Forced Displacement in a Global Context

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Overview

• What is forced displacement?
  ➢ Global trends

• Different types of forced displacement:
  ➢ Armed conflict – Syria
  ➢ Human rights abuses – Rohingya
  ➢ Climate change – Horn of Africa
  ➢ Disasters – Mozambique
“We are witnessing a changed reality in that forced displacement nowadays is not only vastly more widespread but is simply no longer a short-term and temporary phenomenon.”

Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (June 2020)
Terminology & Sources

**International Displacement**

- OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1969)
- Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (1984)
- Protection Agenda for Disaster- & Climate-Induced Cross-Border Displacement (2015)
- Global Compact on Refugees (2018)

**Internal Displacement**

- AU Kampala Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009)
Continuum of Displacement

Voluntary

Involuntary

Forced

Graeme Hugo, ‘Environmental Concerns and International Migration’ (Spring 1996) 30(1) International Migration Review 105
Forced Displacement in 2020

82.4 MILLION
FORCIBLY DISPLACED WORLDWIDE
at the end of 2020 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.

- 26.4 million refugees
- 20.7 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate
- 5.7 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA’s mandate
- 48.0 million internally displaced people
- 4.1 million asylum-seekers
- 3.9 million Venezuelans displaced abroad

UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020*
Major increase in forced displacement between 2010 and 2020
Countries of origin

- Syria: 7
- Venezuela: 4
- Afghanistan: 3
- South Sudan: 2
- Myanmar: 1

Host countries

- Turkey: 4
- Colombia: 3
- Germany: 2
- Pakistan: 1
- Uganda: 1

UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020*
Causes of Displacement: Armed Conflict Syria

- 6.6 million Syrian refugees – with 5.6 million of these seeking protection in nearby countries
- 6.7 million internally displaced within Syria, including over 1 million new displacements during 2020
Armed Conflict: Syria

Ongoing impacts:

→ A decade of conflict has left the country devastated – families separated, long-term physical and mental disabilities resulting from conflict, destruction of homes / schools / hospitals

→ Most Syrian refugees and IDPs have been displaced for years – intergenerational trauma of displacement
  – Plus new displacements are still occurring

→ Challenge of finding durable solutions: voluntary return, local integration or resettlement
Causes of Displacement:
Human Rights Abuses
Rohingya (Myanmar)

- **2017**: extreme violence against the Muslim Rohingya community lead to massive internal displacement, then cross-border displacement into Bangladesh
- As of July 2021, over 1 million Rohingya have fled to other countries – largest displacement in Asia since 1970s
Human Rights Abuses: Rohingya (Myanmar)

Ongoing impacts:

→ Physical and psychological impact of physical, mental and sexual trauma
→ Forcible returns from Bangladesh to Myanmar
→ International legal responses:
  − Nov 2019: The Gambia commenced a case against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice on the basis that genocide was being committed against the Rohingya
  − International Criminal Court is also investigating if crimes against humanity or genocide have occurred
→ Recent political coup in Myanmar
Causes of Displacement:
Climate Change
Horn of Africa

- **2020**: 5 million people displaced by disasters and conflict
- Long-term, pre-existing systemic vulnerabilities – exacerbated by climate change
- Causation difficult to attribute – is displacement caused by conflict, economic factors, poor governance, climate change?
Climate Change: Horn of Africa

Ongoing impacts:

→ Climate change leads to greater food insecurity, health outcomes and loss of livelihoods
  – Potential for cyclical and secondary displacements

→ Forced immobility for pastoralist communities who lost livestock and cattle
  – Need to consider appropriate local integration strategies

→ Most climate displacement is over relatively short distances – impacts of displacement primarily felt in the locality and region
Causes of Displacement: Disasters Mozambique

- **2019:** Cyclones Idai and Kenneth hit Mozambique within weeks of each other
- 603 people killed; 1,641 injured
- Over 500,000 people internally displaced as a result of the two cyclones
- 2.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance
Disasters: Mozambique

Ongoing impacts:

→ The frequency and severity of extreme weather events is increasing:
  – December 2020: Tropical Storm Chalane
  – January 2021: Cyclone Eloise
  – February 2021: Cyclone Gaumbe

→ UNICEF has reported serious nutritional impacts on children resulting from repeated displacement

→ Combination of conflict and disaster displacement in northern province of Cabo Delgado – more than 669,000 internally displaced in Mozambique by Dec 2020
The Future...

• Forced displacement will continue to increase
• Long-term, cyclical and secondary displacement will become more common
• The global south will continue to host the largest number of displaced people
• All countries are affected by climate change and disasters

BUT
Concerted action is possible!