

Human tide: the real migration crisis

A Christian Aid report
May 2007



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We believe in life before death

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Introduction

A world struggling to cope with the largest enforced movement of people in its history. Tens of millions displaced, living in parlous conditions – their very futures threatened by the enormity of the problem.

That was the dire situation at the end of the Second World War, and Christian Aid – known at the time as Christian Reconstruction in Europe – was founded to help address it. Then, 50 years ago, came the first Christian Aid Week – a mass mobilisation of supporters to raise funds for the continuing refugee crisis in Europe and beyond.

The roots of the organisation run deep into the tragedy of forced migration. So it is with some authority that we now issue a stark warning about accelerating rates of displacement in the 21st century.

As the effects of climate change join and exacerbate the conflicts, natural disasters and development projects that drive displacement, we fear that an emerging migration crisis will spiral out of control. Unless urgent action is taken, it threatens to dwarf even that faced by the war-ravaged world all those decades ago.

Christian Aid predicts that, on current trends, a further 1 billion people will be forced from their homes between now and 2050. We believe forced migration is the most urgent threat facing poor people in developing countries. The time for action is now.

The issue of migration is currently riding high on the domestic political agenda. Media attention here is focused on economic migrants and those seeking political asylum in Britain and Ireland, with debate centering on whether these people bring benefits or dangers. This report is not about those issues.

For the real crisis is emerging a long way away, and largely unnoticed. It really is not about us. Principally, it involves some 155 million men, women and children who have had no choice but to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere in their own countries. They are, in the flat jargon of international classification, ‘internally displaced persons’, or ‘IDPs’.

Millions are escaping war and ethnic persecution, and millions more have literally had their homes swept away by the increasing number of natural disasters. A staggering number of people are being pushed aside to make way for dams, roads and other large-scale development projects. Most are in the world’s poorest countries, often among their poorest people. Their already harsh lives are made worse by being forced to move, sometimes repeatedly.

Unlike the relatively small numbers of dictionary-definition ‘refugees’, who have struggled across a border to escape persecution, they are also largely voiceless. They have no status or protection under international law and no single international agency is responsible for their welfare. They are nobody’s problem, apart from their own governments’. And those governments are often responsible for these people’s plight in the first place.

The number of IDPs is expected to rise dramatically in the coming decades. And those already displaced look likely to be joined by at least equal numbers of people forced from their homes because of climate change.

The impact of climate change is the great, and frightening, unknown in this equation. Existing estimates of its potential to displace people are more than a decade old and are widely disputed. Only now is serious academic attention being devoted to calculating the scale of this new human tide.

Given the amount of work and column inches devoted in recent years to the economic implications of global warming, including the landmark *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, commissioned by the UK government, this may seem inconceivable – even shameful. But it is the case. Stern, for example, merely quotes the old figures. Cynics may conclude that this lack of focus, while popular chatter centres on threats to our foreign holidays and big cars, is because the problem is perceived as being a long way away. It really is not about us.

For the people of the developing world, however, mass migration forced by climate change could prove to be a further crushing blow.

In our report, *The Climate of Poverty*, published a year ago, Christian Aid highlighted how the process of climate change was already affecting poor populations. It also predicted how the threat of increasing floods, disease and famine sparked by climate change could nullify efforts to secure meaningful and sustainable development in poor countries. At worst, the report said, these ravages could send the real progress that has already been achieved ‘spinning into reverse’.

To add many more millions of uprooted people to this mix makes an already apocalyptic picture potentially even more devastating.

The danger is that this new forced migration will fuel existing conflicts and generate new ones in the areas of the world – the poorest – where resources are most scarce. Movement on this scale has the potential to de-stabilise whole regions where increasingly desperate populations compete for dwindling food and water. While mired in political complexity, the genesis of the appalling conflict in Darfur has been in part attributed to this very downward spiral. Let Darfur stand as the starkest of warnings about what the future could bring.

This scenario has not escaped the attention of military planners. In December 2006 Sir Jock Stirrup, as the Chief of the Defence Staff and Britain’s most senior seviceman, used his annual lecture at the Royal United Services Institute to highlight these concerns.

‘Climate change and growing competition for scarce resources are together likely to increase the incidence of humanitarian crises. The spread of desert regions, a scarcity of water, coastal erosion, declining arable land, damage to infrastructure from extreme weather: all this could undermine security,’ he said.

The latest *Global Strategic Trends Programme* report from the UK’s Ministry of Defence (MoD) forecasts the state of the world over the next 30 years. Released earlier this year by the MoD’s Defence Concepts and Doctrine Centre military think-tank, the report outlines past examples of rapid climate change and speaks in no-nonsense terms about the possible extreme consequences of another one.

‘The Earth’s population has grown exponentially in the last century and any future event of this type would have more dramatic human consequences, resulting in societal collapse, mega-migration, intensifying competition for much-diminished resources and widespread conflict.’

The case studies in this report spell out in human detail how major internal migration crises, caused by conflict, have already developed in **Sudan**, in **Uganda** and in **Sri Lanka**. The main studies that follow seek to highlight equally devastating situations that are still developing with far less attention from the world’s media or the wider international community. They illustrate how, over time, internal displacements with their roots in conflict can mutate into disputes over land and other economic resources – or hard cash. In all cases, very few people get to go home.

Colombia is second only to Sudan for its number of IDPs, living in makeshift camps or in crowded slums on the fringes of the capital, Bogotá. Originally forced to move by guerrillas and militias locked in a decades-long civil war, this largely rural population is now seeing its land grabbed to make way for lucrative plantations. Increasingly, this is to produce palm oil – a substance in high demand and found in many products in the rich world’s shopping baskets.

In **Burma**, ethnic minority groups, including the Karen, have also been subject to decades of violence, displacement and persecution. Their government is now using the space created by their displacement to plan dams and other large-scale developments, including palm oil plantations, leading to further, vicious forced displacement.

These are just extreme examples of the ‘development displacement’ that experts say accounts for up to 105 million displaced people at any given time. Once again, the onset of climate change is set to further swell these numbers. As the pressure to cut CO₂ emissions in rich countries grows, a solution is being sought by substituting biofuels for oil – particularly by the US government – as a way to keep cars and trucks running. The problem is that this potential bonanza for biofuel producers will require vast tracts of land for plantations, leading to the forced ejection of yet more peasant farmers.

In **Mali**, the threat from climate change is more immediate. The country lies in the Sahel belt of semi-arid land that straddles sub-Saharan Africa and is one of the areas of the world most vulnerable to global warming. Already farmers here are now finding it impossible to live off the land in the way they have done for centuries. Erratic and declining levels of rainfall mean dramatically declining crop yields – and people have to move in order to earn the money to feed their families. Increasing numbers are trying to get to Europe for this purpose.

And always it should be remembered that people in poor countries such as Mali have contributed least to global warming and to the climate change that now threatens their existence.

Christian Aid Week is by no means the only event marking a big anniversary in 2007. In what is turning into a year of anniversaries, it also marks the 40th anniversary of the Six Day War and the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel. Later, there is the 60th anniversary of Indian independence. And we have just, of course, marked the 200th anniversary of the bill to end the British slave trade. All these big moments tell gruelling tales of enforced mass migrations of poor people.

It would be fitting, therefore, if 2007 could in future be known as the year in which the world took serious steps to avoid the worst impacts of future forced migration.

So what can be done? In the aftermath of the Second World War, the international community responded with vision and imagination to tackle what must have seemed like an intractable problem. That same kind of vision is needed now to prevent the latest migration crisis from spiralling out of control.

Christian Aid does not pretend to have all the answers, but the solution must start with an overhaul of the current UN system for dealing, or not dealing, with internally displaced people. Together with our partner organisations, we work closely with UN agencies in response to humanitarian shocks – implementing their programmes to get aid through to those who need it most. So we know the challenges faced. But these millions of people cannot be left without a voice.

The growing problem of displacement resulting from large-scale development programmes must also be addressed. At present there is not even agreement about whether people forced from their homes to make way for dams or roads are covered by existing codes of conduct. Rich countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have had their own guidelines on the impact of their funding of development projects for the past ten years. But it is simply not known whether they are effective or not.

To address the looming crisis of climate change, the polluter must pay. Governments of rich states, such as the UK, must accept their countries’ responsibility for the growing harm and suffering that climate change will bring to developing countries – and pay to alleviate it. A US\$100 billion-a-year fund is needed to help poor people adapt to changing weather patterns so that they can stay in their own homes.

The alternative, as this report seeks to highlight, is a desperate situation that could destabilise whole regions – plunging them further into poverty and conflict. We hope that on its next big anniversary Christian Aid will be able to celebrate its part in a positive effort to overcome these problems, not to commemorate another forced migration disaster.

‘Most forced displacement – whether caused by human rights abuses, natural disasters or development projects, or in the form of trafficking or abduction – takes place in poor countries, and has the greatest impact on the poorest and most vulnerable people in those societies.’¹

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *State of the World's Refugees 2006*

The forced migration crisis

Today's international machinery for protecting people forced to leave their homes was created in the aftermath of the Second World War. By May 1945, some 66 million people were displaced across Europe, in addition to many millions more in China.²

At the time, it was the largest population displacement in modern history.

But those in charge of helping people return home or find new homes were optimistic. They assumed Europe's refugee crisis would be solved and that the organisation created to deal with it would be closed down by 1950.

Even when this did not happen, because large numbers of people remained uprooted, it was hoped that a successor organisation – the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – would settle Europe's problem quickly.

Since then the world has lurched from one crisis to another. The partition of India, the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the creation of Israel, the Korean and Vietnam wars, the many conflicts which followed the collapse of communism and now the 'war on terror' have forced many millions of people to leave their homes. Natural disasters and economic activity have added greatly to the toll.

Far more people are now displaced around the world than even immediately after the Second World War. But the vast majority of them are not refugees. You are unlikely even to have heard of them. They have no special laws or organisations to protect them and their plight gets little media attention. They are, in the jargon, 'internally displaced persons' or 'IDPs'.

Work to try to meet their most basic needs is currently done by a vast patchwork of United Nations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) around the world, which includes Christian Aid and its local partner organisations. A growing proportion of our work is in countries with major internal displacement problems, such as Sudan, Colombia, Burma and Sri Lanka. But this makeshift system is creaking and many people are getting no help at all.

Now it is coming under greater strain than ever. Margaret Beckett, the UK Foreign Secretary, warned the UN Security Council in April 2007 that climate change was a security threat which could cause 'flooding, disease and famine, and from that migration on an unprecedented scale'.³

Christian Aid believes that without urgent action, climate change will make the forced displacement crisis the biggest threat facing developing countries over the next 50 years.

Who are the displaced?

Forcibly displaced people are those made to leave their homes with very little or no choice in the matter. They leave in order to avoid acute physical dangers such as those posed by war, floods, hurricane or famine, or because their home or land is to be destroyed by large-scale development projects such as dams, roads and plantations.

This group does not include people who might be described as economic migrants – those who have more freedom of choice about whether to remain in their homes or move elsewhere in search of a better life.

The world currently has around 163 million forcibly displaced people. This figure includes:

- 25 million people displaced by conflict and extreme human rights abuses who remain within their own countries.⁴
- 25 million people displaced by disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes and floods, who remain within their own countries.⁵
- 105 million people displaced by 'development' projects such as dams, mines, roads, factories, plantations and wildlife reserves. The vast majority remain within their own countries.⁶
- 8.5 million people who are refugees. This means that they have fled persecution in their own countries and gone to other countries that have accepted their claims for asylum.⁷

These figures give a 'snapshot' of the number of people who are displaced from their homes at any one time. People are constantly becoming newly displaced, while others are able to return home or resettle elsewhere.

All figures on displaced people are approximations, not least because of the difficulties of counting people, especially when they are living in urban areas or in the homes of family members, rather than camps. Governments may be unwilling or unable to say how many of their citizens are displaced, or may deliberately under- or over-state the scale of the problem to attract more humanitarian aid or turn international opinion against an internal enemy.

Christian Aid believes that the growing number of disasters and conflicts linked to future climate change will push the number of people forced to flee their homes far higher, unless urgent action is taken.

We estimate that over the years between now and 2050, a total of 1 billion people will be displaced from their homes.

This comprises:

- 50 million people displaced by conflict and extreme human rights abuses. This assumes a rate of displacement of roughly 1 million people a year, which is conservative.⁸
- 50 million people displaced by natural disasters. Again, this conservatively assumes that around 1 million people will be displaced in this way every year.
- 645 million people displaced by development projects such as dams and mines (at the current rate of 15 million a year).⁹
- 250 million people permanently displaced by climate change-related phenomena such as floods, droughts, famines and hurricanes.¹⁰
- 5 million people will flee their own countries and be accepted as refugees.¹¹

Helping refugees after the Second World War

The Allied powers had realised before the end of the war that huge numbers of people would need to be helped to return home, and in November 1943 they established the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

Between May and September 1945, it assisted with the repatriation of some 7 million people.¹² Interestingly, it helped everyone who was displaced from their home, regardless of whether they were still within their own countries.

However, the repatriation operation became increasingly controversial, as people were unwillingly returned to countries that came under control of the then USSR.

The United States government pressed successfully for the creation of a new, supposedly temporary refugee organisation. The International Refugee Organisation (IRO) began life in July 1947, as a United Nations agency which was to have finished its work by June 1950. Its functions included repatriation, identification, registration, care and assistance, legal and political protection, transport and resettlement. The IRO focused on resettling people outside their own countries, rather than sending them home. It repatriated 73,000 people, and helped to resettle more than 1 million.

Even though it continued its work for longer than anticipated (eventually closing down in early 1952), around 400,000 people were still displaced from their homes in Europe at the end of 1951.¹³

The displacement problem began to grow again in the late 1940s, as people fled communism in eastern Europe and millions were displaced in India and Pakistan by the partition of India in 1947. As a result, west European governments, together with those of India and Pakistan and the International

Committee of the Red Cross, favoured the creation of a new UN organisation to resettle refugees.

In December 1949, the UN General Assembly voted to create the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and it came into being on 1 January 1951, with a mandate for three years. In the summer of that year, a UN conference also adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

UNHCR was to provide international protection for refugees and help governments with their voluntary repatriation or resettlement in new countries. It was given a small administrative budget, plus a small emergency fund and allowed to appeal for voluntary contributions, so long as the appeals were approved by the General Assembly.

Refugee protection

The 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees remains the main plank of legal protection for refugees today.

It defines a refugee as a person with a 'well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion'. Signatory states may not expel or return refugees to countries where they will face persecution.

Importantly, the convention did not apply to people who had been expelled from their homes but remained within their own countries. This means it does not apply to the roughly 155 million people who are internally displaced today.

The convention also sets out the obligations and rights of people who are accepted as refugees, and the duties of states towards them, for instance in relation to employment, education, homes, freedom of movement and access to the law.

The original 1951 convention limited UNHCR's scope to Europe and to people who became refugees as a result of events before 1951, but its 1967 Protocol removed those limitations. By then, it was clear that people were still becoming refugees around the world and that the convention needed to extend to include them.

UNHCR itself was also extended. After its original term expired in the 1950s, the United Nations renewed its mandate every five years and then, in 2003, the limitation on its term was removed.

From the mid-1960s until the mid-1970s, the number of refugees around the world fluctuated between 2 and 4 million, rising rapidly after 1975 to reach 12 million in 1985 and a peak of 18 million in 1992.¹⁴ UNHCR attributes the sharp rise in

Stranded within their countries and largely ignored by the media, they are the world's forgotten people.

the early 1990s to the outbreak of 'ethno-national' wars for independence following the end of the Cold War – for example in former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union.

Since then, refugee numbers have halved, to reach their current level of some 8.4 million people.¹⁵ This reflects a fall in the number of wars between countries and also the number of autocratic regimes that repress ethnic minorities, according to UNHCR. The fall is also partly the result of several large repatriations, in particular involving refugees from Afghanistan who had fled to Pakistan and Iran.

At the same time as some refugees are going home, governments are making it more difficult for people to become refugees. They are making their asylum laws and procedures more restrictive and some are even building walls on their borders. This is happening, for example, between India and Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, and the United States and Mexico.

The forgotten millions

This report is not principally about refugees. Rather, it seeks to draw attention to the less well-known but far larger number of people who have fled their homes but stayed within their own countries, rather than crossing international borders.

