

Global Displacement Forecast 2026: Snapshot of Key Findings



DRU DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL **70** YEARS

*Supporting refugees and displaced
towards a dignified life*

Scope, Methodology and Data Sources

This report presents forecasts of forced displacement in 2026 and 2027 generated by DRC's Foresight model, developed with IBM and supported by the Danish and Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Drawing on historical patterns across 148 displacement-relevant indicators from 18 open data sources, the model forecasts cumulative forced displacement one to three years ahead.

The report examines global and regional trends, underlying conditions and funding dynamics, and projected pressures on host countries, alongside a thematic focus on anticipatory action. The report includes focused analysis of regions and countries where significant displacement is projected to occur, with countries selected based on the highest absolute change in displacement forecasted for 2026 and 2027.

The forecasts cover 27 countries* with ongoing displacement crises, accounting for approximately 93% of global displacement. Forced displacement is defined as refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). As final 2025 displacement figures were not available at the time of writing, baseline estimates draw on the latest data from UN agencies and will be updated once official figures are published in mid-2026.

Data note: The forecasts presented in this report are based on data available at the time of modelling and therefore pre-date the escalation of conflict in the Middle East in February 2026. As a result, potential displacement linked to these developments is not reflected in the projections.

Forecast Accuracy and Validation

In 2025, the difference between the forecasts and the estimated actual level of displacement was on average 8%. Based on all the 298 forecasts made so far the difference (absolute margin of error) is 17%.

Overall, more than half of the forecasts we have made have an absolute margin of error below 10% and almost two-thirds of the forecasts are less than 15% off the actual displacement.

* The 27 countries include: Europe: Ukraine; Asia: Afghanistan, Myanmar; West Africa: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria; MENA: Iraq, Libya, oPt, Syria, Yemen; East Africa & Great Lakes: Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan; Latin America: Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Venezuela.

Introduction

The 2026 Global Displacement Forecast (GDF) report marks the sixth consecutive year that the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has published a global outlook on future displacement. Across six editions, the purpose has remained consistent: not to predict the future with certainty, but to make visible the structural patterns driving displacement and to provide forward-looking evidence that supports earlier, preventive responses in contexts where risks are already identifiable.

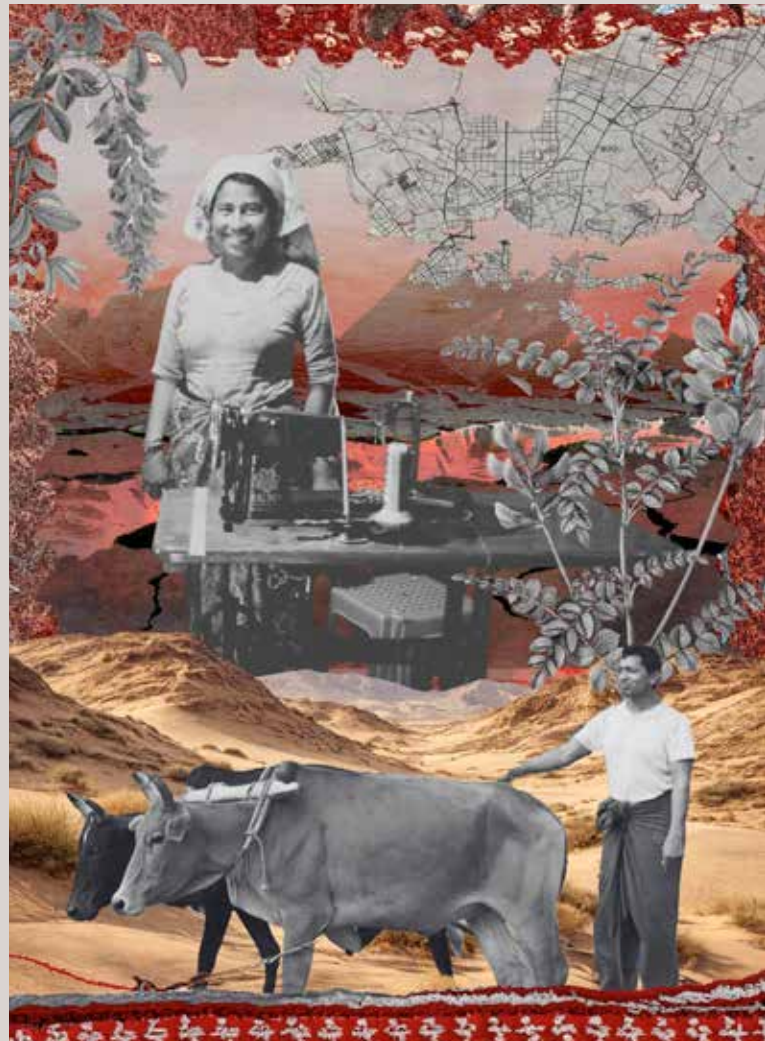
Unforeseen political developments, conflict, or institutional breakdown can lead to large-scale displacement in ways no model can predict. Forecasts are not a crystal ball; rather, they highlight the structural fragility, inequality, and political stress already visible in the data. The Foresight model covers 27 countries representing approximately 93% of global forced displacement. It focuses on contexts with sustained displacement, drawing on established trends to project plausible future scenarios. Its purpose is not to predict geopolitical shocks, but to anticipate how displacement may evolve in current crises and enable earlier, more informed action.

