



BRIEFING PAPER

Number of IDPs by age at the end of 2019

Information on the age of internally displaced people (IDPs) is essential to assess their needs and design programmes that can support them at every stage of their lives. Assistance must be tailored to respond to the specific necessities and resources of each age group. For instance, while displacement can affect the mental health of all IDPs, it will result in different impacts and will require different responses for children or older people.¹

This paper estimates the age of people who were living in internal displacement at the end of 2019 as a result of conflict, violence and disasters, using national-level demographic distribution data for 98 countries. This information is intended as a first step to inform age-sensitive planning and support to IDPs' health, education, security, livelihoods and housing conditions.

KEY FIGURES

The total number of people living in internal displacement around the world at the end of 2019 was estimated to be 50.8 million, including 45.7 million displaced as a result of conflict and violence and 5.1 million as a result of disasters.²

There were about 6.6 million IDPs between the ages of 0 and 4, 11.7 million between 5 and 14, 9.7 million between 15 and 24, 19.2 million between 25 and 59 and 3.7 million over the age of 60. Internally displaced children under the age of 18 now represent more than 21.3 million, up from 17 million recorded at the end of 2018.³ Figure 1 illustrates the age distribution of all IDPs worldwide at the end of 2019.

FIGURE 1: Global estimate of the number of people of different age groups living in internal displacement associated with conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2019

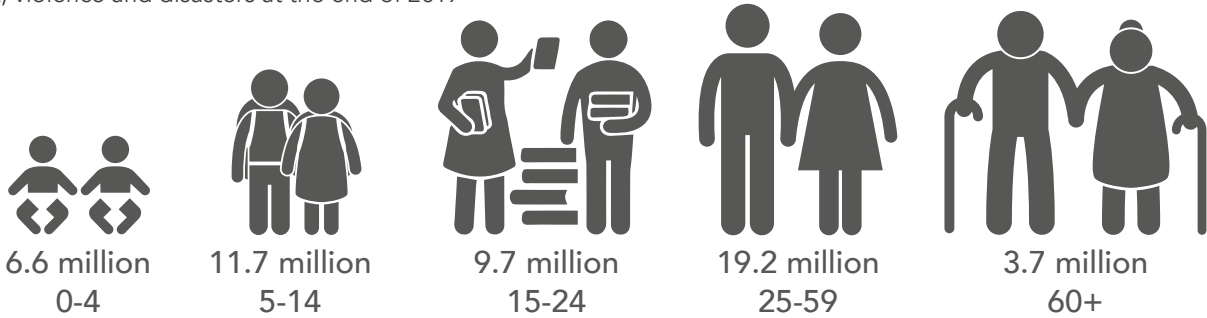


TABLE 1: Estimates of the number of people living in internal displacement associated with conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2019, by region and age group.

Region	0–4	5–14	15–17	0–17	18–24	25–59	60+
Sub-Saharan Africa	3,465,000	5,731,000	1,428,000	10,618,000	2,820,000	6,652,000	1,008,000
Middle East and North Africa	1,527,000	2,768,000	739,000	5,035,000	1,656,000	5,171,000	804,000
Americas	504,000	1,022,000	330,000	1,858,000	805,000	3,085,000	834,000
South Asia	767,000	1,462,000	404,000	2,634,000	835,000	2,139,000	340,000
Europe and Central Asia	189,000	397,000	109,000	695,000	268,000	1,398,000	504,000
East Asia and Pacific	131,000	273,000	81,000	486,000	186,000	741,000	196,000
Global	6,586,000	11,655,000	3,093,000	21,327,000	6,573,000	19,188,000	3,689,000

**Some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures because they have been rounded.*

The age groups employed in this paper are commonly used for statistical purposes, to correspond to the expected needs of people at different stages of their lives. Infants between 0 and 4 years may, for instance, require nutritional support and vaccinations, while children between 5 and 14 should receive primary and secondary education. Young people between 15 and 24 may need support to enter the labour market. People over the age of 60 may require dedicated healthcare and livelihood support if they can no longer work, for example.

Table 1 presents in more detail the regional estimates for each age group. The distribution varies from one age group to another. For instance, the region with the highest number of internally displaced children under 18 is sub-Saharan Africa with 10.6 million, followed by the Middle East and North Africa with 5 million, South Asia with 2.6 million, the Americas with 1.9 million, Europe and Central Asia with 695,000, and East Asia and the Pacific with 486,000.

