Global Displacement Forecast 2024

Using data modelling to predict displacement crises

Ilustration 1: Prompts - silhuettes, refugees fleeing wartorn city, infographic vector style, shades of crimson red, black and white

About the Danish Refugee Council
The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) currently operates in 40 countries around the world. We work with humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities to ensure a dignified life for refugees, the displaced, and displacement-affected people. We work in conflict-affected areas, along displacement routes, and in the countries where refugees settle. The range of our work includes everything from relief operations to strengthening opportunities for a brighter future for refugees and internally displaced persons.

About the Foresight model
The Foresight model can, with a high degree of accuracy, forecast the cumulative number of forcibly displaced people one to three years into the future. The model uses more than 120 indicators related to conflict, governance, economy, environment and population/society to forecast future displacement. The model has been employed to forecast the cumulative number of people displaced from 26 countries. The countries included in the model account for approximately 92% of all global displacement or a combined total of 94 million people displaced in 2022.

The forecasts tend to be conservative, i.e. underestimate the level of displacement in the coming year: of the 214 forecasts made so far for the coming years' displacement, 100 have predicted less than10% of the actual number of people living in displacement in the coming year. The Foresight model also has limited ability to forecast unprecedented events or high surges in displacement.

Executive summary

Key messages

Armed conflict, marked by a disregard for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is on the rise, as diplomatic and political channels to resolve conflict and end fighting are evidently failing. Conflict has been on the rise since about 2012, after a decline in the 1990s and early 2000s[1]. Out of approximately 600 million people exposed to conflict in 2023, 412 million were specifically exposed to incidents of violence against civilians.[2] Palestine was the country with the highest share of people exposed to violence in 2023, with 85% of the population exposed. As a result of these trends in violence, displacement, especially internal, continues to grow. At the same time, the numbers also show that the majority of people living in proximity to conflict and violence stay behind, either voluntarily or involuntarily, often facing severe constraints in receiving humanitarian assistance.

Remaining in a war zone can be more or less life-threatening especially in cases where IHL is not respected. IHL seeks to limit the effects of armed conflict, thereby protecting people who are not direct participants and restricting the means and methods of warfare. However, respect for IHL appears to be decreasing. While there is no systematic collection of IHL violations on a global scale, some indicators illustrate the issue. Violence specifically targeting civilians, which must be considered an IHL violation given the requirement to target combatants only, has increased by 25% since 2018. Attacks on or use of medical facilities protected under international law, which in many cases constitute an IHL violation, have increased four-fold since 2017.

Primarily as a result of these trends, forced displacement is projected to increase by 6.8 million by the end of 2025, exclusive of displacement resulting from the conflict in Gaza. Forced displacement is forecast to increase by 3.7 million in 2024 and by an additional 3.1 million in 2025. The forecasted displacement numbers highlight the intra-national nature of displacement, with 80% of the 6.8 million people expected to be internally displaced people (IDPs). Since the majority of displaced people are expected to be IDPs, assisting and accessing them will require addressing and interacting with governance structures particularly at the sub-national level. To meet the scale of need, there will be an increasing requirement for local solutions in concert with local governance actors.

The geographical location of displacement is once again concentrated in fragile contexts: 4.1 million of the displaced are estimated to be hosted in sub-Saharan Africa. Only approximately 3.8% or 259,000 of the displaced are expected to be hosted in Europe and North America. Strengthened asylum systems and other refugee-hosting arrangements are necessary to alleviate the responsibility placed on already fragile and low-income countries that continue to host the majority of refugees, even at the cost of falling back on their own progress towards sustainable development goals.

The surge in new displacement is propelled by the conflicts in Sudan, Myanmar, Burkina Faso, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Colombia and Nigeria. The crises in Sudan and Myanmar alone are forecasted to account for approximately 40% of the increase in displacement.

The increase in displacement is largely linked to a broader crisis of fragility and weak governance. Fragile countries with weak governance structures face consistently heightened vulnerability to climate change and its effects, including disasters. This vulnerability stems from the very same governance challenges, manifested in a lack of early warning systems, planned development projects and investments in

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[1] International Crisis Group, 10 Conflicts to Watch in 2024. Available at: crisisgroup.org (accessed 4 March 2024)
[2] ACLED (nd): Conflict Exposure. Available at: acleddata.com (accessed 4 March 2024)

maintenance and upkeep of civil infrastructure. It is not a coincidence that fragility and climate-vulnerable countries overlap; unfortunately, displaced people within these countries are disproportionately affected. In 2015, 16 million displaced people or 33% of the displaced were hosted in countries most vulnerable to climate change. This increased to 46 million in 2023 and is set to increase to 51 million by end-2025.

As such, development assistance can play a strong role in addressing displacement crises. Mapping the past two decades in conflict and displacement-affected countries, the analysis shows that when countries have seen low levels of official development assistance (ODA) and support for peacebuilding, displacement in the following year increases by an average of 134%. Conversely, a robust engagement in the form of development assistance when combined with achieving a peace agreement resulted in, on average, an increase in displacement of only 31% in the following year.

Globally, the share of ODA given to fragile countries fell to 24% in 2022 (latest available data) down from 31% in 2021. This is the lowest share in the last 10 years and is almost USD4 billion less than allocated in 2013. Given the deep and intersecting links between fragility and displacement, this continues to have major implications for displacement trends. Ukraine received approximately 43% of all global ODA towards peacebuilding in 2022, while the other 25 countries witnessed a decrease of 900 million.

With displacement and conflict on the rise, humanitarian needs are expected to escalate significantly. The humanitarian funding gap in 2023 stands at USD33 billion, the highest ever and approximately USD12 billion more than in 2022. The drivers of displacement and conflict, as we have seen, often arise from a combination of man-made causes and development-related challenges and require longer-term solutions for prevention. Therefore, integrated solutions that incorporate humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors from the onset are vital for sustainable results. The Foresight model offers predictability that can inform preparedness, integrated planning and allocation of resources with development actors to deliver better-integrated, lasting solutions.

Recommendations

As this report shows, the responsibility of hosting and supporting displaced people will continue to disproportionately fall on fragile, low-income countries – including new, forecasted displacements and existing protracted displacement. The results show the need to hold parties to the conflict accountable for respecting IHL to guarantee the protection of civilians, and the need for integrated solutions to address the multi-dimensional and interconnected root causes of displacement. The results further underscore the overlapping determinants of fragility and displacement, highlighting the need for broader solutions revolving around issues such as participation, equity and accountability in building strong and resilient institutions. This calls for equal investments by humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors, particularly in fragile contexts that host the majority of displaced people.

More specifically:

1. **Upholding international humanitarian law is imperative for all parties to a conflict, including states and non-states armed groups in line with customary law, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977.**
    a. States bear legal and moral responsibilities to protect civilians and civilian objects. We call on all states to abide by the IHL principles and rules as well as IHL treaties they adopted.
    b. We also urge governments to actively engage in diplomatic efforts to not only bring an end to international or non-international armed conflicts, but to also ensure that humanitarian aid can reach those who need it the most guaranteeing principled and unhindered humanitarian access. This includes removing barriers to the movement of aid staff and supplies both within countries and across

borders, and ensuring the safety and security of aid workers, medical personnel, and vital infrastructure, such as health facilities.

2. **There must be a drive to increase engagement in addressing the root causes of displacement.**
    a. This includes the use of increased diplomatic engagement during protracted crises in order to reach political solutions to conflicts that drive displacement, and restore a conducive environment for safe, sustainable and voluntary returns in the countries of origin.
    b. Humanitarian and development engagements should be tailored to address the underlying issues of fragility and weak governance and the interconnection with climate change.

3. **Development and humanitarian funding to displacement crises should be increased.**
    a. There is an urgent need for global donors to scale up funding for Humanitarian and Refugee Response Plans, which were woefully underfunded in 2023. This includes increasing flexible, multi-year, predictable funding in a conflict- and gender-sensitive manner so responses can respond adequately to need.
    b. Non-traditional donors, such as international financial institutions and some of the high- and middle-income countries need to scale up their support. Only 4 countries are currently living up to UN's target of 0.7% of GNI to ODA and they are all in Europe.
    c. A greater proportion of funding must be channelled via local actors (including refugee-led organisations) with deeper knowledge of local contexts and priorities, and displacement-affected communities should be meaningfully engaged at all levels of decision making about the use of this funding in order to leave no one behind.
    d. Development assistance and engagements in fragile contexts should be increased, while ensuring coherence between humanitarian and development aid, within a space that supports and encourages inclusive peace efforts.

4. **Ensure access to asylum and responsibility-sharing.**
    a. Host countries must live up to their obligations under international human rights and refugee law and maintain access to territory and asylum for people fleeing conflict, enabling them to seek safety and access life-saving protection and assistance.
    b. Donors need to support refugee-hosting countries both financially and technically to create enabling conditions for strengthening refugees' self-reliance through a range of rights, including the right to work, access to education, and freedom of movement, and facilitate pathways towards durable solutions through enabling policy and legislative frameworks.
    c. High-income countries should expand resettlement programmes to ensure that more vulnerable refugees are safely resettled to third countries.
    d. High-income countries should also increase investments in complementary pathways for refugees, including through education and employment opportunities, and family reunification.

Contents

Introduction

This report presents the expected forced displacement in 2024 and 2025, as forecasted by the Foresight model. The Foresight model was developed by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and IBM with funding from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is currently funded by the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Operations (ECHO). The model uses the historical relationships and patterns in the data on 148 displacement-relevant indicators from 18 different open sources to forecast, with a high degree of accuracy, the cumulative number of forcibly displaced people one to three years into the future. DRC uses the Foresight model to support country operations and the wider humanitarian system with more accurate forecasts for strategic planning for better prevention, response to and protection of displacement-affected populations. The model has been employed to forecast the cumulative number of people displaced from 26 countries[3] that have ongoing and evolving displacement crises. These countries account for approximately 92% of all global displacement.

The report presents an overview of the displacement forecasts for 2024 and 2025 and highlights key trends and patterns in the forecasts, focusing on the overall and regional trends, developments in the underlying conditions and funding, and estimates of how the hosting of displaced people will evolve. The report then analyses in more detail how disregard of international humanitarian law connects and affects displacement dynamics, in particular: the link between violence targeting civilians, destruction of vital services/infrastructures and constraints on humanitarian access. Lastly, the report puts the spotlight on specific regions and countries, where significant displacement is forecasted to occur in the coming years. The countries of focus have been selected on the basis of having the highest absolute change in displacement forecasted in 2024.

The report aims to facilitate the uptake of the forecasts and analysis for better planning and preparedness by providing a broader narrative and understanding of the numbers and trends presented. With an improved understanding of future displacement trends and crises, international organisations, humanitarian actors and donors can collaborate to better prepare for, mitigate and respond to these developments.

In this report, forced displacement is defined as refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people (IDPs). The official number of people displaced in 2023 for the countries covered by the model was not available at the time of writing. Therefore, the level of displacement in 2023 has been estimated based on the latest available displacement updates from agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In most cases, the number of IDPs in 2023 is available to the end of November 2023, while the number of externally displaced (refugees and asylum seekers) is available to the end of June. The forecasts are thus preliminary in nature and will be updated once the final, official numbers on the level of displacement in 2023 have been published around June 2024.

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[3] The 26 countries are: Europe: Ukraine; Asia: Myanmar, Afghanistan; West Africa: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria; MENA: Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen; East Africa & Great Lakes: Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan; Latin America: Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Venezuela

Illustration 2: Prompts - silhouettes, refugees crossing river, infographic vector style, cinematic, shades of crimson red, black and white

Future forced displacement

Combining forecasts for the 26 countries covered in the model, the cumulative number of displaced people is projected to increase by 3.7 million in 2024, with a further 3.1 million increase expected in 2025, resulting in a total increase of 6.8 million between the end of 2023 and the end of 2025. Forecasts indicate that only Libya and El Salvador will see a decrease in the number of displaced people; last year, five countries were forecasted to experience a decrease. These developments will contribute significantly to escalating humanitarian needs globally. In 2023, OCHA projected that 300 million people would require humanitarian assistance in 2024, necessitating USD46 billion in funding[4].

Clear geographical trends emerge from the forecasts. Of the 6.8 million people forecasted to be displaced by the end of 2025, approximately 4.1 million are estimated to reside in sub-Saharan Africa, while another 1.3 million are expected in Asia. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and Latin America are anticipated to witness an increase of 0.5 million each by the end of 2025, while Europe and North America are projected to experience a combined increase of 259,000 in the number of displaced people being hosted. These trends are largely related to the fact that close to 80% of the 6.8 million displaced people will be IDPs.
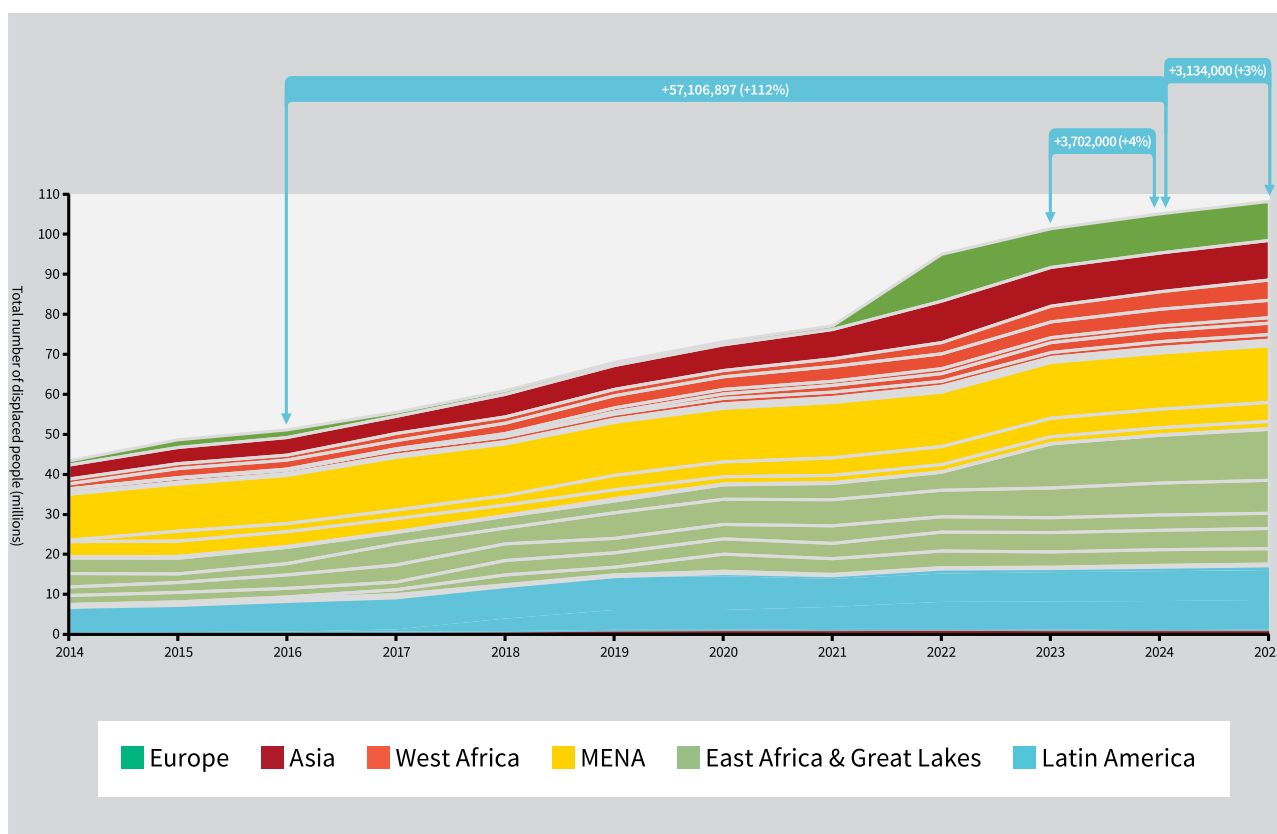

Figure 1: Displacement trends

[4] OCHA (2023): Global Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024. Available at: unocha.org (accessed 4 March 2024)

Displacement hotspots

The surge in **displacement in 2024** is primarily propelled by substantial growth of displacement forecasted in Nigeria, Colombia, Burkina Faso, Myanmar, DR Congo, and Sudan. Forecasts indicate that displacement in these countries is poised to increase by more than 200,000 people in each country. This contrasts with last year's projections, where only four countries were forecasted to experience such significant increases in displaced populations.
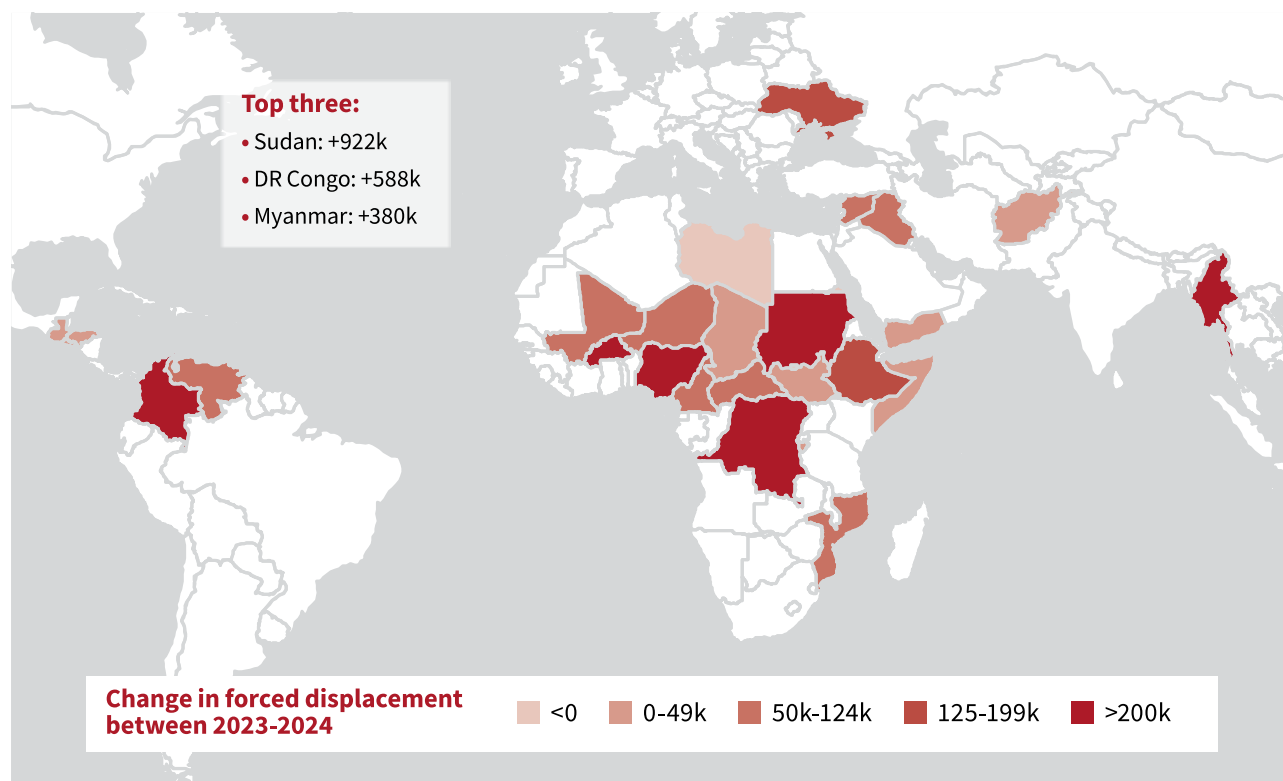

Top three:
- Sudan: +922k
- DR Congo: +588k
- Myanmar: +380k

Change in forced displacement between 2023-2024   <0   0-49k   50k-124k   125-199k   >200k

Figure 2: Forecasted displacement hotspots in 2024

There are seven internal active conflicts in **Colombia,** driving up displacement and humanitarian needs. There were approximately 300,000 people displaced in 2023 and analysis shows that 60% of them were affected more than once, and 84% of them had to move with children and/or adolescents, exposing them to high risks in terms of security and personal protection. In fact, 21.5% of displacement victims were the target of other forms of violence in addition to the causes of displacement, such as extortion or threats.

Nigeria is another country forecasted to experience a significant increase in internal displacement. The country faces regional instability, the presence of NSAGs, escalating intercommunal conflicts, and a precarious socio-economic situation. Insurgent activities in the north, including conflicts involving Boko Haram's splinter groups, clashes between ethnic groups and resurgence of banditry and kidnappings, have led to massive population displacements and heightened humanitarian and protection needs, particularly among women and children. In Borno State, the heart of the insurgency with approximately 1.8 million displaced persons, the government initiated IDP camp closures in Maiduguri in 2021, a move expected to continue into 2024. This strategy, aimed at hastening the return of IDPs to their areas of origin, has raised concerns among humanitarian and protection actors, who, because of security or administrative restrictions, are questioning voluntariness of returns and the feasibility of sustaining humanitarian support in areas of return. The allocated funding to the humanitarian response plan in Nigeria plummeted from USD764 million in 2022 to USD532 million in 2023, marking a steep 44% decrease, with forecasts predicting

a similar or further reduction in 2024. This decline in financial support arrives at a critical juncture, as the humanitarian needs across the country remain acute, driven by ongoing conflict, displacement, and severe climatic events, such as the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon.