If UNHCR helped everyone internally displaced from their homes, as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration did after the Second World War, then rather than working for 21 million 'persons of concern' (including 8.4 million refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, stateless people and others), it would be responsible for some 169 million people.¹⁶

As it is, the vast majority of forced migrants have no organisation dedicated to protecting and demanding a better deal for them, and no specific legal rights. They are at the mercy of their own governments. Stranded within their countries and largely ignored by the media, they are the world's forgotten people.

50 years of Christian Aid Week

As Allied forces advanced across Europe, signalling the beginning of the end of the Second World War, British churches began fundraising to help millions of people made homeless by the conflict.

In 1945, Christian Aid, then known as Christian Reconstruction in Europe, was set up, mainly to provide emergency supplies and help resettle refugees. Its work soon spread further afield, as conflict displaced millions more in Palestine, Korea and China.

Meanwhile, the Second World War legacy of homelessness and poverty endured. In 1956, Christian Aid, which was by then called the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Refugee

Service, built a replica refugee camp in London's St Martin-in-the-Fields church, highlighting the plight of some 100,000 people still living in appalling temporary conditions.

Then, 50 years ago in 1957, the first Christian Aid Week was held to raise both money and public awareness. The 200 towns and villages that took part collected a grand total of £26,000. Christian Aid Week became an annual event. The following year, it was launched in Ireland.

Fundraising for refugees was not restricted to Christian Aid Week. When the United Nations designated 1959-60 World Refugee Year, the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service raised more money than any other charity.

By 1964, Christian Aid Week had become so well known throughout the UK that the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service changed its name to Christian Aid.

At the end of the 1960s, Christian Aid Week broke through the £1 million barrier. As well as giving aid to crises such as the Biafran war, Christian Aid began to speak out about the causes of poverty.

In the 1970s, Christian Aid expanded its long-term development work, funding more than 100 projects in more than 40 countries. And by the end of the 1980s, Christian Aid Week was raising £6 million.

Much of the money raised during Christian Aid Week continues to be spent tackling problems similar to those of

half a century ago.

In this, its golden jubilee year, the UK's longest running door-to-door fundraising week is expected to raise £15.5 million.



Christian Aid Week poster 1959

Sudan

Sudan has the dubious distinction of being the country with the highest number of internally displaced persons – more than 5 million. In the western region of Darfur, more than 2 million people have been forced from their homes, rendering them homeless in their own country. Sudan is also emerging from a 20-year civil war which left millions displaced.

Time is running out for Darfur; insecurity is increasing and humanitarian access is shrinking. The new UN humanitarian chief, Sir John Holmes, fears that soon more than half of Darfur's population will be displaced.

He has warned that the entire UN aid operation is in danger of collapsing because of the continued fighting.

In the first two months of 2007 some 80,000 people were forced to flee their homes in an attempt to escape the slaughter, rape and destruction by the government-backed *Janjaweed* militia and Sudanese government forces. The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that many places have become too dangerous for aid workers, despite a peace deal signed in May 2006 between one of the rebel groups and the government.

The conflict is also

threatening to engulf the region. The killings are spreading westwards into neighbouring Chad and the Central African Republic. As in Darfur, it is not only a political conflict but also a fight for increasingly scarce resources, including water and land to graze animals. And the result is equally obvious; more killing, and more displaced people.

Civilians in Chad are now being bombed by Sudanese government planes and attacked by armed militia on horseback – reminiscent of the early days of the conflict in Darfur. Eastern Chad is now a landscape of ghost villages with torched huts and smashed pots.

As the Chadians are internally displaced, not refugees, they do not have the right to enter the UN camps in their country which are hosting some 250,000 Sudanese refugees fleeing the same violence. With nowhere else to go, some have settled outside camps, hoping their proximity to the camps will offer some protection. They are not provided with food or water. In desperation, some 20,000 Chadians have fled over the border into Darfur, where they at least have the status of refugees.

Protection of the displaced is the top priority for the aid agencies working in Darfur, because even in camps they

'We ran and did not look back.'

Halima Abdulrahman Mamoud

are not always safe from marauding militias.

At a summit in 2005, all the member countries of the United Nations agreed on a principle of a 'responsibility to protect' civilians from atrocities, and that if a state would not protect its own, outsiders must step in, with force if necessary. But putting that principle into action has proved difficult as there is little appetite for violating other countries' sovereignty. Sudan's largest oil importer, China, has effectively prevented the UN Security Council from enforcing the responsibility to protect.

The desert town of El Fasher, the capital of north Darfur, has been a magnet for people displaced by the conflict. Close to 200,000 people are crammed into three camps which surround the town. One of Christian Aid's partner organisations, the Sudan Social Development Organisation (SUDO), works in all three, providing sanitation and health services.

The town of Zamzam, south of El Fasher, now hosts some 45,000 internally displaced people in a settlement which is effectively an extension of the town. And for the first time there is a clinic, which provides health services to both Zamzam's residents and IDPs. The solid brick compound

boasts a delivery room, a ward, examination rooms, a laboratory and a vaccination room with a freezer powered by solar panels.

'This is a historic development for these people,' says Dr Mudawi Ibrahim Adam, SUDO's chairperson. 'They have never had a clinic or schools before. We do development work at the same time as emergency work.'

The IDPs are in a desperate state, totally dependent on food aid and too fearful to return home. Halima Abdulrahman Mamoud, 25, has been living in one of the camps for three years with her husband and children. They arrived after the Janjaweed attacked their village: 'We ran and did not look back,' she says.

Many of the displaced have been here for three years; their children are in school, and others have married into the local community. Persuading them to return home may be difficult. But all are adamant they will not return home until they feel sure they will not be attacked; most say the only guarantee they will accept is a UN peacekeeping force. They are not reassured by the rickety, under-resourced, 7,000-strong African Union force in Darfur which has failed to assert itself.

There has been some progress against the

alleged perpetrators of the Darfur conflict. In February 2007 prosecutors at the International Criminal Court in The Hague named two suspects wanted for allegedly committing war crimes in Darfur. The men are a Janjaweed militia leader and a member of the Khartoum government who is minister of state for humanitarian affairs. But Sudan remains the first test case of the international community's resolve to protect civilians from their own government.

The future of the millions who fled to the capital to escape the north-south civil war is precarious. Most live in the camps surrounding Khartoum, known as the capital's 'black belt'.

The government is eager to see them return home but the devastated south has little in the way of schools, health facilities or jobs. Many consider Khartoum as 'home'. The younger generation has only ever known city life and is ill-prepared for a largely rural life in the south.

Farida Usman, 23, is a perfect example of the limbo in which many people find themselves. She arrived in Khartoum as a baby with her mother, fleeing the war in the Nuba mountains. She has never been to southern Sudan and is married to a man from Darfur.

'Nuba means nothing to me, I have lived here all my life. Khartoum is my home,' says Farida. 'I met my husband here, and I would never have met him in Nuba.'



Children in one of the many camps for internally displaced persons surrounding El Fasher, the capital of north Darfur

‘The internally displaced are often the most forgotten and neglected people in the many forgotten and neglected emergencies in the world.’¹

Jan Egeland, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Internal displacement: the hidden crisis

When people flee to escape conflict, natural disasters or large-scale development projects, they suffer some of the most traumatic of human experiences. All at once, they lose their familiar surroundings, their land, jobs, businesses or education, and they may be separated from their friends and loved ones.

Their new ‘homes’ may be in squalid, dangerous camps where they depend on others for life’s essentials, or in urban slums or the crowded houses of family members. They may end up in areas where they do not speak the local language and are obviously ‘different’.

Food, water and sanitation may be in short supply or unavailable and they may be forced to beg or work in highly exploitative, perilous conditions in order to survive. In areas of conflict, displaced people are often in danger of being caught up in the violence, and women and children are at particular risk of abduction or sexual attack.

To make matters worse, internally displaced people are at the mercy of their own governments, which are often unable to help or are actively hostile and therefore unwilling to allow in outsiders who might ‘interfere’.

They are, in effect, ‘internal refugees’.² But unlike ‘official’ refugees, who have left their home countries, there is no international law or organisation dedicated to protecting them. Nor is there much media attention for them and, consequently, little political will to relieve their suffering and tackle its causes. Christian Aid believes this is unacceptable, and that urgent reform is needed.

No legal status

The legal principle of national sovereignty has a huge impact on the lives of people uprooted within their home countries. It puts them at the mercy of their own governments, which legally are in charge of everything on their own territories. International organisations and NGOs may get involved only with governments’ permission.

In practice, some governments use the principle as an excuse to persecute or severely neglect their own people, with little fear of external intervention. Shockingly, in more than one third of the conflicts that caused displacement in 2006, people were forced to flee by their own national armies or armed groups linked to the government.³

The displacement crises in Sudan, Burma, Cote d’Ivoire, Colombia and Zimbabwe are all examples of this, according to the independent Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in Geneva.

At the World Summit held at the UN’s New York headquarters

in September 2005, the international community recognised the unacceptability of governments manifestly failing to protect their people against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The summit declared that governments must protect their own people against such atrocities. If they failed to do so, then other governments had a ‘responsibility to protect’ and were prepared to step in together, with force if necessary, acting through the UN Security Council.

As the example of Darfur shows, these good intentions have had no more impact than the hand-wringing declarations of ‘never again’, made after particularly horrific events such as the massacres in Rwanda.

Even if they are not guilty of using violence to displace people, most governments fail to fulfil their responsibilities towards citizens who have fled conflict. Where governments allow the outside world to help internally displaced people, most of the practical work – providing food, water, shelter and so on – is done by international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Christian Aid with its partners. United Nations organisations tend to coordinate work done by others, rather than doing it themselves.

With no international law specifically to protect people displaced within their own countries, they are all the more vulnerable. In 1998, United Nations organisations produced a set of Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which restate the principles of international humanitarian and human rights law that are relevant to internally displaced people.

They define internally displaced people as: ‘...persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid, the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.’

The 30 principles include a prohibition on ‘arbitrary displacement’, a requirement that displacement must be prevented wherever possible, a demand that governments protect displaced people against murder, torture and violence, and a statement that governments are responsible for helping IDPs to return home voluntarily or resettle elsewhere.

The principles were endorsed by more than 100 heads of state at the World Summit in September 2005, and provide useful standards towards which governments can be urged to work. However, they are not themselves legally binding and are far from being implemented. Among the countries that have developed national policies based on the principles are Uganda

'Most of the IDP camps in northern Uganda are more like rural prisons.'

Tim Allen, London School of Economics

and Colombia, whose internal displacement crises are among the worst in the world.⁴

The problems and needs of IDPs vary depending on where and why they are displaced. But the absence of any single organisation working on behalf of all internally displaced people obscures the vast scale of their crisis. Organisations that work on internal displacement focus narrowly on sub-categories of IDPs, such as those displaced by dams or those displaced by conflict. The figures they collect are rarely added up to reveal that around 155 million people are effectively 'refugees' within their own countries.

There are individuals within the UN system whose job it is to lobby on behalf of the internally displaced and some organisations work with conflict and disaster displacees on an ad hoc basis. But there is nothing like the equivalent of a UNHCR for internally displaced people.

Uganda

Uganda illustrates starkly how refugees and internally displaced people are treated differently – even within one country.

In our Christian Aid Week 2004 report, *The Politics of Poverty: Aid in the New Cold War*, Christian Aid highlighted the country's 21-year civil war. We described how it created thousands of 'night commuters' – mostly children who walk into towns every night to sleep, because of the relative safety they offer from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) – a rebel army group that took up arms against the government in 1986.

The children feared being abducted and used as child soldiers, sex slaves or porters by the LRA. Led by Joseph Kony, the LRA has kidnapped an estimated 66,000 children

who make up 80 per cent of its force.

Uganda's war has also created one of the world's worst internal displacement crises, in which 1.7 million people are uprooted. In the six worst-affected northern districts of Uganda, some 1.3 million Ugandans live in IDP camps – more than 90 per cent of the IDP population.

When the Ugandan government forced people to move into these camps – known as 'protected villages' – more than a decade ago, it cynically claimed that it was for their own safety. In fact, it was done to give the army freedom of movement to fight rebels of the LRA.

But displacement did not bring security for the people forced into camps. Until the conflict began to simmer down in 2005,

Even for the men, women and children who are uprooted by conflict, the UN is 'far from being able to step in whenever national governments were unable or unwilling to protect or assist IDPs,' according to the IDMC. Its latest report on conflict displacees around the world also notes the 'still glaring deficiencies of the current response system'.⁵

Walter Kälin is the United Nations Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced People. His job is to encourage governments and the UN to safeguard IDPs' human rights. He also reports back to the UN on the situation in particular countries. However, there is only so much that one energetic individual can do, even with administrative support, and in the context of a vast number of people forced to flee their homes, it is not nearly enough.

While the IDMC monitors and reports on the situation of displaced people, it covers only those who have fled conflict.

rebels regularly attacked the camps and civilians who ventured out for food, water or firewood. The Ugandan army also preys on the people it is supposed to protect, arbitrarily beating, detaining and torturing civilians, and forcibly recruiting children.

Despite the fact that murders, kidnappings and rapes had been thoroughly documented for more than a decade, the UN did not start to set up offices in Uganda with a particular focus on protection until 2005.

Ironically, Ugandan IDPs' living standards are markedly worse than those of some 140,000 mainly Sudanese refugees hosted elsewhere in the country.

Above all, the refugees have security, and the IDPs do not.

'The refugees have some

protection because they are formally registered refugees,' says Tim Allen of the London School of Economics, an expert in forced migration in East Africa. 'UNHCR has a responsibility to protect them that it doesn't with the IDPs.'

'IDPs are, in theory, protected by their own governments,' he adds, 'but clearly they are IDPs because they are not being protected by their own government.'

Sudanese refugees in Uganda have legal rights to food, shelter and safety. They live in an area where they are able to cultivate land and blend into the informal sector. An economy has sprung up around their camps.

By contrast, says Tim Allen, 'most of the IDP camps in northern Uganda are more like rural prisons. The whole process of displacement

Encouragingly, it is considering widening its mandate to cover people forced out by disasters and development projects. It does not give practical assistance to IDPs.

Media coverage, or lack of it, also contributes to the invisibility of the displaced. Despite the vast number of IDPs who have suffered the trauma and often impoverishment of being forced from their homes, there is little media interest in their plight. This is true even of people displaced by violence and by natural disasters, whose stories are arguably more newsworthy than those of people uprooted by dams, mines, factories and other developments. For example, some 1.9 million people have been internally displaced by the conflict in Iraq. This in addition to 2 million refugees that have fled to neighbouring countries. But, according to the IDMC⁶, reporting on the IDPs 'hardly made its way into mainstream news'.

The media matters, not least because it influences those who decide what, if anything, will be done to help people in trouble.

has forced people into concentrated settlements where they are not able to cultivate, and they are, to a large extent, dependent on food relief.'

Hunger and malnutrition are widespread in these squalid, overcrowded camps. As a result of a lack of funding from donors, the World Food Programme has reduced rations to as low as 40 per cent of the minimum daily requirement per person in parts of northern Uganda. Sanitation is poor, leading to outbreaks of cholera. Education and healthcare services are minimal. A whole generation has missed out on schooling and the HIV rate is double that found elsewhere in the country.

For many years, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni was the west's 'golden boy'.

When he seized power in 1986, ending decades of conflict and instability, aid poured in, and few outsiders were willing to criticise his refusal to negotiate with the LRA rebels.

In 1994, Museveni gave LRA leader Joseph Kony an ultimatum to come out of the bush. Soon after this, the LRA rebels crossed the border into Sudan, beginning a new, deadlier phase of the conflict. The Sudanese government was fighting the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in the south, a rebel group that was aided by Museveni. In a tit-for-tat measure to weaken the SPLA, the Sudanese government decided to support the LRA and allow it to operate out of bases in southern Sudan.

As attacks on civilians increased, the Ugandan



government introduced its policy of 'protected villages'.

Most non-governmental organisations were reluctant to speak out because they depended on military escorts to reach the camps, and feared that being critical could get them expelled from the country.

The international community made virtually no criticism at the time. In fact, at the height of the war in 2002/03, the Department for International Development gave £68.5 million in aid to Uganda, making it the third largest recipient of UK aid. DFID has increased its aid to Uganda to £70 million a year in 2006/07. The country is now the sixth largest recipient of UK aid.

