

# chapter 1

## people and crisis

Poverty, vulnerability and crisis are inseparably linked. Poor people (living on under US\$3.20 a day) and extremely poor people (living on under US\$1.90) are more vulnerable to shocks. Many also live in countries at high risk of such shocks. Nearly 59% of the world's extremely poor and almost half of the world's poor people live in countries identified as fragile, environmentally vulnerable or both.

Over 201 million people in 134 countries were estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2017. Conflict continued to fuel much of this need, with protracted violence and unrest continuing in many countries, including Yemen, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC], and new outbreaks in Nigeria among others. Many crises were complex, involving a combination of conflict, disasters associated with natural hazards and forced displacement. In 2017, all 10 of the countries with the largest numbers of people in need faced complex crises involving conflict. The pattern of a small number of crises generating high levels of need continued in 2017. Of the 201 million people identified as in need of humanitarian assistance, 23.5% were in just three countries – Yemen, Syria and Turkey.

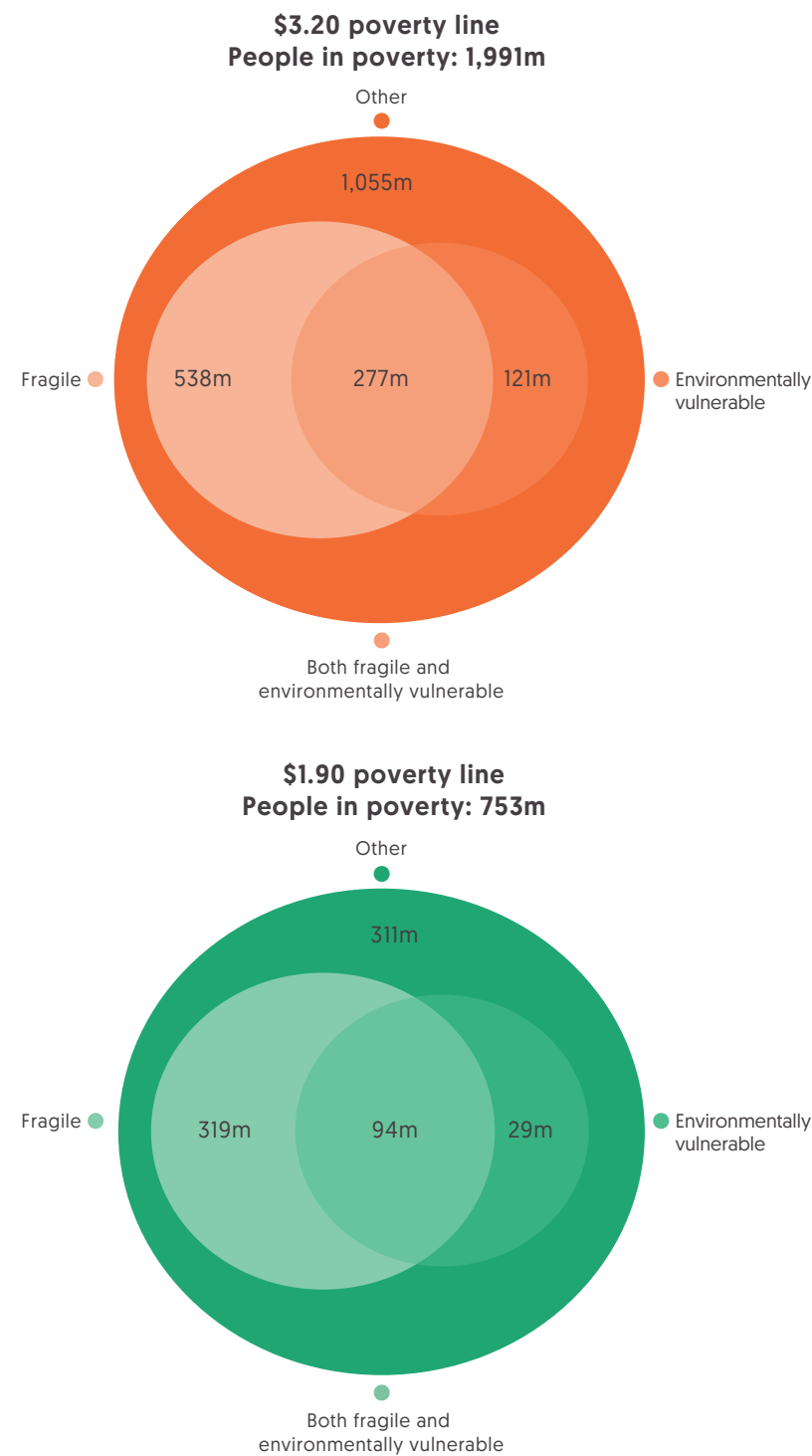
Conflict, violence and persecution drove ever more people from their homes in 2017. The total number of people forcibly displaced grew for the sixth consecutive year to an estimated 68.5 million. And 2.8 million more people were identified as refugees than in the previous year. Most of those forcibly displaced (62%) remained in their own countries.

