
Internal Displacement in



**An overview of trends and developments
(2009-2023)**

With thanks

This report has been produced with the generous contribution of the following funding partners: Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, European Union, German Federal Foreign Office, Liechtenstein's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Robert Bosch Foundation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and U.S. Agency for International Development.

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<https://doi.org/10.55363/IDMC.VYIL2669>

To reference this report in your work, please use the following citation:

IDMC (2024) *Internal Displacement in Africa: an overview of trends and developments (2009-2023)*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. <https://doi.org/10.55363/IDMC.VYIL2669>



Key definitions and metrics

Defining internal displacement

Internal displacement refers to the forced movement of people within the country they live in.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998).

Measuring internal displacement

The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) is a snapshot of the total number of people living in internal displacement at a specific point in time in a specific location. For this report, such a snapshot is made as of the end of each year. This number includes people uprooted within a year who have not been able to return home or find another solution to displacement, plus people who have been displaced in previous years and have not found a lasting solution.

An internal displacement refers to each new forced movement of a person within the borders of the country of their habitual residence recorded during the year. The same person or people can be displaced several times over a given period before finding a solution to their displacement. Figures include each time a person is forced to move as an internal displacement. This figure illustrates dynamics of displacement in a specific crisis.

Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures.

Borders and regions

This report uses the African Union sub-regional division, aiming at informing regional and sub-regional level policies and actions.

Country and territory boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC.

Executive summary

Fifteen years ago, Africa was at the forefront of progress towards comprehensive responses to internal displacement. The African Union adopted the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, known as the Kampala Convention, in 2009. It was the first – and is still the only – legally binding regional instrument that addresses all causes and phases of displacement. It reflected the determination of African countries to address the phenomenon and set international standards for its management.

Yet as of the end of 2023, the continent was hosting 35 million internally displaced people (IDPs). That was nearly half of the global total and three times more than in 2009. Many countries have developed legal and policy frameworks and made meaningful investments in addressing internal displacement over the last 15 years, but the numbers show that there is still much more to do.

Conflict and violence are the main triggers of internal displacement in Africa, accounting for 32.5 million IDPs at the end of 2023. The number of disaster displacements has also risen rapidly across the continent, up nearly sixfold in the last 15 years. Floods accounted for more than three-quarters of the movements, and where data is available, it shows that drought is increasingly part of the story.

Many people have been displaced repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods of time. Conflict, violence and disasters often overlap or recur, driving complex displacement crises. These situations add to low levels of socioeconomic development, food insecurity and other challenges, putting IDPs in a cycle of vulnerability and displacement risk.

Persistent conflict and violence and the growing impacts of disasters and climate change make more people susceptible to displacement and increase the needs and vulnerabilities of those already displaced.

All of these factors place additional obstacles in the continent’s path towards sustainable development.

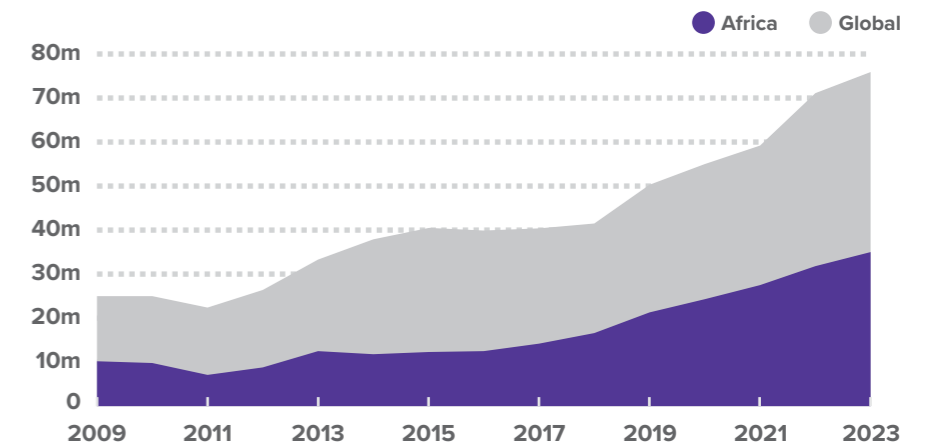
The Kampala Convention underscores the fact that countries hold the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting their IDPs, and many states are gradually integrating its obligations into domestic legal and policy frameworks. However, most of these policies emphasise responses to displacement more than measures to prevent it.

Responding to IDPs’ unique needs helps them in the short term, and with proper planning, can set them on a path to resolving their displacement. But to reverse the trend of increasing displacement, it is essential to address its underlying drivers. Some countries are doing this through investments in areas including disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation and peacebuilding, and these can serve as examples for others.

Political stability and sufficient funding are necessary ingredients for successful efforts to prevent, respond to and resolve displacement. So is having the right data. There are still significant gaps, but some progress has been made in the past 15 years. More information on the scale, duration and impacts of displacement is becoming available, and this is invaluable for governments and their partners in designing more impactful policies and actions that improve IDPs’ lives and reduce the risk of future displacement.

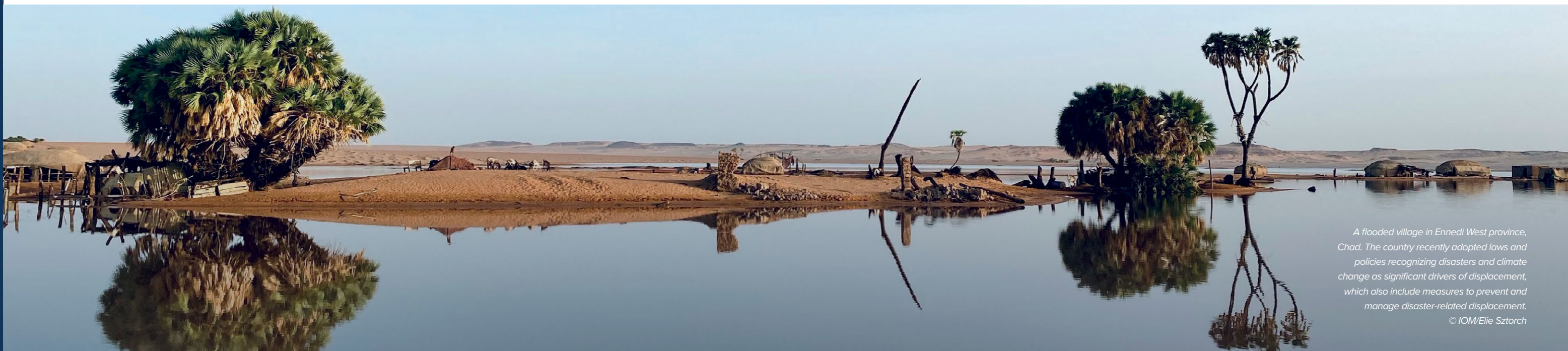
Conflict displacement is highly concentrated - only five countries account for 80 per cent of people displaced by conflict and violence on the continent – but it is also on the rise. Climate change is making weather-related hazards more frequent and more intense, and it is amplifying other factors that make communities more vulnerable to disaster displacement, increasing the risk of future movements. Unless governments and their partners redouble their efforts, the number of

Africa’s share of global IDPs is increasing



people being forced from their homes is likely to continue to increase.

By shining a light on the scale, causes and impacts of internal displacement in Africa, and by demonstrating that progress is possible, this report aims to generate renewed interest and increased investment in addressing this critical issue.



A flooded village in Ennedi West province, Chad. The country recently adopted laws and policies recognizing disasters and climate change as significant drivers of displacement, which also include measures to prevent and manage disaster-related displacement.

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An aerial view of boats on the Buzi River in Sofala province, Mozambique. Over the past 15 years, the country has been hit by severe cyclones and floods, triggering internal displacement.
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Conflict displacement is on the rise



A site for internally displaced people in Dolow region, Somalia. The number of people living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence in Africa has more than tripled in the last 15 years.

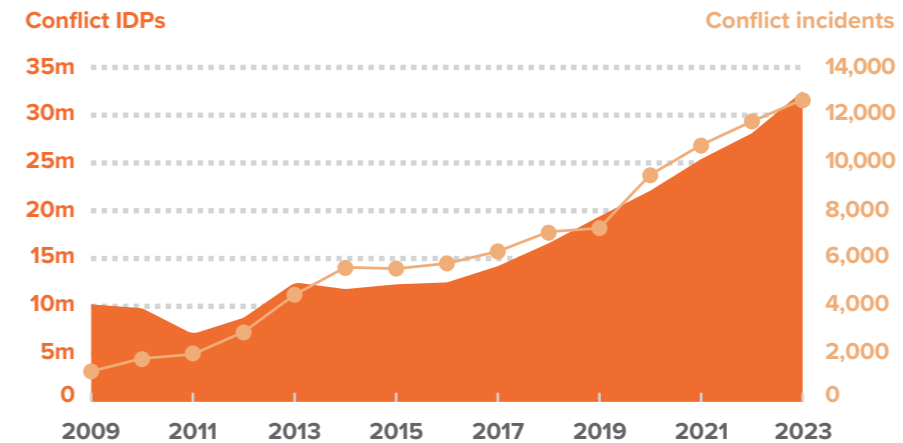
© IOM/Raber Aziz

The number of people living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence in Africa has more than tripled in the last 15 years, from 10.2 million in 2009 to 32.5 million in 2023. The figure has nearly doubled since 2018. People displaced by previous conflicts continue to struggle to resolve their displacement, while in some countries where people have been living in protracted displacement, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sudan, conflict and violence have escalated (see p.29 and p.17).

New conflicts have also broken out in countries such as Mozambique and Burkina Faso, where the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) has risen sharply (see p.47 and p.39). The increase in conflict and displacement not only creates immediate humanitarian challenges, it also has longstanding consequences for countries' development and stability.

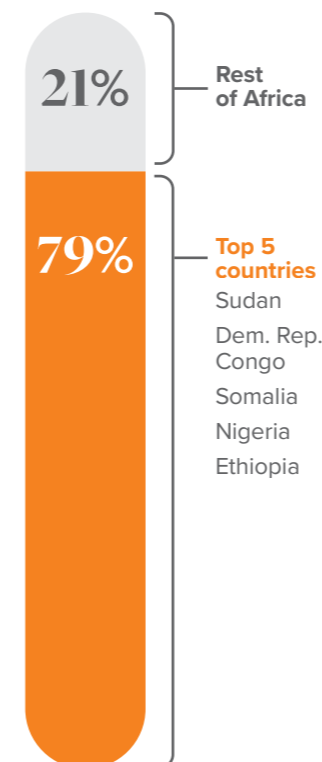
Conflict displacement is highly concentrated

Increasing incidents of conflict drive and prolong displacement



Sources: IDMC and ACLED

Five countries represent nearly 80 per cent of IDPs by conflict and violence in Africa



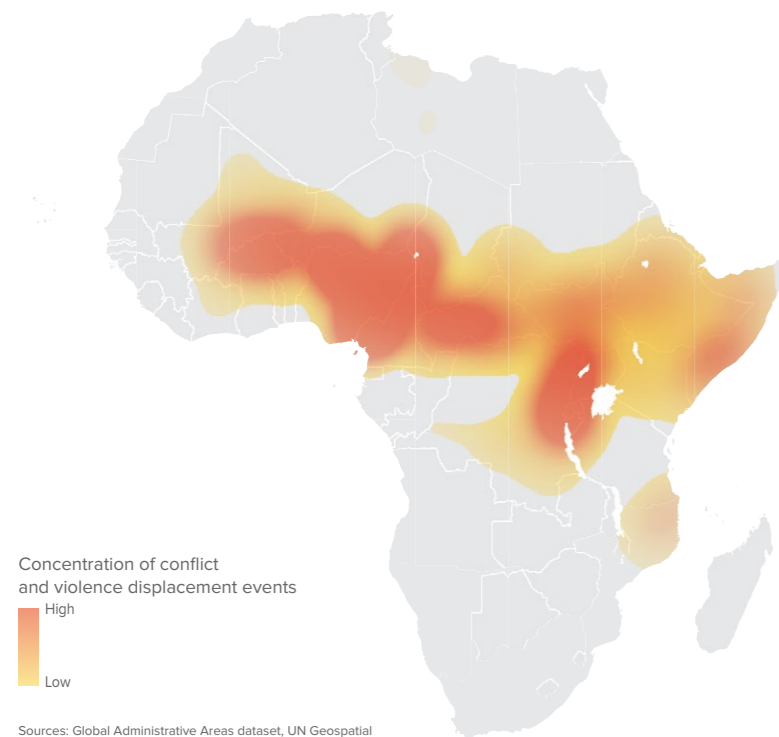
Just five countries – Sudan, DRC, Somalia, Nigeria and Ethiopia – accounted for 80 per cent of the people internally displaced by conflict and violence in Africa as of the end of 2023.

Displacement is also concentrated in specific hotspots within countries. These include eastern DRC, Sudan's Darfur region, Ethiopia's Tigray region, Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, the Lake Chad Basin and border areas between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.



Sustaining data collection at the local level allows governments and their partners to understand displacement dynamics over space and time. It is key information for the design, planning and implementation of measures to prevent, respond to and resolve the phenomenon.

Conflict displacement hotspots in Africa (2018-2023)



Geolocated displacement data shows that the events of conflict and violence that have triggered displacement since 2018 are largely concentrated.

Poverty and marginalisation fuel violence and make communities more vulnerable to displacement

The drivers of violence and displacement are highly context specific, but poverty, inequality and marginalisation are often among the factors that fuel new and protracted crises, as non-state armed groups exploit grievances about limited livelihood opportunities and basic services, and longstanding communal tensions. Displacement further aggravates poverty, putting the most vulnerable IDPs at risk of onward movement and prolonging their plight.

Investing in rural livelihoods, resolving land and property disputes, and integrating marginalised communities into conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts have the potential to break this cycle. Laws and policies on internal displacement also play a key role in guiding prevention and response measures (see p.55).



Sustainable peace and development are essential to prevent and resolve displacement

The rise in conflict displacement brings increased humanitarian needs, but as situations worsen and become more complex, emergency assistance alone is not enough to resolve them.

Solutions also require conflict resolution, peacebuilding and development investments to address the underlying drivers and vulnerabilities that lead to displacement. Such actions would help IDPs to return, relocate or integrate into their host communities in a sustainable way and reduce the risk of further displacement happening (see p.55).

A woman and child in a displacement site in Lac region, Chad. Across Africa, poverty, inequality and marginalisation often fuel new and protracted crises that lead to displacement. © UNOCHA/Ivo Brandau

Floods and droughts are driving increasing displacement



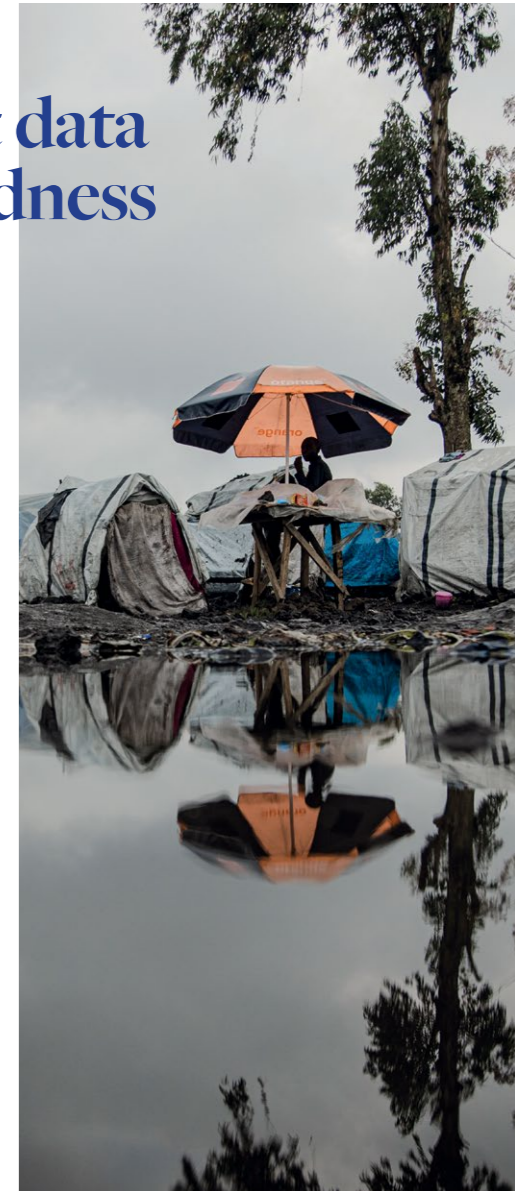
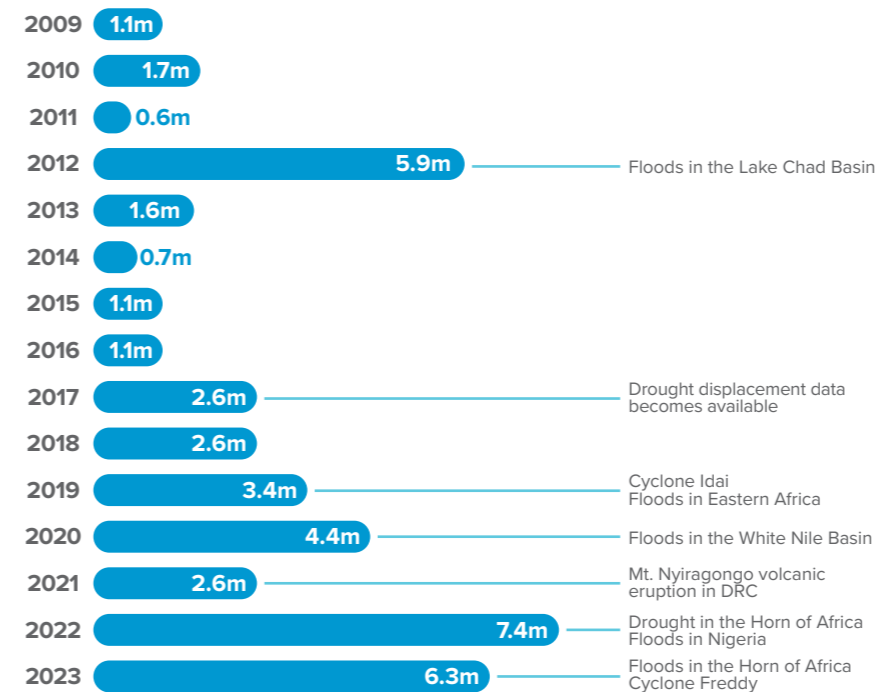
The number of internal displacements triggered by disasters has risen nearly sixfold across the continent in the last 15 years, from 1.1 million in 2009 to 6.3 million in 2023. The greater availability of data partly explains the increase, but the growing number of people exposed and vulnerable to hazards is also a significant factor. Measures including early warning, land use planning and water management will be key to lower the trend.

Nigeria has reported the highest figures, notably as a result of floods in 2012 and 2022 (see p.37). Cyclones in southern Africa, such as Idai and Freddy, also triggered significant displacements, while communities in the Horn of Africa have been forced to move by the consecutive impacts of droughts and floods (see p.41 and p.9).

Flooding in a displacement site in North Kivu province, DRC. Floods triggered more than three-quarters of Africa's disaster displacements over the past 15 years. © UNICEF/UNI470852/Benekire

Flood displacement data can inform preparedness and risk reduction

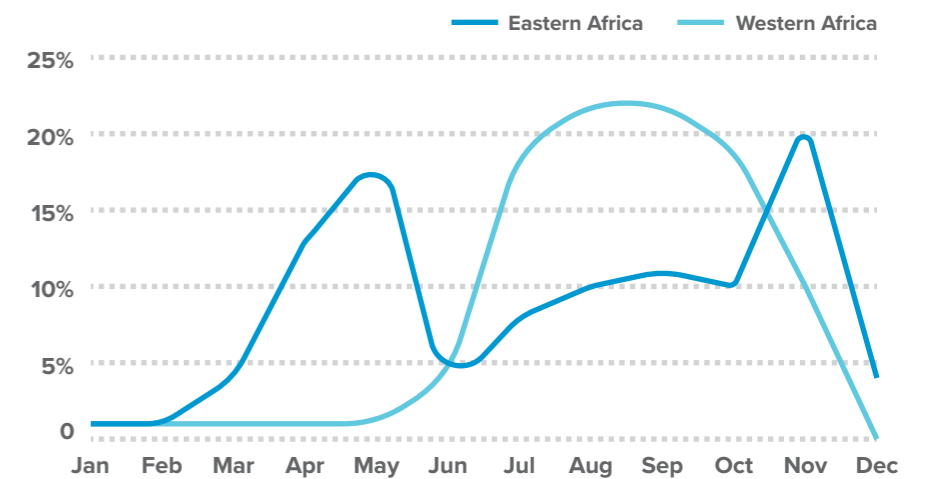
Internal displacements by disasters in Africa (2009-2023)



Floods triggered more than three-quarters of Africa's disaster displacements, and most have taken place during each region's rainy season. Most movements in eastern Africa have taken place during the *Gu* season between March and May, and the *Deyr* season between October and December. In western Africa they occurred between June and September.

Floods' seasonal nature makes them relatively predictable, which means governments and their partners can take pre-emptive action to reduce their impacts, including displacement. This includes early warning systems, national preparedness measures and local initiatives to build community resilience.

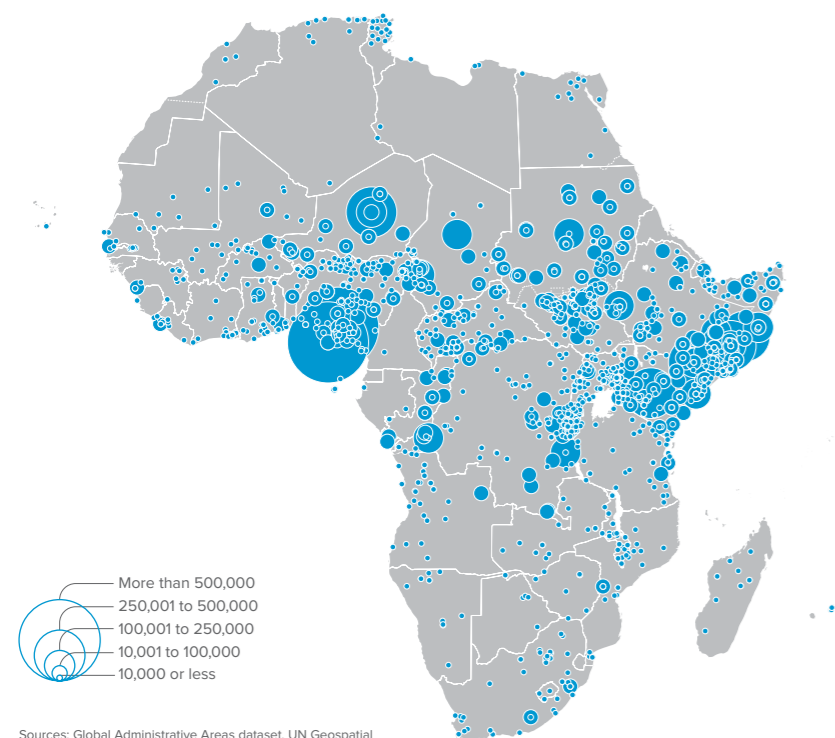
Disaster displacements often follow predictable patterns



Monthly flood displacement as a percentage of annual flood displacement (2016-2023)

The growing availability of geolocated data sheds light on the areas most affected, providing valuable insights to inform local actions that support communities at risk of new and repeated flood displacement. If data collection continues to improve, governments will be in a better position to support IDPs in overcoming their vulnerabilities, regardless of the duration or severity of their situation.

