

# Global Scenario of Conflict Induced Displacement: A Survey of Literature

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## ABSTRACT

*Through the twentieth century there has been a significant growth in the frequency of armed conflicts across the globe. These conflicts have not only led to widespread death but extensive displacement, fear and economic devastation. The most affected of these conflicts are those who get dislocated from their native places under unbearable violent conditions. The problem of these IDPs is really a daunting humanitarian challenge. Today about thirty-eight million people (UNHCR 2015) are believed to have become displaced. The IDPs also differ from the refugees (those who cross an international border) as there are no specific international legal instruments in international law to protect the IDPs like the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, nor a mandated institution such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The issues of the internally displaced have remained less understood as compared to other displaced ones like refugees or asylum seeker because of their internal crises. The paper will aim to explore the global scenario of the IDPs in relation to the existing literature.*

## 1. Introduction

Since the end of World War II, there has been large scale of displacement of people all over the globe due to the armed conflicts, ethnic strife and as a consequence there have been human rights violations. In the 1990s, there has been an increase in the number of IDPs and a decline in the number of refugees, as compared to the earlier period. The reasons for this trend are increased border controls, limited opportunities to cross international borders, decline in the tradition of hospitality and the institution of asylum. In several cases many states either closed their borders or adopted restrictive policies for refugees which in turn led to their decreasing number and raised the number of internally displaced persons. There have been problems within the categories of IDPs. Firstly, those who are unable to cross over the national borders to escape violence are doubly disadvantaged. Secondly only those persons are treated and counted as internally displaced persons who have got displaced due to conflict and persecution while millions of people have been uprooted by natural disasters, but their statistics are missing (Cohen et al, 2006). Sometimes people are displaced due to development projects and without even consultations with them. These people are not just ignored of their rights but rarely are resettled or offered adequate compensation (Robinson, 2003). The IDPs are without the protection of their own governments as well as lack any binding international instruments like the 1951 Convention for refugees. The lack of global responsibility at the regional and international level has serious implications for the human rights of refugees and IDPs.

## 2. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): Definition

Over the years a debate has been going on about who qualifies as an internally displaced person and who does not. In general, people who migrate to other places, not for socio-economic betterment but due to civil wars, ethnic conflicts and natural or man-made disasters and do not cross their national boundaries are termed as Internally Displaced Persons. Before the drafting of guiding principles on internal displacement, IDPs were defined differently and there was no universally agreed

definition (Korn 2000). According to a report on Internally Displaced Persons submitted to Commission on Human Rights on 1992 defines IDPs as:

*“Those who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflicts, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights or natural or man-made disasters, and who are within the territory of their own country” (Commission on Human Rights 1992)<sup>1</sup>.*

This definition has a limited scope as the phrase, “suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers”, excludes those who do not want to leave their homes but are expelled for example Muslims of Bosnia (Weiss and Pasic 1998). The definition also includes, “in large numbers” which often does not hold true always as many a times people flee in small groups which becomes inconspicuous.

Francis Deng, who was the representative of the Secretary-General of United nations on Internally Displaced Persons, redefined the existing definition and came up with a new and broader definition of the internally displaced keeping in mind the limitations of the existing definitions. He defined Internally Displaced as:

*“Internally Displaced Persons are persons or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or 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 human-made made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border” (UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998)<sup>2</sup>.*

<sup>1</sup> It was on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1992 that the Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution on Internally Displaced Persons and requested the UN Secretary-General to appoint a representative on IDPs.

<sup>2</sup> It was for the first time in 1998 when a committee headed by Francis Deng appointed by the UN General Assembly presented the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in the General Assembly.

The words 'in particular' in the definition indicates that how internal displacement may occur, and the examples listed in the definition are not exhaustive. The definition describes two main elements of IDPs- first forced migration and the choice of an individual whether to leave or stay within his/her country during war time and the second element explains how IDPs are different from refugees. Like the previous definitions, this definition has also included armed conflicts, civil war, natural or man-made disasters as main causes of displacement. Though the definition has been criticized claiming it does not explain the displacement of the people during the construction of Human-made disasters like dams, hydro-power projects and has also failed to explain the nature of people who are living on borders which are under the control of various countries but still this definition is relatively more comprehensive than its previous ones.

