many parts of the region, humanitarian organisations were often prevented from reaching displaced populations to deliver aid. In parts of Iraq, organisations were able to provide only sporadic assistance to IDPs because of ongoing military operations. In addition, aid groups received threats for helping displaced families of certain religious affiliations, and several were also threatened and humanitarian agency staff were targeted. In Lebanon, humanitarian access was also limited during the fighting in Nahr al Bared, preventing assistance from reaching people in the camp, while in northern Yemen access proved difficult and dangerous. In the Palestinian Territory, access conditions deteriorated at a time when humanitarian needs grew more acute. The work of humanitarian organisations in the West Bank, and most particularly in Gaza from June 2007, was severely limited by increasingly restrictive checks and delays.

The 60 per cent rise in the number of people displaced within the region in the past two years has made the issue of internal displacement one of paramount concern. However the humanitarian response to the various displacement crises of the region was in 2007 still struggling to meet the protection and assistance needs of people who had been displaced for short or longer periods.

Remains of a house in southern Lebanon destroyed by bombardment, December 2006. Although compensation and reconstruction programmes were in place, the signs of devastation remained through 2007.

*Photo: Christophe Beau, IDMC*





# Marginalised minorities

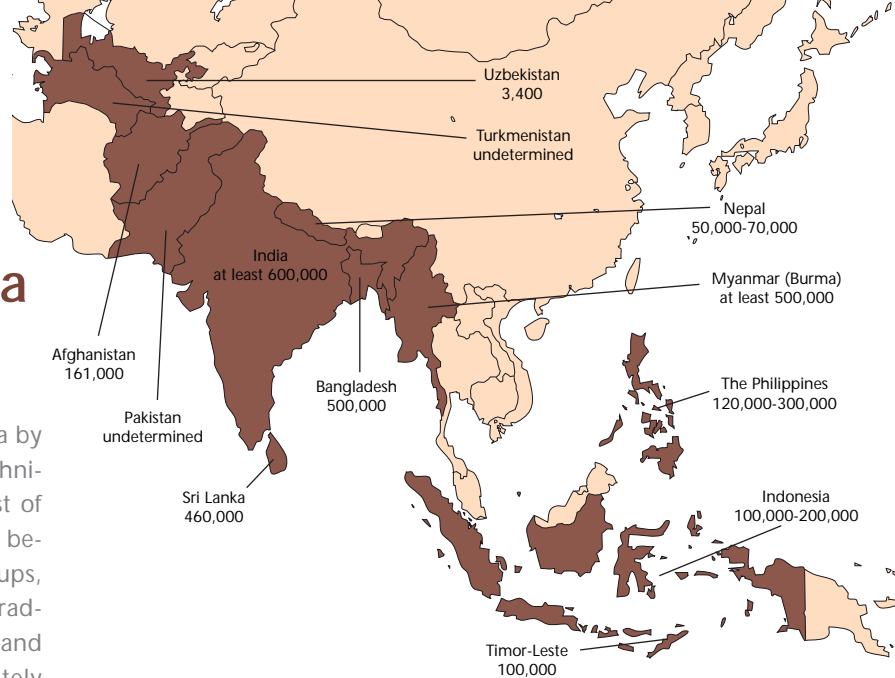


## Internal displacement in Asia

Although the groups of people displaced in Asia by armed conflict and human rights abuses are ethnically diverse and belong to various faiths, most of them share certain characteristics. They tend to belong to the poorest and most marginalised groups, and they usually live as small-scale farmers or traders in rural areas. Ethnic or religious minorities and indigenous groups tend to be disproportionately represented.

Many armed groups currently active in Asia emerged in response to nation-building processes which failed to accommodate minority and indigenous groups' demands for political inclusion and economic empowerment. Denied political, social and economic rights<sup>55</sup> by national assimilation and migration policies, these groups have continued to resist the loss of their ancestral land, lifestyle and livelihood. They continue to be met with brutality by governments valuing territorial unity over peoples' aspirations to self-determination or the recognition of their rights.

In addition to those forced to flee conflicts and human rights abuses, millions of people are displaced each year in Asia as a consequence of projects linked to urban development, the production of energy or natural resources extraction. While these two types of displacement are usually clearly distinguishable in terms of causes and consequences, in some cases these differences are blurred, in particular where development projects are carried out in areas where earlier



military operations forced people from the land, or when resettled populations are denied adequate compensation for the loss of land, housing and livelihoods. The consequences for these uprooted populations are often characterised by impoverishment and further social and cultural marginalisation.

A number of governments in the region have long kept international protection and aid agencies out. This limited access means that information on Asia's displaced populations is often difficult to establish and validate. What is known is that most of the region's internally displaced people have been living in displacement for years, often with few prospects of returning home or finding other durable solutions. Obstacles to their return may include continued violence and insecurity, opposition from communities in the area they were displaced from, unresolved land and property disputes, or a lack of assistance to rebuild homes and livelihoods in areas of origin or elsewhere.

## Developments in internal displacement

Across Asia, the number of people displaced by conflict and widespread human rights violations rose slightly during the year, from around three million to 3.1 million. While there were cases of major short-term dis-

placements during the year, the majority of those displaced at the end of the year were in situations of protracted displacement, in countries such as Sri Lanka, Afghanistan or India where continuing internal conflicts showed no signs of ending.

### Ongoing conflicts and new displacements

During 2007, almost one million people were newly displaced in the region, as a number of existing conflicts intensified, and the "war on terror" was used by several governments to justify major offensives against insurgent groups. In a number of situations, includ-

◀ A returnee boy in central Aceh, Indonesia, helping to dry the coffee beans which provide the family's main source of revenue, November 2007.  
*Photo: Frederik Kok, IDMC*



Children at the Motael IDP camp in Dili, Timor-Leste, December 2007.  
*Photo: Evan Schneider, UN Photo*

ing in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, the people displaced were civilians caught in conflict which included indiscriminate and arguably disproportionate attacks in the form of bombardments by government forces. In other countries such as Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines and Indonesia (Papua), civilians were specifically targeted within strategies aiming to cut off support to rebel groups.

Only in Nepal did new conflict break out, with fighting between opposing ethnic groups causing displacement in the south-east of the country. Conflict erupted in the Terai region between Pahadis and Madhesis frustrated by decades of political and social marginalisation. From January 2007, Madhesi protests rapidly spread to several towns, and culminated in September when riots and inter-communal violence left 14 people dead, hundreds of houses destroyed and an estimated 6,000 people, mostly Pahadis, forced from their homes. By the end of the year, most of them had managed to return and only 1,600 remained displaced in camps.

Numbers are difficult to verify due to limited access: however it is believed that the largest single displacement in 2007 took place in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province in November, when clashes between the army and pro-Taliban militants caused at least 400 civilian casualties and displaced at least 500,000 people<sup>56</sup>. By the end of the year, it was reported that most people had returned to their homes, though many found their homes and property destroyed. In North Waziristan, close to the Afghanistan

border, renewed fighting and displacement followed the breakdown of a ceasefire between the government and tribal leaders. Intense fighting near the town of Mirali in October led 80,000 civilians to flee to neighbouring areas. Towards the end of the year, an army offensive in Balochistan against armed separatist groups forced a significant number of people from their homes.

In Afghanistan, an estimated 130,000 IDPs remained in camps in southern provinces, their hopes of returning home thwarted by insecurity and the absence of any means to resolve property disputes. The country was also heavily contaminated with land mines, which killed or injured an average of two people every day and complicated efforts to re-establish livelihoods in affected areas. During 2007 the government only managed – with the support of UNHCR – to help some 1,500 IDPs return to their homes, and many long-term IDPs continued to wait for viable alternatives. By December 2007, only 3,000 families had benefited from a land allocation scheme launched by the government in 2005. Meanwhile, the resurgence of the Taliban against the government security forces and their western allies continued through 2007. Intense fighting and human rights abuses committed by both sides against the civilian population forced an estimated 80,000 people to flee their homes, mainly in the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan. Many people fled to avoid forced recruitment into the Taliban's ranks, and many more as a result of aerial bombardment by international forces<sup>57</sup>.

The dramatic escalation of the civil war in Sri Lanka showed no sign of abating during 2007. An estimated 93,000 people fled their homes in eastern provinces between January and April to escape fighting between government forces and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and widespread human rights abuses committed by both sides. In September, a further 22,000 people were displaced in north and west Sri Lanka, bringing the total number displaced in 2007 to about 115,000. By the end of 2007, it was estimated that a total of 460,000 people remained displaced as a consequence of the conflict.

In all there were an estimated 500,000 IDPs in eastern Myanmar (Burma) at the end of 2007, 295,000 in temporary settlements in ceasefire areas administered by ethnic minorities, 99,000 in jungle areas hiding from the Burmese army, and approximately 109,000 villagers living in relocation sites into which they had been evicted by the army. It remained impossible to establish IDP figures for the rest of the country.

The Burmese army's counter-insurgency operations and human rights violations continued to displace civilians, particularly in ethnic minority states of Myanmar (Burma). An estimated 76,000 people were forced from their homes in the twelve months to October 2007 as a result of, or in order to avoid, continuing armed conflict and human right abuses:

these were committed by the army and, to a lesser extent, by the ethnic armed groups they were fighting. At least 167 villages were destroyed in eastern States during 2007, while displacement was most concentrated in northern Karen State and eastern Pegu Division. Towards the end of the year, a significant build-up of troops was reported in Karen State and the southern Karenni State, raising concerns of an upcoming massive offensive against rebel groups and further displacement in early 2008.

In neighbouring Bangladesh, displacement continued in the Chittagong Hill Tracts where incidents of land-grabbing by the army and illegal settlers intensified. An unknown number (estimates range from 60,000 to 500,000) of Jumma tribespeople in the disputed area were unable to return to their homes due to unresolved land and property disputes. They had been forced from their homes from 1971 onwards as unrest followed a government-sponsored programme to bring Bengali settlers from the plains.

