

## II. Displacement dangers

LINA GRIP<sup>1</sup>

Refugee crises can involve raised levels of distress and increased vulnerabilities—including inadequate protection and health provision (leading to increased mortality) and loss of educational opportunities—which threaten the immediate safety and well-being of refugees and the communities hosting them, and which can pose more long-term challenges as well. This can lead to risky livelihood coping strategies among displaced populations and host communities, such as undertaking dangerous sea crossings to a neighbouring country with an ongoing armed conflict (e.g. refugees fleeing between Somalia and Yemen in 2016).<sup>2</sup> A 2016 survey from Kenya, for example, found that 24.6 per cent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) had experienced or witnessed cases of human trafficking.<sup>3</sup>

Forced displacement in fragile contexts generates specific vulnerabilities for affected populations. A United Nations report on human rights abuses against displaced people in Libya published in December 2016 identified different forms of torture, including sexual slavery, forced labour and inhuman detention conditions.<sup>4</sup> A global study in 2014 estimated that approximately one in five female refugees or displaced women had experienced sexual violence during their displacement caused by complex humanitarian emergencies (including violent conflict). The authors concluded that this was probably an underestimation of the true prevalence, given the multiple existing barriers to disclosure.<sup>5</sup>

Displaced people who are smuggled or trafficked are particularly at risk of experiencing unsafe means of passage, infectious disease and debt bondage.<sup>6</sup> The latter may result in slavery, forced labour, forced prostitution, forced

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Kate Sullivan for her valuable contribution to this section.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Yemen situation', UNHCR Regional Update no. 41, July 2016; and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 'Nigeria: about the crisis', <<http://www.unocha.org/nigeria/about-ocha-nigeria/about-crisis>>.

<sup>3</sup> According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) definition, human trafficking is distinct from human smuggling. Human trafficking is a crime against a person, and is not related to whether the victim crosses a national border. Human smuggling is a crime that entails crossing a national border. UNODC, 'Human trafficking'; and Malinowski, R. et al., 'Displacement, violence and vulnerability: trafficking among internally displaced persons in Kenya', HAART Research Series no. 1 (Nairobi: 2016), p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "'Detained and dehumanised": report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya', 13 Dec. 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Vu, A. et al., *The Prevalence of Sexual Violence among Female Refugees in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis*, PLOS Currents Disasters, 18 Mar. 2014, Edition 1.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that 3771 migrants died trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea in 2015.

marriage and other types of labour and sexual exploitation undertaken as payment for the debt incurred by the migrant in exchange for their passage.<sup>7</sup> Recent evidence suggests that traffickers in Eritrea have begun exploiting the local conflict by targeting refugees in transit, holding them hostage and subjecting them to rape and physical and psychological abuse.<sup>8</sup> A number of studies have shown that refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers have higher rates of psychological disorders (i.e. post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression) than the general population, although this is in large part due to post-migration stresses such as racism and other forms of discrimination, housing insecurity, unemployment and the asylum process itself.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond shared and specific vulnerabilities, the dynamics of forced displacement crises include aspects of geographical proximity, local coping abilities, violence, mobility-restricting policies and population density. Most forced displacement occurs within countries and then spreads outwards to neighbouring states, with relatively few people fleeing beyond their region of birth. Similarly, displacement in border areas tends more often to spill over national borders for reasons of proximity, resource constraints and identity or other connections. Given that fragile states and violent conflicts are often located close to or next to each other, former refugee-hosting countries frequently become unsafe and a source of forced displacement themselves. The Greater Horn of Africa (i.e. Somalia and Yemen) is one recent example. Syria in 2011, which prior to the outbreak of civil war hosted over 1 million Iraqi refugees, arguably without proper coping strategies or resources, is another.<sup>10</sup>

Like the areas displaced people flee from, refugee-hosting areas themselves are often afflicted by conflict and instability.<sup>11</sup> The displacement of people to already fragile contexts often further disrupts the social and economic fabric of communities, with negative effects on the means used to maintain

