

Displacement severity:

Assessing the severity of displacement
situations: data gaps and ways forward

Acknowledgements

Authors: Chloe Sydney and Alesia O'Connor, with contributions from Melissa Keles, Aurelie Hutzli, and Elisha Bugarin.

Graphic design and layout: Vivcie Bendo and Julie Schneider

Cover photo: *Displaced families in Plaine Savo camp in Ituri, DRC.* © Hugh Kinsella Cunningham/NRC, 2022



Student in Dabat Bosin camp, Sudan.
© Ahmed Omer/NRC, 2022



Table of contents

6

Introduction

8

A revised methodology

11

Findings and limitations

12

Spotlights on Iraq and CAR

19

Ways forward

26

Endnotes



A school destroyed as a result of conflict in southern Afghanistan, Kandahar. © Enayatullah Azad/NRC

Introduction

Filling a knowledge gap

Internally displaced people (IDPs) account for more than half of the world's forcibly displaced population, but there is relatively little information on the conditions they face.¹ Behind the figures published in IDMC's annual Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) are millions of IDPs with vastly different experiences.

In Iraq, our research team met Amal, who was living in a damaged school in Mosul. "I returned to my home and found it completely destroyed, just a pile of stones," she said. "So I went to live in a school. I live with ten families. Each family lives in a classroom where there are no services, doors or windows. It is so cold here, it's not a life."²

In Colombia, Daniel has been provided with free social housing, but he worries about violence and insecurity in his neighbourhood. "The police have no power here, on Sunday they were expelled with machetes," he said. "Demobilised fighters have started taking control of some of the buildings. Young people are involved in gangs."³

Amal and Daniel are just two of the world's 59.1 million IDPs. The different challenges they face demonstrate the importance of going beyond the numbers to better understand the severity of internal displacement.

Our assessments are intended to start filling this knowledge gap by calling attention to situations of particular concern, highlighting some of the main threats to IDPs' safety and wellbeing and helping to measure their progress in achieving durable solutions.

The ultimate aim is to support governments, humanitarian and development organisations and their donors in prioritising their responses to displacement by providing them with a reliable and trusted assessment of its severity.

Conceptualising displacement severity

We first identified the need to better understand the differing levels of displacement severity in 2017. Our original internal concept note stated that the main purpose was "to disaggregate stocks of IDPs by severity in order to call attention to those situations requiring the most attention". After extensive consultations and a review of related initiatives, our first methodology was published in 2019.⁴

To enable comparisons across a wide range of countries, and in the absence of reliable and systematic data collection against quantitative indicators, the assessment was designed as a qualitative exercise using a standardised set of evaluation criteria to optimise consistency and comparability across situations.

The criteria were based on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)'s eight benchmarks for durable solutions: safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to effective remedies and justice.⁵ We used this methodology to conduct assessments of displacement severity in 2019 and 2020.⁶

These exposed some significant limitations, including inconsistency in defining the populations under study, the exclusion of disaster displacement and variations in the interpretation of questions and associated response options.⁷ We attempted, for example, to identify distinct caseloads of IDPs with similar experiences of displacement in each country studied. This resulted in a variety of caseloads defined by their location, demography, length of displacement or trigger. We did not, however, attempt to identify and assess all possible caseloads in any given country. Those displaced by disasters, in particular, were excluded given anticipated lack of data.



Mohammed Saif with his daughter Khatima outside the family's shelter in wintery conditions in Kabul's Charqala-e Wazirabad IDP camp.
© Christian Jepsen/NRC

As a result, severity scores were often skewed towards specific caseloads, at times disregarding other groups of IDPs. Nor did we try to weight each caseload according to population size when various caseloads were included, leading to potentially unbalanced country averages.

Despite basing our assessment on the IASC framework, a lack of clear definitions and the complexity of the situations under study meant that many of the questions and response options were open to differing interpretations. "No housing solution", for example, could be interpreted both as total homelessness and lack of housing assistance. Such inconsistencies undermined the quality of the assessment and the comparability of scores between countries.

A revised methodology

Drawing on these lessons learned we developed a revised methodology for our severity assessments in 2021. Given the continued absence of reliable data on standardised global-level indicators, the exercise remains predominantly qualitative, drawing upon a combination of our expertise and rigorous desk research. To address some of the limitations discussed, however, it was designed to take the country's entire population of IDPs into account, including those displaced by disasters as well as conflict.