The Philippines yet again ranked as one of the most displacement-affected countries of the region, with up to 145,000 people newly displaced by armed conflict and human rights violations during the year. Most of the people were displaced in the southern island of Mindanao, where Muslim rebel groups have been fighting the government for the past 30 years. Between April and August

An internally displaced woman arrives home in Batticaloa North, Sri Lanka, March 2007. Humanitarian agencies reported that while the government initially restricted access to some resettlement communities, the situation improved through the year. Photo: Amantha Perera, IRIN





A girl and her grandmother at the entrance of their shelter, near Bijni, western Assam. Muslims of Bengali origin had in 2007 been living on the roadside since being displaced by conflict in 1993.

*Photo: Viviane Dalles*

2007, a total of up to 100,000 people were forced to flee their homes in the provinces of Sulu and Basilan following large-scale military operations. Elsewhere across the country, continuing sporadic clashes between government forces and New People's Army communist rebels displaced several thousand people.

In Indonesia's Papua province, counter-insurgency offensives against rebels of the Free Papua Movement (Organisasi Papua Merdeka or OPM) forced thousands of civilians to flee their villages in Yamo district in the Puncak Jaya regency. Most of them fled into the forest where they struggled to survive in the absence of food, shelter and access to medical services. Lack of access due to government restrictions made it difficult for independent observers to assess their humanitarian needs and provide assistance. Up to 16,000 people displaced in the same region in 2005 had not returned as of March 2007.

Finally, in southern Thailand, an insurgency in the majority-Muslim Patani region reportedly resulted in more than 2,500 civilian deaths since 2004 and displaced between 35,000 and 100,000 Buddhists<sup>58</sup>. During 2007, the conflict showed no sign of respite with an estimated 1,000 deaths recorded between November 2006 and September 2007, though information on resulting displacement was scarce.

### **Continuing displacements and return movements**

Return movements of those displaced prior to 2007 remained limited throughout the region. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced for many

years, sometimes decades, with little hope for return due to continuing conflicts, opposition from former neighbours or the failure of national authorities to address land and property issues.

In the Puttalam district of western Sri Lanka, some 60,000 Muslim IDPs have been living in 140 welfare centers and 60 relocation sites since being forced from majority-Tamil northern areas seventeen years ago. During 2007, a World Bank grant provided hope of improved housing conditions. However, despite this resettlement assistance and the length of their displacement, many of the people displaced still hoped to return when security conditions permit.

At least 600,000 people remained displaced in India following earlier or ongoing conflict and localised violence. In the western state of Gujarat, thousands of Muslim IDPs remained displaced by inter-communal violence which erupted in 2002. The squalid relief camps in which many of the IDPs were living were shut down by the state government in an effort to make them to return to their homes, but their return continued to be blocked by the hostility of former neighbours. At the end of 2007, some 19,000 Muslims were living in more than 40 emergency settlements across the state and in ghettos within cities and towns.

In the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, up to 50,000 members of tribal groups or Adivasi remained in government-run makeshift camps in the Dantewada and Bijapur districts. While some had initially sought refuge in the camps from the violence between Maoist rebels and pro-government militias, others were forced

to move there by the militias and even forcefully prevented from leaving them. In the north-eastern states, the return of over 200,000 people continued to be blocked: for example local authorities denied over 30,000 IDPs from the Bru community in Mizoram the option of return as a Bru armed faction had not given up their armed struggle.

Of the estimated 150,000 people who fled riots and fighting in Timor-Leste's capital Dili in 2006, around 100,000 remained unable or unwilling to return at the end of 2007. The majority of the displaced were living in rural districts, mainly with host families: they had not returned to their home communities because of unresolved land and property issues, a lack of progress in the reconstruction of damaged houses and volatile security conditions. During 2007, the government started resettling a number of IDPs from the camps in Dili to longer-term transitional shelters, but the lack of funds and problems in identifying suitable sites hampered the process and by October, the capacity of the transitional shelters was still only about ten per cent of the population of Dili's camps. By the end of the year, the new government had abandoned the scheme<sup>59</sup>.

With the exception of Sri Lanka, there were few large-scale organised return movements during 2007. Most of the people who returned during the year did so shortly after being displaced, as soon as the security situation permitted, as for example in Pakistan's Swat Valley. In both Sri Lanka and Pakistan, returnees found their homes and communities heavily damaged and sometimes completely destroyed.

In the Philippines, the mobile nature of the conflict has led communities to suffer repeated short-term displacements over the years. Thus the majority of the estimated 145,000 forced to leave their homes during 2007 returned as soon as fighting receded, usually in the following days or weeks. Similarly, in Pakistan most of the 500,000 or more people displaced in November in the North West Frontier Province are believed to have returned before the end of the year.

Some regions where warring parties had made peace in recent years, such as Nepal or Indonesia's Aceh province, continued to see gradual return movements. While assistance was sometimes available for the return of these long-term IDPs, most returns were initiated on an individual basis and took place with little or no external help.

In Nepal, people displaced by the ten-year civil war between the rebel Maoists and the government continued returning to their homes during 2007 despite continued threats to their safety from local Maoist cadres in some areas and unresolved issues related to land and property. Return movements started in the wake of the May 2006 ceasefire and intensified following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006. An estimated 50,000 to 70,000 people remained displaced, most of were likely to integrate in the areas of their displacement<sup>60</sup>.

In Indonesia's Aceh province, where the August 2005 peace agreement put an end to 30 years of conflict, most of those displaced were believed to have returned home or resettled by the end of 2007. However, assessments in return areas devastated by years of conflict and lack of development revealed pressing needs with regard to housing, food, health care, livelihood and psycho-social assistance<sup>61</sup>.

The end of armed conflict or the restoration of peace and security in areas formerly affected by inter-communal violence did not necessarily enable displaced people to return to their homes and restart their lives. Often former neighbours opposed their return, and where years of heavy fighting had caused widespread destruction of property and essential infrastructure, displaced people were often unwilling to return and preferred to integrate locally or try to restart their lives elsewhere.

In Aceh province, the majority of the estimated 150,000 ethnic Javanese who fled and sought refuge in neighbouring North Sumatra between 1999 and 2004 had still not returned, and in fact most had no intention of doing so, having long established livelihoods in their area of displacement.

Most people displaced in Indonesia's other former hotspots of Maluku and North Maluku, West and Central Kalimantan and Central Sulawesi had long returned to their homes since they were displaced seven or eight years ago. However, tens of thousands of people across the Indonesian archipelago remained unable to return. They were trying to rebuild their lives in areas of displacement or in resettlement camps where living conditions were often inadequate and economic opportunities rare. Corruption and embezzlement of humanitarian funds were widely reported, in particular in Central Sulawesi and Maluku provinces, where many IDPs were still waiting for promised government assistance.



Schools destroyed by the war in central Aceh province, November 2007.

*Photo: Frederik Kok, IDMC*

## IDPs' rights and related protection needs

Caught in the fighting between armed groups and government forces, targeted specifically in counter-insurgency campaigns, or victims of religious or ethnic violence, displaced civilians continued to be subjected to threats to their physical security and integrity. When forced to flee their homes, they often continued to be vulnerable to protection and security risks during displacement or when attempting to return home.

### Threats from armed actors

During 2007, the terrorist threat continued to be used by some governments in Asia to justify an increase in military operations against rebel movements and their suspected sympathisers. Counter-terrorist strategies pursued in countries such as the Philippines, Afghanistan and Pakistan often failed to differentiate between combatants and civilians and thereby caused large-scale displacement. In Afghanistan, the markedly increased reliance of international forces on aerial bombardments (the number of sorties in which weapons were dropped increased 30 times to nearly 3,000 in 2007 compared to 86 in 2004<sup>62</sup>) in their fight against the Taleban forced more people from their homes. Across the border, in Pakistan's North Waziristan region, the government's heavy use of helicopter gunships and jet aircraft in its October 2007 offensive against Taleban militants reportedly linked to Al-Qaeda caused widespread destruction of

villages suspected of harbouring militants, leading to the displacement of 80,000 people.

The adoption by the Philippine Congress in February 2007 of an anti-terror bill known as the "Human Security Act" raised concern among Muslim groups in Mindanao that it would further curtail civil and political rights, including of the displaced population. After visiting the country the same month, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions called on the government to do more to ensure a clear distinction between civilians and members of rebel groups in its counter-insurgency campaign. The government's "guilt by association" tactics, where civilians suspected of associating with rebel groups were considered as legitimate targets, were seen as having been responsible for a large number of civilian casualties in the past years<sup>63</sup>.

In a number of countries, displaced civilians faced the choice between going into hiding and risking starvation and disease in harsh jungle environments, or risking brutal attacks on their person by government forces. In Myanmar (Burma), IDPs across the country risked violence against their person in 2007. The dangers of being caught by the Burmese army patrols and the risks of landmines and artillery attacks were especially acute for IDPs living in hiding in the contested areas in the east of the country. For IDPs living in relocation sites or in ceasefire areas with ethnic administrations, arbitrary arrest or detention, torture or beatings and forced conscription were significant risks.

In Papua, the Indonesian army reportedly sought to cut support to the OPM rebels by subjecting communities to physical abuse, burning of homes and properties, and destruction of vegetable gardens and means of livelihoods<sup>64</sup>. Displaced people were forced into hiding to avoid the threat of extra-judicial killings and other violations of their rights by the security forces.

In Laos, thousands of ethnic Hmong fled into the jungle, in response to regular attacks by the army for their past association with the Americans during the Vietnam War. A report by Amnesty International in March 2007 brought international attention to the plight of these vulnerable IDPs who lacked access to food, shelter, medical care and basic services and were living in fear of attacks and abuses by the military<sup>65</sup>. Further thousands had sought refuge across the border in Thailand and the many who were forcibly returned to Laos were at risk of severe human rights violations including torture.