While finalising the Guiding Principles on IDPs there was long debate over the issue whether the persons displaced due to natural disasters should be considered as IDPs or not. Some argued that only those people should be included in the category of IDPs who have fled because of violence or persecution, while majority of the international experts favoured the broader definition of the IDPs including those people who are displaced by natural and manmade disasters. The significance of including people displaced by natural disasters was two-fold: first, these people are displaced and secondly, they too have human rights and needs protection and thus international attention is required. Also, people who migrate for the reasons of poverty and economic want should be considered as IDPs or not is quite often debated (Cohen, 2006: 101-109).

Various attempts have been made by different countries to define IDPs according to their policies and legislations. The most appropriate definition of IDPs under the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement has been adopted by most of the countries while some countries have included 'project' affected persons in their definitions for IDPs viz- the Government of Kenya. The Kenyan Government under the 'Prevention, Protection and Assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons and Affected Communities Act, 2012' defines IDPs as, "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, large scale development projects, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (section 2 of Kenyan Act No. 56 of 2012)<sup>3</sup>.

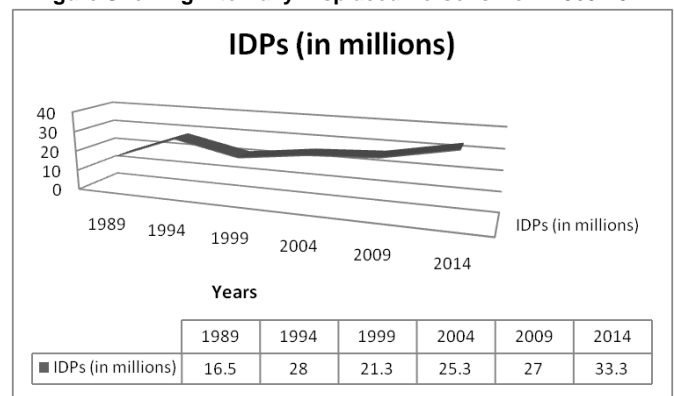
### 3. Internal Displacement: Worldwide

For the first time the IDPS were counted in 1982 and their number was estimated as 1.2 million in eleven countries. Since then various methodologies were developed to estimate their

<sup>3</sup>To give effect to the Great Lakes Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (adopted on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2004 in Dar-es-salaam) and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and for connected purposes, the Parliament of Kenya an act in 2012 as, "The Prevention, Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons and Affected Communities Act No.56 of 2012".

numbers. Among the various efforts to monitor the IDPs, in 1998 the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by UN on the recommendations of the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) to collect data on IDPs more accurately. Rising numbers of IDPs over the years have made this problem difficult to ignore. On the other hand, the Western governments were much concerned with the increasing numbers of IDPs as most of them were taking refuge along their borders. According to the report of IDMC, at the end of 2014 there were 33.3 million displaced people due to armed conflicts and frequent human rights violations and about 22 million people were displaced by natural or man-made disasters (Ferris, 2014).

Figure Showing Internally Displaced Persons from 1989-2014



Source: Ferris, Brookings- LSE Project on Internal Displacement 2014.

Since the creation of IDMC, the information available regarding the IDPs has increased and its accuracy has also improved. The data collected and made available on internally displaced persons by the IDMC has been successful in drawing the attention not only towards the magnitude of displacement but also to the need for protection of IDPs.(Ferris, 2014). The data collected from 1989 to 2014 reveals that there is an increasing trend in the number of internally displaced persons. In 1989 when the data was collected for the first time, it was estimated that there were 16.5 million internally displaced persons all over the world. There was an increase of 11.5 million to the already existing 16.5 million, taking the number of IDPs to 28 million in 1994. There was a fall in the number of IDPs from 1994-99 to 21.3 million, showing a decrease of 6.7 million worldwide. But from 1999-14 there was again an increasing trend in conflict induced displacement across the globe. Overall the number of IDPs is increasing year after year as the whole world is engaged in one or the other type of conflicts.