<sup>7</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Human rights and human trafficking', Fact Sheet no. 36 (United Nations: Geneva, June 2014), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Lijnders, L. and Robinson, S., 'From the Horn of Africa to the Middle East: human trafficking of Eritrean asylum seekers across borders', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, Special Issue: Human Rights at the Border, vol. 2 (2013), pp. 137–54.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Fazel, M., Wheeler, J. and Danesh, J., 'Prevalence of serious mental disorder in 7000 refugees resettled in western countries: a systematic review', *The Lancet*, vol. 365, no. 9467 (9 Apr. 2005); Porter, M. and Haslam, N., 'Predisplacement and postdisplacement factors associated with mental health of refugees and internally displaced persons: a meta-analysis', *JAMA*, vol. 294, no. 5 (2005), pp. 602–12; and Li, S. S., Liddell, B. J. and Nickerson, A., 'The relationship between post-migration stress and psychological disorders in refugees and asylum seekers', *Current Psychiatry Reports*, vol. 18, no. 9 (2016), pp. 1–9.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 'Statistics on displaced Iraqis around the world', Apr. 2007; and Schneller, R., 'No place like home: Iraq's refugee crisis threatens the future of Iraq', *Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 8, no. 8 (2010).

<sup>11</sup> Jacobsen, K., 'Livelihoods in conflict: the pursuit of livelihoods by refugees and the impact on the human security of host communities', *International Migration*, vol. 40, no. 5 (2002), p. 97.

and sustain life, including food production.<sup>12</sup> Refugees and IDPs in areas of violent conflict are subject to new forms of risk and aggravate existing vulnerabilities, making it more difficult to sustain livelihoods. Social groups that are politically or economically marginalized can find themselves doubly at risk when they are displaced. Displacement can also result in new forms of gender and age vulnerability. Women can experience discrimination in the allocation of economic and social resources. For men, displacement and the resulting loss of livelihood can increase their risk of military recruitment, including by armed non-state groups. Displaced children must often manage as heads of households while being at risk of forced labour, sexual abuse and abduction.<sup>13</sup> Forced displacement in fragile contexts also has a severe impact on children's access to education.<sup>14</sup>

Host states' and communities' abilities to cope is central to the consequences of displacement. The ability to cope is mainly determined by structural factors such as the quality and resources of local institutions. Yet the strain put on resources, by for example the size of the affected population (comprising both displaced and the host communities), is also relevant and can in turn impact on the ability to cope. For example, states with high levels of urbanization (e.g. Iraq and Afghanistan) risk generating rapid displacement on a massive scale if fighting is taken into a city, as was the case in Mosul in October 2016 (see section III). Although population density at the national level may be less relevant compared to local and subnational conditions, full-scale civil war tends to generate a larger displacement crisis in a country with a high population density, such as Syria, compared to a country with a low population density, such as Libya. According to the World Bank, population density in 'fragile and conflict-affected situations' was on average 33 people per square kilometre of land area in 2015.<sup>15</sup> However, population density was significantly higher in the countries most affected by displacement crises in 2016—not only in the countries generating forced displacement but also in key hosting countries and locations receiving returnees (see table 7.3). The gap between identified 'fragile situations' and key locations of massive forced displacement suggests that general use of the concept of fragility does not fully incorporate displacement crises.

Some studies have also noted the urban settlement patterns of forced displacement in fragile contexts, for example, Iraqi and Syrian refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, and IDPs in Nigeria (see section III).<sup>16</sup> Forced urban

<sup>12</sup> Jacobsen (note 11), pp. 95–123.

<sup>13</sup> Jacobsen (note 11), p. 98.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), '2015 humanitarian needs overview: Syrian Arab Republic', Nov. 2014.

<sup>15</sup> World Bank, 'Population density (people per sq. km of land area)', <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST>>, accessed 27 Dec. 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Newland, K., and O'Donnell, K., *The Iraqi Refugee Crisis: The Need for Action* (Migration Policy Institute: Washington, DC, 2008), p. 2.

**Table 7.3.** Displacement and population density in selected states

Country	No. of refugees created	No. of refugees hosted	No. of IDPs	Population density (people/km <sup>2</sup> )
Afghanistan	Over 6 m.	..	1.475 m.	50
Iraq	Over 2 m.	250 000 <sup>a</sup>	3.1 m.< <sup>b</sup>	84
Jordan	..	2.726 m. <sup>c</sup>	..	86
Lebanon	..	1.95 m. <sup>d</sup>	21 000	572
Nigeria	195 350	..	2.152 m.	200
Pakistan	..	1.56 m.	1.8 m.	245
South Sudan	1.3 m.	260 000	1.8 m.	..
Syria	Over 5 m.	500 000 <sup>e</sup>	8.7 m.	101
Turkey	..	3 m.	..	105
Yemen	182 011	278 670	2.10 m.	51
Uganda	..	665 000	30 000	195

.. = not applicable; IDP = internally displaced person; km<sup>2</sup> = kilometre squared; m. = million.