A small number of crises continued to receive the majority of international humanitarian assistance: 60% was channelled to 10 countries. For the fifth consecutive year Syria was the single largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance. Response to the overspill of crises and the forced displacement of populations led to Turkey and Greece featuring among the 10 largest recipients of humanitarian assistance for the first time.

The pattern of protracted, recurrent crises seen in previous years continued. Of the 20 largest recipients of official humanitarian assistance, 17 were either long- or medium-term recipients. This concentration of international assistance to long-running crises reaffirms the importance of developing longer-term, multi-year plans and funding. Responses need to address both immediate humanitarian need and underlying development and peacebuilding shortfalls in crisis-affected countries.

# Poverty, risk and vulnerability

**Figure 1.1**  
Number of people living in poverty or extreme poverty in fragile and/or environmentally vulnerable countries



**Sources:** Development Initiatives based on World Bank PovcalNet, World Bank World Development Indicators, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and INFORM Index for Risk Management data.

**Notes:** Charts not to scale. Poverty estimates use World Bank PovcalNet modelled 2013 data. Regional estimates are used for 21 countries with no poverty data. Eight Middle East and North of Sahara countries are excluded due to lack of national or regional representative data. Fragile states defined according to the 2016 OECD report States of Fragility; and environmental vulnerability defined using INFORM's 2018 Index for Risk Management, selecting countries scoring high and very high on 'natural hazard' indicator, and medium, high and very high on 'lack of coping capacity'.

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Crisis can affect the poorest people disproportionately as they have less resources to cope with shocks. Crisis can also deplete limited resources, deepening poverty. Poor and extremely poor people are more vulnerable to shocks, and live in countries at high risk of such shocks. National data is available on poverty, fragility and environmental vulnerability but this can mask vulnerability in subnational locations.

- According to the most recent data,<sup>1</sup> almost 2 billion people were living on less than US\$3.20<sup>2</sup> a day and thus considered 'poor'.
- Of these, at least 936 million people (47%) were living in countries affected by fragility (27%), environmental vulnerability (6%) or both (14%).<sup>3</sup>
- 753 million people were living on less than US\$1.90<sup>4</sup> a day and therefore identified as in 'extreme poverty'.
- Of those people in extreme poverty, 442 million (59%) were living in countries affected by fragility (42%), environmental vulnerability (4%) or both (12%).
- The number of extremely poor people identified as living in environmentally vulnerable countries has reduced since the previous estimate.
- Assessments of environmental vulnerability have shown some changes in countries' capacities to cope with shocks. For instance, in India, an identified increase in coping capacity means that the 210 million people living in extreme poverty and 696 million people living in poverty<sup>5</sup> are not currently considered to be environmentally vulnerable.
- Nationally aggregated data can mask local differences in levels and severity of poverty and in exposure to the causes and symptoms of fragility and environmental vulnerability. But subnational data on environmental vulnerability is not widely available.

Large proportions of the populations in fragile and environmentally vulnerable countries are extremely poor or poor.

- Among the populations of the 50 countries<sup>6</sup> identified as fragile, on average, 54% of the population lived under the US\$3.20 poverty line and 31% lived under the US\$1.90 poverty line.
- Across the 23 countries identified as environmentally vulnerable, 38% of the population lived on less than US\$3.20 per day and 17% lived on less than US\$1.90 per day.

The occurrence of fragility and environmental vulnerability varies between countries in different income groups.

- More low income countries (LICs) were deemed fragile than lower middle income countries (LMICs) – 85% of LICs compared with 48% of LMICs.
- Conversely, more LMICs were identified as environmentally vulnerable than LICs – 31% of LMICs compared with 15% of LICs.

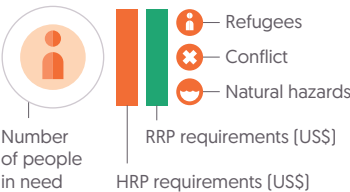
# People affected by crisis

**Figure 1.2**  
People in need, type and severity of crisis, and funding requirements, 2017

**Map – ACAPS severity level**

- Severe humanitarian crisis
- Humanitarian crisis
- Situation of concern
- No severity score