Other countries are forecasted to experience a noteworthy relative increase in the number of displaced individuals. In the Sahelian region, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are expected to undergo a displacement surge of more than 10%. Niger, in particular, is forecasted to witness the highest relative change, reaching 15%. This underscores the escalating crisis in the region, which has been marred by significant political instability in recent years, including several coups.

Looking ahead to 2025, the biggest forecasted increase in displacement is found in Sudan, Myanmar, Venezuela and DR Congo, where displacement is forecasted to increase by more than 200,000 people.

Top three:
- Sudan: +850k
- Myanmar: +750k
- Venezuela: +275k

Change in forced displacement between 2024-2025 | <0 | 0-49k | 50k-124k | 125-199k | >200k
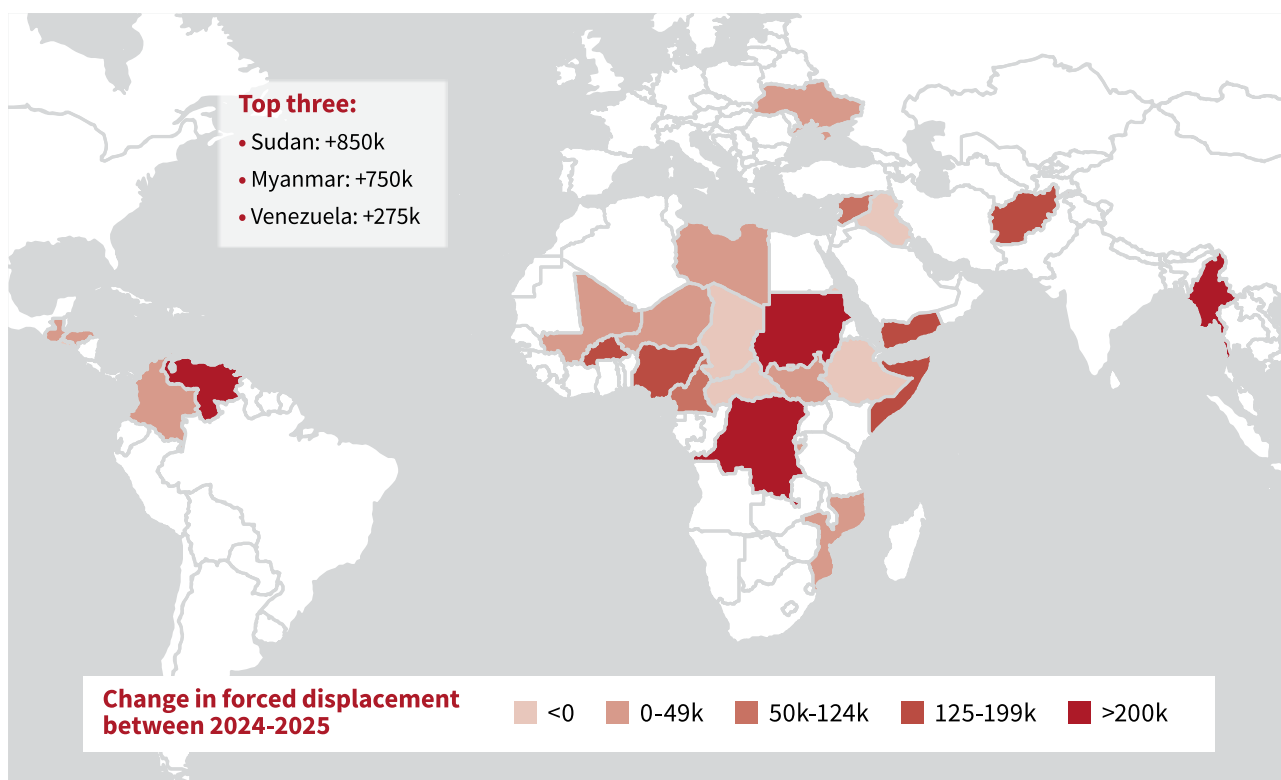
Figure 3: Forecasted displacement hotspots in 2025

DR Congo is home to one of the largest IDP populations in the world, reaching close to 6.5 million people in 2023[5], almost exclusively driven by conflict and violence. While eastern DR Congo has long been an area of complex humanitarian crisis, the situation has deteriorated significantly over the past couple of years, in particular after the re-emergence of the M23 NSAG in North Kivu in early 2022. The clashes between the Congolese army (FARDC), M23 and other armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO) in Ituri, have resulted in civilian deaths, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and large-scale displacement. More specifically, the breakdown of the ceasefire agreement between the government and the M23 in October 2023 triggered 450,000

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[5] UNHCR (nd): Operations Data Portal: Regional Bureau for Southern Africa. Available at: unhcr.org (accessed 4 March 2024)

displacements between 1 October and 14 November 2023[6].The recent surge in displacement has strained the limited existing resources within host communities, and put the overall humanitarian infrastructure under immense pressure. The lack of adequate shelter and water and sanitation facilities, combined with the loss of livelihoods, exposes IDPs to an array of protection risks including sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, abductions and killings, prompting many IDPs to negative coping mechanisms, including begging and survival sex.

The displacement crisis in **Sudan** is forecasted to continue to escalate in 2024 and 2025. What started as a power struggle between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and the Rapid Support Force (RSF)s' Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo – known as Hemedti – escalated in April 2023 to a conflict that has now spread across half of the country. The conflict has been marked by extreme violence and ethnic killings, most acutely in Darfur. Both parties have engaged in massive ethnic-based recruitment since late 2022 and have intensified these drives since the war broke out, relying on local armed militias in some areas. Both parties have employed siege tactics and blockades to prevent civilians from leaving conflict-affected areas. Confining civilians to conflict-affected areas also impedes their access to humanitarian assistance – a trend that is likely to continue in the coming months. In less than a year, the conflict has deepened humanitarian needs in Sudan, with at least 24.8 million people in need compared to 15.8 million before the conflict began. The conflict has led to widespread displacement within Sudan and across international borders as people look for safety and access to basic services. As of 18 February 2024, more than 8 million people have been forcibly displaced by the conflict. This includes 6.2 million IDPs, making Sudan the location of one of the largest internal displacement crises in the world. As the conflict continues to expand to new areas previously sheltering displaced populations, an increasing number of people will face secondary or tertiary displacement as they keep looking for safe zones. In addition, more than 1.6 million people have crossed into South Sudan, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and Central African Republic (CAR).

Since the military takeover of **Myanmar** in February 2021, the country has witnessed eruption of conflict across various states, especially in the northwest and southeast of the country. Myanmar has witnessed a further escalation of conflict since 27 October 2023, when the Brotherhood Alliance, comprising three ethnic armed organisations (EAOs), initiated a coordinated offensive across multiple townships that led to a new spike in violence and displacement. Since then, several other groups have joined the fighting, which has spread across the country, has led to further spikes in displacement and has further deepened the humanitarian crisis. As of 25 December 2023, there were an estimated 2.3 million IDPs across Myanmar, with an additional 61,900 displaced to neighbouring countries since February 2021. Overall, in 2024, given the escalation of protection threats resulting from the crisis, 18.6 million people are expected to be in humanitarian need, marking a 1-million increase compared to 2023. This is particularly significant as many IDPs and other conflict-affected communities struggle to access basic services or humanitarian assistance. This escalation in conflict across the country has significantly increased protection risks, including mine risks, and has escalated critical needs for food and non-food items (NFIs), affecting the protective environment. Myanmar remains a protection crisis, with daily violation of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL). The most prevalent risks are forced displacement and restrictions on movement; attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure; extortion; presence of explosive ordinances; impeded access to civil documentation and a lack of humanitarian access aggravating negative coping strategies.

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[6] USAID (2023): Democratic Republic of the Congo – Complex Emergency, Fact Sheet #1. Available at: usaid.gov (accessed 4 March 2024)

Given the forecasts, displacement is set to increase by 1.8 million in Sudan, 1.1 million in Myanmar and 800,000 in DR Congo, which means these three countries alone will account for more than half of the total forecasted displacement of 6.8 million between end-2023 and end-2025.

From a broader regional perspective, East Africa[7] and Asia[8] emerge with the highest forecasted growth in the number of displaced people. In East Africa, the forecast indicates a staggering increase of more than 3 million displaced individuals between the end of 2023 and the end of 2025, accounting for approximately 45% of the total growth in displacement. Meanwhile, in Asia, the number of displaced people is anticipated to rise by slightly more than 1.3 million. In West Africa[9] an increase of 1.2 million displaced people is expected, marking it as the region with the highest relative growth rate. This 1.2 million figure represents a 12% increase compared to the numbers at the end of 2023. Moving to Latin America[10] and the MENA[11] region, both are forecasted to witness an increase of approximately 0.5 million displaced people each. Conversely, displacement numbers in Europe[12] are expected to remain stable.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the overwhelming majority of displaced people will be internally displaced. Among the forecasted 6.8 million people to be displaced between the end of 2023 and the end of 2025, approximately 80% are expected to be IDPs. This percentage is notably higher than the current rate, where approximately 63% of the displaced people in the 26 countries are IDPs.

Trends in displacement drivers

Conflict remained at a very high level in 2023 and increased when looking at all the countries of focus combined. Globally, approximately 600 million people were exposed to conflict incidents in 2023, including 412 million specifically exposed to incidents of violence against civilians and 135 million living within 1 kilometre of at least one conflict incident[13].

According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the total number of conflict events increased by 5% in 2023 in the 26 countries of focus. In 2023 the number of conflict events in the 26 countries just exceeded 100,000. The increase in events in 2023 even came on top of a 40% increase in the number of events the year before. The total increase was the result of developments in a few countries such as Ukraine (+9,862) and Sudan (+3,404); however, 17 of the 26 countries did see a decrease in the number of conflict events, with Yemen (-3,373) and Afghanistan (-1,458) seeing large decreases. Focusing on events specifically targeting civilians, the number of such events fell by 5% in total in seven of the 26 countries, with 17 of the countries seeing a decrease. But the number of events targeting civilians in 2023 is still the second-highest figure in the ACLED data, just exceeding the number in 2022.

Despite the immense need to address drivers of conflict, support to development and peacebuilding in displacement-generating countries is vastly below the average allocated to non-fragile contexts. Development aid is a key instrument in promoting good governance, reducing poverty and inequality, and fostering longer-term, locally anchored peacebuilding and development. Globally, the share of official development assistance (ODA) given to fragile countries[14] fell to 24% in 2022 (latest available data), down

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[7] East Africa includes Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan
[8] Asia includes Myanmar and Afghanistan
[9] West Africa includes Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Mali
[10] Latin America included Colombia, Venezuela, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador
[11] MENA includes Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen
[12] Europe includes only Ukraine
[13] ACLED (nd): Conflict Exposure. Available at: acleddata.com (accessed 4 March 2024)
[14] As defined by OECD

from 31% in 2021. This is the lowest share in the last 10 years and is almost USD4 billion less than given in 2013.

The share of ODA to the 26 countries of focus was approximately 25% of the total ODA provided by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries in 2022. This was more than was provided in 2021. However, the increase was largely due to significant funding provided to Ukraine, which accounted for more than 1/3 of the total ODA given to the 26 countries. In fact, for the other 25 countries, their share of total ODA fell to 15%, amounting to a decrease in funding of more than USD2 billion. Further, as displacement numbers have increased in these countries, the ratio between displaced persons and ODA has decreased by almost 50% in the period 2012–2022[15].

At the same time, the total share of ODA allocated to peacebuilding activities[16] decreased from about 13.3% in 2012 to 9.5% in 2021. The share increased to 11.6% in 2022, but this was again largely driven by the amount of funding provided to Ukraine, which accounted for 43% of all OECD/DAC donor funding to peacebuilding in 2022. If funding for Ukraine is disregarded, the share fell from 9.3% to 6.6%, amounting to a decrease of USD900 million for peacebuilding across the 25 countries. In 18 of the 26 countries of focus, ODA allocated to peacebuilding decreased in 2022, including for major displacement crises such as seen in Burkina Faso, Colombia, DR Congo, Myanmar and Somalia. In other major displacement crises, such as seen in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Syria and Yemen, less than 8% of ODA went towards peacebuilding in 2022. Without the financial support to address the root causes of conflict and displacement, the displacement crises will not be resolved.

In the countries where a small share of ODA was provided towards peacebuilding activities in 2022 _– Chad, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Syria and Yemen – displacement is forecasted to increase by an average of more than 180,000 people (or 4%) between end-2023 and end-2025. In the countries where a high share of ODA was allocated to peacebuilding activities – El Salvador, Guatemala, Iraq, Libya, Mali and Ukraine – displacement is forecasted to increase by an average of 46,000 people, or 2%.

Analysis for the *DRC Global Displacement Forecast 2023 – Update*[17] demonstrated that development assistance and its allocation towards peacebuilding is linked to future displacement trends. Over the past two decades, in conflict and displacement-affected countries[18], low levels of development assistance and a minimal share directed towards peacebuilding correlated with an average 134%[19] increase in displacement the following year. Conversely, countries with substantial development assistance or a significant portion allocated to peacebuilding experienced an average increase in displacement of 44%. Moreover, when robust engagement in development assistance was combined with achieving a peace agreement, displacement increased by only 31% on average the following year[20].

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[15] From USD857 in 2012 to USD475 in 2022 in ODA per displaced person

[16] Using the definition and Creditor Reporting System (CRS) codes developed by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office. Available at: un.org (accessed 4 March 2024)

[17] DRC (2023): Global Displacement Forecast 2023 – Update (July 2023). Available at: drc.ngo (accessed 4 March 2024)

[18] Countries that have experienced >0 battle-related deaths and >25,000 increase in displacement. This includes a total of 366 country-years

[19] In the DRC Global Displacement Forecast 2023 – Update (July 2023), 253% was cited. This new figure is based on including more data and removing significant outliers. Available at: drc.ngo (accessed 4 March 2024)

[20] DRC (2023): Global Displacement Forecast 2023 – Update (July 2023). Available at: drc.ngo (accessed 4 March 2024)

Trends in conditions for humanitarian response

With crises not being resolved, funding is needed to address the humanitarian needs arising from both newly emerging and ongoing, protracted crises. However, the scale of humanitarian funding is insufficient. So far[21] only 40% of the required funding for humanitarian response plans (HRPs) in 2023 was provided, compared to 55% for the equivalent period in in 2022, while the figure was 53% in 2021 and 50% in 2020. In 2023, the gap between needs and funding currently stands at USD33 billion – the highest ever and approximately USD12 billion more than in 2022. The share of funding provided towards the HRP decreased for 22 of the 24 countries of focus in this report with an HRP[22]. This was most noticeable in CAR, where the HRP in both 2021 and 2022 was 90% funded, but received just 59% of the requested funds in 2023. Countries such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen all saw a drop in the absolute amount of funding provided, ranging from a USD311 million decrease in Syria to more than USD1.8 billion in Afghanistan.

Among the countries of focus, Honduras, Guatemala, Burundi, El Salvador, Mali and Cameroon were among the least funded in 2023, with only around one third of the required funding for the HRPs being provided. In countries where HRPs were more than 50% funded in 2023, displacement is forecasted to increase by an average of 89,000 in 2024. Conversely, in countries where HRPs were less than 50% funded, the forecasted increase in displaced people averages around 235,000 for 2024. Analysis of funding and displacement trends across over 189 HRPs supports these conclusions. When response plans were under two-thirds funded, the subsequent year saw, on average, a 39% increase in the cumulative number of displaced individuals. Conversely, if plans were more than two-thirds funded, the average increase in displacement was only 8%. While multiple factors may contribute to this trend, insufficient humanitarian funding hampers the ability of the humanitarian community to respond adequately, alleviate suffering, ensure protection for vulnerable groups, implement early action and prevention activities, and enhance the resilience of communities.

Funding is not the only major challenge in responding to the growing humanitarian needs arising from the displacement crises. Humanitarian access is also an issue: even in situations where funding is available, the ability of people in need to access services and assistance, and for humanitarian actors to reach people in need, is often challenged by restrictive environments. Of the 26 countries in focus, 17 are categorised as having either very high or extreme humanitarian access constraints[23]. Forecasted displacement is on average higher in countries with poor humanitarian access. Countries with extreme access constraints – Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine – are forecasted to see an average increase of 369,000 people displaced in 2024. In countries categorised as facing very high access constraints, such as DR Congo, Syria and Yemen, the average forecasted increase is 116,000 displaced people. Lastly, in countries categorised as having high to moderate access constraints, such as Iraq, Colombia, Niger and Venezuela, average displacement is forecasted to increase by only 50,000 people.

Future displacement hosting and solutions

Low-income countries continue to be the main hosts of displaced people. Approximately 4 million of the total increase of 6.8 million displaced people is estimated to be hosted in low-income countries, and another 1.7 million will be hosted in lower-middle-income countries. The proportion of displaced people from the 26 focus countries that is hosted in low-income countries has fallen from 49% in 2021 to 42% in 2022, mainly because of to the Ukraine crisis. In 2023, the share increased again to 45% and the forecasts

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[21] Because of delays in reporting, the figure for the total amount of funding provided to the 2023 HRPs is unavailable

[22] Iraq and Libya no longer have HRPs

[23] ACAPS (2023): Humanitarian Access Overview, December 2023. Available at: acaps.org (accessed 7 March 2024)

suggests that the share will increase further to 46% by end-2025. Conversely, the share is decreasing in high- and upper-middle-income countries.

Both displacement and hosting are primarily increasing in East and West Africa. The number of displaced people living in sub-Saharan Africa is set to increase by 3 million by the end of 2024, while the number is set to increase by approximately 900,000 in Asia and 800,000 in Latin America. It is estimated that approximately 40% of displaced people will be hosted in sub-Sahara Africa by end-2024 and a further 20% will be hosted in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Only 11% will be living in Europe, one of the richest economic zones in the world, down from 14% in 2022. And only 1% will be hosted in North America. While the GDP per displaced person hosted in European countries amounted to USD1.7 million per person in 2022, it increased to 1.9 million in 2023. At the same time, the amount in sub-Saharan Africa only comes to USD49,000 down from USD55,000 in 2022. In the MENA region, GDP per displaced person amounts to USD225,000 and in Latin America USD442,000. As such, host countries in sub-Saharan Africa disproportionately bear the responsibility of supporting displaced populations, while having very limited resources to do so.

That major host countries of displaced people are facing development challenges is not new. These countries face many socio-economic challenges[24]. Overall, 53% of displaced people are in countries with the lowest levels of human development and highest levels of poverty, up from 49% in 2022. This is set to increase to 54% by end-2025.

Another major challenge facing host countries is climate change. Overall, 47% of displaced people from the countries of focus are hosted in countries that are among the overall most vulnerable[25] to the impacts of climate change, up from 43% in 2022. In 2015, 16 million displaced people or 33% of the displaced were hosted in the countries most vulnerable to climate change. This increased to 46 million in 2023 and is set to increase further to 51 million by end-2025. For example, Niger, Chad, Somalia and Sudan are ranked among the top five most-vulnerable countries in the world. Finally, 50% are hosted in the countries most exposed[26] to the impacts of climate change, which include Burkina Faso, Mali and Kenya.

As such, many displaced persons are living in countries at significant risk of climate hazards. This is not only a longer-term risk, it is also a significant risk for displaced people now. In 2023, the Horn of Africa went from years of devastating droughts to above-normal rainfall, leading to devastating flooding. The Dadaab camp in Kenya was severely affected, with many parts flooded. Furthermore, as the water washed away roads, supplies could not reach the remote camp, fuel was in short supply and almost all water boreholes became inoperable[27]. In Somalia, many parts of the country were affected and more than 700,000 people were displaced because of floods. In the city of Beletweyne, the river broke through the banks and 85% of the city was submerged. Beletweyne was hosting more than 100,000 IDPs and their camps were particularly badly affected, with the flood water washing away tents. The plastic sheeting was already in a poor state and unable to withstand heavy rains as it had been worn away by preceding severe heat and drought[28]. In 2024, 59% of displaced people will be living in countries that are among those at highest risk

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[24] Defined as among the 25% most challenged based on the scoring in the INFORM Risk Index
[25] This is developed using the ND-Gain scores from 2020. More on the ND-Gain methodology is available at: nd.edu (accessed 4 March 2024)
[26] The degree to which a system is exposed to significant climate change from a biophysical perspective
[27] Care International (2023): El Niño-induced floods devastate the Horn of Africa: Over 230 killed, hundreds of thousands displaced. Available at: care-international.org (accessed 4 March 2024)
[28] Islamic Relief (2023): Somali city of Beledweyne is 85% under water following devastating floods. Available at: islamic-relief.org (accessed 4 March 2024)

of flooding, 39% will be living in countries that are among those at highest risk of experiencing an earthquake and 34% will be living in countries most at risk of experiencing drought[29]. Many of the host countries are facing multiple hazards and, as such, 12% of displaced people will be living in countries that are among those most at risk of experiencing floods, drought and an epidemic. Compared to 2023, there are now fewer displaced people living in these multi-hazard settings, which is partly because of the decreased risk of drought.