Location of flood displacement events in Africa (2018-2023)



Sources: Global Administrative Areas dataset, UN Geospatial

Flood displacement is a concern across the continent

Drought displacement data has improved, but more is needed

No sub-region of Africa has been spared severe dry spells, but the availability of data on drought displacement has been limited to a handful of countries since 2017. Better monitoring, particularly in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, has started to reveal the scale of the phenomenon and the significant impacts it has on the livelihoods of millions in rural communities who have been forced to move to urban areas (see p.19).

Despite its limitations, the data reveals that 11 per cent of Africa's disaster displacements in the last 15 years have been linked to drought, making it a significant trigger. As climate change is expected to drive more extended and severe droughts, producing more comprehensive data on the scale and impacts of displacement associated with drought and other slow-onset hazards is necessary.



A child crouches over cracked earth at al-Massira dam in Settat province, Morocco. In 2022, the country experienced its worst drought in at least four decades, but no displacement data was available. © Fadel Senna/AFP/Getty Images

Conflict and disasters often overlap, exacerbating IDPs' vulnerabilities and prolonging their displacement

In some settings, people already displaced by disasters are then affected by conflict and violence, forcing them to move again, which undermines their resilience and puts their prospect to find solutions further out of reach. Conflict also pushes people towards areas exposed and vulnerable to disasters, including informal urban settlements and displacement camps which are often flooded, forcing IDPs to move again and prolonging their plight. Disaster risk management and climate adaptation in conflict and other fragile settings are necessary to break this cycle and sustainably reduce displacement risk (see p.55).

Eastern Africa



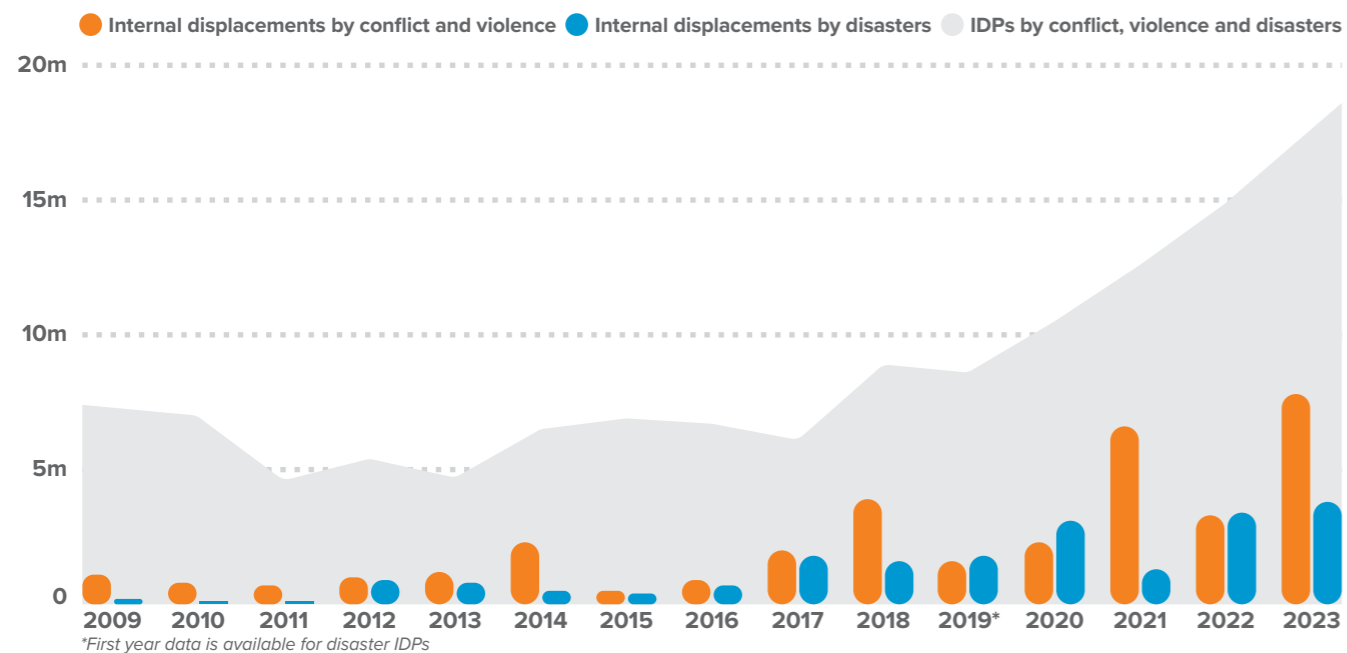
Eastern Africa recorded more internal displacements than any other sub-region between 2009 and 2023, with 56.3 million or 46 per cent of the total for the continent. Conflict and violence triggered 35.9 million movements and disasters 20.5 million. The sub-region has been the scene of some of the world's largest conflict displacement crises, including in Ethiopia's Tigray region and more recently in Sudan. Other countries, such as Somalia and South Sudan, have also experienced protracted conflict and displacement.

Compared with other sub-regions, more data on drought displacement has become available, which has helped unveil how the slow-onset hazard has overlapped with other displacement triggers, including floods and conflict, particularly in the Horn of Africa (understood here as Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya).

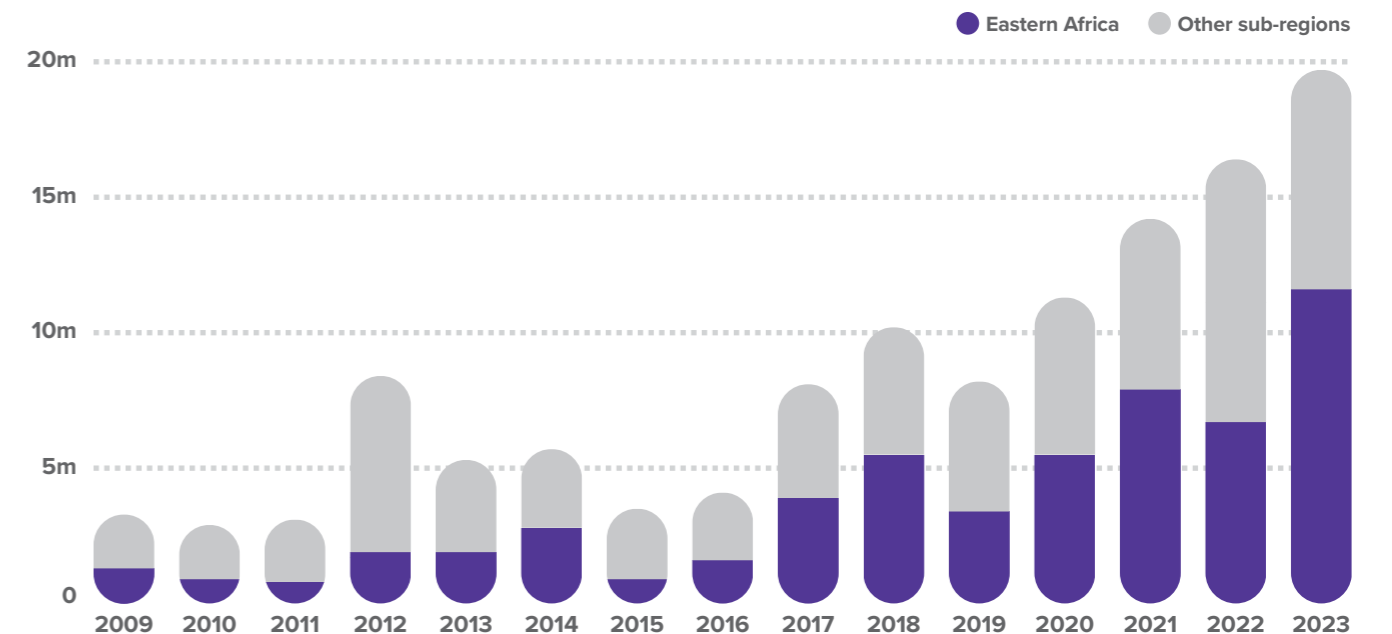


Women return to the Bentiu displacement camp in Unity state, South Sudan, to construct shelter after flooding. In the country, disasters regularly overlap with ongoing conflict, forcing displaced people to move and rebuild time and again.
© UNOCHA/Sarah Waiswa

Internal displacements by conflict, violence and disasters, and total number of IDPs in Eastern Africa (2009-2023)



Share of internal displacements in Eastern Africa against continental total (2009-2023)



Conflict and violence

Conflict and violence left 16.9 million people living in internal displacement in Eastern Africa as of the end of 2023, with Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and South Sudan accounting for more than half of the total for the continent. **Sudan** alone was hosting 9.1 million IDPs, making it the world's largest and one of the most neglected displacement crises (see spotlight, p.17).

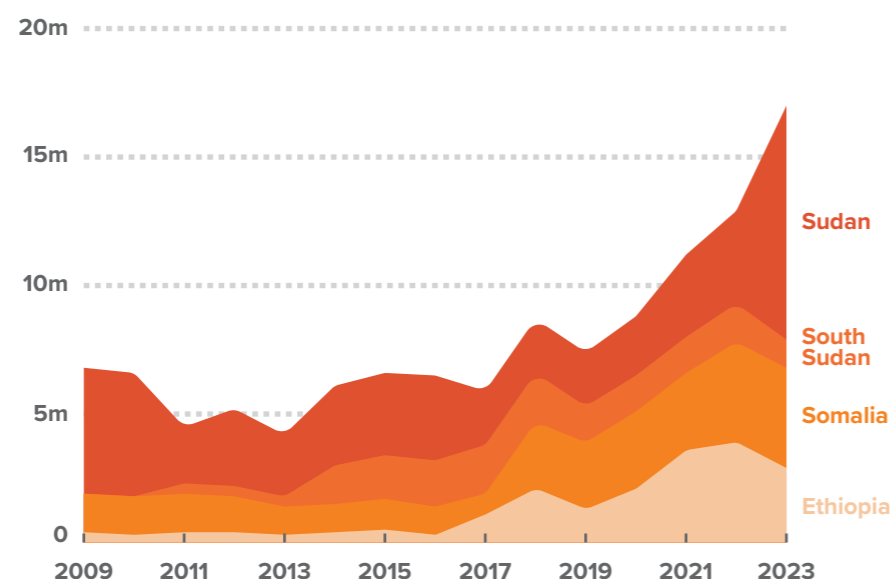
Somalia had the second highest number at nearly 3.9 million, a figure that has been rising since 2017 (see spotlight, p.19). Most displacements were in rural areas in the southern and central regions of the country, the result of attacks by Al-Shabaab and clashes between the group and the country's military and its partners, including the African Union.¹ Communal violence triggered smaller-scale displacement elsewhere in the country.

Al-Shabaab attacks also led to displacement in neighbouring **Kenya**, but communal and political violence were the main triggers. Many people were displaced by escalating clashes in the run-up to the country's 2013 general election, leaving 412,000 people living in displacement as a result of conflict and violence at the end of the year.² That figure had fallen to around 40,000 by the end of 2023.

After nearly two decades of relative calm, communal violence erupted in **Ethiopia** in April 2018 and again in June, particularly in the West Guji zone of Oromia region and the Gedeo zone of what used to be known as the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) region. This resulted in the highest number of conflict displacements globally that year, at 2.9 million movements.³

Displacement reached new heights when conflict between the Ethiopian armed forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) broke out in the Tigray region in November 2020. The fighting triggered the majority of the 5.1 million internal displacements reported country-wide in 2021, the highest annual figure ever recorded for a single country globally

IDPs by conflict and violence in the most affected countries of Eastern Africa (2009-2023)



at the time, and only surpassed since by Ukraine in 2022 and Sudan in 2023.

Initially concentrated in the region's capital of Mekelle, the conflict spread to rural areas of central, southern and western Tigray, and then to the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions. The TPLF was forced to retreat back to Tigray in December 2021, allowing many IDPs in Amhara and Afar to return.⁴ Clashes continued in Tigray for much of 2022, however, leaving nearly 3.9 million people living in displacement as a result of conflict and violence at the end of the year, a record figure for the country. The government and the TPLF signed a peace agreement in November that led to an improvement in security and allowed hundreds of thousands of people to return in 2023.⁵

While conflict in Tigray receded, conflict erupted in Amhara region that left 326,000 people living in displacement at the end of 2023, a conservative figure given access constraints.⁶ Fighting between government forces and the Oromo Liberation Army also triggered displacement in Oromia region.⁷

Efforts to resolve displacement have been made during the reporting period. A durable solutions strategy for the

Somali region, in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention, was put forward for the period of 2017-2020 and then renewed for 2022-2025.⁸ Also, A Ministry of Peace was created in 2018.⁹

The federal government also organised a series of national consultations that culminated in the ratification of the Kampala Convention in February 2020.¹⁰ Other initiatives, including peacebuilding activities to promote voluntary returns and programmes for those who preferred to integrate locally or settle elsewhere, have also been undertaken.¹¹

South Sudan has been among the ten countries most affected by conflict displacement in Africa, and had 1.1 million IDPs as of

the end of 2023. After its independence from Sudan in 2011, the country plunged into an internal conflict in 2013 that left almost 1.5 million people living in displacement at the end of the following year, a near four-fold increase in a year.

The parties to the conflict signed a revitalised peace agreement in September 2018 but there have been numerous challenges to its implementation, and communal violence, mostly between pastoralists and farmers, has continued to trigger displacement.¹² In response, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the South Sudanese government undertook consultations to launch a Durable Solutions Strategy, a promising development to support IDPs put an end to their plight.¹³



A village in South Darfur state, Sudan where many of its residents have returned after spending years in camps for internally displaced people in the country. For the last fifteen years, millions of people have been trapped in a cycle of repeated displacement.
© IOM/Muse Mohammed

Disasters

Drought and floods in the Horn of Africa

Most countries across Eastern Africa experience water stress or scarcity, and dry spells are not uncommon. Three episodes of drought particularly affected the Horn of Africa in the last 15 years, in 2011, 2017 and 2022, and the impacts on agricultural production and food security were significant. Evidence also suggests water scarcity fuels violence and competition over natural resources.¹⁴

There is widespread evidence that the 2011 drought led to food insecurity and forced people to leave their homes, with famine declared in Somalia, but no systematic monitoring of displacement was undertaken at the time.¹⁵ Humanitarian organisations started to collect data on drought displacement in 2017, and it unveiled the true scale and scope of the phenomenon. Drought triggered 1.3 million movements across Ethiopia and Somalia that year, surpassing the 1.1 million associated with conflict and violence.

Another drought between 2021 and early 2023, the worst in more than 40 years, was fuelled by a prolonged La

Niña phenomenon. It triggered 2.1 million displacements across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia in 2022. More than half of the movements were in Somalia, mostly in the southern regions of Bay, Lower Shabelle and Bakool.¹⁶ The drought continued to affect the livelihoods of pastoralists and farmers across the Horn of Africa, with six failed rainy seasons fuelling food insecurity, including among IDPs.¹⁷ In Ethiopia, it coincided with conflict in the north of the country, heightening the needs of those affected.¹⁸

Between the droughts, seasonal floods triggered significant displacement across the Horn. Evidence suggests that drought conditions aggravate the impact of the floods by reducing soil absorption capacity. As such, flood displacement can sometimes be seen as an extended impact of drought, further undermining people's resilience to climate shocks.¹⁹

Significant flood displacement was recorded in 2018, 2020 and 2023. Hundreds of thousands of movements took place across Kenya, southern Somalia and parts of the Somali and Oromia regions of Ethiopia in 2018. The floods in Kenya aggravated disease outbreaks, while IDPs who had fled drought in



Displaced people in the Badbaado II displacement site in southern Lower Juba province, Somalia. Between 2021 and early 2023, a historic drought with six consecutive failed rainy seasons hit the Horn of Africa, triggering 2.1 million displacements in 2022 alone. Half of these occurred in Somalia. © OCHA/Marc Belanger

Somalia and Ethiopia were forced to move again because their shelters were unable to withstand the floodwaters.²⁰

The onset of El Niño two years later fuelled an intense rainy season that led to 2.2 million flood displacements across the three countries. It also contributed to a locust infestation that devastated agricultural production in the midst of health concerns linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.²¹

The return of El Niño in 2023 led to floods that triggered a record 2.9 million movements, nearly a third of all flood displacements globally that year. **Somalia** accounted for 1.7 million, prompting the federal government to declare an emergency across several states. Some sites hosting IDPs were flooded in Galmudug, forcing some to flee again.²²

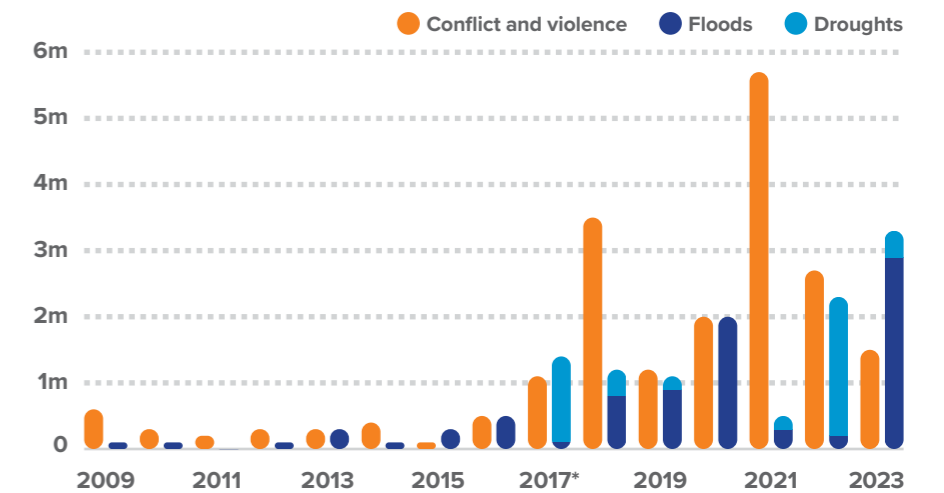
Kenya also reported its highest number of disaster displacements in 2023 at 641,000, the result of floods in the north-eastern counties of Mandera and Wajir and the eastern counties of Garissa and Tana River.²³

Ethiopia recorded 550,000 flood displacements, mostly in southern and south-eastern areas where rainfall was 300 per cent higher than average.²⁴ The Somali region



A man stands in front of a hut with water up to his knees in Tana River county, Kenya. In 2023, disaster displacement figures reached a record high in Kenya at 641,000 movements as floods hit the country's north-east. © IOM/Moses Otunga

Increasing displacements in the Horn of Africa led to Eastern Africa having the most displacements of any sub-region



Note: The graph is restricted to internal displacements caused by conflict and violence, floods and droughts in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. *First year drought data became available

Internal displacements by trigger in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia (2009-2023)

was among the most affected, followed by the South Ethiopia region (formerly SNNP). The floods also fuelled a cholera outbreak, including among IDPs.²⁵

Seasonal floods in the White Nile basin

Significant flood displacement was reported in countries along the White Nile basin, albeit on a lesser scale. Decades of significant transformation, including the irrigation of ever greater expanses of cultivated land, the construction of hydropower dams and urban expansion, have increased flood risk in the basin.²⁶

The 2020 rainy season was particularly intense, leading the White Nile and its tributaries to burst their banks, forcing some communities to flee various times. The floods triggered 966,000 movements across Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda.²⁷ **Sudan** accounted for almost half of the total with 454,000, by far the highest disaster displacement figure recorded for the country. The capital, Khartoum, which sits near the confluence of the White Nile and Blue Nile, was one of the worst hit areas as the waters in both rivers reached record levels.²⁸

In **South Sudan**, the White Nile had not fully receded from its 2019 level when the 2020 rains began. The reconstruction of homes and infrastructure had not been completed when floods hit, displacing people again, including IDPs and Sudanese refugees who were sheltering in at-risk areas. Submerged roads significantly delayed the delivery of aid.²⁹

Floods triggered an even higher number of displacements during the 2022 rainy season at 596,000. They also overlapped with conflict, as non-state armed groups (NSAGs) took advantage of the situation in Unity and Jonglei states to increase the number of checkpoints along the White Nile, looting aid convoys and extorting aid organisations.³⁰

Flooding also took place against a backdrop of conflict in Sudan in 2023, but the fighting hampered data collection, meaning the 58,000 movements recorded is likely to be a significant underestimate. The

overlap of disaster and conflict displacement was noticeable in River Nile state, which recorded the highest share of the country's flood displacements while hosting a significant number of people displaced by the conflict.³¹

Storms and drought in Madagascar

Madagascar is exposed to the south-west Indian Ocean cyclone season. This combined with poverty and vulnerability, make it one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.³² Storms, including tropical cyclones, triggered 90 per cent of the 1.4 million internal displacements in the country between 2009 and 2023. Storms Giovanna and Irina in 2012, Enawo in 2017 and Ana in 2022 triggered most movements.³³

Drought also forced people to flee. The Grand Sud region suffered its worst in four decades starting in 2019 and extended



over the next two years. It triggered around 66,000 displacements between 2019 and 2021, a conservative figure given the difficulty of monitoring the phenomenon.³⁴ Sixty per cent of the region's crops were lost in 2021, leaving millions of people severely food insecure. Many left their homes and land in search of resources further north and in cities.³⁵

The drought also reduced soil absorption capacity, aggravating the impacts of six consecutive storms and associated floods in the first quarter of 2022. These led to 291,000 displacements, the highest figure ever recorded for the country. The rapid and informal urban expansion of the capital, Antananarivo, also contributed to their impacts, given that about 700,000 people live in the capital's flood-prone informal settlements.³⁶

Disaster displacements by hazard in Eastern Africa

69% Floods

23% Droughts

8% Storms and cyclones

A flooded neighbourhood in Atsimo Andrefana region, Madagascar. The country is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries. © UNICEF/UN0845856/Andriantsoarana

Spotlight: Sudan

The world's largest displacement crisis has been mostly neglected

Before the latest conflict erupted in Sudan in April 2023, the country was already home to one of the largest and most protracted internal displacement situations globally, with 3.6 million people living in displacement. The new conflict led to an all-time high of 9.1 million IDPs as of the end of 2023, the highest figure on record for any country globally. As the crisis continued to worsen, it became one of the world's most severe and neglected, especially in the Darfur region which has seen relentless episodes of violence and displacement over the past two decades.³⁷

For the last fifteen years, millions of IDPs have been trapped in a cycle of repeated displacement, unable to put an end to their situation. As a result, Sudan has consistently been among the five countries with the highest number of IDPs by conflict and violence in Africa, and among the top ten globally.

For most of this period, the country was ruled by Omar al-Bashir, who consolidated military, political and territorial power by, among others, tapping into the grievances of and tensions between different communities. This fuelled frequent episodes of intercommunal violence which triggered displacement.³⁸

In Darfur region in particular, this led to the emergence and expansion of the Janjaweed, a government-backed armed group which perpetrated widespread crimes and triggered millions of displacements.³⁹ The extent of the

violence prompted the International Criminal Court to charge al-Bashir with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.⁴⁰

In parallel to these developments, Sudan and South Sudan split in 2011 after decades of conflict. Data gaps and a lack of clarity about the status of many people on both sides of the new border partly explain the drop in the number of IDPs between 2010 and 2011. The country still hosted the largest internally displaced population in Africa, however, with 2.2 million IDPs as of the end of 2011, of whom 1.9 million were in Darfur.⁴¹

In the years that followed, IDPs had difficulties accessing basic services, markets and livelihood opportunities, and exercising their land and property rights.⁴² The situation deteriorated in 2018 when an economic crisis further disrupted public services and agricultural activity, resulting in significant price increases for staple food items.⁴³ This in turn sparked countrywide protests, which led to the ousting of al-Bashir and the establishment of a civilian-military transitional government.⁴⁴

This pushed various NSAGs to join negotiations to build lasting peace and stability, which culminated with the signing of the Juba peace agreement in October 2020.⁴⁵ The agreement led to a reduction in fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and several NSAGs. However, some communities felt excluded from the process. Fear of losing control of land and resources led to tensions and violence in 2021, particularly in Darfur.⁴⁶

The withdrawal of the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in June that year exacerbated a security vacuum that left civilians, including IDPs, largely unprotected. Villages and displacement sites were

attacked and torched, particularly in North and West Darfur where land was contested.⁴⁷

The political situation deteriorated significantly in October 2021 after the military took control of the government.⁴⁸ Escalating violence led to a more than five-fold increase in the number of internal displacements compared with the previous year, and the number of IDPs rose by nearly 900,000 to reach 3.2 million as of the end of the year.