For IDPs over the age of 60, while sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest numbers with over 1 million, the next region is the Americas with 834,000, the Middle East and North Africa with 804,000, Europe and Central Asia with 504,000, South Asia with 340,000, and East Asia and the Pacific with 196,000.

Map 1 illustrates the global distribution of IDPs over the age of 60. Colombia is the country with the highest number at over 736,000, followed by Syria with 487,000, the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 267,000, and Afghanistan, Ukraine, Yemen, Turkey, Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and India with over 100,000 each.

The estimated numbers of people living in internal displacement at the end of 2019 as a result of conflict, violence and disasters are presented separately, by age groups for about 100 countries, in tables 2 and 3 annexed to this paper.

METHODOLOGY

Age disaggregation of any kind of data is limited, and even more so for internal displacement. Out of the nearly 50 countries and territories for which the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was able to estimate the number of IDPs in 2018, only 14 per cent provided some age disaggregation.⁴

Information on the age of IDPs is most often available in camp settings where a registration system is in place. Most IDPs, however, do not live in camps but instead in host communities, where they are not systematically registered. In cases where the number of IDPs is estimated through housing destruction levels or satellite images, their age is also unknown. These and other reasons such as countries' lack of statistical and financial capacity or difficulties of access to displacement sites mean that age-disaggregated data on IDPs remains a major knowledge gap.

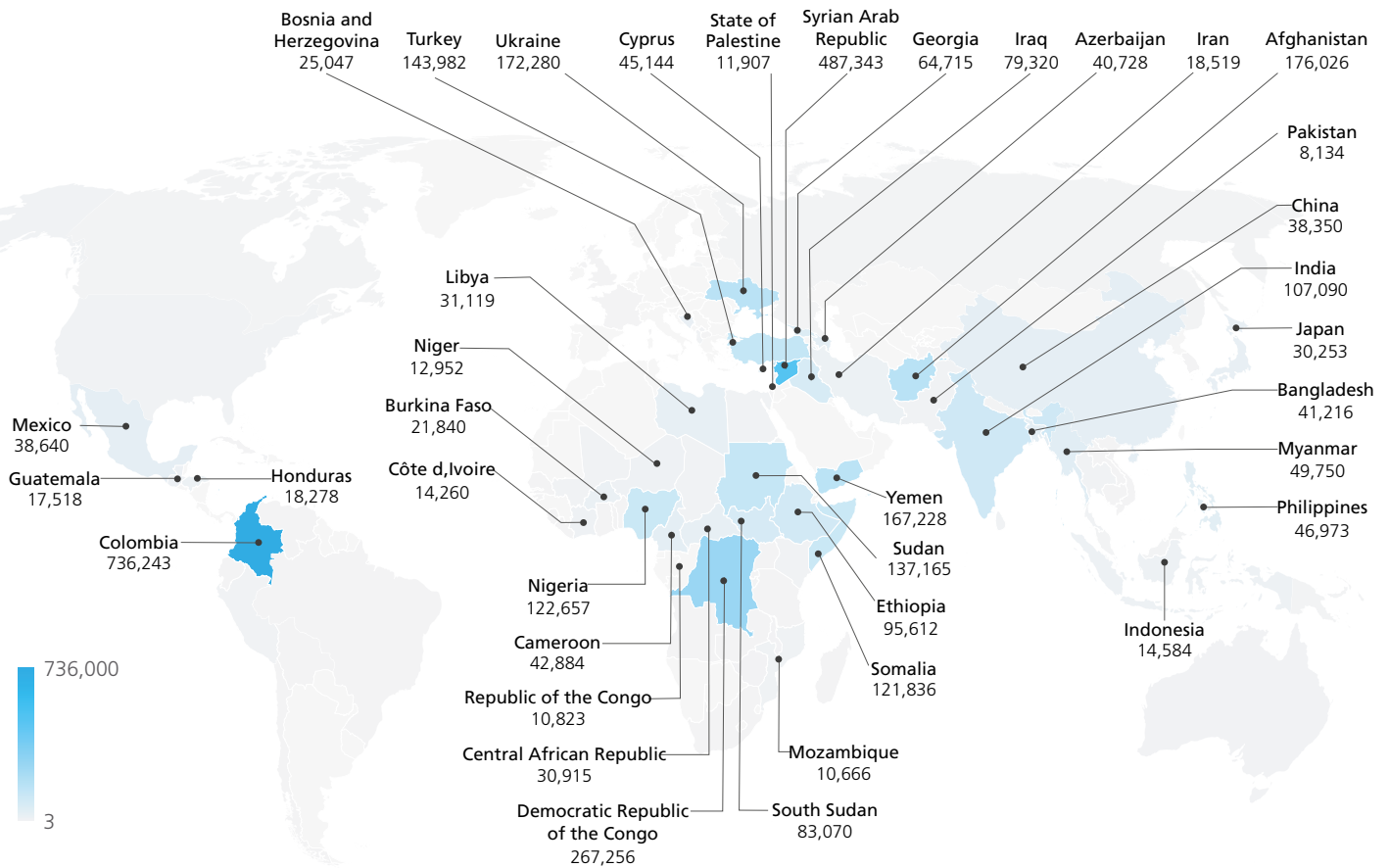
As a first step to bridging this gap, this paper applies the percentage of the national population in broad age groups – estimated by the United Nations (UN) Population Division's World Population Prospects 2019 – to the number of people living in internal displacement associated with conflict, violence and disasters in each country at the end of 2019, as published in the Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020.⁵