Hosting displaced people in these fragile, climate-exposed, low-income settings is also a result of the limited progress on realising durable solutions to displacement, including the lack of resettlement of refugees from low-income hosting countries. In 2022, 113,000 people were resettled, almost double the number resettled in 2021. The numbers are, furthermore, still far below the peak in 2016, where more than 172,000 displaced people were resettled. Of the resettlements in 2022, 83,000 people were from low-income countries, yet this still only amounted to 0.3% of the total number of displaced people living in these countries. The number of IDPs and refugees who have returned to their place of origin is significantly higher than resettlement and naturalisations, as almost 10 million returned in 2022. About 44% of the returns were displaced people originally from low-income countries, but this group accounted for approximately 55% of all displaced people in 2022. Despite increases in 2022, returns still only amounted to around 10% of the total number of displaced people. Given the lack of progress in resolving conflicts and addressing root causes, the share of displaced people able to return will remain limited. By the end of 2022, there were 57 protracted situations in 37 different host countries, meaning that about two-thirds of refugees lived in protracted displacement[30]. In 2023, this could increase to 61 protracted situations. An additional three situations could be added in 2024: Azerbaijanian refugees in Armenia, Ethiopian refugees in Sudan and Sudanese refugees in Egypt.

An overview of the specific forecasts for displacement in each of the 26 countries is available in the annex.

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[29] Defined as among the 25% countries most at risk based on the scoring in the INFORM Risk Index relevant indicators
[30] UNHCR (2023): Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022. Available at: unhcr.org (accessed 4 March 2024)

Connecting disregard of international humanitarian law and displacement

IHL is a set of rules developed to define the minimum standards of conduct during armed conflict. As such, IHL seeks to limit the effects of armed conflict, protecting people who are not direct participants and restricting the means and methods of warfare. As a self mandated protection agency with the mission to assist refugees and other displaced people by supporting them in the protection of their rights and empowering them towards a better future, IHL compliance is core to DRC's work. The main sources of IHL are the 1949 Geneva Conventions, supplemented by the Additional Protocols of 1977 relating to the protection of victims of armed conflict. Other conventions contributing to the body of IHL are the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, the 1980 Conventional Weapons Convention, the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, the 1997 Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines and the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict[31]. In addition to this there is an amble body of customary IHL

Given that displacement is closely linked to armed conflict, there is a natural relationship between disregard of IHL and displacement. There is a direct link between displacement and IHL in that the latter generally forbids mass forcible transfers of individuals as well as deportations. However, there are provisions that allow for evacuations of people but with the clear stipulation that they should be transferred back to their homes when hostilities in the area have ceased. The rules apply in cases of international armed conflict and in cases of civil war / internal conflicts[32].

Beyond these regulations, disregard of IHL can have an indirect link with displacement in that it regulates the conduct of armed conflict, which is a key driver of forced displacement. The links between armed conflict and displacement are well established. One study has found that the spread of violence, and in particular whether it targets urban areas, is a key driver of displacement[33].Civil war on average affects approximately 48% of a country's territory, but the average amount of territory with repeated fighting is 15%. This is important in shaping the opportunities for civilians to find safe havens[34]. Another study has found that there is a constant return to scale: when war intensity (conflict deaths) double, the number of refugees doubles[35]. DRC analysis has further shown that change in the number of conflict events is the strongest predictor of displacement the following year, followed by change in the total number of fatalities and total number of civilian fatalities[36].

The extent to which respect for IHL has an indirect link to displacement by influencing the conduct of warring parties has not been extensively explored. There are a number of provisions in IHL that could influence displacement dynamics. The principle that parties to a conflict must at all times distinguish between civilians and combatants and attacks must not be directed against civilians is codified in Articles 48, 51(2) and 52(2) of Additional Protocol I and enshrined in customary IHL. As highlighted above, the

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[31] The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (2004): What is International Humanitarian Law? Available at: icrc.org (accessed 4 March 2024)

[32] James D. Cantor (2013): Does IHL Prohibit the Forced Displacement of Civilians during War? *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Volume 24, Issue 4, December 2012, Pages 840–846: Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/ees053 (accessed 4 March 2024)

[33] Melander, Erik & Öberg, Magnus. (2007): The Threat of Violence and Forced Migration: Geographical Scope Trumps Intensity of Fighting. *Civil Wars*. 9. 156–173: Available at: demographic-research.org (accessed 4 March 2024)

[34] Clionadh Raleigh (2011): The search for safety: The effects of conflict, poverty and ecological influences on migration in the developing world, *Global Environmental Change*, Volume 21, Supplement 1, Pages S82-S93, ISSN 0959–3780. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.08.008 (accessed 4 March 2024)

[35] James D. Fearon & Andrew Shaver (2021): *Civil War Violence and Refugee Outflows*, Empirical Studies of Conflict Project (ESOC) Working Papers 25, Empirical Studies of Conflict Project. Available at: squarespace.com (accessed 4 March 2024)

[36] DRC (2022): Global Displacement Forecast 2022. Available at: drc.ngo (accessed 4 March 2024)

number of civilian fatalities is a driver of displacement, and as such it could be expected that the failure to distinguish between civilians and combatants would lead to increases in displacement. On the other hand, if civilians can reasonably trust that armed actors will uphold this rule and distinguish between civilians and combatants, less displacement could be the likely outcome, as civilians would have less reason to fear for their safety and protection. The same articles that require distinction between civilians and combatants also require armed groups to distinguish between civilian and military objectives, which can be argued offer protection of, for example, education facilities, personnel and students, while other provisions seek to ensure that there are the necessary conditions for education to be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable during periods of armed conflict[37]. Health facilities are offered specific protection under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, where article 19 stipulates that 'Fixed establishments and mobile medical units of the Medical Service may in no circumstances be attacked, but shall at all times be respected and protected by the Parties to the conflict'. If essential services – like access to medical services and education – become unavailable because of deliberate targeting by armed actors, displacement could increase, as civilian populations would have to leave to gain access to such services. In addition to the aspect of distinction other key IHL principles are proportionality and precaution. Another relevant IHL rule is set forth in the Additional Protocol I, which stipulates that armed actors must ensure the 'rapid and unimpeded passage of all relief consignments, equipment and personnel'. As with access to health and education services, a lack of access to relief, such as food and water, could also lead to people having to flee in order to survive. Related to this, there is a specific prohibition of using starvation as a method of warfare, which is codified in Article 54(1) of Additional Protocol I.

In the following sub-chapters, the following links will be explored in more detail:
- Violence targeting civilians as a driver of displacement
- Targeting of critical services and civilian infrastructure (health and education) as a driver of displacement
- Restrictions on humanitarian access as a driver of displacement

The quantitative element of the analysis looks at data from the past 21 years from countries experiencing active conflict and displacement[38]. Quantitative analysis of the link between disregard of IHL and displacement is not straightforward, as there is no database of the level of respect or disregard for IHL. ACLED has a curated dataset with conflict incidents that directly target civilians and as such can shed light on this aspect. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack collects data on attacks on education facilities. Whether each of these attacks constitute an IHL violation is not determined, but it is likely still an indication that the principles of proportionality and caution are not being applied. The same caveat is relevant for the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition and Insecurity Insights data on attacks on health facilities. Independent analysis provider ACAPS has a dataset on humanitarian access that includes nine sub-indicators from which three different pillars are scored in order to calculate an overall access score. As with the data on health and education, determining whether the access constraints are deliberate and in violation of IHL is beyond the scope of this analysis, but all else being equal, the access constraints are likely a good indicators of some level of disregard for IHL.

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[37] Education Above All (2020): Protecting Education in Insecurity and Armed Conflict: An International Law Handbook. Second edition. Available at: right-to-education.org (accessed March 2024)
[38] Countries that have experienced >0 battle-related deaths and >25,000 displaced. This includes a total of 383 country-years

Engaging with armed actors and de facto authorities for protection of civilians and humanitarian access

Many of the countries DRC is working in have seen a proliferation of armed groups and de facto authorities (AGDAs) over the last few years, which directly affects DRC's operations. DRC serve people in need wherever they are, including in hard-to-reach areas and/or in locations controlled by AGDAs. To gain and maintain access and foster local acceptance for our programming, DRC considers humanitarian engagement with these AGDAs as an issue of humanitarian necessity, something that is unavoidable if we are to continue our assistance to the most vulnerable population groups.

Humanitarian engagement is never an objective in itself – it is a tool DRC uses to carve out space, including for some of DRC's key activities, thereby contributing to the centrality of protection objectives and providing opportunities for protection activities. Engagement also offers a platform to sensitise and familiarise AGDAs with their responsibilities under IHL, encouraging them to investigate their duty of care and strengthen and improve efforts to protect civilians. DRC's humanitarian engagement with AGDAs is guided by DRC's mandate and rooted in a set of principles, including the humanitarian principles of humanity, operational independence, neutrality and impartiality, as well as the nine commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standards. Additionally, DRC's humanitarian engagement is in line with both national and international laws and respectful of local customs.

Engagement with AGDAs can be conducted directly through a DRC staff member or indirectly through local intermediaries who engage an AGDA interlocutor on DRC's behalf. Both engagement modalities have their own benefits and risks, which need to be carefully analysed before deciding on the best modality: While direct engagement provides an opportunity to communicate directly and clarify our mandate, programming activities and principles and contributes to establishing a medium- to long-term relationship based on trust, it can also expose DRC to a number of risks, such as direct demands coming from AGDAs and create security concerns among our staff. Indirect engagement on the other hand can provide DRC with a buffer between our organisation and the interlocutor. This can provide DRC with added space, time and distance when interacting with an AGDA. However, this approach raises the risk that the intermediary's agenda could shape the engagement and distort DRC's messages. In reality, direct and indirect engagement approaches often are very fluid and complement one another.

Humanitarian engagement, even when well and thoroughly planned, comes with certain risks – but so does the absence of humanitarian engagement. DRC classifies risks related to humanitarian engagement into four categories: 1) Reputational Risks, 2) Safety Risks, 3) Programmatic Risks, 4) Compliance and Legal Risks. The way these risks play out are highly context dependent.

As with all types of engagement, engaging AGDAs is a process that takes time and resources. However, doing so has increased DRC's ability to gain safe, principled and sustained access to hard-to-reach populations, increase upholding of IHL, fulfil our mandate and increase our impact.

Illustration 5: Loose Gestural sketch of soldiers inside hospital

Violence targeting civilians

Illustration 4: Loose Gestural sketch of soldiers inside hospital

Violence against civilians on the rise

Conflict almost always means that civilians will be exposed to violence, at the very least because of proximity to ongoing fighting between armed actors. As highlighted above, globally, approximately 600 million people were exposed to conflict incidents in 2023, including 412 million specifically exposed to incidents of violence against civilians and 135 million living within 1 kilometre of at least one conflict incident. In 2023, Palestine was the country with the highest share of people exposed to violence, with 85% of the population exposed. Even before the 7 October 7, 52% of the population in Palestine had been exposed to conflict. Furthermore, 60% of the population in Palestine where exposed to incidents of violence against civilians in 2023[39]. What this data also underscores is that the vast majority of people do not flee - either voluntarily or involuntarily - even when living in close proximity to violence.

As such, the type of violence has an impact on displacement. One study has found that civil war has the largest impact on displacement, followed by genocide/politicide[40]. Another study has found that the dynamics of civil war, while leading to displacement, tends to have a higher share of internally displaced than genocides or state violence targeting civilians. The argument is that insurgents or rebels in civil wars are targeting the government and need the support of the local population and thus seek to provide pockets of safe havens within the country to which populations can flee and seek safety rather than having to cross borders[41]. In the Sahel, the opposite has been found to be true: here insurgent groups have been targeting civilians as part of a deliberate tactic to intimidate local communities into cooperation or to forcibly displace them, providing the groups both greater political leverage and territorial control – for example, of areas rich in natural resources[42].

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has found that, generally speaking, civilians feel much safer when they know that attacks are aimed at specific military targets and are thus less likely to flee. Unfortunately, armed conflicts often include indiscriminate attacks, where armed actors fail to uphold the requirement to distinguish between civilian and military targets either unintentionally or intentionally. The latter is by definition a violation of IHL. This can take the form of using force and physical violence against men, women and children, and carrying out small- or large-scale killings and massacres of civilians. In many conflicts, sexual violence is used deliberately to cause trauma and longstanding suffering[43].

As highlighted above, violence against civilians is on the rise. Globally, there has been an increase of 25% in incidents of violence against civilians between 2018 and 2023. In Africa, where there is more historical data on violence against civilians, there has been an increase of more than 700% in the last 20 years. In 2023, 412 million people were exposed to violence against civilians, an increase of 57 million since 2020. The most glaring example is the war on Gaza, where in less than four months more than 25,000 Palestinians, at least 10,000 of them children, have been killed, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza and more than 62,000 people have been injured, many with life-changing injuries that will leave them with permanent disabilities; these include more than 1,000 Palestinian children who have lost one or more of

[39] ACLED (nd): Conflict Exposure. Available at: acleddata.com (accessed 5 March 2024)

[40] Clionadh Raleigh (2011): The search for safety: The effects of conflict, poverty and ecological influences on migration in the developing world, *Global Environmental Change*, Volume 21, Supplement 1, Pages S82–S93, ISSN 0959-3780. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.08.008 (accessed 5 March 2024)

[41] Moore, W. H. and Shellman, S. M. (2006): 'Refugee or Internally Displaced Person?: To Where Should One Flee?', *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(5), pp. 599–622. Available at: 10.1177/0010414005276457 (accessed 5 March 2024)

[42] Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2022): Five Zones of Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel. Available at: africacenter.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[43] ICRC (2019): Displacement in Times of Conflict: How International Humanitarian Law Protects in War, and why it matters. Available at: icrc.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

their upper or lower limbs. The relentless bombardment has displaced almost 1.9 million people. Sudan witnessed a similar number of incidents of violence against civilians as Palestine, but spread out over a larger territory and thus exposing about 15% of the population compared to 60% in Palestine. Sudan has been plagued by heavy violence since April 2023, where civilians have been targeted, often along ethnic lines, and armed actors rampage through villages. At the same time, indiscriminate bombing has also taken place and an air raid on a densely populated area in South Darfur in end-December 2023 left dozens dead. An estimated 12,000 Sudanese have been killed since the fighting broke out in April, while millions have been displaced[44]. DR Congo has seen a long series of incidents in which civilian populations, especially those in displacement sites, have been directly targeted in violation of IHL, especially in the eastern part of the country. The area has seen a resurgence of localised insecurity created by a multitude of armed actors, which has directly targeted civilian populations with extreme levels of violence. In June 2023, an attack on a displacement site in Lala, left 46 people dead, of whom half were children. The attack also displaced 7,800 people from the site[45].

Violence against civilians increases displacement

Numerous stories from displacement-affected contexts show the link between displacement and violence against civilians at the individual and household level. In 2019, fighting between the military and opposition armed groups in Esu in northwest Cameroon led to several civilian deaths and dozens of houses burnt. Several people fled the violence including Roskstana: "When they started shooting and killing people in Esu, we ran to the bush and stayed there for three months. During this period, we thought of relocating to a safer place but we did not know where to go to and did not have the means for transport either." In Nigeria, Elizabeth lived in Borno State when it was attacked by Boko Haram: "I was displaced from Pulka (Borno State, Nigeria) to Cameroon for four years, after Boko Haram infiltrated Pulka, looting food items and valuables, setting buildings ablaze, killing civilians including my eldest son and government security forces while holding many hostages. Before the attack, I never thought of leaving my community, but the threat of being killed or abducted made me leave my community in search of safety"[46]. As both stories illustrate, the violence directly targeting civilians led them to flee in search of safety and protection.

At a general level, violence against civilians has been found to increase the total number of displaced people. There is a very strong correlation between violence against civilians and overall violence, so to prove the link entails disentangling the displacement that is driven by the general level of violence and that is driven by violence against civilians. Regression analysis shows that when controlling for country effects, population age composition, GDP per capita, the overall number of conflict incidents, changes in battle-related deaths and violence against civilians is a significant driver of changes in the total number of displaced persons: i.e., when the level of violence against civilians is higher than usual, there is an increased change in the total number of displaced people that same year. As shown in the figure below, on average, the total number of displaced people increases by 32,000 when there are below-normal levels of violence against civilians. On the other hand, when there are above-normal levels[47] of violence against civilians, the average increase in the number of displaced people is 193,000. In the 10 cases, where violence against civilians has been significantly greater than normal[48], the average increase in number of displaced

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[44] International Crisis Group (2024): Sudan's Calamitous Civil War: A Chance to Draw Back from the Abyss. Available at: crisisgroup.org (accessed 7 March 2024)

[45] Danish Refugee Council & Norwegian Refugee Council (2023): Advocacy note on the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in the Ituri province, DRC. Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 7 March 2024)

[46] Danish Refugee Council (2022): Global Displacement Forecast report 2022. Available at: drc.ngo (accessed 7 March 2024)

[47] Calculated as 0.7 standard deviation from average number of incidents of violence against civilians in the given country

[48] More than 2 standard deviations from average

people has been 232,000. The analysis also tested whether, in particular, air strikes targeting civilians would be a driver of displacement – but this was not found to be the case.
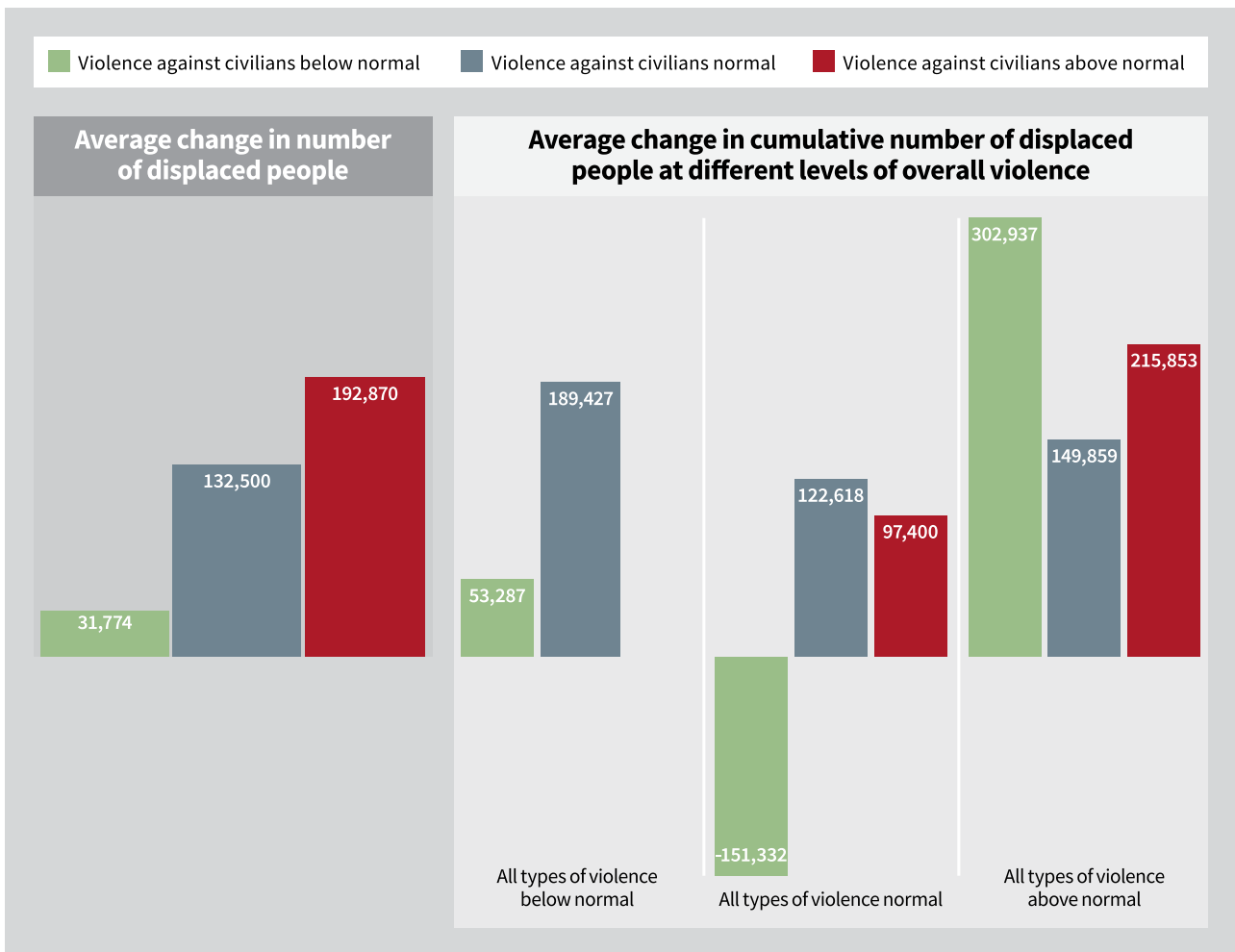
Figure 4: Relationship between level of violence against civilians and displacement

Similarly, air strikes were not found to have an effect on displacement dynamics: i.e., whether people displaced internally or externally. General violence against civilians was also not found to lead to a higher share of the displaced being either internally or externally displaced. The analysis did not distinguish between the perpetrators of the violence, but one could expect that if the actor responsible for the violence is a state actor acting against its own population, that this would increase the number of people fleeing across borders in search for safety and protection. Similarly, the analysis did not find a significant relationship between violence against civilians and returns: i.e., the level of violence against civilians was not found to increase or decrease returns in the same year or the coming year.