Disagreements, in particular over security sector reform, between the SAF and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which has its roots in the Janjaweed, led to growing tensions in 2022. The tensions reached a tipping point on 15 April 2023, when fighting broke out between the two parties.⁴⁹

Nearly two-thirds of the internal displacements recorded in 2023 were from Khartoum state, but the conflict also progressively spread to other major cities and became national in scope. The destruction of critical infrastructure concentrated in urban centres had significant repercussions for IDPs' access to basic services and livelihood opportunities.⁵⁰

Beyond Khartoum, South and North Darfur were the main states of both origin and destination for IDPs.⁵¹ Many of the 1.9 million movements recorded in the Darfur region during the year involved people already living in protracted displacement and facing significant vulnerabilities. Camps hosting IDPs suffered large-scale attacks by the RSF and other NSAGs which targeted civilians along communal lines.⁵²

By the end of 2023, Darfur was home to 4.6 million IDPs, more than half of the country's total. The region alone had the second highest number of IDPs in Africa after the Democratic Republic of

the Congo (see spotlight, p.29). Countrywide, nearly 20 per cent of Sudan's population was internally displaced and 1.5 million people had fled the country.⁵³

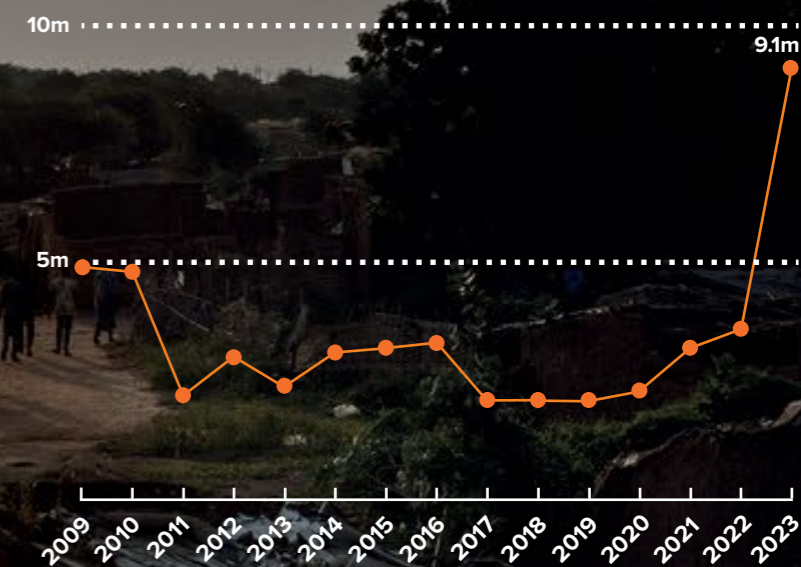
Despite its scale and severity, Sudan has been labelled one of the world's most neglected crises for the last three years.⁵⁴ Without more effective diplomacy and humanitarian responses, the crisis is bound to worsen.⁵⁵ Ending the hostilities would be an evident first step, but resolving longstanding land and property issues and meaningfully including marginalised communities and IDPs in conflict resolution and peacebuilding will also be essential.

The Darfur region hosted more than half of the country's IDPs by the end of 2023



Sources: Global Administrative Areas dataset, UN Geospatial

Number of IDPs by conflict and violence in Sudan (2009-2023)



- 2011: Separation of Sudan and South Sudan
- 2019: End of rule of Omar al-Bashir
- 2020: Adoption of the Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan
Mandate of UNAMID ends
- 2021: Military takeover of the government
- 2023: New wave of conflict

The Otash Camp for internally displaced persons in South Darfur, Sudan state. With 9.1 million people living in internal displacement as of the end of 2023, Sudan has become the world's largest internal displacement crisis.

Spotlight: Somalia

Conflict, drought and floods combine to fuel rural to urban displacement

A combination of protracted conflict and repeated drought and floods have led to an increase in internal displacement in Somalia since 2009. The country has consistently been among the ten countries with the highest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) globally and among the five highest in Africa. Its figures more than doubled in 15 years, from 1.5 million in 2009 to 3.9 million in 2023, in a country with a population of fewer than 20 million.⁵⁶ During this period, displacement patterns have been mainly rural to urban, driving significant demographic and socioeconomic changes.⁵⁷

Conflict and violence, mainly associated with attacks by Al-Shabaab in rural areas in the southern and central regions of the country, have been major triggers of displacement. The number of movements has fluctuated over the years, but it has risen since 2019 to reach a record figure of 673,000 in 2023.⁵⁸

Some of the violence has been fuelled by increasingly severe droughts, notably in 2011, 2017 and 2022. These have undermined the resilience of rural communities and driven competition for land and natural resources.⁵⁹ Seasonal floods add another layer of complexity, and although they have the potential to counterbalance the impacts of failed rainy seasons, this is often not the case. Because drought damages vegetation, which in turn reduces soil absorption capacity, heavy rains increase the risk of flash floods without replenishing groundwater.⁶⁰

Droughts and floods together have triggered more displacement than conflict and violence since 2017, and they often

affect the same locations and communities. The interaction of these drivers and triggers is complex, but displacement and food insecurity have been some of the main outcomes, heightening the vulnerabilities and needs of both displaced and non-displaced communities.⁶¹ The situation among agro-pastoralists is of particular concern. Their livelihoods have been severely undermined by the loss of crops, livestock and grazing land, forcing them to move to urban areas in search of safety and humanitarian assistance.⁶²

Some IDPs have found new livelihoods and protection in urban areas, but cities are not necessarily safe havens for many.⁶³ Displacement from rural areas has fuelled informal urban expansion, which risks aggravating the marginalisation and inequalities that drive conflict and violence. Women and children, who make up at least two-thirds of Somalia's IDPs, have faced particular protection issues including gender-based violence.⁶⁴ Nor have cities been spared from Al-Shabaab attacks.

Often lacking formal land tenure and protection from their clans, many IDPs have been evicted or subjected to harassment and other forms of violence, forcing them to move again.⁶⁵ Evictions reached a peak in 2017 after a large influx of people fled conflict and violence as well as a severe drought, mainly to Mogadishu. Coordinated prevention efforts, a moratorium on evictions and the formalisation of lease agreements in displacement sites have since helped to reduce the scale of the issue.⁶⁶

Informal urban expansion has also driven up flood displacement risk. Often living in shelters unable to withstand heavy rains and floods in areas without adequate water management, many IDPs have been pushed into secondary urban displacement.⁶⁷ The flood-prone city of Beledweyne in Hiraan region is a case in point. Nearly a third of all disaster displacements associated with the Deyr and Gu rainy seasons in Beledweyne in 2023 involved IDPs forced to move again.⁶⁸

Local integration has been challenging for many pastoralists, who need to adapt their skills to their new urban environments. With only limited development planning and funding available, dependence on humanitarian assistance is a real concern.⁶⁹ Rural to urban displacement has also undermined agricultural production, aggravating food insecurity.⁷⁰ Given that more Somalis are expected to be living in urban than rural areas by 2026, and that the agricultural sector accounts for 70 per cent of the country's GDP, internal displacement is likely to have long-lasting effects on Somalia's socioeconomic development.⁷¹

Breaking the cycle

Many initiatives have been put in place in recent years in an effort to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement in Somalia. The country ratified the Kampala Convention in 2019, an important step to guide solutions programming.⁷² A Durable Solutions Unit was also created within the Ministry of Planning, Investments and Economic Development (MPIED) in the same year, and as part of it, a Durable Solutions Secretariat.⁷³

The country's 2020-2024 National Development Plan acknowledges the high levels of poverty and vulnerability IDPs face and includes elements to respond to their needs, and the government also developed a National Durable Solutions Strategy for the same period.⁷⁴

MPIED leads the Durable Solutions Progress Survey, which began in 2024, in coordination with federal and local authorities, IOM-DTM and the Danwadaag Consortium.⁷⁵ The survey, which is conducted in the urban centres that host most of the country's IDPs, measures progress towards solutions at the neighbourhood level by assessing the comparative needs of IDPs and host communities to inform government-led interventions.

The role of local stakeholders in developing programmes to improve IDPs' livelihood opportunities and address their displacement-related vulnerabilities

has been key. In Mogadishu, the Banadir regional authority has worked with the UN and the private sector to create a durable solutions unit that supports employment creation and entrepreneurship programmes.⁷⁶

The production of comprehensive and timely displacement data plays a key role in shaping such initiatives. The IDP Working Group has established a much more accurate evidence base on displacement dynamics by producing more harmonised, interoperable and disaggregated data that informs policy and operational responses.⁷⁷ Such data also feeds into emerging drought displacement modelling to inform preventive measures and anticipatory action.⁷⁸

Discussions have been held about creating a nationally owned statistical system on internal displacement within the National Bureau of Statistics. Supported by several international partners, including the Joint IDP Profiling Service, the system would follow the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS) put forward by the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS).⁷⁹ This initiative would enhance government ownership of displacement data systems, which in turn would help to structure prevention, response and durable solutions measures.

The Ladan displacement site in Dolow region, Somalia. The number of people living in internal displacement in the country has more than doubled in 15 years, from 1.5 million in 2009 to 3.9 million in 2023. © IOM/Raber Aziz

Central Africa



Central Africa is home to some of the largest internally displaced populations on the continent. There were nearly 9.1 million IDPs as of the end of 2023, the highest figure for the sub-region in the last 15 years. The overwhelming majority were displaced by conflict and violence, particularly in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (see spotlight, p.29).

The Lake Chad basin is another conflict displacement hotspot where significant new and repeated movements have been recorded within and between Cameroon's Far North region, Chad's Lac province, Niger's Diffa region and Nigeria's Borno state (for more information on Niger and Nigeria, see Western Africa overview, p.31).

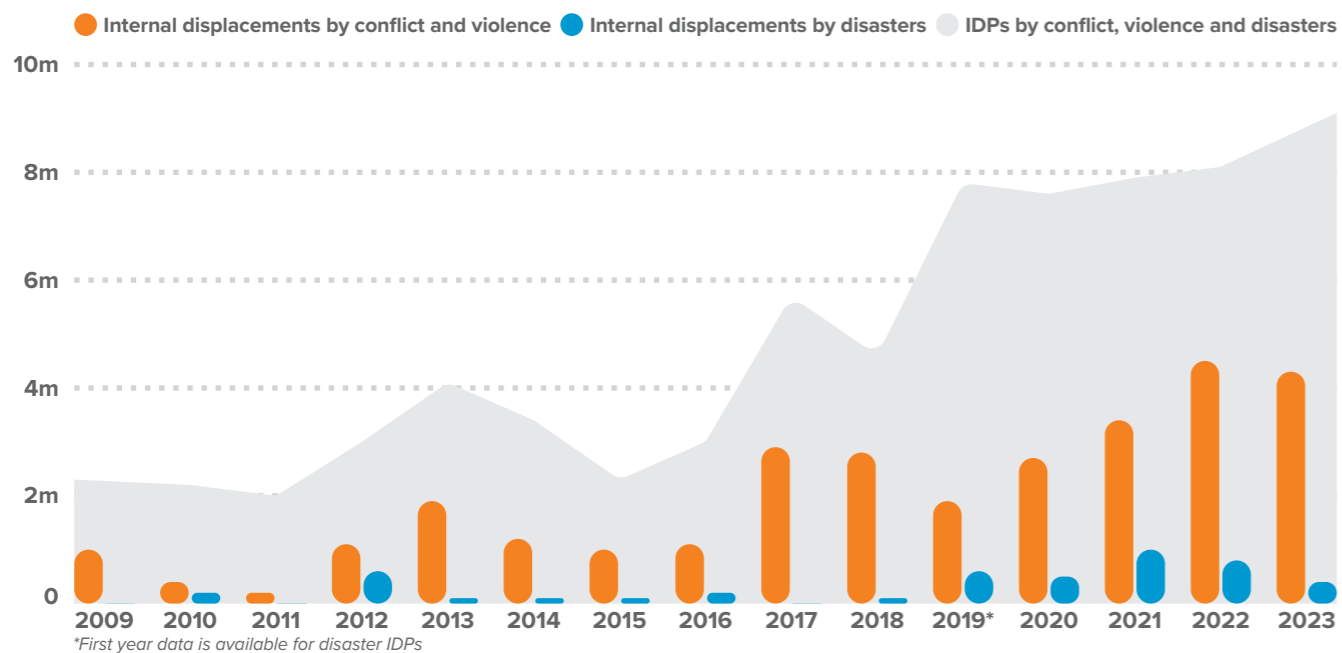
Even in those countries where the number of annual movements has fallen in recent years, such as Cameroon and the Central African Republic (CAR), the number of people living in internal displacement as a result of conflict and violence has remained high, pointing to the challenges inherent to achieving durable solutions.

Floods triggered more than three-quarters of the 4.7 million disaster displacements recorded in the sub-region between 2009 and 2023. DRC and Chad were the most affected, but no countries were spared. An eruption of DRC's Mount Nyiragongo in 2021 also triggered nearly 600,000 movements. This and other disasters forced some people who had already fled conflict and violence to move again, illustrating the overlapping impacts of the two triggers.

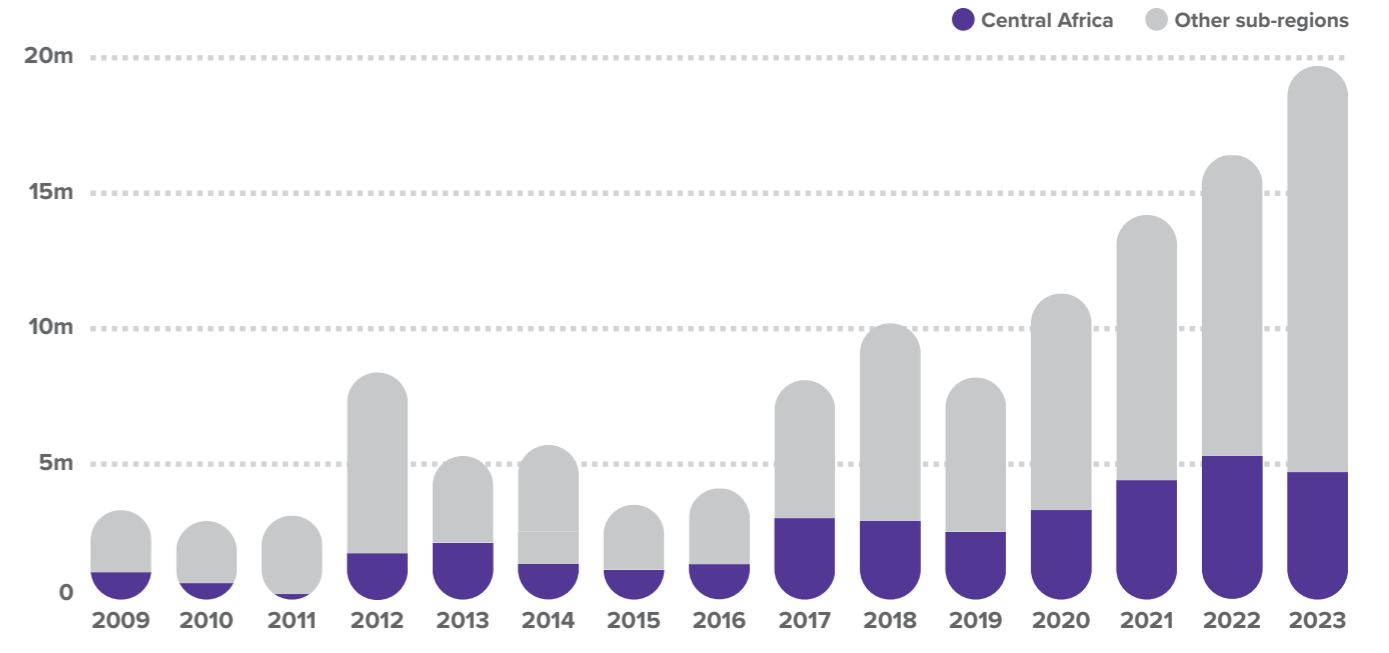


A girl walks through a camp for internally displaced people in Ouaka prefecture, Central African Republic. The number of people living in internal displacement in Central Africa has more than doubled in the past decade, and finding durable solutions remains challenging. © UNICEF/UN0239504/Gilbertson VII Photo

Internal displacements by conflict, violence and disasters, and total number of IDPs in Central Africa (2009-2023)



Share of internal displacements in Central Africa against continental total (2009-2023)



Conflict and violence

DRC has recorded the highest cumulative number of internal displacements in Africa and globally over the last 15 years, but determining the true scale of the phenomenon is challenging. The data available shows a rising trend, mostly the result of persistent conflict in the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu.

Tensions between local customary leaders and the central government also escalated into conflict in the Greater Kasai region in 2016-2017. More than 488,000 displacements were recorded in 2017, pushing the country-wide number of IDPs by conflict and violence up to 2.2 million at the end of that year.⁸⁰

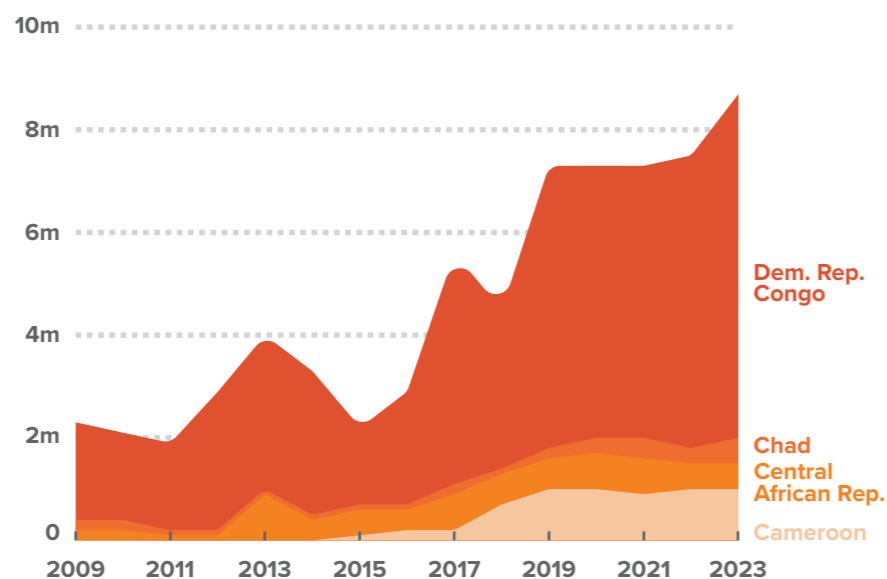
The conflict has since abated and some IDPs have been able to return, but many have faced food insecurity and challenges in re-establishing their livelihoods.⁸¹ The absence of comprehensive data on their conditions hampers full understanding of the extent to which they have been able to bring their displacement to a sustainable end.

Food insecurity has been on the rise across the country, particularly in the eastern provinces.⁸² Ebola, measles and cholera outbreaks have also taken place, sometimes affecting IDPs, who have limited access to healthcare.⁸³

Cameroon had the second-highest number of people in the sub-region living in displacement as a result of conflict and violence as of the end of 2023 at more than a million, including 422,000 in the Far North region. Boko Haram attacks, which began in 2014, triggered most of the movements. People were forced to flee repeatedly, both internally and into Nigeria and Chad. The Logone-et-Chari, Mayo-Sava and Mayo-Tsanaga departments along the border with Nigeria were the most affected in 2023.⁸⁴

The Northwest and Southwest regions have been another conflict displacement hotspot, particularly since 2016 when protests by the English-speaking minority

IDPs by conflict and violence in the most affected countries of Central Africa (2009-2023)



over grievances of discrimination and marginalisation erupted into conflict. Non-state armed groups (NSAGs) calling for independence started to fight the military, triggering significant displacement, particularly since 2018.⁸⁵ Many IDPs sought refuge in the West and Littoral regions.⁸⁶

Education lies at the heart of the conflict, and displaced and non-displaced children alike have had theirs disrupted. NSAGs have banned formal schools which use curricula in French from reopening, burned some down, and threatened others which do not comply with the ban.⁸⁷

The Northwest region was home to 114,000 IDPs as of the end of 2023, the Southwest region 169,000, the West region 189,000 and the Littoral region 80,000. It is unclear how many of them were displaced by causes other than this conflict. IDPs' needs have largely been unaddressed across all affected regions, making Cameroon one of the world's most neglected displacement crises.⁸⁸

Conflict and violence also caused a sharp increase in the number of IDPs in neighbouring **Chad**, from 90,000 at the

end of 2018 to 452,000 at the end of 2023. Around half of them were living in protracted displacement in the Lac province in the Lake Chad Basin, bordering Nigeria's Borno state and Cameroon's Far North region, where Boko Haram and other NSAGs are active.⁸⁹

Displacement data only became available for the Lac province in 2019, when about 52,000 movements were recorded. That figure reached 92,000 by 2023 as NSAGs continued to operate across borders, conducting attacks, kidnappings and extortion that forced whole communities to flee, often repeatedly.⁹⁰ Communal violence has also triggered displacement in the province, driven by a complex set of factors including competition over natural resources and socioeconomic vulnerability.⁹¹

Other provinces in central and southern Chad have been increasingly affected by communal violence too, mostly between

pastoralists and farmers, which has forced people to flee.⁹²

The humanitarian response to the internal displacement situation in Chad has been complicated by conflict and violence in Sudan's Darfur region, which have led to a significant inflow of refugees over the years. The conflict that erupted in Sudan in April 2023 also prompted around 136,000 Chadians refugees to return from Sudan, but they came back to a situation of internal displacement.⁹³

In the **Central African Republic (CAR)**, conflict displacement increased sharply in 2013, when a NSAG known as Séléka overthrew the president in March that year. A coalition of NSAGs known as the Anti-balaka formed to fight Séléka, triggering a cycle of revenge attacks.⁹⁴ Around 935,000 people were living in displacement by the end of 2013, the highest figure ever recorded for the country. The figure is partly explained by



Two women on their way to sell wood at the market in Far North region, Cameroon. With over one million people living in internal displacement due to conflict and violence as of the end of 2023, Cameroon is the country with the second highest number in Central Africa. © UNICEF/UN0335762/Bindra

the fighting that took place in the capital, Bangui, where more than 512,000 people were displaced.⁹⁵ As a result, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has been deployed since 2014 to help the government improve security.⁹⁶

Conflict and displacement continued, however, and despite a peace deal facilitated by the African Union in February 2019, the security situation deteriorated at the end of 2020 when electoral violence broke out. This was aggravated by the emergence of a new alliance of NSAGs, the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), which united several signatories to the 2019 peace deal.⁹⁷ The group clashed with government forces and its international partners, which led to a significant increase in displacement, particularly in 2021.⁹⁸

Returns, including from abroad, have taken place, but given the ongoing insecurity, many have not been sustainable.⁹⁹ Even in relatively safe parts of the country, villages often lack basic infrastructure and long-term economic opportunities. Many homes have also been damaged, destroyed or occupied, hampering returnees to re-establish their lives and livelihoods.¹⁰⁰ Around 512,000 people were still internally displaced by conflict and violence across the country at the end of 2023.