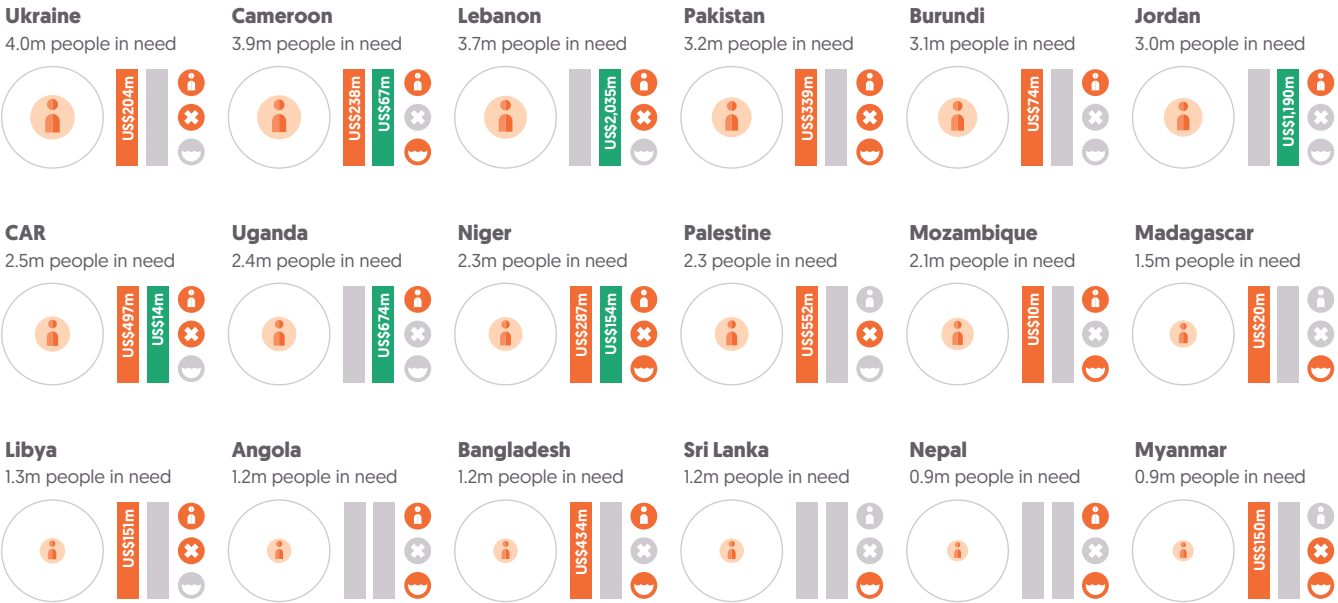
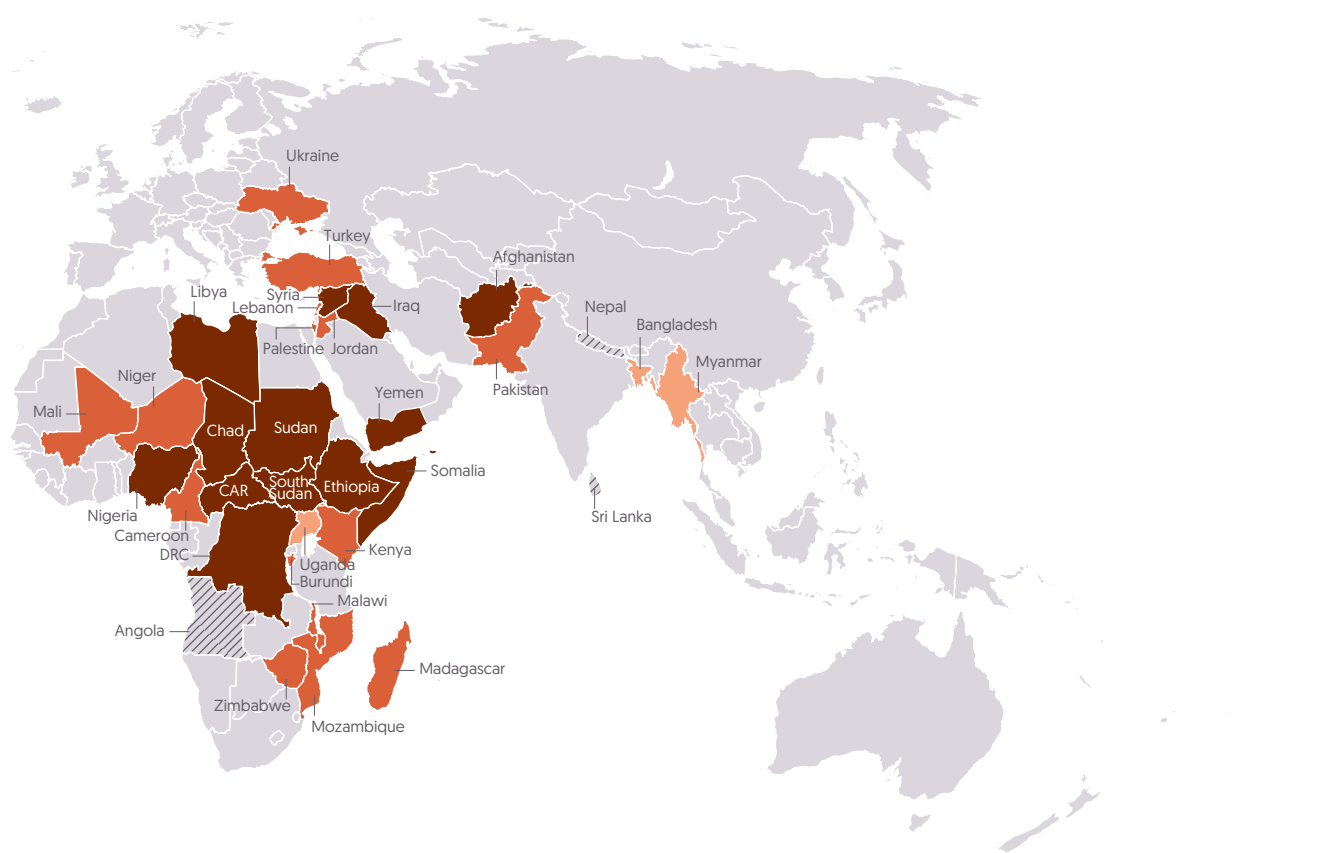
**Country summaries key**



