



FORCED DISPLACEMENT: A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AND A DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

“No one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land.”

Warsan Shire

INTRODUCTION

A humanitarian crisis of gigantic proportions is unfolding in the landlocked Afghanistan even as the world community struggles to come to terms with the country's takeover by the Taliban. Today, nearly 6 million Afghans have been driven out of their homes and their country by conflict, violence and poverty. The Afghan refugees already constitute one of the largest protracted refugee situations in the world and the present crisis has galvanized attention to one of the world's foremost challenges: Forced displacement.

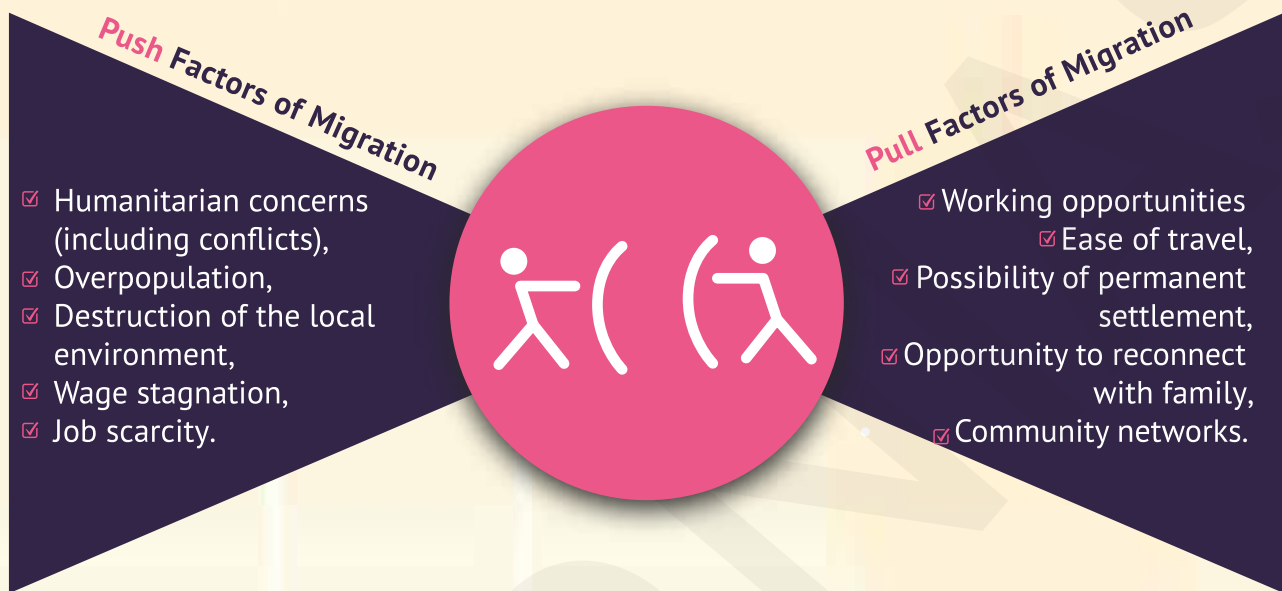
In this situation, it is important to understand- What drives the movement of people globally? What are the different types of forced migration or forced displacement? How many people are forcibly displaced across the globe? What are the implications of forced displacement on the countries of origin and on host countries? What steps have been taken so far to address the issues? What is India's take on refugees? And what is the best possible way to manage the issue of forced displacement across the world? In this edition, we will provide answer to these questions.



WHAT DRIVES THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE GLOBALLY?

Migration (or movement of people) within a country or across regions is a **global phenomenon caused** due to factors like economic, social, political, cultural, environmental, health, and education that are broadly classified as **Push and Pull factors of migration**.

It is not a new phenomenon. History demonstrates that migration has existed for centuries as trade relations, the expansion of empires, wars, persecution and political turmoil have triggered human movement within regions, countries and beyond.



MIGRATION THEREFORE CAN BE CATEGORIZED AS **MANAGED, UNMANAGED, VOLUNTARY AND FORCED**

- **Managed migration** refers to relocation to a host country in a planned manner such as through quotas or visas.
- **Unmanaged migration** refers to migration that the host country has not planned or accounted for.
- **Voluntary migration** means relocation according to personal desires.
- **Forced migration** is a migratory movement which involves force, compulsion, or coercion. While **not an international legal concept**, this term has been used to describe the movements of refugees, displaced persons (including those displaced by disasters or development projects), and, in some instances, victims of trafficking.