Conflict and violence have also triggered displacement in other countries in the sub-region over the last 15 years, albeit on a lesser scale. In the **Republic of Congo**, a NSAG known as the Ninja re-emerged in Pool department in 2016 and conducted attacks against government infrastructure and security forces. The conflict escalated



A small handmade ball in Makamba province, Burundi. Since 2015, the number of people living in internal displacement in the country has been gradually decreasing as some people have been able to return.
© UNICEF/UNI201440/Nijimbere

in 2017 after a contested election, leaving around 108,000 people internally displaced as of the end of that year.¹⁰¹ All IDPs were reported as having achieved solutions in the following years.¹⁰²

Before political violence erupted in **Burundi** in 2015, the country was home to more than 77,000 IDPs, most of whom had fled the country's 1993-2005 civil war.¹⁰³ The violence, fuelled by grievances over the re-election for a third term of the then president Pierre Nkurunziza, left 99,000 people living in displacement as of the end of 2015.¹⁰⁴ Most have since been able to return, bringing the figure down to 8,000 at the end of 2023, half of whom were in the cities of Bujumbura Mairie and Muyinga.¹⁰⁵



Displaced children play in the Rhoie displacement site in Ituri province, DRC. The country has had the highest number of internal displacements in Africa and globally over the last fifteen years, most triggered by persisting conflict in its eastern provinces. © UNICEF/UNI443384/Benekire

Disasters

Disasters, particularly floods, triggered 4.7 million internal displacements across Central Africa between 2009 and 2023, with **DRC** accounting for more than half of the total. The capital, Kinshasa, is home to millions of vulnerable people living in informal settlements, some of whom are forced to flee when the Congo river bursts its banks. This happened in 2015 and 2022, when floods triggered 104,000 and 200,000 movements, respectively.¹⁰⁶

Significant flood displacements have also been recorded in the Great Lakes region, particularly around Lake Tanganyika, where deforestation on the banks of the lake and rapid urbanisation, including the growth of informal settlements linked to the arrival of people fleeing conflict, have increased people's exposure and vulnerability to floods and landslides.¹⁰⁷ Several territories, including the city of Uvira in South Kivu, was flooded during a particularly intense rainy season fuelled by El Niño in 2020, which triggered an estimated 176,000 movements.¹⁰⁸

Further 217,000 flood displacements were reported across Tanganyika province in the first half of 2021.¹⁰⁹ An additional 36,000 displacements were reported in neighbouring **Burundi** as the country's economic capital of Bujumbura and its surroundings were flooded in May.¹¹⁰

The sub-region's most significant disaster displacement event of the past 15 years was the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in the DRC in May 2021, when many people displaced by conflict and violence were forced to flee again. The volcano destroyed more than 4,000 homes and triggered almost 600,000 movements, mostly in Goma, the capital of North Kivu. Government evacuations accounted for around two-thirds of the total.¹¹¹ The event triggered the highest number of displacements associated with volcanic eruptions globally since data became available in 2008 and the highest number of disaster displacements in Africa in 2021.

The combined impacts of conflict and disasters have been particularly severe in North Kivu. They complicated the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and Ebola outbreaks, and have aggravated the province's already high levels of food insecurity.¹¹²

Chad is the second-most affected country by flood displacement in Central Africa. The largest event took place in 2012 when a severe rainy season led several rivers to burst their banks, triggering around 500,000 movements. Central, eastern and southern parts of the country were inundated, including large areas south of the capital, N'Djamena, which is traversed



A market in N'Djamena region, Chad stands under floodwaters. The country is the second-most affected by flood displacement in Central Africa. © UNOCHA/Pierre Peron

by the Chari river. The floods destroyed around 96,000 houses and hundreds of thousands of hectares of cultivated land, heightening food insecurity. The floodwaters also impeded humanitarian access to thousands of people already displaced by conflict and violence.¹¹³

Heavy rainfall broke dikes and led to extensive flooding again ten years later, triggering 158,000 displacements and prompting the government to declare a state of emergency.¹¹⁴ The Chari and Logone rivers burst their banks, flooding a quarter of N'Djamena.¹¹⁵ Almost 57,000 houses were destroyed, and local authorities sheltered those displaced across 20

sites.¹¹⁶ Many were overcrowded, however, leading to the growth of informal settlements in flood-prone areas.¹¹⁷

Other Central African countries recorded spikes in flood displacements during particularly heavy rainy seasons, often associated with the onset of El Niño. This was the case in 2019 across **CAR** and the departments of Cuvette, Likouala, Plateaux and Sangha in the **Republic of Congo**.¹¹⁸

Disaster displacements by hazard in Central Africa

80% Floods



13% Volcanic eruptions



6% Storms and cyclones



1% Others

Spotlight: Eastern DRC

A displacement hotspot

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been the country most affected by internal displacement associated with conflict and violence in Africa in the last fifteen years and among the most affected globally. Around 6.7 million people were living in displacement at the end of 2023 as a result of conflict and violence, including 5.1 million in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. Their living conditions have become increasingly dire and the lack of peace and security limits their prospect of achieving solutions.

The number of IDPs has more than tripled in 15 years, and displacement has become increasingly repeated and protracted, fuelling one of the world's most complex humanitarian crises. The challenges are significant, and persistent data gaps make it difficult to build a solid baseline on the scope and scale of the phenomenon.

Long-standing socioeconomic vulnerability, coupled with intercommunal tensions, have led to the emergence and consolidation of more than 120 non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in eastern DRC, including the March 23 Movement (M23), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO). These groups have fought among themselves, with government forces (FARDC), the UN stabilisation mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and regional forces from the Eastern and Southern African regional economic communities.¹¹⁹

Over the last fifteen years, most displacements have been reported in **North Kivu**, where the M23 has been most active. The group briefly captured the provincial capital of Goma in 2012, forcing 140,000 people to flee in a week.¹²⁰ Government and MONUSCO forces retook the city soon after, and a peace agreement followed with the demobilisation of M23 fighters.¹²¹

The situation remained fragile, however, and other local events continued to trigger displacement.¹²² Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration challenges, coupled with economic and mining interests, led to the M23's re-emergence in 2021 and a significant rise in violence and displacement, most recently in Masisi, Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories.¹²³

The situation in North Kivu has attracted most attention. However, while comparable in severity, the displacement situations in Ituri and South Kivu have been mostly neglected.¹²⁴

After being embroiled in conflict between 1999 and 2007, **Ituri** enjoyed relative peace and stability for a decade, but communal violence reignited in December 2017 during a national political crisis.¹²⁵ Violence and insecurity hampered access to fields and markets, undermining the livelihoods and food security of millions of people in a province where almost 70 per cent of the population rely on the sale of agricultural products as their primary source of income.¹²⁶

The re-emergence and expansion of the M23 in 2021 and 2022 meant government forces moved from Ituri to North Kivu, leaving a security vacuum that the ADF and other NSAGs took advantage of to increase their attacks, triggering further displacement and heightening IDPs' humanitarian needs.¹²⁷

South Kivu has also been the scene of communal violence and armed conflict. In 2019, for example, 401,000 displacements were reported after an escalation of violence, mainly in Mwenga and Fizi territories.¹²⁸ People fleeing violence in North Kivu have moved to South Kivu over the years, putting pressure on already stretched host communities and aggravating the needs of displaced and non-displaced communities.¹²⁹

Access constraints and a lack of interoperable data make it difficult to paint a full picture of the longer-term patterns and trends of internal displacement in DRC, but it is clear that the phenomenon has increased over the past five years. Millions of movements have been recorded each year, many of which have involved IDPs forced to flee again.

Many resort to short-term and short-distance pendular movements as an initial coping strategy, switching between their places of origin and refuge in search of security and aid without abandoning their land.¹³⁰ As conflict and insecurity persist, however, the exhaustion of resources eventually forces both displaced and host communities to abandon their agricultural livelihoods and head towards larger towns and cities. Many IDPs have sought refuge in Goma, where most humanitarian aid is concentrated, straining the already-scarce resources in the city.¹³¹

Others are widely dispersed across large rural areas where aid agencies struggle to access them given their remoteness, movement restrictions, and damages to roads by attacks and floods.¹³² Displacement has been difficult to monitor as a result, leaving important information gaps to guide a comprehensive response. More than 80 per cent of IDPs in the eastern provinces lacked access to humanitarian aid in 2023, and the figure was as high as 90 per cent in North Kivu.¹³³

Over 3/4 of all conflict IDPs in the DRC live in the Eastern provinces



Sources: Global Administrative Areas dataset, UN Geospatial

The security architecture to respond to the crisis that has unfolded in eastern DRC underwent significant changes at the end of 2023. MONUSCO started its withdrawal in December after being present in the country since 1999.¹³⁴ Eastern African Community forces also disengaged after one year of presence on the ground, and Southern African Development Community forces started their mission.¹³⁵

Mandated to support the government in providing security and protecting civilians, these initiatives have not been enough to stem the violence against civilians. IDPs continue to be attacked and forced into repeated displacement. The situation is deteriorating, and displacement is taking place across all three provinces, sometimes overlapping with disasters.¹³⁶



A displaced woman stands amidst rubbish at the Lushagala displacement site in North Kivu province, DRC. Across the country, the number of people living in internal displacement has more than tripled in 15 years. © UNICEF/UNI480903/Vigné

Western Africa



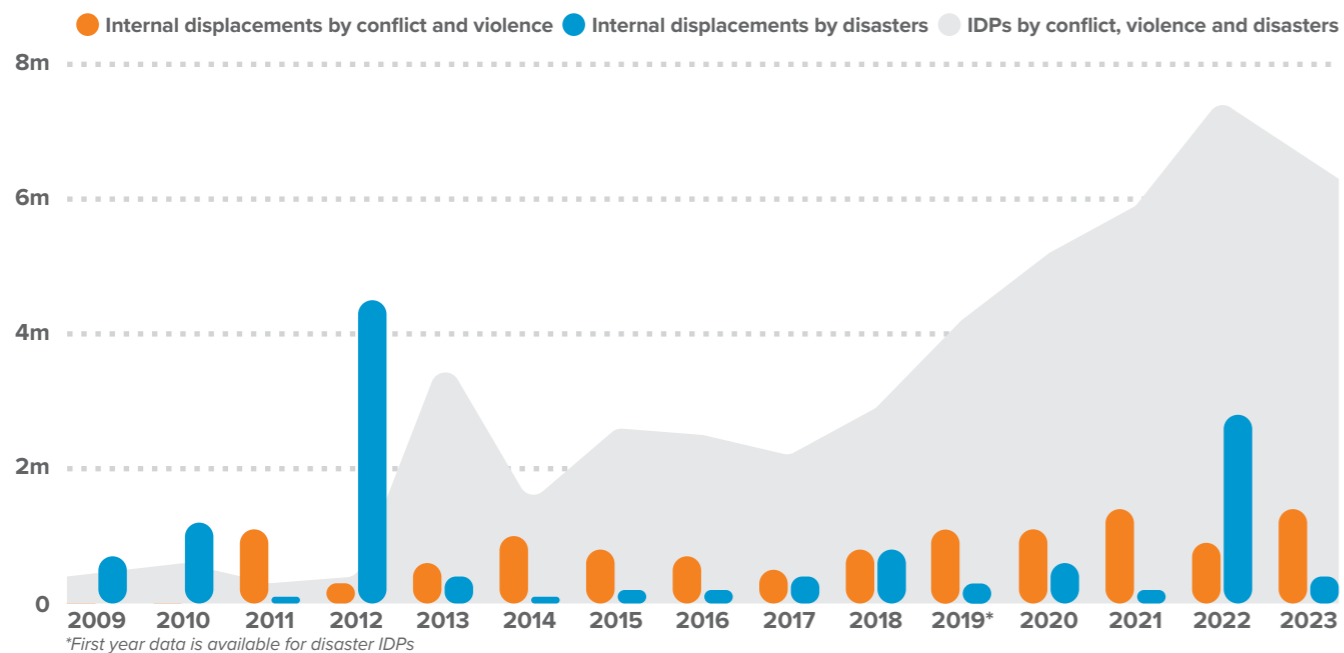
Around 24.3 million internal displacements were recorded in Western Africa between 2009 and 2023. Conflict and violence accounted for 11.6 million, most of which were associated with Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in the Central Sahel also recorded significant figures. Burkina Faso has been one of the continent's fastest growing internal displacement situations since conflict escalated there in 2018 (see spotlight, p.39)

Disasters, particularly floods, triggered 12.7 million movements. Nigeria recorded the highest figure with 8.7 million, three-quarters of which were associated with two severe rainy seasons in 2012 and 2022, becoming the largest disaster displacement events in Africa in the last fifteen years (see spotlight, p.37). Many data gaps on disaster displacement remain across the sub-region, however, making overall figures conservative.

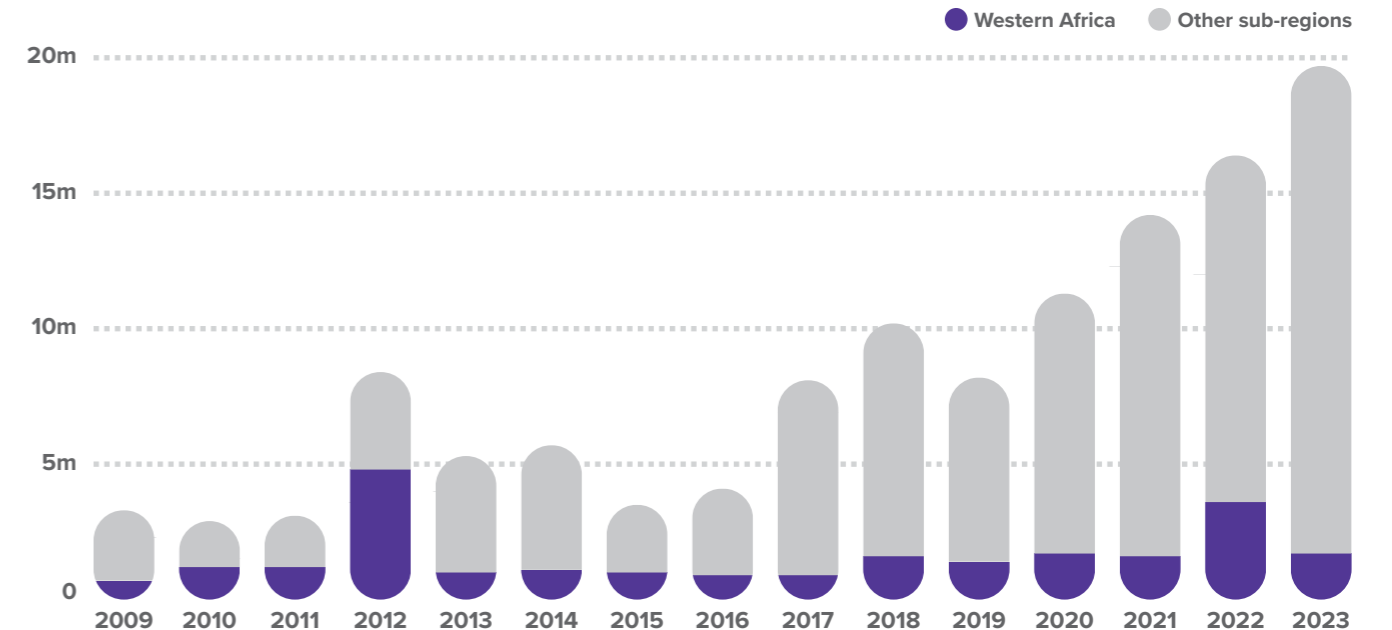


A displaced woman outside her makeshift shelter in Diffa region, Niger. Since early 2015, attacks from Boko Haram and other non-state armed groups have displaced communities in neighbouring Nigeria, and in recent years also in Niger. © IOM/Amenda Nero

Internal displacements by conflict, violence and disasters, and total number of IDPs in Western Africa (2009-2023)



Share of internal displacements in Western Africa against continental total (2009-2023)



Conflict and violence

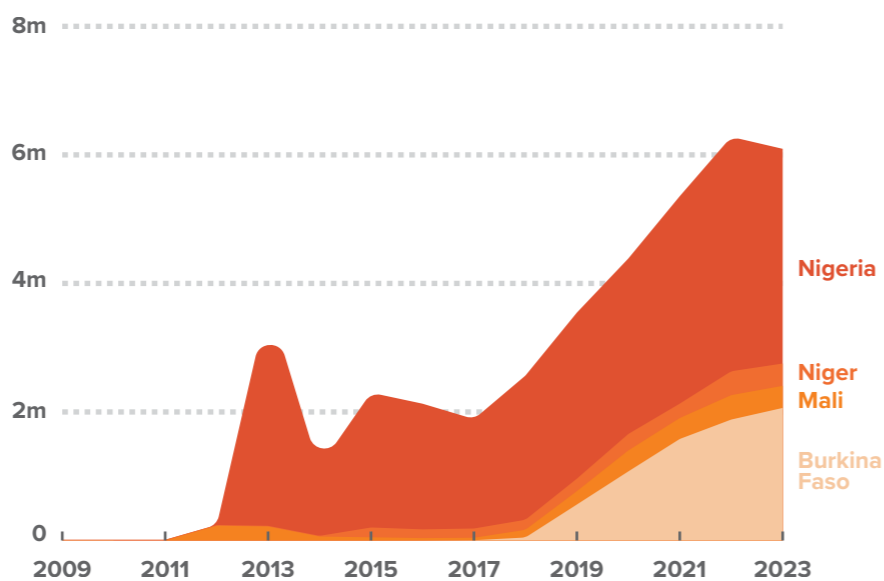
Internal displacement by conflict and violence is a highly contextual phenomenon, and its drivers, patterns and impacts vary significantly from the Lake Chad Basin to Central Sahel, but there are also some similarities. The violence and displacement have happened in porous border areas, where non-state armed groups (NSAGs), some of which are associated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group, have tapped into local grievances, including the marginalisation of mainly rural communities, to recruit youth or coerce them into joining their ranks.¹³⁷

Different waves of conflict and violence have resulted in some of Africa's largest displacement situations, and a combination of political instability and underdevelopment continue to fuel insecurity and make both internal and cross-border displacement repeated and protracted.¹³⁸ Humanitarian access constraints have been significant in many areas, hampering the delivery of much-needed aid and the collection of data, making overall displacement figures conservative.¹³⁹

Nigeria has been most affected, particularly since 2012 when Boko Haram, one of the most prominent NSAGs in the country, increased its attacks against civilians in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states.¹⁴⁰ The escalating violence led to a sharp increase in displacement in 2013 and even more so in 2014, when 975,000 movements were recorded, the highest conflict displacement figure ever for the country.

Displacement continued in the following years, albeit on a lesser scale, and in the absence of durable solutions, the number of people living in displacement continued to increase. The destruction of homes and insecurity in areas of origin were among the main barriers to people's return. Limited access to services and assistance in host areas also remained a key challenge.¹⁴¹ The Borno state authorities launched a return strategy in 2018 that laid out the objectives and principles

IDPs by conflict and violence in the most affected countries of Western Africa (2009-2023)



for IDPs' dignified and voluntary return.¹⁴² Initiatives to close camps and support returns began, but some took place against a backdrop of continued insecurity in some areas, raising concerns about IDPs' protection and the sustainability of some returns.¹⁴³

A National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, which includes provisions to resolve the plight of people displaced by conflict and violence, was also adopted in 2021.¹⁴⁴ As of the end of 2023, however, 3.3 million people were still living in displacement in Nigeria, more than half of them in Borno state.

While a decade ago most displacements in the country were associated with conflict, particularly in the north-east, clashes between herders and farmers have since become more common in north-western and north-central states. Criminal violence has also increased in the same areas. The two types of violence between them triggered nearly three-quarters of the 291,000 displacements recorded in 2023.¹⁴⁵

Boko Haram and other NSAGs started to conduct attacks in neighbouring **Niger** in early 2015, particularly in the Diffa region. Disputes over land, mainly between herders and farmers, has also triggered

displacement, an issue aggravated by soil erosion and desertification.¹⁴⁶ Displacement has overlapped with food insecurity, malnutrition and epidemics.¹⁴⁷ Around 157,000 people were living in internal displacement in Diffa at the end of 2023, almost half of the national total.

Communal disputes between herders and farmers have also been reported in other regions of the country, such as in Maradi, where violence has spread from Nigeria, and NSAG attacks have forced people to flee in the Tahoua and Tillabéri regions bordering Mali and Burkina Faso.¹⁴⁸

Internal displacement has increased sharply in **Burkina Faso** since 2018, and the situation was deemed the world's most neglected displacement crisis for the second year in a row in 2023. At least 707,000 movements were recorded in 2023 and 2.1 million people were living in displacement as of the end of the year (see spotlight, p.39).¹⁴⁹ Escalating attacks against civilians has been a major trigger

of displacement, especially in the Centre-North, East, North and Sahel provinces. The insecurity and a shrinking humanitarian space mean many people have moved repeatedly in search of protection and assistance.¹⁵⁰

An insurgency in northern **Mali** spread in 2012.¹⁵¹ The resulting increase in conflict and violence triggered 227,000 internal displacements that year. NSAGs regrouped in the arid north and expanded into the fertile centre of the country, gaining ground by recruiting from pastoralist communities who also clashed with farmers over land and resources.¹⁵²

The government signed a peace agreement with a number of NSAGs in 2015, which led to a reduction in conflict and displacement between 2014 and 2017.¹⁵³ However, the agreement's implementation was slow, and conflict reignited in 2018, triggering 126,000 displacements, a more than three-fold increase compared with the previous year.

Figures then doubled in 2019 and remained high during the following years, as insecurity increased in a climate of political instability accentuated by a military takeover in May 2021.¹⁵⁴ Clashes between NSAGs triggered significant displacement, as did intercommunal violence, notably in the Timbuktu, Mopti and Gao regions.

French troops and UN peacekeepers withdrew from the country between 2021 and 2023 at the government's request, and hostilities resumed between the military and NSAG signatories to the now defunct peace agreement.¹⁵⁵ Around 344,000 people were living in displacement as of the end of 2023.