A major turning point in the war in northern Uganda was a peace agreement between the Sudanese government

and the SPLA in January 2005. Under the deal, all foreign forces had to leave south Sudan. The issuing of arrest warrants for Kony and four of his top commanders for war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court in 2005 has also helped.

The 2003 landmark visit of Jan Egeland, the then UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, also raised the profile of the Ugandan conflict, increasing pressure on both Museveni and the international community to be seen to be doing something. This begs the question: what might have happened if the UN had spoken out earlier?

Peace talks began in 2006, although the war is not yet over and the rebels remain in the bush.

‘The influence on governments is much higher from the media than from the UN... there’s no question once, I’m afraid, the babies are on screen.’

Dennis McNamara, UN expert on IDPs

Dennis McNamara, one of the UN’s experts on IDP issues, told the BBC in April 2006: ‘Media support is critical... The influence on governments is much higher from the media than from the UN... there’s no question once, I’m afraid, the babies are on screen.’⁷

A more analytical approach leads to a similar conclusion. According to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which compared media coverage of ten disasters in 2005 and the amount of aid they attracted, there is a ‘very close correlation’ between the two. The only exception was the Darfur crisis, which got less than half the aid appealed for by the United Nations, yet received the second highest amount of print media coverage after the tsunami. Funding is, in turn, a critical and persistent problem for the United Nations and NGOs working with people who have fled their homes.

Conflict

There are today around 25 million people who have been forced out of their homes by conflict and extreme human rights abuses, and who remain in their own countries. The vast majority are displaced by internal rather than international wars. One of the most striking facts about these people is that between 70 and 80 per cent of them are women and children.⁸

Having gone through the huge trauma of fleeing their homes and losing their everyday lives, they still face a particularly high risk of violence, sexual assault and abduction for use as child soldiers or sex slaves. Even within camps for people displaced by conflict, the degree of violence and the rate of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases are high. Even simple, necessary daily tasks such as washing, bathing and gathering firewood are potentially dangerous for women and girls in camps.⁹

Some of the world’s worst conflict displacements are in Burma, where more than half a million people are uprooted within their own country, Sudan (more than 5 million), the Democratic Republic of Congo (more than 1 million) Iraq (1.7 million), Cote d’Ivoire (750,000) and Colombia (1.9-3.8 million).¹⁰

IDMC’s figures suggest that the number of conflict displacees around the world rose by almost 1 million in 2006, as more than 4 million people were forced to flee their homes during the year, many of them in Lebanon, Israel, Iraq, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. There were also large-scale returns of people, notably in Lebanon, Israel, southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and eastern Uganda.¹¹

Even when people have left their homes to avoid being caught up in violence, most remain in danger. In 2006, around

16 million people internally displaced by conflict were at high risk of falling victim to physical violence threatening their lives, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

The rise in the number of people who have fled violence over the past two decades reflects the changing nature of conflict. Increasingly, fighting forces are deliberately displacing people as a way of gaining control over territory and natural resources. The vast displacements in Darfur and Colombia are examples of this.

As the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports: ‘The images of war that showed uniformed soldiers of opposing armies meeting on the field of battle have faded into a more insidious vision of millions of civilians, including innocent women and children, being targeted and killed. With many inter-nation tensions at rest, new forms of conflicts have emerged within borders of a state: civil strife flamed by ethnic and religious tension and in many cases caused by greed and the control of a country’s mineral or timber resources. At the centre of these shocking developments is the emergence of civilians as the deliberate targets of warfare rather than its incidental victims. Today, victims of war cover all segments of the population regardless of gender or age.’¹²

UNHCR and the Red Cross can only help and protect displaced people with the agreement of their governments, in accordance with national sovereignty. Such agreement is often withheld. When UNHCR does get involved in protecting people in these situations, it currently pursues a ‘protection as presence’ approach, meaning that its mere presence is supposed to deter violence. In fact, once fighting starts, its staff and those of NGOs usually have to withdraw.

Fleeing one’s home to escape violence is extremely traumatic, but so too can be returning home. As UNHCR says: ‘Returnees may face renewed violence, human rights abuse or extreme poverty, leading to further displacement in their search for safety or a viable livelihood... If returnees are not provided with adequate support and are not able to reintegrate, they may choose to flee again.’¹³

Where people have been displaced for years, they may not even want to go back to the places from which they fled and may regard their new location as home.

More than 250,000 Tamils are displaced on Sri Lanka’s east coast after fierce fighting between government forces and rebels. IDP camps are short of food, medicine and sanitation, and are targeted by armed militias

Sri Lanka

In the past 20 years, Rajeswari, from eastern Sri Lanka, has spent no more than a few months in her own home. The 52-year-old is a veteran of displacement caused by the conflict that has raged on the island for almost 30 years.

In 1985 she fled to India when fighting broke out between the Sri Lankan government and rebel Tamil Tigers (LTTE). She returned to the island two years later, then went back to India in 1990 to escape renewed fighting.

In 1992 she returned to Sri Lanka once again and for the past ten years has lived at the Alles Gardens camp near Trincomalee, set up in 1992 by UNHCR as a reception centre for Tamil refugees returning

from south India.

The 30 years of fighting have exacted a grim toll on Sri Lanka’s people. More than 65,000 have been killed and many thousands more injured or traumatised in a brutal war between the government and the Tamil Tigers, who are fighting for a separate state in the north and east of the country. More than 500,000 people, mostly Tamils, are displaced by the war. In the past year of fighting, a further 250,000 Tamils have been displaced and another 20,000 have fled to India.

Many of the displaced returned home after a ceasefire was signed by the two warring sides in 2002. Just as they had begun to rebuild their lives, the tsunami

struck and they were left homeless again.

Sasikala, 28, lost everything in the tsunami, including her shelter in Alles Gardens. Her home was rebuilt by aid agencies, but when fresh fighting broke out in Sri Lanka in 2006, she fled to India.

‘I ran for my life on the day the tsunami came. I managed to escape the waves with my children and my children are the reason I am in India now,’ she said.

‘I want them to go to school and get good jobs, not get caught up in the fighting. Any place I go to in Sri Lanka the fighting will come.’

‘People are pushed and pulled by the warring parties until they don’t know which way to turn,’ says Ms S

Sooriyakumary, president of the Organisation for Eelam Refugees’ Rehabilitation (OfERR), a Christian Aid partner that works with returning refugees and tsunami survivors. ‘Then they run. The need for safety overwhelms everything else.’

The 2002 ceasefire had ushered in an uneasy truce in Sri Lanka. But on 25 April 2006, it was shattered when a Tamil suicide bomber threw herself at the vehicle of Sri Lankan

Army Commander, General Sarath Fonseka, at Army Headquarters in Colombo.

The assassination attempt narrowly failed, but the mission achieved another objective. Within four hours Sri Lankan air force jets bombed LTTE positions

in Sampur, south of the strategic eastern port town of Trincomalee, and the country's ethnic conflict was re-ignited.

As a new exodus of refugees and displaced people got underway, OfERR, in a series of letters to Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, called on UNHCR to set up a demilitarised zone or 'zone of peace' on Mannar Island – the last exit point on Sri Lanka's north-west coast, for the refugees fleeing to India.

More than 500 refugees a day, like Sasikala, were risking their lives in high seas and overcrowded boats, paying a year's wages to reach safety in Tamil Nadu. If a place of safety could be provided inside Sri Lanka, people could return home when they felt the danger was over, or claim asylum later in safer circumstances.

The idea of a safe haven was not a new one. In 1990, UNHCR Country Representative, William Clarence, proposed that Mannar Island – then under LTTE control – become a demilitarised zone. The proposal was politically too hot to handle at the time, but its successor, the 'open relief centre' came to play a vital role in providing shelter to displaced people in Pesalai and Madhu, in Mannar district, until 1999.¹⁴

An open relief centre is a

temporary-stay refugee camp where people can come when the war threatens, and return home when the fighting subsides. It performs the same function that hundreds of temples, churches, schools and public buildings do in times of conflict, but with a critical difference. It is a place of safety with resident UN staff to provide protection and assistance.

Christian Aid and OfERR asked the current UNHCR Representative in Sri Lanka, Amin Awad, why the open relief centre concept had fallen out of fashion with UNHCR policy-makers. 'We are anxious not to create a pull factor,' said Mr Awad.¹⁵

'But that's exactly what they're supposed to do,' says SC Chandrasaran, head of OfERR's India programme, who first sought refuge in Tamil Nadu in 1983 after riots in Colombo killed 3,000 and displaced 50,000 people. 'No one is going to give up their home, their possessions and their livelihood to come and squat on a mud floor just because it is a refugee camp. You only go there only when your life is at risk.

'According to the law of armed conflict, if belligerent parties insist on fighting, they must make adequate provision for the safety of the civilian population. That inevitably means agreeing places of safety, managed by

international actors with a protection mandate such as UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross,' says Mr Chandrasaran.

Every bout of shelling triggers new population movements. Schools and temples fill with frightened civilians, crying children, the old and infirm. But without a UN presence, these are not necessarily places of safety.

In June 2006, local people say naval personnel threw a hand grenade into St Mary's Church in Pesalai where 2,000 terrified villagers were sheltering from local fighting. Kilparamma Manuel, a 70-year-old woman, died of gunshot wounds to the head, and a

further 45 people were injured. In the aftermath, hundreds of families fled the area.

'We need to remind parties to the conflict of their moral and legal responsibilities towards civilians in war zones, and offer as much physical and psychological support to the safe and voluntary return of displaced people and more generally to all civilians affected by this conflict,' says Laurent Viot, Christian Aid's representative in Sri Lanka.

At the same time UNHCR and its collaborating agencies must use their influence to make warring parties recognise that a UN presence at an IDP site makes it into a place of safety.



'Many people are displaced and relocated but remain not rehabilitated for years: for them, displacement has not ended.'

Professor Michael Cernea

Disasters

Some 25 million people are thought to be displaced from their homes at any one time as a result of disasters such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and avalanches.¹⁶

Single incidents routinely cause thousands of people to flee their homes, as the frequent appeals issued by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) testify.

The number of natural disasters has more than doubled over the last decade, from 193 in 1996 to 422 in 2005, according to the IFRC.¹⁷ The increase is due to a sharp rise in the number of weather-related disasters – from 175 in 1996 to 391 in 2005 – an upward trend that will continue because of climate change.

Poor people are especially vulnerable to displacement by natural disasters, because their poverty forces them to live in less favourable places which, for instance, are more prone to flooding or landslides. Their less-robustly built homes are similarly more vulnerable to destruction by extreme weather and earthquakes.¹⁸

People who are already displaced from their homes by conflict or large-scale development projects are also particularly badly affected by natural disasters. This was evident among the tens of thousands of people already displaced by the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Indonesia when the tsunami hit on Boxing Day 2004.

The UN's expert on the human rights of IDPs, Walter Kälin, visited the region for the UN Secretary General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons. 'Many observers noted that in areas already affected by conflict and hosting IDPs, there had in some cases been unequal treatment in the assistance provided by governments and international actors, in particular certain NGOs,' he reported.

'Generally, there was a tendency to neglect IDPs created by conflict, who had been displaced some time ago, while focusing immediate attention on the IDPs created by the tsunami, who would benefit from the increase in political attention as well as from the sudden influx of international humanitarian assistance.'¹⁹

Even when people can return home after a disaster, they still often face new problems. Their homes may have been damaged or destroyed, along with property they used to make a living, such as shops, fishing boats or farming equipment.

In some cases governments ban people from returning to their former areas, on the grounds that they are too dangerous. This happened in several countries in the aftermath of the tsunami, in some cases in an apparently arbitrary way which was very damaging to people who made their living by fishing.²⁰

Development

Economic activity displaces more people every year than conflict and natural disasters. This, in the jargon of academics and international organisations, is 'development' displacement.

Every year, some 15 million people are forced out of their homes to make way for dams, mines, factories, roads and other infrastructure, tree plantations and wildlife conservation parks, according to the world's foremost expert on development displacement, former World Bank resettlement specialist Professor Michael Cernea.²¹

It takes years for them to be adequately resettled, so the total number of people displaced by such projects at any one time is far larger – at least 105 million.

People cease to be displaced only when their livelihoods have returned to being at least as good as they were before they had to leave their homes, Cernea argues.²²

The vast majority of development IDPs stay in their own countries but can never go home, because the places where they lived have been taken for another activity. Development displacees are effectively sacrificed for the sake of others who will benefit from the projects that force them out.

Not surprisingly, the people forced to make such sacrifices are disproportionately likely to be from ethnic minorities or indigenous peoples, who are already less powerful than other groups. In India for example, the writer Arundhati Roy has pointed out that well over half the people displaced by the Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada River were from ethnic minorities who make up only eight per cent of the Indian population.

'This opens up a whole new dimension to the story,' she wrote. 'The ethnic "otherness" of their victims takes some of the pressure off the Nation Builders. It's like having an expense account. Someone else pays the bills. People from another country. Another world. India's poorest people are subsidising the lifestyles of her richest.'²³

When people are forced to leave their homes and/or land, they are not necessarily given new places to live and grow food, or any compensation. In India, Cernea reports that many of the 60 million people displaced by development projects since 1950 have been 'simply left to fend for themselves without assistance from the state that displaced them'.²⁴

It might seem that if displaced people are given new places to live, then they are not badly affected. However, researchers have found that often, 'resettled' families suffer prolonged or permanent damage.

'Many people are displaced and relocated but remain not rehabilitated for years: for them, displacement has not ended,'

warns Cernea.²⁵ This should not be surprising, given that they are often an afterthought on the part of those running the projects that displace them.²⁶

People's new land may be inferior to that from which they were forced, in quantity and/or quality, with severe consequences for their ability to earn a living. Displaced people are also at very high risk of losing their jobs or businesses and never regaining the living standards they had before being forced to move. There are many examples of resettled people suffering worse nutrition, worse health and higher death rates in their new areas, for example because of poor sewerage and clean water systems. The displaced are also taken away from natural resources, such as pastures and forests that helped sustain them.

The impact of 'development' displacement

The number of people who have to make way for 'development' is thought to have increased over the past few decades, as a result of growing urbanisation and a rapid rise in dam building. In the final two decades of the last century Cernea estimated that 10 million people a year were displaced. He now says the equivalent figure is 15 million.

In China, 70 million people are estimated to have been displaced and resettled between 1950 and 2005. China's Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River alone is expected to displace at least 1.2 million people. Ghana's Akosombo Dam displaced 80,000 people; the Aswan High Dam in Egypt displaced almost 100,000 people in Egypt and Sudan; Guatemala's Chixoy Dam Project involved the resettlement of 2,500 Maya Achi Indians and led to the massacre of 369 displacees who were deemed 'guerrillas'. In Indonesia, the Jabotabek urban development project, which involved the widening of roads in Jakarta, displaced some 40,000-50,000 people.²⁷

Development projects can spark violence and extreme human rights abuses. Christian Aid has reported how, in Sudan, government troops have reportedly used aerial bombing, helicopter gunships and mass executions to force people out of areas to be used for oil exploration.²⁸ In India and Bangladesh, plans to force people off their land to make way for mines and factories have sparked riots in which people have been killed and injured.²⁹

Professor Cernea believes the number of people being forced from their homes and land will rise still higher in future. 'The figure is going to increase before it will start to decrease, because development processes are accelerating faster than safeguards are being implemented,' he says.³⁰ However, he

hopes that, over time, governments will introduce enforceable legal rights and safeguards for people facing displacement, and that this will eventually reduce the scale of the problem.

The responsibility of lenders

Some public organisations that fund development projects – for example the World Bank and the government departments responsible for aid giving in countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – have policies to minimise the displacement they cause, and ensure proper treatment of all those who have to leave their homes.

But what does this add up to? Cernea and others have highlighted major failings in projects financed even by the most enlightened lenders and funding organisations, whose fine-sounding policies are often not implemented and their effectiveness not evaluated.

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), for example, has never evaluated the impact of the Guidelines for Aid Agencies on Involuntary Displacement and Resettlement in Development Projects adopted by its members by 1992.³¹ DAC says it is unusual for the impact of its guidelines to be assessed, and points out that the guidelines are not legally binding. But without such assessment, what incentive is there for member countries to take them seriously?