Major categories of Forcibly Displaced People

Refugees	Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	Climate Refugees
Crossed the international border to flee to other countries	Remain within the boundary of their own country but flee their residential place. (For example, Kukis of Assam living in neighbouring Manipur and Nagaland).	They may be IDPs or refugees. In this case people migrate due to reasons like water scarcity, lower crop productivity, sea level rise, extreme climatic events, etc.

The hardships they endure through their displacement make these people vulnerable. They lose assets and livelihoods, and are unable to plan their future. Many suffer from trauma, and women and girls are at high risk of gender-based violence. They need help to regain their agency and begin rebuilding their lives.








HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE FORCIBLY DISPLACED ACROSS THE GLOBE?

82.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced at the end of 2020 **as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.** According to the World Bank's 2021 'Groundswell' report, Climate change can force 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050.








Major hosting countries

Five countries hosted at least 1.2 million refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad*

	Turkey	3.7M
	Colombia	1.7M
	Pakistan	1.4M
	Uganda	1.4M
	Germany	1.2M

Major source countries


More than two thirds (68 per cent) of all refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad came from just five countries*

	Syria	6.7M
	Venezuela	4M
	Afghanistan	2.6M
	South Sudan	2.2M
	Myanmar	1.1M

Source: *UNHCR Global Trends 2020*



WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT OF PEOPLE?

Impacts on the countries of origin	Impacts on the host countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Political fragility: There have been instances where the forcibly displaced have used exile as a sanctuary and remained engaged in the conflict, through political support or by providing remittances. ■ Large-scale departures can also cause demographic shifts. ■ Internal displacement of people leads to new regional imbalances. ■ Loss of capital and human resources. ■ Institutional capacity and service delivery can be affected when the forcibly displaced include large numbers of state employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Demographic shock: Influx of large numbers of forcibly displaced persons disrupts preexisting equilibria and creates mismatches in supply and demand in markets. ■ Stress on infrastructure: The inflow of refugees increases demand of social, urban, and environmental services, while supply may take time to adjust. ■ Social problems such as gender-based dominance and/or violence often increase during conflict and in displaced settings. ■ Security risks: Refugee camps located close to the boundary of the country of origin can provide sanctuary to rebel organizations, and a base from which to carry out operations and fertile grounds for recruitment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ At times, refugees can create tensions in bilateral relations between neighboring countries. ■ Challenges with labeling migrants: Many of the factors responsible for migration overlap making it difficult to objectively determine the definition of a 'migrant,' 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' which leads to problems for those respective population. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ An asylum seeker is someone who claims to be a refugee but whose claim hasn't been evaluated. So, not every asylum seeker will be recognised as a refugee.

In conversation ! REFUGEES: BURDEN OR ASSET?



Vinay: Vini, Refugees are truly a burden over countries worldwide!

Vini: No Vinay! It is not like that. There are numerous benefits as well that refugee population provides to a host country.

Vinay: Really? How so?

Vini: By participating in the workforce and creating new jobs, refugees have raised the median income and also the GDP of many host countries like the US. Similarly, refugee population can present demographic solutions to ageing populations of the host country and also fosters greater cooperation across regions and countries to address migratory issues.

Vinay: Wow, I never thought it that way. Has any country been able to leverage the positive aspects of refugee population?

Vini: Yes, there are many countries. Germany, for instance, has historically benefited from migration and stands to profit in the future as well. Waves of Turkish migrants compensated for a deficiency of manual labourers in the post-war decades in Germany, and migrants from Eastern Europe and the Middle East might offset the negative economic trends of an ageing population over the coming decades if there is successful integration.

Vinay: That's great.





WHAT STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN SO FAR TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT?

- **Outlining Government responsibilities:** The UN 1951 Refugee Convention and its subsequent 1967 Protocol are the most important legal documents setting out government responsibilities towards refugees globally.
 - ☑ These documents set out the definition of refugees (or asylum seekers) and a requirement that governments do not return refugees to a territory where his or her life or freedom is threatened (**the principle of non-refoulement**). They also establish cooperation procedures with the UNHCR.
- **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):** Created in 1950. It promotes three durable solutions for refugees as part of its core mandate: voluntary repatriation; local integration; and resettlement.
- **The first Global Refugee Forum (GRF):** It was organised in 2019 to bring the international community together, support implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and develop a concrete work plan towards the next forum in 2023.
 - ☑ **GCR** adopted at UNGA in 2016 calls for greater support to refugees and the countries that host them, and also aims to help refugees become more self-reliant so that they can contribute more to their own future and to that of the host community.
- **Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement:** It is a research partnership between the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the UNHCR and the World Bank. The program was launched in 2016, with the objective of contributing to **expand high quality and policy-relevant research** on forced displacement.