Across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, NSAGs have exploited the volatile security situation to establish a foothold and expand their influence, while national and international military interventions did not fully succeed in their objectives.¹⁵⁶ After a military takeover in Niger in 2023, the governments of the three countries entered a new military



A displaced woman and two children have found shelter in a school in Mopti region, Mali. Persistent insecurity and violence have triggered significant displacement across the country. © WFP/Aurélia Rusek

pact known as the Alliance of Sahel States and sought other foreign support for their military operations.¹⁵⁷

Insecurity has gradually spilled over into coastal Western Africa, particularly Togo and Benin, where around 18,000 and 8,800 people respectively were living in displacement as a result of conflict and violence at the end of 2023.¹⁵⁸ The number of movements in **Togo** has increased significantly since 2020, with most taking place in the northern region of Savanes, where many IDPs have been unable to return because of insecurity, including unexploded ordnance.¹⁵⁹

There have been growing concerns about insecurity also spilling over into **Côte d'Ivoire**, which has received a growing number of people fleeing Burkina Faso since 2021.¹⁶⁰ Conscious of the threat posed by the expansion of NSAGs, the government has invested in security and socioeconomic programmes, including on social inclusion and youth employment, in its northern border areas.¹⁶¹

The country also experienced internal displacement triggered by political violence related to disputed elections in

late 2010. As many as a million displacements were recorded at the height of the crisis in March 2011, including more than 700,000 within or from the capital, Abidjan, and 150,000 in the west of the country.¹⁶²

Disasters

Around 99 per cent of Western Africa's disaster displacements between 2009 and 2023 have been triggered by floods, especially during the sub-region's rainy season which runs from June to September.¹⁶³ Disaster displacement has taken place against the backdrop of rapid population growth, informal urban expansion and inadequate planning in cities along the main water basins, heightening people's vulnerability and exposure to floods.¹⁶⁴ The latest World Weather Attribution studies found that increased temperatures reduced the return period of severe rainy seasons in some of these areas, including the Lake Chad and Niger river basins.¹⁶⁵

Nigeria exemplifies these challenges and has been the country most affected by flood displacement. Two unusually extended and severe rainy seasons in 2012 and 2022 triggered the largest

disaster displacement events in Africa of the last 15 years (see spotlight, p.37). Displacement camps are also sometimes flooded, forcing people displaced by conflict and violence to move again, as happened in Borno and Adamawa states in 2019 and 2022.¹⁶⁶

Niger has also been badly affected by flood displacement, recording 2.2 million movements in the last 15 years. The Diffa, Maradi and Zinder regions have been particularly hard hit, but significant displacement has also been recorded in the capital, Niamey. This prompted the government to ban the building of homes in flood-prone areas in 2017, but construction has continued and neighbourhoods are regularly inundated during the rainy season, triggering repeated displacement of people.¹⁶⁷ In some areas of Diffa, Tillabéri and Tahoua affected by conflict and violence, people have also been forced to flee floods.¹⁶⁸

Benin reported the third-highest number of flood displacements with 397,000, more than two-thirds of which were triggered in 2010 when unusually heavy rainfall led several rivers to burst their banks, including the Ouémé, which cuts

across the country from north to south. Two-thirds of the country was flooded and around 55,000 homes were damaged. The floods also came close to the harvest season, which badly affected agricultural production.¹⁶⁹

Other countries in the sub-region recorded significantly lower figures, but this is partly because data collection on disaster impacts, including displacement, is not systematic. Filling data gaps is paramount, because Western Africa is not spared the impacts of weather-related disasters and climate change.¹⁷⁰

The impacts of floods and storms are sometimes aggravated by other factors, including coastal erosion, mangrove deforestation and unregulated urbanisation. This is a growing concern for countries along the Gulf of Guinea, including Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, where large parts of the coast are receding by between one and two metres a year.¹⁷¹ Occasional displacements have been reported in places such as Saint Louis in Senegal and Plantain Island in Sierra Leone, where communities have been forced to move because coastal erosion has destroyed their homes.¹⁷²

Other slow-onset hazards such as drought and desertification also require better monitoring, given some evidence that drought is reshaping pastoralist livelihoods in countries such as Mali and Niger.¹⁷³ Drought also has the potential to harm social cohesion and increase the risk of communal violence over water and other natural resources, particularly in the Sahel. No displacement data has been made available, however.¹⁷⁴

Disaster displacements by hazard in Western Africa

99%
Floods



1%
Storms and cyclones



A boy steps on cinderblocks to avoid floodwater as he leaves class at Avedji Primary School in Mono department, Benin. The country reported 397,000 movements triggered by disasters in the last 15 years.

© UNICEF/UNI96737/Asselin

Spotlight: Nigeria

Tackling the country's growing flood displacement risk

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country. It is also located at the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, which flow into the Gulf of Guinea through a large delta on which several major cities sit. Most of the country receives substantial precipitation during the rainy season, and floods in both rural and urban areas are not uncommon.¹⁷⁵ As a result, Nigeria reported the highest number of disaster displacements in Africa between 2009 and 2023 with 8.7 million movements or a fifth of the continental total.

Flooding in 2012 and 2022 was particularly severe. In 2012, the most damaging rainy season on record in the country led to widespread floods that triggered 3.9 million movements, making it the largest disaster displacement event in Africa that year. Heavily populated settlements in low-lying areas along the Niger and Benue basins were flooded, particularly in the states of Kogi, Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers.¹⁷⁶

Some dams were damaged and others were in danger of overflowing. Gates had to be opened to release excess water, leading to further flooding downstream. Authorities in neighbouring Cameroon also had to release water from the Lagdo dam upstream on the Benue, which led to further flooding in Nigeria. Some of those displaced had already fled violence earlier in the year, their onward displacement heightening their vulnerabilities.¹⁷⁷

Many IDPs' return was impeded because their homes had been severely damaged or destroyed. Of the nearly 686,000 homes estimated to have been destroyed, almost all were traditional buildings of mud bricks, wood or bamboo.¹⁷⁸ No formal camps were established, leaving IDPs to shelter in overcrowded public buildings

such as schools, where food, sanitation and hygiene facilities were reported as inadequate.¹⁷⁹

The 2022 floods triggered more than 2.4 million displacements. The southern state of Bayelsa on the Niger delta was again one of the worst affected, accounting for half of the total, while the neighbouring state of Anambra recorded more than 500,000 movements. The release of excess water from the Lagdo dam in Cameroon again aggravated the impacts of the disaster. The floods also had a devastating effect on agricultural livelihoods, reducing crop yields for 95 per cent of households in the worst affected states.¹⁸⁰

Despite improvements in early warning systems and disaster risk reduction policies, only a fifth of the households across six of the most affected states were aware of government flood alerts and fewer than 10 per cent were able to evacuate pre-emptively. Some emergency camps were set up, but they only hosted about 1.7 per cent of those displaced, and only 1.5 per cent of those affected by the floods received government assistance.¹⁸¹

About a third of the homes reported as destroyed were along the Benue in the eastern states of Adamawa and Taraba, which host some of the largest numbers of IDPs in the country.¹⁸² A higher proportion of rural households were displaced and had their houses damaged or destroyed compared with those in urban areas, highlighting their vulnerability.¹⁸³

Camps hosting IDPs who had fled conflict and violence in the north-eastern state of Borno were also flooded, forcing thousands of people into secondary displacement.¹⁸⁴ Around 854,000 people were living in displacement at the end of 2022 as a result of the floods, pending the reconstruction of their homes.

Urban expansion increases flood displacement risk

Nigeria's population has more than doubled in the last 30 years to reach around 223.8 million people in 2023.¹⁸⁵

This growth has contributed to rapid and often unregulated urbanisation, which has been a major factor in increasing flood displacement risk. Left unaddressed, the risk will continue to increase given that 70 per cent of the country's population is projected to be living in urban areas by 2050.¹⁸⁶

Large cities in coastal areas and major river basins, including Lagos, Port Harcourt and Warri, are home to millions of informal urban dwellers who are at risk of displacement.¹⁸⁷ Many have moved as a result of conflict, previous disasters or lack of economic opportunities in rural areas. Their arrival has put pressure on Nigeria's urban infrastructure, fuelled a rise in urban poverty and increased people's vulnerability to disasters. The urban poor are often the first and worst affected by the impacts of floods, including displacement.¹⁸⁸ Their homes are all too often built in flood-prone areas with materials unable to withstand the impacts of flooding.¹⁸⁹

Insufficient water management systems have also driven up flood displacement risk. Limited infrastructure in rural areas and the inadequate management of dams has left wide areas subject to flooding. Several studies have pointed out the need to improve such systems along the Benue in particular, given that managing excess water runoff from Cameroon is currently impossible.¹⁹⁰

Insufficient drainage and waste management systems are also an issue in urban areas, despite several plans that highlight the need to improve them. Solid waste can block drains and worsen flooding, contaminate water sources and increase the risk of waterborne diseases.¹⁹¹

The 2012 and 2022 floods revealed extensive challenges, but looking back will not be enough to inform policy-making and action to reduce risk and strengthen resilience. IDMC's global disaster displacement risk model shows that even in an optimistic climate change scenario of 1°C of global warming, riverine floods in Nigeria could displace an average of one million people in any

given future year. The figure could increase by 50 per cent in a pessimistic climate change scenario of 5°C of warming. These figures should be seen as conservative, because the model considers current population exposure.¹⁹²

Mainstreaming displacement in disaster risk management

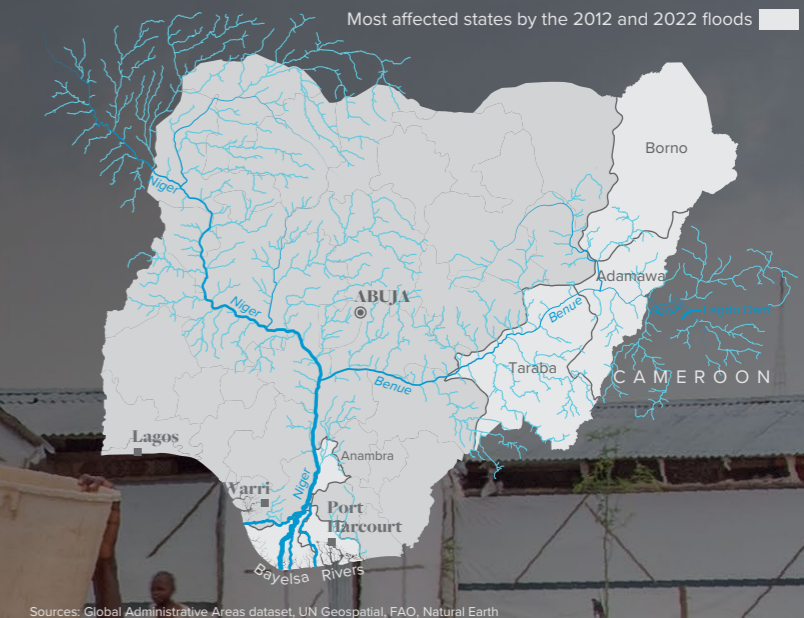
Acknowledging an institutional and capacity gap, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) put forward a national disaster risk management policy in 2018 in which displacement is explicitly mentioned. It also sets out NEMA's role in collecting data on displacement and providing IDPs with shelter, services and protection.¹⁹³

The policy highlights the importance of coordination and alignment among different government institutions. It clarifies the division of roles and responsibilities between NEMA and the state emergency management agencies as well as other agencies responsible for humanitarian affairs, including the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs.¹⁹⁴

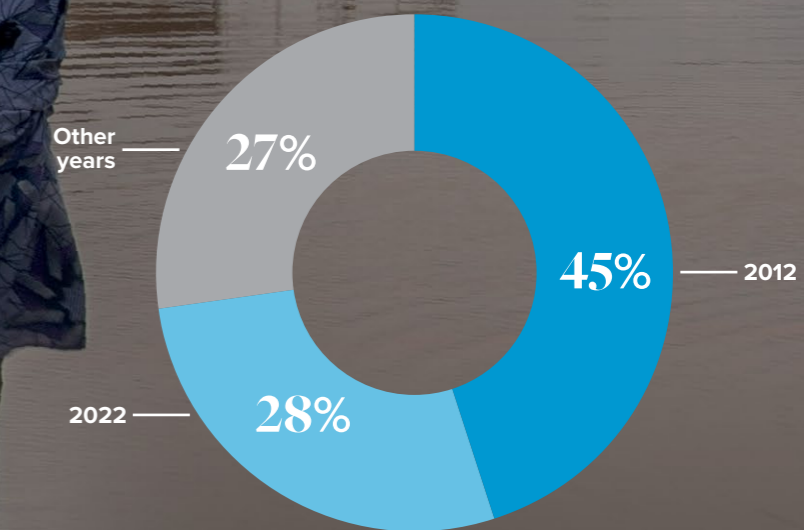
The national climate change policy, which was revised in 2021, also acknowledges the increasing number of IDPs and the threat displacement represents to the country's social and political stability.¹⁹⁵ The government also laid out a national strategic action plan for flood prevention and management in 2022, and approved a national flood emergency preparedness and response plan, illustrating its acknowledgement that building flood resilience is a priority.¹⁹⁶

These policies and plans are comprehensive, but they have been developed in response to rather than ahead of major disasters, which means that effective risk management strategies have yet to be put into practice.

Nigeria's many river systems make it highly prone to flood displacement



Major floods in 2012 and 2022 made up over 70 per cent of all flood displacements in Nigeria



A child stands in the flooded Stadium camp in Maiduguri, Nigeria during the rainy season. Nigeria has reported the most disaster displacements in Africa between 2009 and 2023, with 8.7 million movements, or one fifth of the continental total. © IOM/Natalie Oren

Spotlight: Burkina Faso

Africa's fastest growing internal displacement crisis

Burkina Faso has been embroiled in spiralling conflict and violence which triggered a sharp increase in the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the country from 47,000 in 2018 to 2.1 million in 2023, making it the fastest growing internal displacement crisis in Africa in recent years. Displacement has spread across most of the country and spilled over its borders, fuelling food insecurity and increasing humanitarian needs, particularly for internally displaced women and children.

The drivers of conflict and violence are complex. Longstanding social discontent over a lack of political representation, basic services and infrastructure began to grow in 2016, particularly in the northern province of Soum, and non-state armed groups (NSAGs), some of them affiliated with al-Qaeda, exploited the situation. Movements such as Ansarul Islam, which recruited mainly among young people, expanded their presence, offering marginalised people the promise of protection and livelihoods.¹⁹⁷

The conflict spread quickly to other areas of the country, escalating significantly in 2019 when displacement figures rose more than ten-fold.¹⁹⁸ The Burkina Faso armed forces were attacked near-daily and a growing number of self-defence groups emerged, including the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP), which receives financial support from the government.¹⁹⁹

The conflict then expanded to southern areas and across borders into coastal West Africa in 2022 and 2023, including Togo, Benin and Ghana, where NSAGs'

increasing attacks triggered displacement.²⁰⁰ The political landscape in Burkina Faso also shifted. The military took over the government in January 2022 and a second takeover followed ten months later in a context of growing insecurity.²⁰¹

Women and children at the epicentre of the crisis

Women and children, who make up around 80 per cent of the country's IDPs, face specific needs and protection risks. Be it in their area of origin or in the areas they fled to, many women have been subjected to harassment and violence, including sexual violence. Some have resorted to negative coping strategies such as survival sex or recruitment into NSAGs.²⁰²

Given that NSAGs have killed or recruited men and boys, many displaced women have become heads of household. In a country where traditional gender norms place men in this role, some women have faced stigmatisation and exclusion from decision-making processes and community-level meetings, including in displacement camps. This could potentially leave them unaware of essential information on security or the distribution of aid.²⁰³

To cope with such challenges, some women have set up organisations to gather their own resources and share income-generating opportunities. These organisations also serve as safety nets and support systems, including for survivors of violence.²⁰⁴

Displaced children have been victims of recruitment and gender-based violence by NSAGs.²⁰⁵ Food insecurity and malnutrition have also been on the rise among both displaced and non-displaced children, with one in ten under the age of five in the most affected areas facing acute malnutrition as of the end of 2023.²⁰⁶

The conflict has also had severe impacts on education. NSAGs have targeted schools and abducted and killed teach-

ers. One in four schools were closed as of October 2023 as a result, while others were used as shelters for IDPs, leaving about a million children without education at the start of the new school year. With UN support, the education ministry has made efforts to support the return to school for more than 3.8 million children, particularly in areas most affected by conflict and violence.²⁰⁷

Rising conflict, displacement and access constraints fuel food insecurity

Most of Burkina Faso's population live in rural areas and rely on agropastoral livelihoods. Therefore, conflict and displacement have had major impacts on food security and nutrition. In 2022, when food insecurity was at its worst, the Sahel and Centre-Nord regions accounted for more than half of the country's IDPs and more than a third of those facing crisis levels of food insecurity or worse, or IPC phase 3+.²⁰⁸

Sanmatenga province in Centre-Nord region had both the highest number of IDPs and the highest number of acutely food insecure people in the country. The Soum province in the Sahel region had the second highest number of IDPs and was the only province where people faced famine, or IPC phase 5 levels of food insecurity.²⁰⁹

This trend persisted in 2023, when the proportion of IDPs facing acute food insecurity continued to be higher than their non-displaced peers in most provinces.²¹⁰ The number of IDPs and acutely food insecure people have grown in parallel since 2018 amid an ever-increasing number of violent incidents.

NSAGs have laid sieges, particularly in northern provinces, creating a major obstacle to the delivery of food and other aid, worsening water and sanitation conditions and leading to a significant drop in agricultural production.²¹¹ They have also

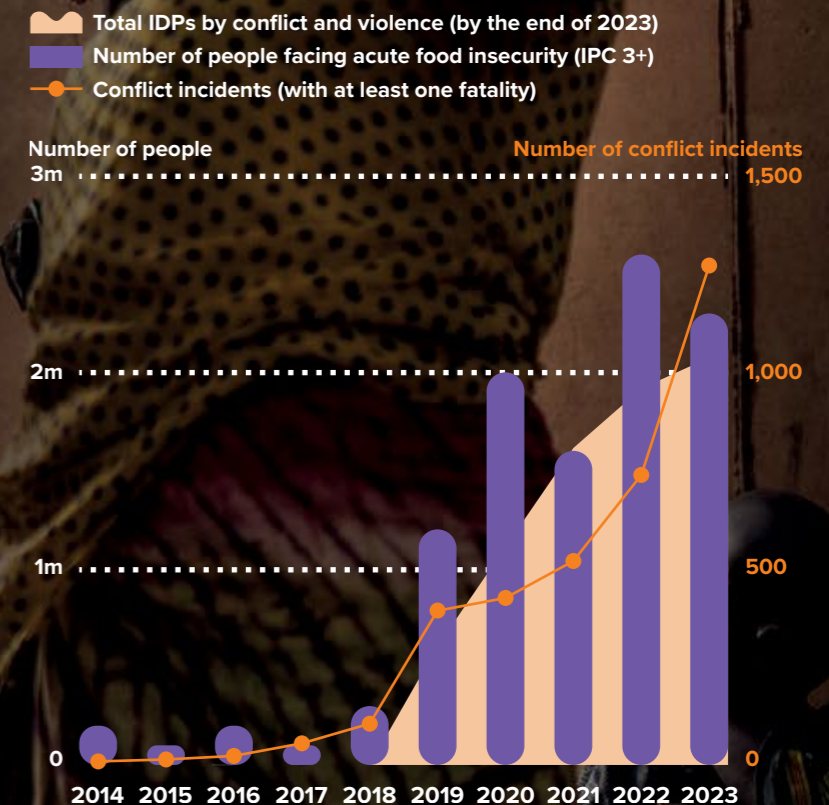
destroyed transport infrastructure and attacked relief convoys to loot them or deter others from being sent.²¹² They have prevented water trucks from reaching people in need, contaminated wells, destroyed water facilities and sabotaged water generators during the dry season.²¹³

Data collection has also been severely hampered, making displacement figures conservative. The number of IDPs as of the end of 2023, for example, which stood at 2.1 million, is a figure from March that year. The number of population movements alert, however, did not change and even increased in some periods of the year, suggesting that new displacements persisted.²¹⁴

The number of communes under siege doubled in 2023, and supplies for local markets and food aid had to be delivered by air or using military escorts, which increased food insecurity and the risk of famine, particularly in the city of Djibo in Soum province.²¹⁵

Improving humanitarian access and allowing rural communities to revamp their agricultural activities and livelihoods could help to stabilise local economies in conflict-affected areas.

Increasing displacement by conflict and violence has coincided with increasing food insecurity in Burkina Faso



Sources: CONASUR, Cadre Harmonisé, ACLED.

Women, who fled their village due to an armed attack, found safety in an abandoned school in North region, Burkina Faso, where internal displacement has increased sharply since 2018. © NRC/Tom Peyre-Costa

Southern Africa



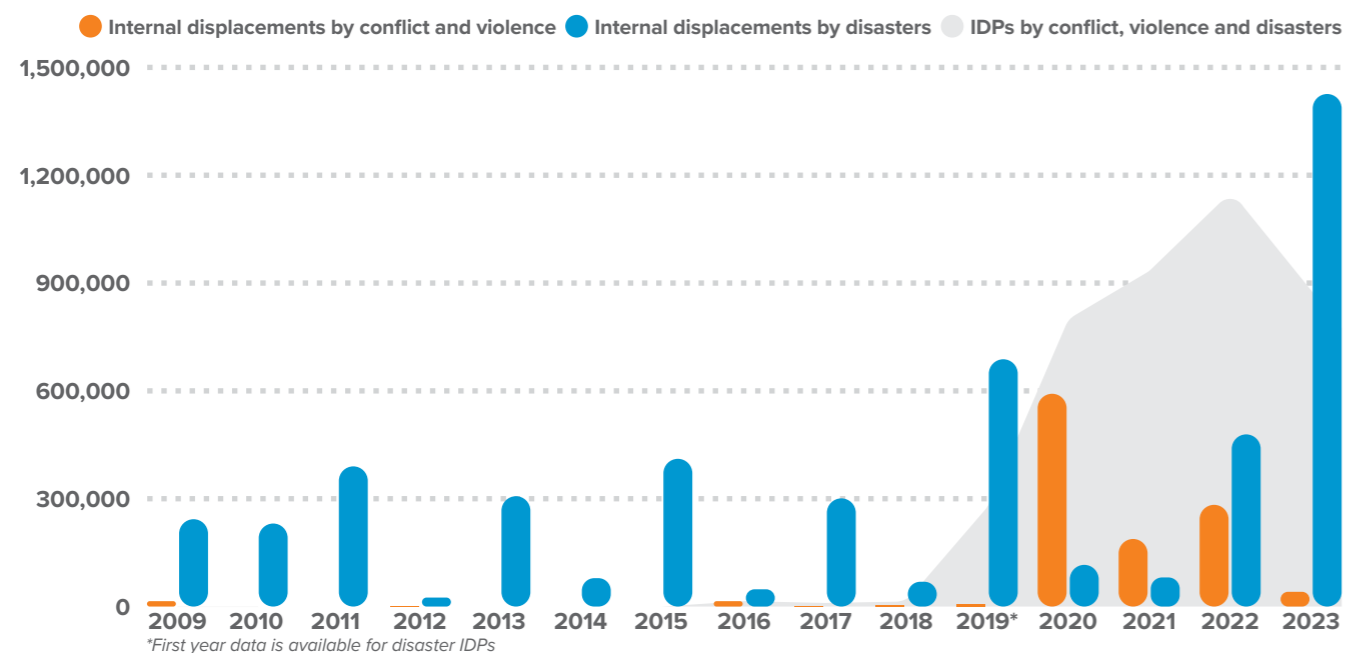
An estimated 6 million internal displacements have been reported in Southern Africa in the last 15 years, of which 4.9 million were triggered by disasters and 1.1 million by conflict and violence. Most were recorded in Mozambique, which is affected by both triggers and where more data is produced than in other countries. Painting a clear picture of internal displacement trends at the sub-regional level is difficult, which underscores the need to improve and sustain monitoring efforts.

Southern Africa is highly prone to storms, including tropical cyclones, which triggered 2.8 million movements between 2009 and 2023, accounting for 59 per cent of all storm displacements on the continent. In terms of conflict and violence, the situation in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province has triggered most displacements (see spotlight, p.47). Violence also led to movements in Zimbabwe in 2009 and in South Africa between 2019 and 2023, but on a much smaller scale.