Illustration 6: Loose Gestural sketch of , silhouettes, soldiers in wartorn city, shades of crimson red, black and

Destruction of vital services

Health facilities increasingly targeted in conflicts

Since 2017 there has been a steady rise in attacks on health facilities in conflict zones. In 2017, approximately 600 incidents were recorded, while in 2023, preliminary data suggest that there have been more than 2,400 incidents worldwide, up from 1,639 incidents in 2022. This is partly driven by the war on Gaza, as more than 700 incidents have been recorded in Palestine alone – more than the total number of incidents worldwide in both 2017, 2018 and 2020. In both Myanmar and Ukraine, more than 400 incidents have been recorded, while in Sudan more than 260 incidents have been recorded. Incidents in these four countries combined account for approximately three-quarters of attacks or threats against health facilities in 2023. [49]

Unsurprisingly, some of these countries have also witnessed education facilities coming under attack or being used for military purposes. In 2022, Ukraine, Palestine and Myanmar experienced the greatest number of attacks on education facilities. Such incidents have also been on the rise in recent years[50].

Shelling and bombardment of schools, health facilities and other vital infrastructure leads to disruption in access to services. ICRC has found anecdotal evidence suggesting that destruction of schools, health facilities and water supply have direct impacts on people's decision-making. Clearly, if health facilities are destroyed, families with sick, disabled or injured members will need to leave, if they have the means, to access appropriate care and medicine. Similarly, destruction of schools is also likely to lead families with school-aged children to leave to ensure access to education. As with violence against civilians, these attacks can be deliberate or unintentional. Health care services may be rendered inaccessible because roads are destroyed or because of lack of water, fuel or electricity. Intentional attacks often target ambulances trying to recover the injured or the dead in areas of fighting. In some cases, armed actors take control of medical facilities and use them for military purposes[51].

In Gaza, in just one week in December, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded at least 13 strikes on or in the vicinities of schools in northern Gaza and Gaza City. The schools were housing thousands of displaced civilians. In the same week, OHCHR recorded at least 15 strikes on or in the vicinity of hospitals in the north of Gaza. As these examples show, the war on Gaza has seen a concerning pattern of attacks on or close to civilian settings protected under IHL[52]. Only a month into the war, more than 250 education facilities or 40% of the total number of schools in the Gaza strip had been hit by shelling[53]. In West Africa, deliberate targeting of schools by NSAGs, occupation by armed forces, and a general climate of insecurity has led to the closure of more than 13,000 schools, affecting the education, well-being and protection of an estimated 2.5 million children[54]. In CAR, armed groups 'specifically targeted education in September–November 2014, in order to impede the return to school, which is a

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[49] Insecurity Insight (2024): Attacked and Threatened: Health Care at Risk. Interactive Map. Available at: mapaction-maps.herokuapp.com (accessed 5 March 2024)

[50] Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) (2023): Education Under Attack. Available at: humdata.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[51] ICRC (2019): Displacement in Times of Conflict: How International Humanitarian Law Protects in War, and why it matters. Available at: icrc.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[52] OHCHR (2023): UN Human Rights Office – OHCHR is alarmed at Israeli strikes on or in the vicinities of schools and hospitals in the north of Gaza. Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 5 March 2024)

[53] Education Above All (2023): Schools are Off-Limits – Cease Attacks Now. Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 5 March 2024)

[54] West and Central Africa Education in Emergencies Working Group (2023): Education Under Attack in West and Central Africa - 2023 Update. Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 5 March 2024)

symbol of the return to normality and stabilisation'[55]. Underscoring the intent behind attacks on educational facilities, a report by Human Rights Watch[56] emphasises how schools have been occupied and used for military purposes. For instance, educational facilities have been looted, converted into military bases or barracks to accommodate soldiers, or used for detention of opposition affiliates. Even after brief utilisation, the facilities and equipment of schools have been reported to be unfit to host any sort of educational activities. In Ukraine, a number of cases have been documented where Russian military forces has used schools when capturing and occupying towns and cities. Military forces have pillaged, looted and ransacked schools, leaving behind burned-out facilities that will require significant efforts to rebuild[57]. In Sudan, armed groups have commandeered medical facilities, attacked staff and looted medicines, supplies and vehicles[58].

Targeting of infrastructure appears to increase displacement across borders

"*I lived under occupation for six months. Then, with my son, we left because he needed to continue school. We chose Stryi town to live in because there are many adapted houses for rent. Since September this year, my son has started school. But there is no dream to stay here. Still, we want to go home. We don't unpack our bags*"[59].

Generally speaking, attacks on health care and education facilities correlate fairly strongly with each other[60], but have an even stronger correlation with violence against civilians[61]. This shows that, as a result of a broader, systematic disregard for IHL, incidents of disregard of IHL do not happen in isolation . Despite this, attacks on health care and education facilities do not have a strong correlation with changes in overall displacement, nor with changes in the number of IDPs. Regression analysis shows that when controlling for country effects, GDP per capita, as well as the overall number of conflict incidents and changes in battle-related deaths, change in attacks on health and education facilities are significant drivers of displacement across borders, i.e. increase the number of asylum seekers and refugees. However, when adding control for the population age composition in the country, attacks on education facilities is no longer a significant driver of cross-border displacement. As shown in the figure below, on average, the total number of displaced people increases by 29,000 when there are below-normal levels of attacks on health care facilities. On the other hand, when there are above-normal levels[62] of attacks on health care facilities, the average increase in the number of displaced people is 79,000. A possible explanation for why such disregard for IHL is only a significant driver of cross-border displacement and not general or internal displacement, could be that when people depend on access to health, they need to cross borders in order to access it in a safe and sustainable manner. This could be the case if these attacks are widespread and therefore there is generally poor access to health across the country or in cases where people fear that this type of violence will spread to other parts, in which case displacing internally would only be a temporary solution to accessing the service. The difference between health and education services, can be explained

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[55] Education Cluster (2015): Education Cluster Assessment on the State of Education in Central African Republic – End of the First Semester, April 2015. Available at reliefweb.int (accessed 5 March 2024)

[56] Human Rights Watch (2017): No Class: When Armed Groups Use Schools in the Central African Republic. Available at: hrw.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[57] Human Rights Watch (2023): Tanks On the Playground: Attacks on Schools and Military Use of Schools in Ukraine. Available at: hrw.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[58] Médecins Sans Frontières (2023): MSF facilities looted, medical activities impeded by violence in Sudan. Available at: msf.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[59] DRC (2024). Available at: drc.ngo (accessed 5 March 2024)

[60] Pearson's R 0.226

[61] Pearson's R 0.523 for attacks on health care x violence against civilians and Pearson's R 0.414 for attacks on education facilities x violence against civilians

[62] Calculated as 0.7 standard deviation from average number of incidents of attacks on health care / education facilities in the given country

by the fact that crossing the border to obtain education services is typically challenging as this entails enrolling children into a new school system and access to education as refugees is in many instances also limited and potentially require national ID or forms of documentation to legally be in the country. This is not necessarily the case for accessing health services.
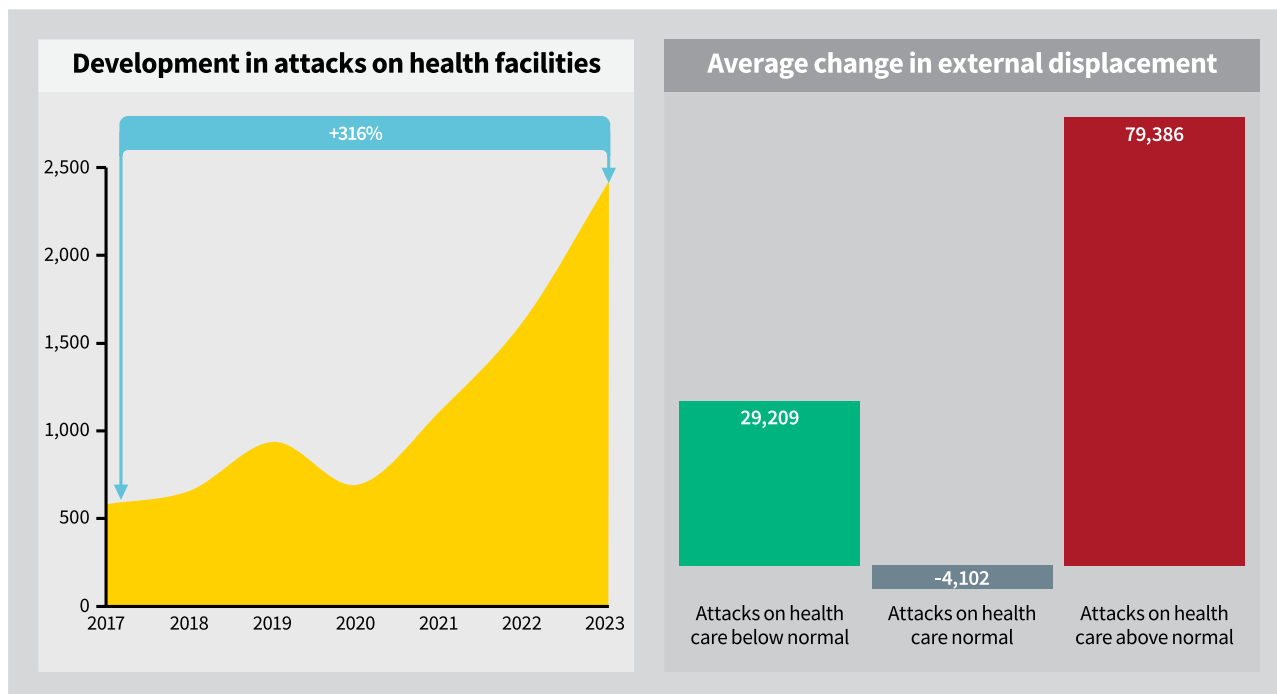

Figure 5: Relationship between attacks on health facilities and displacement

That access to education and health services affect displacement dynamics has also been documented as a source of onward movement. A study found that the significant movement of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries towards Europe in 2015 was a result of poor protection space with 'little or no access to social rights of protection, education, health care, and employment'[63]. UNHCR's spokesperson Melissa Fleming also highlighted that 'Children are going too long without an education'[64] as one of six key reasons Syrian refugees were moving onwards from the hosting countries neighbouring Syria.

The quantitative data analysis does not indicate a significant relationship between attacks on health and education facilities and returns. But other studies have found this link. A major World Bank study found that 'low provision of education, health, and basic services in Syria provides an effective deterrent against return'[65]. The study found that restoring services could increase return movements of Syrian refugees by 26%, but that improving services has a much greater effect on return movements if it happens in an environment of improved security, whereby the effect could be as much as a 62% increase[66]. Return intention surveys conducted by UNHCR with Syrian refugees have also consistently found inadequate

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[63] Almustafa, M. (2022): Reframing refugee crisis: A "European crisis of migration" or a "crisis of protection"? Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space, 40(5), 1064-1082. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654421989705 (accessed 5 March 2024)

[64] Melissa Fleming (2015): Six reasons why Syrians are fleeing to Europe in increasing numbers, *The Guardian*. Available at: theguardian.com (accessed 5 March 2024)

[65] World Bank (2020): The Mobility of Displaced Syrians: An Economic and Social Analysis. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: doi/abs/10.1596/978-1-4648-1401-3 (accessed 5 March 2024)

[66] World Bank (2020): The Mobility of Displaced Syrians: An Economic and Social Analysis. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: doi/abs/10.1596/978-1-4648-1401-3 (accessed 5 March 2024)

basic services, along with lack of safety and security and livelihood opportunities as the key reasons Syrian refugees are not intending to return in the foreseeable future. The impact on returns in Sudan is also highlighted in a recent interview conducted by MSF with Souad from Mayo, South Khartoum, who fled fighting and said, "I have no prospect of returning to Khartoum because of the huge destruction that has occurred there, as well as the demolition of institutions and hospitals"[67]. Interviews with displaced people in Yemen also highlighted the issue of a lack of access to housing, water and healthcare as critical factors preventing return[68].

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[67] Médecins Sans Frontières (2024): Sudan: Mass displacement follows violence in Wad Madani. Available at: reliefweb.int(accessed 5 March 2024)
[68] DRC & Norwegian Refugee Council (2023): Yearning for a home that no longer exists: The dilemma facing people forced to flee in Yemen. Available at: drc.ngo (accessed 5 March 2024)

Restricting humanitarian access

Humanitarian access has been increasingly constrained

Humanitarian access is central to any functional delivery of aid. In spaces of conflict and vulnerability, aid workers are exposed to a considerable set of constraints. Humanitarian workers, even if not directly targeted, can still become victims of violence during conflicts, leading humanitarian actors to scale back or suspend operations, leaving affected populations without essential aid. Violence against humanitarian staff, restriction of movement, impediments to entering a country or (political) interference into the implementation of humanitarian activities frequently complicate the provision of assistance. Although operating under neutrality, humanitarian assistance can be seen by governments and armed groups to have economic, social or political implications and is hence subject to strategic considerations[69]. A striking example of such dynamics is the situation in the besieged Gaza Strip. As outlined in a report by Human Rights Watch 'Israeli officials have publicly stated that humanitarian aid to Gaza would be conditioned either on the release of hostages unlawfully held by Hamas or Hamas' destruction'[70]. In this case, humanitarian access is instrumentalised to further exert pressure on the civilian population as a means to achieve strategic objectives.

Amidst prevailing political unrest, the threat of direct violence and assaults on humanitarian workers emerges as a primary worry for both international and local aid agencies. In 2023, there was a slight decline in the number of recorded security incidents involving aid workers. But the number of aid workers killed doubled compared to 2022 and reached 257 in 2023 with 247 being nationals of the specific country.[71] Just as crucial as ensuring the safety and accessibility of humanitarian staff to these areas, is the imperative that vulnerable communities are able to access the aid and the actors providing it. If affected populations are denied the existence of their needs and entitlements to assistance, they are faced with legal barriers to access aid they may not be able to overcome. Conflict-affected communities face barriers to accessing aid or services due to various constraints, including mobility obstruction and impeded access to documentation. Moreover, general insecurities such as armed hostilities or the presence of landmines or UXOs (unexploded ordnances) can hinder humanitarian access considerably, immobilising both affected populations as well as humanitarian staff. Finally, physical and environmental constraints might cut off certain areas from being accessible.[72]

Using quantitative data to study the above-mentioned factors, trends in humanitarian access have been examined across 40 countries over the period 2018–2023 and a number of developments are evident. First, humanitarian access is more restricted. This change has been driven by increased restriction and obstruction of access to services and assistance of affected populations and the substantial increase in physical and environmental constraints. Second is a decrease in the ability to access aid. An ACAPS report[73] cites numerous instances across various regions where mobility restrictions force affected populations to abstain from obtaining aid instead of making their way through besieged territories. Administrative hurdles and lack of documents such as movement permits also significantly restrict an individual's ability to access aid.

As shown above, humanitarian access in crises continues to be challenged in 2023. In Gaza, the ongoing siege by Israel and military operations are hindering the scaling up of humanitarian efforts. The siege included cutting off supplies of electricity and water and the import of fuel. With these constraints in place,

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[69] ACAPS (2021): Humanitarian Access. Methodology Note. Available at: acaps.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[70] Human Rights Watch (2023). Starvation used as Weapon of War in Gaza. Available at: hrw.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[71] Humanitarian Outcomes (nd), Aid Worker Security Database, aidworkersecurity.org (accessed 11 March 2024)

[72] ACAPS (2021): Humanitarian Access. Methodology Note

[73] ACAPS (2022): Humanitarian Access Overview, July. Available at: acaps.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

humanitarian assistance is severely limited and unable to meet the mounting needs[74]. In Afghanistan, Bureaucratic and Administrative Impediments (BAI) remain the number one access constraints in the country, encompassing restrictive legal frameworks, challenges in administrative requirements such as registration, movement restrictions and interference attempts during implementation. On Monday 11 September, a violent storm with torrential rain unleashed a catastrophic flash flood that wreaked havoc in several cities across northeastern Libya. In the coastal city of Derna, home to 125,000 residents, two dams collapsed resulting in widespread destruction and more than 10,000 fatalities. Humanitarian responders addressing the aftermath of Storm Daniel in Derna faced significant challenges, navigating various layers of permissions and approvals from eastern, western, and municipal authorities, resulting in prolonged delays to their activities. Additionally, a multitude of official and unofficial checkpoints controlled by different armed groups remained in and around Derna, posing security and bureaucratic risks. Into October 2023, road closures and damaged infrastructure persisted in and around Derna, hindering movement. While transport routes have been restored in most other affected areas, difficult terrain complicated access to some flood-affected areas[75]. Lastly, in Burkina Faso, Amnesty International reported that, in July 2023, armed groups had placed at least 46 locations under siege. This tactic, which has become a defining feature of the conflict since 2022, involves establishing checkpoints on main exit routes, laying improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to restrict traffic, and conducting occasional attacks on civilians, soldiers and supply convoys. These sieges have affected an estimated one million people, preventing residents from farming, grazing cattle, accessing healthcare and education, and forcing tens of thousands to flee their homes. Additionally, the armed groups have destroyed civilian infrastructure, including bridges and water facilities, to enforce the siege[76]. In other cases, there are reports of armed groups in Mali and Burkina Faso imposing lockdowns or curfews. '*Many of these lockdowns are put in place on Mondays, leading to the term 'ghost-town Mondays*'[77].

Restrictions on humanitarian access increase displacement across borders
As described in the example from Burkina Faso, when people are not able to access humanitarian assistance or when humanitarian assistance is hindered from reaching people in need, people may decide to flee. ICRC has found that while access to humanitarian assistance can influence people's decisions on whether stay or flee, the relationship between aid and displacement is complex. Humanitarian organisations can address reasons for displacement but may inadvertently attract people to areas with better aid access. Proximity to aid can reduce displacement, but people may still be displaced if they must travel long distances for assistance.

Humanitarian access scores correlate fairly strongly with both changes in total displacement: internal displacement and external displacement. Regression analysis shows that when controlling for country effects and the overall number of conflict incidents and changes in battle-related deaths, the level of humanitarian access is a significant driver of displacement across borders, i.e. increases the number of asylum seekers and refugees, but not of total displacement or internal displacement. As shown in the figure below, on average the total number of displaced people across borders decreases by 6,000 when there is zero to moderate access constraints. When there are high access constraints, there is an increase of 6,000 displaced on average across borders, while in situations with very high or extreme access constraints the number is 18,000. Looking at the different elements of humanitarian access, violence

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[74] ACAPS (2023): Palestine/Israel: Spotlight on the situation of Gazan workers. Available at: acaps.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[75] ACAPS (2023): Protection risks in eastern and western Libya. Available at: reliefweb.int. (accessed 5 March 2024)

[76] Amnesty International (2023): "Death was slowly creeping on us": Living under siege in Burkina Faso. Available at: amnesty.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

[77] Amnesty International (2023): "Death was slowly creeping on us": Living under siege in Burkina Faso, p.10. Available at: amnesty.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

against humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets is found to be a significant driver of cross-border displacement. When this creates few to zero access constraints, there is an average decrease in external displacement – of 2,000 people. When this creates high access constraints, there is an average increase in 12,000 people in cross-border displacement, and this goes up to 37,000 when it creates a complete block on access.