The physical security of IDPs living in camps in eastern Sri Lanka was affected by the infiltration of armed men and cases of abductions in the camps. In March 2007, it was reported that armed men, some wearing the uniform of the Karuna paramilitary group, were roaming camps and taking over distribution of relief goods. In areas under LTTE control, IDP families remained liable to have family members forcibly recruited by the LTTE. Landmines remain a threat for returnees, with more than a million mines and unexploded ordnance unaccounted for, and at least 95 square kilometres still contaminated. The general security situation in many areas of return remains problematic and civilians face multiple protection risks.

### **Security and integrity of displaced women and children**

Displacement naturally results in the breakdown of a community's social and cultural networks as well as of the usual protection mechanisms that guarantee its members' economic and physical security. Husbands are separated from their wives and children from their parents. Life in camps often increases women's vulnerability exposing them to health risks or gender-based abuse. Already marginalised and discriminated against if they belong to an "inferior" ethnicity or caste group, women usually also suffer gender discrimination and are often dependent on their husbands to exercise their civil rights. Unmarried

women and widows particularly struggle to assert their rights, reclaim property or claim compensation when returning home.

Particular challenges facing displaced women and children in 2007 were reported in Myanmar (Burma), Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan. In Myanmar, domestic violence, physical assault, threats of sexual violence from army troops and forced or early marriage were seen as the most common types of violence that threatened displaced women and girls. IDP women in Sri Lanka's Puttalam district faced difficulties including abandonment and domestic and gender-based violence.

Displaced women in India continued to face threats to their security. In the north-east, the water tanks and wells in many camps were out of order, and women were forced to walk many kilometres to collect water from streams and ponds, rendering them vulnerable to harassment from the local population. In some areas, the government provided rations, but no firewood, and women also had to venture out of the IDP camps to collect firewood, exposing themselves to further risks.

Young children are at the greatest risk of dying in displacement. In Pakistan's Balochistan, 28 per cent of IDP children under the age of five were acutely malnourished and six per cent were severely underfed and in danger of starving without medical attention. An estimated 80 per cent of the hundreds of deaths among the IDPs were those of children under the age of five<sup>66</sup>. In addition, a number of IDP women in Balochistan died in childbirth in the absence of medical facilities.

In conflict, children are often the target of armed groups who recruit them to participate in combat or work as spies or messengers. Children caught up in protracted conflict in eastern Myanmar (Burma) continued to be vulnerable to abuse, and many were working in some military capacity, for both the army and non-state actors.

In Sri Lanka, many IDPs were reluctant to return to their homes for fear of the forced recruitment of their children. Both the LTTE in the north and the Karuna group in the east of the island continued to forcibly conscript children. The LTTE operated a policy in areas under its control whereby one person from each family had to enlist, leaving children at risk of losing a parent or family breadwinner.

Fleeing forced conscription or sent by their parents to live with relatives in more secure or prosperous areas, children often had to fend for themselves, vul-





Thousands of men, women and children who had fled the war in South Afghanistan were at the end of 2007 struggling to survive the freezing winter in the capital, Kabul. Hundreds of families were living in tents covered with snow both on the inside and outside.  
*Photo: Astrid Sehl, NRC*

nerable to exploitative working conditions or abuses by employers. In Nepal, in the face of forced recruitment from the Maoists and a lack of education opportunities, many parents sent their children into the cities, where they faced a wide range of risks<sup>67</sup>. At least 1,000 IDP children were reportedly living in Kathmandu and many more in the main cities of the Far West Region, where the conflict had been most intense. While some managed to attend school, many others lacked the proper documentation or were too poor. They often ended up working as domestic servants, subject to exploitation and exposed to physical or psychological abuse. On the streets of the main cities, the children risked being abducted and trafficked or exposed to sexual exploitation.

**Access to basic necessities:  
shelter, food and healthcare**

While some IDPs can take advantage of shelter with families and friends and can, initially at least, rely on the receiving community to support their immediate needs, many have no choice but to set up precarious makeshift shelters some distance from their original homes or to move to temporary accommodation in public buildings, churches, mosques or schools in cities or semi-urban areas. These groups typically endure inadequate shelter and insufficient food and drinking water, and have no access to health services, although the overcrowding and unsanitary conditions expose them, and in particular elderly

people and children among them, to health risks such as malaria, diarrhoea, and respiratory or skin infections.

In Dili, where some 30,000 East Timorese were living in makeshift camps since May 2006, the main humanitarian concern related to the health and sanitation challenges created by the prolonged presence of such a large population in overcrowded camps. Many camps were also vulnerable to floods and landslides. In a country where only a third of the population has secure access to food, the influx of large numbers of IDPs to rural districts, and poor harvests in 2006 and 2007 led to widespread food insecurity among IDPs and hosts alike.

The massive displacements in Sri Lanka stretched the capacity of both local communities and international agencies to ensure secure access to food. Those living with host families were wholly dependent on the hosts for support in the absence of government schemes to ensure that they were receiving rations. In March 2007, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that the recent near-doubling of the IDP population had created a major humanitarian challenge: in some districts WFP had been forced to put its mother-and-child nutrition and school feeding programmes on hold in order to redirect resources to the newly displaced. The situation of those living in IDP camps in the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Trincomalee presented similar causes for concern, with overcrowding and shortages of shelters and sanitation. Many IDP camps and welfare

sites offered minimal health facilities to address family planning, child bearing and feeding infants. Single women or widows responsible for the welfare of their displaced families were often at a disadvantage in accessing services and provisions.

Living conditions for IDPs in relief camps in India's Chhattisgarh state continued to be unsatisfactory. Having lost access to agricultural activity, IDPs were largely dependent on government rations and occasional manual labour on government projects under a food-for-work programme. A number of the camp shelters had no adequate roofs, with IDPs using leaves as they could not get any tarpaulin. Conditions for IDPs in camps in the north-east remained similarly desperate. In many cases, they had to do without adequate food rations, resulting in widespread malnutrition. Lack of clean drinking water remained a concern, and many camp residents had to travel miles in search of clean drinking water or collect it from dirty ponds. Health facilities remained non-existent in many cases and diseases such as malaria, jaundice, dysentery and influenza posed serious threats as existing government dispensaries often lacked basic medicines.

IDPs in hiding in conflict areas of Myanmar (Burma) were often in even more urgent need of food, shelter, clothing and farming tools. Dependent on "slash-and-burn" techniques to grow rice, the risk of having to flee at any moment from an army attack meant their means of survival could always be disrupted. These IDPs had no access to hospitals or medicines, and the only sustained medical assistance came from agencies based across the border in Thailand. Conditions for the IDPs living in ceasefire areas were generally considerably better than for IDPs at relocation sites and in hiding, with some having limited access to government hospitals and medicines, but health indicators were still generally very poor. Displaced people in ceasefire areas could also seek some income through manual labour, but many still faced chronic malnutrition with no means of securing their minimum subsistence needs.

In Pakistan's Balochistan province, where fighting between government forces and the Balochi rebel tribesmen had displaced an estimated 84,000 people by 2006, many IDPs were still living in 2007 in makeshift shelters with no access to clean drinking water or health facilities.

A family meal in a camp in Karbi Anglong, Assam State, north-eastern India. The camp was set up by the government in 2005, and was two years later still home to around 1,000 Karbi families. Despite the precarious conditions they did not wish to return to their villages for fear of reprisals from insurgent groups.  
*Photo: Viviane Dalles*





A Karen man smokes pipe outside his bamboo hut at a make-shift camp near the Salween River in Myanmar (Burma).

*Photo: Reuters, courtesy [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)*

## Accessing economic, social, cultural, and civil rights

Most of the countries in Asia which hosted displaced populations continued to show strong economic growth in 2007, but most IDPs failed to benefit as their relative poverty increased in comparison to non-displaced populations. In a number of countries in the region there was little evidence of effective programmes to provide them with employment or education opportunities, or to promote their social, cultural and civil rights.

### Displaced children's right to education

Armed conflict and forced displacement invariably threaten children's right to education, as schools are destroyed or requisitioned to house IDPs. Displaced children lose their access to school during displacement and as parents become too poor to afford their education or too afraid to send them to school.

In Myanmar (Burma), while children living in cease-fire areas had access to schools, those in conflict-affected areas had very few schools and their education was frequently disrupted as fighting broke out. As a result of the conflict in Sri Lanka, the education of thousands of children was disrupted as many schools were closed and used as shelters for IDPs. In

Afghanistan, the education of many IDP children remained disrupted throughout the year as the conflict caused schools to close.

IDP children remained without education in many parts of India in 2007. In Gujarat, many Muslim IDPs who returned to their areas of origin stopped sending children to school for fear of violence there, while thousands of tribal children in India's north-eastern states were forced to abandon their education after being displaced. Children as young as nine years of age were forced to seek work under a food-for-work programme in Chhattisgarh state, and fact-finding missions to the Chhattisgarh relief camps in 2007 noted that a number of children were unaccompanied by their parents, and that some children in boarding schools had been deported to the camps without the consent or the knowledge of their parents<sup>68</sup>.

Many IDPs in Nepal lost essential documents during their flight. As well as preventing them from accessing basic services, this blocked their attempts to send their children to school. Where administrative structures no longer existed in their districts of origin, displaced people found it impossible to obtain replacement documents. During 2007 there was no evidence of concrete government action to facilitate the issuance of new documents to replace those left behind or lost.

### Experiences of return and restitution of property

Across the region, IDPs' attempts to leave camps and return homes to rebuild lives and livelihoods were complicated by unresolved issues of land and property as well as continued protection concerns.

In March 2007, Sri Lanka's government launched a massive programme to return IDPs to areas of Eastern province which it considered under control, despite the serious concerns of humanitarian agencies and IDPs themselves over the lack of security and inappropriate conditions there. Although the more overtly coercive aspects of the return process were eased in the following months, IDPs were threatened by the government that their food rations would be cut off and that they would be forced to leave the camps unless they agreed to return.

Property restitution for Sri Lanka returnees continued to be very complicated, especially for those who had been displaced a number of times. The loss of documents to establish land title remained common as a result of displacement or the destruction of homes and government land ownership offices, while the loss of other civil documentation such as marriage, death and birth certificates also caused hardship for IDPs seeking government assistance.