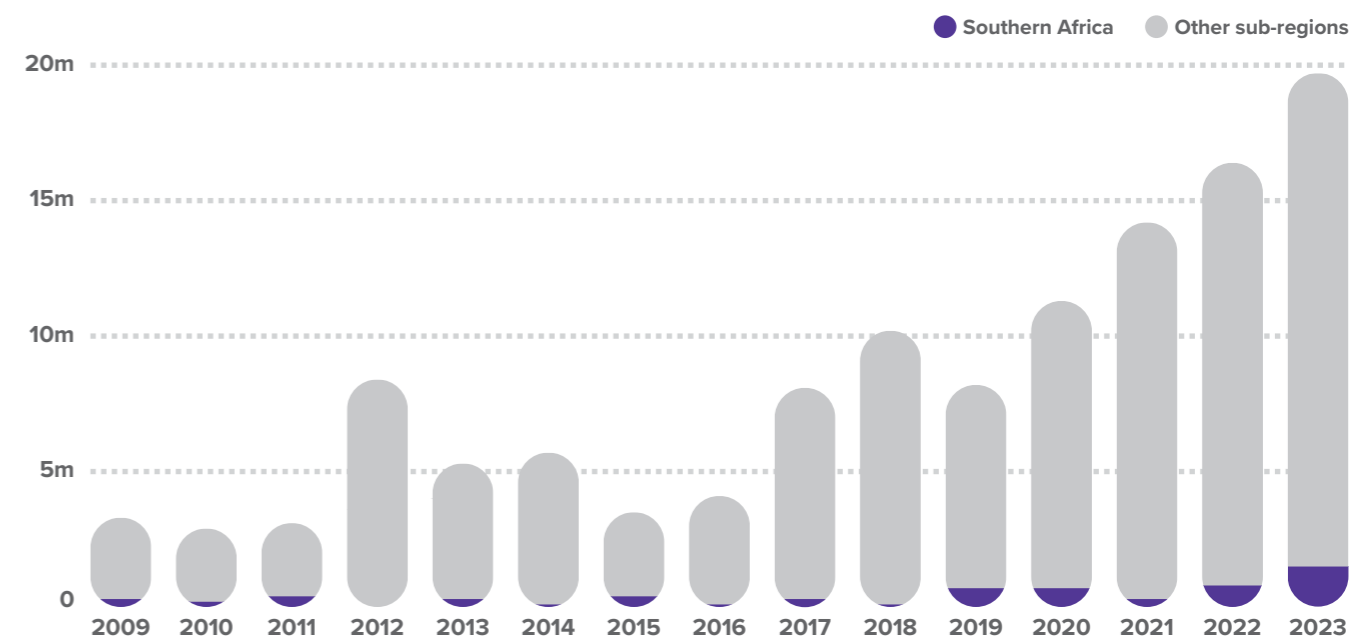


Residents converse at the Metuge displacement camp in Cabo Delgado province, Mozambique. An estimated 6 million internal displacements have been reported in Southern Africa in the last 15 years, most of them in Mozambique. © UNICEF/UN0381365/Bisol

Internal displacements by conflict, violence and disasters, and total number of IDPs in Southern Africa (2009-2023)



Share of internal displacements in Southern Africa against continental total (2009-2023)



Disasters

Storms are the leading displacement trigger

Mozambique and Malawi between them accounted for the majority of storm displacements recorded across the sub-region in the last 15 years, with 1.5 million and 1.1 million respectively. Both countries are exposed to the south-west Indian Ocean cyclone season, which runs from mid-November to the end of April.²¹⁶

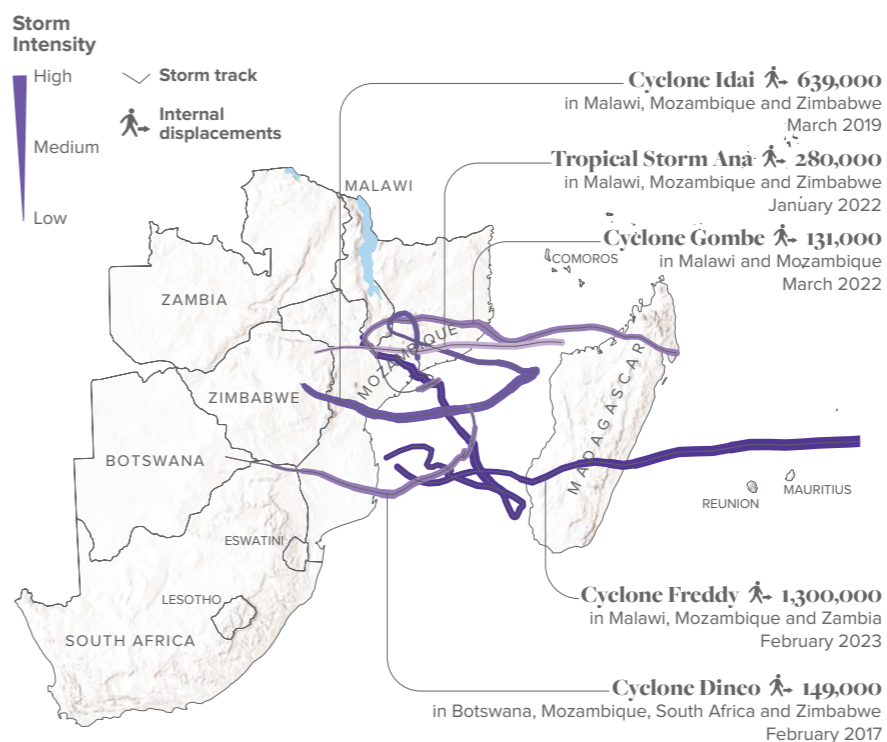
Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019 and Freddy in 2023 triggered the largest number of movements. Idai, which started as a tropical depression in early March 2019, caused severe flooding in northern **Mozambique** and Malawi before moving back out to sea where it developed into an intense tropical cyclone. It made landfall on 15 March near the city of Beira in Mozambique, causing riverine and flash floods, landslides and significant loss of life and property. Idai affected around

2.2 million people and triggered around 639,000 displacements across Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe.²¹⁷

It was soon followed by Kenneth, which struck Cabo Delgado six weeks later, triggering further 24,000 displacements and causing significant damage and losses, particularly in the agriculture and fishing sectors.²¹⁸ It made landfall near the city of Pemba, where conflict was escalating at the time, disrupting access and hampering the emergency response.²¹⁹ Most IDPs in temporary accommodation centres and resettlement sites were unable to continue farming because they did not have access to land or agricultural inputs, which heightened food insecurity.²²⁰

Tropical storms Ana and Gombe hit Mozambique and Malawi in early 2022, causing significant damage and triggering 280,000 and 131,000 displacements respectively. They also fuelled the worst cholera outbreak in Malawi in 20 years.²²¹

Five storms which triggered the highest number of internal displacements in Southern Africa



Sources: Global Administrative Areas dataset, UN Geospatial

About 59 per cent of all storm-related displacements in Africa since 2009 have occurred in Southern African countries, with Mozambique and Malawi the most affected.

for pre-emptive evacuations, including a maximum timeframe for emergency shelters, which should allow better monitoring of the duration of displacement.²²⁵

The government also updated its disaster risk management plans, assigning roles and responsibilities for a multi-hazard risk assessment to prevent reconstruction in areas most frequently affected by disasters and, when necessary, relocate people to safer areas.

Like Idai, Freddy made landfall in **Mozambique** twice, on 24 February in Inhambane province and on 12 March in Zambezia. The storm affected eight of the country's ten provinces and destroyed more than 132,000 homes, in some cases affecting households already displaced by violence.²²⁶ It triggered 640,000 movements, making it the largest disaster displacement event on record in Mozambique.

Pre-emptive evacuations helped to save lives when compared with previous cyclones of similar strength. Applying lessons learned from other disasters, the government deployed early warning systems and evacuation protocols. Better technology helped to identify at-risk areas, evacuation routes and safe areas, and a community-based and multilingual approach improved the dissemination of information.

The government also inaugurated a radar system a few months after Freddy to further improve its hazard identification and early warning capacities.²²⁷ These initiatives are timely given that the frequency and intensity of cyclones are projected to increase in Southern Africa.²²⁸

Flood displacement is underreported

Often difficult to disassociate from storms, floods triggered around 2.1 million internal displacements in Southern Africa between 2009 and 2023. The figure is conservative, given that many small and medium-scale events were unaccounted

People were still recovering from Ana and Gombe when cyclone Freddy hit in early 2023. Freddy formed on 5 February and sustained cyclonic conditions until it dissipated over Malawi on 14 March, making it one of the longest-lasting cyclones ever recorded worldwide.²²² It triggered 1.3 million internal displacements across six countries and territories.

Malawi, where Freddy hit many of the provinces affected by Ana and Gombe, including Phalombe and Nsanje, accounted for more than 659,000 movements.²²³ In acknowledgment of the impacts of these disasters, the government passed the Disaster Risk Management Act a month after Freddy hit, placing greater emphasis on early warning, prevention and risk reduction, as well as response and recovery.²²⁴ The act also sets out the process



A muddy clinic in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Freddy in Phalombe district, Malawi. Southern Africa is highly prone to storms, including tropical cyclones, which have triggered 2.8 million movements in the last 15 years. © UNICEF/UN0809528/Chikondi

for across several countries, which limits the understanding of the phenomenon and impedes the development of effective disaster risk management policies.

Nearly three-quarters of the movements reported were in Malawi, Mozambique and Angola, most of them during the sub-region's rainy season in the first three months of the year. The largest flood displacement event took place in **Malawi** in January 2015, triggering 336,000 movements after the country's highest rainfall on record.²²⁹ The floods affected rural areas and forced smallholders to flee, halving agricultural production.²³⁰

Mozambique suffered severe floods in 2010 and 2013, which triggered 130,000 and 186,000 displacements respectively. Heavy rains in February 2010 prompted the National Disaster Management Institute to activate a contingency plan, temporarily relocate those affected and provide them with survival items. The floods in the city of Beira were particularly severe after the Púnguè river burst its banks.²³¹

The same areas affected in 2010 had been flooded various times in previous years, and some communities had permanently relocated to avert further impacts. Drought, however, led some farmers to return to flood-prone areas they had previously left, because the land was more suitable for agriculture. As a result, some communities were displaced again in 2010, illustrating the challenges of reducing displacement risk sustainably.²³²

A long rainy season in 2013 triggered months of flooding and caused the Limpopo river to burst its banks. The floods led to widespread devastation and even higher displacement figures than in 2010, particularly in the southern province of Gaza.²³³

Angola recorded significant flood displacements between 2009 and 2011, but smaller figures since. The 2011 rainy season was particularly severe and

led to flooding that triggered 227,000 movements, by far the largest disaster displacement event reported in the country. Figures for Angola should be considered significant underestimates, because major urban areas, including the capital, Luanda, are at high risk of flooding. Reports show that entire areas of the city are inundated during the rainy season, but comprehensive displacement data is hard to come by.²³⁴

The latest data for Angola points to 79,000 disaster displacements in 2023, including 36,000 triggered by floods in the coastal province of Cuanza-Sul in mid-December.²³⁵ Heavy rains and flooding triggered another 6,800 in Malanje province at the start of November.²³⁶

South Africa has also experienced flooding, notably in 2011, 2022 and 2023. Major floods during the 2011 rainy season led the government to declare a national state of disaster and more than 52,000 displacements were reported, a conservative figure as no comprehensive data was made available after the event.²³⁷

The north-eastern coastal province of KwaZulu-Natal was battered by heavy rains and storms in 2022, resulting in significant flooding that triggered almost 62,000 movements, the country's highest disaster displacement figure since data became available in 2008. The government declared a national emergency in January as dams began to overflow, and in April KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape provinces were flooded again.²³⁸

The scale of the event led to the activation of the International Disasters Charter, which provides for the release of satellite data to humanitarian organisations to assist their operations.²³⁹ The government built temporary shelters for the displaced and supported the reinstatement of lost personal documents.²⁴⁰

Another 15,000 displacements were recorded in Gauteng and North West provinces in December 2022, but most people were able to return home. Another 20,000

displacements were reported countrywide in 2023. Floods in Cape Town in September accounted for 9,100 movements.²⁴¹

Growing disaster risk and impacts in the sub-region prompted the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to put forward a disaster preparedness and response strategy and fund in 2017 that covers the period until 2030.²⁴² The strategy, which is in line with the Sendai Framework, acknowledges displacement as one of the most significant impacts of disasters, and is a good basis to guide member states in taking action to reduce disaster risk, strengthen resilience, and support durable solutions as part of early recovery and reconstruction.²⁴³

The importance of filling data gaps

Gaps in data on displacement for certain countries for specific years and by different hazards make it difficult to understand the evolution of trends in Southern Africa. Improving and sustaining the systematic monitoring of displacement should be a priority, particularly when it comes to disasters, because the sub-region will continue to be affected by the impacts of climate variability and change.²⁴⁴

Many, if not all Southern African countries experience seasonal rains that often trigger small and medium-scale floods, flash floods and landslides, which force people to flee. More consistent monitoring of events on this scale would help to shed light on the impacts of different hazards on rural, isolated and marginalised communities which may get displaced, even for short periods, potentially undermining their resilience and heightening their vulnerability.

Data is currently missing or hard to come by for countries such as Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe, which are traversed by major river basins, and also for Botswana and Namibia.

Drought displacement is another major blind spot. Despite several reports showing that drought has significant impacts on agricultural production and food security, data on displacement is all but missing, except for one event in Angola in 2021, when 7,400 movements were recorded.²⁴⁵ Even in countries with drought response frameworks, such as Mozambique, displacement is not included as a key indicator or outcome.²⁴⁶

SADC has published numerous reports that acknowledge the risks associated with increasing climate variability, such as drought and desertification, underlining the need for improved water management systems.²⁴⁷ It collaborated with the World Bank on a Southern Africa Drought Resilience Initiative between 2020 and 2023 to produce national risk profiles that evaluate levels of preparedness and response to the hazard.²⁴⁸

The sub-region is also part of the Africa Drought Monitoring and Advisory, which compiles meteorological data to assess the risk and level of drought across the continent as a basis for developing early warning systems.²⁴⁹ These are positive steps to mitigate the effects of climate change that also demonstrate regional cooperation and commitment to tackle the impacts of drought. Understanding its role as a driver and trigger of displacement should be a key next step.

Assessing displacement risk and impacts associated with other slow-onset hazards, including sea level rise and coastal erosion, would also be valuable, given that significant numbers of people in countries such as Angola, Mozambique and South Africa, as well as small island states in the Indian Ocean, live in coastal areas.²⁵⁰

Disaster displacements by hazard in Southern Africa

57%
Storms and cyclones



42%
Floods



1%
Others

Spotlight: Mozambique

Breaking the cycle of conflict and displacement in Cabo Delgado

Mozambique's northern province of Cabo Delgado, one of the poorest and most marginalised in the country, has experienced conflict since 2017 when Ahlu Sunna Wal-Jama (ASWJ), a local non-state armed group, emerged.²⁵¹

ASWJ has expanded its presence and recruited among the local population over the years by tapping into long-standing political and social grievances, including discontent over the perceived unequal distribution of resources from the exploitation of offshore natural gas by foreign companies.²⁵² Government forces and their international partners have pushed the group back from many areas, but violence and displacement has continued, leaving around 592,000 people internally displaced at the end of 2023.

ASWJ's early attacks were mostly concentrated in small villages, but after its affiliation to the Islamic State group in mid-2019, the conflict spread to larger towns and attacks on government forces and infrastructure became more frequent.²⁵³ In August 2020, ASWJ captured the strategic port city of Mocimboa da Praia, leading to the destruction of homes and infrastructure that left more than 676,000 people living in displacement at the end of that year.²⁵⁴ About ten per cent of them were living in areas where lack of access, movement restrictions and general insecurity hampered the delivery of much-needed aid.²⁵⁵

The arrival of IDPs in the provincial capital of Pemba increased the city's population by more than 30 per cent, putting pressure on host communities.²⁵⁶ Others fled to the provinces of Niassa, Nampula, Sofala and Zambézia.²⁵⁷

Fighting continued in 2021, triggering tens of thousands more displacements, especially from late March after a major assault on Palma, which was already home to almost 44,000 IDPs.²⁵⁸ The escalation prompted the government to call for a regional standby force from several member states of the Southern African Development Community and a bilateral deployment from Rwanda.²⁵⁹ This helped the military regain control of some areas, including Mocimboa da Praia, and allowed tens of thousands of IDPs to return.²⁶⁰ Many, however, went back to severely damaged or destroyed homes with insufficient food and water.²⁶¹

Despite territorial gains, the government and its partners made in 2022, the conflict pushed the number of IDPs up 40 per cent compared with 2021. More than a million people were living in displacement at the end of 2022, the highest figure since the start of the conflict.²⁶²

Improved security allowed returns to resume in 2023, but many returnees still needed humanitarian assistance.²⁶³ Given the widespread destruction of housing and basic services, and the disruption of markets and livelihoods, few can be confirmed to have achieved sustainable solutions to their displacement. In destination areas, meanwhile, host communities slid further into poverty, which increased tensions with IDPs.²⁶⁴

Supporting durable solutions

These developments show that while increasing security is a necessary step, it is not enough to prevent new waves of displacement. Poverty, inequality and lack of basic services continue to be some of the main drivers of the conflict, and they hamper IDPs' pursuit of solutions.²⁶⁵ To break this cycle, promoting humanitarian, development and peacebuilding initiatives is key.²⁶⁶

Some initiatives have already been put in place, including the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan, which is led by line ministries with support from the

UN and other humanitarian and development partners. One element of the plan is the Northern Crisis Recovery Project, which is intended to improve social cohesion, provide livelihood and economic opportunities for IDPs and host communities, and repair and build public infrastructure. It includes cash-for-work programmes, vocational training and the provision of education and agricultural inputs to IDPs and host communities across different districts.²⁶⁷

The World Bank has also collaborated with the national government to provide at least 75,000 IDPs with new identity documents, allowing them to access services.²⁶⁸ It has also financed social cohesion projects, including dozens of peacebuilding committees which put those affected by displacement at the centre of recovery efforts.²⁶⁹ The provincial authorities of Cabo Delgado have established a commission to support IDPs' relocation and resettlement.²⁷⁰

At the national level, the government approved a Policy and Strategy for Internal Displacement Management in 2021, intended to guide initiatives to prevent, respond to and resolve the phenomenon.²⁷¹ The policy is aligned with the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Sustainable Development Goals.²⁷²

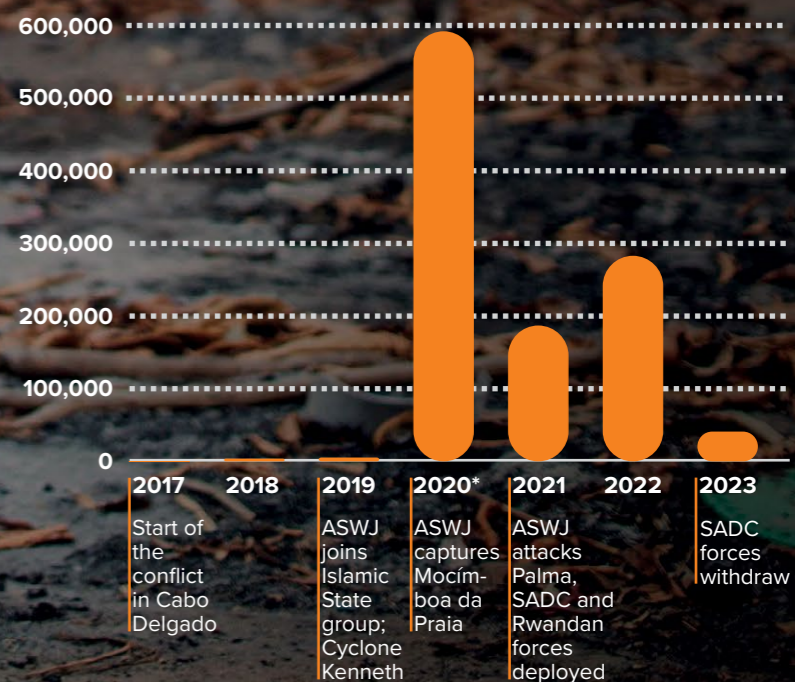
Taken together, these undertakings are testament to the government's political will to resolve displacement through a comprehensive policy and operational architecture that goes beyond humanitarian responses to build sustainable peace and development and prevent future displacement.

Most displacements by conflict and violence have occurred in Cabo Delgado province



Sources: Global Administrative Areas dataset, UN Geospatial

Internal displacements by conflict and violence in Mozambique (2017-2023)



*Beginning of data collection by IOM DTM, 2017-2019 are underestimates due to lack of data collection.

A woman holds her child while standing in a burned-out area in Cabo Delgado province, Mozambique. Since 2017, conflict there has triggered 1.1 million internal displacements.

Northern Africa



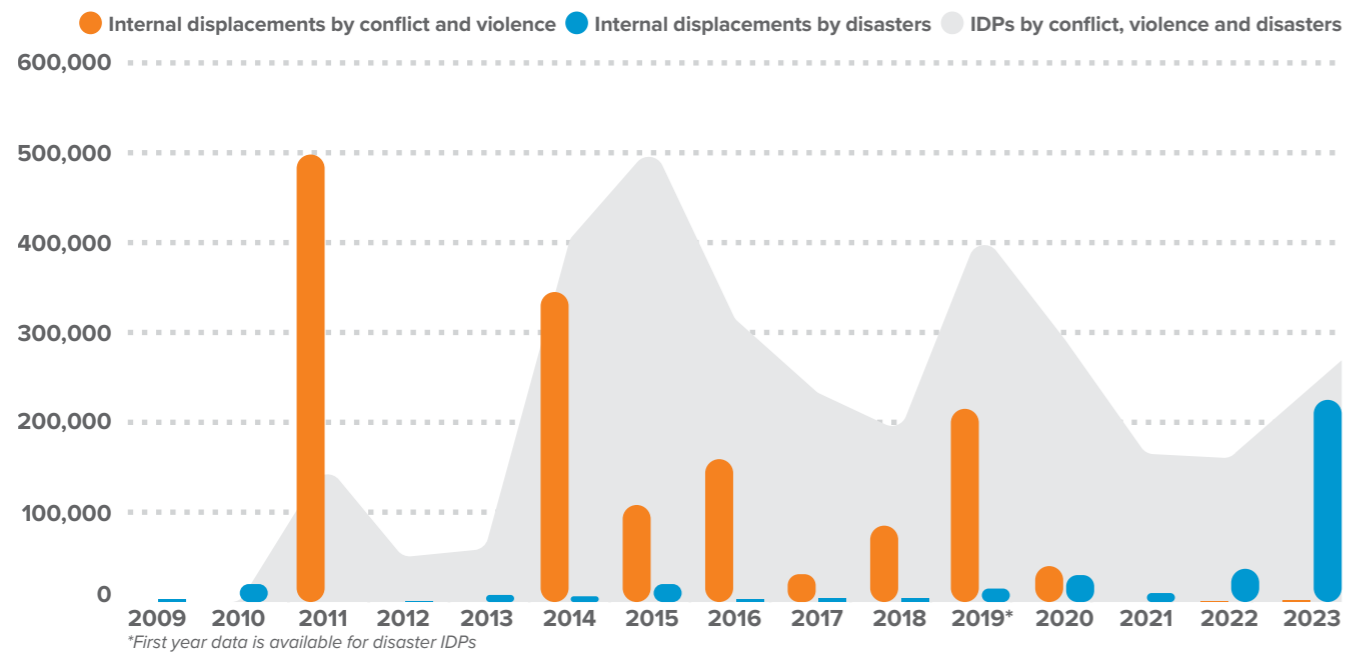
Northern Africa recorded 1.9 million internal displacements between 2009 and 2023, a figure that is most likely an underestimate. Around 1.5 million were triggered by conflict and violence, the overwhelming majority associated with the conflict in Libya. The number of IDPs in the country has been falling since 2019 as hundreds of thousands of people have achieved durable solutions and others are on the path to doing so.²⁷³

There are significant data gaps on disaster displacement across the sub-region, which make it difficult to paint a clear picture of the scale and scope of the phenomenon. Disasters triggered 384,000 movements over the last 15 years, of which 146,000 were associated with an earthquake that struck Morocco in September 2023. Weather-related hazards, particularly floods and wildfires, accounted for 58 per cent of all disaster displacements.