A possible explanation for why access constraints and a potential disregard for IHL is a significant driver of cross-border displacement and not total or internal displacement, is that the analysis focuses on humanitarian access constraints on the national level, i.e. in situations where there are high or extreme access constraints in (almost) the entire country. In such cases, displacing internally will not necessarily improve people's access to critical assistance. As such, availability of assistance on the other side of a border can act as a pull factor, when people are fleeing violence and thus influence displacement dynamics. But lack of access to humanitarian assistance can – like access to health services – also be a push factor. Many people, as also shown earlier, live in context with violence and find ways to adapt and cope. But when violence combines with an inability to meet critical needs either by oneself or with support from humanitarian actors, the situation becomes untenable and fleeing is the only option. In cases where there are severe access constraints in most parts of a country, the option to flee will entail crossing a border. Often, in cases where there are severe access constraints in a given country, humanitarian actors will operate from and provide services in neighbouring countries so that people in need can access assistance by crossing the border. In particular, this will be the case if there is specific violence against humanitarian personnel, facilities and assets. For example, the crisis in Sudan made many areas inaccessible for critical humanitarian assistance to be safely delivered and prompted more than 1.8 million people to cross into neighboring countries in search of safety and assistance.
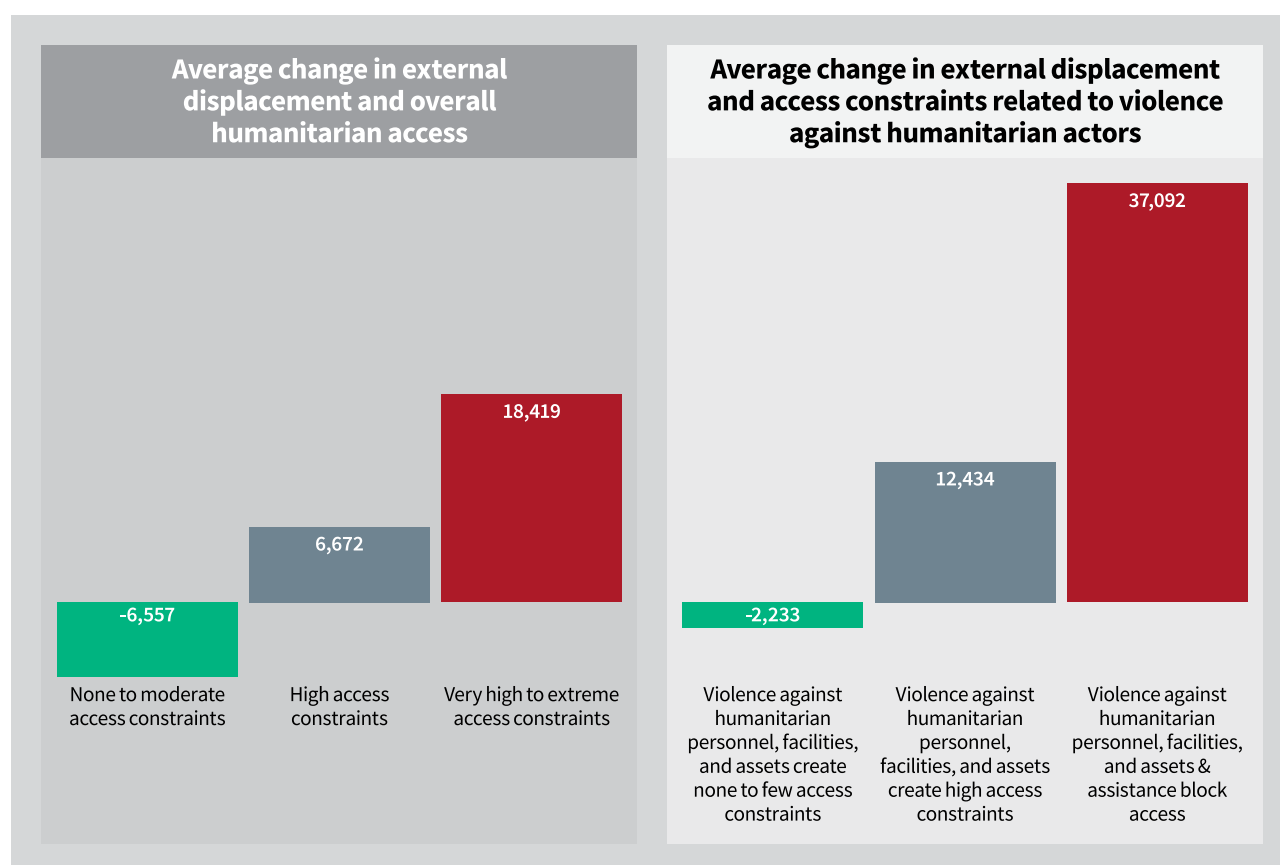

Figure 6: Relationship between humanitarian access and displacement

While overall humanitarian access is not a driver of changes in internal displacement, restriction and obstruction of access to services and assistance for people in need of humanitarian assistance is a significant driver of increasing internal displacement. This access indicator assesses whether people are prevented from reaching aid or services because of restrictions, such as administrative barriers, and requirements to have specific documents, as well as, for example, sieges, roadblocks, curfews and harassment[78]. When this creates zero to few access constraints, there is an average increase of 600 IDPs, where there is a high level of access constraints, there is an increase of 122,000 IDP. In cases where this creates a complete block on access to humanitarian assistance, the average increase in IDPs goes up to 190,000. The World Bank has found that in Somalia, *"The situation is complicated by insecurity, as a result of which humanitarian actors are unable to reach many of the food insecure in their home areas. This means that they are only able to reach a number of urban areas, inadvertently acting as a pull factor for food insecure households to move to urban areas in order to secure such assistance"*[79]. Similar dynamics have been found in Nigeria[80], shaping the movement of people internally in search of assistance. An examination of families intending to depart Iraq, of whom one-third were IDPs, revealed that their main motivations for relocation were linked to insufficient income, exorbitant living expenses, and difficulties in accessing essential services[81].

What these combined results suggests is that specific access constraints can increase internal displacement from locations that are difficult for humanitarian actors to access for humanitarian or where constraints are put on people in need's ability to reach humanitarian actors. More general access constraints can then work to increase displacement across borders, but not total displacement, which can suggest that the cross-border movement is primarily secondary displacement by IDPs, which as a result does not increase the total number of displaced.

The analysis also shows that returns decrease when people in need face restriction and obstruction of access to services, and assistance and denial of existence of humanitarian needs or entitlements to assistance. When there are zero to few access constraints for people to access humanitarian aid, returns are on average 68% of the total number of people displaced. When people's access to humanitarian aid is facing high constraints, returns drop to 10% and when access is completely blocked, returns drop to 6% of the total number of people displaced. This suggests, as described in the section on vital services, that fewer people will be inclined to return in cases where some level of security has been restored, but there is no expectation that they will receive the support needed to re-establish their lives and livelihoods.

[78] ACAPS (2021): Humanitarian Access: Methodology note. Available at: acaps.org (accessed 5 March 2024)
[79] World Bank (2014): Analysis of displacement in Somalia. Available at: worldbank.org (accessed 5 March 2024)
[80] REACH (2019): Situation Overview: Humanitarian Needs and Displacement Dynamics in Hard-to-Reach Areas of Borno State (August 2018 – April 2019). Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 5 March 2024)
[81] IDMC (2017): Off The Grid: Are today's IDPs tomorrow's refugees and migrants? Available at: internal-displacement.org (accessed 5 March 2024)

Average change in IDPs and restriction on access for affected people

- **642** — Restriction and obstruction of access to services and assistance for people in need create none to few access constraints
- **122,123** — Restriction and obstruction of access to services and assistance for people in need create high access constraints
- **193,007** — Restriction and obstruction of access to services and assistance for people in need block access

Average returns relative to cumulative number of displaced people and overall access of people in need

- **68%** — Access of people in need to humanitarian aid face few or no constraints
- **10%** — Access of people in need to humanitarian aid face moderate to high constraints
- **6%** — Access of people in need to humanitarian aid is (nearly) fully blocked
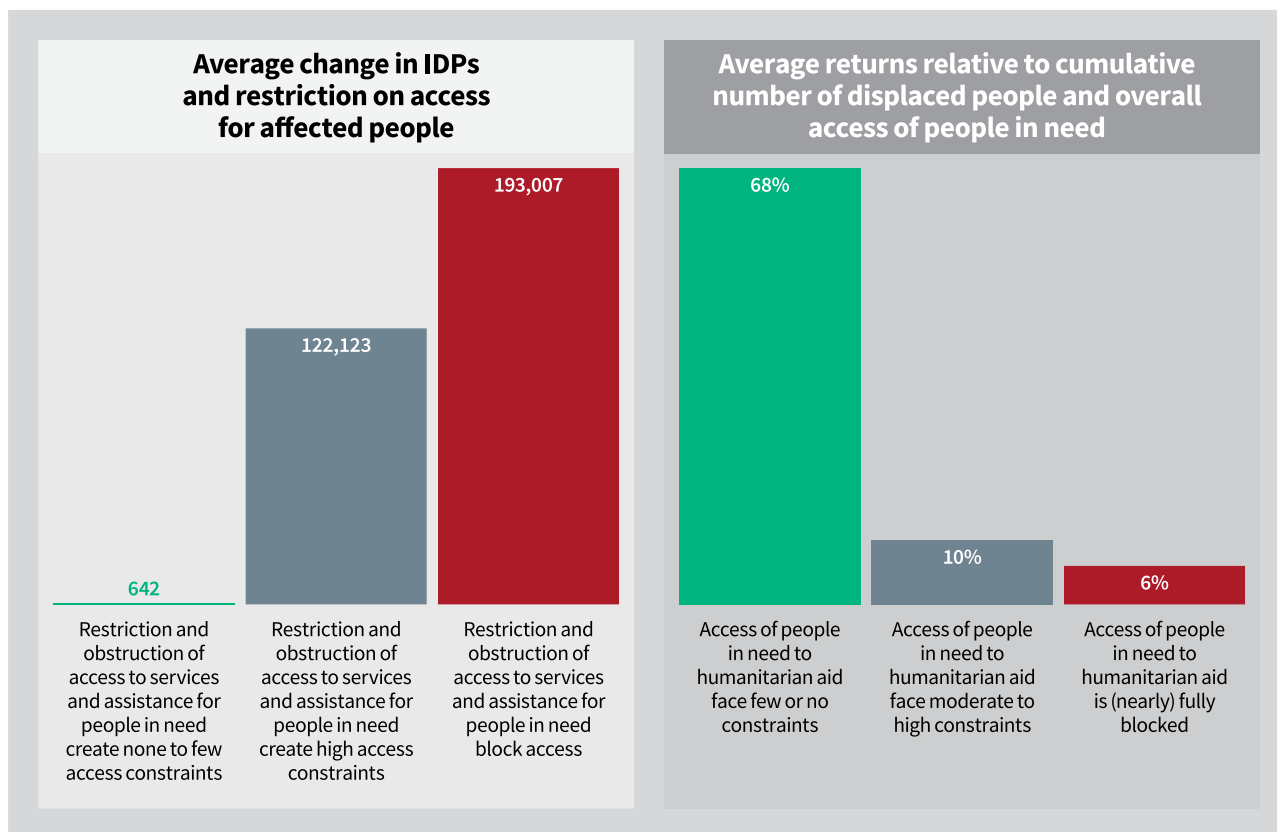
Figure 7: Humanitarian access, IDP movements and returns

Engaging with non-stated armed actors in Colombia for humanitarian access

Despite peace efforts in Colombia since 2016, the country still experiences internal fighting involving multiple actors. According to ICRC[82], in 2022 there were seven active conflicts in Colombia involving four of the main AGDAs and the Colombian government. While peace negotiations are reducing the intensity of clashes, with an apparently positive impact on local communities' humanitarian needs[83], analysts report that NSAGs are taking advantage of bilateral ceasefires to empower themselves by expanding their territorial and social control[84].

This scenario requires actors in the humanitarian sector to establish a dialogue with whoever is controlling specific territories in order to socialise mandate, activities, objectives and limitations. However, Colombia's complicated legal framework[85] is preventing the humanitarian community from engaging (in any form) with NSAGs.

This limitation means that DRC has to look for indirect engagement with local AGDAs. To this end, DRC field teams work intensively to map stakeholders to identify the most suitable intermediaries to convey DRCs messages to whoever is controlling areas of intervention. Because Colombia has an articulated social structure that is represented both at social and political level, in areas under the control of NSGAs it is necessary to interact and with whoever is in charge while representing community interests. Two actors can play a key role as intermediaries: community leaders and Chairmen of Community Action Boards. DRC strives to build solid and transparent relationships with these actors by explaining what DRC is, what it does and how it does it, clearly stating mandate limitations and organisational red lines that it is not willing to cross so as not to risk compromising humanitarian values. To achieve this, DRC organises meetings, identifies NGO focal points and decision makers at field level, maintains fluid and transparent communications and proactively engages communities during project implementation phases.

This kind of indirect engagement comes with some risks; for example, misinterpretation of the DRC mandate, reputational risks and manipulation of DRC messages and requests. DRC works to prevent and mitigate these risks, ensuring a continuous analysis of stakeholders in order to identify manipulators and personal interests of intermediaries, ensuring compliance to humanitarian principles and clearly stating DRC Colombia red lines. This is also done to prevent possible harm to intermediaries who are clearly exposed to personal safety risks.

Indirect engagement is time consuming and requires solid information triangulation. However, in several instances it has been very successful and has helped ensure programme continuity – guaranteeing sustainable, safe and principle-based access. This strategy has been particularly effective in areas where DRC is the only humanitarian actor with permanent presence in the field and in areas that are considered hard to reach. The strategy has enabled DRC to establish a solid relationship with communities that accept and recognise DRC's presence as fundamental to address humanitarian needs. It has also caught the attention of the humanitarian community so that more NGOs are able to intervene and address needs that DRC cannot take care of.

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[82] ICRC (2023), *Retos Humanitarios 2023, Balance Annual*. Available at: icrc.org (accessed 6 March 2024)
[83] OCHA (2024), *Tendencias e Impacto Humanitario en Colombia 2023*. Available at: unocha.org (accessed 6 March 2024)
[84] Fundacion Idea para la Paz (2024): Total Peace: armed groups win head and shoulders. Available at: ideaspaz.org (accessed March 2024
[85] Ley 1908 de 2018 Congreso de la República de Colombia

Illustration 8: Loose Gestural sketch of refugees leaving wartorn city, skyline.

Deep Dives

As highlighted in the Future Forced Displacement section, specific hotspots of future displacement are emerging in the forecasts. This section examines the situation in select areas in more detail and considers how the context – conflict, disregard for IHL, climate change, etc. – is driving the observed displacement trends. The countries of focus have been selected on the basis of forecasted increase in 2024.

Sudan

The fighting that has torn across Sudan since 15 April 2023 has turned the country into one of the world's largest displacement and protection crises, and one of the most dangerous environments for humanitarians to operate in. The stage has been set for a long war.

What started as a power struggle between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), and the Rapid Support Forces' (RSF) Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo – known as Hemedti – escalated from fighting in Khartoum to a conflict now spread across half of the country. SAF and RSF had previously joined forces to oust President Omar al-Bashir in 2019, agreeing to share power with a civilian government. Generals al-Burhan and Hemdti were respectively Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Transitional Sovereign Council, which eventually which eventually turned into a military junta. This alliance, however, grew weaker under the pressure to restore civilian rule and relaunch the transitional process and over talks in 2022 of dissolving the RSF and integrating it into the army. Tensions came to a head in April 2023, and fighting broke out in Khartoum on 15 April 2023, before expanding to Darfur and the Kordofan states

Peace-making efforts, including multiple talks in Jeddah focusing on ceasefires and humanitarian access, have repeatedly failed to get traction, largely due to a failure to implement confidence-building measures. Talks organised by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) between generals al-Burhan and Hemedti at the end of December 2023 were postponed. On 1 January 2024, RSF signed the 'Addis Ababa Declaration' with the Taqaddum civilian coalition led by former Prime Minister Addalla Hamdok, which SAF quickly rejected. SAF was critical of the reception Hemedti received in IGAD member states and to an 18 January summit in Uganda.

The conflict has been extremely violent and included ethnic killings, particularly in Darfur, a region still healing from the 2003–2005 genocide. Both parties have engaged in massive ethnic-based recruitment since late 2022 and intensified the drive after the war broke out, relying on local armed militias in some areas. A report commissioned by the UN Security Council confirmed that some killings in Darfur were carried out on an ethnic basis and were prepared before the conflict began. According to the report, between 10,000 and 15,000 have been killed in El Genena alone in 2023 because of their ethnicity.

Both parties have restricted the movement of aid and prevented civilians from leaving conflict-affected areas. On 10 December 2023, a clearly marked humanitarian convoy due to evacuate civilians from war-torn Khartoum towards Wad Madani was attacked in violation of the warring parties' obligation to guarantee safe passage to those wishing to leave conflict zones. Confining civilians to conflict-affected areas also impedes, if not prevents, their access to humanitarian assistance – a trend that is likely to continue in the coming months.

The persistent use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), including rockets and others air-delivered munitions continues to kill civilians. In early October 2023, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project reported that 75% of all recorded civilian fatalities from the Sudan conflict were the result of bombs dropped on Khartoum. In 2024, air strikes and shelling have caused civilian causalities in at least half of Sudan's 18 states. The presence of explosive ordnances in conflict-affected areas also heightens people's exposure as they flee, and will in the long-term be an obstacle to durable solutions.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is widely used as a weapon of war to terrorise communities in conflict-affected areas. While most cases go unreported because of the lack of a functioning justice system and fear of reprisal, the UN Panel of Experts reported that "hundreds of women have been detained [...], held in inhuman or degrading conditions, subjected to sexual assault, and are vulnerable to sexual slavery".

Humanitarian crisis

In less than a year, the conflict has deepened humanitarian needs in Sudan, with at least 24.8 million people in need compared to 15.8 million before the conflict began. The needs in IDP-hosting areas are extremely high as the increased population size puts additional pressure on available resources.

According to the World Food Programme, Sudan is one of the top four hunger hotpots of highest concern globally. Nearly 18 million people – more than a third of the population – are at acute risk of hunger. This figure will continue to grow as fighting spreads further into agricultural centres in the East, and additional people are displaced. Insecurity preventing farmers from accessing their fields and erratic rainfall patterns have created unfavourable conditions for the forthcoming harvest.

Sudan faces a major protection crisis as active conflict has shut down access to basic services. Women and girls, in particular, face high risks of domestic violence, sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse but also trafficking. People awaiting visas at transit centres and IDPs fleeing from one state to another, or whose houses have been looted, are particularly vulnerable. In 2023, 4.2 million people were in need of GBV services, a figure that is expected to rise to 6.9 million in 2024.

The conflict has led to widespread displacement both within Sudan and across international borders as people look for safety and access to basic services. As of 18 February 2024, more than 8 million people have been forcibly displaced by the conflict. This includes 6.2 million IDPs, making Sudan one of the largest internal displacement crises in the world. As the conflict continues to expand to new areas previously sheltering displaced populations, an increasing number of people will face secondary or tertiary displacement as they search for safe zones. This is particularly the case for people displaced from Wad Madani.

In addition, more than 1.6 million people have crossed into South Sudan, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and CAR, including 447,850 South Sudanese people who were refugees in Sudan and were left with no choice but to return to their country of origin, despite conditions not being conducive to durable solutions. The large number of new arrivals and returnees in South Sudan is exacerbating the already high humanitarian needs in the country and is contributing to increased tension, particularly with recently IDPs who have not had equal levels of access to services.

The regional impact of the conflict goes beyond cross-border displacement. The crisis has disrupted regional trade and supply chains, which, combined with inflation, substantially increase the needs of the most vulnerable and the cost of humanitarian interventions, and challenge the stability of Sudan's neighbours.

Based on the developments in Sudan, the Foresight model predicts that the cumulative number of displaced people from Sudan will increase by more than 900,000 in 2024. The model also forecasts that the number of displaced people will increase by a further 850,000 in 2025, meaning a total increase of 1.75 million displaced people by the end of 2025 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Forecasted displacement in Sudan

DRC's response in Sudan

In 2023, DRC adjusted activities to respond to the emergency needs of the rapidly growing IDP population. Directly delivering services and working through local partners and community-based networks, DRC continues to operate in Gedaref and hard-to-reach areas of Central Darfur, South Darfur, South Kordorfan and Khartoum, providing emergency relief, protection, humanitarian mine action, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food security and livelihoods support. New offices were opened in Port Sudan, White Nile and Al Jezirah, areas that host hundreds of thousands of IDPs from Khartoum.