ACROSS SIX YEARS OF DRC FORECASTS, SEVERAL PATTERNS HAVE REMAINED CONSISTENT:

1. **Displacement is highly predictable** where conflict, institutional fragility, climate stress, and poverty intersect.
2. **Internal displacement accounts for the majority of global displacement**, with IDPs representing roughly two-thirds of all forcibly displaced people worldwide.
3. **Fragile and lower-income countries host most displaced people**, with approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of refugees remaining in neighbouring states, often amid declining per-capita support and growing fiscal strain.
4. **Displacement is increasingly long-term**, with around two-thirds of refugees living in protracted situations of five years or more.
5. **Most displaced people live outside camps**, settling across cities and districts, relying on national delivery of public services, rather than humanitarian aid.

This year's Forecast confirms that the global context shaping displacement is defined less by isolated shocks than by structural and intersecting crises. Conflict remains widespread, diplomatic space for negotiated settlements has narrowed, and official development assistance has stagnated or declined in real terms, particularly in fragile settings. Climate shocks and economic stress increasingly interact with fragility, violence and conflict.

Against this backdrop the scale of displacement across the countries covered remains high. By the end of 2025, the GDF estimates that the total number of displaced people across the 27 countries of focus stood at 113.4 million, a decline of 3.4 million compared to 2024. This estimate combines the most recent data reported by UNHCR on refugees and asylum seekers with the latest data from IOM on IDPs. Even at this level, displacement remained more than 50% higher than in 2019.





The decrease in displacement numbers recorded in 2025 reflect specific dynamics, rather than a structural easing of displacement pressures. For example, in Afghanistan, large-scale and mainly forced returns from Iran and Pakistan, significantly reduced displacement figures, with over 1.8 million Afghans returning from Iran alone during 2025. Similarly, in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, camp closures and renewed violence compelled hundreds of thousands to return or disperse informally, with nearly 2.9 million IDPs recorded as returning to their areas of origin.

Interpreting recent trends requires caution due to declining data availability. Across the 27 countries covered by the Forecast, IOM's DTM, a key source for IDP data, conducted 57 nationwide IDP assessments across 18 countries in 2024, compared with 36 in 2025. In five countries no new nationwide assessments were published during 2025, and only six countries currently have publicly avail-

able data updated to the final quarter of the year. More broadly, OCHA estimates that 68% of crisis data across 22 humanitarian operations is currently up-to-date, down from 74% the previous year, reflecting a broader decline in humanitarian data collection capacity.

Despite headline fluctuations in global displacement figures, what remains constant across the countries covered by the Forecast is the persistence of structural drivers i.e. unresolved conflict, institutional fragility, economic stress and constrained international support. For this reason, the purpose of the GDF is not simply to track how many people are displaced, but to better understand where and why displacement risks are likely to intensify. By identifying these patterns early, the GDF seeks to support more anticipatory, prevention-oriented responses before crises escalate and humanitarian needs deepen and become systemic.

Reflecting on 2025: Structural Trends that Shaped Displacement

ESCALATING VIOLENCE AND CIVILIAN HARM

Political violence remained widespread in 2025. Globally, an estimated 869 million people were exposed to political violence, with 225 million living within one kilometre of at least one conflict incident. Across the 27 countries covered by this Forecast, conflict events increased by 6% in 2025, with particularly sharp escalations in contexts such as DR Congo and Ukraine. Sixteen of the 27 countries experienced rising levels of violence.