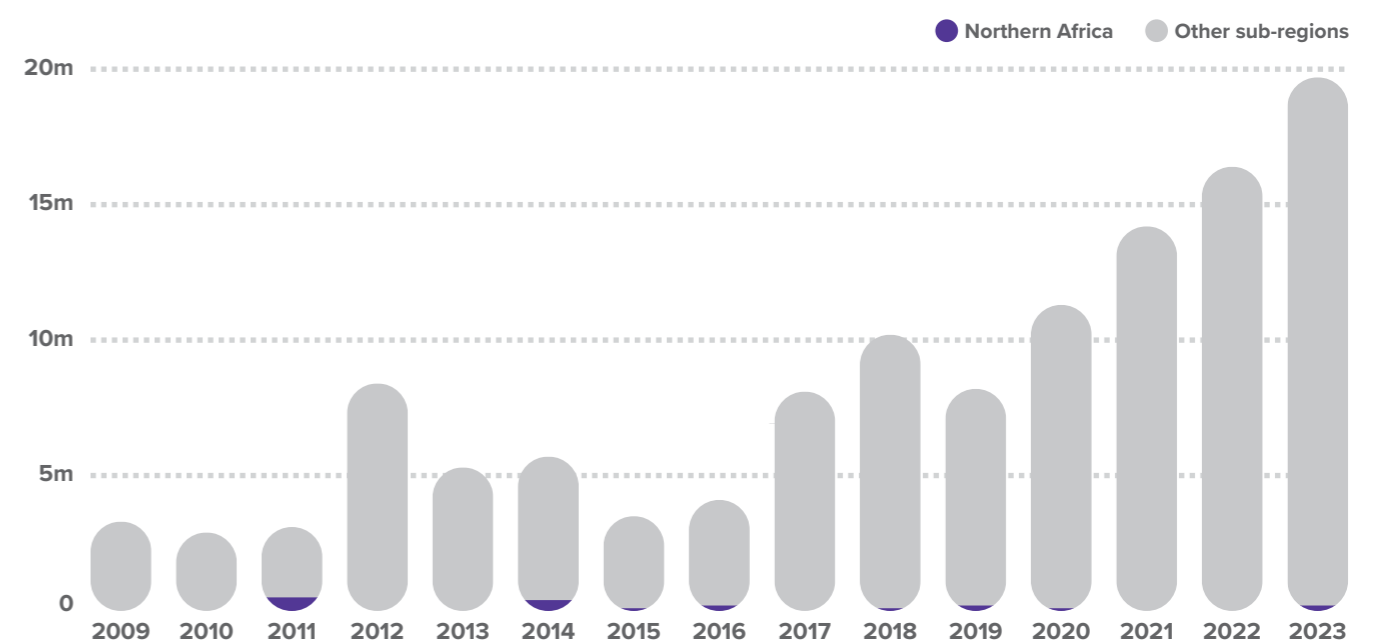


A woman poses near piles of rubble in Imzalin, Morocco. A 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck in 2023, triggering 146,000 displacements, by far the largest disaster displacement event since data became available for the country. © Alexi Rosenfeld/Getty Images

Internal displacements by conflict, violence and disasters, and total number of IDPs in Northern Africa (2009-2023)



Share of internal displacements in Northern Africa against continental total (2009-2023)



Conflict and violence

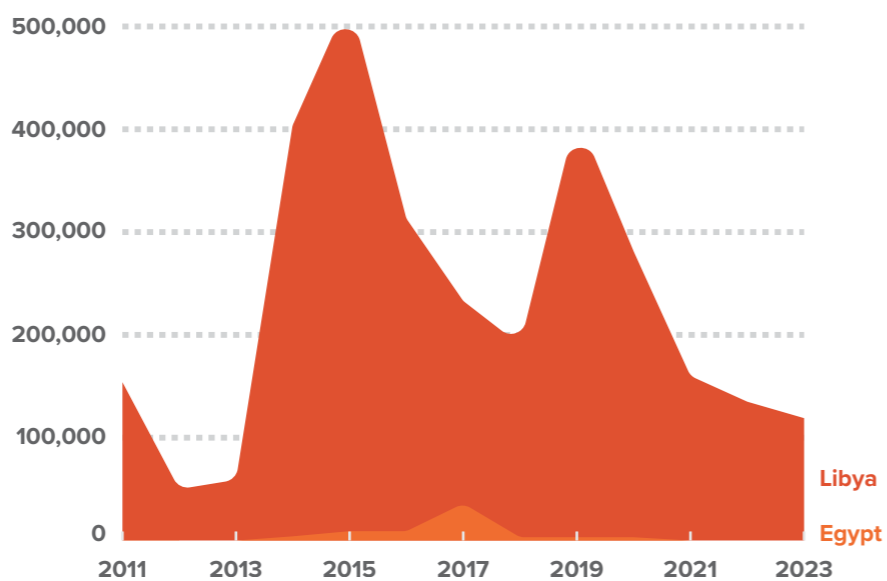
The beginning of the last decade was characterised by political upheaval in Northern Africa as the Arab spring erupted in early 2011. Countries including Egypt, Libya and Tunisia experienced incidents of violence, but internal displacement was only reported in **Libya**, where protests escalated into armed conflict that triggered nearly 1.5 million movements in the following 12 years.

In the early stages of the crisis, civilians clashed with security forces in Benghazi during protests against the country's longstanding ruler, Muammar Gaddafi.²⁷⁴ The conflict quickly spread across the country and was particularly intense in the western Nafusa mountains and cities including Ajdabiya, Bani Walid, Misrata and Sirte, with sustained sieges and attacks involving prolonged shelling and street-to-street fighting. Most IDPs took refuge in nearby towns or moved to safer neighbourhoods within the same city, as in Ajdabiya, Misrata and Tripoli.²⁷⁵

As attacks against civilians increased, the UN Security Council authorised a military operation to protect them, which ultimately led to the ousting of Gaddafi.²⁷⁶ An estimated record high of 498,000 displacements were reported in 2011.²⁷⁷ The conflict then receded, and most IDPs were able to return.²⁷⁸ The political and security situation remained volatile in the following years as disagreements over government formation persisted. Violence continued to trigger displacement, especially in urban centres such as Benghazi, Derna and Sebha.²⁷⁹

A contested election in May 2014 resulted in two separate governments and warring sides. The General National Congress (GNC) with its seat in Tripoli, took control of western Libya, while the Libyan National Army (LNA), with its seat in Tobruk, took control of the east and south. Fighting between the two parties triggered nearly 341,000 displacements in 2014,

IDPs by conflict and violence in the most affected countries of Northern Africa (2011-2023)



the highest figure since 2011, as some of the country's most populated urban areas became epicentres of conflict. Many people who had been displaced in 2011 were forced to flee again.²⁸⁰

The conflict was further complicated when the Islamic State group (IS) seized parts of Libya at the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015. Many other non-state armed groups (NSAGs) joined the fighting, and persistent clashes triggered a significant number of displacements. The number of people living in displacement reached its peak of around half a million at the end of 2015.²⁸¹

In December of that year, the GNC and the LNA formed a Government of National Accord (GNA), but they continued to disagree on many issues, and conflict and displacement persisted during 2016.²⁸² IS was driven from many areas in 2017, including the cities of Sirte and Derna, and the frontlines between the two governments stabilised, resulting in a decrease in new displacements. It was the first year since 2014 when there were more returns than displacements, bringing the number of IDPs down to 197,000.²⁸³

The conflict escalated in 2018 and 2019, resulting in 64,000 and 215,000 displacements, respectively. A UN-backed comprehensive ceasefire agreement was finally signed in October 2020, which allowed tens of thousands of people to return.²⁸⁴ New displacements and the number of IDPs have since reduced, allowing peacebuilding, recovery and durable solutions work to advance.²⁸⁵

Many IDPs have gone back to severely damaged homes, and recent evidence suggests they still face food insecurity and lack of access to water.²⁸⁶ Those who sought shelter in large cities such as Tripoli would prefer to integrate locally, which highlights the need to support livelihood opportunities in areas of destination and other measures that encourage this type of durable solution.²⁸⁷

Latest data from IOM reveals that out of the nearly 126,000 people still estimated to be living in displacement across Libya, about 76,000 are on a "solutions pathway".²⁸⁸ Many, however, still have displacement-related vulnerabilities. In Murzuq, for example, a sizeable number of people still lack the services and assistance they need to bring their displacement to sustainable end, and highlighted lack of safety and security as some of the main barriers to put an end to their displacement.²⁸⁹

Egypt also recorded displacement associated with conflict, most of which took place in the Sinai peninsula after the country's long-term ruler Hosni Mubarak was ousted in February 2011. NSAGs launched attacks against infrastructure and civilians in North Sinai governorate over the following three years, leading

the government to declare a state of emergency in October 2014 and conduct a series of military operations.²⁹⁰ Homes were demolished to create a buffer zone along the border with the Gaza Strip, with most movements reported in the Rafah district between 2014 and 2020.²⁹¹

Some of those forced to flee were relocated and compensated financially for the loss of their homes and land. They also received three months of financial assistance for alternative accommodation and schooling for their children.²⁹² Several committees were established to support those displaced, monitor their needs and develop programmes to assist them.²⁹³ The situation eventually stabilised and, by 2021, there were no longer any people living in displacement as a result of conflict and violence in the country.



Destroyed housing blocks in the old town of Benghazi, Libya. Despite a significant decrease in people living in internal displacement, those who have returned still face significant challenges, including damaged infrastructure, food insecurity, lack of access to water. © UNOCHA/Giles Clarke

Disasters

Data on disaster displacement in Northern Africa is scarce, and most that is available relates to large-scale events. Movements triggered by small to medium-scale and recurrent disasters tend to be underreported. Filling this gap is important, considering that the sub-region experiences some of the world's highest variations in precipitation from year to year, which means it is affected by both long droughts and severe floods, that are expected to worsen as a result of climate change.²⁹⁴ The sub-region is not spared from earthquake and tsunami risk either.

Almost 60 per cent of the 384,000 disaster displacements reported in the sub-region in the past 15 years occurred in 2023. They were the result of the earthquake that struck Morocco and storm Daniel in Libya, which took place within a few days of each other.

On 8 September 2023, a 6.8 magnitude earthquake hit **Morocco**, triggering 146,000 movements and making it the country's largest disaster displacement event since data became available in 2008. The figure is, however, still a significant underestimate based on the more than 19,000 homes destroyed and does not account for short-term movements of people who returned quickly to their homes.²⁹⁵ The quake mainly struck the region of Marrakesh-Safi, where it mostly affected remote villages in the High Atlas mountains, many of which had mud houses unable to withstand such an event. Roads were also damaged, complicating the delivery of aid.²⁹⁶

The government set up tents and took measures to respond to some of IDPs' most pressing needs, in particular regarding water, sanitation and health.²⁹⁷ Recovery and reconstruction efforts began soon after the quake, but no data on displacement was available, making it difficult to estimate the number of people still living in displacement at the end of the year.²⁹⁸

Storm Daniel, a rare and powerful Mediterranean hurricane, hit the north-east coast of **Libya** on 10 September, triggering more than 52,000 displacements. Around 24,000 took place in the coastal city of Derna, which received 100 times its average monthly rainfall.²⁹⁹ Lack of investment in infrastructure significantly aggravated the impacts of the disaster. Two ageing dams near the city collapsed, causing devastating floods that killed thousands of people and severely damaged infrastructure.³⁰⁰

Derna had already been affected by more than a decade of conflict and displacement and its inhabitants were already in a vulnerable situation, illustrating how the impacts of disasters and conflict can combine and lead to catastrophic outcomes.³⁰¹ Disagreements between Libya's two governments initially hindered



Residents look at a vehicle stuck in mud after flooding in Ghardaia province, Algeria. Displacements triggered by floods accounted for 44 per cent of all disaster displacements in Northern Africa in the last 15 years. © Fayeze Nureldine/AFP/Getty Images

response efforts, but this improved over time and the involvement of international partners helped to step up the response and early recovery.³⁰² Storm Daniel was by far the largest disaster displacement event in Libya since data became available for the country in 2013.

Beyond these two major events, weather-related hazards triggered most internal displacements in Northern Africa between 2009 and 2023, particularly in **Algeria**. Significant flooding in 2015 triggered more than 19,000 movements, the vast majority in the Sahrawi refugee camp in the western commune of Tindouf, where many people were pushed into secondary displacement.³⁰³

Algeria also accounted for more than two-thirds of the sub-region's wildfire displacements, which is partly explained

by more data availability for the country compared with others. The largest event took place in 2023, when unusually high temperatures fuelled fires in coastal regions that triggered around 20,000 movements.³⁰⁴

Dry spells and extreme heat are common across Northern Africa, and these increase the risk of flooding and flash flooding when seasonal rains hit because they reduce soil absorption capacity. Inadequate drainage systems also contribute to increase flood risk.³⁰⁵ After a severe drought in **Mauritania** in 2021, above-average rainfall and floods triggered 23,000 movements in July 2022, the highest disaster displacement figure on record for the country. The floods hit the central and southern regions of Hodh El Gharbi, Assaba and Tagant, where more than 3,800 homes were destroyed and infrastructure and farmland damaged.³⁰⁶

In addition to drought, other types of slow-onset hazard deserve to be monitored more closely. Most countries in Northern Africa have coastal areas, but data on displacement linked to sea level rise, coastal erosion and salinisation is all but missing. In **Egypt**, Alexandria's coastal areas have become increasingly vulnerable to land subsidence, flooding and salinisation. If the trend continues, millions of people could be displaced.³⁰⁷

The broader Nile Delta region hosts about a quarter of the country's population and also accounts for around half of the country's agricultural land. Salinisation of agricultural land has had a negative impact on crop yields, harming both livelihoods and food security, and some people have resorted to circular migration as a form of adaptation.³⁰⁸

Disaster displacements by hazard in Northern Africa

44% Floods



42% Earthquakes



11% Wildfires



3% Others

Policy developments on internal displacement

The Kampala Convention 15 years on

African countries have consistently hosted the world's largest internally displaced population over the past 15 years. Efforts have been made to develop legal and policy frameworks to address internal displacement at different levels, but a number of challenges have impeded their implementation.

The adoption in 2009 of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, widely known as the Kampala Convention, marked a significant step forward. It reflected African countries' determination to address displacement and set regional and international standards for its management.³⁰⁹ Building on the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the 2006 Great Lakes Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons, the Kampala Convention is the world's first and only legally binding regional instrument that addresses all causes and phases of displacement.

It underscores states' primary responsibility to protect and assist internally displaced persons (IDPs), and sets out the obligations of other stakeholders, including non-state armed groups,

private companies, humanitarian agencies and IDPs themselves.³¹⁰ Thirty-three of the African Union's 55 Member States had ratified it as of 2023, and it is gradually being integrated into domestic legal and policy frameworks.³¹¹

Since its inception, the Convention has served as a benchmark for guiding and measuring legal and policy progress on internal displacement in Africa. To support countries in implementing it, the African Union Commission (AUC) developed a model law that can be adapted into national legislation.³¹² The AUC and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) provide regular training for policymakers and civil servants to enhance their understanding of international and regional instruments relevant to IDPs' protection and assistance.³¹³

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Convention's adoption, but despite regional, national and local efforts, the number of IDPs in Africa has more than tripled since 2009.³¹⁴ This serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need to accelerate its implementation, particularly given that persistent conflict and violence and the growing impacts of disasters and climate change will continue to increase IDPs' vulnerabilities and needs, and place additional obstacles in the continent's path towards sustainable development.

There has been significant progress across the region over the last 15 years in setting up frameworks intended to prevent, respond to and resolve displacement. Twenty-seven countries had established at least one that addresses or refers to displacement linked with disasters or conflict by the end of 2023, which means that half of the region's states have demonstrated political will to make progress.³¹⁵

Implementation, however, is fraught with challenges. A lack of enforcement mechanisms, insufficient financial resources, limited institutional capacity and technical expertise often hinder the translation of laws and policies into concrete action. The varying degree of political will and commitment among governments is also an issue. Protracted conflict, political instability and the combined effects of climate change and disasters also hamper the implementation of these frameworks, by disrupting governance structures, diverting resources and exacerbating vulnerabilities of affected populations.

Since the establishment of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement in 2019, there has been renewed political momentum at the global level to address the phenomenon.³¹⁶ The subsequent Action Agenda on Internal Displacement published in 2022 outlines three overarching goals for governments and international and local stakeholders: to prevent new displacement, protect and assist IDPs and support them in achieving durable solutions.³¹⁷ These interconnected goals require the development of comprehensive frameworks that simultaneously address all three of them.

The following section discusses some of the progress made in addressing internal displacement in Africa, and sheds light on some effective practices and remaining challenges.

Preventing displacement

Most national frameworks to address internal displacement in Africa encompass all phases of displacement, from prevention and protection to assistance and durable solutions. However, the majority focus primarily on the humanitarian response and offer few concrete prevention measures. Prevention is often addressed in broad terms, with a general acknowledgment of the state's obligation to reduce the risk of displacement by addressing its underlying causes and protecting people from arbitrary movement. The lack of specific and actionable prevention strategies represents a significant gap in efforts to reduce displacement effectively.

Displacement-specific instruments in Africa have traditionally focused on conflict and violence, but recent frameworks adopted in Chad, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and the Republic of Congo also recognise

disasters and climate change as significant triggers.³¹⁸ They outline measures to prevent and manage disaster displacement, including early warning systems, evacuation plans, disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies and initiatives to build community resilience.

Addressing the underlying causes of conflict and achieving peace remain essential.³¹⁹ Somalia and South Sudan emphasise peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts and facilitating IDPs' return and reintegration as necessary to achieve durable solutions and prevent future displacement.³²⁰

Comprehensive approaches that address the multifaceted nature of displacement are necessary to improve coordination, monitoring and resourcing, particularly in situations where conflict and disasters overlap, and effectively protect and assist IDPs. Other instruments not specific to displacement, however, also play an important role in prevention.³²¹ Measures

to ensure social cohesion and economic stability or to prevent conflict, discrimination and extremism are also instrumental in protecting people from displacement and achieving durable solutions.

Many African countries have also integrated displacement into broader DRR and climate adaptation strategies.³²² Acknowledging that it is not always possible to prevent displacement, and that it can even function as a resilience measure to reduce harm and loss of life, the role of such frameworks in avoiding the multiplication of vulnerabilities as a result of disasters and displacement is key. Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Nigeria are among the countries to have included displacement in their DRR strategies and frameworks.³²³

Seventeen states refer to displacement in their national adaptation plans to prepare for climate change impacts.³²⁴ Zambia commits to developing climate-resilient livelihoods for populations at risk of



Displaced children play in a flooded camp in Borno state, Nigeria. The country has pledged to scale up the issuance of birth registration and national identity numbers to ensure displaced children have legal recognition and access to services. © IOM/Julia Burpee

displacement and plans to relocate flood-prone communities to safer ground.³²⁵ Niger aims to enhance IDPs' capacities in sustainable land management and improve access to climate forecasting. These strategies reflect a growing recognition of the need to address the displacement challenges that climate change poses through targeted adaptation efforts.³²⁶

Efforts to cooperate at the regional level to ensure stability through the prevention of conflict, disasters and displacement are also increasingly evident. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Regional Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2030) acknowledges that the region is heavily affected by displacement triggered by entrenched conflicts that often stem from competition for scarce resources and are likely to be aggravated by climate change.³²⁷

The strategy prioritises prevention efforts intended to mitigate the socioeconomic consequences of climate change and develops guidelines for emergency evacuation plans in response to disasters, and for resolving conflict. These measures are essential to prevent further instability and displacement in Eastern Africa.

The increasingly complex interplay between conflict, violence, disasters and climate change, which overlap in many African countries, makes the combined involvement of peacebuilding, development, climate adaptation and disaster risk management stakeholders even more important in preventing displacement. It underscores the need for robust coordination mechanisms and coherence across diverse frameworks to ensure that efforts to address the multifaceted drivers of displacement are harmonised.³²⁸

Protecting and assisting IDPs

Several African countries have developed national and sub-national frameworks to protect and assist IDPs guided by the Kampala Convention and international standards such as the Guiding Principles.

Niger domesticated the Kampala Convention through the adoption of a national law on IDPs' protection and assistance in 2018, and Chad and the Republic of Congo did so in 2023.³²⁹ Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and South Sudan are advancing similar legislative processes.³³⁰

Uganda stands out as the first African country to adopt a policy on IDPs in 2004, before the Kampala Convention was adopted. The policy outlines IDPs' rights and sets up mechanisms for their protection and assistance, including access to land, housing and basic services. More countries have since followed suit. Somalia adopted a policy to address internal displacement in 2019, and Mozambique and Nigeria did so in 2021.³³¹

Regional bodies such as IGAD and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have been instrumental in supporting these national efforts. Through its Regional Migration Policy Framework, IGAD has prioritised the domestication and implementation of the Kampala Convention and offers support to Member States in doing so.³³² Similarly, ECOWAS organised engagement meetings in 2020 and 2021 to encourage its Member States to develop national legislation aligned with the Convention.³³³ These initiatives are essential for fostering a coordinated and harmonised approach to protecting IDPs across the continent.

Beyond national legislation, governments can enhance IDPs' protection through targeted action. Nigeria, for example, has pledged to scale up the issuance of birth certificates and national identity numbers, a vital step in ensuring that displaced children have legal recognition and access to services. In collaboration with UNHCR, the government conducted a birth registration

drive in 2021 that provided certificates to more than 1,500 children in three displacement camps.³³⁴

Despite these positive developments, significant challenges remain. Many African states have still not domesticated the Kampala Convention because of capacity constraints or lack of sufficient political will, leaving gaps in protection. Even where policies exist, the focus tends to be on protecting people living in displacement camps, leaving behind those who live with host communities and may face protection risks too.

Limited resources and a lack of clear division of roles and responsibilities between different authorities also hinder the effective implementation of laws and policies on IDPs, while persistent conflict and insecurity complicate efforts to reach and support displaced populations in several countries.

Even in the absence of clear national frameworks and mandates, some countries have taken steps to support preparedness and responses to displacement, including at the sub-national level. In Kenya, for example, county governments were consulted in the first half of 2024 to develop a National Shelter Strategy that will help to manage evacuations and displacement. A nationwide preparedness initiative that focuses on capacity building for evacuation support is now being rolled out at the county level.³³⁵

The authorities in Garissa, Homa Bay, Kisumu and Mombasa counties also assessed capacities to integrate displacement into DRR and disaster risk management actions, highlighting how sub-national institutions can spearhead policy progress, particularly in countries that support devolution.³³⁶

Stronger commitments from governments and increased international support, including funding and capacity strengthening, will be essential if IDPs' rights are to be upheld and their needs adequately met. Including IDPs in the design and implementation of policies that affect them is also important to ensure that the solutions are aligned with their specific needs, challenges and aspirations.