WHY ARE IDPs' AGES RELEVANT?

People have different needs and may rely on different resources at each stage of their lives. Adopting blanket approaches to supporting IDPs without taking their age into account can lead to some being excluded and further marginalised.

While research has shown that internal displacement commonly affects the health, livelihoods, security, housing conditions and education of IDPs, what these impacts mean and how they should be mitigated will largely depend on IDPs' age.

MAP 1: Global distribution of people over the age of 60 living in internal displacement associated with conflict, violence and disasters at the end of 2019



HEALTH

Reduced income levels and poor housing conditions can damage the health of all IDPs, with age-related specificities.⁶ Displaced children under the age of five are more likely to die of malaria than non-displaced children.⁷ Displaced girls and women of reproductive age often record higher rates of early and unintended pregnancies.⁸ Environments that are conducive to the spread of communicable diseases and lack of access to healthcare and preventive measures mean that older IDPs are at higher risk of severe infections and complications resulting from underlying conditions or disabilities.

LIVELIHOODS

Livelihood support must be adapted to each age group. Cash-based assistance can help displaced families with limited resources educate their school-age children.⁹ Unemployment subsidies or small grants for entrepreneurs are better suited to sustaining working-age IDPs. Older IDPs who may no longer be able to work because of illness or disability would need to receive income through other mechanisms, including retirement or social security.¹⁰

SECURITY

Insecurity can also take different forms depending on age. Older IDPs face a higher risk of neglect, abuse and violence,

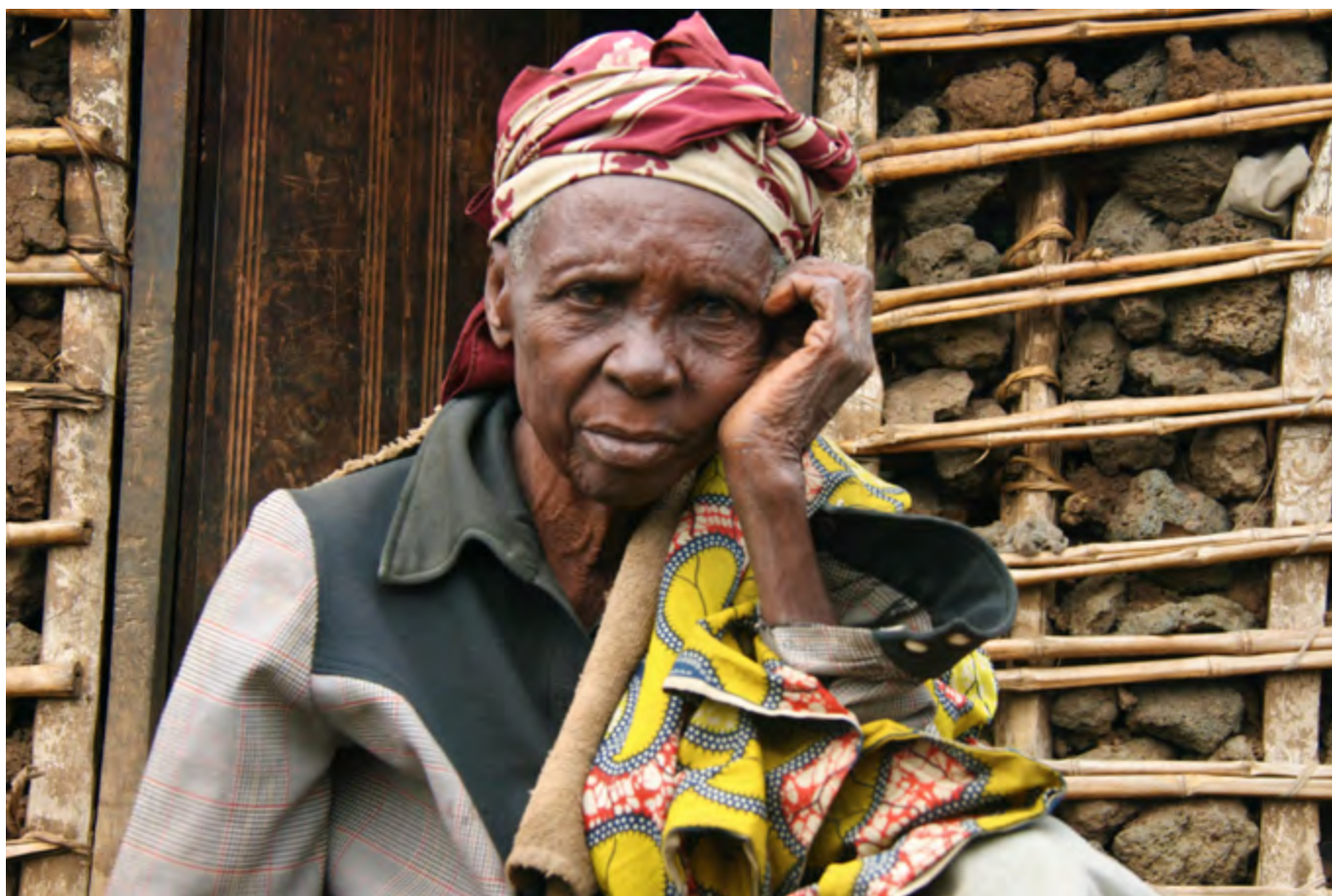
while young men are more likely to be forcibly recruited into armed groups.¹¹ Adolescent girls may be forced into early marriage and suffer sexual or other forms of gender-based violence.¹² Younger displaced children are also more vulnerable to neglect, abuse and violence, as well as trafficking.