Violence targeting civilians also intensified. Globally, incidents increased by 9%, and by 14% across the countries of focus. Previous Forecast analysis has demonstrated a clear relationship between elevated levels of violence against civilians and increases in displacement within the same year. While aggregate displacement is estimated to have decreased, countries experiencing the highest levels of civilian targeting saw smaller declines than others, underscoring the continued centrality of violence as a displacement driver.

At the same time, adherence to international humanitarian law remains under strain. More than 300 aid workers were killed in 2025, with Gaza accounting for the majority of fatalities. Systematic targeting of civilians, humanitarian personnel, and civilian infrastructure continues to constrain protection space and complicate response efforts.

FINANCING GAPS

Despite sustained need, international financing for conflict prevention and humanitarian response has contracted. The share of official development assistance (ODA) allocated to fragile and conflict-affected countries fell from approximately 27% in 2023 to 24% in 2024, declining in absolute terms by roughly \$4 billion. The proportion of ODA directed toward peacebuilding activities also decreased, from 12% to 11%, with nearly half concentrated in Ukraine.

Across the five countries that experienced the largest estimated increases in displacement in 2025 – Ukraine, Myanmar, South Sudan, Nigeria and Mali, peacebuilding funding declined on average by 23% in 2024. In contrast, the five countries with the sharpest estimated declines in displacement – Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria and DR Congo, saw average peacebuilding funding increases of 15%. This pattern reinforces findings from previous Forecast editions: sustained peacebuilding investment is closely linked to lower future displacement.



Humanitarian financing has also weakened. As of end-2025, only 30% of required funding for humanitarian response plans had been met, compared to 47% at the same point in 2024. The global funding gap widened to \$31 billion. Previous DRC analysis of 189 response plans found that when plans were funded below two-thirds of requirements, the following year saw an average 39% increase in cumulative displacement, compared to 8% where funding exceeded that threshold.



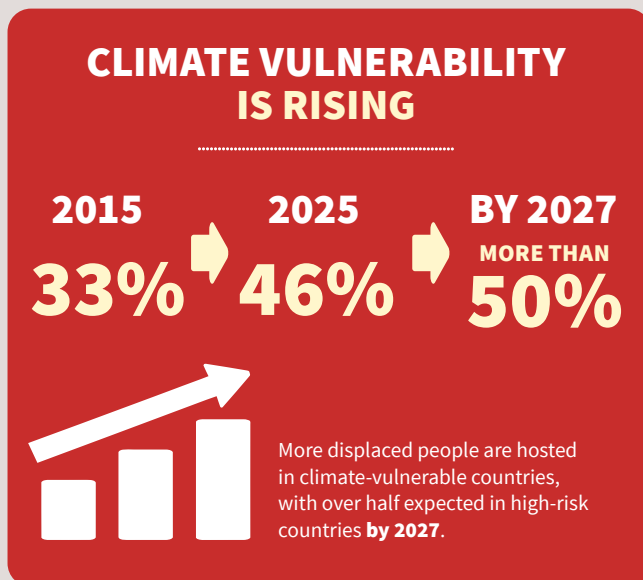
Access constraints further compound these pressures. Fifteen of the 27 countries of focus are categorised as having very high or extreme humanitarian access restrictions. Forecasted displacement growth is significantly higher in contexts with extreme access constraints than in those with moderate limitations, underscoring how restricted operational space can intensify displacement risks.

UNEQUAL HOSTING PRESSURES, CLIMATE EXPOSURE AND LIMITED SOLUTIONS

The economic disparity in hosting capacity is stark. The majority of the displaced live in the poorest regions of the world, while the richest regions such as Europe and North America host only a small fraction of the displaced. This creates an enormous gap in the

resources available to support the displaced. In 2025, Gross Domestic Product per displaced person hosted in European countries exceeded USD 2 million per person, compared to approximately USD 47,000 in sub-Saharan Africa. Half of displaced people reside in countries with the lowest levels of human development.

Climate vulnerability further compounds this imbalance. In 2015, 33% of displaced people were hosted in countries among the most climate-vulnerable; by 2025 this had risen to 46% and is projected to increase further by 2027. By that time, more than half of displaced people are expected to reside in countries at highest risk of flood exposure, with substantial proportions also in countries highly vulnerable to drought and seismic hazards.