The UK connection

Although the 15 million people who lose their homes each year to development projects are far away, some of the culprits responsible for this are based in the UK. For example, UK company Asia Energy admits that operating its planned open-cast coal mine in Phulbari, Bangladesh, would require 40,000 people to leave their homes.

And, ironically in the light of Bangladesh's extreme vulnerability to rising sea levels caused by climate change, which could displace 35 million people,³² the mine will displace people from valuable high ground because it is some 30 metres above sea level, according to Asia Energy. Burning the coal that comes out of the mine will produce more of the very greenhouse gases that are causing climate change.

Opposition to the mine provoked protests in which at least three people were killed and 200 injured last year, according to the BBC.³³ The government of Bangladesh then postponed a decision on the future of the mine until after elections that were due to take place in January this year. However, political violence caused the elections to be postponed; it is now hoped that they will take place later this year.

Work to help and protect IDPs

Work to help and protect the world's internally displaced people is done by a vast, highly uneven patchwork of organisations. Within the UN, there is no single agency dedicated to helping the millions of people who are uprooted within their own countries – only individuals such as Walter Kälin, who speaks up for IDPs' human rights.

Christian Aid recognises that the complexity and diversity of internal displacement around the world mean that there is no simple 'one-size-fits-all' solution to the plight of displaced people. They have fled their homes for different reasons and have varying needs and problems. But the current situation, in which millions of internally displaced people lack protection even against violence that threatens their lives, is not acceptable.

Overall coordination of the NGOs and UN organisations doing humanitarian work is done by the Emergency Relief Co-ordinator within the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).³⁴

Sir John Holmes, former Principal Private Secretary to UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, became the Emergency Relief Co-ordinator earlier this year. Importantly, one of his tasks is to ensure that all humanitarian issues are dealt with, including those such as the protection and assistance of IDPs that fall into the gaps between the mandates of UN organisations.

OCHA's tasks are to coordinate UN and NGO responses to humanitarian crises created by conflict and natural disasters, and to lobby other parts of the UN – notably the Security Council – on humanitarian issues.

The Security Council is tasked with maintaining international peace and security. Made up of five permanent member countries (the US, UK, France, the Russian Federation and China) plus ten temporary members, it authorises military action in the name of the United Nations.

Other UN organisations involved in the international response to internally displaced people include UNHCR, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and UN Habitat, which exists to organise shelter for those without it.

UN organisations tend to organise humanitarian work done by local and international NGOs, such as the Red Cross and Christian Aid with its partner organisations, rather than doing it directly themselves.

Where people are displaced by conflict, they often need protection against attack. NGOs have neither the mandate nor the resources to do this. UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross do have such a mandate, but can only protect displaced people with the permission of their often reluctant governments. OCHA reports that in 20 current conflict zones humanitarian access is restricted, 'condemning populations to protracted and unmitigated suffering'.³⁵

With so many organisations involved in responding to the needs of internally displaced people – which in turn vary from one place to another – coordination and leadership are both vital and difficult to achieve.

'Improving the delivery of humanitarian aid to IDPs... must remain a priority considering the still-glaring deficiencies of the current response system.'

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva

Funding problems

Funding is a further obstacle for all organisations working with IDPs. There is a particular problem with the funding of work in so-called 'complex emergencies' such as those in Darfur and Iraq – large-scale humanitarian crises in places where there is armed conflict and the partial or complete breakdown of authority.

UN appeals for complex emergencies in 2005 raised just seven per cent of their target figures within the first month of the appeal launch, and just over one third of their targets within three months, according to an analysis for the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.³⁶

By contrast, appeals to help people hit by natural disasters in 2005 raised 73 per cent of their target figures within the first month. This relatively high figure was due largely to the tsunami, which generated a generous international response – the previous year it was 37 per cent, a lower figure but still much better than for complex emergencies.³⁷

Work in response to natural disasters that happen suddenly – such as a tsunami or an earthquake – is much better funded than slow-onset disasters such as droughts and famines.

Recent reforms

The need for better coordination, leadership and funding has prompted recent reforms to improve the UN and NGO responses to internally displaced people. The reforms have been enthusiastically backed by the UK government.

Christian Aid believes that they are right in principle but that the way they are being implemented is imperfect, and that so far they have had limited – and in some respects counterproductive – results.

In December 2005, a new Central Emergency Response Fund was created to allow more rapid humanitarian responses to new emergencies as well as supply more resources for other, under-funded crises. Ironically, some donor governments are diverting money from NGOs and into the fund, which slows NGOs' ability to move quickly to help people caught up in emergencies.

Also in 2005, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, a body that coordinates the work of UN agencies and NGOs doing humanitarian work – identified nine 'clusters' of work which needed to be done better. These were camp coordination and management, emergency shelter, telecommunications, health, logistics, nutrition, protection, early recovery and water and sanitation.

In 2006, different agencies assumed responsibility for coordinating everyone involved in particular clusters, and acting as a first port of call and 'provider of last resort'.³⁸ For example, where people are displaced by conflict, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees leads the clusters providing protection, emergency shelter and camp management and coordination. This is likely to increase the number of IDPs helped by UNHCR in the future.

However, the new approach is so far being applied in only a small minority of the places where people have fled conflict: four pilot countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia and Uganda) plus new conflict displacements such as Lebanon and Cote d'Ivoire as they arise.

The cluster approach is also being followed in all new major disasters. So far, Christian Aid believes that it has led to an over-centralisation of the response to disasters, with those in charge of coordination putting little emphasis on the hugely important contribution of local NGOs.

An early evaluation of the cluster approach, published by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in November last year, suggests that although UN and NGO staff see it as having the potential to improve the humanitarian response to people forced from their homes, there is a very long way to go. Problems included mismatched expectations, lack of genuine collaboration and, in some cases, lack of trust in the motives of the UN organisations leading particular clusters.³⁹

By the end of 2006, the UN system was still far from being able to intervene wherever national governments were unwilling or unable to protect or assist even IDPs who have fled conflict, according to the IDMC. 'Improving the delivery of humanitarian aid to IDPs and other conflict-affected populations must remain a priority considering the still-glaring deficiencies of the current response system,' it said in its latest annual assessment of conflict displacement around the world. 'But the urgent need for better humanitarian response and ongoing efforts to improve the system must not divert attention from states' responsibility to address internal displacement at the political level.'⁴⁰

'An unstable climate risks some of the drivers of conflict – such as migratory pressures and competition for resources – getting worse.'

UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett, speaking at the UN Security Council

Climate change: outlook bleak

The number of people who have fled their homes because of war, disasters and large-scale development projects is already staggeringly high, and in future, climate change will push it even higher. Experts warn that hunger, water shortages or flooding will threaten hundreds of millions more, pushing an unknown number of them to seek safer lives in new places.

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report highlights the huge numbers of people who are predicted to suffer a severe impact from climate change. Most of the references here are taken from unpublished drafts of the report because, as this report goes to press, the full text is not available.¹

‘By 2080, it is likely that 1.1 to 3.2 billion people will be experiencing water scarcity; 200 to 600 million, hunger; 2 to 7 million more per year, coastal flooding,’ says the IPCC.²

‘Stresses such as increased drought, water shortages and riverine and coastal flooding will affect many local and regional populations. This will lead in some cases to relocation within or between countries, exacerbating conflicts and imposing migration pressures.’³

As this suggests, climate change will displace people from their homes, both directly and by intensifying conflicts that cause people to flee. Military planners have been worrying about such scenarios for years, and have reached alarming conclusions.

Christian Aid is concerned about how little the rich world is doing to help poor countries adapt to the damaging impacts of climate change, so as to reduce their people’s vulnerability.

We estimate that, unless strong preventative action is taken, between now and 2050 climate change will push the number of displaced people globally to at least 1 billion.

There is, however, a great deal that can be done now to prevent such suffering. Work by the IPCC, for example, shows that reducing the number of people living in poverty will make a dramatic difference to the number at risk of flooding.

Since the rich world is largely responsible for the increasingly cruel climate, it is also our responsibility, as polluters, to help pay for the protection of those who will bear the worst consequences.

Mind the gap

Our understanding of climate change and its potential impact has improved dramatically over the past two decades. The IPCC report notes that even over the past six years, there has been a large increase in the number of relevant studies. This, it says, has allowed ‘a broader and more confident assessment of the relationship between observed warming and impacts than was made in the IPCC Third Assessment’.⁴

Despite the progress in our understanding of likely changes to weather patterns, agriculture, diseases, and animal and plant distribution because of climate change, one remarkable gap remains. There are no recent, authoritative, global figures on the number of people who could be displaced from their homes by climate change.

Such estimates are of course very difficult to calculate, and depend on many other assumptions, not least about how much is done to protect people, about poverty levels and about population growth.

Some experts regard requests for predictions about the number of people who could be displaced from their homes by climate change with distrust or distaste, believing that useful figures are impossible to calculate, or fearing that they will be used to stoke hysterical debates about immigration.

Others feel there is a gap to be filled. Among them is Professor Andrew Watkinson of the University of East Anglia School of Environmental Sciences. He said of figures on climate-induced migration: ‘That data isn’t there. There is silence on this.’⁵

He described how, at a meeting in February 2007, entitled ‘Beyond Stern’ (a reference to the *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, published by the UK government in October 2006), he was struck by the fact that the organisers had failed to cost the migration that could be triggered by climate change. ‘Essentially no-one has an answer to that, as far as I am aware,’ he said.

Professor Watkinson is now considering how to improve our understanding of the issue. ‘It is a massive topic... everyone recognises it is a potential problem,’ he adds. ‘The costs associated with it are potentially enormous.’

Christian Aid’s perspective is that the lack of knowledge of the number of people who could be displaced by climate change must not lead to a neglect of what can be done now to prevent such displacement, and to help people who are affected.

Floods and water shortages

Studies of the effects of climate change on human beings suggest a future in which millions more people will suffer extreme events such as tidal waves, droughts, floods and hurricanes, and the poorest will be hardest hit. Indeed, there is strong evidence that it is already biting, as the latest IPCC report points out.

The number of disasters caused by weather-related phenomena such as hurricanes, floods and droughts has more than doubled over the past decade, from 175 in 1996 to 391 in 2005.⁶ The proportion of the world that is affected by drought has risen substantially since 1980, according to the climate change experts at the UK Met Office’s Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research.⁷

There is high-level recognition that such changes will, in some cases, force people to leave their homes. *The Stern Review* warned: ‘As temperatures rise and conditions deteriorate significantly, climate change will test the resilience of many societies around the world. Large numbers of people will be compelled to leave their homes when resources drop below a critical threshold. Bangladesh, for example, faces the permanent loss of large areas of coastal land, affecting 35 million people (about one-quarter of its population), while one-quarter of China’s population (300 million people) could suffer from the wholesale reduction in glacial meltwater.’⁸

The latest IPCC impact report warns that it is the regions already struggling with other problems which force people from their homes that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change: ‘Vulnerable regions face multiple stresses that affect their exposure and sensitivity [to climate change] as well as their capacity to adapt. These stresses arise from, for example, current climate hazards, poverty and unequal access to resources, food insecurity, trends in economic globalisation, conflict and incidence of diseases such as HIV/AIDS.’⁹

The IPCC also highlights the vast numbers of people around the world who are at risk from flooding by the sea. ‘In the absence of an improvement to protection, coastal flooding could grow tenfold or more by the 2080s to more than 100 million people a year, just due to sea-level rise alone.’¹⁰ In Africa, it suggests that without mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its effects, between 350 million and 600 million people would suffer increased water scarcity if global temperature were to rise by 2°C over pre-industrial levels.¹¹ This, in turn, would affect their ability to grow food. ‘In some countries, yield from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50 per cent by 2020,’ says the IPCC.¹²

In Asia and Latin America, water shortages will be a major problem, with a 2°C rise in temperature affecting between 200 million and 1 billion people in Asia, and 80 to 180 million people in Latin America.¹³

A report released by the Hadley Centre in 2006 warned that very large increases in both the spread and the severity of droughts will leave almost a third of the planet with extreme water shortages by the end of this century.¹⁴

As well as the increased frequency of extreme events that climate change will bring, there will be other impacts that also push people from their homes. Gradual changes in regional and local climates – for example slowly decreasing rainfall – are likely to undermine people’s ability to make a living – especially for the 1 billion people in the world who currently rely on smallholder agriculture for their survival and income.

Steadily and silently, people will be forced to leave their land and seek alternative means of survival elsewhere. The likelihood is that people displaced in this way will migrate to the nearest town or city, accelerating the pace of rural to urban migration or perhaps, in time, further afield.

This will put increasing strain on already overburdened urban infrastructure, but it may also fail to deliver people from the impact of climate change – many of the places to which they will naturally gravitate, such as large coastal cities, will also increasingly be at risk.

This slow-onset crisis can be prevented. But to achieve this it is essential that drastic action is taken to cut CO₂ emissions globally in order to keep average temperature increases to below 2°C. Furthermore, additional funds must be released to help people adapt the way they live to cope with an increasingly harsh climate.

‘Regions where climate change holds the greatest risk of creating population displacement include countries that are already wracked by conflict and are hosts to groups that pose security concerns internally and internationally.’

Professor Robert McLeman of the University of Ottawa, Canada

Climate change and security

The Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), the UK’s most senior military officer, uses his annual Christmas lecture to the Royal United Services Institute to highlight issues he considers most important to national security. Last year, Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, the current CDS, included climate among his concerns.

‘Climate change and growing competition for scarce resources are together likely to increase the incidence of humanitarian crises. The spread of desert regions, a scarcity of water, coastal erosion, declining arable land, damage to infrastructure from extreme weather: all this could undermine security,’ he said.

‘The areas most at risk – the Middle East, South Asia and the Sahara belt – are already prone to instability; and they are strategically important to the UK. So we will need to act where we can to prevent such crises developing. But we will also have to consider our response, should prevention fail.’

A still more alarming picture is painted in a report that reveals British military strategists’ latest thinking about the world over the next 30 years – a report which also has a lot to say about climate change. The document was produced by the Ministry of Defence’s Defence Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) where for many years strategists have studied the potential effects of climate change on global conflict and security.

The DCDC’s *Global Strategic Trends Programme 2007-2036* notes: ‘By the end of the period, nearly two-thirds of the world’s population will live in areas of water stress, while environmental degradation, the intensification of agriculture, and pace of urbanization may reduce the fertility of, and access to, arable land. There will be a constant heavy pressure on fish stocks, which are likely to require careful husbanding if major species are not to become depleted or extinct. Food and water insecurity will drive mass migration from some worst-affected areas and the effects may be felt in more affluent regions through distribution problems, specialized agriculture and aggressive food-pricing.’

In a later section about more unexpected and extreme future possibilities – described as ‘strategic shocks’ – the report describes an even worse scenario: ‘Abrupt climate change from a warm and wet environment to colder and drier conditions, occurring within a decade or less, has occurred several times in the past 100,000 years and even within historic memory, such as in the early 14th century in Europe,’ it says. ‘Evidence from ice-cores indicates that the end of the last Ice Age, 12,000 years ago, which warmed the planet by 5 degrees, occurred over one

decade. The earth’s population has grown exponentially in the past century and any future event of this type would have more dramatic human consequences, resulting in societal collapse, mega-migration, intensifying competition for much-diminished resources and widespread conflict.’

One of the academics who has studied the security implications of migration is Professor Robert McLeman of the University of Ottawa in Canada. His conclusions about the possible effects of climate change on global security are disturbing, although like other experts he believes there is much that governments can do to secure better outcomes for the world.

‘Regions where climate change holds the greatest risk of creating population displacement include countries that are already wracked by conflict and are hosts to groups that pose security concerns internally and internationally,’ he points out.

‘Polarisation is already developing between groups adversely affected by climate change and the governments of western nations that are largely responsible for causing the changes due to their high per capita emissions of greenhouse gases... The extent to which such polarisation may contribute to international security tensions remains to be seen, and will be dependent in large part on the commitment western nations make toward addressing their emissions...’

‘The time has come for policy-makers to cease treating migration, international development, environment and security as independent silos of policy and planning, and seek new ways to develop policy-making linkages across these interconnected fields.’¹⁵

Biofuels: solution or problem?