HOUSING CONDITIONS

One of the most immediate and common consequences of displacement is a degradation of IDPs' housing conditions.¹³ In severe displacement crises, they may find themselves living in makeshift shelters, under-serviced informal settlements or displacement camps with limited access to water and sanitation and high risks of diseases and insecurity.¹⁴ Ideally, housing arrangements in displacement settlements should consider the specific needs of IDPs of different ages. For example, children's needs would include playgrounds, schools and parks, and age-sensitive information to guide them through their new environment. Older people may need adjustments to access services and infrastructure, particularly if they have disabilities.¹⁵

EDUCATION

Internal displacement can affect a child's education in many ways, reducing access to school as well as quality of learning.¹⁶ Children of different ages will require tailored educational



Nyiragine is 85 years old. A widow, she has lived in Mungote displacement camp, in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, for nine years. "Here, there is no assistance, no food, no healthcare. We are suffering," she said. Photo: NRC/Ephrem Chiruzza, 2018.

support, starting with early childhood education and primary and secondary education. Displaced youth may also require education in the form of vocational training or higher education, while adults may need to learn new skills to adapt to the labour market in their host area, or learn a new language to better integrate in their host community. Older IDPs may also benefit from continuous learning programmes to avoid or mitigate the reduction of their cognitive abilities, which may be aggravated by displacement.

WAY FORWARD

Policies and responses to internal displacement should consider the specific needs of IDPs at different stages of their lives. To plan these policies and responses better, information is needed on how many people of each age group are living in internal displacement. Although this information remains largely unavailable, demographic estimates such as the ones presented in this paper can serve as a first step to designing more inclusive support for IDPs.

This method assumes that the demographic distribution in the displaced population is the same as in the overall national population, which is not always the case. In cases where data on the age of IDPs is collected, the proportion of children, for instance, is often found to be higher than in the national population.¹⁷

Another limitation to the figures in this paper is that the numbers of IDPs used to calculate these figures are likely to be underestimates. Data on IDPs in disaster settings only exists for 7 per cent of the disasters that IDMC monitored in 2019 – for which time-series data was available – and for about 50 per cent of events where housing destruction data exists. The number of IDPs in conflict and violence settings can also be underestimated as data collection is often limited to the most affected or most accessible areas. IDPs who do not find refuge in camps but in host communities also often remain off the records.¹⁸

Obtaining more accurate information on the age of IDPs requires increased investments in data collection and analysis. This alone will not suffice if not accompanied by age-sensitive approaches to policies and support programmes, and by the collection of more qualitative information on the specific needs and resources of IDPs of different ages, genders and abilities.