Assessment components

The revised assessment is still based on IASC's durable solutions criteria, but now includes 18 questions grouped into four categories: safety and security; standards of living; basic services; and civic and social rights. To maximise its relevance, the updated questions focus on IDPs' most severe experiences. Definitions and clarifications on key terminology are also provided to ensure consistent interpretation (see annex 1). One component of the assessment, for example, focuses on exposure to serious consequences as a result of conflict and violence, which are understood as "loss of life, serious injury, significant loss of property or disruption of livelihood means", as defined in the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) indicator library.⁸

Response options have also been standardised, focusing on the estimated proportion of IDPs who experience certain conditions: almost all (>75%), most (50-75%), many (25-50%), some (<25%) and none (0%). The fact that quantitative data would rarely be available was anticipated during the development of the revised methodology, but it was expected that there would in most cases be enough qualitative information to select one of the above response options.

Safety and security
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Q1. What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of conflict or violence? ● Q2. What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of explosive hazards? ● Q3. What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of natural hazards? ● Q4. What proportion of IDPs are subject to harassment, intimidation or persecution? ● Q5. What proportion of IDPs are subject to sexual and gender-based violence?
Standards of living
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Q6. What proportion of IDPs have insufficient income to meet their basic needs? ● Q7. What proportion of IDPs are experiencing food insecurity? ● Q8. What proportion of IDPs have no or limited access to social support or humanitarian assistance? ● Q9. What proportion of IDPs are living in inadequate housing?
Basic services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Q10. What proportion of IDPs do not have access to safe drinking water from an improved water source? ● Q11. What proportion of IDPs do not have access to improved sanitation facilities? ● Q12. What proportion of IDPs have no or limited access to affordable essential healthcare services? ● Q13. What proportion of displaced children of primary-school age are not receiving an education?
Civic and social rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Q14. What proportion of IDPs have no valid birth certificates, national ID cards or other necessary personal identification documents relevant to the context? ● Q15. What proportion of IDPs are separated from family members? ● Q16. What proportion of IDPs are unable to vote in local or national elections as a result of their displacement? ● Q17. What proportion of IDPs have no access to effective remedies and justice, including on housing, land and property (HLP)? ● Q18. What proportion of IDPs face restrictions to their freedom of movement as a result of their displacement?

Figure 1. Severity questions

Scoring

Based on the revised response options, each question is scored from one to five, with five being the most severe score and one the least. If not enough data is available to answer a particular question, it is left blank and not included in the overall score. An average is then calculated for each of the four categories, and in turn the average of the four categories gives the country's overall severity score.

A score of five would indicate a country with extreme levels of displacement severity, while a score of one would suggest its IDPs are well on their way to achieving durable solutions.

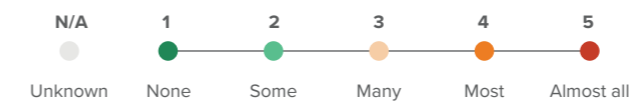


Figure 2. Scoring



Baga Sola hosts a large number of IDPs, refugees and returnees who have fled violence inside Chad. © UNHCR/Sylvain Cherkaoui

Findings and limitations

The revised methodology was expected to significantly increase the reliability, comparability and validity of our severity assessments, creating a higher quality tool to better support decision making and informed investment. It was tested on 40 countries with high levels of internal displacement.

Significant data gaps remain

Despite improvements on the previous iteration, significant issues remain in terms of data availability. Even as a qualitative exercise, it proved difficult to select responses based on limited contextual information.

In terms of the proportion of IDPs at risk of serious consequences from natural hazards in Syria, for example, the country's Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) states that "torrential rain and strong winds in Aleppo governorate damaged or destroyed at least 25,000 tents in 407 IDP sites, leaving 142,000 people living in increasingly unsanitary and unsafe conditions, including persistent standing water". It also notes that "drought like conditions and water shortages have posed challenges for both in-camp populations and host communities" in north-east Syria.⁹

Should we conclude that "some" or "many" IDPs are affected? Despite the relevant contextual information, any choice of response option is subjective and arbitrary in the absence of additional quantitative data. In other cases, available information, whether qualitative or quantitative, refers to the entire population of a given country rather than IDPs specifically. The World Bank estimates that around 70% of the population of the Central African Republic (CAR) live in extreme poverty.¹⁰ Should we assume the same for a similar percentage of IDPs and conclude that "most" are unable to afford to meet their basic needs?