At first glance, ‘carbon neutral’ biofuels appear to offer a way of reducing our contribution to climate change.

There are two main biofuels – liquid fuels made from organic matter. Ethanol, made from sugar cane, soya or grains, is blended with petrol. Biodiesel is made from fats and oils, such as palm oil, soya and *jatropha*, and added to diesel.

The market is growing at lightning speed, despite concerns that the carbon sums don’t add up. The US grain and food multinational Cargill, which is making major investments in ethanol and soya production, compares it to a ‘gold rush’.

In February, the European Union set a legally binding target that ten per cent of fuels must be biofuels by 2020. Much of this will be imported because it would take around 25 per cent of EU agricultural land to meet the target.

Sawit [palm oil] Watch, an organisation which represents the millions of Indonesians affected by palm oil plantations, wrote to the European Parliament expressing its ‘deep concern’ over the EU’s promotion of biofuels.

There have been 350 conflicts related to the takeover of land by palm oil developers in Indonesia. Dozens of people have been killed and around 500 tortured. When people are driven off their land, they often have no choice but to work on the plantations. Children and other relatives are often co-opted to work for nothing in order to meet tough production targets.¹⁶

While the European Union says that it will only import biofuels that have been produced in an environmentally sustainable way, it has yet to produce any convincing method of verifying this.

The biofuel revolution began in Brazil in the 1970s. The most popular biofuel cultivated in Brazil now is ethanol, made from sugar cane. The US buys 58 per cent of Brazil’s ethanol exports, and has ambitious targets to increase its use of biofuels. By 2017, biofuels should be supplying 24 per cent of the US’s transport fuel.

Brazil also has a strong domestic market, with eight out of ten new cars in Brazil running on ethanol. Some 30,000sq km of Brazilian land are currently dedicated to producing the fuel – an area the size of Belgium.¹⁷

Sugar-cane cutters endure terrible conditions. Most of the 200,000 workers are migrant men from Brazil’s impoverished north-east. They work 12-hour shifts in temperatures of more than 30°C for £100 a month. Between 2004 and 2006, 17 died from overwork or exhaustion.¹⁸

Another biofuel that Brazil intends to invest in is soya. Currently, it is primarily being used to feed animals. Soya

plantations are the largest single cause of deforestation of the Amazon, the world's largest remaining tropical forest. In Brazil, an area the size of six football pitches is razed every minute.¹⁹

The Brazilian Amazon is home to more than 20 million people. This includes some 220,000 people from indigenous Indian communities who depend upon the plants and animals of the forest for subsistence. Survival International describes them as having already experienced 'genocide on a huge scale'.²⁰ They are considered minors in law and their land rights are not recognised.

Many have been forcibly evicted from their land, often at gunpoint. Every year, rural people in Brazil are shot dead as they try to resist the annexation of their lands. In Paraná state alone, 2.5 million people have been displaced by soya production, according to the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).²¹

Much of the current deforestation in Brazil takes place in Mato Grosso state, where hydro-electric dams are now planned in the forest to provide power for the soya industry. Survival International reports that the 420 surviving Enawene Indians who live in the state say their entire way of life is being destroyed by soya.²²

In 2006, evidence of large-scale illegal destruction of the rainforest for soya farming, financed by Cargill among others, led McDonalds, Asda, Waitrose and Marks and Spencer to announce a boycott of meat raised on Amazonian soya.²³ But this will not stop deforestation, because demand for soya is rising, partly because of soaring demand for biofuels. WWF predicts that the soya business will increase by 60 per cent in the next 20 years, imperilling up to 49,000sq km of rainforest. This is more than twice the area of Wales.

Christian Aid's partner in Brazil, Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), is vehemently opposed to the expansion of the biofuel industry. MST does not want Brazil to become a factory to supply rich countries with cheap energy. It argues that the most important use of Brazil's land is to produce food for its people. MST wants agrarian reform to promote small-scale mixed farming – not giant monocultures owned by multinationals – government support for farmers' co-operatives.

Christian Aid believes that rich countries need to rethink their rush towards biofuels, and recognise how it will push millions of people from their land.

We can make a difference

The latest IPCC report stresses that there is no simple link between the global temperature rises and the number of people damaged by climate change.

Rather, the human impacts of climate change will be strongly influenced by other factors, such as poverty. To explore this idea, the IPCC examined how different levels of income, population and technological change affect the number of people at risk of coastal flooding. It found that the number at risk varies as much as 26-fold – in the worst case, some 26 million people each year would be at risk from coastal flooding in the 2050s and in the best case, only around 1 million.²⁴

'These studies show that the impacts of climate change can vary greatly due to the development pathway assumed,' it says. 'The difference between impacts is largely explained not by differences in emissions but by differences in the size of low-income population, which is generally more vulnerable to flooding.'²⁵

This highlights the fact that the impacts of climate change are not fixed – they depend significantly on what we do about them. However, it seems that so far, governments and international organisations are not acting on this knowledge.

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre was set up in The Hague five years ago, because the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement recognised that climate change would affect millions of extremely vulnerable people all over the world. The centre is helping national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies to understand and address the risks that climate change poses in their countries, and raising awareness of what climate change means for the world's poorest people.

Head of the centre, Madeleen Helmer, says that so far, rich countries have concentrated on reducing their own vulnerability to climate change and treated it as an environmental issue, rather than one which requires them – as the major greenhouse gas polluters – to help the countries whose people will be worst affected.

'In general we can say that the world has not taken on the responsibility to take care of people affected by climate change,' she says. 'What we observe now is a kind of 'our own adaptation first' policy... That is OK, but it is leading to further inequality between north and south, because we take care of our own adaptation first.'

Christian Aid's adaptation work

Christian Aid is working with communities across the world to help them adapt to the erratic weather patterns, warmer temperatures and rising seas brought about by climate change.

Tropical storms and hurricanes regularly wreak havoc in Central America, and are worsened by deforestation. Disaster preparedness is an integral part of the work of Christian Aid's Nicaraguan partner MCM (the Community Movement of Matagalpa). In El Molino Sur, local people have used sand bags to shore up the banks of the river that

flows through the village and protect nearby houses from rising waters. Safe exit routes have been mapped out in the event of a flood and regular puppet shows are staged to educate people about evacuation procedures.

The state worst-hit by disasters in India is Orissa. It is prone to cyclones, heatwaves, floods and droughts. Here, Christian Aid's partner Gram Vikas has built disaster-resistant buildings, which give villagers a place to shelter from extreme weather. Farmers are using water conservation and forestry management techniques to combat drought. Community-based energy programmes,

using biodiesel, biogas, smokeless ovens and micro-hydro and solar power encourage development without using damaging fossil fuels.

Africa already struggles to feed itself and unpredictable rainfall is further jeopardising a precarious food supply. In Kenya, Christian Aid is working with the Benevolent Institute of Development (BIDI) in Machakos, helping poor farmers conserve water and grow new vegetables and grains to reduce the risk of crop failure. People are digging channels alongside their crops in order to collect rainwater, terracing hillsides to prevent topsoil being washed

away and planting grasses to bind the soil together.²⁶

Mali lies on the southern edge of the Sahara desert, where diminishing harvests are forcing many young people to migrate in order to survive. In the Dogon Plateau, Christian Aid's partner, Action for Human Promotion (APH), builds dams to catch water to irrigate the parched earth. Another partner, the Mali Folke Centre, installs renewable energy centres in remote villages that have little chance of becoming connected to the national grid. Fridges, water pumps, lights and batteries are powered using jatropha oil and solar panels.

Paying for adaptation

Rich countries have acknowledged their responsibility to help poor countries adapt to climate change, but have yet to back their rhetoric with significant action. As the world's major polluters, they owe poor countries a carbon debt that, were it realistically 'priced', would far exceed any debt cancellation or aid flows.

In the short term, they should increase financial support for poor countries' adaptation with more rapid debt cancellation and increases in overseas development assistance.

The World Bank estimates that climate-proofing in the developing world will cost between US\$10 to US\$40 billion (£5.09 to £20.36 billion) a year – considerably less than the defence budget of the UK alone.²⁷

There are now three funds dedicated to helping poor countries adapt to climate change: the Adaptation Fund, the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF).²⁸ So far, a total of £91.5 million has been pledged to two of the funds (the third is in flux due to political wrangling) but only half of it has been delivered by rich countries. The UK has pledged £10 million to each of the two operational funds. But so far it has only delivered £3.5 million to the LDCF and £6.6 million to the SCCF.²⁹ These sums are pitiful

in the context of what is needed. They are far lower even than those that rich countries have already promised. At a major summit on climate change in 2001, rich countries pledged US\$450 million (£229 million) a year for adaptation.³⁰

Developed countries are legally, as well as morally, obliged to help poorer countries adapt. Article 4.4 of the Framework Convention on Climate Change states: 'The developed country Parties and other developed Parties included in Annex II [those not currently required to make commitments to reduce emissions] shall also assist the developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting costs of adaptation to those adverse effects.'

Christian Aid is also campaigning for rich countries that have emitted the most pollution to establish a US\$100 million a year global fighting fund to support adaptation in the most vulnerable countries. The principle of compensatory payments has already been accepted in the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but hardly any money has been made available.

Rich countries must redouble their efforts in helping poor countries to overcome these effects and must pledge funds in tens of billions, rather than tens of millions.

'I went to talk to the paramilitaries and they said I had to go because I was collaborating with the guerrillas. This was just a pretext. They told me they were watching me and that they would kill me and cut my head off.'

Don Enrique Petro

Colombia: conflict and commerce

On the occasions when Colombia makes the news, the headlines rarely go beyond tales of drugs barons and kidnappings. But there is another story that has hardly been covered. It is the story of the millions of Colombians who have been forced from their homes by an internal conflict, and now by massive land grab.

It is a startling fact that more people in Colombia have been uprooted from their land and are living as internal refugees than in any other country in the world, apart from Sudan.

As many as 3.7 million¹ – or around 8.5 per cent of the population of 44 million – have been forced to flee their homes in the past 20 years. If the same proportion of the population of the UK were displaced it would equate to around 5 million people. That would mean the emptying out of the combined populations of Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow, Sheffield and Liverpool.²

Massacres and killings have been commonplace in many regions of Colombia for decades, and are the primary cause of forced displacement. The hardest hit have been those living in remote rural areas. They are the victims of what started out as a conflict between opposing ideologies, with left-wing guerrilla groups on one side taking on government forces supported by right-wing paramilitaries on the other.

The paramilitaries, who set themselves up as the armed protectors of big business, have now become businessmen themselves. Supported by parts of the Colombian state apparatus, they are forcing families to leave the land and then taking it over for their own use. The conflict has become an excuse for a violent land grab on a huge scale.

In January 2000, Francis Deng, the then Representative of the UN Secretary General on Internally Displaced People, described displacement in Colombia as a 'tool for acquiring land for the benefit of large landowners, narco-traffickers, as well as private enterprises planning large-scale projects for the exploitation of natural resources'.³

Of those millions who have been forced to run for their lives, the majority are washed up like human flotsam and jetsam in and around towns and cities across the country. Bogotá, the capital, for example, hosts around 500,000 displaced people. They live in massive slums on the edge of cities or with relatives, in squalid and overcrowded housing.

Both paramilitary groups and their rivals, the guerrillas, have for years been financed by the illegal cocaine trade. But paramilitaries are now moving increasingly into 'legitimate' agricultural businesses, most recently into palm oil production.

Palm oil appears an innocuous enough commodity for one that causes so much misery. It is used in biscuits, cereals, ice creams, soaps and detergents, and is found in around one in ten products on our supermarket shelves. It can also be used to make biofuel for cars and power stations, and thus, as the world begins to 'go green', world demand for palm oil is on a steep upward curve.⁴ Biofuel is the new 'big thing' and this is why Colombian paramilitaries want to cash in.

The Colombian government is encouraging this 'push for palm'. It too recognises the increasing demand and appears to be more concerned with increasing national production than punishing those responsible for land seizures. The government wants to see land used for palm cultivation rise from 300,000 hectares to 700,000 hectares in four years. What is not yet clear is how much of this land will be stolen – and how much has already been stolen – from honest farmers.

In 1991, one such farmer, Don Enrique Petro, lost two sons in the same week – one murdered by guerrillas and the other by paramilitaries. Then in 1997 he was forced to abandon his land by paramilitaries who said they would kill him. Later they tried to make him sell his land at a knock-down price, telling him he should sell or they would 'negotiate with his widow'.

One day, while he was away at the local market, gunmen came and riddled his house with bullets, painted death threats on his wall and stole his animals.

'Afterwards I went to talk to the paramilitaries and they said I had to go because I was collaborating with the guerrillas. They told me they were watching me and that they would kill me and cut my head off.'

Don Petro says the accusations of collaboration were just a pretext. 'They were lying. It was so they could get hold of my land to grow African palm on it and make money.'

Today most of Don Petro's land is covered in African palm trees owned by a company called Urapalma.

'I need to leave Colombia. It is the only way I will survive.'

Carlos*

The conflict

The latest conflict in Colombia's troubled history began in the 1950s and 1960s as Marxist and other left-wing guerrilla groups sprang up in response to economic inequality and political repression. At about the same time the Colombian government began to use civilian 'paramilitary' groups of armed men to take on the guerrillas. Many people were forced to leave their homes when their towns and farms became a battleground.

Today's most powerful guerrilla group, the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo*, or FARC), emerged at this time. FARC claims to represent the interests of the rural poor against Colombia's wealthy classes and opposes the United States' influence in Colombia, privatisation of natural resources, multinational corporations, and paramilitary violence.

In response to the guerrilla movement, the Colombian armed forces set up and worked closely with paramilitary auxiliary organisations, which grouped together under the umbrella of the United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, or AUC).

The AUC's strategy was to attempt to deny support for the guerrilla forces from civilians. It was a strategy that has been characterised by the systematic and widespread violation of human rights, including 'disappearances', extrajudicial executions, torture and forced displacement. Terror tactics are used as a means of wresting any potential support for guerrilla groups by civilians, and as a means of forcing civilian communities in conflict zones to abandon their homes *en masse*.

During the 1980s and 1990s, drug production and trafficking became vital sources of financing for all armed groups involved in the conflict. The initial causes of the civil war have become blurred. Terror has been adopted as a tactic to move people from productive land so that paramilitaries and those with whom they collude can make money. Many now see profit rather than politics as their prime motivation.

In the past five years 200,000 people have fled their homes annually.⁵ As ever it is the voiceless and the weak who are the main victims of forced displacement in Colombia.

A life of hardship

The majority of the displaced have lived their lives in the countryside, so the city is an alien environment. Most lack the skills to survive. In the city, they lack decent housing and access to basic services. There is a high risk that they will fall into chronic poverty, passed on from one generation to another.⁶

Approximately half a million displaced people now live in the capital, Bogotá.⁷ Walk around for just a few minutes and you will see children on street corners sorting rubbish to be recycled for cash. Some displaced women sell their bodies to make a few pesos to feed themselves and their children.

The children suffer terribly. When they are forced, with their families, to leave their homes, their parents are often unable to afford to send them to school. Instead, many families send them out to work. In a country of at least 12 per cent unemployment and 33 per cent under-employment,⁸ not having an education can consign people to a life of poverty.

Joaquín Mejía is 14 but looks younger – a product of his poor diet and long working hours. He has lived in Bogotá for seven years, since his family fled from paramilitary violence. His father owns a fruit stall which provides a small income, and Joaquín works on it seven days a week.

He gets up at 5am each day and goes straight to the street market, without breakfast. He works until 12.30pm and then attends a school in a converted garage run by a local charity. The classroom is cold and gloomy and the age range of the pupils is wide. But the young teachers are dedicated and caring, and their passion and even love for both their work and the children make up for many of the obvious deficiencies.

Joaquín gets home in the late evening. He is hungry and eats a sandwich alone and then goes to bed at 9pm. It is a harsh existence, but Joaquín claims he is lucky. Many of his friends who work in the local market are beaten by their employers.

For some chased from their villages, the fear of violence and death continues even after they have fled to the city.

Carlos was accused of giving information about the FARC to the authorities. He was told he had 24 hours to leave so he fled to Bogotá with his father. But when they arrived in the capital, they noticed a man watching them. He has appeared several times since then and they believe he is a member of the FARC, and that they are still targets. 'I didn't take sides in the conflict. I was neutral. This means that I am mistrusted by both sides and protected by none. My father is a diabetic. He has no drugs and no doctor. I can't leave this building in case I am found. I need to leave Colombia. It is the only way I will survive.'