In Timor-Leste, the widespread land and property disputes which arose in the wake of the large-scale displacement that occurred before and after the 1999 independence vote contributed significantly to the regional divisions between easterners and westerners that led to the May 2006 violence. At the time, easterners were quicker to return to Dili and occupied land and houses left vacant by those who had temporarily relocated to

### Urban displacement: the search for livelihoods

In conflict-affected countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal and Timor-Leste, populations boomed in the capitals and other large cities. The flow into cities of people displaced by conflict or returning refugees added to the general urbanisation trend witnessed across Asia. These urban IDPs were usually excluded from any assistance scheme, and many descended into destitution with inadequate housing and limited access to basic social services. However, like migrants moving to urban centres in search of better economic opportunities, many forcibly displaced people who gravitated to cities did not envisage a return to their rural areas even after the end of conflict.

As in previous years, many of the Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran during 2007 – estimated at 400,000 people – did not go back to their original homes where continued insecurity and poor economic and social infrastructure made reintegration unsustainable, but moved to the main cities such as Kabul in search of better economic opportunities. Between 2001 and 2007, the population in Kabul increased from 1.5 million to 4.5 million. This extraordinary rate of growth has placed a huge strain on urban infrastructures and municipalities' capacity to deliver basic services. The city of Kandahar,

located near the areas of fighting in the south of the country, also saw a significant IDP influx during the year. With the authorities and UN agencies seeking to avoid setting up new camps in the area, many of the newly displaced had no choice but to settle in empty public buildings or build illegal mud huts around the city. Owing to very difficult security conditions – WFP suffered at least 30 attacks on its convoys during the year – it was often difficult for assistance to reach the displaced.

In Nepal, rapid urbanisation and population growth combined with the influx of conflict-related IDPs led the population of the Kathmandu valley to more than double between 1995 and 2004: it was by 2007 home to 30 per cent of the country's total population. IDPs' arrival in large numbers not only strained municipalities' capacity to deliver basic services such as water supplies, sanitation and waste management, but also increased real estate and rental prices. High rental prices combined with lack of opportunities to earn a living made it very difficult for the poorest to find adequate accommodation in cities such as Kathmandu. IDPs, cut off from community and family support structures, regularly found themselves forced to live in the most inadequate conditions.

A lesson at an IDP site in Trincomalee district, northern Sri Lanka, June 2007. The school building was being used to house displaced people.

*Photo: Kavita Shukla, IDMC*



West Timor. Lack of progress by the government in addressing housing and property issues after the May 2006 violence continued to foil the return attempts of many IDPs, who decided to return to the camps because of attacks or threats from their former neighbours.

In Bangladesh, the return home of IDPs was hampered by land ownership and property disputes and also by disagreements about whether Bengali settlers should be considered as IDPs. The 1997 peace accord did include mechanisms to address internal displacement, but a task force to rehabilitate the displaced and a land commission to settle land disputes still did not function effectively.

In some areas of Nepal the displaced were welcomed back, and land and property was returned to them according to commitments made by the Maoists in the Comprehensive Peace Accord at the end of 2006. However, in other areas the Maoists opposed returns of IDPs they considered “criminals”, mainly politically active people and landowners. In the absence of any proper mechanism for the restitution of land and property, many displaced people chose not to return to areas they believed to be unsafe, preferring instead to try to integrate locally.

## Responses of national governments

Overall, the response provided by national authorities to the protection and assistance needs of their displaced citizens remained insufficient. While some

governments made progress during 2007 to formulate strategies to deal with their internal displacement problem, and took some steps to ensure that IDP rights were guaranteed, or at least that violations of these rights were minimised during all phases of displacement, most limited their actions to ad-hoc humanitarian interventions. With few exceptions, governments of the region did little to improve their human rights record, in particular when dealing with political aspirations of minorities or marginalised groups, and they continued to be the main agent of displacement across the region. Few invested adequate political or economic resources in addressing the root causes of conflicts or in helping returning or resettling populations make a successful transition from emergency assistance to recovery and re-integration. In some countries, corruption or weak administrative capacity continued to result in a wide gap between policy commitments and their implementation on the ground, while some governments continued to deny their displaced population adequate protection and assistance, severely restricting aid agencies’ access to the affected population or even refusing to acknowledge the existence of an IDP problem altogether.

In February 2007, the government of Nepal issued a revised IDP policy, bringing it in line with international standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. By the end of the year, the government had announced a relief package of \$5.6 million to help returnees, and some of that money had already been used to assist returns. In

close collaboration with the United Nations, the government also developed directives to help local authorities implement the IDP policy. However, by early 2008, the directives had not yet been formally approved.

The fledgling government of Timor-Leste continued to demonstrate goodwill towards IDPs and made efforts during 2007 to ensure that the basic humanitarian needs of the large displaced population living in camps in Dili and in rural districts were met. Despite these efforts, widely supported by the international community, many IDPs were still reported to face significant humanitarian challenges. Also, the government's return and reintegration strategy proved largely unsuccessful, mainly because of its incapacity to address key obstacles to return, in particular protection concerns, land and property disputes in areas of return and the lack of reconstruction of damaged or destroyed houses.

In Indonesia, where the majority of the displaced had returned or resettled for several years, widespread corruption and embezzlement of humanitarian funds, and devolution of responsibility for IDPs to ill-equipped and ill-resourced provincial governments made it very difficult to ensure that these solutions were sustainable. In Afghanistan, the capacity of relevant government ministries to address IDP and return issues remained limited in 2007, partly due to the high turnover of officials in relevant central and provincial roles.

The overall response of the Indian government to the internal displacement situation in the country was criticised for being inconsistent and dependent on requests for support from state authorities. The central government's response to the Kashmiri Pandit IDPs remained much more generous than its response to IDPs in other parts of the country, in particular in the north-east and Chhattisgarh state, where it continued to deny most international humanitarian actors access, arguing that local governments should take full care of the affected people.

Access restrictions remained a central feature of international humanitarian responses in Asia. International agencies were denied access to the IDPs in Balochistan by the government of Pakistan, and the fear of reprisals by security forces prevented local groups from providing protection and assistance. The Sri Lankan government placed restrictions on humanitarian agencies' access to some areas of return, particularly in the Batticaloa west area, making it more difficult

for returnees to obtain seeds and agricultural tools. However, there was a welcome easing of restrictions on aid agencies during the latter part of the year. In contrast, in Myanmar (Burma), the most vulnerable IDP groups in the conflict-affected areas along the eastern border remained beyond the access of virtually all international humanitarian organisations.

The limits to national responses were also reflected at the regional level. There were no regional initiatives during 2007 to bring a more concerted response to situations of internal displacement, which continued to be viewed as a strictly internal matter. However, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) decided in July to set up an intergovernmental human rights commission, despite strong opposition from several of its members, most notably Myanmar (Burma). The effectiveness of such a body remained to be demonstrated as it would operate within a consensus-based organisation based on the principle of non-interference. At the end of November, ASEAN members upheld this principle when they did not permit the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General to brief them on the human rights situation in Myanmar (Burma).

The international community continued to varying degrees to help national governments to protect and assist their displaced citizens, but a number of cases it was not given the chance to do so. The UN, though actively involved in the IDP response in Nepal, Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and to a lesser extent in the Philippines and Indonesia, did not address internal displacement in Myanmar (Burma), Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Laos or Uzbekistan, mainly because of the government's opposition.

Within the wider UN humanitarian reform, the cluster approach, applied in four countries of the region, did not impact on the situation of the region's conflict-induced internally displaced as it was only deployed in response to humanitarian emergencies caused by natural disasters. Similarly, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), established by the UN to close the funding gap and enable a more timely response to humanitarian needs, did not dramatically change the funding situation in conflict-affected countries. Of the ten countries of the region where CERF provided funds during 2007, only in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal and to a lesser extent Timor-Leste did the fund directly support programmes for people internally displaced by conflict.



Rebuilding lives  
in new contexts

## Internal displacement in Europe

In Europe, some 2.5 million people continued to be internally displaced, mainly in the Caucasus and the Balkans, but also in Turkey and Cyprus. Most of these people fled their homes some 15 years ago as a result of conflict arising from rejected independence claims and territorial disputes. While the majority of the countries had by 2007 been in a post-conflict recovery and development phase for several years, the situation of most internally displaced people had not improved significantly and remained a cause for concern. Many of the remaining IDPs were still unemployed and endured poor housing conditions and limited access to services and opportunities to improve their life.

While most of the governments of the region continued to take some responsibility for internally displaced people under their jurisdiction, many IDPs continued to find it impossible to realise the property rights and economic, social and cultural rights enjoyed by their



non-displaced neighbours. Only a few hundred thousand had found a durable solution to their displacement over the past decade, and most of these had struggled to rebuild their lives away from their areas of origin as it remained impossible or impracticable for them to return to their previous homes.

### Patterns of displacement

Almost all the IDPs in Europe were in 2007 in situations of protracted displacement which had lasted several years or even decades. Large-scale displacement resulted from intercommunal conflict in Cyprus and the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus from the 1960s, and from the armed conflict in south-eastern Turkey between government forces and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the 1980s and 1990s. Following the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, inter-ethnic violence and armed conflict displaced millions of people.

As the Soviet Union began to disintegrate, hundreds of thousands of people were similarly displaced by armed conflict and ethnic violence. In the Russian Federation, Chechen separatists sought self-determination, and Ingush militias and North Ossetian secu-

rity forces battled for control of Prigorodny district. In the south Caucasus, Abkhaz and South Ossetian minorities bid for independence from Georgia, and Armenia and Azerbaijan fought over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

### Continuing displacement in 2007

The number of people displaced in Europe fell from 2,7 million in 2006 to 2,5 million in 2007. This overall decrease was partly due to a fall in the reported number of IDPs in some countries, but it was also largely due to IDMC's decision to consider the number of IDPs in Cyprus as undetermined as of 2007<sup>69</sup>. In the early 1960s Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots fought over their political place in the newly independent Cyprus, and although a peacekeeping force was deployed in 1964, violence erupted again in the early 1970s when a coup supported by Greece prompted Turkish troops to invade the island. With the island divided since 1974, over 200,000 Greek and Turkish Cypriots who fled their homes have been unable to return home. More than thirty years on, it is unknown how many of those people continue to live in an IDP-like situation.