Anderson, along with his mother, father, brother and niece, fled their homes in south-western Colombia as a result of armed fighting in October 2021.
© Tomás Méndez/NRC/Consortio MIRE

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18
Afghanistan	Most	Many	Many	Many	Many	Most	Most	Many	A. all	A. all	Many	Some	Many	Most	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Burkina Faso	Some	A. all	n/a	n/a	Some	Most	Most	Some	Many	Many	Most	Some	Most	Many	Some	n/a	Many	Many
Cameroon	Most	Many	n/a	Many	Many	Many	A. all	Many	Most	Many	Most	Many	Most	Many	Many	n/a	n/a	n/a
CAR	Most	Many	Many	n/a	Some	Most	Most	n/a	Most	Most	Most	Most	Most	A. all	Some	Most	A. all	Many
Chad	Most	Many	n/a	n/a	Many	Many	A. all	Many	Most	Many	Most	Many	Most	Many	Many	n/a	n/a	Many
Iraq	Some	Some	Some	Some	Many	A. all	Some	n/a	Many	Some	Some	Some	Some	Many	Some	n/a	Most	Some
Somalia	Most	Some	Many	Many	Some	A. all	Most	Some	Most	Most	Most	Many	A. all	n/a	Many	n/a	Many	n/a
Syria	Most	Many	Many	Many	Some	A. all	Some	n/a	Many	Most	Many	Many	Some	Some	Some	n/a	n/a	n/a

Table 1. Assessment results – all confidence levels

Quantitative data disaggregated by displacement status (high confidence) Contextual or countrywide information (low confidence) Insufficient data

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18
Afghanistan	Most					Most	Most	Many	A. all	A. all	Many		Many	Most				
Burkina Faso	Some	A. all			Some			Some	Many	Many	Most	Some	Most					
Cameroon					Many		A. all		Most					Many				
CAR	Most						Most		Most	Most	Most	Most	Most	A. all	Some			Many
Chad									Many	Most								
Iraq		Some			Many	A. all	Some		Many	Some	Some	Some	Some	Many	Some			Most
Somalia		Some			Some	A. all	Most		Most	Most	Most	Many	A. all		Many			
Syria	Most					A. all	Some		Many	Most				Some	Some			

Table 2. Assessment results – high confidence

Similarly in Afghanistan, 19 per cent of households who participated in a recent countrywide assessment said they did not have an active health centre in or close to their village.¹¹ Can we therefore report that "some" IDPs have no or limited access to affordable essential healthcare services?

To uphold the objectiveness and reliability of the assessment, despite having envisioned it as a qualitative exercise, we decided to rely only on trusted quantitative data referring specifically to IDPs. Exposure to natural hazards in Syria notwithstanding, HNOs proved the most reliable source, but this only served to further highlight the scale of data gaps.

The tables above, which display assessment results for eight countries with HNOs, illustrate the scarcity of quantitative data disaggregated by displacement status. Once responses for which only contextual or countrywide information is available are discarded, huge gaps emerge.

The scale of data gaps affects our ability to calculate reliable severity scores. We have higher confidence in responses based on quantitative data disaggregated by

displacement status, but this approach results in many more unanswered questions, which undermines the scoring itself. Fewer questions go unanswered if we retain responses based on contextual or countrywide information, but the scoring that emerges is marred by low confidence in the selected response options.

Some data gaps could easily be filled by using the additional data which informs HNOs, but is not necessarily made public. Iraq's humanitarian community offers an example of good practice in this sense. The HNO shares findings of the latest multi-cluster needs assessment (MCNA) disaggregated by displacement status, and the full dataset is publicly available on the humanitarian data exchange (HDX) platform.¹²

The following spotlights on Iraq and on the Central African Republic illustrate what severity assessments can look like when sufficient data is available.

Spotlight: displacement severity in Iraq¹³

Overall displacement severity in Iraq is mid-range. Based on the quantitative data on IDPs that appears in the country's HNO, its score is 2.65. Severity is highest in terms of living standards.