The great palm oil swindle

Paramilitaries are not subtle when it comes to taking land. Armed units simply visit a community and tell them they need to leave because enemy forces are operating in the area, and it needs to be cleared. If the community insists on staying, it is accused of collaboration with the enemy. Deaths are likely to follow.

A typical phrase used by paramilitaries who have asked the male landowner to sell up is: 'If you don't sell to us, we will negotiate with your widow.' It is not an idle threat.

Once the land has been vacated, it may be taken over by other farmers or companies. It is common for local legal authorities to work with paramilitaries to falsify property titles. The job is made easier by the fact that many poor Colombians do not hold title deeds to their land.

This is primarily a paramilitary activity. While the guerrillas are also involved in intimidation, violence and displacement, it is the paramilitaries and their allies who perpetuate the land grab. It is estimated that around 6 million hectares of land, equivalent to three times the size of Wales, have been abandoned by people fleeing the conflict. Much of this land is now being stolen.⁹

Señora Milvia Días, 30, lives in the western Chocó region of Colombia and is from the tiny hamlet of Llano Rico. In 1997 she was forced to leave her community by paramilitaries who

wanted her family's land. At that time paramilitaries, claiming the area was pro-guerrilla, killed more than 100 people in the villages surrounding Llano Rico.

'One day my father went out to fix a hole in one of our farm's fences. It was mid-afternoon. By 6pm he hadn't returned and it was dark and my mother was getting worried,' she says.

'We stayed up all night waiting for him. At 6am the next day the family got together. There were paramilitaries everywhere, all over the village – maybe 80 of them. Some turned up at our house and asked us for water.'

The family sent out a search party which found him straight away. 'He was in the field where he had been mending the fence. He had seven stab wounds and they cut his throat from ear to ear. And they ripped his throat out.' Milvia's family's land is now covered in Urapalma palm trees.

There is an increasing body of evidence that state institutions are involved in this land grab. For example, the InterAmerican Commission for Human Rights has recognised the links between Urapalma, the paramilitaries and the army.

* All names have been changed for reasons of security.

'Since 2001, the Urapalma company has promoted the sowing of approximately 1,500 hectares of oil palms in [these] territories, with the help of the... armed protection of the 17th Brigade of the army, and of armed civilians. The objective of the armed operations and incursions into these territories has been to intimidate community members into either supporting the production of palm oil or vacating the area.'¹⁰

Even one of the main paramilitary chiefs, Vicente Castaño, declared in 2005 that, 'in Uraba [where Don Petro and Milvia Díaz come from], we have palm plantations. I personally persuaded businessmen to invest in these projects.'¹¹

The push for palm

The Colombian government is making a show of doing the right thing. It is, for example, attempting to demobilise paramilitary fighters. It is doing it badly, however, forgiving crimes committed by killers and allowing them to keep land they have stolen.

It is spending an estimated 35 times more money on every demobilised fighter, mostly paramilitaries, than it is on every displaced person.¹²

Furthermore, the government has attempted to pass a law stating that any abandoned land left for more than five years reverts to the state or to whoever is occupying it at that time. So far legislators have thrown this legislation out, though commentators expect the government to try again.

In a country where almost 4 million people have fled their land at gunpoint, it is hard to envisage how such a law, if passed, could do anything other than encourage paramilitary land theft.

Andrés Castro is the general secretary of Fedepalma, a Colombian confederation of legitimate palm oil producing companies. He strongly opposes the palm companies associated with paramilitary displacements.

He says that there are officially around 300,000 hectares of palm cultivation in Colombia today, but that in reality this figure is more likely to be around 400,000, with much of this extra crop being grown by companies not registered to Fedepalma and on land that has been stolen by paramilitaries.

One of the bigger paramilitary palm oil companies, Urapalma, has told Fedepalma it has just 200 hectares of palm. But, said Andrés, 'I know this is a lie but I can't prove it. This year [2007] we will do a survey of palm by satellite and also manually. I am certain we will find there are [an extra] 40,000 hectares of palm in Uraba alone.'

He argues that the government is unlikely to force the paramilitaries to return the land they have stolen. 'The

government has expressed a commitment to [extend palm cultivation by an additional] 400,000 hectares in the next four years. [The president] must be keen to solve the land problem without a fuss. So I don't believe the president is going to invest time in investigating this [land ownership issue]. He doesn't care about ownership. He wants palm production. He won't support the peasants.'

The state has the duty to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people, to provide an adequate standard of living, as set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The Colombian government has actually written these principles into domestic law.

The response of the Colombian government, however, has so far failed to deal with the catastrophe facing millions of its poorest citizens.

In 2006 the national Constitutional Court repeated a previous declaration that present levels of assistance to, and protection of, displaced people was 'unconstitutional'. There were insufficient funds, a lack of institutional capacity, bureaucratic barriers to vital services and subsidies and, in general, a low priority assigned by ministries to the problem.¹³

In 2007 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that the government has made moves to overcome this, including mobilising state institutions. But the reality on the ground for most is that if you are forced to leave your home and if your land is stolen, you can expect a life of increasing impoverishment, with little or no help from the state.

The right to return to their homes and land is supposed to be a fundamental right of all internally displaced people. The problem for many displaced Colombians is that they were forced from their land so that others could steal it. The victims are inconveniences that must be moved or killed. The new, criminal, owners are powerful, and they are not keen on giving the land back.

In January 2007, Walter Kälin, the current United Nations Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, noted that there is '... a significant gap between the law and its actual implementation...'¹⁴

In 2005, the Colombian government adopted what is known as the Justice and Peace Law. It is the most high-profile law in a complex package of reforms of land, mining and forestry legislation, which many fear will facilitate the laundering of land illegally acquired by paramilitaries.

According to Christian Aid partner CAJAR, a lawyer's collective, the Justice and Peace law will 'legitimise, amnesty and pardon' and will not dismantle, 'the existing economic, political and social structure of the paramilitaries.'¹⁵ In other

words, there are grave doubts over whether displaced people will ever see their land again.

The InterAmerican Commission for Human Rights agrees that considerable benefits have been conceded to the paramilitaries, and has expressed concerns regarding the lack of, 'reparation to the victims of the conflict, including the return of lands.'¹⁶

For every hundred cases of forced displacement presented to the appropriate authorities, on average only one ever reaches the courts, let alone a guilty verdict.¹⁷

In conflict situations, difficult decisions must be made in pursuit of peace. In many countries in the world people who have committed grave crimes have walked free as part of a peace process. But in Colombia the fear is that powerful criminals, with good connections, are literally getting away with murder – and the lands they have stolen – without bringing the hope of peace any nearer.

Our partners' response

Christian Aid's partners are fighting back. Don Petro, the man who has lost two of his sons to the conflict and most of his land to the paramilitaries, has made a stand. Unlike the vast majority of displaced people in Colombia, Don Petro, with the help of Christian Aid partners Justice and Peace, has been able to return to his land – though most of it is still occupied by Urapalma. He still receives death threats from the paramilitaries, but he refuses to leave.

He, Justice and Peace and others from the community who have lost their land have set up a 'humanitarian zone' – a rudimentary settlement comprising a communal kitchen, a latrine and a river to wash in – where they live as civilians and where the presence of armed groups is prohibited. They do this in the teeth of paramilitaries who surround them, who have stolen the land around them and who have, in many cases, murdered their kith and kin. On some days, they actually see their families' killers.

The community has also created 'biodiversity zones' within which they are determined to protect their forest homeland from the threat of the monoculture African palm, and to recover what has already been lost to the oil palm industry.

Don Petro lives in his house, which he has reclaimed from the paramilitaries, and the rest of the community lives nearby on land he has donated to them. 'I believe this will be a victory against the palm industry,' said Don Petro. 'We believe we will have a chance because of the support from the international community. This is our biggest weapon.'



He still gets death threats, however. Last year Justice and Peace helped him escape the country. But at the end of November 2006 he returned to his farm and the humanitarian zone, along with a full-time, international accompanier from Christian Aid partner Peace Brigades International. It is hoped that the presence of a foreigner with him at all times will deter those who want him dead.

The problem of displacement is huge, and to confer on the displaced the rights to which they are entitled will be expensive. But there can be no argument other than that the Colombian government must both provide services – education, housing and social security – to those who have fled from terror, and stop allowing paramilitaries to operate with impunity.

There can be no doubt that policies pursued by the current Colombian government have allowed, and even encouraged, displacement and land theft to continue. Until the state disentangles itself from the paramilitaries and gives back the land stolen by them, displacement in Colombia will carry on and the lives of people like Don Petro will continue to be at risk.

‘The planned dams have resulted in massive displacement with countless numbers tortured or killed. Villagers are being forced to give up their land and move elsewhere with no prospect of compensation.’

Saw Karen, Karen Rivers Watch

Burma: war, dams and power

As the Salween River winds its way from the mountains of Tibet to the Andaman Sea it creates a natural border between Burma and Thailand. But now its future as the longest free-flowing waterway in South-East Asia is in doubt.

On the Burmese side of the border, civilians have been caught up for almost 60 years in the world’s longest running civil war – a war between the government and several ethnic groups.

The conflict has forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee to Thailand to escape human rights abuses by the military junta, while huge numbers – currently estimated at more than half a million – are displaced within Burma, surviving in appalling conditions. It is a horrifying story of long-term mass displacement because of political conflict.

However, in recent months, a new offensive has started in eastern Burma, motivated by the desire to make millions of dollars from logging, dams, plantations and mining. Since the end of 2005 the government has renewed its efforts to systematically destroy some villages and enslave others, as it seeks to exploit abundant natural resources to prop up its repressive rule.

The largest project is a series of up to five dams on the Salween, which will provide cheap electricity, mostly for export to Thailand, and will generate huge cash flows for the Burmese government, known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). At least one is being funded by Thai and Chinese companies.

New arrivals

The latest offensive has led to an influx of new arrivals at the Mae Ra Ma Luang camp, one of nine camps on the Thai-Burma border housing refugees who started arriving more than 20 years ago.

At least 3,500 people have arrived since the end of 2005, bumping the camp’s population up to 16,000. They come with nothing except the clothes on their backs and harrowing stories of executions, torture, landmine injuries, robbery, forced labour and the destruction of their villages by the army.

Many of them, like Saw No Reh,* are from the Papun district of Karen state, which lies in the flood zone of the first dam to be built.

As he squats outside a bamboo hut waiting patiently to be registered by the camp authorities, he reveals livid scars on his stomach and back, caused by a bullet fired by a Burmese

soldier. He was unarmed and defenceless when he was shot in November last year as he desperately tried to find food for his family who had been hiding in the jungle for six months.

He escaped but his cousin was shot dead in front of him. ‘I had to leave his body behind as I was running for my life,’ Saw No Reh said.

‘My family and our neighbours were hiding in the jungle because the army had burned down our village. We had no houses, no blankets, and we slept on the ground. Many people got sick from malaria. We had little to eat except bamboo shoots, so one night I went back to the village with my cousin to find supplies of rice that we had buried in secret places. That was when the army saw us and tried to kill us both.’

Soon afterwards Saw No Reh, 31, decided to take his wife and four young children across the border to safety in Thailand. They arrived in February.

‘I wanted to stay near my home, so that one day we could go back and start our lives again. But my children were always hungry and we had nothing. We could not live like that in the jungle any longer. I feel safe here in Thailand. If we go back to Burma it would be like committing suicide.’

Shoot on sight

The Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), a Christian Aid partner organisation that works in the refugee camps, says that 200 villages in eastern Burma have been destroyed in the past year.

TBBC and other relief and rights groups working along the border agree that the new offensive is largely motivated by the need to clear land to be flooded by the dams. It is also to secure areas to build roads for transporting building materials and to ensure that the sites are safe from rebel attacks. The overall effect is to further militarise areas previously controlled by minority ethnic groups.

Saw Pler, from the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP), explained the tactics of the military. ‘The army has two strategies. In villages that are useful to them, for example if they are near roads, they use the people there to help them with forced labour. Remote villages are not useful, so they are destroyed. The army has a ‘shoot on sight’ policy because the villagers are useless to them.’

In December 2005 the army apparently decided that Saw Mui Heh’s village in Papun district was useless. ‘One day they set fire to the houses and burned the whole village down,’ said Saw Mui Heh, who is now living in a refugee camp in Thailand.

* All names have been changed for reasons of security.

'We do not know what will happen to us or where we will go. If these dams are built we do not have a future.'

Naw Mya Thaung

'We had nothing left, so we came here. It took us three days of walking and all the time we were terrified that the army would hunt us down and kill us. We ate leaves in the jungle and anything we could find. I want desperately to go back to my home, but I will not return until the army is gone.'

Inside Burma

Meanwhile, those still inside Burma are terrified of what will happen if the project goes ahead. Naw Mya Thaung, 19, lives in Hko Kay village in Burma, which will be flooded if the dams are built.

'We do not know what will happen to us or where we will go. If these dams are built we do not have a future,' she said.

Naw Mya Thaung said the villagers had been told nothing officially about the dams, which human rights groups estimate will flood hundreds of square kilometres of forest and farmland and displace tens of thousands more people. Land belonging

to the Yintalai tribe, of whom there are only around 1,000 surviving, would be completely destroyed.¹

At least 12 other ethnic groups live along the banks of the Salween and they will see little or no benefit from the dams, according to Karen Rivers Watch (KRW), an umbrella group of Karen rights groups including Christian Aid partner organisations.

'The planned dams have resulted in massive displacement with countless numbers tortured or killed. Villagers are being forced to give up their land and move elsewhere with no prospect of compensation,' said Saw Karen from KRW.

'In addition, it is well known that the Burmese government forces villagers to help them build roads and other infrastructure, so they will be made to work on the very projects that will flood their land and leave them with nothing.'

KRW believes the first dam to be built is at Hat Gyi, which will be funded by the state-owned Energy Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and the Chinese state-owned enterprise Sinohydro Corporation.

The site has been under increased security since May 2006 when a Thai employee of EGAT died after stepping on a landmine. 'Building the Hat Gyi dam is going to mean even more soldiers, more guns and more landmines. Does Thailand really want to be part of this?' said KRW's Saw Karen.

The 600-megawatt project will cost around US\$1 billion, while the Tasang dam further upstream in Shan state will provide 7,100 megawatts of power and cost an estimated US\$6 billion.² In 2005-06 Burma approved a record US\$6 billion dollars in foreign direct investment, compared to just US\$158 million dollars in 2004-05.³ The huge difference was down to just one project: the Tasang dam.

Burma is in great need of investment from abroad. It is one of the poorest countries in the world but nearly half of the government's budget is spent on the military, while one in ten children dies before its fifth birthday.⁴ It has one of the largest armies in Asia – with 500,000 soldiers – despite having no neighbours that pose a threat.

Indeed its neighbours have been supportive in the past. In January 2007, China, along with Russia, vetoed a resolution in the UN Security Council condemning human rights violations in Burma, to the dismay of rights groups.

The dams on the Salween are not the only development projects that are having a disastrous impact on the lives of people in Burma.

Commercial agriculture has intensified during the past year with the promotion of a national development initiative to cultivate castor oil plantations to produce biodiesel as an alternative fuel. Thousands of acres across eastern Burma have been confiscated by local authorities without compensation to the owners of the land and handed over to privately financed joint ventures with the government, according to TBBC.

As Human Rights Watch says, state-sponsored development initiatives in Burma have often undermined livelihoods and 'primarily served to consolidate military control over the rural population'.⁵

World's longest running civil war

Numerous ethnic rebel groups have fought Burmese governments for greater autonomy since independence from Britain in 1948.

In recent years many have signed ceasefire agreements with the government, although this has made little difference to human rights abuses on the ground. The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the most significant ethnic rebel group still engaged in armed struggle, fighting what is the world's longest civil war.

In the 1970s the government began its 'four cuts' policy to cut off access to information, supplies, recruits and food for insurgent groups. Karen leaders claim the government has been killing and displacing their people – who make up 13 per cent of Burma's 52 million population⁶ – ever since.