At the same time, durable solutions to displacement remain limited. By mid-2025, only 28,000 refugees had been resettled globally, far below levels recorded in previous years. Although nearly 7 million returns were registered by mid-year, a growing share occurred in contexts characterised by high levels of violence. Returning to highly violent environments hinders the durability of the return and often causes repeated or new displacement and recent trends suggest this pattern may be intensifying.

Taken together, these trends point to a broader structural reality: displacement is not only a humanitarian phenomenon but increasingly a question of how in-



stitutions and systems cope with sustained pressure over time. Humanitarian needs that might once have been addressed through short-term assistance now manifest as long-term development challenges, lost years of education, eroded livelihoods, prolonged exposure to trauma, and weakened national and local service delivery.

Most displaced people live outside camps, across cities, secondary towns, and districts in the countries that host them, often relying on already stretched public services and labour markets. As a result, support for displaced populations increasingly depends on national and local systems rather than parallel humanitarian structures.

This requires a shift in emphasis from managing displacement as a temporary humanitarian outcome and instead framing it as a foreseeable and recurring systems challenge. One that requires strengthening national, sub-national, and community systems to absorb, adapt, and recover.

Looking Ahead: DRC's Displacement Forecast 2026–2027

Looking ahead, across the 27 countries covered by DRC's model, the total number of displaced people is projected to increase by 2.0 million in 2026 and a further 2.2 million in 2027, a cumulative rise of 4.2 million between the end of 2025 and the end of 2027. Only one country is forecast to record a decline, while the remaining 26 are projected to see continued increases.

Looking ahead to 2027, Sudan remains the country with the largest projected increase, with displacement expected to rise by more than 300,000. Myanmar is forecast to see an increase of close to 200,000. Substantial increases are also projected in Afghanistan, Chad, Ethiopia, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Venezuela.

Clear regional patterns emerge from these projections. Of the 4.2 million additional displaced people projected by the end of 2027, approximately 1.9 million are expected in sub-Saharan Africa and 0.9 million in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Asia is forecast to account for an increase of 615,000, and Latin America for 450,000, while Europe and North America combined are projected to see an increase of 330,000.

GLOBAL DISPLACEMENT EXPECTED TO RISE

+ 4.2 MILLION

The total number of displaced people is projected to increase by **4.2 million** by the end of 2027*



*The Foresight model covers 27 countries representing approximately 93% of global forced displacement.

The projected increase in 2026 is driven primarily by substantial rises in Sudan and Myanmar, where displacement is forecast to increase by more than 150,000 people in each country. Significant increases are also expected in Venezuela, South Sudan, and the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

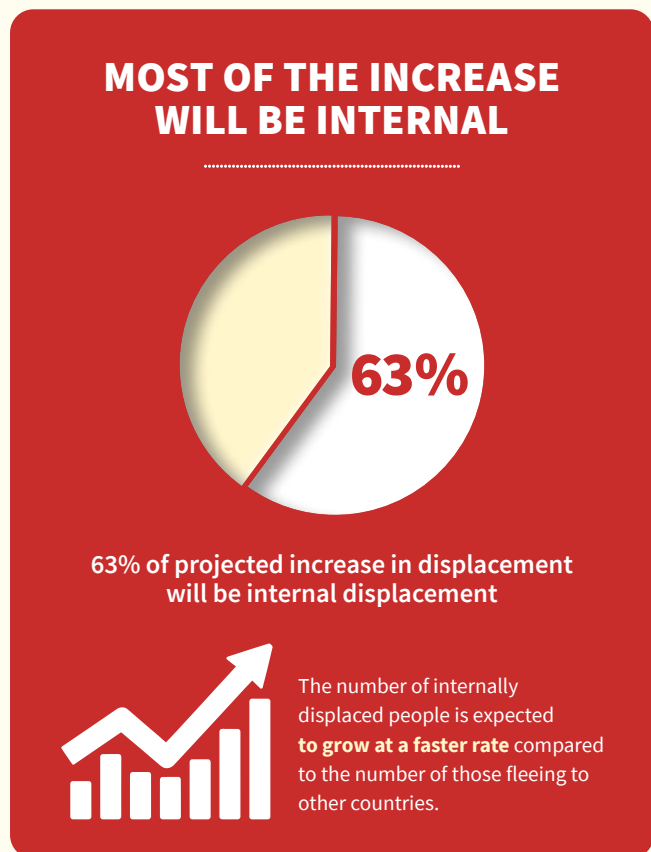
2026 HOT SPOTS FOR DISPLACEMENT

Of the 4.2 million additional displaced people projected by the end of 2027:



