



Forced displacement: refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people (IDPs)

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

- **68.5** million people are forcibly displaced worldwide by conflict:
25.4 million refugees,
40 million internally displaced,
3.1 million seeking asylum.
- **52%** are children under 18 - the highest proportion in a decade.
- **58%** of the global refugee population **live in urban areas**, not in camps or rural areas.
- Largest sources of displaced people: Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, Somalia.*
- **EU funding of more than €2 billion** to help forcibly displaced populations and their host communities in 2017.
- A new **development-led approach** to forced displacement

* Source: UNHCR Global Trends Report 2017

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Key messages

- Each year millions of people are forced to leave their homes and seek refuge from conflicts, violence, human rights violations, persecution or natural disasters. The number of **forcibly displaced people** (refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people) **has continued to rise throughout 2017**, calling for increased humanitarian assistance worldwide.
- The majority of today's refugees live in the developing world, which means that they flee to countries already struggling with poverty and hardship.
- The EU is a leading international donor in forced displacement situations. **In 2017, it gave more than €2 billion** for humanitarian assistance dedicated to refugees, IDPs and their host communities. This funding covers projects that help the forcibly displaced access shelter, protection, food and other basic services such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation and education.
- **In April 2016, the European Commission adopted a new development-led approach to forced displacement**, aimed at harnessing and strengthening the resilience and self-reliance of both the forcibly displaced and their host communities.

Major needs of the forcibly displaced

Each year millions of people are forced to leave their homes and seek refuge from conflicts, violence, human rights violations, persecution and natural disasters. The number of forcibly displaced people has continued to rise throughout 2017, calling for increased humanitarian assistance worldwide. Up to **85%** of the forcibly displaced find refuge among people who already struggle with poverty in low- and middle-income countries. Their survival depends on the availability of assistance provided by local communities and international organisations.

At the end of 2017, **68.5 million** people worldwide were in need of protection and assistance as a consequence of forced displacement, as per UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. This is the equivalent of a person becoming displaced every two seconds. Forcibly displaced populations include **refugees¹, internally displaced people (IDPs)² and asylum-seekers³.**

Globally in 2017, **40 million** people were internally displaced as a result of conflict and persecution, while **25.4 million** were refugees and **3.1 million** were asylum-seekers. Most refugees nowadays live in urban areas (58%), not in camps or rural areas. Of the global refugee population, 52% are children under 18 - the highest proportion in a decade – including many who are unaccompanied or separated from their families (source: UNHCR Global Trends Report 2017).

Every year on **20 June, World Refugee Day** is an opportunity to bring renewed focus to the plight of all people who are forced to flee their homes. The UN General Assembly established the World Refugee Day in 2001, on the 50th anniversary of the United Nations (UN) Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

2018 marks the 20th anniversary of the '[Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement](#)' – a set of standards that outline the rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of IDPs from forced displacement to their protection and assistance during displacement up to the achievement of durable solutions. Although not a legally binding instrument, the EU strongly supports the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and promotes their inclusion into international and national law.

Finding **durable solutions** for the forcibly displaced is a challenge. **Voluntary repatriation** to their home countries is the preferred long-term outcome for refugees; but the lack of political solutions to conflicts prevents many from doing so. Forced displacement is no longer a temporary phenomenon; it lasts on average 20 years for refugees and more than 10 years for 90% of IDPs. Those who are **internally displaced (IDPs)** also face **challenges in terms of protection, access to shelter, food and other basic services**. Both refugees and IDPs in urban areas struggle with poverty, lack of psycho-social support and difficulties in normalising their status. Violence, abuse and exploitation against them often peak in the aftermath of new emergencies.

A development-led approach to forced displacement

In April 2016, the European Commission adopted the Communication '[Lives in Dignity: from Aid-dependence to Self-reliance. Forced Displacement and Development](#)', outlining **a new development-led approach to forced displacement**. The EU's objective is to strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of both the displaced and their host communities through a partnership approach from the outset of displacement crises. Its focus is on working with host governments, at the national and local level, towards the gradual socio-economic inclusion of refugees and IDPs. The new approach aims to harness the productive capacities of refugees and IDPs by helping them to access education, housing, land, livelihoods and services.