		Response	Score	Average score
Safety and security	What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of conflict or violence?	Unknown		2.50
	What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of explosive hazards?	Some	2	
	What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of natural hazards?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs are subject to harassment, intimidation or persecution?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs are subject to sexual and gender-based violence?	Many	3	
Standards of living	What proportion of IDPs have insufficient income to meet their basic needs?	Almost all	5	3.33
	What proportion of IDPs are experiencing food insecurity?	Some	2	
	What proportion of IDPs have no or limited access to social support or humanitarian assistance?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs are living in inadequate housing?	Many	3	
Basic services	What proportion of IDPs do not have access to safe drinking water from an improved water source?	Some	2	2.00
	What proportion of IDPs do not have access to improved sanitation facilities?	Some	2	
	What proportion of IDPs have no or limited access to affordable essential healthcare services?	Some	2	
	Among IDPs, what proportion of primary-age children are not receiving an education?	Some	2	
Civic and social rights	What proportion of IDPs have no valid birth certificates, national ID cards or other necessary personal identification documents relevant to the context?	Many	3	2.75
	What proportion of IDPs are separated from family members?	Some	2	
	What proportion of IDPs are unable to vote in local or national elections as a result of their displacement?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs have no access to effective remedies and justice, including HLP?	Most	4	
	What proportion of IDPs face restrictions to their freedom of movement as a result of their displacement?	Some	2	
Total Severity Score			2.65	

Table 3. Displacement severity in Iraq

Widespread social, ethnic and sectarian tensions mean Iraq's IDPs face significant protection risks, including physical harm. Around a third are at risk of gender-based violence (GBV), and a fifth are exposed to the threats posed by explosive ordnance. Those with perceived ties to extremists face violations of their rights and discrimination in accessing services. Natural hazards are also a threat. Hundreds of returnee households have been displaced again as a result of water scarcity.

Standards of living vary between IDPs living in and outside camps, though the vast majority of both groups - 90 and 87 per cent respectively - are unable to meet their basic needs. Among out-of-camp IDPs, 15 per cent of households report moderate or severe hunger, compared with four per cent among their counterparts in camps. All of the latter and 14 per cent of out-of-camp IDPs are reported to be living in critical shelter conditions, predominantly tents.

Virtually all IDPs regardless of their setting have access to a primary healthcare facility within an hour of their dwellings, and almost all have access to improved sanitation facilities. Only 67 per cent of in-camp households, however, have access to improved water sources, compared with 90 per cent of their out-of-camp counterparts. Nearly a fifth of all displaced children of school age were not enrolled in school for the 2020 to 2021 academic year, and many more did not have to access to distance-learning while schools were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

IDPs' ability to exercise their civic and social rights is hampered by lack of documentation. Twenty-eight per cent of those in camps and 25 per cent of those outside camps are missing at least one key document. This is likely to further complicate access to remedies and justice, which is already undermined by inefficient compensation mechanisms for housing, land, and property. Only around one per cent of IDPs in camps have received such compensation.

Missing documentation may also impede freedom of movement for in-camp IDPs, and in some cases even those with adequate documents may face restrictions, such as those imposed in six camps in the second and third quarter of 2021. This may also affect prospects for family reunification. Data is unavailable for in-camp IDPs, but 16 per cent of households outside camps have children who no longer live with them because they have left in search of work.

Note: all data presented in this spotlight appear in Iraq's HNO.¹⁴

In Mosul, Iraq, 12-year-old Yousef holds destroyed books at Jummuria Secondary School, which was severely damaged by shelling.
© UNICEF/UN0611862/Ibarra Sánchez

Spotlight: displacement severity in the Central African Republic¹⁵

Displacement severity is relatively high in CAR. Based on the limited quantitative data on IDPs that appear in the country's HNO, its score is 3.83. Data is most widely available on IDPs' access to basic services, but the gaps across other dimensions are a significant limitation.

		Response	Score	Average score
Safety and security	What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of conflict or violence?	Most	4	4.00
	What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of explosive hazards?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of natural hazards?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs are subject to harassment, intimidation or persecution?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs are subject to sexual and gender-based violence?	Unknown		
Standards of living	What proportion of IDPs have insufficient income to meet their basic needs?	Unknown		4.00
	What proportion of IDPs are experiencing food insecurity?	Most	4	
	What proportion of IDPs have no or limited access to social support or humanitarian assistance?	Unknown		
Basic services	What proportion of IDPs are living in inadequate housing?	Most	4	4.00
	What proportion of IDPs do not have access to safe drinking water from an improved water source?	Most	4	
	What proportion of IDPs do not have access to improved sanitation facilities?	Most	4	
	What proportion of IDPs have no or limited access to affordable essential healthcare services?	Most	4	
Civic and social rights	Among IDPs, what proportion of primary-age children are not receiving an education?	Most	4	3.33
	What proportion of IDPs have no valid birth certificates, national ID cards or other necessary personal identification documents relevant to the context?	Almost all	5	
	What proportion of IDPs are separated from family members?	Some	2	
	What proportion of IDPs are unable to vote in local or national elections as a result of their displacement?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs have no access to effective remedies and justice, including HLP?	Unknown		
	What proportion of IDPs face restrictions to their freedom of movement as a result of their displacement?	Many	3	
Total Severity Score			83	