**Country summaries ordered by number of people in need**



**Source:** Development Initiatives based on ACAPS, Food and Agriculture Organization, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, INFORM Index for Risk Management, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service (FTS) data.



**Notes:** HRP: humanitarian response plan; RRP: regional response plan; CAR: Central African Republic; DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo. Countries selected using ACAPS data and corresponding estimates of people in need. Countries with fewer than an estimated 0.8 million people in need are not shown. For further information on coding crisis types see our online *Methodology and definitions*.

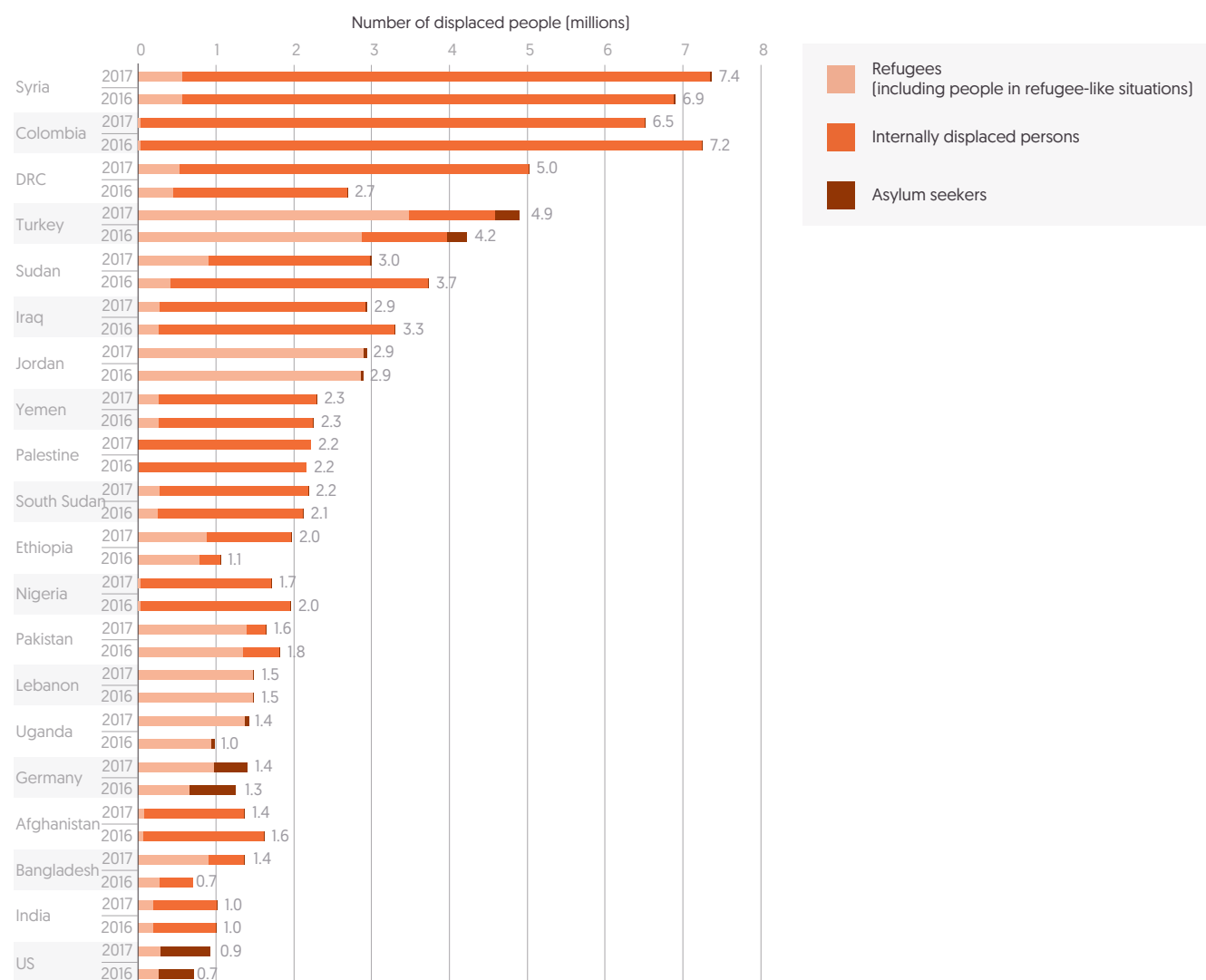
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In 2017, humanitarian need was driven by continued, large-scale conflict, with crises persisting in Yemen, Syria and South Sudan. 2017 also witnessed violence and persecution forcing the mass displacement of the Rohingya population from Myanmar, while hurricanes across the Caribbean caused large-scale destruction.