Insecurity and bureaucratic impediments restrict freedom of movement and access to humanitarian assistance across Sudan. In areas inaccessible to most humanitarian agencies, DRC partnered with grassroots organisations that have stayed to serve their communities. These partnerships will grow in 2024 to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian efforts that are locally-led. To reach more people of concern in remote and under-served areas, DRC also paved the way for implementation of the O-Lab App, which will enable delivery of offline protection and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) training to more than 1,000 front-line humanitarian workers in hard-to-reach areas in 2024. The training relies on interactive methodology, ensuring effective skill-building even in areas with limited connectivity.

DR Congo

DR Congo is home to one of the largest IDP populations in the world, reaching close to 6.5 million people in 2023[86], almost exclusively driven by conflict and violence. The eastern provinces of Ituri and North Kivu are the most affected because of the continued presence of more than 120 NSAGs. While eastern DR Congo has long been a complex humanitarian crisis, the situation has deteriorated significantly over the past couple of years, in particular after the re-emergence of the M23 NSAG in North Kivu in early 2022. The clashes between the Congolese army (FARDC), M23 and other armed groups including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO) in Ituri have resulted in civilian deaths, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and large-scale displacement. More specifically, the breakdown of the ceasefire agreement between the government and the M23 in October 2023 triggered 450,000 displacements between 1 October and 14 November 2023[87]. The M23 is well armed and organised and has been able to take control of several towns in areas close to the provincial capital of Goma. ADF attacks have also intensified since October 2023, spilling from Ituri into North Kivu as FARDC focuses its efforts on M23. Against this backdrop, the United Nations extended the mandate of its peacekeeping force, MONUSCO, for another year until 20 December 2024. MONUSCO has been in the country for nearly 24 years and is in the process of drawing down based on a comprehensive disengagement plan.

The conflict is taking an increasingly concerning inter-ethnic turn, with widespread hate speech and killings. Moreover, the alleged relationship between NSAGs and neighbouring countries causes regional tension, in particular between DR Congo and Rwanda. The risk that the conflict will spread across borders cannot be disregarded.

Regional actors are taking steps to defuse the conflict. A Southern African Development Community (SADC) mission was deployed in mid-December 2023 to support FARDC, and a summit of heads of state was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to relaunch the peace process, reach a ceasefire between FARDC and M23, and reinforce the dialogue between DR Congo and Rwanda[88]. As long as the conflict continues, it is unclear when displaced families will be able to return.

The high concentration of armed groups, combined with the lack of access to services, leads to multiple, repeated violation of human rights and IHL. According to Human Rights Watch, armed groups have been implicated in war crimes, including massacres, sexual violence, recruiting children, and pillaging[89]. The Kivu Security Tracker, shut down at the time of writing, documented 1,211 civilian deaths by armed groups in Ituri between January and October 2023. Over the same period, the Bureau Conjoint des Nations Unies aux Droits de l'Homme (BCNUDH) recorded 4,553 human rights violations, predominantly in conflict-affected areas. Human rights violations against children increased by 41% during the first half of 2023.

Attacks on IDP camps, that people have come to in search of safety, are increasingly frequent and lead to people being displaced multiple times. The latest incident, a bomb in Zaina camp on the outskirts of Sake follows multiple massacres in 2023, including in Drodro and Lala, during which 20 and 46 people respectively lost their lives. The attacks on IDP sites are all the more worrying as IDPs are seeking protection and security there after fleeing the violence perpetrated by armed groups in the surrounding areas, particularly near positions occupied by national and international security forces. Repeated attacks on IDP sites also undermine the credibility of the humanitarian response and the peacekeeping forces.

The activity of armed groups and some hostility towards humanitarian organisations have turned eastern DR Congo into a difficult and dangerous environment for humanitarian agencies. Nine major attacks on

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86 UNHCR (nd): Operations Data Portal: Regional Bureau for Southern Africa. Available at: unhcr.org (accessed 6 March 2024)
87 USAID (2023): Democratic Republic of the Congo – Complex Emergency, Fact Sheet #1. Available at: usaid.gov (accessed 6 March 2024)
88 IOM (2024): M23 Crisis Analysis - Report #14, North Kivu province. Available at: iom.int (accessed 6 March 2024)
89 Human Rights Watch (2024): Democratic Republic of Congo: Events of 2023. Available at: hrw.org (accessed 6 March 2024)

humanitarian agencies were recorded in 2023[90], including four deaths and 13 kidnappings, but many more incidents delayed or otherwise hindered humanitarian assistance. Agencies had to adapt their operating modalities in order to protect their staff while still delivering life-saving assistance to affected populations. For instance, eight NGOs were forced to suspend their activities in Drodro, Largu and Rhoe on 29 May 2023 because of insecurity, further contributing to the deterioration of the humanitarian and protection situation.

Humanitarian crisis

The displacement patterns, both within the country and across the borders with Uganda and Rwanda, are very dynamic and reflect the intensity of the levels of insecurity. In the latest episode in the resurgence of fighting between the Congolese army and the M23 in February 2024, 135,000 people fled Sake towards the provincial capital Goma.

At the end of 2023, DR Congo was home to 6.46 million IDPs, a 25% increase from 2022. The country only counts a small number of camp-like settings, and the majority of displaced people rely on the hospitality of already impoverished host communities. However, the recent arrivals have strained the limited existing resources within host communities, and put the overall humanitarian infrastructure under immense pressure. The lack of adequate shelter and water and sanitation facilities, combined with the loss of livelihoods, exposes IDPs to an array of protection risks including sexual exploitation, GBV, abductions and killings, prompting many IDPs to negative coping mechanisms, including begging and survival sex.

Despite fertile lands and abundant water sources, DR Congo is one of the world's largest food crises: 25.4 million people face acute food security, including 3.5 million in IPC4[91]. While the lack of investment in rural development and access to quality inputs are underlying causes, the conflict directly prevents famers from accessing their crops and hinders their ability to become food sufficient.

Based on the developments in DR Congo, the Foresight model predicts that the cumulative number of displaced people from DR Congo will increase by roughly 600,000 in 2024. The model further forecasts that the number of displaced people will grow by a further 250,000 in 2025, meaning a total increase of 850,000 displaced people by the end of 2025 (Figure 9).

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[90] Aid Worker Security Database (nd): Aid Worker Security Database. Available at: aidworkersecurity.org (accessed 6 March 2024)
[91] IPC Info (nd): Democratic Republic of the Congo: Acute Food Insecurity Situation for July–December 2023 and Projection for January–June 2024. Available at: ipcinfo.org (accessed 6 March)
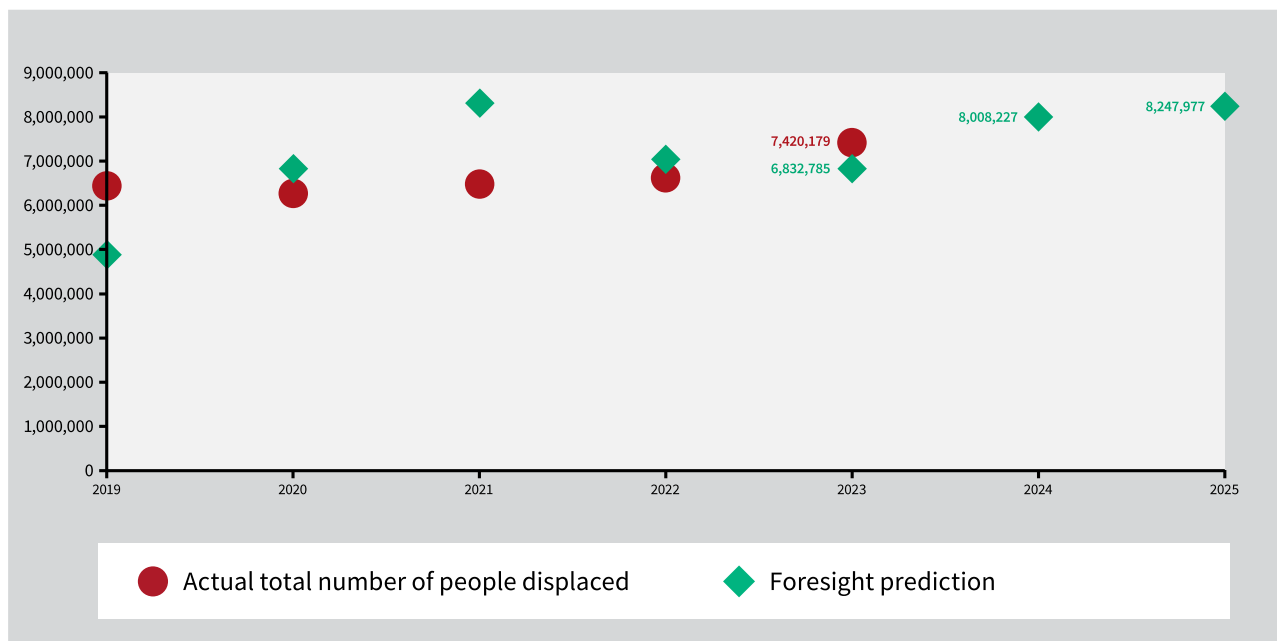
Figure 9: Forecasted displacement in DR Congo

DRC's response in DR Congo

In the context of a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation, DRC is strengthening its strategic positioning in order to support multi-sectoral interventions and respond better to the needs of displaced populations, children made vulnerable by the conflict, people at risk of, and survivors of, GBV, and people with disabilities.

DRC aims to strengthen access to water, hygiene and sanitation services for displaced people in sites, host families/communities and neighboring communities by building/rehabilitating water points, sanitation and hygiene infrastructures (latrines and showers) accompanied by hygiene promotion. The Education response aims to ensure access (to) and quality of education for displaced children and host households in a safe and protective environment. The minimum package of activities for the immediate and long-term response focuses on training/sensitising teachers and communities, setting up temporary learning spaces and emergency latrines, distributing school supplies to pupils and teachers as well as educational and recreational kits to schools, and distributing hygiene and sanitation kits.

DRC works on the prevention (of) and response to GBV and child protection, with an emphasis on building the capacity of community structures with a view to sustainability. Psychosocial support is offered to survivors, as well as individual protection assistance (API), case management and referral.

Burkina Faso

For several years, Burkina Faso has been facing an unprecedented and complex security and displacement crisis, with over 10% of the country population who is now internally displaced. Initially a conflict involving confrontations between non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and the defense and security forces, Burkina Faso's conflict has become more complex over the years, with new conflict actors, notably with civilian auxiliaries, the "volunteers for the defense of the homeland" (VDP), and clashes between NSAGs themselves. Over time, security incidents have been on the rise. In 2023, 1,718 security incidents were reported in Burkina Faso[92], including 609 events of violence against civilians (kidnappings, attacks, and sexual violence), surpassing the total incidents recorded in 2022 (1,438). Levels of violence are particularly high in the regions of Sahel, Est, Centre-Nord, Nord, and Boucle du Mouhoun. The year 2023 also witnessed a further increase in insecurity in other regions of the country, notably in Cascades, Hauts Bassins, or the Sud-Ouest, which were previously less affected than the others. Finally, 2023 saw an increase in the *enclaves* phenomenon, localities where civilians are no longer to freely exit and enter the localities: in 2023, a total of 36 localities were characterized as *enclaves*, in Est, Centre-Nord, Nord, Sahel, Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Est, and Cascades[93].

These incidents predominantly impact civilian populations, the majority of whom are compelled to flee to localities that are perceived as safer. As of March 31, 2023, a total of 2,062,534 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were recorded in the country, with more than 82% being women and children[94]. There is a strong correlation between the areas most affected by security incidents and those most affected by population displacement. Indeed, the regions hosting the most displaced populations are the Sahel, the Centre-Nord, the Nord, the Est and Boucle du Mouhoun, which together account for over 75% of the total number of IDPs throughout the country.

Humanitarian crisis

In 2024, an estimation of 6.3 million persons, or approximately 1 Burkinabè out of 5, will be in need of humanitarian assistance[95]. The insecurity, displacement, and difficulties in accessing basic needs, continue to exacerbate vulnerability and pressure over resources and services. Indeed, insecurity has led to the slowdown and closure of basic social services in the most hard-to-reach localities, including educational institutions, health facilities, courts, and public administrations, including civil registration services. This situation, compounded by the increasingly significant environmental challenge, also exacerbates precariousness and overcrowding and lead to an increase in human rights violations and protection risks.

As a result, the humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso can first and foremost be qualified as a protection crisis, based on different elements: (i) the multiple displacements affecting households looking for security and above all economic opportunities; (ii) inter-communities' tensions amplified by beliefs and suspicion around association to armed groups or militias of some specific communities negatively impacting peaceful coexistence; (iii) and vulnerable populations (IDPs, returnees, refugees, host communities) with protection needs sometimes very similar or specific and living in areas with a weak and low access to means of living. In 2023, the main protection incidents identified and documented by protection monitoring partners in Burkina Faso, including DRC,[96] included theft (17%), physical assault (12%), assassination/murder (8%), extortion of good (8%), and gender-based violence (7%). Violations of the rights of civilian populations are observed before, during, and after displacement, including in the areas

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[92] ACLED data on security incidents from January to December 2023 and January to December 2022.
[93] Access Working Group, Burkina Faso, December 2023
[94] CONASUR data, March 31st 2023. This is the latest official data available.
[95] OCHA (2024): Humanitarian Needs Overview Burkina Faso 2024 (draft
[96] Project 21 data, January-December 2023.

where internally displaced persons are hosted or settled. The psychological shocks and traumas caused by violence, especially against women, children, the elderly, and people living with disabilities, also constitute a prominent concern in areas with significant security challenges, and are highlighted in all rapid protection assessments carried out by DRC in 2023. Women and girls are particularly exposed to GBV risks, such as individual or collective rapes, physical and/or sexual assaults, and psychological violence, when they travel distances in search of water, firewood, or when they return to their places of origin to retrieve their belonging. Men and boys are also regularly exposed to risks of killing, kidnapping or armed groups' recruitment. Finally, in terms of social cohesion, conflict analyses conducted by DRC in 2023 all highlight the deterioration of relations between communities, with latent tensions related to housing, land and property issues, access to natural resources, lack of socio-economic opportunities, and intercommunity mistrust.

Adding up to this situation is an increasingly worrying food insecurity situation, which contributes to maintain or creating extreme levels of vulnerability, and jeopardizing household resilience, including among the host communities. The consequences of conflicts, population movements, and climate risks continue to disrupt agricultural, pastoral, and processing activities, which are the primary sources of income in affected areas, forcing people to abandon their fields or means of production. Projections for the 2024 lean season (June to August) estimate that over 2.95 million people will be in situation of food crisis, representing 13% of the total population[97]. Populations affected by food insecurity are mainly concentrated in areas affected by conflicts and population movements, and in *enclaved* areas, such as Djibo, where risks of famine have already been raised in December 2023 if intensifying conflict and disruptions to humanitarian access further restrict access to food[98]. Indeed, in these localities, market supply is dependent on irregular supply convoys and movement restriction impact the possibilities for population to leave town, further disrupting traditional livelihood activities.

This overall situation is reflected by the priority needs expressed by the affected populations, both displaced and non-displaced, which are primarily food, followed by livelihoods and protection. Other needs, such as access to shelter and non-food items, water, and healthcare, are also reported[99].

Based on the developments in Burkina Faso, the Foresight model predicts that the cumulative number of displaced people from Burkina Faso will increase by roughly 250,000 in 2024. The model further forecasts that the number of displaced people will increase by a further 150,000 in 2025, meaning a total increase of 400,000 displaced people by the end of 2024 (Figure 10).

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[97] Harmonized Framework (2023): Burkina Faso, November 2023
[98] FEWS Net (2023): Famine Alert, December 2023
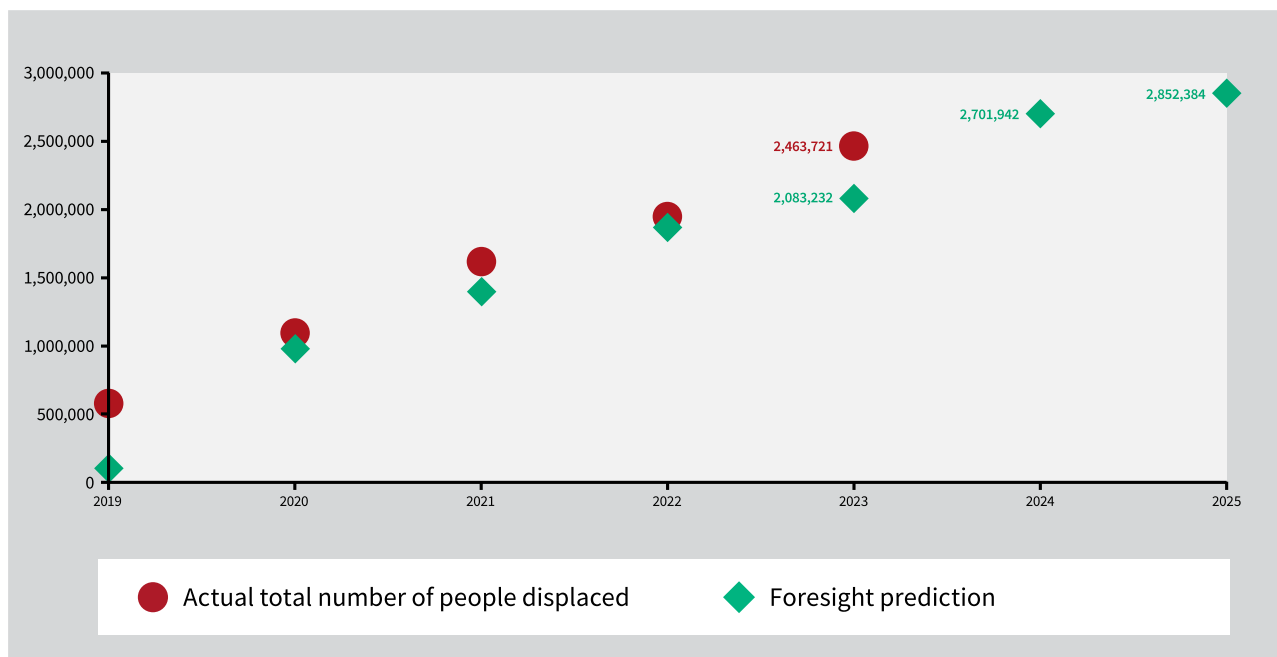[99] REACH (2023): Multisectoral Needs Assessment, August 2023

Figure 10: Forecasted displacement in Burkina Faso

DRC's response in the Sahel

Across the region, DRC applies a comprehensive approach to respond to the needs of vulnerable and displacement-affected populations, including refugees, internally displaced people and host communities.

We provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance including food and non-food items, shelter and settlement support and water, sanitation and hygiene security; our economic recovery activities aim at strengthening livelihoods and the financial and nutritional resilience of affected populations; we carry out humanitarian mine action; our armed violence reduction activities aim at addressing local conflict dynamics, strengthening social cohesion and supporting the resilience of local communities to armed violence.

DRC reinforces market systems and financial inclusion to enable people and communities affected by displacement to better resist food crisis. DRC is responding to the humanitarian consequences of high pressure on diminishing resources fuelled by population growth, climate change and displacement, by innovative, long-term programming and tailored approach to mitigate the effects of climate change and increase resilience to climate change for populations affected by displacement.

DRC continues investing in access and alliances to expand a principled response in hard-to-reach areas. We collect evidence, monitor violations and document access restrictions to advocate against human rights violation and protect people affected by forced displacement. We also promote conflict sensitivity and work alongside affected communities to make our responses more inclusive.

AHEAD in Burkina Faso

In 2020, a project was initiated to develop the West Africa Context Analysis and Foresight Initiative (WACAFI) model covering Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali. The model has since been expanded as part of the Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for Displacement (AHEAD) initiative. The purpose of this model is to support operational response by predicting displacement at the admin 1 and admin 2 level 3-4 months into the future. The basis of the model is Bayesian state-space model for the stock number of internally displaced people. The model uses indicators of conflict, food security, climatic conditions, development, protection, etc. to predict the developments in displacement. Based on 315 historical forecasts in Burkina Faso, the model has shown that the mean absolute percentage error is 15%. The hindcasts are constructed by setting a past now at a historical date, training the model on all previous historical data and attempting to forecast displacement four months into the "future", where we have historical records to compare to. This is repeated at seven different time points for each of the 45 provinces in Burkina Faso.

Using the AHEAD for classification, which is relevant when applying it for anticipatory action, the results in the historical forecasts reveal that it would correctly classify future displacement in approximately 70% of the time. If a threshold it set for anticipatory action to be taken when the model predicts future displacement to increase by 1200 people, the model would lead to correct actions being taken 69% of the time, i.e. action being taken and >1200 people become displaced as predicted or inaction and <1,200 people are displaced 3 months later. The remaining would include 17% false negatives and 14% false positives.