Table 4. Displacement severity in CAR

Ongoing conflict and violence in CAR threaten the safety and security of the country's IDPs. More than a fifth of those living in camps report having been affected by violence in the past month, and one estimate suggests that a quarter deaths among IDPs are the result of armed conflict. An increase in the use of explosive ordnance was reported in 2021, leading to civilian casualties. Sexual violence is a particular concern for women and girls, but its prevalence among displaced populations is unknown. The country is also affected by natural hazards including flooding, wild-fires and water scarcity.

Around 70 per cent of CAR's population live in extreme poverty, and IDPs' living standards are low. More than half of those in camps live in inadequate shelters, and food insecurity is high. Almost 70 per cent of all IDPs and returnees experience moderate food insecurity and a further 6.8 per cent are severely food insecure.

Their access to services is also limited. They face particular challenges in accessing safe drinking water, and dissatisfaction with available sanitation is high, at 73 per cent among those in camps and 70 per cent among those living in other settings. Seventy-one per cent of all IDPs are thought to be in need of health assistance. School enrolment for displaced children aged four to six fell to only 34 per cent countrywide in 2021, with those living outside camps particularly affected.

Growing insecurity means that more than a third of all IDPs face restrictions on their freedom of movement, and fewer than 13 per cent are thought to hold valid personal documents, complicating their access to services and civic and social rights. A truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation commission was set up in late 2020, but it is not yet operational and awareness of it among the population is limited. It is unclear how many IDPs will be able to vote in this year's local elections, although efforts are being made to facilitate their registration.

Note: all data presented in this spotlight appear in CAR's HNO.¹⁶

Displaced by violence, hundred of families are living on the PK5 site in Carnot, CAR.

© Hajer Naili/NRC

Improving data interoperability

Beyond significant data gaps, additional challenges in terms of interoperability were also identified.

HNOs often use different indicators for different countries and years, making it difficult to ensure comparability at the global level and over time. This is illustrated by the information used to estimate the proportion of IDPs at risk of serious consequences from conflict and violence in Syria, Burkina Faso and Afghanistan:

- More than half of Syria's IDPs report safety and security concerns¹⁷
- Ninety-one per cent of Burkina Faso's IDPs feel safe in their host communities¹⁸
- Fifty-six per cent of Afghanistan's IDPs report at least one traumatic incident within the household¹⁹

All three cases provide data relevant to IDPs' experiences of conflict and violence, but the different indicators limit the comparability of the findings. Streamlining data collection in humanitarian emergencies to ensure it is systematically based on standardised indicators would facilitate comparisons between countries beyond the scope of our severity assessments, and should be encouraged. This is one of the aims of the multi-agency Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework, the next version of which is expected to be rolled out with the 2024 humanitarian programme cycle.²⁰

Sometimes various indicators are reported on for a given topic within a single HNO, making it difficult to decide which to use. Iraq's, for example, gives data not only on the percentage of IDPs with access to a primary health-care facility within an hour of their dwellings, but also on the percentage with access to a hospital with emergency, maternity, surgical and paediatric services less than an hour away.²¹ Based on the first indicator, we would report that "some" IDPs have no or limited access to affordable essential healthcare services, but based on the second it would be "many".



IDPs in Louda, Centre-North region of Burkina Faso. © Jacques BOUDA/NRC

The revised methodology presented in this report was designed to improve the reliability, comparability and validity of our severity assessments, but piloting made it clear that data gaps continue to be a major limitation. There are a number of possible ways to overcome this challenge:

1

Option 1. A simplified quantitative approach

A wide range of data on humanitarian needs is collected during emergencies. By focusing exclusively on these settings, identifying indicators for which data is consistently available and working closely with partners to encourage greater data sharing, better assessments of displacement severity could be produced.