◀ A woman and child walk past residential buildings being rebuilt in the Chechen capital Grozny. Despite reconstruction efforts, lack of access to housing overtook personal security as the main obstacle to IDPs' return in Chechnya. Photo: Reuters, courtesy [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)



A Roma woman dancing at a ceremony to mark the return of the Roma community to Roma Mahala in Mitrovica, Kosovo, March 2007.

Photo: OSCE/Hasan Sopa



In other countries the number of IDPs remained stable or continued to slowly fall. Despite continuing low-intensity conflict in Chechnya between separatists and government forces, the number of IDPs in the Russian Federation originating from Chechnya decreased from around 159,000 to 137,000, due to returns and a de-registration exercise carried out by the authorities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, after completing a re-registration exercise, UNHCR reported a decrease from 185,000 in the spring of 2005 to 132,000 in October 2007, mainly due to return and local integration; in Croatia, the number fell to a little over 3,000 as a result of local integration.

In Serbia and in Macedonia, there was no significant change in the reported number of IDPs, with some 227,000 IDPs in Serbia (excluding Kosovo), 21,000 in Kosovo and 790 in Macedonia at the year's end. In Georgia with some 247,000 IDPs, Azerbaijan with 690,000 and Turkey with up to 1.2 million, the figures from 2006 were the latest available.

There was no current and reliable data on the number of IDPs in Armenia, or on those in Russia originating from North Ossetia. Unlike other countries in the region, Armenia has no law to define IDPs and so compiling figures and gathering information on their situation has proven difficult.

### Return movements

Government efforts to facilitate returns during 2007 had only limited success. This was mainly due to difficult economic conditions in areas of potential return, ethnic discrimination, insecurity, but also unresolved land and

property issues. In some countries, the return process was also intimately linked to the resolution of broader political issues of territorial delimitation and sovereignty.

A mere few thousand IDPs returned home in 2007, including some 4,500 people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, about 1,500 in Serbia and small numbers in Chechnya and North Ossetia. By early 2007 around 30 per cent of IDPs in Croatia, 20 per cent in Georgia and 12 per cent in Turkey had returned to their homes or areas of origin since their original displacement. Figures were unavailable for Armenia and Macedonia, and return was still not possible in Azerbaijan and Cyprus. However, in many countries in the region, return was not necessarily permanent as IDPs shuttled between their current and former homes, or later decided to take up residence in a new area.

In most countries of the region, the return of IDPs was hampered by limited employment options, poor access to social services, few sustainable housing options, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient guarantees of physical security and resulting obstacles to free movement. The EU enlargement division concluded in 2007 that almost no progress had been made on return of IDPs in Kosovo and that "the return process remains a major challenge ahead, politically, institutionally and also financially"<sup>70</sup>. The issue of tenancy rights of IDPs in cities remained an obstacle to return in Croatia, as tenants displaced from socially owned property were not entitled to compensation or restitution. In Turkey, many IDPs were unaware of the government return programme, and some who applied received little or no aid<sup>71</sup>. In all areas of the Balkans, ethnic discrimination and the lack of employ-

ment opportunities discouraged IDPs from returning to their former places of residence. The ethnic make-up of Bosnia and Herzegovina's local political structures had the effect of preventing IDPs returning to areas where they would be of a minority ethnicity.

In other cases, broader political processes blocked IDPs from returning to their homes. The stalemate persisted between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, and as a result there was little hope of large-scale return, although the government of Azerbaijan was developing a plan for the return of IDPs during the year<sup>72</sup>. The deadlock over the conflicts in Georgia also stood in the way of organised return of IDPs to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Similarly in Cyprus, both the Greek Cypriot government and Turkish Cypriot administration failed to implement the 2006 agreement which would lay the groundwork for further negotiations, and IDPs on both sides of the buffer zone continued to be prevented from taking possession of their properties. In Russia, some IDPs from North Ossetia claimed that the government was barring their return by declaring their villages water conservation zones, but the government stated that there were no villages closed for return<sup>73</sup>. Similarly, some Roma were cut off from their settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina since they have been declared water supply or "buffer zones", waste storage sites, or the property of municipal authorities or the non-Roma population<sup>74</sup>.

### Resettlement and local integration

With many obstacles still preventing return in many countries, resettlement and local integration often represented for IDPs the only route towards a durable solution. While some government initiatives proved successful in providing land, housing and improved living conditions, many difficulties were reported with regards to the quality and location of the resettlement sites and the lack of inclusion of IDPs in resettlement processes which were sometimes reportedly forced upon them. The experience of Azerbaijan's major programme to resettle IDPs is further considered below.

The governments of Dagestan and North Ossetia in Russia also resettled IDPs in 2007. The authorities in Dagestan allotted land plots, bricks and financial assistance to over 130 IDPs from Chechnya, while in North Ossetia, the government established the village of Novy for IDPs unable to return to their original homes. While some 250 IDP families accepted the offer and resettled in Novy, others insisted on their right

to return to their places of origin, even resorting to hunger strike protests in Moscow. At year's end their demand had not been met.

In some areas there was reluctance to support the integration of IDPs at their current place of residence. The international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina initially avoided giving support to the local integration of IDPs so as not to make permanent the effects of ethnic cleansing during the war; thus initiatives to provide permanent housing and employment in areas of displacement were only established recently and were limited to the most vulnerable residents of collective centres. In Serbia, the government was hesitant to allow IDPs from Kosovo to permanently settle in Serbia proper before the status of Kosovo was finalised, for fear of reducing their claim over Kosovo, though the Council of Europe warned that IDPs in Serbia "should not be held hostage to future political settlements"<sup>75</sup>.

## IDPs' enjoyment of their rights

More than fifteen years after fleeing their homes, most of those still displaced in Europe were unable to resettle or return to their original homes and did not fully enjoy all of their rights in the areas where they were living. They faced threats to their physical security, poor housing conditions, limited access to social services, lack of employment opportunities and difficulties in getting restitution or compensation for the property they left behind. Many were particularly vulnerable, including traumatised survivors of atrocities, sick and disabled people, elderly people without family support and single mothers. A registration exercise in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2007 showed that 40 per cent of IDPs had a chronic illness, 33 per cent had a physical or mental disability, 21 per cent were minors and 14 per cent were over 65. Nonetheless, the attention of international humanitarian organisations was waning and humanitarian aid during 2007 continued to decline.

### Personal safety and integrity

Most IDPs did not face immediate physical security concerns in their place of displacement, except in Russia, where in some areas of the north Caucasus, IDPs continued to face security risks along with the general population. In several countries, threats to their security in areas of origin continued to discourage people from returning home.

A rural settlement in Barda, Azerbaijan, November 2007, where IDPs had been living for over 15 years in makeshift shelters. With no heating system or proper windows, this dwelling failed to provide sufficient warmth, ventilation, physical security or privacy.  
*Photo: Nadine Walicki, IDMC*



In Chechnya, the security situation improved in some ways, but separatist rebels and government forces continued to fight, and illegal detention and torture of civilians were ongoing. Many IDPs refused to return home to mountain villages because of the continued hostilities and landmines<sup>76</sup>. Security declined in Ingushetia in 2007; in mid-2007 federal troops arrived to reinforce security, but by the end of the year skirmishes between local security forces and armed groups were being reported on a regular basis, and there was a sharp increase in the number of abductions and killings of civilians of minority groups. Civilians were also targeted in North Ossetia, where several Ingush youth were shot, and in Dagestan, where security forces conducted special operations in which villagers were beaten and detained. Chechen IDPs living in areas of Russia outside the north Caucasus were also at risk: incidents of violence and intolerance in a number of regions against people originating from the north Caucasus continued to be reported in 2007<sup>77</sup>.

In most other countries, returnees faced risks to their physical security. In Kosovo and to a lesser extent in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they continued to endure ethnically-motivated attacks and intimidation. Landmines and unexploded ordnance posed a security threat to returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in Turkey and Armenia. While de-mining efforts continued in Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2007, the Armenian government's policy not to de-mine its territory until the conflict with Azerbaijan is resolved threatened the security of IDPs who had returned to border areas. Though it had not acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty,

Azerbaijan's National Agency for Mine Action continued marking and clearing landmines in 2007. However, with shots still fired across the frontier and tensions remaining high<sup>78</sup>, returnees in Armenia had to be accompanied by soldiers when cultivating their land, and resettlers in Azerbaijan feared for their physical security in villages less than ten kilometres from the line of contact. With no resolutions to the conflicts in Georgia, frequent security incidents also remained an obstacle to return in South Ossetia and to a lesser extent in Abkhazia.

Displaced people in Turkey who returned to areas bordering northern Iraq faced insecurity as the government deployed troops along the border in mid-2007 and declared some of these areas "temporary security zones". The village guard system also continued to threaten the physical security of returnees; established by the Turkish government in the 1980s to protect villages against PKK attacks, these local militia have since been implicated in a variety of human rights violations including the confiscation of returnees' land<sup>79</sup>. The Turkish parliament adopted amendments in 2007 allowing for the recruitment of an additional 60,000 provisional village guards<sup>80</sup>.

Violence and intimidation in Kosovo continued to discourage IDPs from travelling outside their area of displacement. Kosovo Serbs in particular tended to live in enclaves surrounded by Albanian neighbourhoods, making it difficult for some to access local services such as law courts or health clinics. When IDPs did travel, it was often between enclaves and using humanitarian buses run by the Kosovo authorities to facilitate movements of members of minority groups.

### Accessing social services and health care

IDPs struggled to access social benefits and health care services for a number of reasons linked to their lack of personal documents and inability to register for support.