- 1.9 million in sub-Saharan Africa
- 0.9 million in the Middle East and North Africa
- 615,000 in Asia
- 450,000 in Latin America
- 330,000 in Europe and North America

Globally, internal displacement is expected to grow at a faster rate than refugee displacement. While 59% of those currently displaced are IDPs, an estimated 63% of the projected increase is expected to be IDPs, indicating a continued deepening of internal displacement crises relative to refugee movements.



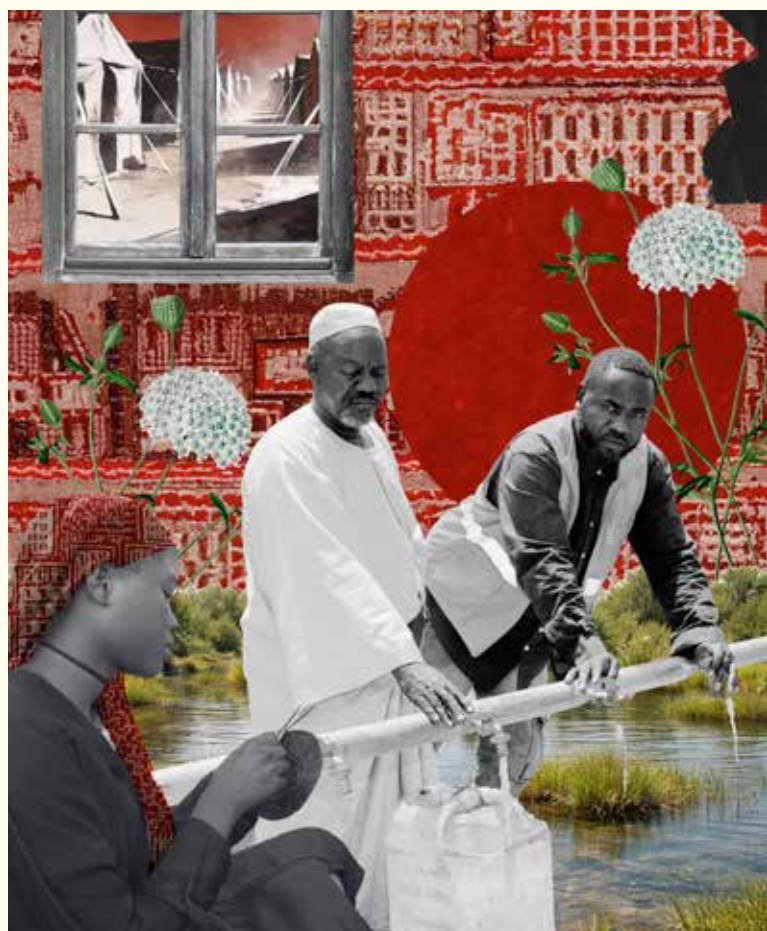
Comparing with last year’s forecast, where projected increases were concentrated in a number of major crises, this year’s projections reflect a broader distribution of substantial increases across even more contexts. In the previous forecast, Myanmar and Sudan together accounted for more than half of the total projected increase; in the current forecast, their combined share is approximately one quarter of the total.

Regionally, East Africa continues to account for the largest share of projected displacement growth, with an estimated 1.4 million additional displaced people (around 33% of the total), though this share is lower than last year’s 45%. At the same time, West Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the MENA region are each forecast to experience increases exceeding 500,000 people.

These projections highlight that displacement pressures remain geographically widespread and structurally embedded across multiple regions. While the scale and drivers vary by context, the forecasts point to risks that are increasingly visible in advance rather than sudden or unpredictable shocks.

Where risks are visible in advance, responses cannot remain reactive. They must be informed by forward-looking analysis and designed to strengthen national, sub-national, and community institutions before pressures escalate. For this reason, the 2026 GDF report’s thematic focus is on anticipatory action for displacement. By linking predictive analytics to operational decision-making, anticipatory action translates forecasted risk into preventive or mitigating action. In an environment of fiscal constraint and protracted fragility, this approach is not an add-on, it is a practical strategy to enhance dignity, preserve human capital, reduce long-term costs, and prevent cyclical shocks from compounding into systemic decline.