The main caveat to this approach is that it would limit the geographical scope of our assessments. Countries which are not the object of a widescale humanitarian response would be excluded even if they experience significant displacement. China, which recorded the world's highest number of disaster displacements in 2021, would be one notable example.²²

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a measurement tool that relies on existing quantitative data, namely life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling and gross national income per capita.²³ When data gaps are encountered, it relies either on alternative sources – such as mean years of schooling in neighbouring Austria for Liechtenstein, or cross-country regression models – to generate “imputed” indicators.²⁴ Because displacement conditions vary so much between countries, however, this method could not be applied to our severity assessments.

2

Option 2. Primary quantitative data collection

The ideal solution would be to base our severity assessments on primary quantitative data collection. Existing questions could be adapted and used to conduct a representative household survey with IDPs in any given country. This would also make it possible to disaggregate severity by gender, age and other characteristics. Given the associated costs, however, the scope of the assessments would be constrained by available resources. Only a limited number of countries could be included.

A less costly alternative would be to rely on key informant interviews with representatives of IDPs. To ensure reliability, a number of key informants would be needed in each country to represent IDPs in different settings. This is similar to the approach that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq uses to compile its returns index. As its methodological overview states: “The advantage of using key informants is that many locations can be covered in a short period of time. However, its key limitation is that it relies on one representative reporting on the views of a potentially large and diverse set of returnees.”²⁵

3

Option 3. Top-level expert opinion

Rather than attempting to calculate a severity score by answering a series of related questions, another option might be to rely on experts to assign a single score based on set definitions of different levels of displacement severity. The Political Terror Scale provides an example of this kind of approach. Researchers rely on Amnesty International’s annual country reports, the US State Department’s country reports on human rights practices and Human Rights Watch’s world reports to assign countries a score of one to five as illustrated below.²⁶

Such an approach could work for our displacement severity assessments if appropriate definitions of its varying levels were agreed upon through a consultative process with other stakeholders. The end-product, however, would only enable comparisons of displacement severity. It would provide no insight into the main threats to IDPs’ safety and wellbeing.

Political Terror Scale Levels

Level	Interpretation
1	Countries under a secure rule of law, people are not imprisoned for their views, and torture is rare or exceptional. Political murders are extremely rare.
2	There is a limited amount of imprisonment, for nonviolent political activity. However, few persons are affected, torture and beatings are exceptional. Political murder is rare.
3	There is extensive political imprisonment, or a recent history of such imprisonment. Execution or other political murders and brutality may be common. Unlimited detention, with or without a trial, for political views is accepted.
4	Civil and political rights violations have expanded to large numbers of the population. Murders, disappearances, and tortures are a common part of life. In spite of its generality, on this level terror affects those who interest themselves in politics or ideas.
5	Terror has expanded to the whole population. The leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals.

Figure 3. Political Terror Scale levels ²⁷

Acceptable trade-offs

None of these options are without limitations. Assessments based only on expert opinion could be global in scope, but they would be subjective. Relying on existing quantitative data disaggregated by displacement status would risk making IDPs such as those in the Northern Triangle of Central America who already receive only limited attention and assistance less visible still.²⁸ Primary data collection would have to be limited to a small number of countries because of resource constraints.

Perhaps the best way forward is a combination of different approaches, for example by conducting primary data collection in under-researched countries with high levels of displacement to complement an otherwise quantitative exercise that draws on data informing Humanitarian Needs Overviews and associated response plans. This is the path we will pursue from now on in our efforts to ensure that the most severe displacement situations across the world are made visible to aid providers and decision makers.



A farmer checks the small trees he has planted in this inhospitable camp in the desert outside Ma'rib city, Yemen. © Hamza Al-Qadimi/NRC, 2021