Turning the displacement prediction into actions is not straightforward, nor necessarily desirable. Basing decision-making solely on predictive models, where the black-box nature means that the causal link between the prediction and resulting humanitarian action is obscured, thus entails both ethical concerns, but also practical concerns for example the challenges these models have in predicting major crises. To address these issues and enhance ownership in affected communities, trigger of actions can be based on a combination of the model predictions and community-level data. With a strong understanding of the local contexts working actors across the triple - humanitarian, development and peacebuilding – the forecasts combined with community data can provide an avenue for anticipatory action in response to conflict-induced displacement.

In Dédougou, Burkina Faso, DRC are now working to establish an anticipatory action framework build around a joint mechanism with the local communities designed to provide emergency response based on the displacement forecasts. This includes:
- training local authorities as well as members of existing community alert committees on predictive modeling and anticipatory action. These alert committees are expected to expand their role in these domains.
- define with this committee an anticipatory action plan that provides an anticipatory response when trigger points are reached. This action plan is a detailed process from reaching a trigger to activate the response by targeting people and their needs.
- establish context monitoring mechanism on key risks identified in the area.
- provide anticipatory assistance based on identified priority needs using community data.

A similar mechanism has been established in Akobo in South Sudan.

Illustration 12: Loose Gestural sketch of refugees leaving wartorn city, skyline

Other countries of concern

Colombia

Despite the Total Peace programme and the ongoing peace negotiations between the Colombian government and two of the main NSAGs historically operating in the country, which also feature a bilateral ceasefire between the negotiating parties, according to ICRC[100], there are seven documented internal active conflicts in Colombia. Four of these involve the main Colombian NSAGs, which, exploiting the temporary ceasefire preventing Colombian military forces to proactively engage criminal groups involved in the negotiations, continue to challenge each other over control of territory and war economies[101]. In parallel to the implementation of the Total Peace policy during 2023, actions by illegal armed groups increased by 11% compared to 2022, with a 54% increase in clashes among the NSAGs themselves[102].

As a direct consequence of internal conflicts among NSAGs and their active presence in communities, civilians continue to be severely affected, exposed to social control measures, clashes and installation of IEDs. This volatile and complex situation directly affects humanitarian actions. In 2023, OCHA recorded 240 events restricting access and affecting a total of 20,300 people, thus preventing the possibility of receiving humanitarian aid. In fact, looking at 2023, even though there was a 17% reduction in the number of victims from emergency situations compared to 2022, a total of 204 humanitarian emergencies were recorded as a direct consequence of violent actions performed by NSAGs and criminal organisations, affecting 250,000 people. Besides the active conflicts, Colombia has been exposed to 4,595 events related to natural disasters that affected almost 400,000 people in 2023. The areas experiencing the greatest impact are those where state presence is very limited, with rural, indigenous and Afro-descendant populations most affected[103].

Events of mass displacement and confinement are having a significant impact on civilians. The number of such events increased by around 24%[104] in 2023 compared to the previous year, as a direct consequence of the empowering control of territories and communities by NSAGs. OCHA recorded 137 events of mass displacement affecting more than 63,000 people in 2023. 43% of these events were caused by clashes between NSAGs, 15% resulted from threats towards civilians, and 11% were caused by the presence of IEDs.

Hence, according to the data presented by the Colombian's national Victims' Unit (*Unidad para las Victimas*) at the of November 2023, 113,290 people were individually displaced as a result of internal armed conflicts. This indicator is very relevant as it suggests a new war strategy implemented by NSAGs[105], aiming to control displacement to prevent victims from officially denouncing their situation and declaring human rights violations through institutional mechanisms established to this end – thus limiting the capacity of the humanitarian community to respond to these events.

According to a Colombia Humanitarian NGO forum study (results to be published in the first quarter of 2024), which takes into account both individual and collective mass displacement, 291,131 people were displaced in 2023. The analysis stresses that around 60% of displaced people were affected more than once, and 84% of were on the move with children and/or adolescents, exposing them to high risks in terms of security and personal protection. In fact, 21.5% of displacement victims were the target of other forms of violence in addition to the causes of displacement, such as extorsion or threats and 9.5% of the affected

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[100] ICRC (2023): Retos Humanitarios 2023, Balance Annual. Available at: icrc.org (accessed March 2024)

[101] Sergio Saffon & Sara Garcia (2023): GameChangers 2023: Las consecuencias imprevistas de la 'Paz Total' en el panorama criminal de Colombia. Available in English at: insightcrime.org (accessed 6 March 2024)

[102] Fundacion Idea para la Paz (2024): Total Peace: armed groups win head and shoulders. Available at: ideaspaz.org (accessed March 2024

[103] OCHA (2024): Tendencias e Impacto Humanitario en Colombia 2023. Available at: unocha.org (accessed 6 March 2024)

[104] Fundacion Idea para la Paz (2024): Total Peace: armed groups win head and shoulders. Available at: ideaspaz.org (accessed March 2024

[105] International Crisis Group (nd): CrisisWatch. Available at: crisisgroup.org (accessed 6 March 2024)

population were living with the presence of IEDs, and 9%were living in communities where recruitment of children is a looming threat.

As of today, around 62,900 people are on the move and unable to return to their homes because of security conditions and a lack of both safety guarantees and financial resources to settle in the host area.

Based on the developments in Colombia, the Foresight model predicts that the cumulative number of displaced people from Colombia will increase by roughly 125,000 between end-2023 and end-2025.

Ethiopia

The humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia escalated in 2020 when violence erupted in the northern Tigray region of the country. More than 20 million people are likely to need humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia in 2024[106], driven primarily by fighting and extreme weather patterns, including drought and floods.

Following the truce and cessation-of-hostilities agreement between the Federal Government and the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), relative peace has been restored in the Tigray and Afar regions. However, in other regions of the country, active hostilities have erupted, while other, pre-existing situations of violence have intensified. Since 2019, Ethiopian Government forces and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) armed group have engaged in hostilities in western Oromia. The Amhara region used to be the least volatile region in the country prior to the conflict in Tigray, but since then violence has escalated and the area is now home to six distinct theatres of violence, making it one of the most unstable areas in the country[107]. Fighting revolves around territorial disputes, security arrangements, political realignments and various structural factors[108].

Lastly, tension has developed with Somalia over a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Ethiopian government and the government in Somaliland. The Federal Government in Somalia views the MoU, which allows Ethiopia to establish a naval base along Somaliland's coast, as an act of aggression. The tension jeopardises the two countries' collaboration and ongoing security operations against al-Shabaab, which has made inroads into Ethiopia, in particular in the Somali region.

In addition to violence and fighting, the country Ethiopia faces significant environmental challenges that are exacerbated by climate change environment. Severe episodes of drought and flooding in several parts of the country displaced thousands of people and caused significant loss to livelihoods and infrastructure. These developments, combined with an inflation rate of around 30%, has pushed up food insecurity and malnutrition in the country, leading to increased protection risks. The crisis was further exacerbated by the suspension of food aid during the second half of 2023 because of concerns of widespread misappropriation and diversion of food supplies.

As a result of violence, climate change and economic hardship, an estimated 3.7 million people were internally displaced by the end of 2023. The displaced face challenges in accessing food and appropriate shelter and basic services, and face significant protection risks, including sexual and gender-based violence, plus housing, land and property issues and loss of civil documentation. Children's access to school is interrupted, which will have severe short- and long-term consequences. Because of the lengthy period of violence and drought, people's ability to cope has started to erode, their humanitarian needs

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[106] OCHA (2023): Global Humanitarian Overview 2024. Available at: unocha.org (accessed 6 March 2024)
[107] Ethiopia Peace Observatory (2023): EPO Weekly: 29 July – 4 August 2023. Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 6 March 2024)
[108] Atrsaw Necho (2023): Conflict Trends Report / October 2023: Amhara Region, Rift Valley Institute. Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 6 March 2024)

have deepened and there has been an increased use of negative coping strategies, such as survival sex and begging[109].

Based on the developments in Ethiopia, the Foresight model predicts that the cumulative number of displaced people from Ethiopia will increase by roughly 130,000 between end-2023 and end-2025.

Myanmar

Since the military takeover of Myanmar in February 2021, the country has witnessed eruption of conflict across various states, especially in the northwest and southeast of the country. Myanmar has witnessed a further escalation of conflict since 27 October 2023, when the Brotherhood Alliance, comprising three ethnic armed organisations (EAOs), initiated a coordinated offensive across multiple townships which led to a new increase in violence and displacement. Since then, several other groups have joined the fighting, which has spread across the country and has led to spikes in displacement and further deepened the humanitarian crisis. As of 25 December 2023, there were an estimated 2,310,900 IDPs across Myanmar, with an additional 61,900 displaced to neighbouring countries since February 2021. Overall, in 2024, given the escalation of protection threats resulting from the crisis, 18.6 million people are expected to be in humanitarian need, marking a 1-million increase compared to 2023. This is particularly significant as many IDPs and other conflict-affected communities struggle to access basic services or humanitarian assistance[110].

This escalation in conflict across the country has increased protection risks significantly, including mine risks, and has escalated critical needs for food and non-food items (NFIs), adding to the negative impacts on the protective environment. Myanmar remains a protection crisis, with daily IHL and IHRL violations. The most prevalent risks are forced displacement and restrictions on movement; attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure; extortion; presence of EO; impeded access to civil documentation; and a lack of humanitarian access, aggravating negative coping strategies[111].

From January 2021 to January 2024, 549 civilian objects have been damaged or destroyed by arson and armed violence. In addition, in Shan State, explosive-ordinance (EO) incidents increase when displaced populations in camps return or visit their areas of origin to check properties, agricultural land, and livestock. As EO remains in these conflict-affected villages and surrounding areas, adult and adolescent male IDPs are often most at risk because of their designation as the primary people responsible for checking on property. Agricultural and foraging activities contribute significantly to EO casualties as economic needs drive movement into dangerous areas. Landmine usage increased after Operation 1027, with mines laid around military compounds, which are typically similar to areas where farming and natural resource collection take place. Children are particularly vulnerable to surface-level items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) casualties during play because of lack of knowledge of safe behaviour. According to the 2022 MIMU report, of the total casualties: 27% resulted from travelling and movement in EO-contaminated areas; 21% occurred during work in EO-contaminated areas; 27% while searching for forest/jungle products, and 11% were caused by handling or playing with UXO[112].

[109] ACAPS (2022): Northern Ethiopia: two years into the crisis. Thematic Report. Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 6 March 2024)

[110] UNHCR (2023): Myanmar Displacement Overview as of 25 December 2023. Available at: unhcr.org (accessed 6 March 2024)

[111] Myanmar Protection Cluster (2023): Protection Analysis Update January–June 2023.

[112] MIMU (2023): Townships with Suspected Landmine/ERW Contamination (1999–2023) and Landmine/ERW Casualties in Myanmar (2022), September 2023. Available at: themimu.info (accessed 8 March 2024)

In addition, in 2023, a total of 6,500 people attempted land and sea movements. With nearly 4,500 Rohingya refugees embarking on perilous sea journeys and 569 people reported deceased or missing, 2023 was the deadliest year on record for maritime movements in the region since the 2015 Andaman Sea crisis. Compared to 2022, the number of people embarking on sea journeys increased by 21% while the number of dead or missing increased by 63%. In contrast, a 170% drop was observed for land movements[113].

Based on the developments in Myanmar, the Foresight model predicts that the cumulative number of displaced people from Myanmar will increase by roughly 1.1 million between end-2023 and end-2025.

Nigeria
Nigeria faces significant humanitarian-development challenges, especially in its northeast and northwest regions. The country suffers from regional instability, the presence of NSAGs, escalating intercommunal conflicts, and a precarious socio-economic climate. Insurgent activities in the north, including conflicts involving Boko Haram's splinter groups, clashes between ethnic groups and resurgence of banditry and kidnappings, have led to massive population displacement and heightened humanitarian and protection needs, particularly among women and children. As of December 2023, IOM reported a total of 2,305,335 IDPs in the northeast and 1,075,893 IDPs in the northwest and north-central regions[114]. According to the November 2023 Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analysis, almost 26.5 million people are likely to experience Crisis Phase 3, or worse, conditions of acute food insecurity during the peak of the country's upcoming June–August 2024 lean season, the period when food is most scarce. This projection includes nearly 5.4 million people in northwestern Nigeria and nearly 4.4 million people in the northeast[115].

The northeast has endured varying levels of armed conflict since 2009, when the jihadist insurgent group Boko Haram announced its goal to form a province of the Islamic State. The prolonged conflict has cost tens of thousands lives, destroyed infrastructure, displaced millions, and devastated economic, health, and education systems. ACLED data reveals a 26% increase in security incidents in 2023 compared to 2022 perpetrated by insurgents in the northeast[116]. The scope of attacks ranges from targeting civilians, to inter-group clashes and attacks on military posts and personnel. Most incidents occur in areas where humanitarian access and assistance are extremely limited.

In Borno State, the heart of the insurgency with approximately 1.8 million displaced people, the government initiated IDP camp closures in Maiduguri in 2021, a move expected to continue into 2024. This strategy, aimed at hastening the return of IDPs to their areas of origin, has raised concerns among humanitarian and protection actors questioning voluntariness and feasibility of sustaining humanitarian support in areas of return because of security or administrative restrictions. The urgency to progress towards 'stability' and economic development underlies these actions, but this overlooks the immediate security and support needs of the IDPs. The unvoluntary relocation of IDPs into areas still under the threat of insurgent groups compromises their safety and potentially forces interactions with insurgents,

[113] UNHCR (2023): Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP): Rohingya refugees fleeing over land and sea – Quarterly Update as of 31 December 2023. Available at: unhcr.org (accessed 8 March 2024)
[114] IOM (2023): Displacement Tracking Matrix. Available at: iom.int (accessed 8 March 2024)
[115] The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that developed a standardised scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries and time, ranges from Minimal –IPC 1 to Famine – IPC 5 for acute food insecurity. The Cadre Harmonisé, a similar tool used only in West Africa, has a similar scale ranging from Minimal – Phase 1 to Famine – Phase 5
[116] Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). Rebel forces and identity militia attacks in Nigeria.

undermining the immediate security needs and rights of the IDPs and violating Nigeria's obligations under both African regional and international law[117].

Nigeria's northwest and north-central regions are afflicted by a multi-layered crisis rooted in long-standing tension between ethnic and religious groups, and attacks by criminal groups and armed bandits. Since 2018, the northwest region has witnessed an escalating surge of communal violence, primarily stemming from disputes between farmers and herders over scarce resources. The situation is aggravated by an increasing presence of ethnically affiliated NSAGs and gangs, which intensify intercommunal grievances. It is estimated that in 2023 more than 450,000 individuals have been displaced as the result of widespread insecurity. Some 90% of these IDPs reside within host communities[118]. The inadequate assistance to IDPs, relegated many to lives in undignified conditions. Multisectoral assessments carried out in 2023, highlighted open defaecation, use of untreated water, and of displaced people sleeping in the open because of lack of shelter, often relying on solidarity of host communities. The ongoing exclusion of the northwest from OCHA's 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan underscores the region's neglect in the global humanitarian agenda, further compounded by the minimal presence of international agencies[119].

The humanitarian sector in Nigeria, mirroring a global trend, has experienced a significant downturn in the funding of the annual OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan for the northeastern states. The allocated funding plummeted from USD764 million in 2022 to USD532 million in 2023, marking a steep 44% decrease, with forecasts predicting a similar or further reduction in 2024. This decline in financial support arrives at a critical juncture, as the humanitarian needs across Nigeria remain acute, driven by ongoing conflict, displacement, and severe climatic events, such as the impacts of the El Niño phenomenon.

The grim outlook for 2024 is exacerbated by the broader macroeconomic challenges facing Nigeria. The nation grapples with soaring inflation rates, and a stark devaluation of the Nigerian naira (NGN). This devaluation, compounded by the removal of fuel subsidies, has resulted in unprecedented high costs for food, fuel and transportation. The dramatic devaluation of the naira, which saw a drop from NGN470/USD in mid-June 2023 to NGN899/USD at end-2023, to NGN1,606/USD by mid-February 2024, has led to increased prices for essential goods and services, intensifying economic hardships for vulnerable populations, inevitably pushing many to face heightened multisectoral humanitarian needs[120].

Based on the developments in Nigeria, the Foresight model predicts that the cumulative number of displaced people from Nigeria will increase by roughly 360,000 between end-2023 and end-2025.

Ukraine
The Russian Federation military offensive launched on 24 February 2022 sparked the most rapid displacement crisis in years. The brutal and still ongoing fighting has forced nearly 3.7 million people to flee their homes and seek shelter elsewhere in the country. The conflict displaced one third of Ukraine's population of 44 million within the first six months, with about 7 million people fleeing the country. As of February 2024, the total number of refugees from Ukraine was approximately 6.5 million, while 3.7 million people remained internally displaced[121].

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[117] African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), adopted October 23, 2009, entered into force December 6, 2012. Available at: au.int (accessed 7 March 2024)

[118] IOM (2023): Displacement Tracking Matrix, December 2023. Available at: iom.int (accessed 7 March 2024)

[119] OCHA (2023): Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan. Available at: unocha.org (accessed 7 March 2024)

[120] Central Bank of Nigeria (nd). Available at: cbn.gov.ng (accessed 7 March 2024)

[121] UNHCR (2024): Situation Flash update #65, February 2024. Available at: unhcr.org (accessed 7 March 2024)

As the war in Ukraine heads into its third year, many refugees and IDPs are now trapped in displacement, unable to return to areas where fighting is still ongoing, or to homes and livelihoods that have been decimated by the conflict. With immediate return out of reach for many IDPs, some of the most vulnerable are struggling to rebuild their lives in displacement, facing high rents and unable to find work to support their families, depleting any savings and leaving many dependent on government support or humanitarian assistance.

In its intention survey, the UNHCR concludes that while the majority of refugees and IDPs are still planning or hoping to return to Ukraine, there is growing uncertainty as their displacement journey continues. In fact, the proportion of refugees planning or hoping to return to Ukraine has decreased compared to one year ago (from 77% to 65 %), while the share of those who are undecided about returning has increased (from 18% to 24 %) as well as those who report no hope of return (from 5% to 11%)[122].

While numbers of newly displaced people in Ukraine continue to fall, overall displacement is becoming more prolonged. More than 80% of IDPs have been in displacement for more than one year, with the average length in displacement at 510 days[123]. As fighting in Ukraine continues and the front lines shift, a high proportion of IDPs are experiencing multiple displacements, forced to move several times as they seek safe shelter for their families. A total of 39% of IDPs have been displaced more than once, with 13% of IDPs displaced three or more times since the full-scale invasion of February 2022[124].

DRC protection monitoring data indicates that some of the most vulnerable choose not to displace from front-line areas because they are unwilling to abandon productive assets and land, and because of financial constraints. Vulnerability (including economic vulnerability) has consistently proven to be a factor in decision-making regarding displacement, as evidenced by the significant proportion of elderly people or those with disabilities remaining in areas along or near the front line. In addition, DRC data from Kharkiv and Donetsk in the east of the country suggests that people including families are returning to their areas of origin because of financial strain in areas of displacement, thus demonstrating that gaps in access to jobs and income-generating opportunities are creating a push factor to return. Without adequate support for integration in areas of displacement, negative coping mechanisms such as returning to unsafe areas will likely be increasingly pursued.

The conflict has had severe consequences for civilians in Ukraine. Since 24 February 2022, conflict-related violence in Ukraine has killed at least 10,582 civilians and injured 19,875. This number includes 587 killed and 1,298 injured children. OHCHR has also recorded damage or destruction to 465 medical facilities and 1,072 educational facilities. In addition, since 11 July 2023, dozens of attacks have damaged or destroyed facilities related to grain production and export in territory under the control of Ukraine, including port facilities, grain silos and vehicles for transporting grain[125].

In addition, ongoing fighting together with a legacy from previous conflict is resulting in widespread and heavy contamination from explosive ordnance across Ukraine. There have been at least seven types of anti-

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[122] UNHCR (2024): Lives on hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees Returnees and IDPs from Ukraine #5 February 2024. Available at: unhcr.org (accessed 7 March 2024)

[123] OHCHR (2022): Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February – 31 July 2022. Available at: ohchr.org (accessed 7 March 2024)

[124] IOM (2024): DTM Ukraine — Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 15 (November – December 2023). IOM, Ukraine. Available at: iom.int (accessed 7 March 2024)

[125] OHCHR (2024): Two-year update – protection of civilians: impact of hostilities on civilians since 24 February 2022. Available at: reliefweb.int (accessed 7 March 2024)

personnel mines used in Ukraine, extensive use of anti-vehicle mines, cluster munitions in certain locations, as well as widespread EO. As of April 2023, 10% of agricultural land in Ukraine was contaminated, preventing the sowing of five million hectares of land.