Many people from the Karen and other ethnic groups have crossed into Thailand to escape. Some 153,000 are refugees living in camps along the border, but Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. So, while it allows the international community to feed and house the refugees, they do not have any official legal status and cannot gain citizenship, cannot legally work and are not even allowed to leave the camps.

As many as 2 million others have left Burma and crossed into Thailand, either fleeing the regime or to find work. They live outside the camps and try to make a living any way they can.



Despite the hardships, those left behind are worse off. Most of those displaced by the army are still inside the country, hiding in the jungle or herded into 'relocation sites' – areas under the control of the Burmese army, with little or no access to outsiders.

TBBC estimates there are currently at least half a million people internally displaced in eastern Burma,⁷ including around 27,000 displaced in 2006 due to the new offensive.⁸

In the past year some of the displaced in Karen state have gathered in camps within Burma, in areas controlled by the KNLA. EeThu Hta camp on the banks of the Salween River was set up in April 2006 by Karen leaders. It already has nearly 3,000 inhabitants who are being housed and fed by humanitarian organisations, and more are arriving every day.

The site is protected from the Burmese army by KNLA troops, but there are three government military posts within two hours walk and camp leaders say they are worried they could be attacked.

Some of the residents say they want to cross the river to the refugee camps in Thailand where they will feel safer, but are afraid they will get turned back by the Thai border police. The Thai government has been reluctant to absorb refugees in recent months because there have been so many new arrivals.

Thai authorities periodically carry out round-ups of migrants and refugees, and send around 300 back to Burma each month, where they face possible arrest.

Saw Tay Tay managed to get from Ee Thu Hta into Thailand and is now living in Mae Ra Ma Luang camp.

He, his wife and six children fled their home in August last year when soldiers came to burn down their village, and were taken to Ee Thu Hta by KNLA troops.

'We wanted to leave the camp because we did not feel safe. We sometimes heard the sound of the guns and there were rumours that the army would attack. We did not have any choice but to come to Thailand.

'I have seen what the army can do with my own eyes. Last year the soldiers came to my village. They arrested two of my friends because they thought they were members of the KNLA. They tortured them by cutting out their eyes and mouth before they killed them and left the bodies for the rest of the village to see.'

Hiding in the jungle

Mae Ra Ma Luang camp, built on two steep hills divided by a small river, is 4km (2.5 miles) from the border with Burma. Refugees continue to arrive, despite the concerns of the Thai authorities. Fifteen-year-old Mueh Paw spent two months in the jungle with ten school friends after their boarding school was burned to the ground by the army.

'We ran off into the jungle and hid there for maybe two months. I was with ten of my school friends. The oldest was 18 and the youngest was 13.

'We were too scared to go anywhere or move at all. We were afraid that the army would find us and kill us.

'We did not have enough to eat. We could not find vegetables or even bamboo shoots because it was the dry season. We tried eating grass and weeds and anything we could find. We had to sleep on the ground, with no mats or blankets. It was cold. We could not find much water either – just a trickle between the rocks.'

The children arrived in Thailand at the end of last year and now live and go to school in the camps. Some have been reunited with their parents, but others like Koe Paw, 16, are separated from their families. Her father was shot dead by the army when she was five and her mother and three younger sisters remain inside Burma.

'I miss them very much but at least here I can get a good education,' she said. 'I cannot go to school back home.'

Villagers in eastern Burma will continue to be killed, expelled from their homes and used as forced labour for the army as long as the military government is able to impose huge development projects, such as the Salween dams, on to populations living in a conflict area.

'Thousands more civilians are likely to be displaced and many will try to enter Thailand as refugees or illegal migrants,' says a representative of TBBC.

'As the economic and humanitarian situation continues to worsen, the Burmese government appears to be in denial that there is any problem, choosing instead to believe their own rhetoric that the country is enjoying a development boom and unprecedented economic prosperity.

'It is a desperate scenario which brings little hope that the situation in the border areas will improve in the foreseeable future.'

'Africa will be the continent that is most affected by climate change, because it is the poorest continent in the world.'

Ibrahim Togola

Mali: heat, dust and climate change

Oumou Karembé has four sons and four daughters. More than enough to look after her in her old age, she thought. But that was in the days when enough rain fell – most of the time – to sustain the farmers living in Africa’s Sahel region. After the massive droughts in the early 1980s, Oumou’s village never fully recovered. Indeed, since then, the rain has become less and less predictable. Two years ago, the last of Oumou’s sons was forced to leave the remote village in northern Mali because he could no longer feed his family with what he was able to grow.

Now aged 76, she sits on a straw mat in her stone hut, sheltering from the 35°C heat with her 79-year-old husband. At a time when she could expect a rest from the back-breaking work she has endured her whole life, Oumou instead has seven young grandchildren to look after, aged between 18 months and 15 years.

One son has agreed to come back and help during the growing season, and his parents say they will do everything possible to convince him to stay for good – even crying openly in front of him if that’s what it takes.

‘One by one my children asked permission to leave,’ said Oumou’s husband, Ibrahim. ‘Every time they didn’t come back, it was a shock. But with the changing climate it would be difficult for them all to stay here.’

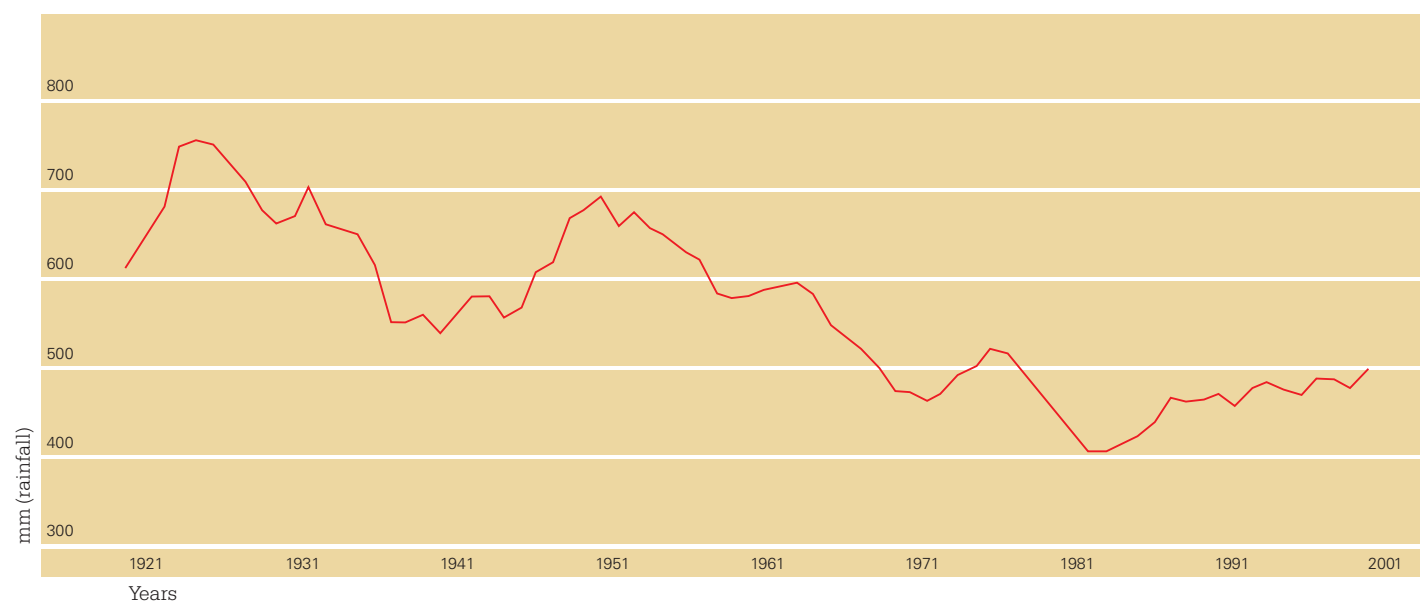
The Sahel region is a swathe of land stretching across Africa from Senegal on the Atlantic coast to Somalia on the Indian Ocean. This region, which cuts across the north of Mali, is what

is known as a semi-arid area, between highly fertile land and the desert, where agriculture is very vulnerable to changes in rainfall patterns. Mounting evidence suggests that the effects of global warming are already being felt throughout the Sahel – changing the delicate balance between humans and their environment that has endured for thousands of years. A study published by the UK Met Office’s Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research last year found that extreme drought is liable to affect a third of the planet by 2100. Places which are already suffering periodic droughts and unpredictable rains will get progressively drier and the Sahel will eventually become uninhabitable.¹

Many Malian farmers are already noticing changes consistent with these predictions, and the country’s rainfall data further supports this view. Over the past 30 years, the rainfall on which the farmers depend has lessened dramatically and has become much more erratic (see graph below). Once, farmers could predict the rains and plant accordingly. During the past five years, farmers report rain disappearing in the middle of the growing season, which drastically reduces, if not totally destroys, their crops.

This change in rainfall patterns is creating a new wave of migrants who are being driven from their homes in search of water, leaving the very old and the very young in the villages to cope as best they can. Already the third poorest country in the world, the fragile Malian economy is facing yet another shock.

Rainfall patterns in Mali, 1921-2001 (source Mali Met Office)



‘Even during the rainy season when things seem to be going okay... at a crucial point the rain just stops and you get stalks with no millet or sorghum to harvest off them.’

Mariam Tapily

An absent generation

Village life in Mali has always been tough. After dark, the only light comes from kerosene lamps and all the water for drinking and washing has to be carried by hand. There is no power for machinery to help with tilling the soil, sowing seeds, harvesting crops or grinding millet into flour.

But like many rural communities in the developing world, close family ties and a strong sense of community have helped sustain the millions of people who eke out a living through hard physical work.

It is the farming villages in the north that are feeling the effects first. Mariam Tapily is 77 years old. She too thought she would be able to pass on many of the more strenuous chores she had performed throughout her life. In an informal pension arrangement, younger family members traditionally gather firewood and water for their elderly relatives.

Instead, Mariam has seen all five of her children leave the village over the past ten years. They didn’t want to go. Like the Karembés’ children, they simply could not earn enough to feed their own families with what they could grow in the surrounding fields. At first they didn’t migrate every year, only when the harvest was bad. But over the past three years none of the harvests has been good enough to sustain them through the dry season. In this time of scarcity, the price of food increases, too, just when people have less money to buy it.

Small children who can be strapped to their mothers’ backs go with their parents in search of income in the cities or areas where there is more irrigation – often causing conflict with communities already settled there. But two of Mariam’s grandchildren, a 15-year-old girl and a five-year-old boy, have stayed behind, giving her the added burden of childcare. Nor are they old enough to take on the chores such as gathering firewood and carrying water. Mariam is slightly better off than the Karembés in that two of her sons are still coming back in the rainy season. It is unclear for how long they will be able to continue, though. Every year, more people leave for good.

Both the Karembés and Mariam live in Solo-Joy, a village of 400 people on the Dogon plateau, about 700km north of Bamako, Mali’s capital. Travel just 100km further north and you reach Timbuktu, known the world over for its remoteness and inaccessibility. It is a stunning region, filled with striking rock formations and rolling hills. But Mariam remembers a time when the hills were covered in forests and populated by panthers and hyenas.

Now the trees have all but disappeared. As well as the constant demand for firewood, farmers increasingly chop down

trees to make charcoal to supplement their dwindling incomes. Those left standing lose their leaves and bark, eaten by hungry animals in times of scarcity. Or the trees simply die for want of water. In the dry season, what earth remains is parched and cracked. Much of the topsoil has been washed away, leaving just sand.

‘Even during the rainy season when things seem to be going okay, at a crucial point the rain just stops and you get stalks with no millet or sorghum to harvest off them,’ says Mariam. This year, for example, a neighbouring village had no harvest at all.

Just outside Solo-Joy, there is a small-scale dam that the community built in 1992 with the help of tools and materials from Action for Human Promotion (APH), a local charity supported by Christian Aid. Originally, this dam caught enough water to allow the community to grow onions, lettuce and other salad greens in the dry season. The income from these crops helped them survive until the rains returned.

For the past three years the system has failed. The dam has not trapped enough water and hardly any onions can be grown in the unirrigated soil.

Since 1992, APH has been improving its techniques for identifying the best sites to chose. Unfortunately, they cannot always put this knowledge to use. Last year they received donations to build two more dams in nearby villages, Youré-Tengueda and Toulabé. Work was supposed to begin in December in Toulabé but the community was so depleted of able-bodied men – many of whom had gone to harvest rice in the dry season – that they could not begin building until mid-February. They finished in May, but heavy rains came in June and washed away 60 per cent of the dam. It was a similar story in Youré-Tengueda.

‘Each year they say we should have more people coming back and staying through the dry season next year,’ says Armand Kassogue, the director of APH, ‘Then the following year comes and families are forced to leave again during the dry season.’ It is a vicious circle. If a dam could be built to capture the water, there would be more arable land to sustain a larger community throughout the year.

Migration in Mali is nothing new. As in the rest of Africa, there are many factors driving people out of their villages towards the cities and beyond. Worsening trade terms have been making agriculture less and less viable. The country’s cotton farming industry, on which a third of the population depends, has been battered by the steep fall in the world price following a hike in subsidies to cotton farmers in the US.

But now the effects of climate change are pushing already vulnerable populations to breaking point.

For generations, cattle-herding nomads have driven their animals south during the dry season in search of watering holes. But as water tables drop and scarcity increases, too many people are trying to occupy the same space. Everyone from nomadic cattle herders to fishermen and settled farmers attempt to earn a living on the same patches of irrigated land. So many people converging at the same time increasingly causes conflict.

Coping with climate change

Much work is being done within Mali to adapt as the climate changes and to develop alternative growing methods and non-agricultural activities. The government is encouraging farmers to use different crop strains which are more resistant to drought. They are also training villagers to gather their own rainfall data so they can make the best use of what rain does fall.

Ibrahim Togola, set up the Mali Folke Centre (MFC) in 2000 to help Malians find ways to adapt to the changing climate, and Christian Aid helps fund their work.

In Mali, he explains, 70 per cent of people live in rural areas, and are directly dependent on the management of natural resources.

'Africa will be the continent that is most affected by climate change, because it is the poorest continent in the world,' says Ibrahim. 'It has a lot of resources, but they are sold as raw materials, without any added value. So we are living directly from natural resources and will be very hurt by climate change.'

To combat this problem, MFC is sponsoring projects to grow the *jatropha* plant for use as a biofuel. Pressing the seeds produces oil which can be used as an alternative to diesel for fuelling vehicles and machines for milling, and charging batteries. As well as producing sustainable energy, while *jatropha* is growing it helps prevent soil erosion. In addition, a by-product of the seed-pressing operation can be used as a high-grade organic fertiliser.

MFC believes *jatropha* could become an important resource for Mali. The local production means local employment, and local generation of income. The potential benefit of *jatropha* technology to Mali, a country dependent on imported fossil fuels, is huge.

As an alternative to farming, the MFC also helped to expand a small-scale beef-drying operation in Bamako, enabling it to employ more people. It is a simple process. High-quality beef

is cut up and dried on the roof using a mixture of sun and hot air. It can then be sold at a premium in shops. The company has recently added dried mangoes to its product list. Adding value to raw materials is crucial to overcoming poverty in Africa, believes Ibrahim Togola.

Farmers in Mali, Ibrahim points out, who have contributed almost nothing to the build-up of CO₂ in the atmosphere, are nonetheless on the frontline and living in a region highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

'All this makes life much more difficult,' adds Ibrahim, 'There were 600,000 people living in Bamako 20 years ago, now there are about 2 million people. This causes insecurity, the spread of HIV and eventually, emigration to Europe.'

Ibrahim Togola is far from a lone voice. Peter H Gleick, the founder of the Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment and Security in Berkeley, California, agrees that outside help is needed to overcome the effects of diminishing rainfall.²

'We have an obligation to help countries prepare for the climate changes that we are largely responsible for,' he said recently. His institute has been tracking trends such as the upsurge of new desalination plants in wealthy places running short of water.

'If you drive your car into your neighbour's living room, don't you owe your neighbour something?' Dr Gleick said. 'On this planet, we're driving the climate car into our neighbours' living room, and they don't have insurance and we do.'



The polluter to pay

If Mali is to adapt successfully to the likely changes in its climate, a lot more needs to be done. The initiatives of the Mali government and organisations such as MFC are important, but the scale of forced migration is just too large to be tackled by Malians alone.