Some could not replace lost or destroyed documents. In Serbia and Azerbaijan, IDPs had to approach their “municipality in exile” to access the records they needed from their original place of residence, which often entailed costly travel. For IDPs in Serbia, certain documents were only available on request in Kosovo, where most were unable or unwilling to go; those who applied to Kosovo authorities to have employment records, driving licenses or university diplomas reissued encountered a mixed response, especially as some records had been destroyed or lost. The lack of mutual recognition of documents between Serbia and Kosovo represented an additional obstacle for IDPs to avail themselves of their rights.

Roma IDPs from Kosovo faced particular obstacles with regard to documentation. Some 20 to 40 per cent never had proof of their identity or residence before their displacement, and had to initiate costly procedures in order to be registered. Living in informal settlements without legal residence or identification, Roma IDPs could not acquire an IDP card to register new births, apply for citizenship and access health care, social benefits, employment and education. The lack of documentation also presented the risk of statelessness in an independent Kosovo for those who could not prove their link

with Kosovo when applying for citizenship. The Office of the Prime Minister in Kosovo made recommendations to ease Roma’s access to documents, but their implementation was uneven.

To access free health care services IDPs in Serbia had to present a health certificate. To get this certificate they had to present their IDP identity card, for which they needed a personal identification card, temporary residence registration, and proof of their residence before 1999. Thus many could not access health care or other assistance and services. Less than half of Roma IDPs have health certificates, and access to health care is a serious problem for many Roma IDPs in Serbia due to a range of cultural and procedural barriers.

In Ingushetia, the Russian Migration Service took IDPs living in the private sector off the forced migrant register in early 2007, as they were not registered at their current place of residence. This rendered them ineligible for government benefits, and the cost of appealing against their de-registration was prohibitive for many IDPs.

IDPs and returnees throughout the region continued to face discrimination in access to social services, which sometimes undermined the sustainability of returns. Minority returnees in Bosnia and Herzegovina often faced intimidation and discrimination in accessing services and entitlements, as the authorities in some areas of Croat-controlled Herzegovina and some towns in the eastern Republika Srpska continued to resist minority returns, obstructing their access to local services

A collective centre in Gori, Georgia, housing people displaced from South Ossetia. By 2007, some of Georgia’s IDPs had been living in collective centres for fifteen years.

*Photo: Tako Tavartkiladze, NRC*





New housing for a displaced family from Chechnya who opted to stay in neighbouring Ingushetia, July 2007.  
*Photo: Nadine Walicki, IDMC*

including municipal power and water, education, issuance of important civil documents and health care<sup>81</sup>. Similarly, in Kosovo, minority IDPs often had to rely on the limited facilities situated in their enclave. Kosovo Serbs largely relied on parallel institutions operating on the territory of Kosovo under the de facto authority of Serbia to meet their needs in terms of documents, education, health care and justice.

#### Access to livelihood opportunities

Many IDPs continued to struggle to secure a livelihood, because job opportunities were still scarce in the depressed economic environments of the region, and also because they faced additional difficulties compared with non-displaced nationals in overcoming administrative obstacles or adapting to urban job markets.

Unemployment rates remained high in most countries of the region as the local economies struggle to recover from the conflict: the unemployment rate in Chechnya was estimated at between 50 and 80 per cent in 2007, and that of the Serbian community in Kosovo at 70 per cent. In Azerbaijan, IDPs living in areas bordering Nagorno-Karabakh suffered higher unemployment than the local population, despite government schemes to introduce financial credit and employment quotas for IDPs. According to the Georgian authorities, IDPs in Georgia had a higher rate of unemployment than the non-displaced population, and their employment was often unstable and unrelated to their professional qualifications. Jobs were scarce throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina with only an estimated 17 per cent of IDPs employed, while 20 per cent of IDPs still had no source of income in October 2007.

Even where there were opportunities to earn an income, IDPs faced obstacles in gaining employment. In Serbia IDPs had to produce a work booklet to receive employment benefits; those who lost their booklet during flight faced a lengthy procedure to have a new one issued, and those who never had one had to submit their request in their place of permanent residence.

In Azerbaijan, many IDPs were at a disadvantage because they lacked the skills, contacts and capital to compete in the job market; local banks would not lend to those without registered residence. The UN Representative on the Human Rights of IDPs urged the government in Azerbaijan to strengthen programmes to help IDPs become more self-sufficient. IDPs in Turkey also struggled to compete in the urban labour markets since they were more skilled in agriculture and animal husbandry, had a low level of education, and often did not speak Turkish.

Returnees faced additional obstacles to earning an income, including threats to their physical security, problems regaining access to property and land, discrimination and lack of capital. Unemployment of returnees was most pronounced in Turkey, Russia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. In Armenia and Turkey returnees were unsafe accessing their agricultural land because of land mines and, in the case of Armenia, ongoing hostilities with Azerbaijan. In Turkey some who had returned had found their orchards, fields and livestock neglected, confiscated or destroyed.

Given the lack of work opportunities, many IDPs continued to depend on government assistance. In 2007 most IDPs in Armenia, and many in Georgia, still relied on government and humanitarian assistance programmes. In Georgia, IDPs frequently faced debt

problems as the assistance was insufficient to meet their needs. In Azerbaijan, the displaced shared many of the economic challenges of their non-displaced neighbours; however, with a lower income and greater expenditure on food and transport, IDPs were more dependent on government allowances and pensions. In Russia, humanitarian aid and pensions, unemployment allowances and child benefits were still the main source of income for many IDPs.

### Displaced children's access to education

In all countries, primary education was free and compulsory and the lack of documentation was seldom an obstacle. However, poverty and the need to provide economic support to the family was the main obstacle to education in the region, while in some countries, ethnic discrimination was reported to discourage attendance. In most countries, school conditions for displaced children were reported to be poor due to a lack of qualified teachers and equipment.

Most IDP children and youth in the region were enrolled in primary and secondary education. Figures on enrolment rates of displaced children were only available for Serbia, where the rate stood at over 90 per cent, and most schools were willing to enrol children without proper documentation. Schools in Russia usually enrolled IDP children without any particular problems, while in Turkey IDP school attendance was maintained in some areas by government incentives for parents to keep their children in school.

Parallel education systems and curriculums were organised in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Georgia, which often discouraged ethnic integration. Displaced ethnic Abkhaz children living in Georgia proper continued to be schooled separately in Abkhaz and Russian. Conversely, ethnic Georgian children returning to Abkhazia after being displaced in Georgia proper lacked Abkhaz and Russian language skills and so struggled to acquire the skills and knowledge for higher education or employment.

The condition of schools for IDP children varied. In the Caucasus, many IDP kindergartens and schools were in urgent need of repair as well as new equipment and supplies and additional qualified staff. In Azerbaijan, new schools were built in resettlement villages, while children in other areas could attend either a school for the displaced or a local school, though these were often in the same building. According to the government, this system helped to preserve the fabric of communities to

facilitate their eventual return, and in a 2007 survey in Azerbaijan, principals, teachers, parents and children unanimously stated their preference for separate IDP schools. However, schools were already being built to cater to both IDP and local children.

In some countries, displaced children did not attend school or dropped out because their parents could not afford to send them to school. Some displaced children in Turkey, for example, stopped going in order to contribute to the family income; non-attendance was reported in Azerbaijan, due to the movement of families in search of employment. Other IDP children, in particular Roma in the Balkans, did not go to school because they did not speak the language or suffered from bullying at school.

### Enjoyment of property rights

Across Europe the main concerns for IDPs were to access adequate housing and to assert their property rights. Housing conditions of Europe's IDPs varied widely. Information on the living conditions of IDPs who were able to access private sector housing was generally limited; nonetheless, the majority of IDPs in Georgia, Russia, Turkey, Cyprus, Serbia and Croatia were living in private apartments or houses, as were some in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Macedonia. The standard of this private accommodation was often inadequate: many of Turkey's IDPs were living in shacks with no infrastructure, while many IDPs in rural Azerbaijan had lived for 15 years in crowded makeshift dwellings, without electricity or effective protection from the elements, on land allocated by the government for their temporary use and for which they had no security of tenure.

Other IDPs in Serbia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and elsewhere were living in informal settlements, squatting in illegally occupied buildings or makeshift dwellings where they were vulnerable to disease and extreme weather, without the proof of residence needed for government support, and at constant risk of eviction.

Still other IDPs in Georgia, Russia, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia were in public buildings such as university dormitories, schools and hospitals, commonly referred to as collective centres. While some displaced families had managed over time to secure alternative accommodation and move out of the centres, many others had by 2007 lived in these buildings for over 15 years. Families often occupied a single room with no separation of the sexes

or age groups, with rooms becoming more crowded as families grew over time. Areas shared by residents such as kitchens and bathrooms were often dilapidated and supplies of gas, electricity and water were irregular.

The scarcity of housing continued to stop IDPs returning to their areas of origin. In Bosnia, by March 2007, over 40 per cent of damaged housing had still not been rebuilt. While the reconstruction programme benefited many displaced people, very few of those whose tenancy rights had been cancelled during the war, and who could not repossess their property due to discriminatory legislation, were included in the programme. The reconstruction programme that began in 1996 continued in 2007 with 2,000 homes rebuilt; but there were 2,500 outstanding requests and almost 15,000 cases under appeal, some of which had been pending for four years. In Armenia, IDPs returned to houses in need of repair and some were living in abandoned basements in the absence of any compensation system.

In Chechnya, lack of housing overtook personal security as the main obstacle to return. Only some returning IDPs received help to rebuild their destroyed homes. Many were unable to find a place in collective centres, and were forced to accept temporary accommodation or land from the authorities or else find their own solution. The majority of resettlers used home-made bricks

and recycled materials to build some sort of shelter. Access to public utilities was usually poor with the electricity, gas and water supplies either frequently interrupted or non-existent in resettlement areas. Under the federal government's housing programme established in 2005, people registered by the Migration Service as in need of housing were entitled to a housing subsidy, but at the end of 2007, there was still no detailed information on the impact for IDP families.