Aung Latt (8) and his little brother Naw Aung (3), internally displaced in Myanmar. "I like going to school, I like studying. I want to become a doctor. I also like playing football," says Aung Latt. Photo: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun, 2017.

ANNEX

TABLE 2: Estimates of the number of people living in internal displacement associated with conflict and violence at the end of 2019, by country and broad age group.

Country	0–4	5–14	15–17	0–17	18–24	25–59	60+
Abyei Area	4,000	8,000	2,000	14,000	4,000	10,000	1,000
Afghanistan	436,000	817,000	218,000	1,472,000	436,000	957,000	125,000
Azerbaijan	28,000	54,000	12,000	95,000	33,000	180,000	40,000
Bangladesh	37,000	77,000	24,000	138,000	55,000	198,000	34,000
Benin	-	-	-	1,000	-	1,000	-
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4,000	10,000	2,000	17,000	8,000	48,000	25,000
Burkina Faso	92,000	155,000	38,000	286,000	75,000	176,000	21,000
Burundi	3,000	6,000	1,000	11,000	2,000	7,000	-
Cameroon	150,000	257,000	64,000	471,000	127,000	327,000	41,000
Central African Republic	90,000	167,000	45,000	303,000	87,000	175,000	26,000
Chad	31,000	50,000	12,000	94,000	23,000	51,000	6,000
Colombia	407,000	830,000	273,000	1,511,000	674,000	2,654,000	736,000
Congo	19,000	35,000	8,000	63,000	16,000	47,000	6,000
Côte d'Ivoire	47,000	78,000	20,000	146,000	41,000	100,000	14,000

Country	0-4	5-14	15-17	0-17	18-24	25-59	60+
Cyprus	12,000	25,000	7,000	45,000	23,000	113,000	45,000
Dem. Rep. Congo	976,000	1,550,000	364,000	2,891,000	695,000	1,671,000	259,000
Egypt	12,000	20,000	5,000	37,000	11,000	39,000	7,000
Ethiopia	206,000	357,000	97,000	661,000	206,000	470,000	74,000
Georgia	20,000	40,000	9,000	70,000	24,000	141,000	64,000
Guatemala	27,000	52,000	15,000	96,000	34,000	93,000	17,000
Honduras	25,000	50,000	15,000	91,000	35,000	102,000	18,000
India	39,000	83,000	25,000	148,000	58,000	214,000	47,000
Indonesia	3,000	6,000	2,000	12,000	4,000	18,000	4,000
Iraq	208,000	377,000	97,000	684,000	209,000	581,000	79,000
Kenya	21,000	41,000	11,000	73,000	22,000	58,000	6,000
Kosovo	-	1,000	-	3,000	1,000	7,000	4,000
Lebanon	-	1,000	-	2,000	-	3,000	-
Libya	41,000	84,000	22,000	147,000	50,000	221,000	31,000
Madagascar	-	-	-	1,000	-	1,000	-
Mali	37,000	60,000	14,000	112,000	26,000	60,000	8,000
Mexico	29,000	59,000	17,000	107,000	41,000	158,000	38,000
Mozambique	18,000	30,000	7,000	56,000	14,000	33,000	4,000
Myanmar	37,000	78,000	25,000	142,000	57,000	212,000	45,000
Niger	38,000	58,000	13,000	110,000	24,000	52,000	7,000
Nigeria	426,000	697,000	170,000	1,294,000	330,000	842,000	116,000
Pakistan	13,000	23,000	6,000	43,000	14,000	41,000	7,000
Palestine	33,000	60,000	15,000	108,000	33,000	89,000	11,000
Papua New Guinea	1,000	3,000	-	5,000	1,000	5,000	-
Peru	5,000	9,000	2,000	17,000	6,000	28,000	7,000
Philippines	17,000	37,000	10,000	65,000	23,000	77,000	15,000
Senegal	1,000	2,000	-	4,000	1,000	2,000	-
Sierra Leone	-	1,000	-	2,000	-	1,000	-
Somalia	471,000	752,000	188,000	1,408,000	370,000	746,000	121,000
South Sudan	206,000	352,000	89,000	647,000	185,000	448,000	70,000
Sri Lanka	2,000	4,000	1,000	7,000	2,000	12,000	4,000
Sudan	309,000	539,000	142,000	992,000	292,000	727,000	121,000
Syria	714,000	1,286,000	350,000	2,351,000	824,000	2,831,000	487,000
Thailand	2,000	4,000	1,000	8,000	3,000	20,000	7,000
Turkey	85,000	178,000	52,000	316,000	124,000	514,000	143,000

Country	0–4	5–14	15–17	0–17	18–24	25–59	60+
Uganda	5,000	9,000	2,000	17,000	4,000	9,000	1,000
Ukraine	35,000	81,000	20,000	136,000	48,000	372,000	172,000
Yemen	501,000	908,000	239,000	1,650,000	508,000	1,308,000	167,000

*Some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures because they have been rounded.