- In 2017, an estimated 201.5 million people living in 134 countries were assessed to be in need of international humanitarian assistance.
- More than a fifth of these people in need (23%) were living in just three countries – Yemen, Syria and Turkey.
- In 2017, conflict drove crises in 21 of the 36 countries with the largest numbers of people in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>7</sup>
- The 10 countries with the highest numbers of people in need all experienced complex crises in 2017<sup>8</sup> – conflict as well as at least one other type of humanitarian crisis (disasters associated with natural hazards and/or refugee situations).
- In 2017, complex crises (involving at least two of conflict, disasters associated with natural hazards and refugee situations) occurred in 29 of the 36 countries with the highest numbers of people in need. Meanwhile six of these 36 countries experienced all three crises types.<sup>9</sup>
- Just three of the 36 countries with the highest number of people in need experienced a disaster associated with natural hazards (Haiti, Madagascar and Sri Lanka) but neither of the other two crises types.

# Forced displacement

**Figure 1.3**  
20 countries with the largest forcibly displaced populations, 2017



In 2017, an increasing number of people were in need of humanitarian assistance having been forced to flee their homes because of conflict, violence or persecution.

- The total number of people forcibly displaced due to conflict, violence or persecution reached 68.5 million in 2017, an increase of 2.9 million [4.5%] from 2016, the sixth consecutive annual increase.
- The numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees both reached record levels in 2017, rising to 42.2 million (62% of all displaced) and 23.2 million (34% of all displaced), respectively.
- The 2.8 million (14%) rise in the number of refugees was the main driver of the overall increase in the number of displaced people. Meanwhile the number of IDPs decreased by 0.3 million (0.6%) while the number of asylum seekers grew by 0.4 million (14%).

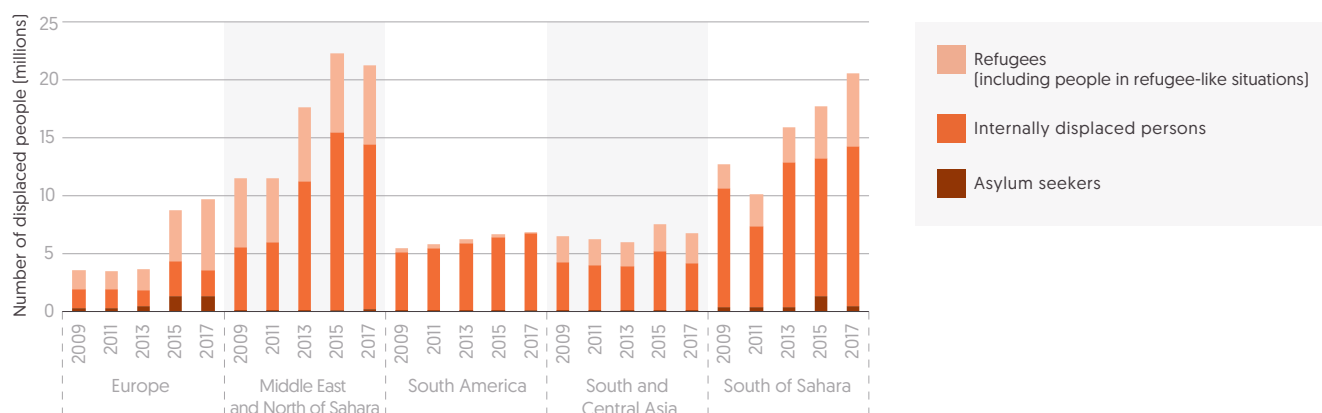
**Source:** Development Initiatives based on UNHCR, UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) data.