Across the country, conflict has transformed the relationships between individuals, groups, and communities. Across all demographics there is consistent recognition of high levels of fear, distress, and layers of traumatic stress. The sources (for example, domestic violence, conflict-related sexual violence, family separation, loss of documentation, repeated exposure to violence, inability to meet basic needs) are present and continuing, with no indication that they will subside in the foreseeable future.

Two years since the full-scale invasion, the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine is growing increasingly complex: along with critical emergency needs, there are now growing numbers of people who need long-term support. As of today, 14.6 million people, including nearly 3 million children, are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance across the country[126]. Almost 80% of those in need of aid also require mental health support. The long-term needs are vast – Ukraine's infrastructure and economy have been decimated by war.

Based on the developments in Ukraine, the Foresight model predicts that the cumulative number of displaced people from Ukraine will increase by roughly 135,000 between end-2023 and end-2025.

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[126] OCHA (2024): Ukraine: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan. Available at unocha.org (accessed 7 March 2024)

About the Forecasts

Framework

The Foresight model is based on a theoretical framework that focuses on the root causes or macro-level drivers of displacement (Figure 9). The dimensions and associated indicators have been grouped into five categories:

1. Economy: Covers the economic well-being and equality in a given country
2. Security: Covers the level of violence, different types of violence and fatalities
3. Political/Governance: Covers aspects related to the legitimacy of the state, public service provisions and human rights
4. Environment: Covers aspects related to climate disasters, access to water, agricultural stress and food security
5. Societal: Covers aspects related to marginalised groups, urbanisation, size and composition.
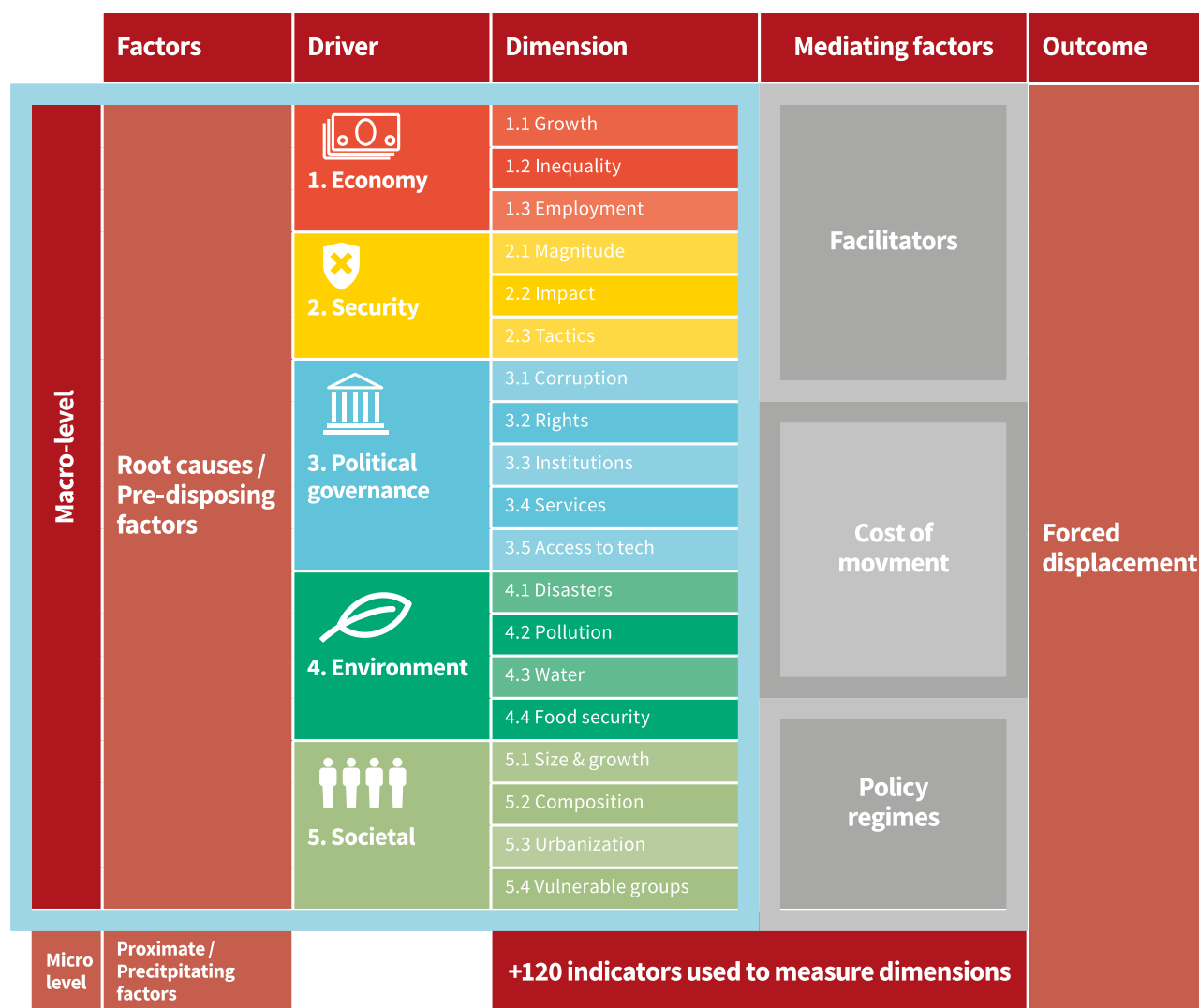
Factors	Driver	Dimension	Mediating factors	Outcome
Macro-level	Root causes / Pre-disposing factors	**1. Economy** 1.1 Growth / 1.2 Inequality / 1.3 Employment	Facilitators	Forced displacement
		2. Security 2.1 Magnitude / 2.2 Impact / 2.3 Tactics		
		3. Political governance 3.1 Corruption / 3.2 Rights / 3.3 Institutions / 3.4 Services / 3.5 Access to tech	Cost of movment	
		4. Environment 4.1 Disasters / 4.2 Pollution / 4.3 Water / 4.4 Food security		
		5. Societal 5.1 Size & growth / 5.2 Composition / 5.3 Urbanization / 5.4 Vulnerable groups	Policy regimes	
Micro level	Proximate / Precitpitating factors		+120 indicators used to measure dimensions	

Figure 11. Foresight model framework

Data

All data used by the Foresight model is derived from open-source databases. The main data sources include the World Bank development indicators, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), EM-DAT, United Nations agencies (UNHCR, the World Food Programme, The Food and Agriculture Organization) and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). In total, the system aggregates data from 18 sources and contains 148 indicators.

The data on forced displacement depends wholly on the information from UNHCR and IDMC. These organisations make an extraordinary effort to collect and verify the numbers. Even so, gathering this data is difficult and the total forced displacement numbers used in the modelling may leave out some people who have been displaced in 2023.

Given that the data is taken from reputable data sources, it is deemed to be highly reliable. However, the data has some shortcomings. Coverage is uneven across geographies and across dimensions. For instance, economic and labour statistics tend to have better availability than governance and violence statistics. Data from institutional providers can often be out-dated and the most recent indicators can be several years old. The data is collected globally.

The system uses several methods to address data gaps. We distinguish between the missing data in the features (or indicators) and missing target variable (i.e., forced displacement). Data with missing target variables is simply excluded from training. For missing values in indicators, we employ two methods. To address data lag, we make indicator projections for each country using an auto-regressive model (i.e. AR(n) model). An auto-regressive model is a time-series forecasting model where future values depend only on previous values of the variable. The 'n' denotes the number of lag variables and is determined using a heuristic approach. For cases where data is insufficient, we simply treat it as missing, which is preferable to projecting incorrectly. Intermediate missing values are computed by interpolation.

We follow a simple standardisation scheme, intended to keep data-ingestion tasks lightweight. A data transformer is implemented for each of the data sources to ensure that each indicator data point is associated with a country and year. The resulting dataset can be cross-referenced and serves as input to the model.

For training we limit the data to the period 1995–2022, the latest data available for displacement. For cross-validation, we use a five-year period: 2015–2022. Following the standard cross-validation set up for time-series data, models are trained on data for the years (1995, y) and predictions made for y+t, where y is in the five-year time period.

Model

The machine-learning model employed is an Ensemble. An Ensemble model works by leveraging several constituent models to generate independent forecasts that are then aggregated. Here we employ two gradient-boosted trees to generate the point forecasts. The model hyperparameters were determined by means of a grid search. Each year-ahead forecast has a separate model. In other words, we train a set of Ensemble models for $y(t + h) = f(x(t))$, where $h = 0, 1, 2, 3$. The associated confidence intervals were generated by an empirical bootstrap method, where the source error distributions were generated on a retrospective analysis. Model training data was limited to data from 1995 onwards.

Accuracy

The average margin of error of the 240 forecasts made so far is 19%. Overall, 47% of the forecasts have a margin of error below 10% and almost two thirds of the forecasts are less than 15% off the actual displacement.

Figure 10 shows the average margin of error. In most cases, this is evaluated based on the last forecasts for 2015 to 2022. In a few countries, additional years are used in the evaluation, as a maximum going back to 2010. The figure shows both the overall margin of error and the margin of error for the last three years.
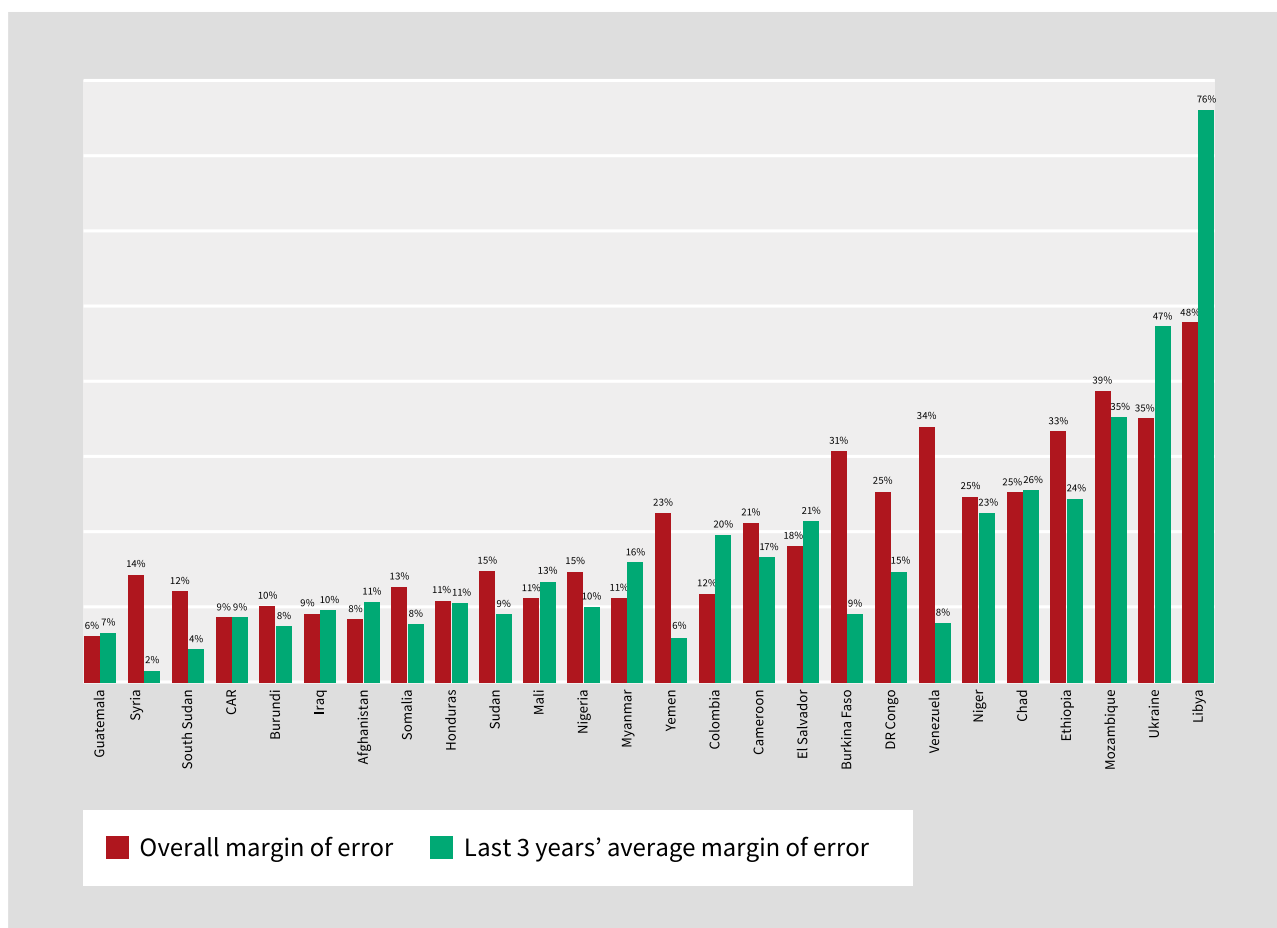

Figure 12. Model accuracy across 26 covered countries

Major missed forecasts in 2023 include:
- Ukraine: 0.94 million forecasted vs. 13.8 million estimated displaced
- Myanmar: 2.0 million forecasted vs. 2.8 million estimated displaced
- Somalia: 3.9 million forecasted vs. 4.7 million estimated displaced

Most accurate forecasts in 2023 include:
- Venezuela (0% off): 6.99 million forecasted vs. 6.96 million estimated displaced
- Colombia (0% off): 7.29 million forecasted vs. 7.25 million estimated displaced
- Nigeria (1% off): 3.97 million forecasted vs. 3.95 million estimated displaced

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to the model that are important to bear in mind when using and working with the forecasts.

- The model tends to be conservative. Of the current 240 forecasts derived from the model, approximately 56% underestimate the level of displacement for the coming year.
- The forecasts are based solely on data and developments up until the previous year (i.e., 2023). As such, recent developments are not taken into account. As an example, the Ukraine war that erupted in 2022 was not taken into account in the preliminary or final displacement forecasts made for Ukraine for 2022 and 2023.
- Because the model is built around national-level indicators, it does not perform as well in cases where conflict and displacement are largely regionally confined within a country.
- Given the methodology of building on historical trends and patterns, the model generally does not tend to capture unprecedented developments or sudden surges in displacement, such as the Sudan 2023 displacement, Ukraine 2022 displacement or Rohingya 2017 displacement.
- The model does not distinguish between IDPs, refugee and asylum seekers, nor does it forecast where people might move to. The estimations used in the report for future hosting of displaced and number of IDPs are based on the current (2023) distribution of displaced people from the given country.
- The model only captures conflict-induced displacement and as such does not include climate-induced displacement. Climate-related indicators are included in the model to capture how such indicators might act as a 'threat' multiplier; however, where climate is the main cause of displacement this is not included. This is, for example, the case for the +1 million people displaced by drought in Somalia in 2022.
- The results are the cumulative number of displaced people, i.e. the total number of people living in displacement at year-end and not 'new displacement'. The model therefore captures both new displacement and returns; therefore, more people than predicted by the model can be displaced over the course of the year. As such, it also does not capture secondary displacements
- The model only includes data from the given country and is thus not sensitive to developments in neighbouring countries that can affect displacement. This could be the case in spill-over violence or when one country invades another.

2024 displacement estimates

As mentioned in the introduction, official figures for the number of people displaced in 2023 will not be available until around June 2024. The IDP figures are typically released by IDMC in May, while the figures on refugees and asylum seekers are released by UNHCR in June. However, it is possible to estimate the number of displaced persons with a fair degree of accuracy by building on displacement updates being provided. These include:

- UNHCR mid-year displacement figures
- IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix assessment data on IDPs
- The UNHCR 'Situation' website, which provides regional data on refugee and asylum-seeker figures for certain crises
- OCHA and UNHCR country operation pages

The table below shows the numbers and sources for the estimates.

Country	IDP 2023	IDP update date	IDP source	EDP 2023	External displacement (EDP) update date	EDP source	Total displ. 2023
Afghanistan	3,252,741	30/06/2023	UNHCR	6,437,481	30/06/2023	UNHCR	9,690,222
Burkina Faso	2,349,082	31/12/2023	CONASUR + Internal model	114,639	30/06/2023	UNHCR	2,463,721
Burundi	8,177	30/06/2023	UNHCR	391,557	30/06/2023	UNHCR	399,734
Cameroon	1075252	30/11/2023	UNHCR	163,236	30/06/2023	UNHCR	1,238,488
CAR	504,992	31/10/2023	UNHCR	766,835	30/06/2023	UNHCR	1,271,827
Chad	215,928	30/11/2023	UNHCR	49,198	30/06/2023	UNHCR	265,126
Colombia	6,886,426	30/06/2023	UNHCR	358,623	30/06/2023	UNHCR	7,245,049
Dem. Rep. Congo	6,298,436	30/11/2023	UNHCR	1,121,743	30/06/2023	UNHCR	7,420,179
El Salvador	71,500	30/06/2023	UNHCR	220,067	30/06/2023	UNHCR	291,567
Ethiopia	3,459,881	30/09/2023	IOM	279,693	30/06/2023	UNHCR	3,739,574
Guatemala	242,386	30/06/2023	UNHCR	215,629	30/06/2023	UNHCR	458,015
Honduras	247,090	30/06/2023	UNHCR	301,864	30/06/2023	UNHCR	548,954
Iraq	1,142,014	31/08/2023	IOM	578,622	30/06/2023	UNHCR	1,720,636
Libya	125,802	31/08/2023	IOM	25,348	30/06/2023	UNHCR	151,150
Mali	391,961	30/09/2023	UNHCR	244,124	30/06/2023	UNHCR	636,085
Mozambique	926,314	31/10/2023	UNHCR	8,810	30/06/2023	UNHCR	935,124
Myanmar	2,625,000	30/11/2023	UN in Myanmar	1,316,017	30/06/2023	UNHCR	3,941,017
Niger	335,277	30/11/2023	UNHCR	26,429	30/06/2023	UNHCR	361,706
Nigeria	3,485,827	30/06/2023	IOM, NEMA	465,589	30/06/2023	UNHCR	3,951,416
Somalia	3,860,099	30/06/2023	UNHCR	1,008,470	30/06/2023	UNHCR	4,868,569
South Sudan	1,490,064	30/06/2023	UNHCR	2,234,545	30/06/2023	UNHCR	3,724,609
Sudan	6,055,749	30/11/2023	UNHCR	1,925,280	30/11/2023	UNHCR	11,899,900
Syria	7,248,188	31/07/2023	UNHCR, OCHA	6,658,791	30/06/2023	UNHCR	13,906,979
Ukraine	3,674,000	30/11/2023	IOM	5,932,746	30/06/2023	UNHCR	9,606,746
Venezuela	0			6,956,021	30/06/2023	UNHCR	7,032,515
Yemen	4,523,022	30/06/2023	UNHCR	76,981	30/06/2023	UNHCR	4,600,003

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Annex

Country	Estimated displacement 2023	Forecast 2024	Forecast 2025
Ukraine	9,607,000	9,732,000	9,739,000
Afghanistan	9,690,000	9,725,000	9,897,000
Myanmar	3,941,000	4,321,000	5,078,000
Nigeria	3,951,000	4,151,000	4,314,000
Cameroon	1,238,000	1,336,000	1,388,000
Burkina Faso	2,464,000	2,702,000	2,852,000
CAR	1,272,000	1,393,000	1,387,000
Mali	636,000	728,000	729,000
Chad	265,000	269,000	268,000
Niger	362,000	416,000	444,000
Syria	13,907,000	14,024,000	14,113,000
Yemen	4,600,000	4,622,000	4,797,000
Iraq	1,721,000	1,785,000	1,782,000
Libya	151,000	147,000	148,000
Sudan	10,978,000	11,900,000	12,753,000
DR Congo	7,420,000	8,008,000	8,248,000
South Sudan	3,725,000	3,759,000	3,783,000
Somalia	4,869,000	4,885,000	5,040,000
Ethiopia	3,740,000	3,921,000	3,873,000
Burundi	400,000	425,000	426,000
Mozambique	935,000	1,017,000	1,060,000
Colombia	7,245,000	7,450,000	7,467,000
Venezuela	6,956,000	7,033,000	7,308,000
Guatemala	458,000	459,000	462,000
Honduras	549,000	563,000	571,000
El Salvador	292,000	303,000	281,000

Founded in 1956, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is Denmark's largest international NGO, with a specific expertise in forced displacement. DRC is present in close to 40 countries and employs 9,000 staff globally.

DRC advocates for the rights of and solutions for displacement-affected communities, and provides assistance during all stages of displacement: in acute crisis, in exile, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. DRC supports displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies. DRC works with civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and inclusion.

Our 7,500 volunteers in Denmark make an invaluable difference in integration activities throughout the country.

DRC's code of conduct sits at the core of its organisational mission, and DRC aims at the highest ethical and professional standards. DRC has been certified as meeting the highest quality standards according to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

HRH Crown Princess Mary is DRC's patron.

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