### Redress for lost property

Several governments in the region issued compensation for lost property in 2007, though in most countries it has not led to widespread return and reconstruction of private housing. In Turkey, property compensation commissions continued their work in 2007, but half way through the year only around 42,000 out of 270,000 applicants had been awarded compensation. In response to accusations of inconsistency and delay, Damage Assessment Commissions were by 2007 following standardised guidance on compensation decisions and award levels.

In Azerbaijan, the UN Representative on the Human Rights of IDPs highlighted that any future compensation schemes would have to overcome the fact that IDPs lack title deeds of their previous property. As the

### Evictions of IDPs from collective centres

In some countries in the Caucasus and the Balkans, IDPs were offered alternative accommodation or compensation in exchange for vacating temporary government housing. Such agreements can result in improved living conditions for IDPs, but this was not always the case in the region in 2007.

In a government effort to close the collective centres in Chechnya, residents were offered incentives to resettle including use of land or an interim grant for rental accommodation. However the compensation and assistance was seldom perceived to be adequate and some residents alleged they were evicted from the collective centres through physical force or threats. In 2006 there were 21 collective centres in Grozny housing 4,400 displaced families, but at the end of 2007 only 12 remained, housing around 1,000 families.

In Georgia, the number of evictions of IDPs from collective centres fell in 2007. The process

of eviction following the government's sale of buildings varied, but there was no information on forceful evictions. While some IDPs were offered alternative accommodation, others were offered insufficient compensation. A November assessment showed that many of those evicted from collective centres in the autonomous republic of Adjara were now living with relatives or in accommodation that they owned, rented or had paid a deposit on.

Ten collective centres in Serbia were closed in 2007 without durable alternatives being offered to the residents, while displaced Roma families living in informal settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina were subjected to frequent evictions, making it difficult for them to register their residence and obtain official identification documents, receive medical care or send their children to school.



### Resettlers in Azerbaijan

Since 2001, the government of Azerbaijan has built new settlements for some 70,000 IDPs, and in 2007 the President of Azerbaijan approved further investment of over \$1 billion until 2011 for the continued resettlement of IDPs and the creation of livelihood opportunities for them. IDPs have chosen to resettle without pressure being put on them, often from the IDP settlements with the worst and unhealthiest conditions. Those who have decided not to resettle have been free to seek other solutions, but have not received government assistance to do so.

Resettlers have received a new house and a small plot of land to use until return to their original homes becomes possible. Receiving newly built homes as well as an adjacent plot of land, resettled IDPs have generally enjoyed a real improvement in their housing conditions.

While most resettlement areas have medical centres, daycares and schools, the new villages are often in remote areas without public transport links, and the physical security of IDPs has in a few cases been compromised by the proximity of the line of contact with Armenia and the landmines there. Land is often infertile and water supply interruptions are frequent.

The government acknowledged in 2007 that the main challenge in resettlement areas was to create livelihood opportunities, given the limited infrastructure and access to job markets and transport networks. Besides work as teachers, medical staff

or shopkeepers, there are few opportunities in the villages for resettlers to become self-reliant.

Resettlers' houses remain the property of the state, unlike housing built and allocated to IDPs by humanitarian organisations, and so occupants have limited security of tenure. However, opportunities to move on from the new settlements are limited, as IDPs must formally register their new residence if they are to continue to receive assistance. However, residence permits for large cities are difficult for IDPs and others to obtain, and so relocation in search of work is liable to lead to the loss of assistance.

New resettlement villages in Azerbaijan, November 2007: Zubchuk, a new village to which IDPs will move in 2008 (above), and Dord Yol-2, less than seven kilometres from the line of contact with Armenian forces (below).

*Photos: Nadine Walicki, IDMC*





country had no laws for restitution or compensation for property lost or damaged during the conflict, some IDPs appealed to the European Court of Human Rights to assert their right to use and enjoy their property.

In Georgia, a law on property restitution in South Ossetia came into force at the beginning of 2007, but it was not recognised by the de facto South Ossetian authorities. Cases resolved through the Georgian courts therefore led to compensation being issued, which was generally insufficient to enable IDPs to access adequate alternative shelter. Meanwhile, Georgian IDPs from Abkhazia were able to register their titles to land and property in a state inventory under the “My House” programme launched in 2006 by the Georgian authorities.

Restitution of property in the Balkans had largely been completed by 2007, but in many cases did not result in the return of IDPs to their original homes. In Bosnia, the success in resolving most cases enabled a significant number of IDPs and refugees to return or allowed them to rent or sell their pre-war property to help them integrate in the area they were displaced to. In Serbia, the Kosovo Housing and Property Directorate (HPD) resolved almost all of the 29,000 claims from Kosovo Serbs displaced into Serbia proper before its closure in mid-2007, but only 18 per cent of applicants opted to return to their property. In Croatia repossession of private property was largely completed, although only about 25 per cent of these properties were subsequently occupied by their owners. However, former tenants or occupants of social housing were not eligible for repossession, and in November 2007 the EU highlighted the need for Croatia to “deal with compensation claims of those who lost occupancy and tenancy rights in Croatia”<sup>82</sup>.

Russian courts turned down all applications for restitution of lost or seized property in Chechnya, instead promoting compensation schemes by which IDPs could receive compensation for destroyed housing up to a maximum of around \$5,000 for those who had resettled and about \$14,000 for those who returned to Chechnya. Only people whose homes were almost completely ruined were eligible, and reportedly compensation was generally insufficient to repair them or build another house. Most recipients put the money towards buying a car, a plot of land, construction materials or daily living expenses. By late 2007, over 80,000 people had benefited from these schemes, but there were still more than 250,000 applications to be proc-

essed. Although residents of collective centres were listed as priority recipients, payments and processing of outstanding applications had been on hold since 2006 due to a lack of federal funds.

Displaced people in Cyprus were in 2007 awaiting an ECHR ruling on the effectiveness of the property commission established in 2006 in north Cyprus by the Turkish Cypriot administration. Towards the end of 2007 the commission had received 300 applications from Greek Cypriots and made decisions on 28 cases, generally awarding financial compensation, but also restitution and in one case property exchange. The ECHR was also examining the voluntariness of the property exchange agreement as well as the validity of Turkish Cypriots’ appeals for property restitution to the Greek Cypriot courts.

In some countries, people who chose to resettle also faced insecurity of tenure. In Azerbaijan and in Russia, some IDPs could not formalise their ownership of land plots, and so resettlers could neither register as residents nor sell the houses they had built on the land.

## National and international responses

Although donor support continued to wane in 2007, governments continued to take responsibility for their internal displacement situations, and several governments worked to facilitate returns. In Kosovo, the government established municipal safety councils, continued implementing community and “go and see” visits, and for the majority of returns, rebuilt the returnees’ homes. Similarly, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina contributed to a “return fund” to finance the reconstruction of housing in 30 municipalities and to support a project aiming to close collective centres. Georgia’s National IDP Strategy contained provisions for return, but had yet to be implemented at the end of the year. However, the government of Georgia and the de facto Abkhaz authorities agreed on UNHCR’s document Strategic Directions for the Return of IDPs to Gali<sup>83</sup>. Armenia and Turkey both had programmes to facilitate the integration of returnees, but while returnees have already benefited from Turkey’s programme<sup>84</sup>, Armenia had yet to adopt and finance its programme. In 2007, Turkey designated its General Directorate of Provincial Administration as responsible for all IDP-related policies and compensation programmes.

The main regional organisations focusing on internal displacement in Europe are the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). A number of Council of Europe initiatives in 2007 promoted an improved response to the situations of IDPs throughout the region, especially those in the south Caucasus and the Balkans, and advocated for the further development of government strategies for voluntary and sustainable return or local integration. The Council's Commissioner for Human Rights considered internal displacement issues during missions to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued several judgements relating to internal displacement in the region. In late 2007, it ordered Russia to pay about \$260,000 to the owners of an estate in a Chechen village for its occupation and damage by Russian police units. There were also several appeals before the ECHR concerning the denial of property restitution in Russia.

The Council's Committee of Ministers also continued to review the property rights of Greek Cypriots in northern Cyprus. The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population of the Parliamentary Assembly published a report on displaced persons in the Balkans, calling for governments to address the deep-rooted pattern of discrimination in the region. In an opinion on the state of human rights in Europe, the Committee

also highlighted the slow progress towards durable solutions for IDPs in the north and south Caucasus, singling out the situation of IDPs from North Ossetia in Russia.

At the European Union, the Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee expressed deep concern about the ongoing difficult situation of IDPs and urged the European Commission Humanitarian Office to conduct a mission to assess their needs. The European Commission allocated close to \$3 million to vulnerable groups in Abkhazia, including IDP returnees, and continued with a \$380 million programme to encourage the economic development of Turkish Cypriots on both sides of the buffer zone in Cyprus. European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instruments were issued for Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, which contained provisions for landmine removal and assistance in the case of return.

The OSCE continued to mediate conflict resolution negotiations in Azerbaijan and Georgia, and the UN continued to do the same in Georgia and Cyprus. The OSCE also made recommendations on educational institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, despite all these efforts, the internally displaced people of Europe still remained far from achieving full enjoyment of their rights or durable solutions to their situations, whether in their places of origin or elsewhere.