Konimba Coulibaly lives in Koulobogou, about 200km north of Bamako, with her seven children. So far her children are too young to leave. But her husband has gone to Bamako for the dry season this year in search of work. It is the first year he has been forced to leave.

'We just didn't have enough production,' said Konimba, '[Leaving] was the only solution. There wasn't enough food for us to survive the dry season.'

The previous year, there were 20 villagers who left during the dry season in search of an alternative income. This year there were 30.

Many of the young women who go to Bamako end up selling bananas and other fruit to motorists at the side of the road.

Saly Angoiba has been selling fruit in Bamako during the dry season for the past three years. She and her husband live in a village in the north near to Dogon country. He is not with her in Bamako, but instead has gone to another province to cut sugar cane.

The family used to get through the dry season by growing onions and lettuce in irrigated plots. But there has not been enough rain in the past three years to enable them to earn enough. Saly is only 23 years old, and misses her parents. Her seven-month-old daughter is strapped to her back.

'If we had the same opportunities in the village, we would stay there,' she said. 'I am separated from my husband for six months of the year. It is easier for him to find work in another city.'

Some villagers try to leave Mali altogether in the hope that they can earn a more secure living elsewhere. Getting out is far from easy, though. Many are sent back by immigration authorities and others perish on the journey. Few succeed in finding work abroad.

Fatoumata Barry set up an organisation last year called the Association for Return, Work and Dignity, to offer moral support to those who come back to Mali after an unsuccessful attempt to leave. They also try to raise awareness of the dangers and push for more international aid so that people can successfully earn a living in Mali.

The most common route is overland through Mauritania, followed by a crossing by boat to Spain. It is a very precarious journey. It is virtually impossible to secure a visa, so the vast

majority make the journey without papers.

'People are sent back with no money, sick... sometimes with broken legs. We want people to know the dangers before they leave, and transform the situation here so that they don't have to go,' said Fatoumata.

When the World Trade Center in New York was attacked by terrorists and nearly 3,000 people died, the media wrote about it for months. But thousands of people die trying to get to Europe every month, added Fatoumata, and nobody writes about that.

'Two hundred years ago, Africans were brought over to Europe in chains. They didn't need a visa to get in then,' she said.

Ibrahim Togola goes further, placing the responsibility for solving the problem squarely on the developed world.

'A lot can be done, if there is willingness. People who are sources of the problem, the rich industrialised northern countries, have to pay for the damage here in Africa,' he says. 'They have a lot of resources and they are making a lot of pollution. We have one global atmosphere for everyone. The damage which is created in Europe, the US and China is felt by everyone.'

‘While we have made the technological and logistical advances necessary to send teams rapidly anywhere in the world, there has been no corresponding moral and ethical revolution by the global community to make it possible to assist and protect everyone everywhere in accordance with humanitarian principles and our agreed responsibility to protect.’

Jan Egeland, former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Recommendations

Christian Aid believes that the appalling plight of millions of people forced from their homes demands a stronger, braver response by the world community. Just as many countries acted together after the Second World War to relieve the suffering of those displaced by that conflict, so now they need to redouble their efforts to help today’s displaced masses.

Existing attempts to help them are hobbled by a system that was designed more than half a century ago. It remains too feeble, unreliable, disorganised and under-funded to address the expanding need.

Crucially, that system frequently lacks the backing of armed force. This, when properly mandated by the international community, is sometimes essential to protect people from rape, torture and murder. In turn, this failure reflects the lack of political will in countries with the power to take effective action. As a result, millions of people who have fled conflict remain in danger of losing their lives and yet are often forgotten by the world.

Millions more wait too long for disaster relief which, especially with slow-onset droughts and famines that fail to interest the media, is often too little, too late.

A further, vast number of people are being deliberately forced off their land to make way for roads, dams, mines, factories and other construction projects. Most, predictably, are impoverished as a result, and their fate is too often an afterthought for the lenders, governments and companies that fund these huge projects.

Climate change is already adding to the number of people who have to leave their homes to survive. Its forecast effects on poor people – on their ability to grow food, to find water and to have safe places to live – are terrifying. Unless the rich world takes urgent action to help poor countries adapt to climate change, then in future it will trigger yet higher levels of forced migration.

In this 50th anniversary Christian Aid Week report we highlight these issues because we believe they will pose the greatest threat to the world’s poorest people in the coming decades. Increasingly, our work and that of our partner organisations is to relieve the suffering caused by forced displacement. But we cannot do it alone.

Now is the time for the world to act, both helping people to stay in their homes as the climate inevitably changes, and putting in place a strong and reliable system to help and protect those who have already had to flee. The need could not be more urgent.

Conflict

Christian Aid recognises that, ultimately, governments are legally responsible for protecting their own citizens’ safety and human rights.

- All states should integrate the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into their national law and make real, practical efforts to uphold them, rather than merely paying lip service to them.
- Donor countries such as the UK and Ireland should use their influence to encourage greater adherence to these principles, and speak out publicly against the governments that manifestly flout them.

The 30 principles – which are based on existing international law and human rights instruments – include the following:

- governments should try to prevent people from being displaced and have a special obligation to prevent the displacement of indigenous people, minorities, small-scale farmers and others with a special dependency and attachment to their lands (Principles 7 and 9)
- internally displaced people (IDPs) have the right to request and receive protection and humanitarian assistance from their governments. They must be protected against harm, including murder, arbitrary execution, disappearances and violence (Principles 3 and 10)
- IDPs have a right to enough food and drinkable water, basic shelter and housing, appropriate clothing and essential medical services and sanitation (Principle 18)
- governments have a duty to help IDPs to return home voluntarily or resettle in another part of the country, in safety and dignity (Principle 28).

The international community has a moral responsibility to help the millions of displaced people currently failed by their own governments.

- Responsibility for organising protection and assistance for those who have fled from conflict should be held by the same organisation whose job it is to organise protection and assistance for refugees – currently UNHCR. This dual responsibility must be formally enshrined in the organisation’s mandate. At present, all too often IDPs fall into the gaps between different UN organisations, so no-one takes responsibility for them. As well as arranging practical responses to IDPs’ needs, the chosen organisation should also be responsible for monitoring and promoting governments’ adherence to the Guiding Principles.

- Where necessary, governments acting through the UN Security Council must be willing to give the organisation the military back-up necessary to protect IDPs and refugees from violence. This is in line with the ‘responsibility to protect’, which world leaders agreed in 2005, and which the UN Security Council reaffirmed just over a year ago in Security Council resolution 1674 (April 2006). The ‘responsibility to protect’ means that where governments manifestly fail to protect their own people against atrocities such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity, then other governments have a responsibility to take collective action through the UN Security Council, using force if necessary.
- Military interventions must involve adequate numbers of forces who are properly equipped and have an effective mandate. They must also follow rules of engagement that protect civilians.
- In addition, displaced people themselves must be involved in managing and solving the causes of their displacement. Those directly affected are often the best-placed to create lasting solutions. Local authorities should also be included in efforts to find solutions, which need their support to be sustainable.

Disasters

The best way to reduce the human suffering and displacement caused by disasters is to make people less vulnerable to them, and more able to cope when they do occur. These principles were outlined in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.¹

- Governments, international and local NGOs should prioritise action to reduce people’s vulnerability. Examples of practical measures include creating better early warning systems, ensuring that coastline protection is not sacrificed to commercial development, preventing forests from being destroyed by housing developments, preventing poor people from being forced to live on flood plains and ensuring that schools and houses are earthquake resistant.

Local NGOs have a huge contribution to make because their knowledge of local conditions means that often they know how best to reduce people’s vulnerability. Where people are forced from their homes, they need help quickly. Response times will be slowed if all funding for the response is channelled through the UN’s Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) – this delays NGOs’ ability to start work.

- Rather than sending all their disaster contributions through the CERF, donors should keep channelling substantial funds directly to NGOs.
- Furthermore, those coordinating the response to disasters must recognise that local NGOs have vitally important local knowledge and capacity. Local NGOs must be used and not, as is often the case, sidelined in favour of international organisations.

Development

Unlike displacement by conflict and disasters, that caused by large-scale development projects is predictable and preventable. People who are forced out of their homes by development projects normally find their lives are damaged for years afterwards, or even permanently. But it does not have to be like this.

When displaced people are resettled, there is an opportunity to improve their lives, although this requires sufficient imagination, dedication and financial resources.² Very few projects currently achieve this.

The governments, lenders and other companies that fund or profit from projects that displace people must ensure that people’s livelihoods are restored to at least as good a level as before displacement.

If displacement is to benefit those who are forced to move, then they must share in the benefits generated by the project that pushes them out, as well as being resettled and properly compensated for their losses. Some countries – including Brazil, China, Canada and Norway – are already following this approach in relation to people displaced by dams.

- Christian Aid believes that the principle of sharing the financial returns from projects with those displaced by them is right. It should be applied by those running all major development projects that displace people.
- All commercial and public organisations that fund or run such projects must adopt credible policies on how they will minimise displacement, and properly compensate and resettle people who are forced out of their homes. Such policies should be publicly available.
- Policies achieve nothing by themselves. They must be implemented and their effectiveness must be independently audited at least every five years, with the findings made publicly available. This gives funding organisations an incentive to ensure that their policies are actually implemented.
- An independent audit of the effectiveness of the development displacement guidelines adopted by OECD countries 15 years ago is long overdue. The UK and Irish governments

should press for each OECD member country to organise its own independent audit and, in addition, for the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee to organise a central audit. The results of all audits must be publicly available.

- Similarly, the World Bank has not had a thorough, independent audit of the impact of its policy on resettlement for ten years.³ For a lender that makes so much of its commitment to proper treatment of people and the environment, this is shameful. The Bank should commission such audits every five years and make public the results.
- Within the private sector, the Equator Principles on forced displacement are good, but should be more widely adopted. Companies that have signed up to them should have their adherence independently monitored and audited, and should make the results publicly available.⁴ While such voluntary codes are welcome, experience shows that legally binding rules are often needed to enforce proper regulation.

Climate change

Scientific forecasts about the effects of climate change are frightening. They suggest a world in which people in already poor countries will have an even harder struggle to survive. Although there are no up-to-date statistics to show how many people are being displaced by climate change, it is clear that the numbers are potentially in the hundreds of millions. This, in turn, is likely to fuel conflicts that will push still more people to flee.

It is poor people who will suffer most as a result of climate change, but rich people who are most to blame for it. In sub-Saharan Africa, people emit less than one tonne of CO₂ per year while in the US it is 24 tonnes.

The latest scientific studies suggest that the climate is changing more quickly than was previously predicted. In addition, because of international prevarication over reducing CO₂ emissions, the scale and speed of action needed now is greater than previously imagined. A massive, international effort is needed to reduce CO₂ emissions and keep global average temperature increases below 2°C. Even then, climate change will cause serious disruption, especially in poor communities.

- A new international, science-based and equitable agreement is needed along the lines of a ‘global carbon budget’. This must be consistent with the 2°C-limit and recognise the right of developing and less-developed countries to increase the size of their economies and reduce poverty in a way that does not lead to further growth in global CO₂ emissions.
- The agreement should have at its heart development-friendly

mechanisms with which rich countries will fund adaptation and clean-development activities in poor countries.

- As part of the agreement, rich countries that have emitted most pollution must establish a US\$100 (£50) billion a year global fund to help poor, vulnerable countries to adapt to sea-level rises, increasing drought and more extreme weather. Funding could be based on CO₂ taxation or trading, or both.
- This money should not be taken from existing aid budgets – it is partial compensation for the damage done by climate change. It should be paid in proportion to countries’ CO₂ emissions since 1990 (when negotiations on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change began), and national wealth.
- In addition, it is in all countries’ interests to share and develop low-carbon technology and pass on know-how. The costs of this should be borne by rich countries, and intellectual property rights should not stand in the way of stabilising the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere. At the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the importance of discussions on technology transfer should be elevated, with rich countries taking seriously their obligations in Article 5 to take ‘all practicable steps’ to ‘promote, facilitate and finance’ technology transfer.
- In the short term, financial support for adaptation should be increased via more rapid debt cancellation and increases in overseas development assistance. In addition, rich countries must live up to the pledges they have made to help the poor cope with climate change.
- The UK should pay all the money it has pledged to the climate change funds without delay. Pledging £10 million but staging payments over three years harms the adaptation efforts of the poorest countries in the world.
- The UK should lead the way towards a science-based, equitable international agreement and towards mechanisms to fund clean development and adaptation in countries that have limited resources to deal with them.

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Recommendations

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Acknowledgements

This report was written by Rachel Baird, Katy Migiro, Dominic Nutt, Anjali Kwatra, Sarah Wilson, Judith Melby, Andrew Pendleton, Malcolm Rodgers and John Davison. Edited by Angela Burton. Sub-edited by Jane Lewis. Production by Stephen Murphy. Designed by Howdy.

The forced migration crisis was written and researched by Rachel Baird, Katy Migiro and Judith Melby. With thanks to Professor Michael Cernea (George Washington University), Paul Ryder (Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford) and Sir Crispin Tickell (James Martin Institute, University of Oxford).

Internal displacement: the hidden crisis was written and researched by Rachel Baird, Katy Migiro and Malcolm Rodgers. With thanks to Simon Addison (Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford), Jens-Hagen Eschenbächer (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre), Professor Stephen Castles (International Migration Institute, University of Oxford), Elizabeth Ferris (Brookings Institution), Joel Charmy (Refugees International), Tim Allen (London School of Economics) and Richard Manning (OECD).

Climate change: outlook bleak was written and researched by Rachel Baird, Katy Migiro, Andrew Pendleton and Amanda Farrant. With thanks to Professor Andrew Watkinson (University of East Anglia School of Environmental Sciences), Paul Brown, Dr Norman Myers (Green College, University of Oxford), Helene Lackenbauer (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), Josh Arnold-Forster, Madeleen Helmer (Red Cross /Red Crescent Centre on Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness), Professor Robert McLeman (University of Ottawa), Professor Neil Adger

(University of East Anglia School of Environmental Sciences), Dr Robert J Nicholls (School of Civil Engineering and the Environment, University of Southampton) and Dr Peter Walker (Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University).

Colombia: conflict and commerce was written and researched by Dominic Nutt. With thanks to Jonathan Glennie, Catherine Bouley, Rosemary McGee, Katherine Nightingale, Hannah Morley (Christian Aid), James Lupton (ABC Colombia), Danilo Rueda (Justice and Peace), Andrés Castro, Marlyn Ahumada (Fedepalma), Simon Pirani and to Don Enrique Petro and all those living in the Humanitarian Zone.

Burma: war, dams and power was written and researched by Anjali Kwatra. With thanks to the Thailand Burma Border Consortium, Karen Rivers Watch, Karen Women's Organisation and the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People.

Mali: heat, dust and climate change was written and researched by Sarah Wilson. With thanks to Tom Burrell, Ibrahim Togola, Diakalia Traore and Sinaly Diallo (Mali Folke Centre), Armand Kassogue (Action for Human Promotion), Bourama Diarra (Mali Meteorology Directorate) and Yacouba Kone, Ousmane Dembele, Xavier Tissier (Christian Aid field office).

Recommendations were written and researched by Rachel Baird, Malcolm Rodgers, Nick Guttman and Andrew Pendleton.

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'Take a moment and picture what it would be like for you if you had to flee from your home because of an imminent threat, or because you were being forced out at gunpoint on ethnic, political, religious or racial grounds, or because you got caught in the middle of a civil war or a natural disaster. You couldn't take many of your belongings with you: you probably would become separated, at least temporarily, from your husband, partner, children, whoever is close to you... In fact, the pillars that make up your life... would be pretty much gone, pretty much in a flash... What would you feel? Anyone... who has ever felt desperate for help or dependent on someone else for help, even for a day, will understand what it is to be a refugee or an internally displaced person.'

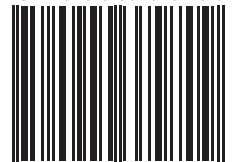
Roberta Cohen, former co-director of the Project on Internal Displacement at the Brookings Institution, Washington DC

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UK registered charity number 1105851 Company number 5171525
Republic of Ireland charity number CHY 6998 Company number 426928
Northern Ireland charity number XR94639 Company number N1059154

P442

ISBN 978-0-904379-70-9



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