According to the IDMC report, by the end of 2009 there were about 27.1 million IDPs in the world because of armed conflicts, human rights abuses and generalized violence. Out of this 27.1 million, Africa constituted about 11.6 million IDPs, making it most affected continent on the earth. The African countries such as Somalia, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) along with Colombia and Iraq comprise over a half of the world's IDPs. It was also found that in 2009 there has been a relative increase in the number of internally displaced persons in South and Southeast Asia where existing

conflicts have forced people to flee from their homes (IDMC 2010)<sup>4</sup>.

**Table Showing Number of IDPs by Region (in millions)**

Region	At the end of 2011	At the end of 2010	% change
Africa	9.7	11.1	-13%
Americas	Up to 5.6	5.4	+4%
Europe and Central Asia	Up to 2.5	2.5	+0%
Middle and North Africa	4.3	3.9	+10%
South and South-East Asia	4.3	4.6	-7%
Total	26.4	27.5	-4%

Source: *Albuja, S et al. 2012, 'GlobalOverview2011: People Internally Displaced by Conflict and Violence', IDMC Report, 2012.*

However, in 2011 the number of internally displaced persons had fallen to 26.4 million from 27.5 million which was estimated in 2010 showing a decrease of 4% in the IDP count. It was regarded as the most significant fall in the number of IDPs since 2005. But the reason for this fall was the unclear status of thousands of people living in Sudan and Khartoum (earlier were part of South Sudan), who were considered as internally displaced persons prior to deceleration of independence by South Sudan in July 2011. Though in 2011, there has been a fall in almost all regions except Middle East and North Africa. In the Middle East and North Africa, the number of IDPs has increased significantly from 3.9 million in 2010 to 4.3 million in 2011. On the other hand, it was for the first time that the number had fallen in South and South East Asia to 4.3 million in 2011. There was no visible change in the numbers of IDPs in Europe and Central Asia. Over all we can conclude from the table that there was a decrease of 4% in the IDP count in 2011 (Albuja, et al. 2012).

#### 4. New Displacements: The Global Trends

Though there has been little fall in 2011 in the number of internally displaced persons but since 1989 there has been a steady increase in their numbers. In 2014 the number of IDPs was estimated at 38 million, representing a 13% increase from 2013. Also, in the same year 11 million people were forced to flee from their homes, which means 30,000 people are newly displaced in a day. The Darfur crisis in 2004, Sectarian violence 2006 in Iraq, Arab Spring in 2011 and internal crisis in the Middle East have resulted in huge numbers of newly displaced persons. The Darfur crisis has been termed as the world's worst humanitarian disaster by the United Nations as the government was responsible for the displacement of its people. The conflict began with an attack on the army by the Fur, Massalit and Zaghawa tribes which alleged the government for favouritism towards 'Arab herdsmen' for their increasing encroachment on the farmlands of the black Africans (UNHCR, 2006: 162). The sectarian violence aroused in Iraq after bombing of a Shia shrine-al-Askari in Samarra. The incident gave rise to a sectarian conflict between the Shia and Sunni and to avoid this violence, government began to kill and