In conversation ! INDIA'S REFUGEE POLICY



Vini: Hey! You know, my family is planning an excursion trip to Dharamshala, the winter capital city of Himachal.

Vinay: Wow! Dharamshala represent the home of Dalai Lama and thousands of other Tibetan refugees who continue to live harmoniously, largely, with other local Indian groups.

Vini: Perhaps there are many more refugees living across India, isn't it?

Vinay: Exactly! In fact, in the seven decades, since it became an independent country, India has seen and **largely welcomed waves of migrants fleeing conflict in neighbouring nations** like from Bangladesh in early 1970s, from Afghanistan in late 1970s, from Sri Lanka in the 1980s, etc.

Vini: Yes, and it is also a reflection of India's '**vasudhaiv kutumbkam**' philosophy.

Vinay: Yeah! Moreover, it is intriguing that even though India lacks specific legislation, **neither it is a signatory to the 1951 Refugees' Convention nor the 1967 protocol**, it served as a home to the largest refugee population in South Asia.

Vini: But if India is already providing shelter to so many refugees, why does it desist signing the convention and protocol?

Vinay: The possible reason is India's **geographical vulnerabilities** as well as its **strategic interest**.

Vini: Could you please elaborate this?

Vinay: As you must be aware of the fact that India has a porous border and is surrounded by politically fragile neighbor. Any conflict can result in a mass movement of people putting a strain on India's resources & upsetting the demographic balance. In addition, India's experience with UNHCR has not been very pleasant during the Bangladesh refugee crisis when its actions were perceived as an explicit endorsement of Pakistani propaganda.





Vini: So basically, not signing any such convention has graciously allowed India to carefully keep its options open on the ethical question of refugees.

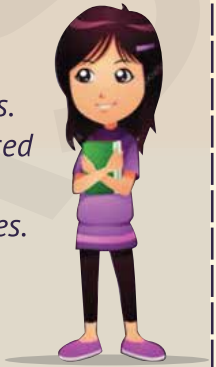
Vinay: Definitely. In fact, the government can declare any set of refugees as illegal immigrants and decide to deal with them as trespassers under the Foreigners Act or the Indian Passport Act. The government often gets criticized also for such ad-hocism resulting in a discriminatory action, which is perceived as tends to be a violation of human rights.

Vini: What about UNHCR being operational in India since 1981?

Vinay: Absolutely. In India, the **UNHCR works with the government, NGOs and civil societies to facilitate refugees and asylum-seekers** in accessing public health, education and legal aid services. However, the **policy on the grant of the refugee, asylum or temporary assistance to** people displaced due to persecution in their home countries are **determined by the Indian government** through a bilateral or multilateral process with those countries, in line with its international relations policies.

Vini: What guides India's policy of granting the refugee, asylum or temporary assistance to people fleeing conflicts?

Vinay: Any conscious decision of the Indian government to grant refugee or asylum status cannot be isolated from its international responsibility under the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child** of which India is a signatory. These international regimes coupled with the guidelines under the **Constitution** drives India's stand on refugee crisis of the world.



HOW COULD THE FORCED DISPLACEMENT BE MANAGED?

■ Preventing displacement

- ☑ **Legal:** The right not to be displaced should be more firmly recognised by a competent body (such as the UN General Assembly or UN Human Rights Council).
- ☑ **Improving governance: NGOs, civil societies and conflict-affected communities could be roped in for engaging state authorities in** a dialogue to highlight the high costs of forced displacement and to support better policy choices to address the causes of displacement.

■ Managing displacement

☑ Host countries

- ▶ **Develop early warning systems:** When displacement can be forecast, there is time to prepare— for example, providing block grants that can be rapidly deployed to affected municipalities when the crisis hits.
- ▶ **Economic development and poverty reduction:** The host countries should be provided enough resources to strengthen and expand service delivery in the education and health sectors as well as urban and environmental services. This requires a strong engagement by the private sector.
- ▶ **Integration of displaced in the economy** by creating economic opportunities.
- ▶ **Transforming camps into settlement:** This will end situations of “continuing limbo” where people remain dependent in camps for extended periods.
- ▶ **Legal migrant status:** Many a time forcibly displaced people get ‘de-facto’ integrated in the host country (for example, Tibetan refugees in India). However, they may not be able to secure legal recognition as ‘citizen’. Such people could be given legal migrant status and work permit.