TABLE 3: Estimates of the number of people living in internal displacement associated with disasters at the end of 2019, by country and broad age group.

Country	0–4	5–14	15–17	0–17	18–24	25–59	60+
Abyei Area	3,000	6,000	1,000	12,000	3,000	8,000	1,000
Afghanistan	174,000	327,000	87,000	589,000	174,000	383,000	50,000
Albania	1,000	3,000	1,000	6,000	3,000	14,000	6,000
Australia	-	1,000	-	3,000	1,000	6,000	3,000
Bangladesh	7,000	15,000	5,000	28,000	11,000	41,000	7,000
Burundi	2,000	3,000	-	5,000	1,000	3,000	-
Cameroon	4,000	7,000	1,000	13,000	3,000	9,000	1,000
Canada	-	-	-	1,000	-	3,000	1,000
Central African Republic	14,000	26,000	7,000	48,000	13,000	28,000	4,000
Chad	4,000	7,000	1,000	14,000	3,000	7,000	1,000
China	12,000	26,000	7,000	46,000	18,000	117,000	38,000
Comoros	2,000	4,000	1,000	8,000	2,000	6,000	-
Congo	15,000	28,000	6,000	50,000	13,000	37,000	4,000
Dem. Rep. Congo	29,000	47,000	11,000	88,000	21,000	50,000	7,000
Ethiopia	56,000	98,000	26,000	182,000	56,000	129,000	20,000
Gambia	-	1,000	-	2,000	-	1,000	-
Ghana	1,000	3,000	-	6,000	1,000	5,000	-
Haiti	5,000	10,000	3,000	19,000	6,000	20,000	3,000
India	50,000	104,000	32,000	187,000	73,000	269,000	59,000
Indonesia	8,000	18,000	5,000	32,000	12,000	49,000	10,000
Iran	16,000	28,000	7,000	51,000	16,000	93,000	18,000
Japan	3,000	7,000	2,000	13,000	5,000	38,000	30,000
Lao PDR	-	1,000	-	2,000	-	2,000	-
Malawi	8,000	14,000	3,000	26,000	7,000	17,000	2,000
Malaysia	1,000	2,000	-	4,000	1,000	7,000	1,000
Mali	1,000	1,000	-	3,000	-	1,000	-
Mozambique	21,000	36,000	9,000	67,000	18,000	40,000	5,000
Myanmar	3,000	6,000	2,000	12,000	5,000	18,000	4,000

Country	0–4	5–14	15–17	0–17	18–24	25–59	60+
Nepal	2,000	5,000	1,000	10,000	4,000	11,000	2,000
Niger	23,000	36,000	8,000	68,000	15,000	32,000	4,000
Nigeria	23,000	38,000	9,000	71,000	18,000	46,000	6,000
Pakistan	1,000	3,000	-	6,000	2,000	6,000	1,000
Papua New Guinea	1,000	2,000	-	4,000	1,000	4,000	-
Peru	-	-	-	1,000	-	2,000	-
Philippines	35,000	74,000	21,000	130,000	47,000	155,000	31,000
Rwanda	-	1,000	-	2,000	-	1,000	-
South Sudan	37,000	64,000	16,000	117,000	33,000	81,000	12,000
Sri Lanka	-	-	-	1,000	-	2,000	-
Sudan	39,000	68,000	18,000	126,000	37,000	92,000	15,000
Syria	-	-	-	1,000	-	1,000	-
United States	2,000	4,000	1,000	8,000	3,000	17,000	8,000
Vietnam	-	1,000	-	1,000	-	3,000	-
Zimbabwe	7,000	14,000	3,000	25,000	7,000	17,000	2,000

*Some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures because they have been rounded.

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Cover photo: Zaumala Ali Ibrahim, wife Waslame Ali and their eight children are originally from Hajjah in Yemen. They were displaced to Amran governorate two years ago when the war reached their doorstep. Photo: NRC/Becky Bakr Abdulla, September 2018.

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