**Notes:** The 20 countries are selected based on the size of displaced populations in 2017. 'Displaced population' includes refugees and people in refugee-like situations, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and asylum seekers. IDP figures include the total number of IDPs at the end of 2017 as reported by the IDMC. Data is organised according to UNHCR's definitions of country/territory of asylum. According to data provided by UNRWA, Palestinian-registered refugees are included as refugees for Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and as IDPs for Palestine.

The figure above shows the location of forcibly displaced populations by country.

- In 2017, 70% of the total displaced population were in middle income countries, 22% in LICs and just 7% in high income countries, a similar distribution to 2016.
- In 2017, the 10 countries with the highest populations of forcibly displaced people accommodated 39.4 million displaced people (refugees, IDPs and asylum seekers), 58% of the total displaced population.
- From 2016 to 2017, numbers of displaced people in these 10 countries increased by 1.9 million, and included 1.3 million refugees, 0.5 million IDPs, and 0.1 million asylum seekers.
- The single largest refugee population in 2017, with 3.5 million refugees, was in Turkey.
- Of people displaced in 2017, more originated from Syria than any other country, with 13.1 million people displaced – 6.3 million refugees (including people in refugee-like situations), 6.7 million IDPs and 0.1 million asylum seekers.

**Figure 1.4**  
Location of forcibly displaced populations by region, 2009–2017



The figure above shows the location of forcibly displaced populations by region.

- The growth in the total numbers of displaced people from 2009 to 2017 is evident across the regions of Europe, the Middle East and North of Sahara region, South America and South of Sahara, with only South and Central Asia witnessing no consistent or marked rise.
- Since 2011, the Middle East and North of Sahara region, including the large population of displaced Palestinians, has accommodated more displaced people than any other region. The second-largest population of displaced people in the same period was in the South of Sahara region.
- In 2017, the Middle East and North of Sahara region and the South of Sahara region accommodated similar numbers of IDPs and refugees, respectively, 14.2 million and 13.8 million IDPs and 6.8 million and 6.3 million refugees.
- In 2017, the Middle East and North of Sahara region's displaced population (21.3 million) was more than double that of Europe's (9.7 million), while South of Sahara hosted the second-largest number of displaced people (20.6 million).

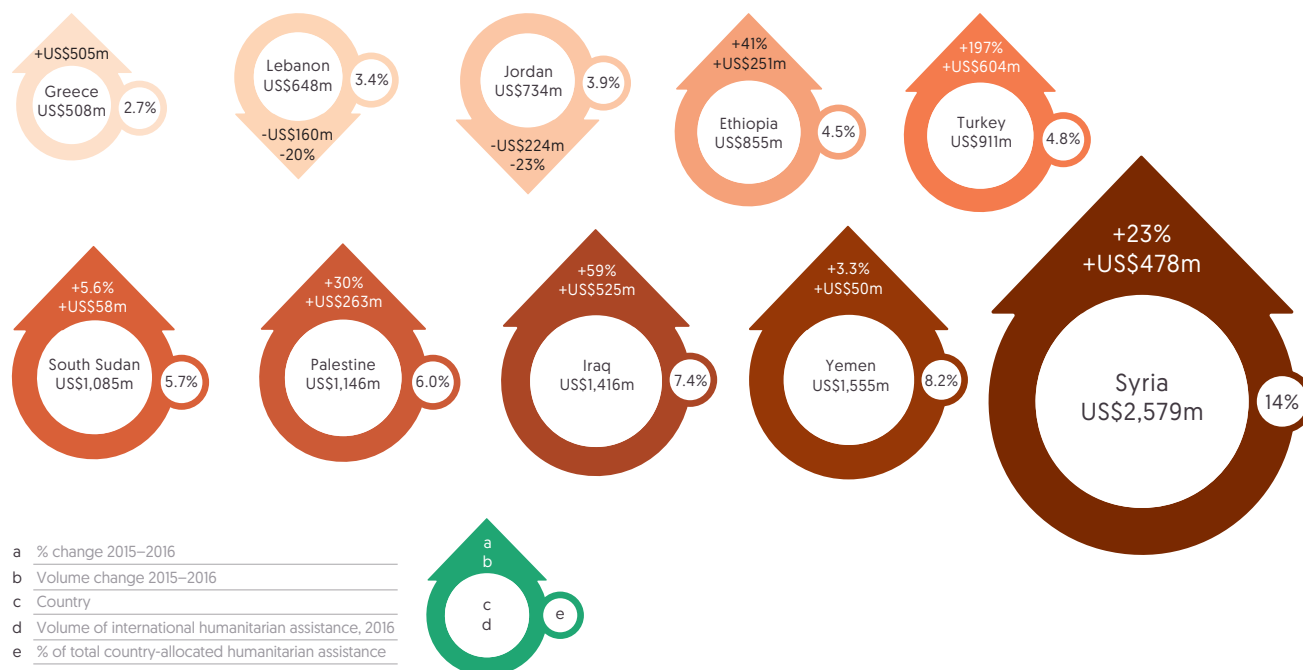
**Source:** Development Initiatives based on UNHCR, UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) data.

