

Fact sheet: 43 million people uprooted by war

Internally displaced persons (IDPs)¹: 27.1 million people are seeking safety from conflict within their own countries.

- Six countries are home to almost half the world's IDPs: **Colombia** (3.3 million), **Democratic Republic of Congo** (over 2 million), **Pakistan** (1.9 million), **Iraq** and **Somalia** (over 1.5 million each) and **Sudan** (1 million). IDPs have fewer rights than refugees.
- Conflict in the northeast of **Democratic Republic of Congo** displaced hundreds of thousands; by the end of 2009, the number of IDPs was estimated at 2.1 million.
- Up to 3 million people were newly displaced in **Pakistan** in mid-2009 due to conflict in the north-west of the country. Although 1.1 million of these IDPs were able to return in 2009, 1.9 million remained displaced within **Pakistan** by year end.
- The situation in central and southern **Somalia** further deteriorated, leading to the displacement of 300,000 people in 2009. The estimated number of IDPs in **Somalia** increased to 1.55 million by year end.
- In **Sudan**, the number of IDPs protected or assisted by UNHCR was approximately one million by year end.
- Significant numbers of people were also internally displaced in **Afghanistan**, **Sri Lanka** and **Yemen** during 2009.

Refugees and asylum seekers¹: 15.2 million refugees have fled to another country in search of safety from conflict. Another **1 million** asylum seekers have applied for protection under international law and are waiting to hear the decision.

- The highest numbers of refugees and asylum seekers are from the **Palestinian Territories** (4.8 million), **Afghanistan** (2.9 million) and **Iraq** (1.8 million).
- Overall, decreases in the **refugee population in some countries were offset by** mass outflows in **others** due to renewed or continuing conflict, such as in **Democratic Republic of Congo** and **Somalia**.
- Developing countries hosted 8.3 million refugees – 80% of the global refugee population. The 49 least-developed countries provided asylum to 1.9 million refugees.
- Asia hosted over half of the global refugee population (54%), followed by Africa (22%), Europe (16%), North America (4%), Latin America and the Caribbean (4%), and Oceania (0.3%).
- **Pakistan**, with 1.7 million refugees, hosted the highest number of refugees at the end of 2009. Other major countries of asylum included **Iran** (1.1 million), **Syria** (1.05 million; government estimate), **Germany** (594,000) and **Jordan** (451,000; government estimate). These five major refugee-hosting countries accounted for almost half (47%) of all refugees under UNHCR's mandate.

Principal health concerns of refugees and IDPs

Measles

Measles remains a leading cause of **mortality in children** in the developing world with close to 30 million cases each year and nearly 350,000 deaths per year². Every day almost one thousand children die from measles, most often in Africa and Asia, usually from complications related to pneumonia, diarrhea and malnutrition. These figures are even more shocking knowing an effective and inexpensive vaccine has existed for more than 30 years. Dense numbers of displaced people often weakened by their displacement are at high risk and so measles is one of the first and main concerns for MSF teams starting to work in a camp. When MSF intervenes in measles outbreaks, our teams provide care for patients (treatment of symptoms of malnutrition after measles, etc.) and conduct a measles vaccination campaign if allowed by local authorities.

¹ Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

² Source: United Nations Children Fund

³ Source: United Nations Population Fund

Cholera

Transferred through fecal-oral contact, cholera is spread via contaminated food and contaminated water. Dense numbers of displaced people living in camps with a lack of sanitary infrastructure are at high risk of this disease in regions where this disease is endemic. In 2009, MSF treated over 130,220 people for cholera.

Malnutrition

Children under the age of five are at greatest risk of malnutrition, but **therapeutic ready-to-use foods** offer hope to aid agencies and governments for the treatment of this preventable disease. MSF estimates that only 3% of the 20 million children suffering from severe acute malnutrition receive the treatment they need. In 2008 and 2009, more than 720,000 children (in 34 countries) received malnutrition treatment in MSF projects.

Women's health

According to 2008 estimations³, nearly 358,000 women in the world – 1000 woman every day – die due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Seventy to 80% of refugees and displaced persons are women and children. MSF integrates the specific vulnerability of women in its operational approach and pays particular attention to women living in camps by adapting its logistics infrastructure (shelters, location of toilets, water and food). As well, despite the difficulties (fear of reprisal, stigma and the law of silence) MSF organizes medical and psychological care for survivors of sexual violence.

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¹ Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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