Annex 1. Revised severity assessment



Safety and security	1. What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of conflict or violence?		Serious consequence' is to be understood as loss of life, serious injury, significant loss of property or disruption of livelihood means. (Source: JIPS)
	Almost all	5	Conflict and violence can include international armed conflict, non-international armed conflict and other situations of violence, as detailed in IDMC's Violence typology. (Source: IDMC)
	Most	4	
	Many	3	
	Some	2	
	None	1	
	Unknown	-	
	2. What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of explosive hazards?		Serious consequence' is to be understood as loss of life, serious injury, significant loss of property or disruption of livelihood means. (Source: JIPS)
	Almost all	5	In this context, explosive hazards are understood to include landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). For more information on these different types of explosive hazards, see here: https://unmas.org/sites/default/files/handbook_english.pdf
	Most	4	
	Many	3	
	Some	2	
	None	1	
	Unknown	-	
	3. What proportion of IDPs are at risk of serious consequences as a result of natural hazards?		Serious consequence' is to be understood as loss of life, serious injury, significant loss of property or disruption of livelihood means. (Source: JIPS)
	Almost all	5	Natural hazards are defined as naturally occurring physical phenomena. They can be: – Geophysical: a hazard originating from solid earth (such as earthquakes, landslides and volcanic activity) – Hydrological: caused by the occurrence, movement and distribution of water on earth (such as floods and avalanches) – Climatological: relating to the climate (such as droughts and wildfires) – Meteorological: relating to weather conditions (such as cyclones and storms) – Biological: caused by exposure to living organisms and their toxic substances or diseases they may carry (such as disease epidemics and insect/animal plagues) (Source: IFRC)
	Most	4	
	Many	3	
	Some	2	
	None	1	
	Unknown	-	
	4. What proportion of IDPs are subject to harassment, intimidation or persecution?		Harassment should be understood as any behaviour that causes deliberate mental or emotional suffering. Intimidation is the action of threatening or frightening someone, usually in order to force someone to do something. Persecution is unfair or cruel treatment over an extended period because of race, religion, political beliefs or membership of a specific social group. (Source: Cambridge Dictionary)
	Almost all	5	Note that this should not include SGBV since this is covered by the following question.
	Most	4	
	Many	3	
	Some	2	
	None	1	
	Unknown	-	
	5. What proportion of IDPs are subject to sexual and gender-based violence?		Gender-Based Violence (GBV), sometimes also referred to as Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), is any harmful act of sexual, physical, psychological, mental, and/or emotional abuse that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. (Source: UN OCHA)
	Almost all	5	If it is unclear whether SGBV has occurred, or there is no documented evidence, the question should not be answered (as with all questions in the assessment).
	Most	4	
	Many	3	
	Some	2	
	None	1	
	Unknown	-	



Standards of living	6. What proportion of IDPs have insufficient income to meet their basic needs?		Basic needs are understood to include the minimum requirements of a family for private consumption (adequate food, shelter and clothing, as well as certain household equipment and furniture), plus essential services such as safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport, health, and education. (Source: Declaration of principles of the 1976 World Employment Conference)
	Almost all	5	
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		
	7. What proportion of IDPs are experiencing food insecurity?		Where data is available, food insecurity should be understood as crisis level food insecurity and above on the IPC scale. At a minimum, this means that households have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; or are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies. (Source: IPC)
	Almost all	5	
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		
	8. What proportion of IDPs have no or limited access to humanitarian or social assistance?		In this context, humanitarian or social assistance should be understood as any programme that provides income support or in-kind assistance to individuals in need, irrespective of the provider.
	Almost all	5	
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		
	9. What proportion of IDPs are living in inadequate housing?		Housing is considered adequate if it is safe, secure, weather-appropriate and meets international minimum standards. Shelters provided in camps may constitute adequate housing if this criteria is met.
	Almost all	5	
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		

Basic services	10. What proportion of IDPs do not have access to safe drinking water from an improved water source?		Improved drinking water sources include the following: piped water into dwelling, yard or plot; public taps or standpipes; boreholes or tubewells; protected dug wells; protected springs; packaged water; delivered water and rainwater. (Source: JIPS)
	Almost all	5	
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		
	11. What proportion of IDPs do not have access to improved sanitation facilities?		An improved sanitation facility is one that likely hygienically separates human excreta from human contact. Improved sanitation facilities include: Flush or pour-flush to piped sewer system, septic tank or pit latrine, Ventilated improved pit latrine, Pit latrine with slab and Composting toilet. However, sanitation facilities are not considered improved when shared with other households, or open to public use. (Source: WHO)
	Almost all	5	
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		
	12. What proportion of IDPs have no or limited access to affordable essential healthcare services?		Essential health services include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access. (Source: JIPS)
	Almost all	5	
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		
	13. Among IDPs, what proportion of primary-age children are not receiving an education?		Primary education is typically designed for children age 6-11, although this may vary by country. (Source: UNICEF)
	Almost all	5	
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		