<sup>a</sup> Iraq hosts 250 000 Syrians.

<sup>b</sup> Since 2014.

<sup>c</sup> Comprises 726 000 UNHCR-registered refugees plus more than 2 million registered Palestinian refugees (of which nearly 370 000 live in refugee camps).

<sup>d</sup> Comprises 1.5 million Syrians and 450 000 Palestinians.

<sup>e</sup> Comprises 0.5 million Palestinians (Syria hosted millions of refugees prior to the conflict).

Sources: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Jordan: UNHCR Operational Update, December 2016* (UNHCR: Geneva, Dec. 2016); United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), 'Where we work: Jordan', <<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan>>; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon 2016* (UNHCR: Geneva, 16 Dec. 2016), p. 5; United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), 'Where we work: Lebanon', <<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon>>; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDCM), 'Lebanon IDP figures analysis', May 2014, <<http://www.internal-displacement.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/lebanon/figures-analysis>>; Ali, K., 'Pakistan host to fourth highest number of refugees', *Dawn*, 19 July 2016, <<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271718>>; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 'Pakistan IDP figures analysis', July 2015, <<http://www.internal-displacement.org/south-and-south-east-asia/pakistan/figures-analysis>>; United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), 'Syria crisis', <<https://www.unrwa.org/syria-crisis>>; European Commission, Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), 'Turkey: refugee crisis', ECHO Factsheet, <[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/turkey\\_syrian\\_crisis\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/turkey_syrian_crisis_en.pdf)>, accessed Jan. 2017; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDCM), 'Uganda IDP figures analysis', May 2015, <<http://www.internal-displacement.org/sub-saharan-africa/uganda/figures-analysis>>; and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Uganda: Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Country (as 31 Aug. 2016)* (UNHCR: Geneva, 17 Sep. 2016), <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ea68ad60.html>>.

displacement within fragile states due to development, climate change or armed conflict is considered a distinct challenge in meeting the humanitarian needs of IDPs and refugees, but is often overlooked in research on refu-

gee crises.<sup>17</sup> The mapping of so-called self-settling in urban centres requires substantial resources, as displaced populations increasingly end up blending in with the urban poor, which partly explains the lack of data.<sup>18</sup> Densely populated areas in fragile contexts, including cities, may be at particular risk of a displacement crisis due to the stress that forced displacement generates on local services and resources, including water and sanitation. For example, 93 per cent of Syrian refugees in urban areas in Jordan are reported to be living below the poverty line.<sup>19</sup> A study by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on coping with returnees in Afghanistan in 2007 showed that districts that had received the largest influx of returnees relative to the local population were more likely to suffer higher insecurity.<sup>20</sup> Understanding and better addressing the issue of forced displacement in fragile contexts is necessary to prevent local and regional conflicts, increase security and build sustainable peace.

When data is collected on the numbers of refugees hosted by different states (see e.g. table 7.3), it typically refers to the UNHCR definition and categorization rather than to the legal status in the country to which the refugees have fled. The hosting country may or may not provide the displaced with the legal status of refugees (see section I). Furthermore, there are a number of common shortcomings in how the data is collected (e.g. double registration) and then updated after first registration. Refugees living outside of camps, for example in cities, may not be obliged to ‘check in’ with the authorities or prove that they are still in the country.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. Tibaijuka, A., ‘Adapting to urban displacement’, *Forced Migration Review*, no. 3 (Feb. 2010), p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Schmeidl, S., ‘Deconstructing Afghan displacement data: acknowledging the elephant in the dark’, *Migration Policy Practice*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2016), pp. 12–13.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Jordan: UNHCR Operational Update, December 2016* (UNHCR: Geneva, Dec. 2016).

<sup>20</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Fragility and Population Movement in Afghanistan* (UNHCR: Geneva, 3 Oct. 2016), Joint publication with the World Bank.