¹ A **refugee** is someone who has been forced to flee his or her home country and is unable or unwilling to return due to fear of persecution. The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees gives refugees legal protection under the international refugee law. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated to respond to refugee needs.

² An **internally displaced person (IDP)** is someone who was forced to flee his/her home but who did not cross a state border. IDPs benefit from the legal protection of international human rights law and, in armed conflict, international humanitarian law.

³ '**Asylum-seekers**' are those who have made a claim that they are refugees and are in the process of waiting for it to be accepted or rejected. 'Stateless' people are not considered as a national by any state ('de jure') or don't enjoy fundamental rights in their homeland ('de facto'). [source: UNHCR]



The European Union's humanitarian response

In 2017, the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) gave more than **€2 billion⁴** or **90% of its annual budget**, to projects helping the forcibly displaced and their host communities in **49 countries** (Turkey, Greece, Syria, Somalia and Lebanon being the top 5). This helps to:

- meet the most pressing needs of these extremely vulnerable populations;
- protect and support displaced people during their displacement and when returning home;
- increase the self-reliance of displaced people and reduce their dependency on aid.

The Commission's assistance to the forcibly displaced is making a difference in the lives of many: **Syrian refugees** in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Greece; **Afghan refugees** in Iran and Pakistan; **Somali refugees** in Kenya; **Congolese refugees** in the Great Lakes region; **Palestinian refugees**; **Myanmar refugees** in Thailand; **Rohingya** refugees in Bangladesh; and **Sahrawi refugees** in Algeria. Vulnerable **IDPs** are equally targeted by Commission assistance, particularly in **Syria, Colombia, South Sudan, Iraq and Yemen**.

The Commission channels its financial support to forced displacement situations through organisations dealing with refugees, IDPs, vulnerable migrants and (in some cases) host communities. Its main partners include **UNHCR**, the **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)**, the **Red Cross and Red Crescent movement** and **non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**.

Finally, the European Commission has an important role in advocating for and enabling **durable solutions for refugees and IDPs**, especially with regards to fulfilling their **right of return** to their countries of origin. The EU recognises that meeting the needs of refugees and IDPs requires targeted humanitarian aid combined with sustainable development assistance. Together with its partners, the EU also advocates for the full recognition of the new opportunities and benefits for national and local economies which forcibly displaced people can create.

Examples of crises – and how the EU responds

Syria: Already in its seventh year, the Syria crisis has left over **13.1 million people** in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria. Out of these, **6.1 million people are internally displaced**; 2.5 million live in hard-to-reach areas and 400,000 in besieged areas. Civilians continue to be the primary victims of the conflict with children and young people comprising more than half of the displaced population. There are **over 5 million registered Syrian refugees** in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

Since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011, the EU has collectively (EU budget and Member States) mobilised more than **€10.6 billion** for humanitarian, resilience and stabilisation support to Syrians inside the country and Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries.

Afghanistan: Almost four decades of violence have led to large-scale displacement within the country, and to neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. Intensified conflict continues to force people out of their homes: in 2017 alone, **almost half a million people** became internally displaced. **Pakistan** continues to host the largest number of Afghan refugees (around **1.4 million**), while **Iran** hosts almost **1 million**. In addition, there are almost 3 million Afghans living in Pakistan and Iran without having refugee status.

The European Commission has been funding humanitarian operations in Afghanistan since 1994, with a total amount of over **€775 million**. The Commission's support provides food, shelter, water and sanitation, health and protection services to forcibly displaced people. However, delivering aid to IDPs is hampered by complex government procedures in some places and limited access due to ongoing fighting in areas.

⁴ Funding from EU institutions, excluding funding from Member States.