Civic and social rights	14. What proportion of IDPs have no valid birth certificates, national ID cards or other necessary personal identification documents relevant to the context?		<i>This should be understood to include all essential civil documentation required in a given context.</i>
	Almost all	5	
	Most	4	
	Many	3	
	Some	2	
	None	1	
	Unknown	-	
	15. What proportion of IDPs are separated from family members?		<i>This should be understood to include only family members formerly living in the same household, rather than extended family members. Separation should be due to displacement or the drivers thereof, not personal factors (e.g. divorce).</i>
	Almost all	1	
	Most	2	
	Many	3	
	Some	4	
	None	5	
	Unknown	-	
	16. What proportion of IDPs are unable to vote in local or national elections as a result of their displacement?		<i>This question should be answered only if elections do indeed take place in the country of origin. Barriers associated with displacement could include for example a requirement to vote in areas of origin, lack of necessary documentation, harassment or discrimination.</i>
	Almost all	5	
	Most	4	
	Many	3	
	Some	2	
	None	1	
Unknown	-		
17. What proportion of IDPs have no access to effective remedies and justice, including HLP?		<i>Effective remedies include equal and effective access to justice; adequate, effective and prompt reparation for harm suffered; and access to relevant information concerning violations and reparation mechanisms. (Source: IASC framework)</i>	
Almost all	1		
Most	2		
Many	3		
Some	4		
None	5		
Unknown	-		
18. What proportion of IDPs face restrictions to their freedom of movement as a result of their displacement?		<i>This should not include Covid-19 related restrictions, or any restrictions experienced equally by both displaced and non-displaced communities.</i>	
Almost all	5		
Most	4		
Many	3		
Some	2		
None	1		
Unknown	-		



*Vulnerable families in Qamishli, Syria, receive food distributions during a snowstorm.
© Tareq Mnadili/NRC, 2022*

- 1 UNHCR, [Figures at a Glance](#), 2022
- 2 All names have been changed; IDMC, [Nowhere to return to: Iraqis' search for durable solutions continues](#), 2018
- 3 IDMC, [Stuck in the middle: Seeking durable solutions in post-peace agreement Colombia](#), 2019
- 4 IDMC, [Impact and experience: Assessing severity of conflict displacement](#), 2019
- 5 IASC, [Framework on durable solutions for internally displaced persons](#), 2010
- 6 IDMC, [Assessing the severity of displacement](#), 2020; IDMC, [Severity of internal displacement](#), 2021
- 7 IDMC, [Reflecting on displacement severity](#), February 2020
- 8 JIPS, [Durable solutions indicators and guide](#)
- 9 OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#), 2022
- 10 OCHA, [Aperçu des Besoins Humanitaires: République Centrafricaine](#), 2022
- 11 OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Afghanistan](#), 2022
- 12 OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Iraq, 2022](#); HDX, [Iraq – Multi Cluster Needs Assessment \(MCNA\) IX-2021](#)
- 13 OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Iraq, 2022](#)
- 14 OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Iraq, 2022](#)
- 15 OCHA, [Aperçu des besoins humanitaires: République centrafricaine](#), 2022
- 16 OCHA, [Aperçu des besoins humanitaires: République centrafricaine](#), 2022
- 17 OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic](#), 2022
- 18 OCHA, [Aperçu des Besoins Humanitaires: Burkina Faso](#), 2022
- 19 OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Afghanistan](#), 2022
- 20 [Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework](#)
- 21 OCHA, [Humanitarian Needs Overview: Iraq, 2022](#)
- 22 IDMC, [Global Report on Internal Displacement](#), 2022
- 23 UNDP, [Human Development Index](#)
- 24 UNDP, [Human Development Index](#)
- 25 IOM, [Return Index Methodological Overview - Iraq, 2020](#)
- 26 The Political Terror Scale, [Documentation: Coding Rules](#)
- 27 The Political Terror Scale, [Documentation: Coding Rules](#)
- 28 IDMC, [Painting the full picture: displacement data gaps in the NTCA](#), 2019



A Yazidi farmer in Sinjar shows how the drought ruined his tomatoes. August 2021.

© Fared Baram/NRC

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.



The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

La Voie-Creuse 16, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland

+41 22 552 3600 | info@idmc.ch



internal-displacement.org



twitter.com/IDMC_Geneva



facebook.com/IDMC.Geneva



youtube.com/c/InternalDisplacementMonitoringCentreIDMC



linkedin.com/company/idmc-geneva