☑ Country of origin

- ▶ **Reducing vulnerability of people who are yet not displaced:** Their resilience needs to be strengthened to ensure they do not become the victim of forced displacement. International development agencies could finance projects to maintain livelihoods and to strengthen community-based institutions. “Stable parts of unstable countries” could be utilised to complement humanitarian actions.



- ▶ **Supporting return of forcibly displaced:** Country of origin should be supported in improving governance in general and law and order situation in particular. Adequate economic development and facilities for health and education must be ensured. Both returnees and the communities that receive them must be supported through legal, economic and other aid like counselling.
- **Leveraging technology and innovation:** Innovative consumer-focused technology companies and start-ups can provide enhanced solutions to issues faced by refugees at a more micro level, such as information sharing, housing, safety, aid and fund raising, healthcare, integration and jobs matching.
 - ☑ Enterprise technology companies can provide **more tailored end-to-end hardware, software and infrastructure solutions for improved database management, communication** between agencies, security at and inside borders, identity verification and tracking, strategic analysis and planning, and aid and funds distribution.



CONCLUSION

The forcibly displaced often live in poor areas in developing countries that are struggling to meet their own development goals. Accommodating the sudden arrival of masses of newcomers presents a challenge for host governments, putting further pressure on their ability to deliver basic services and infrastructure. **This is why forced displacement is not only a humanitarian crisis, it is a development challenge as well.** Today, displacement situations are becoming increasingly protracted. Many wealthier states continue to prioritize policies that will deter people from seeking asylum in their countries. Such restrictive and short-sighted policies are forcing women, men and children to take dangerous land and sea journeys, putting their lives at risk and fueling human rights abuses. All these underscores the need for a more sustainable and efficient way to support both the displaced and their hosts with a longer-term perspective.



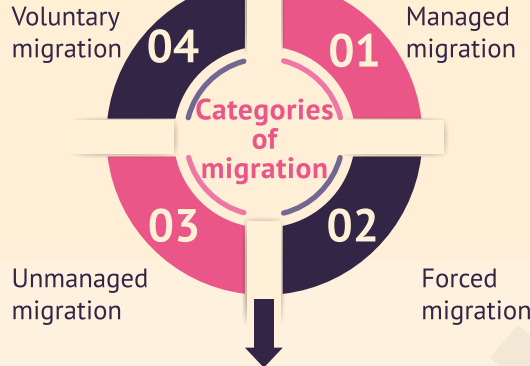
MIGRATION AT A GLANCE

Migration within a country or across regions is a **global phenomenon** caused due to **pull and push factors**.

Types of forced migration

- Refugees
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- Climate refugees

Current status: 82.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced at the end of 2020.



Push Factors: humanitarian concerns, overpopulation, destruction of the local environment, wage stagnation, job scarcity

Pull Factors: working opportunities, ease of travel, possibility of permanent settlement, opportunity to reconnect with family, community networks.

Impacts of forced migration

on the countries of origin

- Political fragility may increase** if forcibly displaced use exile as a sanctuary and remained engaged in the conflict.
- Demographic shifts** and new regional imbalances.
- Loss of capital and human resources.** **Institutional capacity** and service delivery can be affected due to the displacement of state employees.

on the host countries

Adverse

- Demographic shock due** to influx of large numbers of persons.
- Stress on infrastructure** due to rise in the demand.
- Increase in social problems** such as gender-based dominance.
- Security risks** as refugee camps may act as sanctuary to rebel organizations.
- Challenges in classifying forcibly displaced as migrants,** 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker'

Positives: Participating in the workforce and creating new jobs, demographic solutions to ageing populations of the host country, etc.

Way ahead

- Preventing displacement:** Recognizing the 'right not to be displaced' be firmly and Improving governance in the country of origin.
- Managing displacement**
 - Host countries:** Develop early warning systems, economic development and poverty reduction, Integration of displaced in the economy, etc.
 - Country of origin:** Reducing vulnerability of people who are yet not displaced, supporting return of forcibly displaced by improving governance as well as law and order situation.
- Leveraging technology and innovation:** For more micro level and, and more tailored solution to problems of refugees.

Steps taken to address the issue of forced displacement

- The UN 1951 Refugee Convention and its subsequent 1967 Protocol:** They define refugees and set out the Government responsibilities in this matter.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1950:** To promote voluntary repatriation; local integration; and resettlement.
- The first Global Refugee Forum (GRF), 2019:** To bring the international community together.
- Building the Evidence on Forced Displacement:** It is a research partnership between the UK, the UNHCR and the World Bank.
- India:** it is not a signatory of the UN convention, yet provides shelters to thousands of refugees.