A ten-year-old boy runs after his camels in Somali region, Ethiopia. The country is one of several that are developing laws and policies on internal displacement. © UNICEF/UN0583967/Mulugeta Ayene

Resolving displacement

The protracted and repeated nature of internal displacement across the continent highlights an urgent need to strengthen efforts to resolve the phenomenon. Responses tend to have been overly focused on short-term humanitarian assistance, which is necessary in the immediate aftermath of displacement. It does not, however, address IDPs' longer-term needs, which prolongs their plight, entrenches poverty, hinders development and undermines stability.

Durable solutions are essential to break this cycle, whether in the form of IDPs' dignified and voluntary return to their places of origin, their local integration in host communities or their resettlement elsewhere in the country. Such outcomes require strong national leadership and a shift from viewing displacement solely as a humanitarian issue to recognising it as a priority for development, peacebuilding and climate action, as emphasised by the UN Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.³³⁷

Empowering national ownership and local leadership

The need for a comprehensive approach is underscored by the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, which has supported national and local efforts to strengthen a whole-of-government approach in countries such as Ethiopia, Libya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan.³³⁸ This has involved coordinated initiatives across various sectors, recognising that the challenges inherent in achieving durable solutions need to be addressed in broader national and local development agendas.

Some countries have already taken significant steps in this direction by establishing dedicated mechanisms and strategies for bringing displacement to a sustainable

end. Somalia established a Durable Solutions Unit within the Ministry of Planning, Investments and Economic Development in 2019 and launched a national durable strategy in 2021 (see spotlight, p.19).³³⁹ Libya, Chad and Niger have established inter-ministerial committees on solutions to displacement in which IDPs participate.³⁴⁰

National ownership and leadership are essential to create an environment conducive to durable solutions, but the role of sub-national authorities should not be overlooked. Local governments are often on the frontline of displacement crises, responsible for managing their immediate impacts and delivering services. Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in Nigeria developed durable solutions strategies or action plans in 2024, and the Banadir and Somaliland regions have established similar frameworks in Somalia.³⁴¹

These strategies include coordination mechanisms that define the roles and responsibilities of various institutions and levels of government, ensuring that responses are well-articulated and effective. The inclusion of costed plans to guarantee that enough resources are allocated for their implementation is also essential.³⁴² Borno state has committed 15 per cent of its revenue to addressing internal displacement between 2025 and 2027, and Adamawa and Yobe states have committed five and seven per cent, respectively.³⁴³

Mainstreaming displacement in relevant national frameworks

It is equally important to integrate internal displacement into broader national frameworks, such as national development plans, DRR strategies and related instruments, climate adaptation policies, peace agreements and urban and education policies. Doing so ensures that displacement issues are addressed across all sectors of government.

South Sudan's Revised National Development Strategy 2021-2024 includes objectives to renovate schools damaged by conflict and facilitate the return and reintegration of displaced children.³⁴⁴

Mozambique has made significant strides in aligning its 2024 urbanisation policy with its national policy on displacement to address the specific vulnerabilities of IDPs in urban areas. Collaborative efforts with the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and IOM in the city of Pemba promote IDPs' sustainable and gender-sensitive integration through social cohesion initiatives, livelihood opportunities and infrastructure improvements.³⁴⁵

Mozambique has also integrated internal displacement into its peacebuilding efforts, particularly through the Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan, which includes projects to strengthen social cohesion between IDPs and host communities via vocational training, education and livelihood opportunities (see spotlight, p.47).

The government of Chad has conducted stabilisation efforts to transform displacement camps into villages and worked with the World Food Programme (WFP) to support the livelihoods of IDPs and host communities around Lake Chad by establishing negotiation committees to create new agricultural land.³⁴⁶ South Sudan's Peace Agreement contains provisions for IDPs' safe return and reintegration after the permanent ceasefire and during the transition period.³⁴⁷

Adopting comprehensive laws and policies on internal displacement is a significant milestone, but their successful implementation to prevent and respond to the phenomenon and achieve durable solutions hinges on sustained political will and the allocation of enough resources. In addition, the recognition of IDPs as citizens or residents of their country, through their full inclusion of displacement in other sectoral frameworks is equally important.

Development stakeholders need to be engaged and financing that incorporates displacement into long-term development strategies and budgets mobilised. Continuous monitoring of progress and addressing persistent challenges are also important to translate policies into effective practices that mitigate displacement risk, improve IDPs' lives and help them overcome their hardships.

Towards better displacement data

The internal displacement data landscape in Africa has evolved significantly over the last 15 years, and more information on its scale, duration and impacts has become available. There are still many gaps and challenges, however, including inconsistent methodologies, overlaps and insufficient coordination among agencies in charge of data collection.

This in turn hampers the production of harmonised and interoperable datasets, compromising the design and implementation of measures to prevent, respond to and resolve displacement in countries that have some of the largest numbers of IDPs in Africa and the world. The total figure for the continent has risen three-fold in the last 15 years, but it is still difficult to determine the duration of displacement in most countries.

Improving data collection methods, ensuring coordination and collaboration and strengthening the monitoring capacities of national and local governments are required to build a more solid baseline on the scale, scope, duration and severity of displacement in Africa. It would also help to better estimate the risk of future movements. Based on examples of good practice from the region, this chapter discusses how to do so, which will also support the implementation of the Kampala Convention and other national and regional policies and strategies.

Improving data collection

When different stakeholders use varying methods to collect data in the same areas or on the same events, it may lead to conflicting estimates of the number of IDPs, new and repeated movements or returns. This in turn risks causing confusion for policymakers, donors and organisations working to address IDPs' needs, undermining the prioritisation of resources for effective responses.

The lack of harmonised systems and standards also means that data cannot be compared, making it difficult to understand how displacement crises evolve within and across countries. Standards such as the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS) developed by the Expert Group on Refugee, IDPs, and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS) are still to be implemented systematically.

To be considered comprehensive and robust, data should cover the triggers and impacts of displacement in all its forms and regardless of its scale and duration.³⁴⁸ There should also be defined analysis protocols to examine trends and patterns. Given that disasters and conflict overlap in many African countries, understanding their interaction is key.

To fully capture and differentiate between small-scale disasters or localised violence and major events that trigger displacement, data should be recorded using methods that track movements considering their origin and destination and date of occurrence, and if they are new or repeated. To ensure the needs and protection risks of vulnerable groups are identified, it should also be disaggregated by geographic, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, including both displaced and host communities.

In Burkina Faso, the Operational Response Coordination Group (GCORR), which is co-led by OCHA and NRC, was established to report on displacement linked to both conflict and disasters, and offers an example of good monitoring practice.³⁴⁹ It works with a network of partners which operate across all regions of the country to provide alerts after a displacement event.³⁵⁰ The data provides information on IDPs' origin and destination, their demographic characteristics and their most pressing needs.

Greater efforts are needed to monitor repeated displacement more systematically, including by different triggers. If a camp sheltering people displaced by violence is flooded, forcing them to move again, organisations could use displacement data to adapt their interventions by providing shelters better able to withstand such hazards or by setting up camps in less flood-prone areas.³⁵¹ The same data would help to calibrate disaster risk models that could inform future humanitarian planning and action.

Findings from the latest iteration of the disaster displacement risk model developed by IDMC and its partners reveal the extent to which people who have fled conflict and violence are at risk of being displaced again by floods.³⁵² In Sudan, for example, they show that many people displaced by conflict were living in areas at high risk of flooding as of September 2023, particularly along the country's main river basins.

The data also reveals a high concentration of IDPs around the confluence of the White Nile and Blue Nile near the capital, Khartoum, where significant flood displacement has taken place in the past. Riverine flood displacement risk in the area is among the highest in the country, with around 15 per cent of displacement sites in Khartoum state at risk of severe damage. The situation is highly volatile as the current conflict continues, but the application of such data could still help inform more disaster resilient humanitarian action.

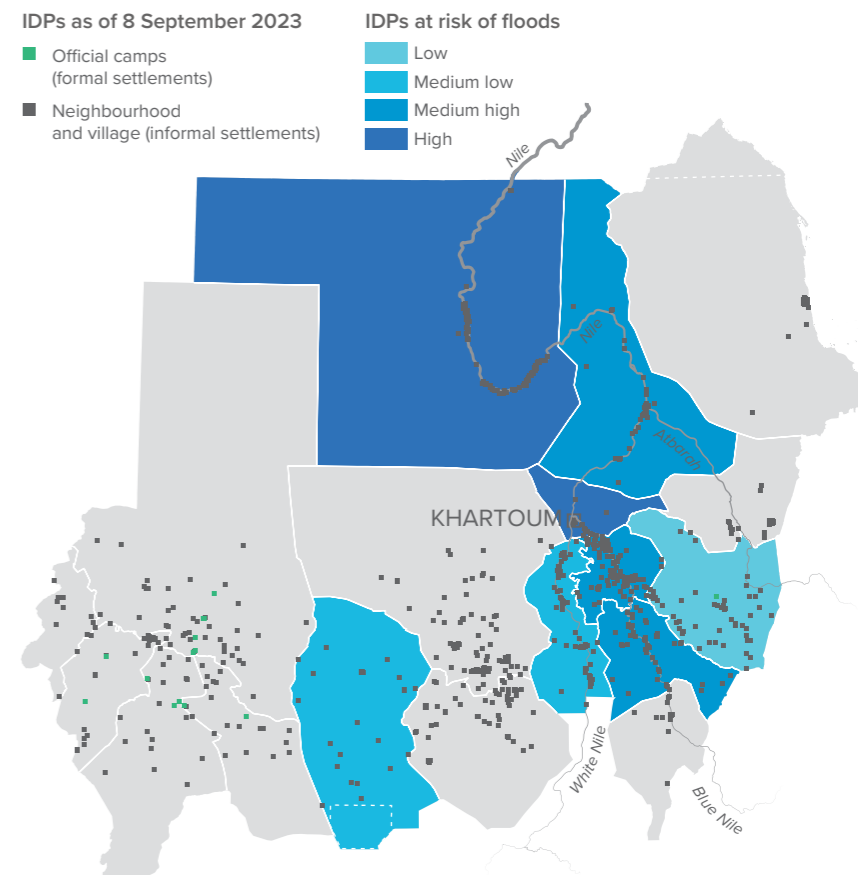
Understanding the duration of displacement is also important to better understand how IDPs' vulnerabilities evolve over time, and a few examples of such data collection already exist in Africa. The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) works with its national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to take stock of a displacement situation a year after the event took place, assessing how many people are still in shelters, how much aid they have received and prepare for the next rainy season.³⁵³ Such assessments have recently taken place in Morocco and Chad.³⁵⁴

Collecting and analysing this type of information would help to measure how long it takes for people to find solutions and what doing so means in different settings. Assessing their overall living conditions over time is an essential part of this work. IDMC uses data collected by IMPACT Initiatives' multi-sector needs assessments to compare the living conditions of internally displaced households with those of their returnee and non-displaced counterparts in the same location. These annual severity assessments cover housing, income, food security and education, perceptions about insecurity, unexploded ordnance and other threats.³⁵⁵

The results, which in Africa are available for Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Niger and Somalia, improve our understanding of displacement conditions within and

across countries and, when combined with contextual analysis, can inform decisions on the location and type of assistance most needed to support IDPs in their pursuit of durable solutions.³⁵⁶

IDP settlements at risk of riverine floods in Sudan



Source: IOM-DTM, Sudan Weekly Displacement Snapshot (3), 8 September 2023

Such analyses and tools would also help to better understand the specific needs and risks that women, children, older people, LGBTQI+ people and other minorities face. There is currently little information, for example, about the age and sex of displaced children, whether they fled with their families or alone, and how displacement affects their education and nutrition.³⁵⁷ Even when such information is available, age groups tend not to be standardised across agencies, making it difficult to compile national-level figures and compare them across countries.

There are, however, some examples of good practices. The government of Burundi collaborates with the Burundi Red Cross and IOM DTM to produce displacement datasets that contain information disaggregated by sex and age and on IDPs' specific needs. This is used to inform prevention efforts and tailor response.³⁵⁸

Ensuring better collaboration and coordination

Collecting displacement data will always involve various stakeholders, so it is important to develop clear and harmonised approaches to doing so. In some cases, however, there are significant overlaps and inconsistencies that impede the establishment of a solid baseline on the scale, scope and severity of displacement.

Partnerships across the continent need to be strengthened at the local, national and international level, as do governments' capacity to record displacement data. Greater collaboration would also help to unlock the potential of data to generate evidence and insights about the whole spectrum of human mobility and its links to development challenges and opportunities.

Some progress has already been made. The establishment of working groups and joint collection systems has led to the production of more comprehensive and interoperable displacement data in countries such as the Central African Republic and Mali. The two countries have set up population movement commissions that bring together all stakeholders involved, ranging from government agencies to NGOs and the UN. The commissions meet monthly to ensure a common understanding of displacement situations and to validate the data to be published, which ensures agreed-upon estimates.³⁵⁹

Similar systems known as rapid response mechanisms exist in Cameroon and Niger, and show how collaboration and coordination can be structured within countries.³⁶⁰ The next step would be to

develop standards to be applied across them, ideally aligned with IRIS. The Joint IDP Profiling Service is already working with economic communities in Eastern and Western Africa and the Pan-African Institute for Statistics to promote IRIS, which is a welcome step forward.³⁶¹

The systematic application of such standards at the national and regional level would help to build more meaningful bridges between the generation of evidence and policymaking to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement in Africa.

Reinforcing local and national capacities

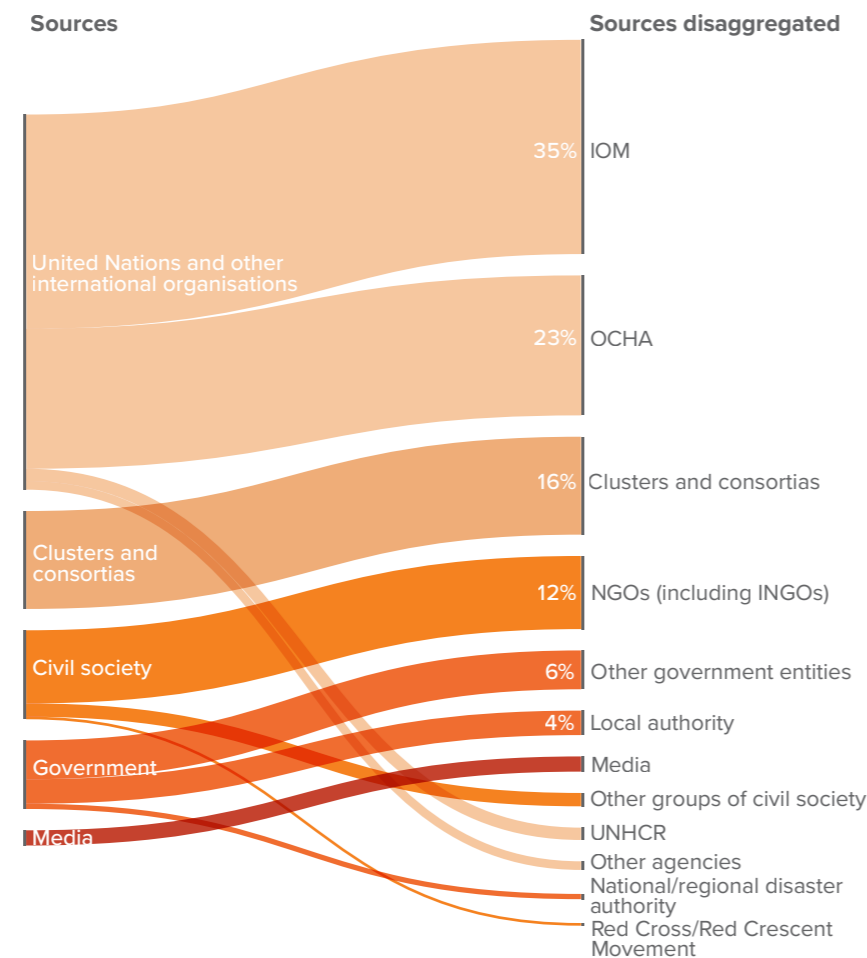
Thanks to the work of agencies including IOM, OCHA, UNHCR and IFRC, human

mobility and humanitarian needs assessments have been carried out in some of Africa's largest displacement crises. They have not only helped those displaced but have also shed light on the scale and scope of the phenomenon on the continent and globally.

International organisations generate most of the internal displacement data in Africa. UN agencies, particularly IOM DTM, accounted for 61 per cent of all conflict displacement figures produced in 2023, while governments accounted for 11 per cent. The figures for disaster displacement were 39 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively.

Many factors explain why government ownership of data systems is lower than that of international organisations, but

Sources of IDMC's estimates for displacement associated with conflict and violence in Africa



The sum of percentages may exceed 100% as displacement figures can be associated with multiple sources. Shares smaller than 4% are not displayed.

the situation shows the need to reinforce national-level data governance and governments' role in sustaining data systems.

More collaboration will be key to achieving this goal. International organisations are already collaborating with some governments across the region, and in some cases, they have supported capacity strengthening for government officials and trained local-level enumerators, who are at the forefront of data collection. They have also created training packages, workshops and courses intended to ensure that collection complies with ethical standards and data protection protocols.³⁶²

The reinforcement of such skills is essential, because relying in whole or in part on international organisations to do this work carries

risks, in particular regarding sustainability. Assessments tend to be conducted in areas defined by annual humanitarian response plans, while displacement may also occur in other places. In Nigeria, for example, robust data collection on conflict displacement takes place in central and northern regions. Evidence shows that intercommunal violence also triggers movements in southern regions, but no comprehensive monitoring takes place there. If local-level data collection is sustained, it becomes possible to produce evidence in a more comprehensive way and over time.

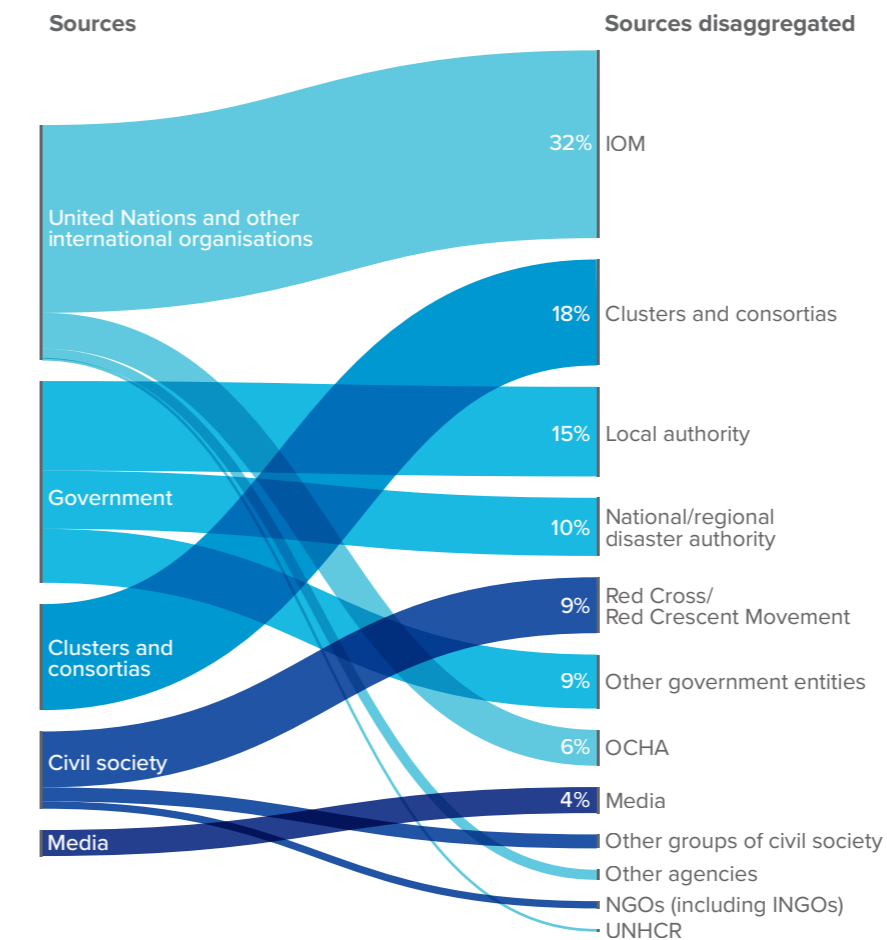
Some initiatives have already been put in place. IOM DTM transferred its data collection and analysis process to Mali's National Directorate of Social Development in 2014, which established a government-led collection, validation and publication

system for displacement data. Numerous organisations are currently involved in training local staff to collect it.³⁶³

Another example of good practice is the way Red Cross and Red Crescent societies are structured in Africa and globally. They have put emphasis on having networks of local staff to collect data on humanitarian needs and impacts, including displacement, even in countries which are not dealing with severe crises.³⁶⁴

This not only ensures that data collection is sustained. It also helps to shed light on the impacts of small and medium-scale events that may trigger displacement, which is valuable input for the localisation of policies and action on resilience and solutions. When aggregated, the information collected also often shows that the impacts of localised shocks can be significant.

Sources of IDMC's estimates for displacement associated with disasters in Africa



The sum of percentages may exceed 100% as displacement figures can be associated with multiple sources. Shares smaller than 4% are not displayed.

Some governments have taken the lead in showing what full ownership of displacement data systems could look like. Madagascar's National Office for Risk and Disaster Management is in charge of monitoring, analysing and reporting on disaster displacement in the country. It collects spatially and temporally disaggregated data on the impacts of natural hazards jointly with the Emergency Prevention and Management Cell. The information is then complemented with ad-hoc IOM DTM assessments to paint a more comprehensive picture of displacement trends, risks and impacts.³⁶⁵

These and other examples show that governments can lead the design and maintenance of data systems on internal displacement without excluding financial and technical support from international organisations, multilateral development banks, NGOs and other stakeholders.

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Expert advice and peer review:

IDMC would like to thank especially the following persons for their inputs, peer review and expert advice: Farah Adan, Nina M Birkeland, Ulrika Blom, Hassane Hamadou, Christelle Huré, Prince Kadilumako Lumueno, Kathleen Maes, Amr Munibari, Dorah Mutogoh, Mahaman Moussoubahou Mani Naino, Thomas Okedi, Sabiu Shehu, Jeremy Taylor, Nelson Tivane, Anne Trehondart and Mathilde Vu (NRC); Waqas Ahmed, Yaseen Alshereda, Melissa Branca, Tariro Chimanga, Jo De Backer, Perry De Marche, Khobib Elsayed Awad Mohamed, Carvalho Magalhaes, Léa Mahfouz, Charlie Pitcairn, Tessa Claire Richardson, Sokhna Sy, Pavla Snajdrova, Christopher Zapp and Zerihun Zewdie Hurissa (IOM); Christopher Agutu, Trond Jensen, Doreen Kansiime, Chima Onwe, Chukwudi Ukanacho (OCHA); Ramsey Beck and Chigo Mabila (DLA Piper), William Chemaly and Mona Folkesson (Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement); Lorenzo Guadagno, Sarah Koeltzow and Timo Schmidt (Platform on Disaster Displacement); Martina Caterina and Nadine Walicki (UNHCR).

Every day, people flee conflict and disasters and become displaced inside their own countries. IDMC provides data and analysis and supports partners to identify and implement solutions to internal displacement.

Join us as we work to make real and lasting change for internally displaced people in the decade ahead.



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