**Notes:** OECD country naming has been used for regions, except the Middle East and North of Sahara, which have been combined. According to data provided by UNRWA, Palestinian registered refugees are included as refugees for Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and as IDPs for Palestine. The regions with the five largest displaced populations in 2017 are shown in the chart.

# Which countries did funding go to?

**Figure 1.5**

10 largest recipients of international humanitarian assistance, 2016



Funding continues to be concentrated among a small number of countries but the profile of the 10 largest recipients of humanitarian assistance saw some changes in 2016.

- The 10 largest recipients accounted for 60% of total country-allocable humanitarian assistance in 2016, a similar proportion as in each of the past four years.<sup>8</sup>
- For the fifth consecutive year, Syria was the largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance, receiving US\$2.6 billion [a 23% increase from 2015].
- Turkey and Greece featured among the 10 largest recipients for the first time in 2016 due to increases in assistance to support the populations of forced migrants they hosted.<sup>11</sup>
- Four of the 10 largest recipients were LMICs [Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and Jordan], three were upper middle income countries [Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon], two were LICs [South Sudan and Ethiopia] and one was a high income country [Greece].
- DRC and Sudan were not among the 10 largest recipients for the first time since 2011 and 1999, respectively.
- The largest increases in volumes of assistance received among the 10 largest recipients were in Turkey (up US\$604 million, 197%), Iraq (up US\$525 million, 59%) and Greece (up US\$505 million).
- International humanitarian assistance provided to Jordan and Lebanon decreased, by 23% [US\$224 million] and 20% [US\$160 million], respectively.

**Source:** Development Initiatives based on OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), UN OCHA FTS and UN Central Emergency Response Fund data.

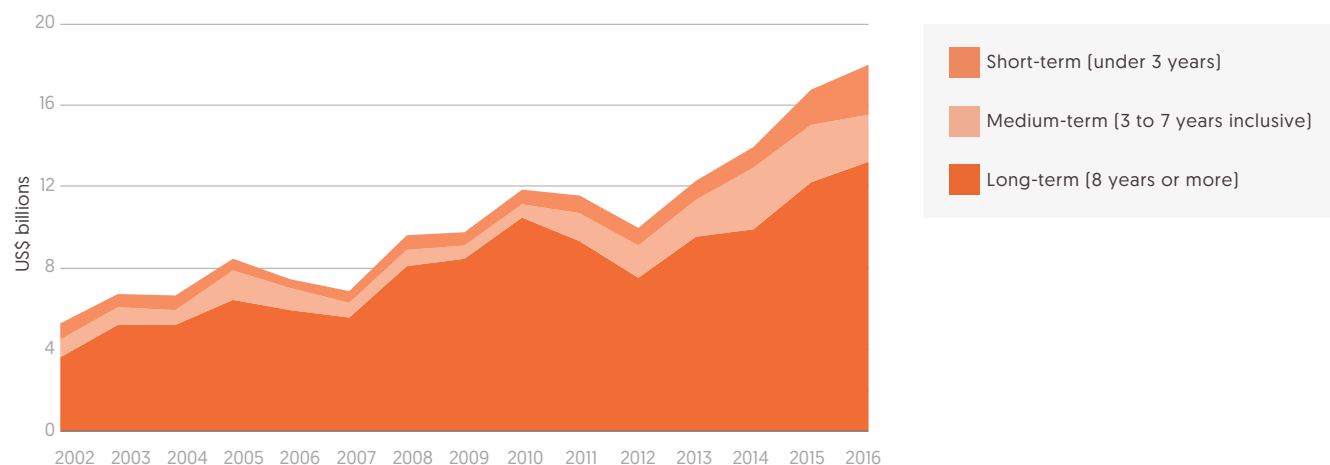
**Notes:** Data is in constant 2016 prices. Graphics scaled by volumes of international humanitarian assistance.