Displaced residents of a collective centre in Mostogradnja, Serbia, September 2007.  
*Photo: Praxis*



## Annexe: IDP Country Figures

Countries	Number of IDPs (rounded)	Government figures	UN figures	Other figures	Comments
Afghanistan	161,000		160,884 (UNHCR, January 2008)		UNHCR estimates include 128,748 people displaced during the Taleban regime and in 2002, and 32,136 newly displaced by ongoing conflict to the end of 2007.
Algeria	Undetermined			1,000,000 (EU, 2002)	No recent figures available.
Angola	20,000		19,566 (UN-TCU, November 2005)		UN figure refers to the number of IDPs in the Cabinda region. No recent figure is available.
Armenia	8,400			8,400 (NRC, 2005)	No recent figure available.
Azerbaijan	At least 690,000	686,586 (March 2007)	686,586 (UNHCR, December 2006)		UNHCR figure includes only those displaced from Nagorno Karabakh and the seven occupied territories.
Bangladesh	500,000	500,000–550,000 (2000)		60,000 (AI, 2000)	In 2000 the government reported 128,364 displaced families, or 500,000–550,000 IDPs, in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, though Amnesty International and others reported in 2000 an IDP figure as low as 60,000. No more recent information is available.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	132,000	131,600 (October 2007)	131,600 (UNHCR, October 2007)		
Burundi	100,000		100,000 (OCHA, November 2006)		
Central African Republic	197,000		197,000 (OCHA, December 2007)		
Chad	179,000		178,918 (UNHCR, October 2007)		
Colombia	2,390,000–4,000,000	2,387,538 (January 2008)		4,000,000 (CODHES, February 2008)	CODHES figure is cumulative since 1985, while government figure is cumulative only since 1994 and does not include intra-urban displacement; displacement due to crop fumigations; or displacements which took place since January 2007 (as IDPs can only register one year after their displacement).
Congo	7,800	7,800	7,800 (OCHA, November 2004)		No recent figures available.

IDP COUNTRY FIGURES

Countries	Number of IDPs (rounded)	Government figures	UN figures	Other figures	Comments
Côte d'Ivoire	709,000		709,000 (UNHCR, March 2007)		UNHCR's figure is based on a 2006 UNFPA survey conducted in five government-held zones.
Croatia	3,200	3,200 (October 2007)	3,200 (UNHCR, October 2007)		
Cyprus	Undetermined	210,000 (Republic of Cyprus, September 2007)	210,000 (UNFICYP, May 2003)	0 ("Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", October 2007)	In the absence of any recent survey, it is unclear how many of the estimated 210,000 people forced from their homes in the 1970s can still be considered as displaced.
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1,400,000		1,312,368 (OCHA, December 2007)		OCHA figure does not include 150,000 IDPs reported in 2007 but not yet verified in North Kivu.
Eritrea	32,000	8,900 displaced households in Gash Barka and Debub (March 2006)	32,000 (UNICEF, May 2007)		
Ethiopia	200,000		200,000 (UN, August 2007)		
Georgia	222,000–247,000	247,000 (February 2007)	221,597 (UNHCR, 2006)		2006 estimate followed a verification exercise carried out by the government and UNHCR, which has not been endorsed by the government.
Guatemala	Undetermined		242,000 (UNFPA, May 1997)		At the end of 2007 the government had not agreed on criteria to include IDPs in a national reparation programme and it is unclear how many people can still be considered as displaced.
India	At least 600,000			At least 600,000 (IDMC, May 2007)	Compiled from various available figures.
Indonesia	100,000–200,000			100,000–200,000 (IDMC, December 2007)	Compiled from various available figures.
Iraq	2,480,000		2,480,000 (IDP Working Group, February 2008)	2,176,769 (Iraqi Red Crescent Organisation, January 2008)	1.2 million people are estimated to have been displaced prior to 2003. Approximately 200,000 were displaced from 2003 to 2005. Inter-communal violence from since February 2006 led to an additional 1,268,000 people being displaced as of December 2007.

Countries	Number of IDPs (rounded)	Government figures	UN figures	Other figures	Comments
Israel	150,000–420,000			150,000 (Cohen, July 2001); 420,000 (BADIL, May 2006)	BADIL figure includes displaced Bedouin, with their numbers estimated on the basis of an average annual growth rate of 4.2 per cent in 1950-2001, and 3 per cent since.
Kenya	200,000	216,834 (National Operations Centre, January 2008)	250,000 (OCHA, January 2008)		Includes an estimated 100,000 displaced by end December 2007 following elections, and 100,000 people believed to be displaced beforehand. The total increased rapidly during January 2008, and the OCHA figure referred only to post-election IDPs.
Lebanon	90,000–390,000	33,000 Palestinian refugees displaced (September 2007); 40,000 Lebanese displaced since July 2006 (December 2007); 16,750 prior to July 2006 (July 2006)	70,000 since July 2006 (UNHCR, December 2007) in addition 32,000 newly displaced Palestinians (UNRWA, September 2007)	50,000–300,000 prior to July 2006 (USCR, 2005); 600,000 prior to July 2006 (USDOS, 2006)	Displaced populations include Palestinian refugees displaced from Nahr El Bared camp, Lebanese displaced by the July-August 2006 conflict, and people still displaced as a result of the 1975-1990 civil war and Israeli invasions.
Liberia	Undetermined		Undetermined (UNHCR, July 2007)		About 23,000 people are believed to be still in former IDP camps, including some 16,000 who received a return package and 7,000 who claim to have been denied assistance. Verification exercises are ongoing.
Macedonia	790	788 (October 2007)			
Mexico	5,500			5,500 (Zapatista officials, October 2007); 12,000 (Center for Human Rights Fray Bartolomé de la Casas, June 2003)	The 5,500 figure is based on interviews held with Zapatista officials.
Myanmar (Burma)	At least 500,000			503,000 (Thailand Burma Border Consortium, October 2007)	Estimate relates to eastern border areas only and does not include significant numbers of IDPs in the rest of the country.
Nepal	50,000–70,000		50,000–70,000 (OCHA, July 2007)		

IDP COUNTRY FIGURES

Countries	Number of IDPs (rounded)	Government figures	UN figures	Other figures	Comments
Nigeria	Undetermined	1,210,000 (National Commission for Refugees, September 2007)			No reliable figures available. NCR figure does not clearly differentiate between people still displaced and those who have returned.
Occupied Palestinian Territory	25,000–115,000		24,547 (OCHA, October 2004)	115,000 (BADIL, October 2007)	Lower estimate only includes IDPs evicted by house demolitions in Gaza between September 2000 and October 2004; higher figure cumulative since 1967. Estimates are conservative due to lack of agreed definition and methodology.
Pakistan	Undetermined	25,000 (May 2007)	84,000 (UNICEF, August 2006)	200,000 (Baloch Rights Council, May 2007)	In October 2007, conflicts led to the displacement of 80,000 people in North Waziristan and at least 500,000 in the Swat valley. It is not known how many IDPs were able to return by end of year.
Peru	150,000	150,000 (Ministry of Women and Social Development, May 2007)			
Philippines	120,000–300,000		120,000 (WFP, March 2006); 300,000 (WFP, January 2008)		There are no overall national IDP figure available. The higher and most recent estimate represents the number of IDPs who will benefit from WFP food assistance in 2008. Up to 160,000 people were newly displaced by conflict in 2007.
Russian Federation	19,000–159,000	82,200 (Federal Government, February 2006)	158,905 (UNHCR, December 2006)	18,759 (DRC, 28 December 2007)	Government figure includes forced migrants registered in Ingushetia and Chechnya, while UN figure includes IDPs in Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan and other areas, and forced migrants from North Ossetia and elsewhere. DRC figure includes IDPs in Ingushetia or Dagestan who meet DRC beneficiary criteria.
Rwanda	Undetermined				In the absence of any recent survey, it is unclear how many people can still be considered as internally displaced. In 2000, more than 600,000 people were still recognised as such.
Senegal	14,000–22,000		64,000 (IOM, June 2003)	14,000–22,000 (IDMC, September 2006)	Compiled from various available figures.

Countries	Number of IDPs (rounded)	Government figures	UN figures	Other figures	Comments
Serbia	247,000		227,504 (UNHCR, December 2007)		Estimate includes 206,000 IDPs in Serbia, 20,000 unregistered Roma displaced in Serbia, and 21,000 IDPs in Kosovo.
Somalia	1,000,000		1,000,000 (UNHCR, November 2007)		
Sri Lanka	460,000			460,000 (IDMC, December 2007)	Difficulties in determining exact numbers due to overlap between conflict- and tsunami-induced IDPs, and between those displaced by conflict before and since 2006. According to estimates of international humanitarian agencies, 460,000 people remained displaced by conflict and violence at end 2007, including over 181,000 displaced since April 2006.
Sudan	5,800,000		4,465,000 (OCHA, September 2007)	5,800,000 (IDMC, November 2007)	The estimate of 5,800,000 IDPs is based on separate UN estimates for Darfur, Khartoum, and Southern Sudan. By mid-2007, 1,325,535 returned IDPs had been recorded.
Syria	430 000	430,000 (November 2007)			
Timor-Leste	100,000		100,000 (OCHA, July 2007)		
Togo	1,500		1,500 (OCHA, November 2006)		
Turkey	950,000–1,200,000	953,680–1,201,200 (Hacettepe University, December 2006)		Over 1,000,000 (NGOs, August 2005)	Hacettepe University survey commissioned by the government.
Turkmenistan	Undetermined				No estimates available.
Uganda	1,270,000		1,272,693 (UN, November 2007)		The UN figure includes IDPs in new displacement sites, but excludes certain IDP groups, such as IDPs in urban areas. In addition, and as acknowledged by the UN, data received from the Teso sub-region does not cover all districts. Some 556,643 IDPs have also returned to their villages of origin (UN, November 2007), but they still have ongoing needs in terms of protection and assistance.
Uzbekistan	3,400			3,400 (IOM, May 2005)	No more recent figures available.

## IDP COUNTRY FIGURES

Countries	Number of IDPs (rounded)	Government figures	UN figures	Other figures	Comments
Yemen	25,000–35,000		25,000–27,000 (UN, October 2007)	30,000–35,000 (ICRC, May 2007)	Of an estimated 77,000 war-affected people in Saada region, ICRC and the UN have considered roughly one third to one half as internally displaced.
Zimbabwe	570,000		569,685 (UN, July 2005)		UN estimate only covers those made homeless by Operation Murambatsvina in 2005. Not included in this figure are: former farm workers displaced by the fast-track land reform programme; mine workers made homeless by Operation Chikorokoza Chapera in late 2006 - early 2007; people who originally benefited from land distribution under the fast-track land reform programme but who have since been evicted again from the land on which they were resettled; and people displaced as a result of direct targeting on political grounds.
Global Total	26,000,000			IDMC, December 2007	Estimate based on the analysis of available country figures and additional information on displacement and return trends.



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