persecute people from both the communities which uprooted millions of people from their homes (Khalidi and Tanner, 2006). One of the IDP from Iraq namely Abo Hassan while narrating his story to a Global Overview Reporter in 2015 says, that he was living and working as a farmer with his relatives and they together owned 20 acres of land but after the bombing of the Shrine "Al-Askari" in 2006 they started receiving threats and were being targeted. He continues, "The threats started by hinting indirectly that we are not accepted in the village anymore. Then we started to see threatening words on the walls of the houses. Then it became more serious when several attempts were made to kill members of our families. The message was very clear; leave now or be killed". He further adds that it was very difficult for them to leave the village and migrate to Baghdad as the main road which connects their village to Baghdad was not safe for their families, but they took a risky chance to save their lives. Since then the family has been living in an informal settlement at "Al Qudus" in Nissan District of Baghdad. About his property at home he says, "Our houses in Al-Zaidan village were destroyed but I cannot sell the land because of a tribal chastisement preventing it. I cannot go back there, I went to see what became of it only once, hiding among a big group of visiting people but this rare opportunity, I can only take in very limited times". When he was asked about why he has been living in an informal settlement rather than building any permanent settlement, he replied, "I cannot sell my land to buy somewhere else and replace it. I started a paper work few years ago to get a compensation for the destroyed houses, but then at the police station they told me that the paperwork was lost, leaving us with nothing and still in limbo". In 2011 the people of Middle East and North Africa revolted against the government for socio-economic justice, for which their movement was suppressed by the government and forced them to migrate. This incidence came to be known as 'Arab Spring'. The number of refugees has declined to a larger extent while IDPs tend to increase. Today the IDPs are almost twice than refugees in the world. In 2014 two more countries were added to the list of counties having displaced population. One was Ukraine, where displacement happened for first time and another was El-Salvador, where data became evident for first time. The two countries have added about 935,400 to new displacements worldwide. It has also been found that the countries with vulnerable economies produced majority of new displacements as these were unable to cope with crisis. When there is a displacement in less developed countries, they are not able to respond the short-term needs of IDPs because of their limited resources. (Bilak, et al. 2015).

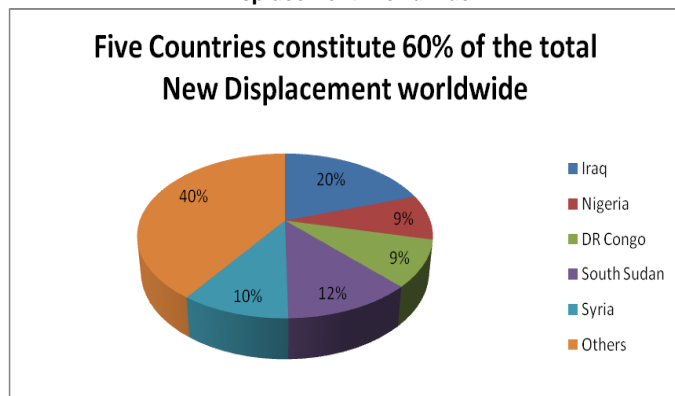
By the end of 2014 there were at least 275,000 internally displaced persons in the 'Occupied Palestine'. These displacements resulted because of the discriminatory policies and practices adopted by the Israeli Government towards the people of Palestine. The conflict has resulted in destruction of homes as well as to the livelihood of the Palestinian by the Israeli forces which in turn forced Palestinian to leave their native places. Not only the destruction to their homes and livelihood has forced Palestinian to leave their homes but they have been forcibly evicted from their homes by the Israeli government since 1967. In August 2014 alone, 1600 houses were destroyed by the Israeli security forces which left people

<sup>4</sup>Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) works under the Norwegian Refugee Council and has been monitoring the internal displacement worldwide since 1998.

displaced. In addition to the destruction there has been an economic blockade to Palestine which prevented international agencies to deliver their responsibilities towards the IDP population of Occupied Palestine. The Israeli government has taken the stand that no international law related to the IDPs is applicable to the territories occupied by them, thus preventing the IDPs to return to their native places (Global Overview, 2015).

Conflict induced displacements may have regional implications too. Conflict in one country can create a 'domino effect'<sup>5</sup> in other countries too such as the internal conflict in Nigeria created displacement in Cameroon in 2014 as it shares its border with Nigeria (Bilak, et al. 2015). Further the existence and subsequent growth of some non-state armed groups (NSAGs) such as The Islamic State (ISIL) in Middle-East, Boko-Haram in West Africa and Al-Shabaab in Africa have forced millions of people to flee from their homes. The main reason for the increase in the number of newly IDPs is the protracted crisis in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo. These five countries alone constitute sixty percent of new displacements worldwide ((Bilak, et al. 2015).