# Funding is directed towards protracted and recurrent crises

**Figure 1.6**

Long-, medium- and short-term recipients of official humanitarian assistance, 2002–2016



Humanitarian crises with the greatest numbers of people in need are frequently complex (see Figure 1.2), protracted and slow onset. Responses should be designed to reflect the long-term and complex nature of many of these crises addressing humanitarian and development needs. Growing levels of international humanitarian assistance have not been matched by increases in non-humanitarian official development assistance (ODA) (see Chapter 2, *crisis financing*). Most international humanitarian assistance continued to go to long- and medium-term recipients.<sup>12</sup> However, 2017 saw a decrease in the number of multi-year appeals, down from 14 in 2016 to eight in 2017. Increased attention is paid to multi-year funding but data on its total volume is not yet available (see Chapter 4, *effectiveness, efficiency and quality*).

- In 2016, 86% of international humanitarian assistance went to long- and medium-term recipients, continuing a trend.
- Almost three-quarters (74%) of all international humanitarian assistance provided in 2016 went to long-term recipients.
- Of the 20 countries receiving the most official humanitarian assistance in 2016, 17 were either long-term (16 countries) or medium-term (1 country) recipients.
- Turkey received the sixth largest share of international humanitarian assistance in 2016 but, as a short-term recipient, is the exception among the 20 largest recipients.<sup>13</sup>
- Long- and medium-term international humanitarian assistance is focused on the countries with more limited domestic capacity. Eight of the 10 countries with the lowest government spending per capita in 2016 were either long- or medium-term recipients of international humanitarian assistance.
- Of the 20 countries with the greatest number of people in need, 17 were long-term (12 countries) or medium-term (5 countries) recipients.

**Source:** Development Initiatives based on OCED DAC, UN OCHA FTS and UN Central Emergency Response Fund.

**Notes:** Long-, medium- or short-term classification is determined by the length of time the country has received an above-average share of its official development assistance (ODA) in the form of humanitarian assistance. Calculations are based on shares of country-allocable humanitarian assistance. Data is in constant 2016 prices.

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Countries can be long-term recipients but, year-on-year, receive varying levels of funding as a result of changes in the funding and needs contexts.

- Zimbabwe received nearly three times the amount of international humanitarian assistance in 2016 (US\$132 million) as in 2015 (US\$47 million).
- Similar patterns of growth in international humanitarian assistance received from 2015 to 2016 were also seen in Iraq (rising 59%), Ethiopia (increasing 41%) and Haiti (up by 40%).
- Conversely, DRC received 58% less international humanitarian assistance in 2016 than in 2015.

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## chapter 1

1. Poverty data drawn from World Bank PovcalNet:  
<http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/povOnDemand.aspx>
2. This figure is in PPP (purchasing power parity) to allow for comparison of poverty data across countries. PPPs are constructed by comparing the cost of a common basket of goods in different countries. To reflect internationally comparable poverty lines, we use the \$1.90 and \$3.20 poverty lines derived from 2011 prices.
3. Fragility is defined by the list of fragile states taken directly from the OECD's report *States of Fragility 2016: Understanding violence*, as defined by OECD methodology. See [www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-2016-9789264267213-en.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-2016-9789264267213-en.htm). Environmental vulnerability is defined by the INFORM Index for Risk Management dataset for countries which meet both of the following criteria: [1] lack of coping capacity score of medium, high or very high; [2] natural hazard score of high or very high. For the 2018 INFORM Index dataset, this translates to a country scoring at least 4.7 in both criteria.
4. See note 2.
5. The 2018 INFORM Index dataset was used to identify environmentally vulnerable countries. India, identified as environmentally vulnerable in 2017, has been adjudged to have reduced its 'lack of coping capacity', previously considered 'medium' and in 2018 identified as 'low'.
6. 56 countries are defined as fragile, however, poverty data is only available for 50 of these. The fragile countries with no poverty data are: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Libya and Somalia.
7. Countries were selected on the basis of the numbers of people in need of humanitarian assistance: 36 countries met the threshold of having 0.8 million or more people in need. This included all countries with a UN appeal.
8. The UN defines a complex crisis as "a humanitarian crisis in a country, region, or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single and/or ongoing UN country program." For the analysis, 'complex crises' refer to those which simultaneously experience at least two of the three types – disasters associated with natural hazards, refugee situations or conflict. See: [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy\\_files/WG16\\_4.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/WG16_4.pdf)
9. Ethiopia, Niger, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan experienced conflict, disasters caused by natural hazards and refugee situations.
10. 2016 is the most recent year for which OECD DAC data on where humanitarian assistance goes is available. Country-allocable humanitarian assistance refers to data reported to the DAC that specifies a recipient country.
11. The methodology used to identify assistance channelled to recipients includes flows of international humanitarian assistance directed to non-ODA eligible countries. For more details see our online *Methodology and definitions*.

12. Long-term recipients are defined as those who have received an above-average share of ODA as humanitarian assistance annually for eight years or more. Medium-term recipients are those that have received such a share for between three and seven years.
13. 2016 was the first year in the last 15 that Turkey received an above-average share of official humanitarian assistance as a proportion of ODA.