Early action to strengthen protection, service delivery, livelihoods, and social cohesion helps ensure that displaced people and host communities retain the capacity to adapt, recover, and contribute economically and socially wherever displacement occurs.



In Focus:

Anticipatory Action for Displacement

The displacement outlook presented in this report projects continued growth across most modelled contexts, with internal displacement increasing at a faster rate than refugee movements. In environments where risks are already visible, the operational question is not whether shocks will occur, but how systems respond before pressure peaks.

Anticipatory action addresses this question by linking forward-looking risk analysis to predefined triggers and time-bound measures, implemented ahead of impact. Forecasts provide early visibility of displacement risk. Anticipatory action determines whether that visibility translates into earlier decisions.

Globally, anticipatory action frameworks have expanded primarily in relation to climate hazards. However, conflict-induced displacement has historically remained outside most anticipatory action architectures. As displacement risk becomes more structurally embedded across fragile and climate-exposed contexts, the relevance of anticipatory approaches increases. By shifting intervention earlier and protecting livelihoods, reinforcing community mechanisms and supporting local institutions before they are overwhelmed, anticipatory action functions as a bridge between humanitarian response, prevention and fragility reduction.

The Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for Displacement (AHEAD) project is DRC's flagship initiative to advance anticipatory action for conflict-induced displacement. Supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it pairs sub-national displacement forecasting (admin 1-2, 3-4 months ahead) with pre-agreed, protection-sensitive early action that is calibrated to operational decision-making timelines. It combines predictive analyt-

ics with community-generated, rights-informed data to ensure that activation thresholds reflect local conflict dynamics and protection realities, not technical indicators alone.



The AHEAD model is a multi-hazard model that also includes climate data thereby allowing DRC's anticipatory action plans to respond not only to acute conflict escalation but also to slow-onset climate stress and compound shocks, ensuring that displacement risk is integrated across both conflict and climate triggers. This is particularly important given that displaced populations often remain underrepresented in national data sets used to inform disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation planning, despite frequently residing in highly climate-vulnerable areas. Integrating displacement into forecasting and risk analysis therefore helps make these populations visible within both data systems and forward-looking planning processes.

DRC'S OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN ANTICIPATORY ACTION:

In **South Sudan** (Akobo County), anticipatory action was activated when predictive modelling combined with community indicators signalled heightened risk of inter-communal violence. Peace committees and dialogue mechanisms were mobilised during the forecast window. A return-on-investment analysis conducted by DRC found substantial avoided humanitarian costs. The peace dialogues are estimated to have prevented displacement of up to 7,000 people, with a conservative estimate of at least 2,800 people remaining in place. Based on this minimum scenario, every €1 invested in the activation generated approximately €6.6 in savings by avoiding emergency response costs, which would otherwise have amounted to nearly €250,000.

In **Burkina Faso**, conflict alerts triggered preparedness measures more than one month earlier than typical humanitarian timelines. Contingency planning, host-community sensitisation and pre-positioning of assistance were initiated despite severe access constraints. Earlier sequencing improved readiness once displacement occurred and reduced the absorption shock on already strained local systems.

In **Somalia**, displacement projections linked to drought and floods, informed anticipatory cash transfers ahead of forecasted flooding. Households receiving early support recorded improved food consumption scores, stronger income retention and reduced protection risks compared to post-shock beneficiaries. Acting before peak impact enabled asset protection and limited secondary displacement pressures.

These operational experiences demonstrate that anticipatory action is both feasible and impactful when forecasting is linked to timely and targeted decision-making. While conflict dynamics remain complex and forecasting uncertainty persists, the cost of inaction is increasingly clear. In environments where risks are visible months in advance, waiting until displacement has already occurred leads to higher humanitarian costs, greater protection risks and deeper strain on national and local systems. Anticipatory action does not eliminate uncertainty, but it provides a structured way to act on credible risk signals before shocks escalate. As displacement becomes more protracted and structurally embedded across fragile and climate-exposed contexts, integrating anticipatory approaches into humanitarian and development responses is no longer experimental but an essential step toward reducing preventable displacement and mitigating its long-term consequences.