Figure Showing Countries with Highest Percentage of Displacement Worldwide



Source: Bilak, et al, Global Overview 2015

Among the five countries of the world, Iraq suffered the most. The country had at least 2.2 million IDPs which alone constitute 20% of the total IDP population. The main reason for this is that many areas of the country came under the occupation of Islamic State (ISIL), which forced people to migrate other parts of the country. South Sudan which constituted 12% of IDPs, is the second most affected region after Iraq. There were some low intensity conflicts and a few brutal incidents like the 'Ben massacres in the North Kivu' region of South Sudan which caused the displacement of people. As there is no end in the civil war in Syria, it forced at least 1.1 million people to live a life of the displaced. Syria constitutes 10% of world's IDPs population. Nigeria and DR Congo constitute 9% each to the displaced population of the

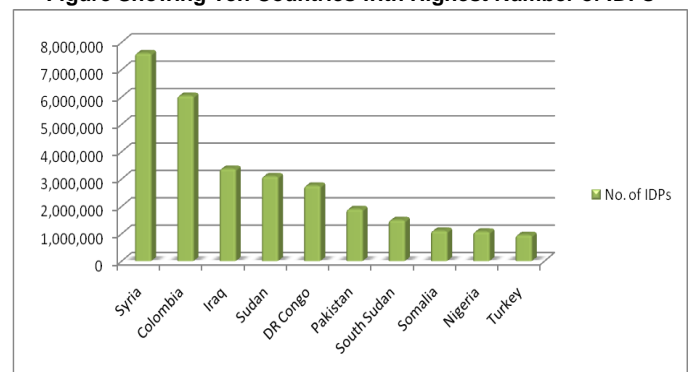
<sup>5</sup> 'Domino

Effect': the consequence of one event setting off a chain of similar events or Repercussion of an act or event under which every associated or connected entity is affected to a more or less the same degree. Its effect was observed in Cameroon as it shares its border with Nigeria.

world. In Nigeria and DR Congo, the reasons for displacement of masses are same, i.e. internal strife in the countries.

In 2014 there were ten countries having highest number of IDPs and these countries constituted 77% of the world's internally displaced persons. These countries include Syria, Colombia, Iraq, Sudan, DR Congo, Pakistan, South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Turkey. In terms of scale of displacement to the population size of country, Syria stands at the top with 7,600,000 IDPs while Turkey stands at the bottom of list with 953,700 IDPs. In all the ten countries the reasons for the displacement has been the same (armed conflicts and generalised violence) though their number differs. It was also found that in South-east Asia, the IDP count has fallen by 65 percent, mainly due to the reduction of conflicts in few countries such as in Philippines and Myanmar. There has been a decrease in the number of IDPs to 855,000 in the South-eastern region, making it the only region with least number of internally displaced persons in 2014 (Global Overview 2015).

Figure Showing Ten Countries with Highest Number of IDPs



Source: Compiled by author from Global Overview 2015

### 5. Conclusion

The continuous struggle between classes, economy and power could lead to conflicts in the society and these conflicts are inevitable elements of the society and thus its consequence too is inevitable. Countries are engaged in one or the other types of conflict over the resources which results in displacement of weaker from their native places. Since the twentieth century there has been a significant growth in the frequency of armed conflicts across the globe. The most affected of these conflicts are those who get dislocated from their native places under unbearable violent conditions. There were around 31.1 million new internal displacements by conflict, violence and disasters in 2016. These internally displaced persons also differ from the refugees (those who cross an international border) as there are no specific international legal instruments in international law to protect the IDPs like the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, nor a mandated institution such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The first and foremost need of the hour is that there should be a proper institution which will collect the data regarding IDPs. Second these IDPs should be protected under international laws like refugees. Third, the United Nations Guiding Principles on International Displacement should be made binding on all member states so that the IDPs get timely assistance and protection from the concerned country.

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