



Global Trends Report on Forced Displacement in 2021

For Prelims: UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Internal Displacement, 1951 Refugee Convention

For Mains: Challenges associated with climate refugees and way out, Government Policies & Intervention

Why in News?

Recently, the 2022 annual Global Trends Report was published by [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#).

- **June 20 is designated as World Refugee Day** by the [United Nations](#). The **theme** for World Refugee Day 2022 is **whoever, whatever, whenever. Everyone has got a right to seek safety.**

What is Global Trends Report?

- It presents key statistical trends and the latest numbers of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and stateless persons worldwide as well as numbers of people who have returned to their countries or areas of origin.
- The report is **published once a year** and reflects on the previous year.
- The **figures are based on data reported by governments, non-governmental organizations and UNHCR.**

What are the Highlights of the Report?

- **Global Overview:**
 - **Globally 100 million people were forced to flee their homes** last year due to violence, [human rights abuses](#), [food insecurity](#), [the climate crisis](#), [war in Ukraine](#), and other emergencies from Africa to Afghanistan.
 - There were 23.7 million new [internal displacements](#) globally due to disasters (these are in addition to those internally displaced due to conflict and violence). This represented a decrease of seven million, or 23%, compared to the previous year.
 - The **largest displacements** in the context of disasters in 2021 occurred in **China (6.0 million), the Philippines (5.7 million), and India (4.9 million).**
 - The **majority of the internally displaced persons returned to their home areas**, but 5.9 million people worldwide remained displaced at the end of the year due to disasters.
 - The **number of people forced to flee their homes has increased every year over the past decade** and stands **at the highest level since records began**, a trend that can be only reversed by a new, concerted push towards peacemaking.
- **India:**
 - **Nearly five million people in India were** internally displaced due to climate change and

disasters in 2021.

What is Internal Displacement?

- **Internal Displacement (Meaning):**
 - Internal displacement describes the **situation of people who have been forced to leave their homes but have not left their country.**
- **Factors of Displacement:** Millions of people are uprooted from their homes or places of habitual residence each year **in the context of conflict, violence, development projects, disasters and climate change** and remain displaced within their countries' borders.
- **Components:** Internal displacement is based on **two components:**
 - The person's movement is **coerced or involuntary** (to distinguish them from economic and other voluntary migrants);
 - The person stays within **internationally recognised state borders** (to distinguish them from refugees).
- **Difference from Refugee:** According to the [1951 Refugee Convention](#), a "refugee" is a person who has been persecuted and forced to leave his native country.
 - A precondition of being considered a refugee is that a **person crosses an international border.**
 - Unlike refugees, internally displaced people are **not the subject of any international convention.**
 - At the international level, **no single agency or organisation** has been designated as the global lead on protection and assistance of internally displaced persons.
 - However, there are **United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.**
- **Challenges Faced by Internally Displacement Persons (IDPs):** IDPs can live under threat of **physical attack, sexual- or gender-based violence, and run the risk of being separated from family members.**
 - They are frequently deprived of adequate shelter, food and health services, and often lose their property, land or their access to livelihoods.

What are the Challenges associated with Internal Displacement?

- **Lack of Proper and Commonly Accepted Statistics:** In terms of the statistics relating to displacement in the context of climate change, simply put, **what is not defined cannot be quantified, and what cannot be quantified cannot be predicted.**
- **Lack of Legal Status to Climate Refugees:** From a legal perspective, **UNHCR does not support the term "climate refugee"** which does not exist in international law. It is also very difficult to assess whether someone who has been displaced in the context of climate change would have been displaced anyway had there been no climate change.
- **Lack of historical precedent:** Secondly, the lack of historical precedent for many situations that will arise as human-related climate change progresses, whose impact on human mobility has never been observed before. This means that it **remains unclear how the changing climate will impact people's decisions and behaviour in the future.**
- **Non-existent relationship between climate change and displacement:** Finally, the link between climate change and (forced) displacement remains **not fully measurable and there is no consensus** that it is a direct causal link, with, for example, only limited information available on the impact of climate change on mounting poverty, political instability and armed conflict.

Way Forward

- **Return to Home country:** For most refugees, returning to their home country based on a free and informed choice would be a **preferred solution to bring their temporary status as refugees to an end.** To realize this, political stability and economic opportunities are essential to ensure that the environment refugees face upon their return allows them to reintegrate in safety and with dignity. To ensure that the returns are sustainable
- **Resettlement:** While several countries have signalled their commitment to resettlement, demonstrating their solidarity with host countries, it is an option for fewer and fewer refugees due to a significant reduction in the number of places offered by States. Resettlement is a crucial

protection tool and solution, and is a core activity mandated by UNHCR's Statute, helping to protect some of the most vulnerable refugees, who may face specific or urgent risks

- **Local Integration:** In the absence of the possibility to return safely or be resettled, pathways are available in some countries for refugees to remain long-term or permanently in their country of asylum. **Local integration helps ensure that refugees can build new lives in these countries.**

What is UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)?

- **About:**

- The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was **created in 1950**, during the aftermath of the Second World War, to **help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes.**
- **In 1954, UNHCR won the Nobel Peace Prize** for its ground breaking work in Europe. But it was not long before we faced our next major emergency.
- During the 1960s, the decolonization of Africa produced the first of that continent's numerous refugee crises. It helped uprooted people in Asia and Latin America over the following two decades.
- In **1981, it received a second Nobel Peace Prize** for what had become worldwide assistance to refugees.

- **The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol:**

- They are the key legal documents that form the basis of its work. With 149 State parties to either or both, they define the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of refugees, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them.
- The **core principle is non-refoulement**, which asserts that a **refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.** This is now considered a rule of customary international law.
- UNHCR serves as the 'guardian' of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. According to the legislation, States are expected to cooperate with us in ensuring that the rights of refugees are respected and protected.

[Source: DTE](#)

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