Key Messages and Recommendations

WHAT THE 2026–2027 OUTLOOK SIGNALS

The current global asylum and refugee hosting architecture rests on an increasingly fragile assumption: that neighbouring low and lower-middle-income countries will continue to absorb the majority of large-scale displacement, despite persistent conflict, intensifying climate stress and contracting external financing. Many of these states are themselves classified as fragile or conflict-affected, and sustained hosting without commensurate support from the international community, risks reinforcing cycles of fragility and cross-border instability.

Recent trends in 2025 illustrate that large-scale returns can reduce aggregate displacement figures without addressing the structural drivers of displacement or restoring conditions necessary for sustainable reintegration. In environments characterised by continued violence, access limitations and weak institutional capacity, such returns are unlikely to meet the criteria for durable solutions and may contribute to renewed displacement risk.

The DRC forecasts presented in this report point to continued growth in displacement, concentrated in fragile and climate-exposed contexts with three structural drivers converging:

1. Ongoing conflict and institutional fragility remain the primary drivers of large-scale displacement. Elevated levels of violence against civilians, limited capacity and political space to resolve disputes through negotiated and non-violent means, limited state capacity to deliver security and basic services continue to generate movement within and across borders.
2. Climate stress and natural resource pressure are increasingly interacting with existing fragility, compounding displacement risk in already vulnerable contexts.
3. Constrained financing environments are weakening both prevention and response systems. Reductions in official development assistance, including peacebuilding and resilience financing, alongside underfunded humanitarian response plans, are associated with higher subsequent displacement pressures in fragile settings.

These dynamics carry direct implications: Humanitarian access will remain constrained in many high-risk contexts, limiting protection monitoring and response capacity precisely where needs are rising. Returns will increase under pressure, particularly from saturated host countries, but many will occur in environments characterised by continued insecurity. Protracted displacement will deepen, with more IDPs living outside formal settlements and relying on overstretched municipal systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS ALIGNED TO POLICY DECISION POINTS

1. Strengthen anticipatory and early action mechanisms

Where displacement risk is visible, earlier intervention reduces long-term cost. Donors should scale anticipatory finance for both conflict and climate-related displacement.

2. Rebalance financing toward peacebuilding and fragility reduction

Donors should protect and expand allocations to fragile and conflict-affected settings, particularly for peacebuilding and strengthening institutions responsible for service delivery in major host countries. Funding volatility increases displacement volatility. Multi-year, flexible financing linked to forward-looking risk analysis is essential.

3. Move from humanitarian containment to systems investment

In major host countries, displacement must be integrated into national development planning, service delivery (education, health, WASH etc.) and labour market strategies. This applies not only to refugee-hosting areas, but also to districts affected by internal displacement, where most displaced people remain within their own countries. Development finance institutions and bilateral donors should align support with displacement-affected districts and systems, rather than treating displacement as a parallel humanitarian issue.

4. Safeguard protection space and humanitarian access

Diplomatic engagement should prioritise civilian protection, access guarantees and adherence to international humanitarian law in high-risk contexts. Rising violence against civilians directly correlates with displacement growth.

5. Re-anchor return processes in protection standards

Support to return processes must be conditioned on safety, voluntariness, and sustainability benchmarks, including access to services, livelihoods, and legal documentation. Systematic post-return monitoring should also be required to assess whether returns are sustainable and to identify risks of renewed displacement.

6. Restore and protect funding for displacement data and analysis as core humanitarian infrastructure

Displacement data systems, including the DTM, protection monitoring, and multisector assessments, are essential to understanding displacement dynamics, identifying emerging risks, and enabling timely, evidence-based responses. They should be treated as core humanitarian infrastructure and funded predictably.

Where access is constrained, donors and operational agencies should invest in complementary methods such as remote sensing, community-based reporting, and mobile surveys. At the same time humanitarian planning documents should report transparently on data gaps, coverage limitations, and uncertainty.

7. Expand meaningful responsibility-sharing

Resettlement quotas, complementary pathways for admission and stay and regional mobility arrangements remain disproportionately limited relative to need. Without broader responsibility-sharing, pressure will continue to accumulate in fragile host states.

The international system is unlikely to revert to a grants-heavy, peacebuilding-centred model in the near future. The question, therefore, is not how to restore a previous paradigm, but how to recalibrate responses to minimise long-term developmental loss and human capital erosion in a world of persistent polycrisis, where conflict, climate stress, economic volatility, and fragility reinforce one another.



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